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Waking Sleep: The Uncanny in Modernist Literary Aesthetics

Delmar R. Reffett Jr.

University of Kentucky, delmar.reffett@uky.edu

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Delmar R. Reffett Jr., Student

Dr. Jonathan Allison, Major Professor

Dr. Michael Trask, Director of Graduate Studies

WAKING SLEEP:
THE UNCANNY IN MODERNIST LITERARY AESTHETICS

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

Delmar R. Reffett Jr.

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Jonathan Allison, Professor of English

Lexington, Kentucky

2020

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

WAKING SLEEP: THE UNCANNY IN MODERNIST LITERARY AESTHETICS

With the dawning of the twentieth century, writers and critics found themselves facing a social world undergoing massive change, the forces of capitalist modernity leaving the individual increasingly disaffected and disconnected from her surroundings. This social world, rent as it was by alienation, offered a hostile environment for the sort of coherence that had traditionally been prized by Western aesthetics since the Enlightenment. How could a literary work attain a degree of coherence while reflecting a deeply dissonant modernity? Navigating this contradiction between literature's inherited values and literature's possibilities in alienated society can be seen as central to the project of literary modernism that emerges at this time.

The uncanny, the experience of something appearing at once strange yet somehow familiar, offers a means by which these conflicting demands of coherence and relevance can be managed. Forwarding a theory of the uncanny that emphasizes its ability to bridge, if momentarily, the disconnect between a subject and her world while not hiding the reality of this disconnect, my dissertation seeks to place the uncanny at the center of our structural understanding of pivotal modernist texts. By employing the experience of the uncanny at crucial moments in the text, the work is able to achieve a coherence between a character's psyche and their material surroundings otherwise difficult to come by when describing a social life often devoid of this coherence. Modernism's innovation is to allot the uncanny the structural role of joining disparate elements of the text together; it is not that modernist works are more uncanny than that which came before, but more reliant on the uncanny on a structural level.

In support of this theory of the uncanny's role in modernism, I look at the works of two of modernism's canonical writers: D.H. Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield. In my chapter on Lawrence, I begin with a reading of his posthumous novella *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, a work that relies heavily on the uncanny as a structural support, before looking back to one of the earlier Brangwen novels, *The Rainbow*, to discern how those novels prefigure a deeper embrace of the uncanny as a means of dealing with problems facing the modern novel. In my chapter on Mansfield, I trace the evolution of her short

stories from her first published collection, 1911's *In a German Pension*, though her later works, *Bliss and Other Stories* and *The Garden Party and Other Stories*. In these later collections, there is seen a movement toward a more uncanny short story, a movement which can be understood as an attempt to deal with the problem of depicting alienated characters while still bringing the story to a satisfying conclusion, a problem which bedeviled many of the stories in her early collection. Mansfield is thus seen as, over the course of her career, tending toward the uncanny as a way of reconciling content and form within her stories.

In this dissertation, I see the first step toward a longer, book-length study of the uncanny as central to the development of twentieth century literature, the changing role of the former reflecting changing pressures on the latter as modernism gives way to postmodernism.

KEYWORDS: Uncanny, Modernism, Aesthetics, Alienation, Novel, Short Story

____Delmar R. Reffett Jr._____

____17 Jan 2020_____

Date

WAKING SLEEP:
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By

Delmar R. Reffett Jr.

__Dr. Jonathan Allison_____
Director of Dissertation

_Dr. Michael Trask_____
Director of Graduate Studies

_17 Jan 2020_____
Date

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The Snowdrop: An Introduction

In D.H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, when young Yvette Saywell returns to the Romani encampment after having had her fortune read, she meets with the palm-reader's husband, and is mesmerized by him, the narrator noting that, "her will had departed from her limbs, he had power over her: his shadow was on her... she was only aware of the dark, strange effluence of him bathing her limbs, washing her at last purely will-less"(84-5). In his thrall, Yvette experiences a sexual awakening, the girl described as, "full out, like a snowdrop which spreads its three white wings in a flight into the waking sleep of its brief blossoming. The waking sleep of her full-opened virginity, entranced like a snowdrop in the sunshine, was upon her" (85). The repetition of the phrase "waking sleep" deserves remark: what, precisely, does it mean? The first instinct is to see "waking sleep" as a description of Yvette's virginity, with her lack of sexual experience likened to being asleep. Yet, in such an instance, one would expect Yvette to be described as "awakening" outright, rather than remaining in a paradoxical state of being both awake and asleep. It seems counterintuitive to compare a character learning about herself to a state of sleep, as such knowledge is usually associated with being awake.

This comparison becomes far more suitable, however, when it is understood as describing the sense of the uncanny that Yvette encounters in her meeting with the man. The uncanny, the feeling of something being at once strange yet familiar, lends itself well to being described as an experience of "waking sleep," as it is brought on by a blurring of the line between a subject's psychic life and the material reality they inhabit. Of central

importance to this study is the development of a theory of the uncanny which at once holds to the Freudian insight attributing it to a return of the repressed while deviating from Freud's account of how, precisely, this return becomes uncanny. In doing so, it seeks to explain the uncanniness of moments like Yvette's encounter in the encampment as instances of a return of the repressed that undermines the distinction between the subject's psyche and their surroundings.

It is the contention of this study that such moments of the uncanny take on a special significance in the literature of the early twentieth century; specifically, the uncanny helps works achieve a degree of coherence while depicting the dissonant world of modern capitalism, a remedy to what I will term the "aesthetic problem of alienation." While the political problem of alienation involves constructing a society that subjects can be integrated into while still maintaining their freedom, the aesthetic problem of alienation concerns creating art that is formally coherent while still relevant to a world that appears incoherent. As such, this study engages heavily with Theodor Adorno, whose work represents a sustained and sophisticated exploration of this contradiction. For Adorno, life under modern capitalism resists depiction in art, as "it is just the essential abstractness of what really happens which rebuts the aesthetic image" (*MM* 144). In contrast to Fredric Jameson's description of Adorno's account of the modernist drive to innovate as stemming from "the deep conviction that certain forms and expressions, procedures and techniques, can no longer be used, are worn out or stigmatized by their associations with a past that has become conventionality or kitsch" (5), Adorno attributes modernism's experiments more to past forms' struggle with modernity than to their being

too *passee*. Among these experiments, this study posits, is the use of the uncanny at key points in the narrative to tie together the narrative's various elements.

At this point, it may be argued that the writers examined in this study were most likely not thinking about this aesthetic dilemma, and thus their work cannot be seen as responding to it. In addition to overvaluing conscious influences at the exclusion of the unconscious, as though the sources of creativity are ever fully transparent to those engaged in it, this objection rests on the flawed assumption that the object of aesthetics is most properly the ideas held about art rather than the artworks themselves. If a novel is only subject to concepts consciously applied to it by its creator, then contemplation of that novel is ultimately an investigation of what its creator believed about it, as the novel is thus simply a reflection of its creator's conscious thought; any argument about the novel will inevitably appeal to these beliefs instead of the novel itself. Thinking primarily about the author's thinking about the work, aesthetic theory becomes the study of aesthetic theories, not of art. The sense that such a degree of remove from the artwork is necessary reflects nothing so much as the old superstition that art is beyond rational comprehension, and thus cannot be directly theorized. In order to avoid this, we have to be willing to wager that our concepts are present primarily in the work of art under examination.

Another potential objection, related to the first, is that this perspective, with its emphasis on form and structure, is ill-suited to the examination of prose fiction, referring to the notion that prose is "less formal" than, say, poetry. Yet, this idea runs aground as soon as one brings up judgment, since to judge a novel as good or not necessarily requires some reference to the way the individual scenes are connected to one another,

and how the various threads introduced are tied together. Such a requirement implies that form is crucial to the reader's experience of prose, and that, as a result, prose is no less "formal" than other forms of literature. Indeed, it brings to light just how much of the meaning of a piece of prose is generated in part by the way it is structured.

The aim of this study is to better grasp how these modernist works were shaped by the conditions under which they were created. By establishing their use of the uncanny as a response to the unique difficulties of writing under modern capitalism, this project seeks to help uncover the logic by which these works were constructed. Toward this end, the first chapter, "Strange Substitutes," will discuss the aesthetic problem of alienation, then develop a theory of the uncanny before explaining how this theory makes the uncanny well-suited to remedy this problem. Following this, "The Flood and the Rainbow" will look at two works by D.H. Lawrence, his novel *The Rainbow* (1915) and his novella *The Virgin and the Gipsy* (1930), and how his use of the uncanny shifts between them, with the later novella relying on the uncanny to help tie its various elements together. A similar shift is traced in "Psyche and Structure in the Short Story," which views Katherine Mansfield's development of the short story form over her career as a response to the problem of accommodating life under capitalism within that form. Eschewing the flat acceptance of her characters' alienation of her first collection, *In a German Pension* (1911), Mansfield comes to regularly end her stories with moments of the uncanny by the time of the last published collection of her lifetime, *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922).

**Chapter 1:
Strange Substitutes:
On Alienation and the Uncanny**

“The ‘clear’ and ‘beautiful’ prescriptions of so many works of art which remain content with the conscious and superficial layer of being, like it or not, are no longer able to arouse our interest. It is altogether possible that the violent economic and social contradictions of our time have had everything to do with the depreciation of this ridiculous lustre.”

-Andre Breton

Introduction

Freud begins “The Uncanny” by remarking that “it is only rarely that a psychoanalyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics,” but that “the subject of the ‘uncanny’ is a province of this kind” (“Uncanny” 219), characterizing the concept as a concern of both theories of art and theories of the psyche. The contention that this shared interest is a rare one may seem strange, as from his earliest writings Freud has examined works of art and literature to find depictions of his theories. How does his study of the uncanny differ from his investigations into the incest motive in *Hamlet* or infantile sexuality in *Gradiva*, studies where he takes as his object works long examined by critics? One possible explanation is that these earlier studies consider the artworks only insofar as they illustrate certain psychic forces, while in “The Uncanny” what is under examination is precisely how these forces effect the artwork in which they appear; *Gradiva* is only of interest for its depiction of the amnesia effecting memories of childhood sexual experiences and *Hamlet* for its picture of oedipal resentment, while the exploration of the uncanny pays special attention to how this feeling is evoked in the

reader of a given work. Where previously the psychological and aesthetic features of a work are considered distinct enough for one to be focused on largely at the exclusion of another, in the concept of the uncanny this distinction is less clear.

The reason for this lies in the effect the uncanny has on the form of the literary work it inhabits, rendering any attempt to discuss the uncanny purely in terms of psychology or of art thwarted from the beginning. As examined in this chapter, the uncanny creates within the artwork a scene of coherence, as the work's various elements, such as characters, settings, and events, become, however briefly, indistinguishable from one another. As a result, the uncanny cannot but have an impact on the structure of the work in which it appears, creating as it does a place where the diverse parts of the story coalesce. This function is precisely why the uncanny takes on a particular importance in certain works of literary modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century, as these works are called upon to depict a society increasingly riven by the divisions created by the capitalist mode of production. The threat posed to art by these divisions, which I term "the aesthetic problem of alienation," will be established by a foray into the nature of the artwork and the modern phenomenon of alienation, with references to the works of Theodor W. Adorno, Karl Marx, and Georg Lukacs. After defining the problem, the chapter will move on to an exploration of the solution, the uncanny, contrasting Freud's theory of the *unheimlich* as a "return of the repressed" with more recent attempts to explain the phenomenon by appeals to the subject's "intellectual uncertainty." Finding these more recent attempts wanting, I will propose an account of the uncanny that, while reasserting its basis in the return of the repressed, nevertheless differs from Freud's. The chapter will then conclude with an examination of a work made synonymous with the

uncanny by Freud's essay on the topic, E.T.A. Hoffmann's short story "The Sandman."

This examination will serve two purposes: firstly, to demonstrate the validity of this newly-proposed account of the uncanny, and, secondly, to model how this account can be used to assist our understanding of literary texts, laying the groundwork for the following chapters.

The Aesthetic Problem of Alienation

Theodor W. Adorno, in his *Aesthetic Theory*, states that "only by virtue of separation from empirical reality, which allows art to model the relation of the whole and the part according to the work's own needs, does the artwork achieve a heightened order of existence" (AT 5), the work of art required to remove itself from the forces that shape mundane reality to have the freedom to shape itself to its own unique ends, attaining, in Adorno's parlance, autonomy. The artwork attains its autonomy from empirical reality, gaining its special status, by its adherence to its own unique logic and its rejection of the everyday logic of utility that attributes meaning to things insofar as they are useful in satisfying the subject's wants and desires. Against this logic of utility, the artwork adheres to a logic of appearances, in which its features derive their meaning from their manner of appearance, without reference to any potential use-value. For instance, it is only when the Venus of Willendorf ceases to derive its meaning from its status as a tool, as a magical charm used to ensure fertility, and to instead be meaningful because of how it appears, that the figurine becomes a proper work of art; at the point where the figurine's curves, shapes, and sparse embellishments no longer gain their meaning from their ability to manipulate reality, but rather from the nature and effect of their appearance, it is an object

of aesthetic reflection. This is what Adorno means when he says that “artworks are alive in that they speak in a fashion that is denied to natural objects and the subjects who make them. They speak by virtue of the communication of everything particular in them. Thus they come into contrast with the arbitrariness of what simply exists” (*AT* 6), the parts and features of the artwork not means to an end, as they were in the magic charm, but instead taken as important in and of themselves. The way in which things appear in the artwork is therefore taken as inherently meaningful, including the fact that the artwork’s features appear together; for the logic of appearance to hold, this appearance together must seem meaningful, reflecting some sort of palpable connection between them. For this reason, coherence takes on special importance for aesthetic perception, as coherence between things that appear together implies that they somehow belong together, allowing their appearance together to be taken as meaningful, rather than as the result of blind coincidence. It is for this reason that Adorno remarks elsewhere that coherence “truly strikes me as the key to the objectivity of aesthetic judgment” (*As* 8), since coherence is central to the artwork’s status as cohesive object outside of and beyond the subject’s impressions of it. The importance of coherence to the artwork lies behind Anton Chekov’s famous dictum that if there is a gun hanging on the wall in the first act, it had better go off in the third. The various elements of a work appearing together should be made to belong meaningfully to one another by the work’s end. Coherence demands that the world that appears around a character be made relevant to that character, in order for their appearance together to be meaningful.

Anything that threatens this coherence threatens the meaningfulness of appearances in the artwork, and thus the artwork’s status as separate from empirical

reality. For this reason, the depiction of modern life becomes fraught, due to just such a threat in the form of alienation. Alienation here is meant less in the existentialist sense, as an emotional-spiritual attitude that transcends any specific historical setting, and more in the Marxist sense. Marx, in his 1844 manuscripts, traces alienation to the conditions of production and labor prevalent under capitalism, noting “the alienation of the worker in his product means not only that labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him.” Without control over the object their labor produces, the worker does not recognize that object, or the labor they supplied to it, as their own, but instead as something irrevocably separate from them. As Bertell Ollman notes, “the worker’s products are alien to him in that he cannot use them to keep alive or to engage in further productive activity,” and as a result, “not only can he not use them, but he does not recognize them as his” (143). The worker’s alienation from the product of their labor has ramifications for their relationship to the wider world, as “the worker can create nothing without nature, without the sensuous external world. It is the material on which his labor is manifested, in which it is active, from which and by means of which it produces” (Marx, 70). Having no sense of connection to their product, the worker by extension has no sense of connection to the physical world in which its production takes place; unable to recognize their ability to effect the material world through labor, the worker sees this material world as distant and irrelevant to them. Rather than being simply the result of a given individual’s psychology, alienation, in Marx’s understanding, stems from the individual’s inability to see themselves in their physical surroundings because the products of their labor, the things that register their activity in those physical

surroundings, have been taken from them and made the property of another. Deprived of the object that manifests their activity, the worker is thus deprived of the place where their activities and needs are most clearly reflected in the physical world, and as a result that world comes to appear to the individual as uniformly indifferent.

The alienation produced by this arrangement is not confined to the workplace, but rather follows the worker home after their shift. The implications for the worker's life experience are spelled out by Marx in a striking moment in his text, in which he describes the worker's dwellings:

Man returns to living in a cave, which is now, however, contaminated with the mephitic breath of plague given off by civilization, and which he continues to occupy only precariously, it being for him an alien habitation which can be withdrawn from him any day-- a place from which, if he does not pay, he can be thrown out any day. (117)

Not owning what they produce, the worker can establish no ownership of the products needed for life, such as housing, and is instead forced to exchange his meager wages to occupy the property of another. As a result, there is a mediation between the worker and the requirements of life, the worker allowed to occupy this property not because of any direct ownership, but because he is continuously paying for the privilege, and can thus be turned out as soon as this payment is interrupted. In this scenario, the worker will understandably view their lodgings not as a meaningful place, shaped by his own work and inhabited by memories, but as the strange, alien home of someone else, which he is

temporarily, and only tenuously, inhabiting. Alienated in how they make a living, the worker is alienated in how he lives his life.

Nor is the alienation produced by this arrangement limited to the workers, since, as Ollman points out “the capitalist’s relation to the product of the proletariat’s labor likewise places him in a state of alienation. For him, the object of another man’s life activity is only something to sell, something to make a profit with” (154). The capitalist, controlling what they have not created, sees the product stamped with an other’s activity and not their own; catching no reflection of themselves in the product they own, the capitalist can maintain nothing but a purely financial interest in that product. In this sense, alienation can be seen as inherent to the separation of labor from ownership central to the capitalist mode of production, in which the worker labors on what they do not own, and the capitalist owns that on which they do not labor. As the capitalist mode of production becomes the predominate way in which a society provides for itself, the alienation inherent to this mode permeates the society, coming to affect even those with no direct involvement in the relation of production.

And it is this prevalent sense of disconnection between a subject and their world that poses a problem for the artwork: if the subject finds the material objects surrounding them alien and meaningless, how is the artwork to depict the subject’s appearing alongside these objects as nevertheless meaningful? If the artwork insists on coherence, insists that the gun on the wall be made meaningful to the characters, it forgoes depicting those characters as genuinely alienated, and thus severs its connection to the world it seeks to depict. If, conversely, the artwork remains faithful to alienated life, and thus refuses to reconcile the gun to the characters encountering it, then it adheres to a logic

different from that of appearances, threatening its status as an artwork. It is this dilemma that constitutes the aesthetic problem of alienation: how can one depict the meaninglessness of alienated existence without at the same time rendering that appearance meaningless in the process, and thus undermining what makes art possible?

Adorno addresses just this problem during his lectures on aesthetics. When asked by a student about the seeming conflict between art's need to be relevant to empirical reality and that reality's hostility to coherence, he acknowledges "I am actually demanding two contradictory things of art. On the one hand, I claim that art must articulate the state in which we, humans, mankind, every individual finds themselves historically, and this state simply happens to be one of alienation. On the other hand, I demand of art that it give a voice to suppressed, mutilated nature, meaning the opposite of alienation" (*As* 77-8). As an experience of the world outside the exploitative, utilitarian mindset that marks the subject's daily life, art describes a relationship to the world in which the subject and their surroundings are connected and meaningful, and is thus at odds with the experience of alienation that insists on the subject's loss of connection and meaning. In order to square the circle, Adorno proposes the answer to the problem of alienation is to be found in alienation itself, alienation as manifested in the device of defamiliarization, where everyday objects are depicted in a way so as to appear strange and new to the reader. "Through the fact that the artistic formulation does justice radically to the actually existing alienation between subject and object, the object is, in a certain delicate sense, changed back into nature... changed back into that which, one could say, freed of its ideological ingredient" (*As* 78). In doing this, twentieth century writers like Brecht, Beckett, and Kafka who "by taking this process of defamiliarization

extremely far, by completely doing away with the self-evident certainty of what one terms 'realistic experience,' end up with something that, in a sense, [evokes] natural conditions, eating, drinking, drinking, sleeping, illness, physical harm" (*As* 78-9). Stripped of any and all meaning to the subject, objects at a certain point lose their status as commodities, so defamiliarized that they are no longer recognizable even as products of the alien forces of the market. At this point, they revert back to their primeval status as biological necessities, things to be consumed in order to continue life; freed from appealing in any way to the subject's mind, the world instead can appeal instead to the subject's stomach. By evoking nothing but the subject's appetites, these objects cannot, it seems, but be familiar to the subject tied to those appetites by their physical being. The problem of alienation for the artwork is then, for Adorno, its own solution, its presence in art remedied by a fuller embrace of it.

Yet, instead of this appeal to bodily needs making alien objects seem familiar, it would seem more likely to make these familiar bodily needs seem alien and strange. In Marx's example of the worker's lodgings, the drive to find shelter is experienced by the worker as coming from without, from the landlord's threat of eviction, rather than from any biological need originating from within. With the objects the worker needs in the hands of another, these needs themselves seem driven by the whims of another; tied up with the actions of others, the worker's needs seem to originate from others. As such, alienation from one's physical surroundings results in the alienation of the needs met by those same surroundings, meaning that these needs cannot be relied upon to be familiar enough to the subject to overcome that alienation. Instead of being reminded of familiar, human needs by the alienated objects that satisfy them, the subject finds their needs made

unfamiliar by their reliance on these very alienated objects. Adorno's faith that defamiliarization will, once pushed far enough, transform into its opposite, becoming something familiar and relevant again, seems misplaced.

If the dilemma cannot be resolved by the artwork's embrace of alienation, perhaps it can be simply rejected in favor of a commitment to depicting a world drained of meaning as nevertheless meaningful. It is this possibility that lies at the center of one of the earliest (and still deeply insightful) articulations of alienation as an aesthetic problem and its implications for literature, Georg Lukacs' *Theory of the Novel*. Lukacs contrasts the literary forms of pre-modern "integrated" societies (specifically ancient Greece) and modern "problematic" societies. By an integrated society, Lukacs means a society whose cultural, political, and social forms are adequate to the psychological and spiritual needs of those living in it, while a problematic society is marked by an unbridgeable chasm between what it offers its subjects and what its subjects require in terms of meaningful existence. Unlike Hellenic Greece, modernity is kept by advances in science and technology from conceiving of the cosmos as inherently spiritual and thus similar to humanity; modernity implies a disenchanting, mechanistic perspective on the universe, stripping it in advance of anything humanity could encounter as intrinsically meaningful. Social forms informed by this mechanistic perspective, like those of modern capitalism, can thus never be anything but alienating. For Lukacs, the ancient Greeks' experience of their world as inherently meaningful is reflected in form of the epic, which is able to rely on its characters' integration into this meaningful universe to provide coherence; put differently, the epic, emerging from an integrated society, does not have to work to create a meaningful unity for itself, it needs only to reflect a unified and meaningful world (29-

32). This happy circumstance is not shared by modern “problematic” society, where humanity’s inherent separateness from its world places the burden of creating meaning onto humanity itself. In such a situation, literature can hardly rely on the world as experienced to provide any sort of meaningful unity; any meaning and coherence found within a work must be generated by the work itself, instead of being borrowed from without. It is in reference to this that Lukacs famously called the novel “the epic of a godless age” (88), as it was precisely the novel that he saw as the form most reflective of the reality of alienation and most capable of overcoming it.

What for Lukacs makes the novel so well suited to overcoming the alienation of modern “problematic” society is what he sees as the form’s inherent sense of irony. The novel (specifically, the nineteenth century realist novel, which for Lukacs is the form’s highest iteration) places at its center characters struggling to enact their ideals in a reality that is fundamentally resistant to them, taking shape as an account of the conflict between these two elements. Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* serves as a clear example of this, the novel following Emma Bovary, her ideas about romance, and the affairs with which she attempts to enliven her staid, conventional life in the provinces. The novel presents an alienated Emma unable to find meaningful connection between her ideals and the world she inhabits, despite her efforts. The ironic tone of the narrator rendering this conflict provides the reader a degree of distance from the conflict, escaping the character’s viewpoint and allowing the reader a more “objective” perspective, one from which the two elements, character and world, can be considered side-by-side. Rather than experiencing Emma’s alienation along with her, the reader is able, through ironic detachment, to gain a clear and unbiased picture of both character and his/her world, thus

making it possible to detect connections between them that evade the character. Emma's response to the romantic stories she's read can now appear to the novel's reader as, for instance, of a piece with the lack of sophistication marking provincial life. The alienation experienced by Emma is ironized, allowing the reader the distance from it needed to see the character and his/her surroundings from a perspective not influenced by that alienation; the reader can consider character and social forces alongside each other in a way not dominated by the character's feeling of alienation, allowing the character and his/her world to appear somehow connected and coherent.

The realist novel's solution relies on an unstated assumption: that even within a modern civilization marked by alienation, the individual's relationship with the social forces shaping the world they inhabit can still be made visible and apparent. The realist novel that Lukacs describes as the placing of a character against a resistant world must be able to show that this alienation vanishes from the more "objective" standpoint offered to the reader, which means it must be possible for the reader to "see" how the character is, despite the character's feelings to the contrary, integrated into their world. It must be apparent to the reader that the character's life is connected to the larger forces in society.

Yet it was just these larger forces which, at the dawn of the twentieth century, were receding from their obvious connection with individual life. Social forces under capitalism tend to become increasingly abstract, as power is concentrated in a market mechanism that subordinates all intrinsic value to abstract exchange value, resulting in social forces becoming disembodied, more connected to the monetary value of things rather than the things themselves. Due to this, the subject's life comes to be determined by forces without any enduring physical form and thus invisible. Whereas the power of

the Catholic Church, for example, announces itself in the form of insignia, ritual, and architecture that makes its presence clear to the individual, the stock market lacks a similar tactile existence, leaving the individual's understanding of its sway on his/her life an issue of abstract knowledge. Walter Benjamin, describing the decay of personal experience's importance in capitalist society at this period, gets at just this problem, reflecting that "never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power" (84) than in the modern world. The ability of the individual subject to experience directly the forces that shape his/her life is undermined by the fact that these forces ("tactical warfare... inflation...") are entirely abstract, the subject unable to apprehend that which eschews any settled, physical form. The resulting difficulty posed to artworks, operating as they do by way of appearances, by social forces that do not properly appear, is particularly felt by the realist novel's ironic narrator. As Adorno notes, "the narrator's implicit claim that the course of the world is still essentially one of individuation, that the individual with his impulses and feelings is still the equal of fate, that the inner person is still directly capable of something, is ideological in itself" ("Position," 31). The attempt to make the isolated, alienated individual in any way comparable to the titanic social forces that control them, without inevitably papering over the chasm between them, is frustrated from the outset. Yet, the ironic narrator identified by Lukacs as so central to realism is involved by his position in just such an attempt, his goal to show both the individual and society alongside one another relying on society's ability to be "shown" in a manner similar to the individual. While the French provincial world of *Emma Bovary*, where the forces of

social convention are clearly visible to the individual in the forms of the church and the municipal authorities, makes it possible to compare them to Emma's own existence, the social forces that shape life under capitalist modernity remain hard to clearly envision. If social forces cannot properly “appear” to the reader in a manner similar as the character and her struggles, the ironic narrator’s goal of presenting them alongside one another to reveal their “objective” connections is thwarted from the very beginning. The fact that inflation cannot be represented in the same direct way that hunger can means no amount of ironic distance can bring them into focus and make them appear directly as part of the same system. The result is a social order which, by its sheer invisibility, resists the creation of coherence in the work of literature by means of irony.

The aesthetic problem posed by alienation thus cannot be fully remedied either by Adorno’s counsel to embrace it or by Lukacs’ to cast it aside in favor of the “truth” of social totality; instead, the impasse remains. Into it, the uncanny enters as a possible means of navigating art’s conflicting commitments under modernity, a way between the Scylla and Charybdis of the loss of relevance on one hand and the loss of coherence on the other. To grasp precisely what about the uncanny makes this possible, a detailed account of the uncanny, a picture of what it is and how it comes to be, is required.

The Blossom Branch: On The Uncanny

However, it is just such a general theory of the uncanny that Nicholas Royle, in his influential study of the subject, argues is impossible, as a fixed and firm description is at odds with the uncanny’s inherently protean nature. For him, “to write about the

uncanny, as Freud's essay makes admirably clear, is to lose one's bearings, to find oneself immersed in the maddening logic of the supplement, to engage with a hydra" (8).

Attempts to set out a theory of the uncanny are inevitably stymied by the tendency for examples of the uncanny to evoke other examples in what he terms the "logic of the supplement," leaving any definition drawn from these examples forever incomplete. As he puts it, "one uncanny thing keeps leading to another. Every attempt to isolate and analyse a specific case of the uncanny seems to generate an at least minor epidemic" (13). For Royle, the uncanny will always evade rigorous definition because as soon as one thinks one has encapsulated it, another example of the uncanny crops up and forces the definition to change to accommodate it. The concept eludes definition, and thus is defined by its elusiveness. Royle claims that "the uncanny is destined to elude mastery, it is what cannot be pinned down or controlled. The uncanny is never simply a question of a statement, description or definition, but always engages a performative dimension, a maddening supplement, something unpredictable and additionally strange happening in and to what is being stated, defined or described" (15-6). In this view, a solid definition of the uncanny cannot be achieved because the struggle to achieve that definition is a central, defining characteristic of the uncanny, the "logic of the supplement" sabotaging any settled description of the uncanny itself at the heart of any understanding of the uncanny.

Yet, Royle's understanding of the uncanny, with this logic of the supplement at its center, is founded on something of an inconsistency. Each new example of the uncanny, which is supposed to frustrate any stable understanding of the concept, must of course be recognizable as uncanny in order to serve as an example in the first place; yet, if one can

identify something as an example of the uncanny, it must already bear a good deal of resemblance to one's idea of the uncanny. Given this, it is thus unclear how this new example would work to unsettle and confuse a notion of the uncanny it already largely comports with. Even in the case of an "avalanche of examples," each example would meet enough of the criteria of the uncanny to be recognizable as such and share enough features with the other examples for an enduring core of "uncanny traits" to emerge by the avalanche's end. In short, the "logic of the supplement" requires the recognition of examples without an idea by which to recognize them. Given this inconsistency, Royle's pessimism should be countered with an effort to work out a general theory of uncanniness.

Freud describes the uncanny as "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" ("Uncanny" 220), a startling encounter with something strange that the subject nevertheless also dimly recognizes, an unnerving feeling of intimacy with something that should be entirely unfamiliar. Distinguishing the uncanny from "the weird," Mark Fisher notes "Freud's *unheimlich* is about the strange within the familiar, the familiar within the strange, the strangely familiar, the familiar in the strange," whereas "the weird brings to the familiar something which ordinarily lies beyond it" (10). The weird refers to something strange that shows up where it does not belong, in the familiar, everyday world, such as the ghost of a loved one appearing in one's kitchen; the uncanny, on the other hand, is a blurring of the line between these categories by a thing that is at once both strange and familiar, such as encountering a number again and again at various points in the day. This strange familiarity is accompanied by the sense that a transgression has occurred, that something

“that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (“Uncanny” 225).

The uncanny leaves the subject feeling that they have seen something that they should not have, something at once strange, familiar, and taboo. Given this combination of the familiar and forbidden, the uncanny would seem like nothing so much a return of the repressed; indeed, it is exactly this element of the uncanny that, for Freud, betrays its origin in repressed material returning to the surface. He argues this in opposition to Ernst Jentsch’s theory of the uncanny as stemming from “intellectual uncertainty,” a subject’s pervasive doubt about what exactly they are experiencing. Against this, uncanniness is for Freud not about the lack of knowledge so much as too much knowledge about what should not be known.

Yet, as himself Freud notes, this explanation runs into a problem as “not everything that fulfills this condition- not everything that recalls repressed desires and surmounted modes of thinking...- is on that account uncanny” (“Uncanny” 245). The repressed always returns, but most of what returns is not uncanny, Freud thus acknowledging a certain limit to his account’s explanatory power. It is not surprising, given this discrepancy, that many contemporary accounts of the uncanny seek to explain it by looking outside of the mechanism of repression. For critics like Andrew Barnaby and Gia Pascarelli, this search involves coming to the defense, knowingly or otherwise, of Jentsch’s “intellectual uncertainty” theory of the uncanny.

Pascarelli, for instance, develops an account of the uncanny which aims to recuperate Jentsch’s theory in order to trace the emergence of the uncanny to the subject’s encounter with modern technology. For her, Freud’s contention that the return of the repressed causes feelings of the uncanny does not effectively counter Jentsch’s notion,

noting that “notwithstanding Freud’s interpretation of the uncanny as the frighteningly familiar, certain aspects of his theory suggest that that the uncanny indeed corresponds with ‘intellectual’ or ‘epistemological’ uncertainty, and, moreover, that the uncanny is generated by the mechanical or technological” (113). For Pascarelli, this is because the experience of the uncanny negates a central tenet of psychoanalysis. She notes that Freud’s understanding of the uncanny “is somewhat analogous to psychoanalysis, which adopts as its task the discovery of ‘unconscious’ material concealed from the patient that the analyst must interpret for the patient, or encourage the patient to interpret” (114). Like therapy, where the subject faces repressed ideas and feelings that have been dredged up, the uncanny forces subjects to encounter things once hidden.

Yet, this analogy is not without its flaw, as she asserts, “Freud’s description of the uncanny, however much it has in common with the unconcealing practice of psychoanalysis, is not reducible to the latter because the uncanny causes fear that is not necessarily productive or cathartic” (114). The encounter with repressed material under analysis leads to healing (at least ideally), while in the instance of the uncanny it only leads to fear and anxiety. Given this, Pascarelli considers the uncanny something which cannot be accounted for by psychoanalysis’ conception of psyche; because the uncanny holds little therapeutic value, it would seem distinct from the psychoanalytic understanding of the return of the repressed. That the return of the repressed is experienced in most neurotic symptoms, which are hardly beneficial to psychological health, would seem to undermine this line of thinking. Nevertheless, for Pascarelli, Freud’s stubborn insistence on the return of the repressed reads as a sign of anxiety about the validity and supposedly transhistorical nature of psychoanalysis, Freud keen to claim

the experience of the uncanny for the inherent forces of the psyche over and against historical and sociological explanations. This, for Pascarelli, leads Freud to ultimately misunderstand the uncanny, which for her “is intrinsically linked to alterations of perception, especially technically enabled or conditioned ones” (126). The technological achievements of the modern world, which Freud supposedly has to exclude to ensure the psychoanalytic model of the mind is universal across time, are here far more responsible for the uncanny than any uncovering of long-repressed thoughts. For Pascarelli, Jentsch’s theory of the uncanny, with its emphasis on the interruption of the subject’s normal understanding of the world, thus hits much closer to the mark than Freud’s, as Jentsch’s notion places the disorientation Pascarelli attributes to new technologies at the center of the notion of the uncanny.

To support her Jentschian account of the uncanny, she turns to one of the examples from Freud’s essay, when on a train he mistook his reflection for another passenger, noting that “what Freud has not considered is the particular uncanniness of modern travel,” uncanny due to the fact that “it entails accelerated movement through space and time... modern travel is therefore uncanny because it diminishes the possibility of recapturing the past,” brought on by a technological “diminishing of physical contact with people and places passed” (127-8). It is not the sudden reminder of the past, but the sudden loss of it caused by technology that is responsible for the uncanny, with the technology of travel undermining the subject’s understanding of time. As a result, “the normal scene is complicated by traveling, which exacerbates the confusion between subject and object, or in this case the subject and himself” (128), the disorientation of the

subject's sense of time creating a disorientation in the subject's sense of self, plunging the subject into general uncertainty.

Pascarelli's contention is that the uncanny stems from fear felt at the disruption of the subject's senses by modern technology, leading to a general intellectual uncertainty about their surroundings. Freud's reflection in the train's window is not responsible for feelings of the uncanny; rather, it is the fact that his grasp of his surroundings has been weakened by the distorting force of modern, mechanized travel that imbues the scene, including the reflection, with a sense of the *unheimlich*. Yet, because of this, Pascarelli's account threatens to diminish the explanatory power of the concept by rendering the uncanny incidental, not the result of the subject, their psyche, or the objects encountered, but instead simply that these have been disrupted from without by technology. Indeed, the incidental is everywhere in this account: the sudden and arbitrary incursion of technology into a subject's otherwise well-functioning senses, which incidentally causes a random thing or event which just so happens to be before the subject at that moment to seem uncanny. The uncanny is thus reduced to little more than a meaningless coincidence, even if it is a coincidence caused by specific technological forces. Additionally, the uncanny also loses much of its uniqueness in this account. Instead of describing a distinct feeling substantially different from others, the uncanny becomes just another instance of the common experience of discomfort caused by confusion. While the Freudian account attributes it to a common phenomenon, the return of the repressed, it nevertheless acknowledges it as an unusual case of return, qualitatively different from the norm; indeed, this peculiarity is central to Freud's discussion of the topic. In contrast, Pascarelli's account does not mark the uncanny out from any other comparable

experience, its origin in technology not seeming to differentiate the experience itself from other such instances of confusion. Pascarelli's use of Jentsch to remedy certain problems of the uncanny risks the concept's usefulness.

Although he does not evoke Jentsch directly, Barnaby similarly offers an account of the uncanny that attributes it to a sort of intellectual uncertainty, in this case the subject's uncertainty about themselves. Barnaby argues that the uncanny results from the subject's realization that others possess knowledge about their origin which the subject is only just discovering, or, as he puts it, "the secret unearthed in the experience of the uncanny is something that has been known to others who appear to know more about us than we ourselves and who therefore appear to have direct access to a past—our past—that we do not share" (986-7). This results in a "lag time" between the subject's conception and their learning about it that works to undermine any sense of familiarity with the self; that such important knowledge of the self could nevertheless evade the self results in a kind of self-alienation, the subject estranged from their own being. According to Barnaby, it is because of this lag that the uncanny emerges, as this revelation is shown as at once intimate, concerning as it does the subject's own existence, and at the same time alien, with the subject long ignorant of it. There is an interesting dimension of the tragic in Barnaby's account, recalling nothing so much as Aristotle's *anagorisis*, the moment when the hero realizes something which alters how he see himself. Like Oedipus learning the truth of his parentage from Tiresias, the subject in Barnaby's account discovers their sense of self built on a falsehood, the resulting self-estrangement triggering feelings of the uncanny. As Barnaby states, "the experience of the uncanny resides in this disorienting duality: what is at once insufficiently and too secretive,

insufficiently and too concealed, insufficiently and too familiar” (985). Learning of their origins, the subject faces something very close to and yet alien to them.

There is, however, an issue with this account, namely that this “disorienting duality” is, upon examination, one-sided, as it seems to focus entirely on one side of the uncanny, the making the familiar strange, while leaving untheorized the opposing move of making the strange familiar. In his argument, Barnaby summarizes Freud’s conception of the uncanny as “a moment of reversal, the point at which our sense of reality as what is comforting, safe, or friendly (*heimlich*) is suddenly exposed as unfamiliar, obscure, or self-estranging” (985), emphasizing the element of estrangement as central to the experience of the uncanny, to the exclusion of its other side, the strange simultaneously becoming somehow familiar. This version of Freud’s definition reflects how Barnaby’s account of the uncanny is much better at explaining the uncanny’s tendency to leave the familiar feeling strange than it is at explaining its equal and opposite tendency to make what is strange feel nevertheless familiar. The subject, upon encountering a truth recently unknown to them but not others, can indeed be expected to feel unsettled as their firm understanding of themselves gives way to feelings of strangeness and uncertainty; it is less clear why that same subject would also find anything familiar about this previously unknown truth. Intimacy does not equal familiarity, and although these truths encountered by the subject deal with their very being, this does not mean that the subject had any of the prior awareness of it required for it to be recognizable to them. Rather, to be familiar, these truths would have to have been known, if only ever unconsciously, by the subject, in which case the subject would be less ignorant than repressed. It is thus unclear from this account how it is possible for the subject to recognize the truth as

familiar while remaining nonetheless ignorant enough to feel estranged from this truth. Barnaby's account of the uncanny is able to explain why the revelation of origins would be insufficiently familiar, but not why it would at the same time be too familiar.

These attempts to follow Jentsch's lead in attributing the uncanny to some form of intellectual uncertainty struggle to capture what is specific and unique about it, failing to account for the paradox at the heart of the uncanny, the simultaneous strangeness and familiarity which is lost when it is forced to fit within the realm of conscious knowledge in which these two states are seen as antithetical to one another; these accounts must either sacrifice half of the paradox, as in Barnaby's version, or the whole paradox, the concept made indistinguishable from any other instance of confusion as in Pascarelli's. Given this, it would seem worthwhile to look again to unconscious psychic forces for a more compelling account of how the uncanny emerges. Indeed, as will shortly be shown, the uncanny is made possible by the very process of symptom formation, and exists *in potentia* wherever the symptom exists.

For Freud, "a symptom is a sign of, and a substitute for, an instinctual satisfaction which has remained in abeyance; it is a consequence of repression" (*ISA* 91). When an urge or idea is repressed, the symptom serves as an alternative means of expression, the emotional and libidinal charge of the original material displaced onto a more acceptable substitute. Implicit in this displacement is a degree of regression, as, after repression, "the new impulse will run its course under an automatic influence- or, as I should prefer to say, under the influence of the compulsion to repeat" (*ISA* 153), the frustrated libido tending to revert back to an object where the subject once found a less fraught enjoyment, but which sexual development had taken it beyond. For example, in Freud's case study of

“Little Hans,” the boy’s horse phobia is shown stemming from oedipal fear and hostility toward his father, which has been moved to the figure of the horse, an animal whose endowment and open urination was once a source of sexual excitement for Hans. “This substitutive formation,” Freud notes, “has two obvious advantages. In the first place it avoids a conflict due to ambivalence (for the father was a loved object, too), and in the second place it enables the ego to cease generating anxiety” (*ISA* 125), Hans’ horse phobia allows repressed fear and hostility toward his father to return without damaging his love for his father by causing it to emerge elsewhere in a substitute, all the while assigning his fear to something easier to avoid. Yet, this sort of displacement does not proceed arbitrarily, moving to any previous object of enjoyment, but rather moves along chains of association that connect the repressed material to its substitute. Little Hans associated horses with his father, having played “horsey” with him, seeing his facial hair and glasses as similar to a horse’s bridle, and experiencing a degree of sexual jealousy toward both. Connected to the substitute through associations, the repressed material can thus shift thoughts and feelings surrounding it to that substitute.

Through these associations, the substitute maintains ties with the original repressed material, ties which in theory would threaten to undo the symptom’s work of ensuring the repressed stays hidden. The substitute, however, also maintains a connection to the forces in the psyche keeping the repressed at bay. When repressed material attempts to return and make its way into the conscious, “the opposition which has been raised against it in the ego pursues it as an ‘anticathexis’ and compels it to choose a form of expression which at the same time becomes an expression of the opposition itself” (*IL* 447-8). Repressed urges and emotions are channeled toward the substitute by this

repressing force, marking that substitute with this force and allowing it to continue to hide the repressed material. This mark can be seen in the very incongruity between the substitute and the emotions attached to it, as in the seeming incompatibility between Hans' fear and the horses that spark it. Anticathexis marks the substitute as the product of repression with the resulting mismatch, guiding displaced emotions toward a mundane substitute which appears undeserving of them. It is this mismatch, the very thing that draws attention to the symptom, that at the same time helps obscure the repressed material expressed in the symptom, as the subject reasons, half-correctly, that the inappropriate emotions around the substitute must be about something else, in the process dismissing the hints to the identity of this something else contained in the substitute. As Jean Laplanche notes, "that which comes from the unconscious intervenes as a reality (itself conflictual) in the midst of the conscious 'text,' which therefore appears less coherent: sometimes lacunary; sometimes, on the other contrary, with moments of unjustifiable intensity and insistence" ("A Short Treatise..." 88), the irruption of the unconscious regarded by the conscious as an instance of odd and meaningless incoherence, rather than something potentially significant. It is apparent even to Hans that his fear of horses is absurd, and as a result he does not consider the horses truly relevant to his fear, remaining unaware of how the horses hold a clue as to the true source of the fear. The substitute is effective because of, rather than in spite of, its unconvincing nature, as it is here that anticathexis leaves its mark, allowing the repressed material behind the substitute to stay hidden.

The symptom, then, functions by pairing a strange, inexplicable emotion or urge emanating from the unconscious with an unremarkable substitute that, the subject

believes, cannot really warrant it. This disbelief relies on the familiar substitute remaining familiar even after it has been imbued with a strange emotional resonance, and not becoming itself strange in the process. Hans' horse phobia only works if horses, being a familiar part of Hans' life, are not made strange by the unfamiliar emotion now attached to them. In such an event, the mismatch between the displaced emotion and the substitute vanishes, as the substitute, now estranged, could, as far as the subject knows, indeed warrant such an emotional response; the subject, now unfamiliar with the substitute, has no frame of reference to tell them that the displaced emotion is out of place where it is. Paradoxically, it is here, when the substitute is at its most convincing, that the symptom is at its least effective. The emotion now seen as befitting the substitute, the substitute comes to resemble the very thing that it was supposed to replace, a resemblance only strengthened by the chain of associations connecting the substitute back to the original repressed material. The uncanny's characteristic confusion of strangeness and familiarity results from this, as the substitute ironically becomes more familiar, resembling repressed material, the more it becomes estranged. Contra Jentch's notion that the uncanny stems from the subject's "intellectual uncertainty," the confusion between strangeness and familiarity at the root of the uncanny experience is not the subject's, but is inherent to an object that happens to be both at once; the subject is not so much uncertain of whether or not the object is familiar or strange as the object is itself both familiar and strange.

Becoming a reminder of repressed material, the substitute also becomes a reminder of repression itself; in bringing to mind the repressed material, the subject is aware, however dimly, of this material while encountering the substitute, and as a result they coincide to the subject. The substitute's aim of taking the place of the repressed

material becomes visible when that repressed material appears alongside the substitute, as it allows the subject to recognize their similarities, similarities brought about by the work of displacement. This accounts for the uncanny's sense of revealing what should have stayed hidden, as the subject at once encounters the hidden thing and the work that went into hiding it in the form of the substitute. A particularly illustrative example is that of the double, which for Freud originally served as "an insurance against the destruction of the ego" ("Uncanny" 235). What should be added to this account is that the feared destruction of the ego stems from a fear of punishment for the autoeroticism implicit in infantile narcissism. In the double, the child projects the source of this illicit enjoyment, their own body, outward, the double a substitute serving as both an expression and a denial of the forbidden, preserving the enjoyment while attributing it to someone else. Yet, the double's resemblance to the child's own self betrays its origin, harkening back to the body that it was supposed to replace. In the uncanny, the offending material and the demand it be hidden sit alongside each other without the one negating the other. It is this coincidence of the substitute and the original material that distinguishes the uncanny from other instances of the repressed returning: when Hans fears horses, it is his repressed oedipal feelings coming back; if, however, this fear were to remind him of the fear of his father and thus making him dimly aware of the horse's status as substitute for his father, his experience would be an uncanny one. The importance of this distinction lies in the subject's experience of the substitute. The return of the repressed leaves the line between the subject and the substitute intact, Hans firmly distinct from the horses, to which the boy is just overreacting; the uncanny, on the other hand, reveals the substitute to be a

product of the subject's own psyche, thus undermining any such clear separation between the subject and their world.

The uncanny, as an instance of original and substitute coexisting, would seem as nothing so much as an instance of dream-logic, given that “the dream has a very striking way of dealing with the categories of *opposites* and *contradictions*. This is simply disregarded. To the dream ‘No’ does not seem to exist. In particular, it prefers to draw opposites together into a unity or represent them as one” (*ID* 243). In the dream, negation does not exist, with elements at odds with each other coexisting and conflating, the dream's imagery the result of this melding together of the repressed and that which seeks to hide it. In contrast to the symptom in waking life, which uses the substitute to obscure repressed material, the dream creates substitutes that acknowledge the presence of the repressed material behind them even as they seek to cover it up. Freud illustrates this with an example from the dream of one of his patients, in which “the dreamer is climbing over a railing. As she does so, she is holding a branch of blossom in her hands,” recalling angels carrying tall lilies in images of the Annunciation and thus associated with virginity. At the same time, “the branch is covered with red blossoms, each one resembling a camellia,” a flower traditionally symbolizing passion and desire, in addition to the color red's associations with menstruation and the coming of sexual maturity. “The same blossoming branch,” Freud concludes, “represents both sexual innocence and its opposite. The same dream, too, which expresses her joy at going through life immaculate, in some places allows the opposite train of thought-- that she had been guilty of various sins against sexual purity (in childhood, that is)-- to shimmer through” (*ID* 243). The dream creates its images by combining the forbidden with what is meant to obscure the

forbidden, the dreamer's suppressed sexual desires and her attachment to the chastity keeping them at bay coexisting in the branch, the two coalescing rather than negating one another. While Hans' horses suppress any trace of the repressed material, save for its emotional valence, the dream-image of the flowers betrays the repressed even as it seeks to cover it over. The uncanny is this dream-logic of combination intruding into waking life, the substitute, like the dreamer's blossom branch, referring at once to what is hidden and that which does the hiding. The presence of this dream-logic helps account for the feeling of unreality associated with the uncanny, the dream-like quality of the uncanny object out of place within the daylight world of waking rationality.

The loss of distinction between subject and object, between dreaming and waking, would seem to make the uncanny similar to the notion of "the abject" as laid out by Julia Kristeva in her seminal *The Powers of Horror*. For Kristeva, the abject is a keen disgust before "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4), a revulsion at the presence of something that undermines the rules and laws that promise to keep the subject separate from the raw stuff of life that would otherwise overwhelm it. Experiencing the abject means that, for the subject, "the clean and proper (in the sense of incorporated and incorporable), becomes filthy, the sought after turns into the banished, fascination into shame" (8), desire is reversed, turning into its opposite, and transforming the desired into the dreaded. The cause of this reversal is the experience of "jouissance," the enjoyment beyond pleasure that threatens to overwhelm the subject and dissolve any distinction between them and the object (9). The desired becomes the obtrusive, disgusting thing, the abject, and the subject will seek to reject it to recover their separateness from it and from the world. As such, "abjection preserves what existed in the

archaism of the pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be” (10). Abjection endangers the subject’s tenuous freedom, threatening to return them to the state of suffocating unity before the maternal body is recognized as something separate, the mother’s body being the first true object in the child’s world. The precise distinction between the abject and the uncanny is most clear when Kristeva notes “I experience abjection only if an Other has settled in place and stead of what will be ‘me’”(10), while, on the other hand, the subject experiences the uncanny when they find themselves, their own mind at work, in the place where they expected the other. The double is uncanny rather than abject because the subject’s own psyche looks back, in this instance quite literally, from where they expected someone or something beyond themselves. Although they both feature a blurring between subject and object, for the abject this is because the object subsumes the subject, whereas the uncanny sees the subject subsuming the object. In this sense, the uncanny is something akin to a feeling of vertigo, a loss of solid ground brought on by the subject’s revelation that their seemingly stable, reliable world is indeed the result of the roiling forces of their own psyche.

It is not surprising that the uncanny, emerging as it does out of an over-estrangement of the substitute, would permeate a society characterized by alienation. Deprived of their familiarity by capitalism’s disassociation of the subject and object, substitutes are more apt to become estranged enough to alert the subject to the unconscious forces attached to the substitute. Marx’s worker, denied anywhere the familiarity of home, will inevitably experience much of his world as “unhomelike,” the *unheimlich* bound to crop up as a result. The historical conditions of capitalism are

particularly conducive to the psychic conditions of the uncanny, resulting in an endemic uncanniness to any life under capitalism.

**The Reason of Sleep Produces Monsters:
“The Sandman”**

Freud, like Jentsch before him, sees the uncanny illustrated with particular vividness in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s classic short story, “The Sandman,” holding it up as a prime example of the *unheimlich* in literature. The reasons for this differ with each account of the uncanny: Freud attributes it to the story’s ability to evoke repressed oedipal urges, while Pascarelli traces its sense of the *unheimlich* to its depiction of technology. My own contention is that the story achieves its uniquely uncanny feel by forcing the main character to confront his own sexual urges and the work his psyche has undertaken to repress them, the Sandman emerging as a substitute who nevertheless reveals what he is intended to hide.

The story centers on Nathanael, a young student haunted by dark and bizarre memories from childhood involving “The Sandman,” a mysterious figure of legend who is said to pluck the eyes from children. While attending university, Nathanael falls in love with the beautiful but strange Olympia, discovering only later that she is an automaton created in part by the Sandman. The story begins with an epistle where Nathanael relates the strange events of his youth, how the strike of nine o’clock would often be accompanied by his parents sending him to bed, with threats that the Sandman would punish him if he did not comply. Fascinated by the thought of such a figure, Nathanael sneaks into the study one night to find his father and the Sandman, revealed to be the

repulsive family acquaintance Coppelius, standing next to each other before a strange hearth. For Nathanael,

“His [Coppelius’] entire appearance was repellant and disgusting; but we children had a particular aversion to his big, gnarled, hairy hands, and anything touched by them ceased at once to be appetizing. Once he noticed this, he took delight in finding some pretext for fingering a piece of cake or fruit that our kind mother had surreptitiously put on our plates, so that our loathing and disgust prevented us, with tears in our eyes, from enjoying the titbit that was supposed to give us pleasure.” (89)

Coppelius is shown here as constantly obstructing Nathanael and his siblings’ chances for enjoyment, interceding between them and the objects of desire before them. Standing in the way of enjoyment specifically from their mother, Coppelius appears an oedipal figure for the children, further evidenced by their revulsion from this enjoyment, implying that they have renounced their desire for it at the behest of some paternal figure and now regard it with a queasy disdain. The focus on Coppelius’ use of his hands to dissuade the children is relevant, as it likely refers to corporal punishment as a means of enforcing paternal restrictions on pleasure. Given this paternal air, it makes sense Freud would interpret this Sandman as an oedipal figure whose presence stokes lingering anxieties that he sees as the source of the story’s uncanniness. For him, “the feeling of something uncanny is directly attached to the figure of the Sand Man, that is, to the idea of being robbed of one’s eyes,” and since “anxiety about one’s eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated,” the Sandman achieves his

uncanny effect by reminding one of “the dreaded father at whose hands castration was expected” (“Uncanny” 230-2). Once repressed, castration anxiety now returns in the guise of the Sandman, the fear produced a familiar one. Yet, it should be observed that Coppelius is not a solemn, austere figure of paternal power, as Freud conceives of him, but one who takes direct and sadistic enjoyment in denying his children these pleasures. Rather than a stern and staid father figure, Coppelius represents the “obscene father” of oedipal fantasy, one who selfishly hoards enjoyment and denies his children out of a cruel glee at their deprivation and pain. This obscene father does not simply punish children to limit their enjoyment but to increase his own.

His obscenity is on full display when Coppelius, upon discovering the boy, lays his hands on him, Nathanael relating that

“he seized me so hard that my joints made a cracking noise, dislocating my hands and feet, and put them back in various sockets. ‘They don’t fit properly! It was all right as it was! The Old Man knew what he was doing!’ hissed and muttered Coppelius; but everything went black and dim before my eyes, a sudden convulsion shot through my nerves and my frame, and I felt nothing more.” (90-1)

Coppelius’s interest in Nathanael’s body parts is strange, given that he has already agreed to spare the boy’s eyes, which are the Sandman’s main concern. While for Freud “this singular feature, which seems quite outside the picture of the Sandman, introduces a new castration equivalent” (“Uncanny” n 232), this act of dismemberment symbolizing castration, Nathanael’s response, however, hints at another explanation, the boy’s

experience of seeing “black and dim before [his] eyes” before feeling “a sudden convulsion,” an essentially orgasmic one, implying an intense masochistic pleasure at Coppelius’ hands. That these hands belong to a figure of paternal power speaks to the masochistic fantasies of punishment by his father at work in Nathanael’s enjoyment; the same hands that serve as a check on oedipal pleasure become themselves a source of pleasure when turned on the boy to punish him. Freud notes that children frequently develop fixations on being beaten, stemming from the child’s internalizing their father’s punishment of a sibling. Initially gratified simply at being shown preference by the father by not being punished, the child comes to take sexual enjoyment in the beating scene when they imagine this punishment turned on themselves out of guilt over taboo erotic attachments. Or, as Laplanche notes, “the sadomasochistic sexual drive, the enjoyment of pain, has its origin in the masochistic phase, but on the basis of a turning round of a primary heteroaggression” (*Life and Death* 91). The child imagines themselves as the target of such a punishment to atone for sexual transgressions, sexualizing the punishment in turn. In such beating fantasies, Freud detects a dual purpose, in which “being beaten is now a convergence of the sense of guilt and sexual love. It is not only the punishment for the forbidden genital relation, but also the regressive substitute for that relation” (‘A Child’ 189). The punishment for enjoyment becomes itself a source of enjoyment, a shift made possible by the subject reverting back to when sexual pleasure was not necessarily tied to the genitals, but could be felt in the body’s erogenous zones independently of and separate from one another. In the beating fantasy, these other body parts are alone stimulated while the genitals are avoided, the subject receiving pleasure while remaining safe from any forbidden contact. Nathanael’s experience of

dismemberment while in Coppelius' grasp reflects his regression to the less integrated, more diffuse pleasure provided by the beating fantasy, the aroused areas enjoyed in isolation, without reference to his other parts. Coppelius' gleeful sadism in his handling of the boy thus appears as a projection of the boy's fervent desire to be beaten by such a figure. This also helps explain Coppelius' otherwise cryptic statement that "the Old Man knew what he was doing!," as reflecting the beating fantasy's blend of guilt and pleasure, the rightness of paternal authority ("the Old Man" an obvious reference to a father figure) asserted even as the scene is permeated with illicit enjoyment.

Coppelius emerges here as a substitute for Nathanael's father, the incestuous desires and masochistic fantasies the boy has about his father displaced onto Coppelius, no doubt accounting for Nathanael's discomfort around him. The boy, to his horror, gains some inkling of this fact, Nathanael recounting that, just before his being discovered, "as my old father bent down to the fire, he looked quite different. A horrible, agonizing convulsion seemed to have contorted his gentle, honest face into the hideous, repulsive mask of a fiend. He looked like Coppelius" (90). In looking like Coppelius, Nathanael's father reveals himself as the true Coppelius, as the taboo origin of Nathanael's masochistic fantasies, the "horrible, agonizing convulsion" on his father's face speaking to the presence of the sadistic pleasure Nathanael had attributed to his father's shadowy colleague. Witnessing his father's strange visage, Nathanael gets a potent reminder of the incestuous desires he had repressed; at the same time, this resemblance to Coppelius also alerts the boy to the displacement that has taken place, Coppelius suddenly looking like Nathanael's father attesting to the boy Coppelius' role as a substitute for his father. Standing in the study, Nathanael confronts his forbidden desires and his own psyche's

attempts to hide those desires from him manifested before him, the vision a deeply uncanny one.

This revelation has a decidedly dream-like quality, as it is made possible by the seeming encroachment of dream-logic into a waking event, the condensation of Coppelius with Nathanael's father acknowledging a secret connection between the two. The blurred line between dreaming and waking can be seen throughout this episode, from its taking place after the child's bedtime to its conclusion, when Nathanael comes awake after being manhandled, "a warm, gentle breath passed over my face, and I awoke from a death-like sleep; my mother was bending over me" (91), the boy awakening as though everything before had been some unsettling nightmare. What occurred in the study is thus granted something of an uncertain status, not clearly an objective event, yet not entirely attributable to the fevered workings of the character's mind either; rather, the uncanny scene exists as a murky conflation of both, psyche and reality combined and indistinguishable.

Freud observes that beating fantasies such as Nathanael's tend to undergo a change, morphing from a scene of the subject being beaten to one of the subject witnessing the beating of another, this other serving as the subject's substitute. Thus altered, the fantasy "arouses activities of the imagination which on the one hand continue the phantasy along the same line, and on the other hand neutralize it through compensation" ('A Child' 195), the subject free to enjoy their masochism vicariously through another, therefore escaping the guilt associated with such enjoyment. When, years later, Nathanael enters his beloved Olimpia's bedroom to find that "the Professor had seized a female figure by the shoulders, while the Italian Coppola was holding it by

the feet, and both were tugging at it for dear life, while quarrelling violently over it. Nathanael started back, filled with deep horror, on recognizing the figure as Olimpia” (113-4), what he encounters is his childhood beating fantasy in altered form. Coppola, the most recent guise of the demonic Coppelius, is manhandling the girl much as he had Nathanael, with the Professor, Olimpia’s “father,” doing the same, again becoming evidence that a displacement has occurred, Coppola’s role as a father-replacement made clear by their similarity. In the middle of this scene, however, Olimpia has assumed Nathanael’s role, experiencing the beating in his stead. While for Pascarelli the revelation that Olimpia is a machine symbolizes how Nathanael has been duped by technology, the sight of her disjointed parts when “Coppelius then threw the figure over his shoulder and rushed downstairs with a frightful yell of laughter, so that the figure’s feet, which were hanging down in an unsightly way, gave a wooden rattling and rumbling as they knocked against the steps” (114), would seem more likely to remind Nathanael of the pleasurable disassembly he enjoyed at Coppelius’ hands, his pleasure now taken on by her. Contrary to Freud, for whom “the automatic doll can be nothing else than the materialization of Nathanael’s feminine attitude toward his father in his infancy” (“Uncanny” n 232), Olimpia in his reading representing Nathanael’s emasculation before his father, she would instead seem to evoke both Nathanael’s own masochistic fantasy and the way in which she functions as a substitute for him, hiding this fantasy from him. What Nathanael confronts in Olimpia’s bedroom is the way his feelings for her are shaped by the desires he has displaced onto her.

These desires are already at work when Nathanael meets Olimpia for the first time, the narrator, describing her appearance, notes “the slightly strange curve of her back

and the wasp-like slenderness of her waist seemed to be the result of excessive tightlacing” (108). The girl’s very figure is seen as marked by painful acts of constriction, her body seeming always constrained in a tight grasp. Looking bound, she cannot but spark sadistic and masochistic thoughts in those who see her. Nathanael would appear to be among them, while watching her perform at the piano, “he felt as though red-hot arms had suddenly seized him; unable to restrain himself, he shrieked out in agony and rapture: ‘Olimpia!’” (108-9). The “red-hot arms” would seem to recall his treatment by the infernal Coppélius, the “agony and rapture” he feels before Olimpia likened to the blend of pleasure and pain of being in Coppélius’ grasp; through her, he can enjoy such masochism without having to be the direct target of any torture.

Olimpia’s place in Nathanael’s fantasy life helps explain their rather strange interaction as they take their first dance. After Olimpia’s performance,

“when the dance had already begun he found himself standing close to Olimpia, who had not yet been asked for a dance, and, scarcely able to stammer out a few words, he seized her hand.

Olimpia’s hand was ice-cold: a shudder went through him like a hideous, deadly frost. He stared into Olimpia’s eyes, which beamed at him full of love and yearning, and at that moment a pulse seemed to begin beating in her cold hand and her life’s blood to flow in a glowing stream. Love and desire flared up in Nathanael’s heart; he embraced the fair Olimpia and flew with her through the ranks of the dancers” (109).

Nathanael surprises and takes hold of her, as if reenacting Coppélius' taking hold of him, to begin the dance. The dismay he feels at her cold, unresponsive hand can be thus understood as disappointment in her lack of any perceivable pleasure while in his hold. When discussing this distorted version of the beating fantasy, Freud offers the caveat that "only the form of this fantasy is sadistic; the satisfaction which is derived from it is masochistic" ('A Child' 191). The beating fantasy, even as the punishment is turned on another, is not properly sadistic, as it is not the infliction of pain but the second-hand enjoyment of that pain which is the source of pleasure. Nathanael grasps Olimpia not to enjoy hurting her but to enjoy her enjoyment of his grasp, and thus feels dejected when she seems unresponsive and inert in his hands. It is only with the reassurance offered by Olimpia's longing gaze that he can take pleasure in his contact with her, the warm life starting to course through her in fact the heat of Nathanael's desire now stoked. This desire drives him to continue his grasp on her, pulling her onto the dance floor in order to further indulge in the sight of her luxuriating in his hold. The scene in Olimpia's bedroom makes this dynamic explicit, as it not only reminds Nathanael of his repressed beating fantasy, but makes him aware that this fantasy has been displaced onto his beloved Olimpia in an attempt to hide it. In doing so, the scene achieves a sense of uncanniness by its dream-like combination of substitute with what it was meant to substitute for, Olimpia becoming part of the fantasy she was supposed to obscure and negate.

This reading of "The Sandman" brings to light two crucial points. Firstly, the uncanny scene does not function in isolation, but relies on facts of the character's psyche established elsewhere in the work. The uncanniness of what Nathanael witnesses in Olimpia's bedroom is only understood by connecting this scene back to his childhood

encounter with Coppélius. The details of the scene are not alone enough to account for its uncanniness, the way these details relate to other scenes required for any understanding. The tendency to overestimate the importance of technology creating the uncanny feeling in “The Sandman,” such as in Pascarelli’s reading, can be seen as stemming from an inadequate appreciation of this, Olympia’s rattling joints taken at face-value as machinery, rather than a reference back to Nathanael’s sexual development. Moments of the *unheimlich* do not exist independently within the larger work, but result from their position in the work’s structure.

Secondly, these moments of uncanniness, understood as expressions of a character’s unconscious, undermine any clear distinction between the character’s psyche and their physical surroundings; Nathanael being manhandled is his repressed fantasy made flesh, confronting him with a glimpse of the inner workings of his own mind. The uncanniness brought on by a character’s recognition, however dim, of their own psychic forces roiling their normally stable surroundings creates a node within the text where any separation between the character and their world vanishes. This second point explains how the uncanny emerges as a possible remedy to the problem that alienation causes the artwork: in conflating the mental and material lives of a given character, the uncanny offers a means of creating coherence between them, momentarily overcoming the gulf imposed between them by the forces of modernity. At the same time, springing from these same forces, the uncanny does not involve any betrayal of the artwork’s connection to contemporary life, but rather reinforces it; rather than offering coherence against alienation, it promises a coherence within alienation. It is for this reason that that uncanny can take on an important structural role in certain literary works of the early twentieth

century, at a time when literature was being asked to address a world that was increasingly inaesthetic.

In the following chapters, this structural role will be further examined, first in the works of D.H. Lawrence, then in the short stories of Katherine Mansfield. The Lawrence chapter will argue that his posthumously published novella, *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, can be seen as reworking his novel *The Rainbow* in a way that emphasizes the uncanny in the place of the earlier novel's more expressionist-inspired search for beauty. In the Mansfield chapter, her development as a short story writer will be traced, as she comes to embrace the uncanny by the end of her career. In both of these cases, the authors in question come to the uncanny as a means of depicting modern, alienated life without sacrificing the structural coherence of their works. Paying attention to these writers' use of the uncanny allows critics to better grasp the ways their works are responses to unique aesthetic challenges of modernity, furthering the appreciation of these works as dynamic products of a rapidly changing world.

**Chapter 2:
The Flood and the Rainbow:
D.H. Lawrence's Uses of the Uncanny**

Introduction

In the epilogue to his *Movements in European History*, D.H. Lawrence reflects on the recently concluded First World War, stating mournfully that, “the war, now called the Great War, came in 1914, and smashed the growing tip of European Civilization” (*MEH* 255). Yet, the mass destruction of the war is for Lawrence the symptom of much deeper societal problems plaguing the industrialized world, asserting that, “if we continue in our ideal of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, liberty for every man and every nation to get as much as he can for himself, equality of opportunity for every sharp and unscrupulous man or nation to get the better of the more honest or less shrewd man or nation, then there is bound to come more war, many more wars” (*MEH* 258). The cause of conflicts like the Great War, according to Lawrence, is to be found in the prevalence of capitalist competition that has dominated societies since at least the great bourgeois revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries¹, the constant jostling for advantage in the market inevitably building to a crescendo of outright warfare. Because of this general discord, “nations are slowly strangling one another in ‘competition.’ The cancer of finance spreads through the body of mankind. Individuals are diseased with the same disease. To get money, to spend money, nothing else remains. And with it goes all the strangling and the bullying and the degradation, the sense of humiliation, and the worthlessness of life, which is the bitterest of all” (*MEH* 266). Set against one another

¹The notion of “bourgeois revolution” is used here as it is defined by Alex Callinicos, who describes them as “political transformations which facilitate the capitalist mode of production” (Callinicos), most often used in reference to events like the English and French revolutions which were waged against feudal hierarchy and privilege.

with no higher goal to aim for than success in the market, these modern subjects appear to Lawrence to be condemned to live without meaning, since there is no room in such a competition to consider loftier, more fulfilling goals. To remedy this state of affairs, Lawrence encourages the upcoming generation to disregard such competition and seek out instead meaningful connection in their own lives, stating that, “every youth, every girl can make the great historical change inside himself or herself: to care supremely for nothing but the spark of *noblesse* that is in him and in her, and to follow the only leader who is the star of the new, *natural noblesse*” (MEH 266, emphasis original). For Lawrence, it is up to the young to try to find the inherently meaningful, and thus ennobling, in life and ignore the demands of competition.

This admonishment occupies a great deal of Lawrence’s fiction, depicting as it often does the struggle of a young protagonist to overcome the alienation of modern existence and forge some sort of meaningful connection with the world in which they live. In these works, the character’s experience of finally achieving meaningful contact with their world is central to the work’s structure, drawing as it does the various parts of the narrative such as character and setting together into a single coherent point. Yet, the precise way Lawrence makes this connection between the young character and their world varies across his career, Paul Morel’s artistic appreciation of the world in *Sons and Lovers* a far cry from Mabel’s slyly erotic engagement with hers in “The Horse Dealer’s Daughter.” This abundance of different methods, I would assert, is the result of Lawrence experimenting with ways around the dilemma of depicting life in the discordant, alienating world of capitalist competition while allowing his characters to resist this discord enough to find the meaningful *natural noblesse* in their own lives. One such

method is his use of the uncanny to bridge the divide between alienated subjects and an alienating society, perhaps best seen in the novella *The Virgin and the Gipsy* (1930), whose surreal conclusion sets an experience of the *unheimlich* as the central joint connecting the narrative's various themes and images. This is in contrast to Lawrence's uses of the uncanny elsewhere, including as something to be avoided and overcome by the characters, as seen in his novel *The Rainbow* (1915). The change in the position of the uncanny within the narrative seen here reflects Lawrence's desire to move away from the style embodied in *The Rainbow*, specifically its Expressionist use of abstraction, and find a new mode of narrative expression better suited to the society he sought to depict. By suffusing the novella's climactic scene with a sense of the uncanny, Lawrence achieves coherence between his alienated character and her world, conflating her psychic and material realities, while also avoiding the abstraction of *The Rainbow*.

In order to better grasp the differences in these uses in the uncanny within the structure of a narrative, this chapter will begin with a close reading of *The Virgin and the Gipsy* to establish just how it generates and utilizes the *unheimlich*. Afterwards, the novella will be compared to *The Rainbow*, with a particular focus on scenes that are similar to those found in the novella but which nevertheless have a much different relationship to the uncanny. Following this comparison, the chapter will conclude with a brief consideration of what it means for the understanding of how Lawrence's criticism of modernity found expression not only in the content but also the structure of his prose.

“Listen to the voice of the water”: *The Virgin and the Gipsy*

Written in early 1926 but only published after Lawrence’s death in 1930 (Jones 116), *The Virgin and the Gipsy* straddles genres by combining the realistic and the fanciful. Joseph Allan Boone, for instance, notes that “the novella assumes the aura of a fairy tale, its plot suffused with a timeless, dream-like quality” (96), a notion echoed by Michael Bell, who states that the story contains fairy tale elements but, “rather than the story being a fable as such, it sets a fabulous episode within, and against, the reality it has established as normative within the world of the story” (59), emphasizing how the narrative follows at moments the conventions of realistic fiction, while at others gives way to the fantastical. These shifts in genre are the consequence of the narrative’s embrace of the uncanny, with the instances of apparent fairy-tale logic the result of a conflation between a character’s psyche and the material reality.

The novella follows Yvette Saywell, a young woman who has just returned with her older sister Lucille from school on the continent to their Midlands home, a rectory held by their father. This home is shared with their extended family, and dominated by their paternal grandmother, referred to as “The Mater,” described as “one of those physically vulgar, clever old bodies who had got her own way her all her life by buttering the weaknesses of her men-folk” (*VG* 6). Their father, the Rector, has remained single since Cynthia, “his unrestrained and beautiful wife” (*VG* 5) and the girls’ mother, abandoned the family to run off with her young, penniless lover; in her absence, the Rector insists on maintaining an idealized image of his ex-wife, an image of her as a “pure white snow flower [that] bloomed *in perpetuum*” (*VG* 6, emphasis original). Anything that disturbs either the Mater’s hold on the house or the Rector’s image of

Cynthia is not allowed, resulting in a quietly crushing atmosphere that Yvette will spend the novella resisting, until the house is finally washed away in a sudden flood.

At first glance, the Mater appears to harken back to ancient figures of female power, an archaic remnant of some primitive, matriarchal religion, to which the rest of the family are devotees. For instance, Boone describes her as “this grotesque relic... associated with rank materiality, mat(t)er in its most chthonic, nonproductive state. As such, Lawrence’s Mater-- as her name also implies-- forms a debased version of the archetypal Magna Mater of ancient religion” (99). Yet, this interpretation seems undermined by the admission of the fact that, rather than being elemental and enduring, the Mater’s position in the rectory is both recent and tenuous, the narrator noting that the Mater had, before Cynthia left, “been somewhat diminished and insignificant as a widow in a small house,” and that “if She-who-was-Cynthia ever came back, there wouldn’t be much left of the Mater” (*VG* 6-7). The Mater took her place of prominence only after Cynthia had fled and would not be able to maintain it if she returned. The Mater can only flourish when Cynthia is gone because she represents the thing that the Rector’s idealized image of his wife cannot admit, her selfishness. The narrator notes that, with Cynthia gone, “the peculiarly *dangerous* sort of selfishness, like lions and tigers, was also gone” (*VG* 7, emphasis original), replaced by the harmless image of a snow flower. This selfishness returns in the figure of the Mater, who bends those around her to her will, the narrator noting that, “under her old-fashioned lace cap, under her silver hair, under the black silk of her stout, forward-bulging body, this old woman had a cunning heart, seeking forever her own female power” (*VG* 8). Like Cynthia, the Mater’s primary concern is with her self and her own happiness over others’. To keep his “pure” image of

Cynthia, the Rector must repress this attribute, displacing this selfishness onto the Mater. Taking on this feature that the Rector cannot accept in his memories of his wife, the Mater makes his sanitized version of Cynthia possible. If Cynthia were to return, the Mater's position in the house would end as the Rector's pure picture of his wife would neither be possible nor necessary, with the Mater losing her *raison d'être*.

Cynthia's selfishness has been displaced onto the Mater, but not without undergoing a transformation: instead of tearing families apart as Cynthia's did, being the "dangerous sort of selfishness," the Mater's is more palatable to the Rector as it limits itself to those within the family, and thus allows the family to remain intact. For example, the Mater justifies her demand that her daughter Cissie sleep in bed with her with reference to her devotion to her late husband, stating that, "for fifty-four years I never slept a night without the Pater's arm round me. And when he was gone, I tried to sleep alone. But as sure as my eyes closed to sleep, my heart nearly jumped out of my body, and I lay in palpitation" (*VG* 13). The Mater here does not claim Cissie's comfort for her own sake, but because she is still so committed to her late husband, unable to bear his absence. While Cynthia's selfishness meant coming into conflict with her duties as wife, the Mater's are enacted through these duties, getting what she wants from Cissie by invoking her continued fidelity to her husband. Yet, by expressing her selfishness through and toward her family, invoking her husband to gain the comfort of her daughter, she is driven to exercise increasing control over them, so that they will meet her desires. As a result, the Mater becomes the "devouring mother," the figure of a mother who threatens her children's autonomy by her need to possess and dominate them, to integrate them into her own self, a fear stems from the infant's anxiety at being dependent on their mother for

the pleasures of sustenance and the lack of active agency that implies (Freud, "Female" 237). The Mater can be seen as such a devouring mother when the narrator states that "the family was her own extended ego. Naturally, she covered it with her power. And her sons and daughters, being weak and disintegrated, were naturally loyal" (*VG* 9). The Mater's narcissism does not allow her to recognize her children as separate and independent of her, but instead as merely appendages of herself that exist to serve her will. This is further evidenced when the narrator notes that "[the Mater] was like the old toad Yvette had watched, fascinated, as it sat on the ledge of the beehive, immediately in front of the little entrance by which the bees emerged, and which, with a demonish lightening-like snap of its pursed jaws, caught every bee as it came out to launch into the air" (*VG* 16), marking her as a figure of ravenous consumption who seeks to swallow up those around her. The devouring mother is also an abject figure, as the suffocating lack of distance between her body and the subject makes that body and its pleasures disgusting. When the narrator states that, "she was perfectly complacent, sitting in her ancient obesity, and after meals, getting the wind from her stomach, pressing her bosom with her hand as she 'rifted' in gross physical complacency" (*VG* 13-4), her pleasures are made repulsive as her body encroaches on others with its expanding girth and its emissions, her overwhelming presence resulting in feelings of abjection.

Given that everyone and everything in the house is subjected to the Mater's open and unabashed enjoyment, it is unsurprising that the house itself becomes abject as well, the narrator stating that, "the hard, stone house struck the girls as being unclean, they could not have said why. The shabby furniture seemed somehow sordid, nothing was fresh" (*VG* 12-3). The house feels tainted to the daughters, not due to anything objective,

but rather by its complicity in the vulgar pleasure of their grandmother. As everything is thus imbued with the Mater's desires, there is no room for their own, leaving the girls feeling alienated from the rectory. This is well illustrated when Yvette attempts to open a window in the living room, since "the room was never fresh, she imagined it smelt: smelt of granny." In response, the Mater says to Yvette that, "I think you might remember there are older people than yourself in the room," adding that the window will let in "a draught to give us all our death," before the Rector comes over and shuts the window at the Mater's behest (*VG* 13), Yvette's desire for fresh air overridden by the Mater's for stuffy warmth. The Mater's enjoyment takes precedence over everyone else's, leaving them smothering in her inescapable presence while their own desires remain cut off from finding any expression in their surroundings. The result is a feeling of detachment and alienation, exemplified by Yvette's thoughts one night sitting at the rectory's dinner table, the narrator noting, "dimly, at the back of her mind, she was thinking: Why are we all only like mortal pieces of furniture? Why is nothing *important*?" (*VG*, 40, emphasis original). Human beings appear like commodities to her: lifeless, interchangeable, without relevance, reflecting their lack of meaningful connection to her wants and desires.

The remedy to this alienation begins, counterintuitively, with a separation. On an excursion through the countryside, Yvette and her friends come across a Romani encampment, and decide to have their fortunes told by a woman there. As Yvette awaits her turn, she notices a handsome man, the palm-reader's husband, looking at her from the caravan, the narrator stating, "the gipsy man at the top of the steps stood imperturbable, without any expression at all. But his bold eyes kept starring at Yvette, she could feel

them on her cheek, on her neck, and she dared not look up,” leaving her, “abstracted, agitated, hardly heeding: in one of her mesmerised states” (*VG* 23). This man is obviously attracted to Yvette, a feeling Yvette would seem to reciprocate, as evidenced by her “agitated” and “mesmerised” response. This attraction helps explain her sudden hesitation, the narrator noting that, “when it came to Yvette’s turn, and the woman looked up boldly, cruelly, searching for a long time in her face. Yvette said nervously: ‘I don’t think I want mine told. No, I won’t have mine told! No I won’t, really!’” (*VG* 23), as she is afraid that the woman will discover her desire for her husband, fearing the jealousy of the woman looking “boldly, cruelly” at her. The woman responds to this hesitation by saying, “You have some secret? You are afraid I shall say it. Come, would you like to go in the caravan, where nobody hears?” (*VG* 23). By telling Yvette that she knows the girl has a secret, she communicates to Yvette that she is aware of her feelings for her husband and that the girl’s reluctance is an attempt to keep the older woman from discovering these illicit desires. Her offer to take her into the caravan suggests to Yvette that these desires should indeed remain hidden, and she should not reveal them to her compatriots or, more importantly, to the man. In agreeing to do so, Yvette is agreeing to hide from woman’s husband her passion for him, thus keeping her desires from coming to fruition, even as she is confessing them to the palm-reader. Yet, even as she directs Yvette to obscure her desires, the woman nevertheless acknowledges them and their potential to disrupt the woman’s married life, Yvette’s desires granted a reality and power that they could never find in the rectory, where they are crowded out by the Mater’s.

This interpretation gains support in Lawrence’s description of the Saywell girls and their friends just before they encounter the Romani camp, stating

Yet they had a peaked look too. After all, they had nothing really to rebel against, any of them. They were left so free in their movements. Their parents let them do almost entirely what they liked. There wasn't really a fetter to break, nor a prison bar to file through, nor a bolt to shatter. The keys of their lives were in their own hands. And there they dangled inert... If there had only been a few 'strict order' to be disobeyed! But nothing... (*VG 17*)

Yvette and her friends are free to do whatever they want, but, because of this, there are at the same time no consequences for anything they do, leaving them feeling that their liaisons are ultimately meaningless. Since the world already allows them to pursue their desires, this pursuit cannot as a result change the world, making it impossible for them to leave their mark on their world no matter what they do. Their freedom, the simple absence of interference, leaves them disconnected from their world, and is ultimately only the hollow freedom of alienation. The purposelessness of their passions results in a passionless malaise taking hold, the narrator noting that "they could really do as they liked. And so, of course, there was nothing to do but sit in the car and talk a lot of criticism of other people, and silly flirty gallantry that was really rather a bore" (*VG 17*), the ultimate meaninglessness of their pursuits removing any urgency from pursuing much of anything. Yvette, however, escapes this when her arousal is recognized by the Romani woman, her jealousy alluding to the possibility that her desires could have some real effect on the wider world.

The promise of, for once, seeing her desires reflected in her surroundings draws Yvette back to the camp, this time alone. Immediately upon her arrival, she is reminded

of the palm-reader's warning to repress her feelings for the Romani man. Finding an old woman cooking stew over a fire, Yvette asks if dinner is being prepared, to which she answers, "Dinner, yes!'...'For him! And for the children!' she pointed with the long fork at the three black-eyed, staring children, who were staring at her from under their black fringe" (*VG* 45). The old woman, who is suspicious at Yvette's approach, answers the girl in a way that emphasizes the fact that she is not welcome ("For him," as if to say, not for you) and draws attention to the children produced by the man's marriage, who would likely be impacted by any infidelity. The palm-reader's injunction lingers even in her absence, the camp permeated with her call for Yvette to repress her attraction to the man. The camp's association with repression helps explain the uncanniness that marks Yvette's interactions with the man while she is in it. When Yvette sits around the fire with the man, the narrator notes that "her will had departed from her limbs, he had power over her: his shadow was on her" (*VG* 46), before going on to state that,

On her face was that tender look of sleep, which a nodding flower has when it is full out, like a mysterious early flower, she was full out, like a snowdrop, which spreads its three white wings in a flight into the waking sleep of its brief blossoming. The waking sleep of her full-opened virginity, entranced like a snowdrop in the sunshine, was upon her... the childlike, sleep-waking eyes of her moment of perfect virginity looked into his, unseeing. She was only aware of the dark, strange effluence of him bathing her limbs, washing her at last purely will-less. She was aware of *him*, as a dark, complete power (*VG* 46-7, emphasis original).

Yvette experiences the man as exercising some strange control over her, as though he as taken over her will. This coincides with an acknowledgement of her desire for him, the narrator noting, “the dark, strange effluence of him bathing her limbs,” attesting to Yvette’s physical excitement in his presence. Yet, within the camp, with its reminders that she avoid these feelings, Yvette wants to deny this attraction, which leads her to reverse it, turning her desire for him into his desire for her. Yvette’s turning around of her own desire back on herself, in the process attributing it to him, is evidenced in the focus on the luridness of his gazing at her, as when he is “looking at her cheek, that was still blanched by the cold, and at the soft hair over her reddened ear, and the long, still mottled hands on her knee” (*VG* 45). Her desire to look at him has been transformed into his desire to look at her, while preserving her enjoyment, Freud noting that “the exhibitionist shares in the enjoyment of [the sight of] his exposure” because “the essence of the process [of turning a desire back on oneself] is thus the change of the object, while the aim remains unchanged” (*IV* 127), the act still enjoyable to the subject even when it is displaced onto another. The excitement Yvette experiences before the man’s “strange effluence” can thus be seen as her own desire to look turned around on herself. Having thus attributed her own desires to him, they seem to still belong to him even when she feels them, as though he had somehow replaced her will with his own. The feeling of being mesmerized, then, stems from Yvette experiencing this desire for him even as this desire has been displaced onto him, a coincidence of the repressed and its substitute, resulting in the encounter’s uncanniness. The narrator’s repeated description of Yvette as being in a “waking sleep” reflects this dynamic, as it is precisely in dreams that such coincidence of the repressed

and its substitute are common; when this dream logic finds itself in the waking world, it appears as the “waking sleep” of the uncanny.

Yvette’s “waking sleep” is explicitly tied to her sexual being, her “full-opened virginity,” this sexual being itself likened by the narrator to a snowdrop flower. The choice of image here is, of course, not innocent (no pun intended): it is precisely as a “snow-flower” that the Rector insists on remembering Yvette’s mother, as opposed to an image referencing her later impurity and adultery. Yet, the seeming irony of Yvette becoming like the purified image of her mother the moment she is taken by her own adulterous passion alludes to the ambivalence at work in that image from the beginning. After all, as the narrator notes, it is precisely as a snow-flower that the Rector perseveres, “the pure girl he had wedded and worshipped” (*VG* 6), Cynthia retaining her “purity,” or her virginity, within that image. Yet, as the “wedded and worshipped” implies, this is a virginity that is oriented toward its fulfillment in sexual experience; as a “snow-flower,” Cynthia remains forever untouched, and forever preparing to be touched. The Rector, in seeking to keep Cynthia as his snow-flower, keeps her at once pure and sexually available, speaking to his libidinal investment in the image. This double meaning inherent in flower imagery is something Lawrence is conscious of, mentioning in his tract *Pornography and Obscenity* the common practice of comparing young women to flowers, saying that, “she, poor thing, knows quite well that flowers, even lilies, have tipping yellow anthers and a sticky stigma, sex, rolling sex. But to the popular mind flowers are sexless things, and when a girl is told she is like a flower, it means she is sexless and ought to be sexless” (*LEA* 248). Flowers are at once highly sexual and spoken of as though entirely non-sexual, applied to the young in an attempt to render them non-

sexual as well. When the Rector thinks of Cynthia as a snow-flower, he is doing precisely this, treating an inherently sexual being as entirely devoid of passion, transforming the inherently sexual snow flower into something without such drives in order to do the same to Cynthia. However, as Lawrence is quick to point out, the same mind that conceives of the young woman as a sexless flower also takes perverse pleasure in that unacknowledged sexuality, stating, “*Du bist wie eine Blume, Jawohl!*”² One can see the elderly gentleman laying his hands on the head of the pure maiden and praying God to keep her forever so pure, so clean and beautiful. Very nice for him! Just pornography! tickling the dirty little secret and rolling his eyes to heaven” (LEA 246). This underside to the snow flower image, sexually-charged even while pure, only becomes clear in the novella when it is applied to Yvette in the camp; the use of the snow-flower/snowdrop for both Cynthia and Yvette not only reinforces the girl’s similarity to her mother, but it also reveals the disavowed eroticism at work in the image. In turning Yvette into a snowdrop when she experiences sexual desire, the narrator grants the same sexual desire to the supposedly sanitized image of Cynthia as snow flower. The Rector, in maintaining this image of Cynthia, is thus revealed as enjoying the hidden eroticism of his memories of his former wife even while disavowing it beneath the cover of the “pure” snow flower. In Yvette, this eroticism returns, attached to and imbuing the very flower-image meant to repress it, resulting in the uncanniness of that image, its dream-like, surreal quality.

Curiously, the novella interrupts this uncanny moment just as it is about to reach its culmination, with Yvette on the cusp of expressing her repressed desires for the man.

² The Cambridge Edition’s explanatory note states “The opening line of the poem (1825) by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) (Oh, you are like a flower! Yes, indeed!)” (LEA 366).

Yvette is invited into the man's caravan, under the guise of washing her hands, when the narrator notes, "she stood still at the foot of the steps. A motor-car was coming. He stood at the top of the steps, looking around strangely... Then they heard the cry of a woman's voice, and the brakes on the car. It had pulled up, just beyond the quarry" (*VG* 47). Yvette is just about to enter the place where her fantasies were hidden with the object of those fantasies, when she is suddenly and abruptly held back by the emergence of the Eastwoods. The wealthy soon-to-be Mrs. Eastwood has just recently left her husband, an engineer named Simon Fawcett, and is in the process of obtaining a divorce so that she can legally marry the much-younger, penniless Mr. Eastwood, a former army officer (*VG* 48-9), their situation nearly identical to that of Cynthia and her young paramour. The Eastwoods would then seem to be a reminder to Yvette of her mother's transgression and subsequent guilt, bringing to the girl's mind memories of the scandal resulting from infidelity as she herself veers close to adulterous passion. There is a crucial difference, however, between Cynthia and Mrs. Eastwood, in that, for Mrs. Eastwood, "the husband had agreed that she should have custody [of their two children], as soon as she was married to Eastwood," (*VG* 52). Unlike Yvette and Lucille, Mrs. Eastwood's children will not be left with their father, feeling abandoned by and vaguely guilty for their mother's flight. The marriage to Mr. Eastwood is enough for Mr. Fawcett to deem her suitable to raise the children, returning them to her as soon as the couple is wed. Given this, it would appear that the Eastwoods are not simply a reminder of Cynthia and her lover, but represent for Yvette the fantasy of her mother restored to respectability by her marriage to her lover and returning to rescue her and her sister from the deprivations of life in the rectory. In the image of the Eastwoods, Yvette sees her mother's illicit liaisons re-

inscribed within the realm of conventional domesticity, a domesticity that offers a place for both she and Lucille to escape the abjection and humiliation of the Saywell household.

Breathing life into this fantasy is the time that Yvette spends in the Eastwoods' cozy little cottage, a site of convivial and orderly domesticity, wherein "the major drank beer from a silver mug, the little Jewess and Yvette had champagne in lovely glasses, then the major brought in coffee... as the afternoon drew on, they went to the kitchen, the major pushed back his sleeves, showing his powerful athletic white arms, and carefully, deftly washed the dishes, while the women wiped" (*VG* 52-3). Within the confines of the cottage, there is a warmth and harmony that feels to Yvette like scenes from a lost childhood, one far removed from the squalid, oppressive realities of the rectory. In her time with the Eastwoods, Yvette glimpses what appears like a paradise that never was, where her mother's actions are reconciled with marital life and that marital life takes the form of a comfortable home life available to the Saywell daughters. The glamour of this fantasy is reflected in the very physical surroundings of the cottage, the narrator's description noting the "strange curving cupboards inlaid with mother of pearl, tortoiseshell, ebony, heaven knows what else," the "strange tall flamboyant chairs, from Italy, with sea-green brocade," and "astonishing saints with wind-blown, richly-coloured carven garments and pink faces" (*VG* 52). The ornate, colorful, and exotic decoration of the Eastwoods' cottage is a blissful antidote to the drab, dingy, and dispiriting interior of the rectory, the former's rococo glitz the idealized dream version of the latter's cluttered, gimcrack domesticity. At the same time, the self-indulgent, decadent sense of style displayed in the cottage is a beautified version of the decaying home ever-indulging the

Mater, precisely the sort of escape that would be imagined by Yvette as she is trapped within the rectory.

This fantasy helps explain why the Eastwoods interrupt Yvette's seduction. Yvette would likely associate adultery, and by extension her own adulterous desires, with her mother's scandal, which left the girls at the mercy of their father and the Mater. The resentment Yvette would have to feel toward her mother for this abandonment would then return as she pursued her own illicit liaison. As a result, Yvette is left in the uncomfortable position of experiencing ambivalent emotions toward her mother: angry with her for selfishly following her own desires and leaving them behind in the rectory, yet at the same time representing their hope of escaping the rectory, as evidenced by the fact that Cynthia "contrived, at intervals, to get a little note through to her girls, her children" (*VG* 7), coming to represent the world outside. The Eastwoods emerge to resolve this contradiction by offering an image of Cynthia redeemed, the selfishness that separated her from her daughters erased. This drive to exonerate Cynthia is can be seen in the Eastwoods' reaction to Yvette admitting to them her interest in the Romani man. When Mr. Eastwood encourages Yvette to pursue this desire, Mrs. Eastwood responds with,

"Charles! You're wrong! How *could* it be the real thing! As if she could possibly marry him and go round in his caravan"

"I didn't say marry him," said Charles.

"Or a love affair! Why it's monstrous! What would she think of herself!-- That's not love! That's-- that's prostitution." (*VG* 58, emphasis original)

Mrs. Eastwood is made the voice of propriety, distancing herself, and by extension Cynthia, from any transgression, while attributing any libertinism within the couple to the young lover, further vindicating Cynthia. By making her mother respectable, and in the process of again taking custody of her daughters, Yvette can maintain that she did not in fact abandon her, thus evading any ambivalent feelings. Yvette's resulting attachment to this fantasy leaves her unable to fulfill her desires for the Romani man, as to do so would remind her of her mother's actions, thus undoing the image of Cynthia redeemed that the fantasy cultivates. The Eastwoods interrupt Yvette's seduction because the fantasy they manifest stands opposed to any adulterous fling, aiming to keep any such reminder of Cynthia's transgressions hidden. Their appearance reveals Yvette to be no less invested than the Rector in the idea of Cynthia's purity and equally unable to accept her desertion of the family.

The Eastwoods' role in repressing Yvette's desires is reflected in the girl's sudden ignorance about sexuality after meeting the couple, asking Lucille what it is "that brings people together? People like the Eastwoods, for instance?-- And Daddy and Mama, so frightfully unsuitable-- and that gipsy woman who told my fortune, like a great horse, and the gipsy man, so fine and delicately cut? What is it?" (*VG* 53). Sexual attraction is not only situated solely within the marriage bond, as is witnessed by Yvette asking about Cynthia and their father instead of Cynthia and her lover, but this attraction is placed beyond her ken, with Yvette claiming no experience with its force and power. Her intimacy with the Eastwoods has not, as one may expect, made her more knowledgeable of how such couples work, but has left her insisting that their connection is all the more mystifying to her. This is made all the clearer when, after Lucille responds to her question

with “I suppose it’s sex, whatever that is,” the sisters lament their own lack of sexual impulse, with Yvette stating “perhaps we haven’t got any sex, to connect us with men” (*VG* 53). Sexuality is, by Yvette’s fantasy of the Eastwoods, confined fully within a marital structure she is outside of, relieving her of any sexual desire and disavowing the connection she experienced with the Romani man. Sex being a concern of married couples means she cannot have sexual desires for him, nor him for her, as they are safely beyond her.

On the level of the narrative, the appearance of the Eastwoods makes possible the coherence between the various parts of the story at the novella’s climax. While the uncanniness of Yvette’s encounter with the man connected her to the encampment, it had no way of creating a similar connection between her and the rectory, or the rectory and the camp. Had she been able to consummate her passions in the caravan, her sexual awakening would have been confined to the encampment, leaving her alienated relationship to the rectory and her family unchanged. This separation of sexual life from larger life would be unsatisfactory for a writer like Lawrence, who, as Bell notes, “writes about the erotic, but is not for the most part an erotic writer. This is because his typical concern is not to isolate the erotic, but to understand its place within a wider sense of life and human relationships” (52-3), always seeking to relate the various facets of a character to each other and to that character’s world. Indeed, for Lawrence, what separates pornography from art proper is the former’s tendency to leave sexuality cloistered and hidden away from the rest of life. According to Lawrence, “the whole question of pornography seems to me a question of secrecy,” pornography characterized by treating sex as a dirty little secret and ensuring that “the dirty little secret is rubbed and scratched

more and more, till it becomes more secretly inflamed,” providing “the sneaking thrill fumbling under all the purity of dainty underclothes, without one single gross word to let you know what is happening” (*LEA* 243-4), thus allowing sex to remain hidden and divided from other lived experiences rather than acknowledged as a part of a coherent whole. Thus, to function as art rather than pornography, the novella needs to bring coherence to Yvette’s character and her story, and thus her sexuality cannot be sequestered in the camp, but must be connected back to her life in the rectory. To make this possible, the consummation must be delayed.

Confirmation for the Eastwoods’ role as hiding from Yvette illicit passions, both her mothers’ and her own, comes from a perhaps unexpected place, the change in Yvette’s attitude toward the Mater. After her father forbids her to continue visiting the Eastwoods, Yvette’s feeling toward her grandmother, who it was early noted that “it was not fair to hate,” is altered, the narrator stating that “it was Granny whom she came to detest with all her soul... her Yvette really hated, with that pure, sheer hatred which is almost a joy” (*VG* 63). Suddenly, Yvette finds herself hating immensely someone whom she had once considered impossible to hate, a change that is not occasioned by anything the Mater had said or done. One possible explanation for this change is that this hatred is the result of resentment, as Yvette’s father claims his demand she cut ties with the Eastwoods is for the sake of the Mater, whom the Rector insists “was a faithful wife and a faithful mother, if ever one existed. She has already had one shock of shame and abomination to endure. She shall never be exposed to another” (*VG* 61). Given this, it is feasible for Yvette to on some level hold her grandmother responsible for depriving her of the Eastwoods’ company. However, the Rector, in the same speech, states that, if she continues to see the

Eastwoods, she “must not expect to associate with your Granny, and your Aunt Cissie, and Lucille” (*VG* 61), citing the rest of the family as well in his threats. Given this, why would Yvette single out the Mater for her hatred, and not extend that hatred to Aunt Cissie and Lucille, if they were all invoked to remove the Eastwoods from her life?

Rather, it would appear that something else is at work, alluded to in the Rector’s description of the Mater as “a faithful wife and a faithful mother.” The Mater, representing the “safe” selfishness that reconciles itself with the bonds of marriage, stands for precisely what is promised by the Eastwoods: desires which find a place within the accepted structure of marriage, and therefore present no threat to that structure or the happy domesticity that it supposedly offers. This can be seen in the narrator’s description of the Mater in the light of Yvette’s fresh hatred for her grandmother, nothing that “the old woman sat with her big, reddened face pressed a little back, her lace cap perched on her thin white hair, her stub nose still assertive, and her old mouth shut like a trap. This motherly old soul, her mouth gave her away” (*VG* 63). Here, the Mater as devouring mother again asserts herself, the maternal and the selfish coinciding in this description, the old woman appearing as at once perfectly domestic (a “motherly soul” in her “lace cap”), and at the same time ruled by selfish appetites (her “assertive” nose and her “mouth shut like a trap”). As hungry, devouring mother, the Mater has squared the circle and made her desires fit within the marital system. In the Mater, Yvette sees a reminder of the fantasy she has been commanded to repress, namely the fantasy of a mother who, able to reconcile her desires with married life, would not have left her stranded with her father. Yvette’s grandmother, in this sense, becomes for Yvette an instance of the return of the repressed, with its accompanying pain and discomfort. That Yvette suddenly acquired a

hatred for the Mater immediately after being forced to cut ties with the Eastwoods and push away the fantasy-world they offered her is, in this view, no accident. Rather, now that such has been rendered forbidden and unclean, the Mater cannot but herself seem unclean and detestable, given that she reminds the girl of the forbidden.

Without the Eastwoods or the Romani man, Yvette stagnates in the boredom of the rectory before encountering the Romani man again, this time along the road. The man informs Yvette that “the old gipsy dreamed something about you,” a dream which told the girl’s fortune, sending along a message to the Yvette, “She said: be braver in your heart, or you lose your game. She said it this way: be braver in your body, or your luck will leave you. And she said as well: Listen for the voice of the water” (*VG* 66). Like the secret palm reading and Yvette’s state of “waking sleep,” the fortune works to reinforce the encampment’s image as a “dream-like” place where the forbidden is hidden and alluded to at the same time. This is reflected in the fact that the fortune contains two versions of the same message. The first, “be braver in your heart, or you lose your game,” seems to be a fairly direct allusion to Yvette’s sexual desires, with “heart” being associated with romance, and “lose your game” able to refer to both playing a game or going on a hunt, both common metaphors for love and courtship. The second, however, “be braver in your body, or your luck will leave you,” is much less direct, the more pointed allusions to romantic desire replaced with the less specific, more general “body” and “luck,” effectively obscuring the romantic message contained in the first version. That these two versions nevertheless appear alongside one another, the fortune simultaneously expressing and hiding what is to be repressed, marks the fortune, and the encampment it came from, as beholden to the logic of dreams.

The last part of the fortune, “listen for the voice of the water,” obviously foreshadows the flood that will ravage the rectory at the narrative’s climax, and associates the waters with dreams as it was a dream that foretold their coming. This association is strengthened by the fact that the waters connect back to Yvette’s seduction, as it was under the pretense of washing her hands that she was invited into the caravan, the place where she was induced to hide her desire for the man, to indulge in this same desire. As such, it harkens back to the coincidence of repression and the repressed, of her passion for the man and the palm-reader’s subtle call to suppress it. This is illustrated when the flood waters suddenly appear at the rectory, Yvette standing near the brook than ran past the rectory when, “she heard somebody shouting, and looked round. Down the path through the larch-trees the gipsy was bounding... simultaneously she became aware of a great roar, which, before she could move, accumulated into a vast deafening snarl,” before she saw “a shaggy, tawny wave-front of water advancing like a wall of lions. The roaring sound wiped out everything” (*VG* 69). The flood forces Yvette to face her feelings for the Romani man by drawing him to the rectory to warn her of the onrushing water, while at the same time working to hide the man, its “roaring sound wiped out everything,” including what the man’s shouts, drawing her attention from him and drowning out what he is saying with its roar. The flood thus induces Yvette to at once remember and repress her desires, an instance of dream logic in waking life granting the rushing waters a sense of the uncanny. This sense is only heightened as the waters rush into the rectory. Yvette and the man began fleeing upstairs to higher ground, when they see “the short but strange bulk of Granny emerge in the hall, away down, from the dining room door. She had her hands lifted and clawing, as the first water swirled round her legs,

and her coffin-like mouth was opened in a hoarse scream” (*VG* 70). The Mater’s “clawing” and her wide open mouth represent her ravenous claims on those in her family. The Mater’s status as devouring mother is brought to the surface here, forcing Yvette to confront what she had previously only dimly perceived, that the Mater is a selfish figure who hides that selfishness beneath a veneer of selfless devotion to family. Yvette sees this truth about the Mater summed up for her in the image of the Mater drowning, “her face purple, her blind blue eyes bolting, spume hissing from her mouth. One old purple hand clawed at the bannister rail, and held for a moment, showing the glint of a wedding ring” (*VG* 71), the wedding ring, a representation of her fidelity, affixed to the clawing hand recalling the selfishness she hid beneath that fidelity, coinciding here. That the Mater’s selfishness becomes clear as a consequence of the flood makes sense when the flood’s connection to Yvette’s desires for the man are recalled: reminded of her adulterous passions and, by extension, her mother’s, Yvette remembers her mother’s own selfishness, and thus recognizes it in laundered form in the Mater; at the same time, what laundered it, the Mater’s commitment to the family, remains, coexisting alongside what it was supposed to hide.

The same can be said for the rectory itself, a house dedicated to maintaining the image of “Cynthia the pure snow flower,” as it weathers the flood. Reaching the house’s upstairs, Yvette and the Romani man attempt to find somewhere safe to ride out the inundation, searching the shuddering house for a stable place. In their search, the Romani man opens a door, and, “the wind, roaring with the waters, blew in as he opened it. Through the awesome gap in the house he saw the world, the waters, the chaos of horrible waters, the twilight, the perfect new moon high above the sunset, a faint thing,

and clouds pushing dark into the sky, on the cold, blustery wind” (*VG* 73). There is something unreal and oneiric in this vista: its interior door leading to the churning, flooded wilds of the outdoors, the rectory would appear to encompass its own exterior, to paradoxically contain its outsides among its insides. The surreal nature of this vision is heightened by the fact that those outsides currently threaten to destroy the rectory, resulting in a scene where the rectory seems to integrate into itself the thing which endangers it. The vision recalls precisely the same fantasy that the Mater did, a fantasy of the desires that threaten domestic safety being reconciled with and housed inside that domestic frame: through the door, the rushing waters and the repressed desires returning along with them, embodied in the Romani man, appear to be just another room within the rectory, as though the adulterous desires brought along with the waters fit comfortably within the home-life provided by the rectory. Through this door, the fantasy that Yvette had to repress returns in the midst of the force of repression, hopelessly entangled with that repression, resulting in a strange, uncanny sight.

This same dynamic appears to be at work as Yvette and the man, after stripping off their soaked clothes, take refuge beneath the sheets of an upstairs bed: “Warm me,” she moaned, with chattering teeth. ‘Warm me! I shall die of shivering.’ A terrible convulsion went through her curled-up white body, enough indeed to rupture her and cause her to die. The gipsy nodded, and took her in his arms, and held her in a clasp like a vice, to still his own shuddering” (*VG* 74). The clearly sexual implications of this moment, alluded to by both its language of “convulsion” and “shuddering,” at the same time also allude to the stress the rectory itself is undergoing at this point, the house itself described as shuddering as the waters rush around and through it. The rectory, the

household built on keeping illicit desires like Cynthia's a secret, seems itself to be writhing with the pleasures afforded by these very same illicit passions, the house seemingly taken with orgasmic convulsions of the type experienced by Yvette and the Romani man in their bed. Yvette's tryst, and Cynthia's which it recalls, sees its pleasure seeping into the very thing that was supposed to work to deny it, the repressed desires seemingly accepted and enjoyed by the very house that was supposed to hide the existence of such desires, and the waters, meant to repress fantasies, evoking Yvette's fantasy of such desires reconciled to a harmonious home. The uncanniness of these convulsions, both in the couple and in the house, stems from the desires the house at once represses and implies.

This moment, with both the lovers and their surroundings shuddering with fear and delight, also marks the novella's climax, the work's various strands and elements coming together in this encounter. The rectory inundated by flood waters recalls Yvette's desires for the Romani man, and by extension Cynthia's own adulterous passions, as well as the fortune-telling of the camp and the oppressiveness of the rectory, embodied in the Mater and her safe selfishness. As the lovers huddle beneath bedsheets, the various parts of the novella are brought together, all evoked by this single event as the work nears its conclusion. The uncanniness of the flood allows fantasy and reality, Yvette's desires, hopes, and dreams as well as her material surroundings, to be conflated in a way that confers on these disparate threads a degree of pleasing coherence. Yet, it is hardly pleasing for Yvette: the surreal nature of the event leaves the girl's estrangement from the rectory intact, the coherence not diminishing the alienation she feels toward her life there. Although the rectory is destroyed, this does not result in Yvette finding a happier home,

but instead leaves her detached and uprooted, quite literally homeless. In this way, the uncanny flood allows the story to coalesce without betraying the fundamental fact that Yvette remains within a society whose emphasis on competition and material gain makes alienation unavoidable. The flood waters, short-circuiting the distinction between character psyche and reality, induce the “waking sleep” that allows connection without that connection undermining the work’s relevance to lived social experience.

“The same brackish, nauseating effect of a marsh”: *The Rainbow*

The uncanny plays a much different role in an earlier work, Lawrence’s 1915 novel *The Rainbow*, being far less central to the narrative’s cohesion. The novel follows three generations of the Brangwen family as they experience the economic and social modernization of their home in the English Midlands through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Andrew Eastham states, in *The Rainbow*, “Lawrence is establishing a genealogy of modernity that is also a phenomenology-- a representation of the experience of consciousness at a fundamental moment of historical transition” (127), this modernization reflected in the changes in the Brangwens’ relationship to their surroundings, as their deepening engagement with capitalist modernity leaves them increasingly alienated from their world. With each successive generation, the Brangwens become more detached from their home, Eastham noting that the family moves from displaying, “a consciousness that is organically related to its natural environment, to a consciousness that continually attempts to recapture this connection by an effort of will, to a modern consciousness that experiences its own detachment as an ambivalent condition of freedom and horror” (128), over the course of the novel. By the novel’s end,

the family's third generation, as embodied by Ursula Brangwen, is a fully modern, alienated subject.

Depicting such alienation while also structuring itself around characters finding fulfillment and meaning, the novel faces much the same dilemma as *The Virgin and the Gipsy*. Yet, unlike the novella, *The Rainbow* does not try to solve this dilemma by relying on the uncanny to bridge the seemingly unbridgeable gulf between modern subject and the society they inhabit. Instead, it gets around this deadlock by allowing Ursula to connect to a figure of pure spiritual hope and bliss in the form of the titular image, while the uncanny is part of the fallen, alienated world that Ursula rejects in the name of the rainbow and the future it heralds. This can be illustrated by a look at some of the similarities between the two works.

Like *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, *The Rainbow* features a scene of flooding that is pivotal to the narrative, the Marsh Farm hit with a deluge that wrecks the property and kills old Tom Brangwen. Lydia, awakened in the night by the waters and the sudden fear for her husband's life, comes down stairs and "stepping down the step into the kitchen, she put her foot into water. The kitchen was flooded... water was running in out of the scullery. She paddled through barefoot, to see. Water was bubbling fiercely under the outer door" (R 229). Also like the flood that destroyed the rectory, this flood can be read as an expression of a character's discontent with their life and a desire to escape it. Just before the waters come, Fred Brangwen, Tom and Lydia's son and the one responsible for most of the work on the farm, is taken with a deep restlessness, the narrator noting that "Fred Brangwen, unsettled, uneasy, did not go out, as was his wont... This wet, black night seemed to cut him off and make him unsettled, aware of himself, aware that he

wanted something else, aware that he was scarcely living. There seemed to be no root to his life, no place for him to get satisfied in” (R 226). Fred, the son most tied to the land like his father, begins to feel unfulfilled by his current situation, a feeling tied to the rainy night that would shortly bring on the flood waters. Like those waters, Fred’s desires exceed and overwhelm the farm’s ability to accommodate them, the inundation representing these feelings that Fred had seemingly kept buried up until now. This understanding of the flood is supported by the fact that it drowns his father, a figure of easy contentment with the farm life that Fred finds so unsatisfying, the narrator saying of the old man that, “he became indolent. He developed a luxuriant ease” (R 225). This contentment would likely be a source of resentment for Fred, as it relies on having Fred remain on the farm since, as the narrator notes, “Fred did most of the farm-work, the father saw to the more important transactions. He drove a good mare, and sometimes he rode his cob. He drank in the hotels and the inns with better-class farmers and proprietors,” (R 225), old Tom’s status as happy gentleman farmer, who can slip away from his farm to have a drink whenever, depends on Fred’s discontent. Fred’s repressed frustrations and anger return in the form of the flood, damaging the farm he feels tied to and killing the father he blames for his lack of freedom.

Despite its similarities to the one depicted in *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, Fred’s flood differs from Yvette’s in a crucial way: unlike in the later novella, the flood in *The Rainbow* does not appear as uncanny. This is reflected in the comparatively realistic way in which the novel describes the flood, the narrator noting that “the flood rose through the night, till it washed the kettle off the hob in the kitchen,” and “in the ruddy light of dawn she saw the waters spreading out, moving sluggishly” (R 231-2), striking a vastly

different tone from surreal images of shuddering walls and upstairs doors opening onto outdoor vistas.

The reasons for this difference are twofold: the first psychological, the second narrative. Psychologically, the difference stems from the fact that, unlike in Yvette's case, for Fred the waters are associated only with his desires, and not also the repression of these desires. As a result, the flood represents a return of the repressed but does not at the same time become uncanny. On the level of narrative, the flood's lack of any sense of uncanniness serves the novel's aim of tracing the increasing alienation of modern life. With the death of old Tom, an important connection to the more holistic and integrated Cossethay is lost to the forces of capitalist modernity, as the flood that killed him is caused by a breach in the canal (*R* 230) that had cut through the farm years earlier as the first incursion of modern economic development into the Marsh. The deluge is here not intended to reconcile characters and their world, as it did for Yvette, but rather to represent the growing distance between them, as is reflected in its association with Fred's sudden dissatisfaction with his life on the farm.

This understanding of the flood helps explain something that otherwise seems strange, namely the rather sudden change in Ursula's feelings about young Tom. Prior to the flood, Ursula is fascinated by her uncle Tom, the narrator noting that, "to Ursula he was a romantic, alluring figure. He had a grace of bringing beautiful presents: a box of expensive such as Cossethay had never seen; or he gave her a hair-brush and a long, slim mirror of mother-of-pearl, all pale and glimmering and exquisite... With all that, he was undefinably an outsider. He belonged to nowhere, to no society" (*R* 225-6). In Ursula's eyes, young Tom is a glamorous figure, associated with luxurious gifts and far away

places. Yet, her feelings toward him undergo a change after the flood. At old Tom's funeral, Ursula sees "her uncle Tom standing in his black clothes, erect and fashionable, but his fists lifted and his face distorted, his face curled back from his teeth in a horrible grin, like an animal which grimaces with torment, whilst his body panted quick, like a panting dog's," after which "she could see him, in all of his elegant demeanour, bestial, almost corrupt" (*R* 233-4). In the midst of his grief, Tom reveals a side of himself, an animalistic side, that disturbs Ursula and undoes her romantic image of him. Ursula's reaction is perhaps strange, until her feelings for Tom are understood in the context of her family life. Tom's appeal to the girl would seem to stem from his status as an outsider, the fact that "he belonged to nowhere," and thus represents an antithesis to the familiar world of her home. Her home is one permeated by her parents' sexuality, in which "he was the sensual male seeking his pleasure, she was the female ready to take hers" (*R* 218). Yet, this sexuality is not romantic, but rather "a sensuality violent and extreme as death. They had no conscious intimacy, no tenderness of love. It was the lust and the infinite, maddening intoxication of the senses," this savage enjoyment preoccupying the parents as "the children became less important, the parents were absorbed in their own living" (*R* 220). The intensity of her parents' passion cuts Ursula off from them, her relationship to them diminished as they plunge headlong into their enjoyment of each other. It is only natural for Ursula in response to feel deprived of her mother and father's attention, and to resent their uninhibited sexuality as the cause of this deprivation. Alongside this resentment, however, a degree of fascination would also be expected, since for the child the scene of parental coitus comes to stand for the affection and pleasure denied to them.

As a result, the child comes to desire the very thing it is excluded from, causing its fascination to be repressed in order to avoid the pain of frustration.

An early indication of this dynamic can be found in a scene where Ursula's father is planting potatoes, the narrator stating that, "Ursula ran up and watched him push the setting-peg in at one side of his ready earth, stride across, and push it in the other side... then, with a sharp, cutting noise the bright spade came towards her, cutting a grip into the new, soft earth" (R 206). Ursula's fascination with her father's activity can be seen as stemming from its sexual symbolism, her father's phallic pegs and spade penetrating the soft, fertile earth, while the "grip," defined in the notes as a "shallow open furrow"(R 513), is of a decidedly vaginal nature. It makes sense to assume that the girl would know enough of anatomy to recognize this symbolism, as "she was used to [her father's] nakedness, and her mother's nakedness, ever since she was born" (R 209), the girl familiar enough with her parents' genitals to spot the similarities. Despite this familiarity, it is likely the girl is still has little understanding of the sexual relation between her parents, and is enthralled by her father's work as it seems to speak in some obscure way to that relation. Her father, recognizing the girl's fascination, and asks her if she wants to help, giving her the job of dropping potatoes into the furrow. He then resumed work, and "she saw him stooping, working towards her. She was excited, and unused... the responsibility excited her like a string tying her up. She could not help looking with dread at the string buried under the heaped-back soil. Her father was working nearer. She was overcome with her responsibility" (R 206). Hunched over the ground and moving, Ursula's father's posture would seem to recall his position in missionary sex, Ursula's excitement at this sight alluding to her recognition of this posture and its connection to

the mystery of her parents' sexual bond. She also recognizes her exclusion from this bond, reflected in her inability to effectively participate in the work, but rather stands frozen and separated from the task. Ursula is only made more aware of this as her father gets closer, her frustration with this bind mounting as he works her way toward her. This frustration can only intensify when her father goes about redoing the few potatoes she had been able to drop, while "she stood by with the painful terrified helplessness of childhood. He was so unseeing and confident, she wanted to the thing yet could not" (*R* 206). Ursula, as a child, must necessarily be excluded from her parents' sexual relationship, the girl feeling ignored as her father disregards her to pursue the mysterious "thing" that she could have no part of. In response, "she turned away, and ran down the garden, away from him, as fast as she could go away from him, to forget him and his work" (*R* 206), her exaggerated response further evidence for the deeper significance of his "work," her attempt to escape it seemingly an attempt to repress and escape reminders of her parents' sex life.

This escape becomes increasingly difficult as her parents' sexuality comes to permeate the house. Into this situation, her uncle Tom appears as an antidote, a glamorous figure from elsewhere, refined and elegant, who is generous toward her and whose cleanliness and dandyish manner bears no hint of her parents' earthy passions. At the same time, his status as absolute outsider works to keep a degree of distance between him and Ursula always, as he does not fit into the staid and stable world of Cossethay in which she is immersed; as a result, Ursula can never approach him too closely, allowing him to remain an idealized figure for her affection. This changes when the epitome of Ursula's old, staid Cossethay, old Tom, is washed away in the flood, diminishing the

distance between the girl and the object of her desire, allowing a different side of young Tom to be revealed. The reason this loss of distance would cause Tom to take on this “bestial” appearance is at first unclear, until he is considered in his relationship to Ursula’s parents. Freud notes that it is fairly common for children to augment their knowledge of sexuality with what they observe from the sexuality of animals, resulting in sex being tied up with animal behavior³ (*IL*,). It is not difficult to imagine Ursula, curious about the precise nature of her parents’ sexual activity, concluding that it is somehow similar to the sex between animals she would no doubt have seen on Marsh Farm, thus connecting their sexuality with the animalistic. In this light, the reason for Tom’s strange appearance becomes understandable as reflecting Ursula’s realization that, like her parents, Tom is a sexual being, becoming animal-like and “bestial” himself. This reading is supported by the Ursula’s otherwise strange ambivalence toward young Tom as they say their goodbyes at the funeral’s end, the narrator stating that, “Ursula almost shrank from his kiss, now. She wanted it, nevertheless, and the little revulsion as well” (*R* 234). Representing both parental sexuality and the refinement meant to evade that sexuality, young Tom now inspires both attraction and revulsion in the girl. This mixture of desire and disgust resolves itself into a desire for disgust, as her ambivalence toward young Tom means that feeling of disgust also heralds the approach of the paternal affection she craves. Further evidence for this is found in the fact that, once deprived of her idealized image of young Tom, Ursula finds that “at Cossethay all was activity and passion, everything moved upon poles of passion. Then there were four children younger than Ursula, a throng of babies, all the time many lives beating against each other,”

³The most famous instance of this in Freud’s cases is that of the “Wolf Man,” whose understanding of his parents’ sexuality became tied up with that of dogs and wolves.

causing the girl to seek the solace of the Marsh (*R* 236). Without the image of kind and sophisticated uncle Tom to serve as salve, Ursula confronts anew her parents' sexuality and the younger children who stand as reminders of that sexuality, leaving her feeling repulsed and suffocated as she seeks refuge in her grandmother's house. The flood takes away the old, stable world of Cossethay, depriving Ursula of the distance with which to idealize young Tom and forcing her to face the reality of her parents' sexual activity and her feelings of betrayal associated with it.

Ursula would encounter another such reminder of her parents' sexual life years later, when, as a teenager, she developed a relationship with Winifred Inger, one of her teachers. Winifred "carried her head high, a little thrown back, and, Ursula thought, there was a look of nobility in the way she twisted her smooth brown hair upon her head. She always wore clean, attractive, well-fitting blouses, and a well-made skirt... Her eyes were blue, clear, proud, she gave one altogether the sense of a fine-mettled, scrupulously groomed person and of an unyielding mind" (*R* 312). In Ursula's attraction to her sophistication and style, there are echoes of her infatuation with Tom, Winifred's "look of nobility" and "well-fitting blouses" and "well-made skirt" recalling Tom's sophisticated finery and elevated behavior. In her cleanliness, Winifred stands opposed to the earth that Ursula likely associates with her parents' sexuality after the incident in the potato field. As she did with Tom, Ursula sees in Winifred a chance to receive affection she feels she lost as her parents were absorbed in their desires for each other, as she bares no trace of the fecund sort of sexuality that reminds her of her parents. Ursula is attracted to the way that Winifred's body differs from the image of the soft, voluptuous maternal body, focusing on how "her knees were so white and strong and proud, she was a firm-bodied

as Diana,” taken in by “the beauty of the firm, white, cool flesh! Ah, the wonderful firm limbs” (R 313), eschewing any obvious signs of the fertility that the girl associates with her parents’ sexual intercourse. At the same time, there is a clear maternal element to their relationship, the narrator noting how, “Winifred seemed to delight in having the girl in her charge, in giving things to the girl, in filling and enriching her life” (R 317). Winifred, like Tom, is a love-object for Ursula because she offers the girl the image of lost parental affection without any association with the earthy and animalistic sexuality of her parents.

Yet, as was the case with Tom, Ursula’s image of Winifred as free of the baser drives is unsettled after some closeness. After a certain amount of time together, Ursula finds that, “a sort of nausea was coming over her. She loved her mistress. But a heavy, clogged sense of deadness began to gather upon her, from the other woman’s contact. And sometimes she thought Winifred was ugly, clayey. Her female hips seemed big and earthy, her ankles and her arms were too thick” (R 319). Ursula has begun connecting Winifred to maternity, and by extension to her own mother’s sexuality, as seen in her focus on the woman’s “female hips,” which “seemed big and earthy,” alluding to the soil of the potato field and its resonances with parental intercourse.

This revulsion only intensifies when Ursula and Winifred visit Tom. There is much in this scene that echoes Yvette’s time with the Eastwoods in *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, Tom and Winifred coming together to form the couple offering the young protagonist the vision of a different sort of life, one in which their desires are reconciled with the world as it is. Like the Eastwoods’ cottage, Tom’s house stands in stark contrast to what the young girl had known in her own home, the narrator noting that, “his house was simply but well-furnished. He had taken out a dividing wall, and made the whole

front of the house into a large library, with one end devoted to science. It was a handsome room, appointed as a laboratory and reading room" (R 321), its open, spacious atmosphere the antithesis to the cluttered, crowded cottage Ursula had grown up in. Also like the Eastwoods' cottage, Tom's house offers its own temptations, promising Ursula what she had not experienced before, namely the dark, strange pleasures to be found the forces of industrialization, in the form of the nearby mine that Tom manages. During a discussion of the working conditions of the miners, the narrator at one point finds Ursula thinking, "How terrible it was! There *was* a horrible fascination in it-- human bodies and lives subjected in slavery to that symmetric monster of the colliery. There was a swooning, perverse satisfaction in it. For a moment she was dizzy" (R 324), the gargantuan forces of modernization intoxicating to the girl accustomed to peaceful village life.

Most importantly, though, like the Eastwoods, Tom and Winifred manifest something that has been repressed, bringing to the surface Ursula's fascination and disgust with the image of her parents' copulation. There is immediately a magnetism between them, alluded to when Winifred, upon seeing him, "was afraid of him, repelled by him, and yet attracted" (R 321), this attraction shown to be mutual when, only a short time later, she had become his lover (R 325-6). The desire between them can only remind Ursula of the sexual tension between her parents, reflected in both Tom and Winifred taking on bestial character, the narrator noting that Tom, "still laughed in his curious, animal fashion, suddenly wrinkling up his wide nose and showing his sharp teeth" (R 322). Winifred's animality comes to light in a particularly strange moment in the narration, the narrator noting that

“[Ursula’s] coldness for Winifred should never cease. She knew it was over between them. She saw gross, ugly movements in her mistress, she saw the clayey, inert, unquickened flesh, that reminded her of the great prehistoric lizards... [Tom] too had something marshy about him-- the succulent moistness and turgidity, and the same brackish, nauseating effect of a marsh, where life and decaying are one.” (*R* 325)

In this bundle of images bursting forth to express Ursula’s revulsion, Winifred becomes animal-like, compared to “the great prehistoric lizards,” connecting her, like Tom, to back to the passion between her parents. In addition, she is also once again likened to damp earth, again connecting her with the potato field and its implied sexuality. Tom is also compared to the damp earth, specifically in a way that recalls the flood at Marsh Farm and its revelation of Tom’s sexual nature. As such, both Winifred and Tom are both associated with the sexual practices of Ursula’s parents; at the same time, both Winifred and Tom have served, at different points, as substitute parental figures, offering Ursula the promise of a familial love that is without reference to parental coitus. These former love-objects revealing the very things they were supposed to help hide accounts for the uncanniness at work in these strange images. This understanding of Tom and Winifred is only reinforced by the fact that, like the desire between Ursula’s parents, the attraction between them is going to result in children, the narrator stating that “Brangwen had reached the age when he wanted children. He wanted children. Neither marriage nor the domestic establishment meant anything to him... she was his mate” (*R* 326-7). This interpretation is further evidenced by Ursula’s resentment for Tom and Winifred as she

watches them together, the narrator stating that, “in the bitterness of her soul, Ursula knew that Winifred was become her uncle’s lover. She was glad. She had loved them both. Now she wanted to be rid of them both. Their marshy, bitter-sweet corruption came sick and unwholesome in her nostrils. Anything to get out of their fetid air” (R 325-6). Recognizing their attraction to one another, Ursula is reminded of her parents’ love and her exclusion from it, the memories of her frustration leaving her angry and wanting to flee from the reminder, as she had in the potato field.

The uncanniness of this scene distinguishes it from that of the Eastwoods’ cottage, which does not evoke a similar feeling of the *unheimlich*. Firstly, this difference can be attributed to the fact that the Eastwoods in their cottage manifest Yvette’s fantasy about her mother’s redemption without betraying at the same time what this fantasy is hiding, her seething resentment toward her mother for leaving, while at Tom’s house what is hidden and what does the hiding appear alongside each other. Secondly, each of these scenes play a different role in their respective narratives, making uncanniness useful to the plot in one and less so in the other. Ursula’s disgust toward Winifred and Tom foreshadows her refusal to reconcile herself to the world as it is at the novel’s end. Fearing herself pregnant by her lover, Anton Skrebensky, Ursula at first unhappily tries to resign herself to a life of children and base material concerns, which she associates with her mother, the narrator noting that, “suddenly she saw her mother in a just and true light. Her mother was simple and radically true. She had taken the life that was given. She had not, in her arrogant conceit, insisted on creating a life to fit herself” (R 449). It was precisely this sort of life she saw alluded to in Winifred and Tom, accepting as they seemed to the same base life of animal fecundity. The possibility they embody, that of

making one's desires fit within the framework of the world as it exists by giving up loftier, spiritual goals, is reflected in their uncanniness, Ursula's psychic life and material surroundings connecting and conflating in her encounter with them. The horror and revulsion generated by this uncanniness lays the groundwork for Ursula's rejection of such reconciliation as the novel concludes. The Eastwoods, on the other hand, represent nothing of the sort to Yvette; rather, in manifesting the girl's idealized fantasy of her mother, they represent the alienated status quo of the rectory and its image of Cynthia the "snow-flower." It is not the Eastwoods, but the flood, that symbolizes Yvette's reconciliation with her world, and is made uncanny in the process.

Conclusion

The different placement of the uncanny within these two narratives corresponds to a shift in the structural role played by the uncanny. In *The Rainbow*, the uncanny and the accord it presents between mind and material is found near the novel's middle, and serves as an obstacle for the protagonist to overcome; in *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, it forms the novella's climax, and is the very thing that allows the protagonist to overcome their obstacles and find connection with their world. This shift can be seen as a reflection of Lawrence's attempt to move beyond the Expressionism of *The Rainbow*. Joyce Wexler points out that, "the spiritual intensity of prewar art dominates *The Rainbow*," that Lawrence's "use of symbolic cues as rhythm, repetition, and extremity creates a verbal version of the visual abstraction of Expressionist painting" (79-80). An example of this can be found in the extremity of the visionary experience of the rainbow, which eschews any contact with the concrete features of Ursula's current situation in favor of the abstract

hope of an unseen future. Yet, Wexler notes that Lawrence would come to be dissatisfied with such abstraction, stating that “while Expressionists suppressed outer appearance in favor of inner meaning, after the war Lawrence and other Post-Expressionists wanted to connect them” (79-80). Instead of creating cohesion by connecting characters to abstract and unreal representations of their desires, like the rainbow, Lawrence moves to connect them to the actual, physical realities they inhabit. The uncanny offers Lawrence a means of doing this without at the same time negating the alienation in the world depicted. Instead of having Yvette reject the rectory in the name of something vague, the uncanniness of the flood to blur any distinction between her internal life and the external world, thus achieving a connection between them, while leaving her as disassociated from the rectory as ever before. *The Virgin and the Gipsy* replaces an idealistic and abstract rainbow with a concrete yet uncanny flood, in the process elevating the *unheimlich* to a more central role in the narrative’s structure.

By comparing and contrasting the uses of the uncanny in these two works by Lawrence, one can more clearly appreciate the uncanny’s utility in addressing the problems facing literature in an age of alienation. Lawrence, a writer so keenly aware of the psychological and spiritual toll of modernity, and so committed to carving out in his art a place where meaning could be celebrated, makes an ideal case in which to observe the way the uncanny functions as a possible solution to the aesthetic problem of alienation. In his shift from Expressionist abstraction to surreal uncanniness, Lawrence can be seen as moving to embrace the promise the uncanny offers for the depiction of modern, capitalist life.

**Chapter 3:
Psyche and Structure in the Short Story:
Katherine Mansfield's Movement toward the Uncanny**

Introduction

Despite the shortness of Katherine Mansfield's mature career, spanning only from around 1911 to her death in early 1923, a clear evolution in the can be seen in the major collections she published during this period, as she steadily changes the way she addresses the psychic lives of characters, moving from showing their mental and material worlds in stark separation to depicting their possible reconciliation. This change is accompanied by a shift in the structure of these stories, their endings becoming less anticlimactic over this same period. That these two trends happen together is no coincidence, but rather reflect the fact that they are bound up with one another.

This chapter will present Mansfield's evolution as the result of her grappling with the structural challenges inherent in depicting an alienated, dissonant society in a form, the short story, that requires a degree of connection and coherence for its effect. This evolution culminates in the uncanny, previously defined as the sense of strange familiarity the subject experiences when encountering repressed material and its substitute at the same time, taking on an important role in her stories. The *unheimlich* establishes a connection between character and setting that makes a coherent ending for the story possible, without at the same time papering over alienation's existence. The uncanniness of Mansfield's late stories thus represents, among other things, the conclusion of a long process of trying to reconcile the detachment endemic to modern life with the coherence demanded by the short story form. This will be shown by tracing the development of Mansfield's strategies for connecting the often alienated characters in her

stories to their surroundings over the course of her career, following from her earliest published collection, *In a German Pension* (1911), to her *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922), published shortly before her death. In this first collection, Mansfield's stories are marked by an acceptance of the dissonance at work in depictions of modern life, paired with a subtle nostalgia for the artistic possibilities of earlier times. As a result, these stories often conclude in a seemingly arbitrary, underwhelming way when depicting characters in a modern setting, as a main character cannot have a meaningful experience with their surroundings and thus cannot be changed by them in a way that ties character and setting together as the story closes. After examining *In a German Pension*, the chapter will move on to a close reading of "Prelude," a longer story included in *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920) that forms an intermediate step between the dissonance of the earlier stories and the uncanniness of the later. This story tries to turn the alienation that proved a problem Mansfield's earlier stories into its own solution, creating an ending around a central character, Linda Burnell, awakening from her fantasies to find herself disconnected from the world around her. Linda's realization ties her to her surroundings as the story concludes even while leaving her feeling detached from them, creating a coherent ending even as it depicts an alienated character. This strategy has been abandoned by the time of *The Garden Party*, these stories relying instead on the uncanny to produce a connection between an alienated character and their surroundings. As a result, the stories in this collection are able to conclude with more of a satisfying cohesion of parts than those of earlier collections. The uncanny thus comes to play a role in structuring Mansfield's late short stories, providing a remedy to the problem of depicting alienated life.

This contention, that Mansfield's turn to the uncanny is motivated by problems inherent in the modern short story, would seem to contradict Clare Hanson's notion that this uncanniness rather reflects the morbid fixations of post-World War I society. Hanson notes that the Great War took a huge toll on Mansfield, given that she lost a brother and many friends to the fighting, and that she spent three nerve-wracking weeks in Paris as it was under bombardment ("Uncanniness" 116). For Hanson, these encounters with the war pushed Mansfield toward an embrace of the uncanny as part of a general "cultural preoccupation with uncanny which marked the years immediately following the First World War," the war's spectacle of mass destruction forcing society to confront the uncanniness of death ("Uncanniness" 115-6). Mansfield's stories register this ambient feeling of the *unheimlich*, the uncanny in her stories reflecting the atmosphere in which they were written. Yet, while this account may explain how Mansfield was inspired to write on uncanny topics, it does not address how her stories create a sense of the *unheimlich*, or what role it comes to play within those stories. A writer preoccupied with the uncanny does not necessarily equal uncanny writing; rather, the writing must itself produce that effect for it to be present in their work. Thus the war, while perhaps a cause of a general sense of the *unheimlich*, cannot directly cause it in specific stories. Nor does the war explain what the uncanny does once it becomes part of the story, its effect on the story as a whole. In other words, Hanson's thesis is silent on the properly aesthetic dimension of Mansfield's use of this effect, and how it relates to the short story form. Given this, it is fruitful to pursue the structural role uncanniness plays within Mansfield's stories rather than see it as simply the index of a broader uncanniness of society.

This is not to argue, however, that Mansfield's uncanniness has no larger social resonance. Her turn to the uncanny can rather be seen as a response to the alienation increasingly prevalent in modern life. Alienation, the subject's experience of their world as indifferent and meaningless to them, is a feeling that Mansfield likely knew well. The daughter of a prominent New Zealand banker, Mansfield wrote throughout her childhood, but it was with her travels in Europe, and subsequent relocation to London, that she began working in earnest. As a colonial subject in the imperial capital, Mansfield found herself out of place, an experience shared by many of her characters. For Hanson, "Mansfield's identity as a colonial subject in Europe" was "marked by shifting modalities of affiliation and estrangement from 'New Zealand' and 'English' identities" ("Uncanniness" 119), resulting in a sense of being unmoored and detached, a theme that is palpable in her writing. Claire Tomalin, comparing Mansfield's work to that of Mansfield's friend and contemporary Virginia Woolf, notes how "Virginia's writing is always reflective. Her people inhabit a world of social, cultural and historical connections," Woolf's characters meaningfully engaged in society's institutions and ideas, such as Clarissa Dalloway, who finds beauty in Bond Street fashion and solace in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. In contrast, Mansfield's stories depict people as deeply alienated, "equipped with nothing more than charm or absurdity or pathos, against their settings of railway trains, seaside houses, hotels, flats, park benches and far, unlabelled corners of the world" (201). Unlike Woolf, Mansfield creates characters who are unrooted in any social milieu or cultural tradition, forced to confront an essentially alien world. This would seem to be particularly the case of the young English narrator who appears in Mansfield's first published collection, *In a German Pension*.

“Tableau grandissimo!”: *In a German Pension (1911)*

Mansfield’s first collection consists of two types of stories: those that can be termed the “pension stories,” in which a young, English woman narrates her stay in a German health spa, and the “provincial stories,” which deal with the everyday lives of mostly rural Germans. These two groups of stories also happen to be structurally different, with the pension stories tending to have weak, seemingly arbitrary endings; when the narrator ends her stories of the spa and its clients, she rarely does so with any sense of conclusion, but rather terminates the narrative at seemingly random points that contribute little or nothing to the reader’s understanding of the events depicted. This is not a coincidence, but rather reflects a challenge inherent in depicting the decidedly modern, bourgeois world of the pension, a challenge not presented by the more backward society of the provincial stories. In order to present its young, English narrator as a modern, alienated subject, these stories must maintain a palpable distance between the character and her setting, keeping her at an emotional remove from the events she witnesses. However, maintaining this distance means the stories forego the kind of meaningful encounter that usually provides a logical point on which to end. Hanson notes that short stories in general tend to take one of two forms, the more traditional, in which “the subject is the situation- extraordinary, bizarre, extreme in some way- which is usually referred back to the ordinary, ‘typical’ human being,” and the modernist that “does not deal with the avowedly strange or marvellous but tends to reveal that quality of the marvellous which is hidden within the mundane, obscured by habit or by dullness of perception” (*Short Stories* 5-7). The traditional story involves an extraordinary event that changes a character’s life, while the modernist story is more concerned with how a

seemingly normal event can change a character's understanding of their life; in either case, the story centers on a character altered by a meaningful event, establishing some sort of relationship between this character and their world. Mansfield's pension stories, in keeping their main character disengaged in her surroundings, allows for neither, as no event is permitted to substantially affect this character. The result of the distance between character and setting in these stories is a lack of any moment of change that would provide a logical point on which to conclude.

For Pamela Dunbar, these sorts of aesthetic problems in the collection result from the fact that "we are dealing with a narrator whose persona is imperfectly dissociated from that of her creator—and who cannot therefore be regarded as a fully-formed fictional construct; a 'character' enjoying autonomous and self-contained existence within the fiction," the narrator not so much a distinct character as a stand-in for Mansfield herself. At the same time, "ambiguities have been planted in the sketches, and relevant information withheld from them, so that problems or mysteries created within the text can only be solved outside- by reference to the author's life" (12-3). The narrator is thus an incomplete stand-in, crucial details about Mansfield's past and personality missing from this figure, leaving her enigmatic. The image of the narrator must be completed by reference to Mansfield's biography in order to be understood, the blank spaces in the character filled in by facts from Mansfield's life. Otherwise, the narrator remains a psychically impoverished character, lacking an interior life that could be reconciled to the world outside of her, the mental and emotional features that could find reflection in the pension simply not present in her. In this reading, the endings for the pension stories are arbitrary because the narrator does not have enough emotional

complexity to be affected by events, the stories thus deprived of any moment of change. However, this reading relies, paradoxically, on taking the narrator at her word in her reserved behavior and elusive answers to fellow guests; in order for Mansfield's biography to be necessary here, the narrator's reticent responses must indicate actual gaps in her psychic life, rather than alluding to facts about herself that she is hiding or repressing. The narrator's silence must mean real emptiness instead of reluctance, since it is only this emptiness that would make reference to Mansfield's life necessary. Yet the stories themselves imply the narrator's apparent paucity of depth is less the result of her lacking internal life than it is that her internal life is hidden. The stories appear suffused by the narrator's refusal to find in her surroundings anything significant and meaningful, her ironic detachment cancelling out any attempt to manifest her wishes, fears, or desires in the material world of the pension. While the narrator may, at points in the story, flirt with this kind of connection to her surroundings, the conclusion always finds her returning to her alienated condition.

This dynamic is perhaps clearest in the story "Frau Fischer," in which the titular character, the wealthy owner of a candle factory, takes a prying interest in the narrator's personal life. At one point, Frau Fischer barges into the narrator's room, insisting she discuss her personal life, stating that "when I meet new people I squeeze them dry like a sponge," leading to the narrator to make the facetious claim that her husband is "a sea-captain on a long and perilous voyage" (*IG* 50). What results is a rather surreal exchange, in which Frau Fischer asserts that the narrator should want to be with her husband, and having children would keep her wayfaring spouse at home. The narrator admits that,

“This husband that I had created for Frau Fischer became in her hands so substantial a figure that I could no longer see myself sitting on a rock with seaweed in my hair, awaiting that phantom ship for which all women love to suppose they hunger. Rather I saw myself pushing a perambulator up the gangway, and counting up the buttons on my husband’s uniform jacket.” (*IG* 52-3)

Over the course of her conversation with Frau Fischer, the narrator’s fantasy has been transformed, becoming something very different from the scene she had herself been imagining.

There are two possible ways to understand this transformation: as the loss of the fantasy, or as its culmination. On one hand, it can reflect the narrator’s pervasive alienation from the pension and her general detachment from its guests. The narrator’s vision of waiting by a restless shore for a traveling husband allows her to enjoy her isolation, eroticizing her loneliness by turning it into romantic anticipation; when Frau Fischer intervenes, this isolation is threatened, and her enjoyment with it, the return of her imagined husband reflecting the unpleasant loss of this loneliness. In this understanding, the moment her fantasy is drawn into any sort of relationship with something or someone at the pension, such as Frau Fischer, it becomes as alien as the pension itself, losing its relevance to her desires and becoming one more thing from which she is disengaged. Such an understanding sets the narrator’s psychic life firmly at odds with the pension, her alienation from it remaining intact.

On the other hand, the change can be seen not as disrupting the fantasy but rather bringing it to its logical conclusion. By introducing the awaited husband to the scenario,

Frau Fischer inadvertently forces the narrator to confront the fact that her fantasied anticipation is built on a contradiction. The imagined husband that allows her to romanticize her isolation also threatens to undo that isolation, the scenario containing the seed of its own destruction. Frau Fischer's insistence on the husband makes the narrator aware of this contradiction, forcing the younger woman to consider which of these conflicting things, a future husband or to be left alone, she really wants. In this case, the scenario is not undone from without, by Frau Fischer's intrusion, but from within, the narrator coming to terms with the paradox that results from following this scenario to its endpoint, Frau Fischer responsible only for bringing it to light. In this second understanding, the fantasy does not cease to be relevant to the narrator when it is altered by the pension, but rather the pension reveals to the narrator a dimension of it she had not previously known. As a result, the pension proves meaningful to the narrator over and against her sense of alienation from it.

The story, however, does not let this ambiguity stand, but comes down on the side of the former, on the side of loss. Realizing how her imaginings had been changed under Frau Fischer's influence, the narrator states, "I decided to wreck my virgin conception and send [my husband] down somewhere off Cape Horn" (*IG* 53). This admission offers confirmation that the husband story functions as fantasy for the narrator; because she is not informing Frau Fischer of her husband's untimely demise, she can only be conjuring such an end for her own benefit, which speaks to her investment in her own story. Dunbar's position, that the narrator has been denied a fully-developed psychic life with emotions and desires, seems to run aground on this point. Perhaps the narrator would concoct this tale of a seafaring husband in lieu of any actual romantic life (as Mansfield

has withheld details of her own love life from this portrait), but it seems strange that for this same reason the narrator would feel invested enough in it to alter it after speaking with Frau Fischer. Despite this investment, the narrator nevertheless rejects this scenario she has conjured, depriving herself of the imagined husband and, by extension, the sense of anticipation he offered her loneliness. Rather than recognize in Frau Fischer something meaningful about her own desires, and thus in some small way overcoming her alienation, the narrator tries instead to dispatch the fantasy that manifests them. By sending her fictitious husband to the bottom of the sea, the narrator dispenses both with her fantasy and the possibility of it granting a part of the pension meaning for her. This choice comes through clearly as the story ends: “‘Come up to my room afterwards,’ said Frau Fischer. ‘There is still much that I must ask you.’// She squeezed my hand, but I did not squeeze back” (*IG* 53). The ending sees the narrator refusing to embrace Frau Fischer, both literally and figuratively, determined instead to preserve her separation from the woman and the pension more generally.

What is perhaps most interesting about this moment is that the story gives her this choice in the first place. The story creates the necessary conditions for the narrator to overcome her isolation, to reconcile herself in some small way to the pension by recognizing something of herself in the otherwise inane lectures of Frau Fischer, only to show her turning away from it at the last minute. The story brings the narrator up to the edge of a revelation, and then pulls her unceremoniously back from it, drawing attention to the narrator’s alienation by means of having her choose to remain alienated. Alienation, when actively preserved by the narrator, goes from an incidental fact of the narrator’s life to the focus of her depiction.

The curious abruptness of the story's ending is a side-effect of this commitment to depicting alienation without papering over it. In refusing to acknowledge the logical extension of her fantasy life found in Frau Fischer's monologues, the narrative ends much as it began, the narrator still isolated in the pension, Frau Fischer still simply presumptuous and meddling. Against the short story's usual tendency to build to a character's confrontation with either a strange event or a new perspective on a mundane one, "Frau Fischer" does neither, and seems to suffer because of it. The narrator neither faces anything out of the ordinary nor reevaluates the ordinary, but instead relates a mundane situation leading to no unusual occurrence or change in perspective, resulting in an anticlimax; both the narrator's thoughts and behavior toward Frau Fischer remain the same throughout, allowing the narrator to retain her alienated distance from both the woman and the pension more generally. The story's fidelity to the narrator's disconnection from the pension thus means that nothing in the pension can have a substantial impact on her. Its main character remaining adamantly unchanged, the story is given no logical point to end on, resulting in a failure to create a meaningful conclusion.

It is when the pension stories come closest to escaping this fate that this dedication to alienation becomes unmistakable. "The Sister of the Baroness," for instance, employs the kind of twist ending that harkens back to the stories of that seminal figure in the development of the modern short story, Guy de Maupassant: arriving at the pension, a young woman claiming to be the sister of a prominent baroness is feted and fawned over by the pension's guests, who are giddy to be in the presence of nobility, only to discover from the baroness that she has no sister, and that her supposed sister was the child of a servant. The story is in this regard similar to Maupassant's classic "The

Necklace,” in which Mathilde, the wife of a humble civil servant, is forced into poverty to replace a borrowed necklace, which is discovered at the story’s end to have been a cheap costume piece (296-304). In both, the ending reveals to characters a truth about themselves, connecting them to their surroundings in a new way that creates coherence between character and setting. Mathilde, for example, confronts at the story’s end the depth of her own vanity and how it has contributed to her suffering; similarly, the ending of Mansfield’s story forces the pensioners to realize the way their fascination with rank and title has clouded their judgment. However, something curious happens at the ending of “The Sister of the Baroness” which sets it apart from Maupassant’s story. When the baroness informs the pensioners of the truth, stating, “Fool, I have no sister. My child travelled with the daughter of my dressmaker,” the story does not immediately conclude, but rather goes on one more line, with the narrator exclaiming “Tableau grandissimo!” (IG 40). While this may appear an exceedingly subtle difference, this single line beyond the revelation changes the narrator’s relationship toward the events of the story. Earlier, the narrator depicts herself as partaking in the excitement surrounding the supposed noblewoman, noting that upon hearing of the baroness’ approach, “we positively scintillated. Anecdotes of the High Born were poured out, sweetened and sipped: we gorged on scandals of High Birth generously buttered” (IG 31). The narrator places herself comfortably among those reveling in the promise of nobility’s presence, enjoying voyeuristic interest in the glamorous lives of the aristocracy with her fellow guests, an enjoyment not at all abated when the baroness’ purported sister arrives. Upon the new guest’s announcement that “I am the Baroness von Gall’s sister,” the narrator admits that “Even for the most jaded of us life holds its thrilling moments. Two Baronesses in two

months!” (*IG* 32). While at first blush it may appear that this is an instance of the narrator mocking her German neighbors, she, by speaking of “us,” is implicitly including herself in the number of those giddy with the prospect of such high born company. After all, there is little in the depiction of her German compatriots which would make them appear as jaded; to the contrary, they have been shown by the narrator as nothing if not credulous and passionate. If anyone in this scenario were to be “jaded,” it is the narrator herself, further linking herself to the excitement caused by the baronesses.

The narrator, in overcoming her jaded detachment in regard to the latest guests, would seem to be on track to overcome her alienation from the pension more generally. It is in the preparation and anticipation surrounding the arrival of nobility that the narrator for once can be seen as engaging in a meaningful way with the others, as well as investing emotionally in something outside of herself. The narrator states that, after the supposed baroness’ arrival, “Absorbing days followed. Had she been one whit less beautifully born we could not have endured the continual conversation about her, the songs sung in her praise, the detailed account of her movements. But she graciously suffered our worship and we were more than content” (*IG* 34-5). The narrator again can be seen as investing emotionally in the figure of the false baroness, her happiness generated by attention paid to this young woman and her doings. This emotional investment coincides with a sudden tendency, rare in the other stories, to speak of the pensioners as “we” or “us” rather than “they” or “them,” reflecting a certain sense of solidarity in the wake of the baroness’ arrival. The narrator’s alienation appears at this point to be waning in the face of a psychic investment in her surroundings.

And yet, as the story concludes, and the sister of the baroness is revealed to be nothing of the sort, this investment is disavowed, with the narrator dissolving (or at least trying to dissolve) her psychic attachment at a stroke. Her exclamation “Tableau grandissimo!” is an obvious allusion to the *tableau vivant*, the practice of using live actors to depict scenes in a manner similar to painting, transforming the pensioners into a living work of art, with the narrator now looking on as an audience. In turning the pensioners’ reaction into an art piece, she separates herself from the tableau, going from a participant to a spectator watching these events with detachment, in an attempt to avoid confronting the truth that she had been as infatuated as anyone with this glamorous image of the aristocracy. The surprised reaction of the pensioners becomes something that the narrator is viewing from the outside, rather than directly experiencing, sparing her from acknowledging the role her own desires played in making a commoner appear as the perfect image of nobility. In doing so, the narrator preserves her alienation from the pension, freeing herself from ever confronting what the phony baroness means to her.

Yet, this move to extract herself from this confrontation comes at a cost, undermining the impact of the story’s ending. Rather than end on the unmasking of the fake baroness, the story continues on, however briefly, to ensure that the reader does not assume the narrator is sharing in the emotional response of the other pensioners. The shock dissipates as the story extends beyond the climax in order to excuse the narrator from being drawn in to this shock and recognizing her own desires manifested in the counterfeit baroness. The story’s fidelity to the narrator’s sense of alienation comes into conflict with the story’s need for a meaningful ending.

One may object at this point that perhaps the weakness of these endings has more to do with a simple lack of artistic skill than the narrator's detachment being at cross purposes with the structural requirements of the short story. After all, Mansfield herself was reluctant to allow the collection to be reprinted, her husband and editor John Middleton Murry noting that "she thought the book itself unworthy," that it was "immature" and "juvenile" (8-9). Could it not simply be these stories are suffering from a still underdeveloped talent? Yet, this objection fails to take into account the "provincial" stories. Written at the same time, one would expect these stories to share any problems resulting from Mansfield's lack of experience. Yet, these provincial stories do not have the same difficulty coming to satisfying and meaningful endings as those set in the pension, implying that Mansfield indeed had the skill needed to bring stories to a strong conclusion. Unlike the pension stories, however, these stories of rural Germany are not burdened with the same need to depict their characters as emotionally cut off from the world they inhabit, allowing characters to have the "single moment of intense or significant experience" (*Short Stories* 55) that Hanson locates as central to the structure of the modernist short story. It is thus the material, rather than Mansfield's talent, that would seem to cause problems for the stories' endings.

"Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding," one of the provincial stories, tells of a harried housewife attending with her husband a wedding feast in their village, only to be disturbed by the proceedings and what they imply for her own life. Upon their arrival at the event, the narrator notes with relish how inviting the feast appears, stating, "The Gasthaus was very festive. Lights shone out from every window, wreaths of fir twigs hung from the ledges. Branches decorated the front doors" (*IG* 57). This atmosphere of

bonhomie only intensifies as they enter, as, “beautiful indeed was the Festsaal. Three long tables were grouped at one end, the remainder of the floor space cleared for dancing. Oil lamps, hanging from the ceiling, shed a warm, bright light on the walls decorated with paper flowers and garlands; shed a warmer, brighter light on the red faces of the guests in their best clothes” (*IG* 58-9). The feast stands in contrast with the dark, wintry night: warm, bright, and playing host to verdant life in the form of its flora of evergreen boughs and paper flowers. More to the point, the feast for these same reasons stands in stark contrast with the home life of Frau Brechenmacher, described as cold, dimly lit, and marked with deep discord. The vision of a “warmer, brighter light on the red faces of the guests in their best clothes” and the cozy conviviality implied by it could not be more different from Herr Brechenmacher barking out orders to his frazzled wife as she scrambles to prepare for their evening out. The Festsaal is the image of the pleasurable interaction which is sorely lacking from the house the Brechenmachers left.

At the center of this image sits the newlyweds, the narrator describing the bride, “she in a white dress trimmed with stripes and bows of colored ribbon, giving her the appearance of an iced cake all ready to be cut and served in neat little pieces to the bridegroom beside her, who wore a suit of white clothes much too large for him...” (*IG* 59). While the image of the bride devoured by her groom might seem at first shockingly out of place inside the idyllic warmth of the Festsaal, it is quite of a piece when understood in its sexual implications, with the bride’s white dress, a symbol of her virginity, making her look ready to serve up to the appetite of her bridegroom. It becomes even more a fitting expression when taken in the context of the celebration, as the consumption of the feast is predicated on this consumption of the bride’s virginity. The

feast itself is thus a reflection of this central act of consumption as consummation, a consumption without blood, instead sweet and orderly (“...in neat little pieces...”). It is a vision of consummation as inoffensive as a fine dessert, soft and sweet. Implicit in this scene is the fantasy of orderly and easy copulation, the flesh of the bride, rendered sweet, delicate, and neat, offered up to a timid young man in an ill-fitting suit; it is the fantasy of a smooth, pleasant, and frictionless sexual experience without discord or pain that underpins the image of bride and groom. From this image, the happy sociality of the room emanates outward, as at their table “everybody was laughing and talking, shaking hands, clinking glasses, stamping on the floor” (*IG* 59), as though the untroubled social relationships reflect the untroubled sexual relationship at the center of the festivities.

The easy conviviality of the wedding feast soon spreads to Frau Brechenmacher herself, as “she watched the couples going round and round; she forgot her five babies and her man and felt almost like a girl again” (*IG* 63). It is of course not at all strange to imagine the excitement of the evening’s celebration could make Frau Brechenmacher feel young. However, in the midst of this excitement, she exhibits some surprising behavior, the narrator noting that “her roughened hands clasped and unclasped themselves in the folds of her skirt. While the music went on she was afraid to look anybody in the face, and she smiled with a little nervous tremor round the mouth” (*IG* 63). It seems odd that, amongst the generally jovial atmosphere, she would display such signs of anxiety, especially given that her husband and children, shown as her major sources of stress, are at the moment far from her mind. She behaves, amongst the joyous scene, as though quietly dreading some awful event.

A hint at the source of this dread comes shortly thereafter, when, after delivering a comic speech to the newlyweds (which everybody but Frau Brechenmacher finds funny), Herr Brechenmacher hands the bride a silver coffee pot. Curious, “she lifted the lid, peeped in, then shut it down with a little scream and sat biting her lips. The bridegroom wrenched the pot away from her and drew forth a baby’s bottle and two little cradles holding china dolls. As he dandled these treasures before Theresa [the bride] the hot room seemed to heave and sway with laughter” (*IG* 64). The bride and groom, who had earlier embodied the fantasy of smooth, easy coupling, undermine that very same fantasy. The bride responds to the coffee pot, the phallic object offering her “children,” with a scream and bitten lips, as though enduring a painful sexual experience. This allusion is strengthened by the groom’s rough treatment of the bride, his “wrenching the pot away from her” in the process of bringing forth the baby dolls, implying harsh treatment of his lover during the act of creating a child. The true ambivalence of the fantasy they manifest reasserts itself here; despite the fact it provides an image of a frictionless sexual encounter, it is nevertheless suffused with violence, with its reference to “cutting” the bride “into pieces.” In stark contrast to the earlier order and care the couple appeared to engender, the clumsiness and pain that is often endemic to sexual interaction is brought to mind by their handling of the coffee pot.

As the couple at the center of the celebration reveals their hidden cruelty, the people in attendance follow suit. While the other guests find their display amusing, “Frau Brechenmacher did not think it funny. She stared round at the laughing faces, and suddenly they all seemed strange to her. She wanted to go home and never come out again. She imagined that all these people were laughing at her,” (*IG* 64-5). The sense of

warm sociability has vanished, replaced with a cruel and disturbing atmosphere of derision. Her sense that the laughter toward the bride is somehow meant for her speaks to the degree to which Frau Brechenmacher identifies with the bride, and is libidinally invested in the fantasy presented by the young couple; in the bride, Frau Brechenmacher sees manifested her own desire for a sexuality as easy accord, and thus sees herself in the bride's pained response to the coffee pot. Unlike the narrator of the pension stories, she cannot retreat back into an alienation she does not experience at the moment that her fantasy turns dark; rather, she maintains a meaningful connection with the village society in general, and the wedding feast in particular, and thus cannot disavow its relevance to her as soon as it becomes uncomfortable. Instead of dismissing the events before her, she allows them to remain meaningful.

For Frau Brechenmacher, this allusion to cruel sexuality brings to mind painful recollections. After returning home from the wedding feast, Herr Brechenmacher reminds his wife of their own wedding night, ““You were such an innocent one, you were... Such a clout on the ear as you gave me... But I soon taught you”” (*GP* 66), referring to a sexual encounter marked by violence and struggle, a far cry from his wife's wish for sex as harmonious, easy accord. She claims to not remember that night, a claim which seems undermined by her own anxious behavior, implying that she has repressed this memory and is disconcerted by the sense that it is returning. Nevertheless, the impact of the return of this repressed memory is seen in Frau Brechenmacher's behavior. The story ends with the narrator noting that, after the conversation with her husband, “she lay down on the bed and put her arm across her face like a child who expected to be hurt as Herr Brechenmacher lurched in” (*GP* 67). The fantasy that guided her relationship with her

husband, which had survived even the savage events of her own wedding night, has been altered by what she witnessed at the wedding feast; the fantasy of the smooth and easy sexual relationship which had informed her understanding of married life, even in the face of events to the contrary, has transformed over the course of the evening's events into something more brutal, forcing Frau Brechenmacher to confront uncomfortable recollections. This finds resonance in Breuer and Freud's now famous declaration that "hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (7); it is not the direct experience of a traumatic event that causes psychic distress, but the later events which threaten to resurrect aspects of that event from repression. It was not the brutal experience of her wedding night that altered Frau Brechenmacher's image of a frictionless, smooth sexuality (in fact, one may suspect that it allowed her to keep that experience at a distance), but the scene at the wedding that worked to bring that brutality to her consciousness. The shift in fantasy results from a return of the repressed, a return made possible by her libidinal attachment to the bride and groom at the wedding feast. Because of this shift, her relationship toward her husband has changed, now seeing violence as an inherent part of their sexual interaction.

The story thus concludes with a change in Frau Brechenmacher's behavior, brought on by the events depicted, the ending coinciding with her altered understanding of the world she encounters daily. The story makes no attempt to exempt her from finding the world around her meaningful and relevant in the name of preserving her alienation, as she has none to preserve, and therefore is free to end at the moment when a meaningful (if unsettling) connection emerges between her and her world; it is this new, sudden coherence between the elements of the story that offers an ideal ending point, and, unlike

in “The Sister of the Baroness,” there is no need to undo this coherence at the last minute to save the distance between the elements of character and setting. Taking place largely outside of the forces of capitalist modernity, “Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding” does not have to concern itself with depicting the alienation these forces impose on subjects, and thus is uninhibited in pursuing the coherence traditionally associated with aesthetic enjoyment.

In this sense, there is a certain nostalgia implicit in the collection, finding as it does that the life most conducive to aesthetic depiction is a life that is fast fading into the past, replaced by a less aesthetic modernity. This is not to say that Mansfield romanticizes the past; indeed, the provincial stories are more often than not concerned with how cruel these traditional societies can be, particularly toward women. Rather, the meaningful connections between character and world offered by the traditions of Frau Brechenmacher’s village Festsaal are simply not at odds with the artwork’s need for coherence, unlike the alienated dissonance between the young English narrator and Frau Fischer. The atomized society of the pension works against the short story’s drive to pull people and places together into a cohesive whole, if only for a moment, a problem much less acute in more traditional, integrated societies like the German village. This should be perhaps unsurprising, given Mansfield’s well-documented debt in her early work to the Aesthetic Movement, which, as Andrew Eastham notes, “saw itself from the outset as belated, looking back to the models of classical Greece, Renaissance Italy, and German Romanticism for an ideal of literary form and an image of the aesthetic life” (1). The Aesthetic Movement, with its belief that something essential had been lost as those earlier epochs gave way to modernity, viewed its own age as artistically poorer, resolving to

maintain a link to these more aesthetically fertile times against the influence of industrial civilization. While Mansfield here does not harken back to any era or movement in particular, she nevertheless seems to share, if unknowingly, the Aesthetes' conviction that modernity stands as uniquely inhospitable to artistic beauty, that the best way to achieve beauty in these conditions is to reach back into the past. *In a German Pension* manifests a kind of melancholy, finding the possibility for artistic beauty diminished in modernity compared to a previous era now vanishing.

The Aloe Plant: "Prelude" (1918/20)

Mansfield's move away from the alienated and aloof style of the pension stories did not go unnoticed by her contemporaries. Leonard Woolf would reflect years later that, "I think that in some abstruse way [John Middleton] Murry corrupted and perverted and destroyed Katherine both as a person and a writer. She was a very serious writer, but her gifts were those of an intense realist, with a superb sense of ironic humour and fundamental cynicism. She got enmeshed in the sticky sentimentality of Murry and wrote against the grain of her own nature" (204). Woolf saw in Mansfield's earlier work an arch and ironic detachment, informed by a "cynical" derision toward her characters' wants and behavior, which was eventually replaced by a more conciliatory attitude, that, to him, degraded her work. While Woolf attributes this change to Murry's bad influence, a more likely explanation is that the problems of maintaining a character's ironic detachment, as seen in the pension stories, motivated this shift. What Woolf saw as Mansfield's betrayal of her "true" style for something maudlin and saccharine can alternatively be viewed as an attempt by Mansfield to escape the aesthetic dead end of her earlier "cynical" style

and its demand that her characters' desires be foolishly at odds with reality, an attempt which required a more nuanced treatment of her characters' psyches.

Despite Woolf's verdict that Mansfield had fully given herself over to sentimentalism, early on her attempt to resolve the problems of depicting alienation tried to retain this cynicism, her characters still shown as deluded and out of touch. This is apparent in "Prelude," a longer story originally published by itself in a slim volume by the Woolfs' Hogarth Press in 1918 before being included in Mansfield's 1920 collection *Bliss and Other Stories*. The story follows a middle-class New Zealand family, the Burnells, as they move from town to a new house in the country and reflect on their lives as they settle in. Mansfield again focuses on the gulf between the psychic lives of her characters and the alien, indifferent reality they inhabit. Unlike in the pension stories, however, where this alienation is accepted and acknowledged by the narrator from the beginning, "Prelude" turns this distance between a character's psyche and their world into something that is discovered over the course of the story, resulting in a more dynamic main character than was possible in the pension stories. In doing so, the story is able to achieve a change in a character's perception and thus create a logical point on which to end, avoiding the problem that plagued the earlier stories. At the same time, it affirms the reality of alienation; instead of a character discovering the true meaning of a part of their world, they discover that their world is not meaningful at all.

The way this method structures the story can be seen as it reaches its climax. Strolling one evening through the new property's gardens, Linda Burnell, the family's mother, encounters her own mother, Mrs. Fairfield, taking in the moonlit scenery: "I have been looking at the aloe," said Mrs. Fairfield, 'I believe it is going to flower this

year. Look at the top there. Are those buds, or is it only an effect of the light?" Mrs. Fairfield offers the reader here an essentially objective, clear picture of the aloe itself, before the narrator picks up the image, noting, "the high grassy bank on which the aloe rested rose up like a wave, and the aloe seemed to ride upon it like a ship with the oars lifted." This extended simile serves as more than a vivid description of the scene before them; it is also functioning to connect Linda's fantasies to the reality of the aloe plant, evidenced as the narrator continues, "she dreamed that she was caught up out of the cold water into the ship with the lifted oars and the budding mast. Now the oars fell striking quickly, quickly. They rowed far away over the top of the garden trees, and the dark bush beyond. Ah, she heard herself cry: 'Faster, faster!' to those who were rowing" (*Bliss* 60). Linda sees in the aloe her fantasy of escape, imagining the plant as a ship which will rescue her, spiriting her away from the property and her life there. The phallic image of the "budding mast" grants Linda's fantasy an erotic connotation, as do the risen oars "striking quickly, quickly" the wet surface of the water, Linda's cry of "Faster, faster!" becoming in this context one of sexual enjoyment. This is in keeping with the story's depiction of their marriage as an unfulfilling one, Linda chafing at her husband's self-involvement. Linda's fantasy of escape would appear to be also a fantasy of sexual gratification, reflecting the fact that her stifling home life is also largely devoid of satisfaction.

As Linda moves closer to the aloe, the narrator remarks on how "looking at it from below she could see the long sharp thorns that edged the aloe leaves, and at the sight of them her heart grew hard... She particularly liked the long sharp thorns... Nobody would dare to come near the ship or dare to follow it" (*Bliss* 61, ellipses original). It is

here that the objective reality of the aloe begins to assert itself against the fantasy through which she sees it: while Linda appears to make these thorns part of her fantasy of her escape, in doing so these thorns work to undermine that fantasy by complicating its underlying sexual meaning, introducing the feature of pain to the otherwise pleasurable content of the fantasy. The appearance of these thorns in connection with her sexually-charged fantasy seems to remind Linda of the pain present in her own sex life, as she remarks to her mother shortly thereafter that “You know I’m very delicate. You know as well as I do that my heart is affected, and the doctor has told you I may die any moment. I have had three great lumps of children already...” (*Bliss* 62, ellipsis original). Linda here tacitly connects her ill health and suffering with her sexual relationship with her husband Stanley by way of the children the marriage produces, as without being sexually involved with him, she would not have to endure the pain of childbirth and risk her health. This would seem to counter Josiane Paccaud-Huguet’s contention that the aloe invites characters into an “arboreal epiphany” defined as “where the viewer [ie, the character] confronts a figure of the maternal object which is infinitely desirable,” the aloe a “figure of the imaginary maternal phallus” which brings characters to a place where “it is the sense of oceanic plentitude that stands out, beyond male or female sexual identity” (136). For Paccaud-Huguet, the sight of the aloe speaks to Linda of a pleasure that lies outside any rigid system of sexual difference by harkening back to the infantile fantasy of the uncastrated mother, which is the child’s image of the mother as having a penis and who lacks nothing, and can thus offer full enjoyment. However, against this understanding of the aloe as the emblem of an enjoyment beyond the framework of sexual difference, it appears by Linda’s linking it to childbirth that the pleasure promised by the aloe is a

specifically heterosexual one, and thus remaining within the confines of conventional sexual identities. The fantasy of the ship Linda entertains before the aloe is less one of obliterating the divisions of sex than it is one of finding enjoyment within a world marked by those divisions. In seeing the aloe plant up close, her erotic fantasy of escape is interrupted by a reminder of how painful her sexual experience tends to be in reality. Rather than holding the key to her escape from her current life, sexuality suddenly appears to Linda as one of the things in this current life tormenting her, the painful reality disrupting her fantasy. That the aloe offers such a reminder of reality over fantasy is supported when, after viewing the aloe, Linda reflects upon her relationship with her husband Stanley, with the narrator noting that “it had never been so plain to her as it was at this moment. There were all of her feelings for him, sharp and defined, one as true as the other. And there was this other, this hatred, just as real as the rest” (*Bliss* 62). The way the narrator describes these feelings, now apparent to Linda, as “sharp and defined,” recalls the thorns of the aloe, further connecting her encounter with the plant to both fantasies of enjoying the phallus and the disappointing reality which lies obscured beneath her fantasies of pleasure and escape. Facing the stark, bristling reality of the aloe which complicates Linda’s sexual fantasies, she catches a glimpse of the world beyond those fantasies, placing her living situation in a clear light.

This has the effect of turning the aloe into a symbol of alienation: when, standing before the aloe, Linda ruefully asks herself “what am I guarding myself for so preciously? I shall go on having children and the gardens will grow bigger and bigger” (*Bliss* 62-3), she is acknowledging the distance between her fantasies and the reality of her life; the physical world around her will proceed without any concern for what she

wants. The aloe, in resisting the desires Linda has connected it to, comes to stand for a reality beyond fantasy; in its ultimate indifference to her desires, the aloe comes to represent for Linda her alienation, the plant made relevant to her by the very fact that it communicates to her how irrelevant her desires are in a meaningless, inhuman world. In contrast to the narrator in "Frau Fischer," who begins the story feeling disconnected from the pension and finds nothing in Frau Fischer's ramblings to change that, for Linda this disconnection from her world comes as a revelation, resulting in an intense moment of insight where Linda connects with the material reality her fantasies had once clouded as she comes to finally understand it, creating coherence between the character and the setting in which the story plays out. Like Frau Brechenmacher, Linda is disabused of her fantasies about sex. Linda, however, is not granted by this experience a new and different meaning for the situation in which she lives, as Brechenmacher is, but rather realizes that her situation has no intrinsic meaning, that the estate is indifferent to her imaginings and desires. The story is thus able to end with an encounter that changes a character's perspective while at the same time not creating a meaningful relationship between character and setting, resulting in a coherence without meaning that would seem to nevertheless reinforce the character's alienation.

At the same time, Linda's encounter with the aloe also brings to light a limitation to this strategy. In order to show her overcoming her dreams and fantasies in front of the plant, the narrator must render these fantasies in fine detail; only after seeing Linda's imagined ship can the reader appreciate her rebuke of that ship in the name of the reality of the aloe. Yet, when Linda reaches her epiphany, this same fantasy, now richly rendered, must be excluded, jettisoned in favor of reality, by the same narrator who

introduced it into the story, precisely at the climactic moment where one would expect all of the different parts of the story finally to be drawn together. The strategy employed in “Prelude” thus creates coherence between a character and their setting at the cost of abandoning any such coherence between that setting and the character’s richly rendered psychic life. In service of the story’s climax, the narrator must sunder what the reader expects to be brought together, diminishing somewhat the effectiveness of the story’s conclusion.

The story itself seems to concede this point as it closes. Coming immediately after Linda’s climactic encounter with the aloe, the story’s denouement finds Kezia, Linda’s younger daughter, standing at the vanity in her aunt Beryl’s bedroom, where the child “unscrewed a little pot of cream and sniffed it. Under her arm she carried a very dirty calico cat” (*Bliss*, 69) Beryl leaves the room, and the girl “set the cat up on the dressing table and stuck the top of the cream jar over its ear,” showing the cat itself in Beryl’s mirror. In response,

“the calico cat was so overcome by the sight that it toppled backwards and bumped and bumped on the floor. And the top of the cream jar flew through the air and rolled like a penny in a round on the linoleum- and did not break. But for Kezia it had broken the moment it flew through the air, and she picked it up, hot all over, and put it back on the dressing table.

Then she tiptoed away, far too quickly and airily... (*B* 69-70, ellipsis original)

Kezia ignores the fact that the jar lid is clearly not broken, instead convinced that it had been damaged, but by falling rather than by landing on the floor. Her conviction would seem to stem from the reoccurring nightmare she spoke of early in the story, stating that “I often dream that animals rush at me- even camels- and while they are rushing, their heads swell e-enormous” (B 10). Falling backwards from the mirror, the stuffed cat would look to Kezia to be rushing toward her, calling to mind her fearful dreams. Confusing this fear for the fear of being punished for damaging Beryl’s things, Kezia is thus certain the lid is broken. This interpretation of Kezia’s reaction is reinforced by the fact that it was the moment the lid went flying, while the cat rushed toward her, and not when the lid hit the ground, that Kezia considered it broken. Kezia’s dreams are thus seemingly manifested before her, embodied in the incident at the vanity, the event thus meaningful, if misunderstood.

The story thus ends on a curious note, effectively reasserting the kind of confusion of fantasy with reality that it had just dispelled, even as the narrator assures the reader that the two are nevertheless distinct. This otherwise mystifying ending makes sense, however, when it is understood as an attempt at compromise, the story trying to have it both ways, with the psychic lives of its characters tied to physical objects while their separation is nonetheless acknowledged by the narrator so as to depict these characters as alienated; the narrator attaches Kezia’s dreams to the stuffed cat and the jar lid while at the same time asserting the distance between the two. Kezia’s scene at the story’s end seems to revert back to the correspondence between mind and material seen before Linda’s epiphany about her alienation, while still holding on to the implications of that epiphany. The story is unwilling to end on Linda’s sudden realization of how

disconnected her desires are from the life she lives, and rather attempts some reconnection between these two spheres as the story ends, even while maintaining the fact of general alienation. In looking to conclude on a conflation of psychic and material realities while still speaking to the characters' fundamental alienation, the ending of "Prelude" attests to the limitations of Mansfield's strategy in this story, while also foreshadowing her turn to the uncanny in later collections.

"A Dream-- a Wa-kening": *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922)

By turning Linda's alienation into a revelation, "Prelude" can be seen as attempting to avoid the weak endings that plagued the pension stories while maintaining their commitment to depicting alienation. Although this revelation creates for the story an intense, climactic encounter connecting the character to her world and thus serving as a fitting ending, it does so at the price of leaving that character's psyche unreconciled to the story's other elements. It is only with *The Garden Party and Other Stories* that Mansfield seems able to remedy the dissonance between the characters and settings of her stories that had worked to undermine their endings while still allowing her to depict these characters as fundamentally alienated. This is accomplished by the use of the uncanny in creating a climactic moment that ties together the character, their desires and fantasies, and the world they inhabit as the story comes to a close. By structuring the stories of *The Garden Party* around a character's uncanny encounter, Mansfield achieves a coherence between these elements and can thus more effectively bring her stories to a conclusion.

The titular story of the collection, in which a well-to-do family learns in the midst of hosting a lavish party that a poor worker living nearby has died in an accident,

foreshadows this death by having Meg, one of the family's daughters, play at the piano a song that goes "This Life is Wee-ary,/ A Tear—A Sigh./A Love that Chan-ges/ This Life is Wee-ary/ A Tear—A Sigh/ A Love that Chan-ges, And then...Goodbye/.../ This Life is Wee-ary/ Hope comes to Die/ A Dream—a Wa-kening" (*GP* 42-3). While this melancholy song seems out of place among the general gaiety of the party preparations, it both hints at the tragic events later in the story (as well as the family's flippant reaction to it, as sorrow is just a song to test the piano), and leaves off with a curious moment, likening the sorrows of life to both a dream and an awakening. Either image, on its own, would have made sense within the song's logic: life's happiness is as fleeting as a dream; life offers a cruel rebuff, waking us from our cherished hopes. In each of these, too, one can hear echoes of the distinction between psychic and material reality Mansfield relies upon for the climax in "Prelude:" our lives are lived largely within our dreams and fantasies; life itself works to wake us from our dreams. Presenting them side by side, however, and equating the sorrow in life to our dreaming and our waking, the song creates a paradox, comparing the same thing to two seemingly contradictory states. The response that the song is claiming that life encompasses both of these states, is made up of both, misses both the fact that equating life with one of its aspects, sorrow, is the song's entire logic and, that the line itself gives no indication of an "and" or anything else to imply combination. Instead, the dash between "Dream" and "a Wa-kening" would seem to speak to a conflation of these two states. The song would appear to not only foreshadow the death, but also to characterize the coming encounter with it as a moment of "waking sleep," an uncanny moment in which the subject's waking life suddenly

following the dream-logic that combines hidden material and what represses it, in the process blurring the line between the subject's mind and the outside world.

The significance of this foreshadowing is lost on Laura, another of the family's daughters and the story's protagonist, since she feels largely detached from her family and their preoccupation with entertaining, seen in her assumption that her mother would be the one making decisions around the party preparations (*GP* 38). This detachment is further evidenced by Laura's quickness in deciding of the workmen that "she would get on much better with men like these," rather than her own friends and relatives, the narrator noting that "she felt just like a work-girl" (*GP* 40), as she eats her breakfast in front of them; her sudden identification with the working people she in reality shares little with indicates how little she identifies with her own place in society, suggesting a feeling of disconnection with the comfortable environs and social pretensions of her family home. While Paccaud-Huguet holds this to mean that "the absurdity of class distinctions is unbearable to Laura" (134), it would appear rather that she finds these distinctions fascinating, and is looking to find a place within the class system where she can feel like she belongs, implying a lack of such a place in her own privileged existence. Although Laura may indeed enjoy the party, she is, in this sense, similar to the narrator in "Frau Fischer," keeping her distance from a place which seems to hold little of value for her.

This distance from her surroundings vanishes as Laura is deeply affected by the news of the death, and volunteers to take some leftovers to the newly-widowed Mrs. Scott. Upon arrival, the widow's sister shows Laura the young man's body, the narrator describing her experiencing it as:

...a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under those closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden parties and baskets and lace frocks mean to him? He was far from all of those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. (*GP* 51)

It is crucial to note that nowhere in this passage is it mentioned that the young man is indeed dead, implying a reluctance on Laura's part to accept this fact. The presence of the phrase "never wake him up again" is particularly important, as it points to the use of sleep less to describe death than as a way to obscure it, the possibility of his waking contradicting and covering over death's permanence. Seeing the dead body as only sleeping, Laura seems suddenly unwilling to acknowledge the very thing that brought her to this cottage, the demise of this young man. And unlike in the final scene of "Prelude," the narrator does not intervene to reassure the reader of the reality of the situation, allowing instead for Laura's refusal to accept the death to come to the fore.

The cause of this strange refusal is alluded to by the very phrase that most signals it: a belief that it is somehow possible for the young man to "wake" from his death. It is a fear that the dead can return to the living that, for Freud, accounts for the fact that "in hardly any other sphere has our thinking and feeling changed so little since primitive times," stemming from the fact that "our unconscious is still as unreceptive as ever to the idea of our own mortality," ("Uncanny" 242). The unconscious cannot imagine its own demise or, by extension, the demise of others, with the comparison to sleep suggested by

the fact that sleep is likely the closest approximation to death that the unconscious can grasp; the unarticulated beliefs that stood beneath the ancient fears of the dead's return are still extant in even the modern psyche. In the passage's description of the young man's body, what would appear to be interfering with an objective picture of his death is Laura's unconscious disbelief in death's reality, the metaphoric comparison to sleep a reflection of her psyche's inability to see death as anything else.

Laura's experience of the body is thus distorted by the presence of her unconscious beliefs. Yet, this distortion alone cannot account for the uncanniness of this moment of the story. For Hanson, what makes this encounter uncanny is it allows the violence and bloodshed of the wider world, a world so recently rent by global war, to invade a domestic sphere assumed safe from such carnage, she notes that "Mansfield here dramatizes the traumatic intrusion of death into the space of the non-combatant who nonetheless, as Freud well knew, could suffer extreme mental distress during wartime," ("Uncanniness" 125). Stripped of its sense of safety, the home becomes properly "unhome-like," or uncanny. Yet, in this case, it is unclear why a contemporary reader, far removed from the Great War and thus much less sensitive to the echoes of its young dead in the body of the workman, would find this moment at all uncanny. Rather, to understand why the appearance of the young man's body strikes the reader as uncanny, this moment must be placed within its context in the story.

The story begins with the women of the family making preparations for the large party to be held on the family's property that afternoon, preparations which require the very middle class girls to interact with the markedly proletarian workmen setting up for the party. Laura's sister Meg, the narrator tells us, "could not possibly go and supervise

the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking coffee in a green turban, with a dark curl stamped on each cheek,” while her other sister, Jose, “always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.” In response to this, Laura is told by her mother that she’ll have to deal with the workmen (*GP* 38). Both Meg and Jose are described as too exposed, too undressed, to interact with the workmen, who because of this immediately carry the suggestion of sexuality. While Laura’s mother claims that it is because Laura “is the artistic one,” the narrator makes it clear that Laura’s duty is the result of her sisters’ skimpy clothing. The workers are thus not to be enticed, implying that they are viewed as sexually volatile and easily provoked by any hint of uncovered flesh.

This supposed sexuality is not lost on Laura, who, observing the men, is shown thinking, “they looked impressive. Laura wished now that she was not holding that piece of bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it, and she couldn’t possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short sighted as she came up to them” (*GP* 38). Laura greets the workmen with a blush, traditionally associated with sexual arousal, and is frustrated that she does not feel as impressive to them, eating her bread and butter, as they do to her. Any objection that Laura simply wants to seem authoritative around the workmen falters when, in response to a rather expressive, but hardly vulgar, statement from one of the workmen about a marquee hitting one “bang slap in the eye,” the narrator notes that “Laura’s upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye” (*GP* 39). Laura finds something offensive about this turn of phrase, especially coming out of the mouth of a workman. While at first it appears possible that it is the

violent implications of the phrase that she finds off-putting, it is not clear why this is any more offensive voiced by a workman than anyone else; would not any violence alluded to in such a turn of phrase be offensive to Laura regardless of who used it? If, instead, Laura's objection to the phrase lies in its closeness to a euphemism for sexual activity, it becomes clearer why the fact that a workman is using it makes it more scandalous. It is, after all, her "upbringing" that makes her find it offensive, an upbringing shaped by a mother who herself seems to consider workmen to be particularly lascivious. Thus, Laura only finds it objectionable when spoken by a workman because she more readily associates the workman with sexuality; a workman saying "bang" is more likely to spark for Laura a sexual connotation, as the workman for Laura is more connected to sexuality.

As the workmen go off to begin their tasks, the narrator states that "only one tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell" (*GP* 40). This display of sensual enjoyment by the workman immediately resonates with Laura: "when Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that—caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have done such a thing. Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and came to Sunday night supper?" (*GP* 40). Laura, impressed by the sight of the workman's open sensuality, is immediately reminded of the young men in her circle, those whose dancing and dining with her imply their romantic intentions, and how she finds them wanting. The workman's attention to the smell on his fingers is for Laura a sign of a concern for delicacy and pleasure that seems to her woefully lacking in those who would be her potential lovers. The workman,

and then the workmen more generally, come to represent for Laura an easy sensuality alien to her own experience.

When, back inside the house, Laura indulges in the quiet pleasures of her bedroom, it would seem that she is taking her cue from this workman, attentive to the sensuality of her surroundings while the house is prepared for festivities: “She was still, listening. All of the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices... But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this?” The sounds of the house are here like the workman’s lavender, small moments of delight often ignored by those who live in the house; Laura seems to emulate the workman’s concern for these small sources of pleasure by stopping in the midst of the general activity and indulging in what others seem to pass by. And, according to the narrator, she is not disappointed in what she finds, noticing that, “little faint winds were playing chase in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it” (*GP* 41). In a seemingly short period of time, Laura’s surroundings take on the intense luster of enjoyment, as she finds herself enthralled by the simple stimuli of these surroundings. Her experience of the “warm little silver star” on the inkpot depicts something of ecstasy, as Laura’s delight gives way to an attraction, the feeling of warmth, and the desire to embrace the node of light in orgasmic culmination of her enjoyment, implying that her time in repose on her bed had a hidden, masturbatory purpose. Lying alone in her room, Laura experiences an autoerotic pleasure

suggested to her by the young workman's open sensuality, a sensuality that motivates her to self-satisfaction.

Laura's erotic interest in the young workmen helps explain her otherwise strange excitement upon learning about the death of one living nearby, the recently deceased young man and the sensual workmen from earlier likely converging in her mind. As a result, she displays a certain ambivalence toward the news, the socially-expected pity and grief mingled with a restlessness at contemplating the young man's body, bringing to her mind the body of the young workman from that morning who had so excited her. Laura's eagerness to deliver food to the young widow reflects this ambivalence, as it allows her to at once pay her respects while affording her proximity to an object of sexual fascination. However, as is the case with objects of desire, excitement often turns into anxiety when they are approached too closely; Laura, once eager, is suddenly apprehensive upon reaching the shanty where the body rests awaiting burial. She "was terribly nervous... Oh, to be away from this! She actually said 'God, help me,' as she walked up the tiny path and knocked," and is hesitant when invited to view the body itself, the narrator noting that "Laura only wanted to get out, to get away" (*GP* 50). Stepping into the bedroom, Laura is confronted by the eroticized body of her young workman in the broken body laid out before her on the bed.

The presence of her fantasy within this mournful scene helps explain why Laura, in her thoughts as voiced by the narrator, is so insistent that the body before her never be awoken, as the prospect of his waking, a real possibility to an unconscious unconvinced of death, threatens to fully realize this fantasy of a well-muscled young working man in bed before her, which likely crossed her mind as she lay in masturbatory bliss in her own

bedroom. Indeed, the image of this young man lying quietly on the bed recalls nothing so much as Laura herself as she lay in autoerotic enjoyment. Their similarity is supported by Laura's thinking "What does he care for garden parties?", a strange thing to say about the deceased unless she saw in him her own retreat from her family's party preparations into the self-pleasure of her own room. The body before her, then, not only reminds Laura of her fantasies but also the autoerotic pleasure accompanying these fantasies. That she sees the body as resting, as "asleep," harkens to the "rest" she took earlier in her bedroom, justifying her quiet pleasures forbidden to a well-brought-up girl of her class under the guise of sleeping. Her pleasure is displaced onto the idea of sleep, resulting in the description of her time at "rest" taking on an erotic charge, as seen in such moments as, "It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it." This seemingly restless rest becomes more understandable when it is seen as taking on the autoerotic enjoyment of her fantasies of the workman, thus becoming a less scandalous replacement and substitute for her indulgence in those fantasies.

Sleep, then, would seem to hold contradictory meanings for Laura, hiding her sexual desires even while threatening to return those same desires to the surface: it is under the conceit of "sleep" that she hid her enjoyment of her fantasy, yet if asleep, the young man can then awaken, bringing her fantasy to life right before her. It is this contradiction that she is confronted by in the young man's body, which strongly alludes to her fantasies while reminding her of the thing that was supposed to hide her enjoyment of these fantasies. Laura's masturbatory fantasies coincide with the state of sleep that obscured them, as she confronts in the corpse her desires for young workmen and the self-pleasure inspired by those desires, alongside the very figure of sleep that was supposed to make

this confrontation impossible. It is for this reason the corpse is here encountered as deeply uncanny: in this corpse, Laura sees both her repressed fantasy of the workman and the sleep meant to hide that fantasy together, combined without one or the other being cancelled out. The fantasy survives alongside the substitute seeking to replace it, leaving the work of repression exposed before Laura.

Laura's uncanny moment with the corpse ties together the events of the story, recalling the party preparations and her own retreat from them, with Laura's psychic life, creating coherence between them. Unlike the aloe in "Prelude," the corpse does not so much disabuse the protagonist of her fantasies as manifest them directly before her, conflating psychic with material reality rather than asserting an unbridgeable gap between them. The climax of "The Garden Party" is thus able to integrate Laura's psychic life with the events of the story, in contrast to "Prelude," where Linda's desires and fantasies must be cast aside and left unreconciled in its climactic moment in order to connect character to setting. At the same time, this connection does not diminish Laura's essential alienation from the impoverished cottages or her own comfortable middle class life, allowing that alienation to persist even as she is changed by her encounter; in its uncanniness, the young man's body is strangely affecting, speaking to Laura's psyche without reconciling her to her material surroundings.

At the same time, this encounter with the uncanny does not result in Laura overcoming her feelings of alienation. Looking on the young man's body, she is struck by the meaninglessness of the world she inhabits, the narrator noting, "what did garden parties and baskets and lace frocks mean to him? He was far from all those things" and that "while they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to

the lane” (*GP* 51). Laura contrasts the frivolity and emptiness of their gaiety to the serene detachment of the corpse, finding him “wonderful” and “beautiful” and leaving her as at odds with her lush existence as before, if not more so. Although this uncanny moment has created coherence between character and setting, it has nonetheless left the character’s alienation intact.

The uncanny also creates such coherence, albeit perhaps more subtlety, in another of the collection’s stories, “The Daughters of the Late Colonel.” In it, adult sisters Constantia and Josephine, having recently lost their father, try to grapple with his death while seeming unconvinced that he is actually gone, their disbelief a source of humor for the story. The narrator maintains an ironic distance from the sisters’ fear of their father’s wrath, noting, for instance, at the funeral that “neither of them could believe that father was never coming back. Josephine had had a moment of absolute terror at the cemetery, while the coffin was lowered, to think that she and Constantia had done this without asking his permission” (*GP* 57). Josephine cannot fathom that she would not, at some point, have to answer to her father, creating the absurd moment where she frets having to explain to him her part in burying him. At this early part of the story, the narrator remains objective, presenting these fears as belonging entirely to the daughters, reassuring the reader that, objectively, they have little to fear from the old man at this point. In contrast to the climactic moment of “The Garden Party,” where the narrator does not step in to remind the reader that Laura’s sleeping young man is indeed dead, here Josephine’s fear is clearly distinguished by the narrator from the world around her. Thus, her experience remains absurd, at extreme odds with the reality, rather than becoming surreal.

However, one should pause to ask, what exactly are Josephine and her sister afraid of in regard to their father? The apparent answer is that they fear his finding out that they are treating him as though he were dead, burying him as though he had passed away. In this sense, the daughters fear their father taking offense to their acknowledging his demise. Yet, this reading seems undermined earlier in the story when, while lying in bed, Constantia asks, “Do you think we ought to have our dressing-gowns dyed as well?,” feeling they too should be black, as “it doesn’t seem quite sincere, in a way, to wear black out of doors and when we’re fully dressed, and then when we’re at home-- ” (*GP* 52). Constantia feels that, in not wearing black around the house, their mourning is not convincing enough. That Constantia would want to her grief on display in the house she had shared with her father, even, as Josephine remarks, “nobody will see us,” makes sense if she still feels her father’s eyes upon her, and wishes for him to witness their grieving for him. It is before her father, in this case, that Constantia feels insincere, as he sees them change out of their mourning clothes whenever at home with him. This would seem to receive some support in Josephine’s response; although she speaks incredulously, the narrator notes that, when it was mentioned, “she gave the bedclothes such a twitch that both her feet became uncovered” (*GP* 52), pulling the covers more closely over the part of her body covered by the dressing-gown, as though she found herself suddenly embarrassed at the fact that it was not black. Josephine too, it appears, feels as though her father still inhabits the house, and expects their mourning of him to be complete and honest.

The contradiction exposed here, the daughters at once wanting to appear to their father to mourn him properly but not so much so that he seems really gone and unable to

witness their mourning, is responsible for much of the story's conflict. This contradiction is on display when the two enter their father's bedroom to clear out his belongings. The narrator notes, "it had been a rule for years never to disturb father in the morning, whatever happened. And now they were going to open the door without knocking even... Constantia's eyes were enormous at the idea; Josephine felt weak in the knees" (*GP* 58). The prospect of entering is approached as though their father were still present to enforce his rules for the house, leading them to step softly, and keep their voices down upon entering (*GP* 59). Although terrified of going against their late father's will, the sisters nonetheless attempt to go about the normal mourning routine of removing and packing away the deceased belongings. This conundrum appears a strange one: after all, if they feel their father still very much present in the house, so much so that they regard his rules as still in effect, why bother with packing away his belongings at all? What would serve as appropriate motivation? Much like the daughters' nightdresses, the room would likely go unseen by others, and like the nightdresses, clearing the room is a gesture of mourning they do not want to forgo because it is directed at the one person who could conceivably see, their deceased father. To placate their father, they therefore must transgress his will. This dilemma leads Josephine to hesitate before the drawers, the narrator noting, "how could she explain to Constantia that father was in the chest of drawers? He was in the top drawer with his handkerchiefs and neckties, or in the next with his shirts and pajamas, or in the lowest with his suits. He was watching there, hidden away—just behind the door handle—ready to spring" (*GP* 59). Opening the drawers, and thus continuing to remove the items therein, means inciting their father's wrath; and yet, feeling that her father is observing her, Josephine cannot bring herself to evade this wrath by simply leaving the

room. Under her father's eyes, she is able neither to meddle in his belongings nor leave the room and shirk the responsibilities of mourning, leaving her stuck.

Josephine finally communicates this hesitance to her sister, adding, "But—it seems so weak," to which Constantia responds "But why not be weak for once, Jug?... Let's be weak—be weak. It's much nicer to be weak than to be strong" (*GP* 60, ellipsis original). From this exchange, one would assume that Constantia is advocating they leave the belongings alone, allowing their fear of their father to dictate their actions. Yet, Constantia appears to immediately contradict that, as "she marched over to the wardrobe, turned the key, and took it out of the lock. Took it out of the lock and held it up to Josephine, showing Josephine by her extraordinary smile that she knew what she'd done, she'd risked deliberately father being in there among his overcoats" (*GP* 60). Against expectation, Constantia, while counseling weakness, unlocks the wardrobe, something that would appear to require the strength to overcome their terror at the thought of disobeying their father. What, then, is the weakness that Constantia gives into by opening the wardrobe and risking their father's punishment? This rather abrupt turn begins to make sense if one views Constantia as referring not to the weakness of being cowed by their father into obeying but the weakness of being unable to continue obeying their father now that he is gone. Instead of weakness before their father's irresistible presence, it refers to weakness before his resounding absence.

In light of the daughters' dilemma, this otherwise inexplicable scene makes sense: caught between the temptation to perform their mourning for their dead father and to allow that mourning to render him gone and unable to see them, "weakness" can refer to moving too far in either direction. In this case, it is giving in to the latter. Yet, while this

understanding illuminates Constantia's behavior, the scene's ending remains mysterious. After Constantia opens the wardrobe, the narrator remarks, "nothing happened. Only the room seemed quieter than ever, the bigger flakes of cold air fell on Josephine's shoulders and knees. She began to shiver" (*GP* 60). Josephine, whose knees were shaking before they entered the room, is shown shaking once again, betraying a similar dread. Although what she feared earlier has not come to pass, she nevertheless remains terrified. Her sister's response is even more strange, "'Come, Jug,' said Constantia, still with that awful callous smile, and Josephine followed just as she had the last time, when Constantia had pushed Benny into the round pond" (*GP* 60). Constantia, with her wicked smile, seems to register some sense of transgression, comparable to a piece of playful cruelty committed against their father's friend. Yet it is not clear why she would feel such guilty pleasure, as her father, the figure before whom she would likely feel any guilt for her pleasurable act, has just been shown absent. At the very moment that one would expect her guilt to vanish along with her father, Constantia recognizes, with perverse glee, a transgression where one would seem impossible. What could possibly account for the guilt that pleases Constantia and terrifies Josephine?

Grasping this means grasping the sisters' motivation for performing grief for their father in the first place. In the very next scene, the two decide to send their father's watch to the aforementioned Benny, who is stationed in Sri Lanka. Fearing the watch will be stolen in transit, Josephine resolves to make the package appear as though it contains something else. The narrator notes that

"she liked the idea of having to make a parcel such a curious shape that no could possibly guess what it was. She even thought for a

moment of hiding the watch in a narrow cardboard corset-box that she'd kept by her for a long time, waiting for it to come in for something. It was such beautiful firm cardboard. But, no, it wouldn't be appropriate for this occasion. It had lettering on it:

Medium Women's 28. Extra Firm Busks" (GP 61, italics original).

Josephine is at first excited at the prospect of hiding the watch, rendering this reminder of her father unrecognizable. The narrow box that she considers for the task can only bring to mind the coffin that the two had, while greatly conflicted, buried their father in only recently. Similarly here, Josephine is suddenly wracked with doubt and fear, at once wanting to go forward and place the reminder of her father from view while at same time hesitant to remove her father from his vantage on their mourning of him. Like burial, making the watch unrecognizable obscures the feeling of their father's presence, as does sending it across the sea to Benny. That the hesitance to do so comes here in the form of a reminder of the corset is telling. Josephine's own reasoning, relayed by the narrator as "It would almost be too much of a shock for Benny to open that and find father's watch inside" (GP 61), feels like a non-sequitur, more of a feeble rationalization than a compelling reason. Rather, the corset and the box it came in likely once belonged to their mother, who died while they were young, which would explain Josephine's desire to keep it "by her for a long time," implying some sentimental attachment leading her to want it nearby. The thought of ridding themselves of a reminder of their father seems to be immediately accompanied by a reminder of their mother, the lettering on the box calling to mind their mother's presence and body. This reminder would appear an uncomfortable one, given that it results in Josephine deciding not only against using the corset box, but

against sending the watch to Benny at all. Instead, it is decided that the watch go to their nephew Cyril, an occasional visitor to the house for tea, therefore keeping it close by, rather than sending it off to Benny. The sisters resolve to preserve their father's presence, as his absence is accompanied by disquieting recollections of their mother.

The dynamic dramatized here points to an explanation for the otherwise odd guilt the sisters feel before the opened wardrobe. In disobeying their father's rules with impunity and thus rendering him effectively absent in that moment, Constantia makes it impossible for their father to "see" them mourning him, resulting in guilt in regard to their late mother. That memories of their mother would be accompanied by guilt is not surprising, given how young they were when she died. Freud holds that a young girl's relationship with her mother is often marked by "a hostility which develops in the child towards her mother in consequence of the manifold restrictions imposed by the latter in the course of training and bodily care" ("Female" 227). The daughter resents her mother for her demands that the girl give up sources of sexual satisfaction deemed inappropriate. This resentment drives the girl away from the mother to whom she had been previously deeply attached and toward her father, who serves as a replacement, Freud noting that "a woman's strong dependence on her father merely takes over the heritage of an equally strong attachment to her mother" ("Female" 227). This same resentment also fuels a wish in the child to be rid of her mother; in the event that this wish is granted, as with Constantia and Josephine, guilt naturally follows, as though the child's wish had made it so. From this perspective, the daughters' deep devotion to their father the Colonel becomes understood as displaced love of their mother, love that has been exaggerated to assuage the guilt they feel over her death. By lavishing care and admiration on their

father, the two are trying to keep at bay self-accusations regarding their mother's demise. Because of this, when their father is felt absent and thus unable to witness their mourning, the guilt associated with their mother returns.

This reading finds support in the story's climactic scene, where the sisters reflexively jump to chase away a street performer making his rounds in front of the house, as they always did at their father's request, when "in the street below a barrel organ struck up" (*GP* 67). Yet it is here when the full force of their father's death finds the sisters, with the narrator noting:

Then they remembered. It didn't matter. They would never have to stop the organ- grinder again... Never would sound that loud, strange bellow when father thought they were not hurrying enough. The organ-grinder could play there all day and the stick would not thump.

It will never thump again,

It will never thump again,

the barrel organ played. (*GP* 68)

The first thing to be noted here is the narrator's move from the ironic distance which marked much of the story to something more sympathetic; rather than play Josephine's perspective off against the reality that it seems divorced from, such as during the funeral or the sisters' excursion into their father's room, the narrator instead seems to take on her perspective. As in the climactic moment of "The Garden Party," the reader is forced to share in the apparent conflation of the characters' thoughts and their surroundings. That it is the organ-grinder manifesting the sisters' psychic life in their material reality may seem

odd, given how abruptly the street-performer appears in the story. Unlike “The Garden Party,” that more or less clearly foreshadowed the young man’s body with the presence of the workmen in the story’s beginning, the reader is less primed for the climax of “The Daughters of the Late Colonel,” the organ-grinder feeling like a sudden and late addition to the story’s logic. The climax relies on an importance for the organ-grinder, an importance that makes it more able than either their father’s funeral or his personal effects to bring home the reality of his death, which the story does not seem to establish. However, while looking at first blush like a *deus ex machina*, the organ-grinder subtly recalls the scene with the corset box, as the encounter with the street performer manifests the dynamic revealed when Josephine contemplates mailing the watch.

The organ-grinder is linguistically connected to the same glimpse of the sisters’ mother Josephine had earlier. Firstly, the street performer, or “busker,” recalls the word “busks” printed so prominently on the outside of the box that made it an inappropriate vessel for their father’s watch. Secondly, the instrument is described as a “barrel-organ,” which recalls the popular barrel-shape style of corset, further connecting the scene of the corset box that occasioned Josephine to reconsider sending their father’s watch away. In addition, the term “organ-grinder” itself alludes to the much-circulated notion attributing organ damage in women to the constrictive nature of corsets⁴. The organ-grinder would

⁴Despite a tendency to think that worries about the health hazards of corsets are a more contemporary phenomenon, these concerns had already long been circulating in the public discourse by the early twentieth century. Valerie Steele notes, “*The Lancet*, Britain’s most important medical journal, published more than an article a year from the late 1860’s to the early 1890’s on the medical dangers of tight-lacing,” including dangers to the wearer’s heart, lungs, and kidneys, among other ailments (67).

therefore appear to be manifesting their mother's death, and their feelings in regard to it, in reality by way of memories of her corset.

Why the corset would hold such a powerful association with their mother is hinted at later in this scene. While listening to the organ-grinder play, "Josephine remembered standing on a chair and pointing out [their late mother's] feather boa to Constantia and telling her that it was the snake that had killed their mother in Ceylon" (*GP* 69). This memory shows how, in the sisters' minds, their mother's death is connected to her feather boa, the snake that killed her thus becoming itself a "boa," a snake renowned for its ability to constrict and squeeze its prey. The constrictor, thought of by the sisters to have killed their mother, brings to mind the corset that also squeezed their mother's body. Their mother's sudden death, the cause of the sisters' guilt, becomes associated with constriction, which calls to mind the constriction of the body performed by her corset. The corset, alluding to their mother's death, seems to come to life in the form of the barrel organ and the organ grinder operating it.

It is no coincidence that the linguistic nature of these connections resembles nothing so much as the function of the dream-work, treating things and their names as inseparable and creating bundles of associations built on seemingly arbitrary similarities between words. Indeed, such an incursion of dream-logic into waking life is a hallmark of the uncanny. What faces the sisters in the organ-grinder is the condensation of their feelings of guilt surrounding their mother's death, and the extreme loyalty to their father that was meant to replace and hide this guilt. By obeying their father and performing the duties expected of good daughters, up to and including mourning one's parents, the sisters attempt to shield themselves from their lingering sense of being complicit in their

mother's death. As the organ-grinder's song continues, Constantia asks her sister, "'do you know what day it is? It's Saturday. It's a week today, a whole week.' *A week since father died/ A week since father died* cried the barrel organ" (GP 68). The barrel organ's repetition of their mourning of their father ("It will never thump again," "A week since father died") puts their mourning in the mouth of one representing their feelings of guilt surrounding their mother, the sisters encountering their guilt about their mother and the exaggerated loyalty to their father meant to hide that guilt at the same time, these opposed features of their psychic lives coinciding. What the sisters hear in the organ-grinder's song are the mechanisms of their psychic lives, their guilt and its repression, laid bare before them, in a manner that makes these mechanisms indistinguishable from the material reality surrounding them. This appearance of the hidden along with that which was supposed to hide it, making processes of the psyche evident within the very fabric of the supposedly indifferent material world, accounts for the uncanniness of the organ-grinder's playing.

The uncanniness of the organ-grinder, establishing the scene's importance both to the sisters and to the story's earlier scenes, offers a means for the climax to tie together the story's various elements, including the psychic lives of the sisters. Unlike Linda in front of the aloe in "Prelude," Constantia and Josephine do not experience connection with their material surroundings when their psychic lives fail to correspond to reality, but when it corresponds too closely, forcing an encounter with that psychic life instead of shunting it aside. Experiencing the uncanny, the sisters find their surroundings significant to their psychic lives. At the same time, it is a significance that heightens rather than diminishes their experience of alienation: as the story closes, the sisters find themselves

questioning the life they had built in their father's house, their recollections bringing the story to a close on a note of missed opportunity that works to make their time there the result of blind happenstance instead of conscious attachment. In their uncanny moment, alienation and conflation coincide, leaving the sisters at once deeply connected to the house by way of its manifestation of their psychic fantasies, and at the same time alienated from it by way of the revelation that a combination of guilt and circumstance brought them there. In lieu of conscious significance, the house becomes important to the sisters by means of their unconscious.

Conclusion

Contrary to Leonard Woolf's assessment that the change in Katherine Mansfield's writing over her career was a betrayal of true style, Mansfield's development can be seen as a succession of attempts to address the problem of depicting alienation in the short story, the sentimentalism Woolf sees in her later work in fact an effort to reconcile the psyches and emotions of her characters to their surroundings. This effort reaches its apex in her embrace of the uncanny in her later stories, which reconciles these elements of the story by directly manifesting the character's psychic life in the material world with which they are otherwise at odds. In "The Garden Party," for instance, Laura is linked to the world she feels detached from not by finding any meaning in it, but by finding the forces of her unconscious manifested in it. In stark contrast to her earliest stories, where alienation was portrayed with little effort to mitigate its effect on the story's structure, these later stories are able to facilitate the coherent, cohesive endings expected of short stories, without sacrificing their clear picture of alienated life. With the uncanny at their

center, these stories written near the end of Mansfield's life are able to navigate the seemingly contradictory demands placed on them.

This understanding of Mansfield's development not only informs the interpretation of the individual stories, but also illuminates how these stories relate to their historical context. Their adaptation of the uncanny, a response to the social and economic conditions of the time in which they were written, situates them as the product of a specific moment in literature, when many writers were seeking a way to integrate the experience of life under an increasingly modernized and capitalistic world into literary forms developed under very different circumstances. As such, the uncanny in Katherine Mansfield's stories indicates a concrete link between the conditions of the time period and the condition of the short story form.

Conclusion

Hugh Haughton, in his introduction to Penguin's collection of Freud essays titled *The Uncanny*, states that "psychoanalysis after the First World War increasingly conjures up a Gothic closet, an uncanny double, at the heart of modernity"(xlii). This is nowhere more at work than in its exploration of the uncanny, a concept which is "a paradoxical mark of modernity. It is associated with moments when an author, fictional character, or reader experiences the return of the primitive in an apparently modern and secular context. For Freud as uncanny theorist, however, this is also a survival from the abandoned psychic culture of our own childhood" (xlix). The uncanny does not simply rebuke the present in favor of the past, but rather injects the present with the past, the subject's personal history in the form of repressed content invading the current moment and giving a sense that something "archaic" has arisen within their contemporary life. In doing so, it creates the strange sensation that what had passed away somehow persists, and that what was taken as new is somehow very old. It involves a coincidence between past and present that at the same time confuses the two, which disrupts the subject's sense of linear time.

Fittingly, the uncanny is called upon to do just this when it is used in these modernist texts, to erase the gulf between literary forms of the past and a disenchanted modernity. In both Lawrence and Mansfield, the discordant world of the present is made to appear, if momentarily, like the more integrated world of the past, and thus more conducive to forms like the novella and short story, by the appearance of the uncanny. Yet, the intrinsic strangeness of the *unheimlich* preserves how alien the world feels to the modern subject inhabiting it. In creating a paradoxical "past within the present," the

uncanny opens up the possibility that the culture of previous eras can relate to the much different world of modern capitalism. That, according to Haughton, this sort of possibility is a central concern of psychoanalysis after the Great War reflects the way the conflict made plain the ways capitalism had changed the world and plunged it into a crisis with which thinkers and artists sought to grapple.

As has been shown in the preceding chapters, among the reasons certain writers of the early twentieth century gravitated toward the uncanny was what it offered them in terms of coherence as they attempted to depict the alienated life of their time. As such, the *unheimlich* comes to be understood, at this study's close, as both a psychological and aesthetic category, encouraging an expansion of our thinking on it, as well as our understanding of its effect on the literary works in which it appears.

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Vita

Delmar R Reffett Jr. was born in Ashland, Kentucky. He has a B.A. in English from Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights and a M.A. in English from DePaul University in Chicago, in addition to a certification in Social Theory from the University of Kentucky. He has worked as a graduate instructor at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, and is now an adjunct professor of English at Kentucky State University in Frankfort.