Apples and Pears: Symbolism and Influence in Daphne du Maurier's 'The Apple Tree' and Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss'

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We discovered the *cimetière* on a hill. The *gardien* told us that she was first buried in the Fosse commune – the common grave for the poor – but her *beau-frère* had her moved and placed where she is now, with just a plain slab stone in memory. Her husband, Middleton Murry, had never been near it. I bought some flowers and put them on her grave. I wish I had the money to pay for it to be kept in order. I can't forget it.[i]

This essay focuses on a comparative analysis of the short stories 'Bliss' (1918) by Katherine Mansfield and 'The Apple Tree' (1952) by Daphne du Maurier,[ii] two stories that illustrate key literary parallels: the use of dramatic irony, 'organic unity',[iii] and liminal spaces.[iv] In recent years literary criticism has repositioned Mansfield as a vital contributor to the development of literary modernism. Her influence upon other writers is still being explored and the short stories of du Maurier, herself erroneously regarded as merely a popular novelist, indicate both Mansfield and modernism as primary influences. Clare Drewery argues that there are 'few comparative discussions of modernist women's short stories';[v] this study attempts to redress such an imbalance by showing how a close reading of Mansfield and du Maurier illuminates the current debate on genre and gender within shorter fiction.[vi]

Mansfield died in 1923 when du Maurier was only sixteen, but she was a significant influence on and inspiration to du Maurier, who commented that '[s]urely Katherine Mansfield would not have been so easily discouraged?' when trying to overcome the difficulties of living as a writer.[vii] In this we see that du Maurier is not only taking literary inspiration from Mansfield, but also using her as a model for living as well as for the development of her fiction. In a letter from du Maurier to her governess Maud Whaddell (known in the du Maurier family as Tod), the twenty-one-year-old fledgling writer comments:

> I met someone who used to know Katherine Mansfield very well, and apparently K.M. used to live at Hampstead at one time and told this friend how terribly interested she was in the du Maurier children and that she longed to talk to us, and used to watch us for hours playing about on the heath. […]
>
> Isn't it wonderful Tod? Probably when Madam and I used to dash about as Red Indians and schoolboys, Katherine Mansfield watched us. If only she'd spoken to us. It's so odd because she honestly is quite my favourite writer, and I've always felt how sympathetic she must have been. I'm sure I should never have started writing stories if I hadn't her example before me.[viii]

However, there is more substance to this comparison than mere proximity and timing, as both story content and form indicate a closer relationship between the two authors. Du Maurier's work is currently undergoing a period of critical reassessment, indicated by Virago's recent republication of her novels and short story collections. However, this repositioning has yet to reach her shorter fiction, which reveals a social awareness and moral didacticism worthy of greater critical attention. Mansfield's influence on style and symbolism in du Maurier's writing is crucial in this study, and the stories perfectly illustrate the importance of the liminal in modernist texts, a space in which 'pivotal individual and cultural change' is caused by 'life's significant milestones such as adolescence, mourning, death and old age'.[ix] Mansfield's influence is clearly discernible in du Maurier's stories, which, like Mansfield's, range from satirical thrusts at the bourgeois dinner-party set to accounts of lives on the margins, and more generally, to what Drewery calls the modernist focus on the 'inner life, fragmentation, ambiguity, epiphany, and the relationship between the individual and society'.[x]

It was, perhaps, from reading Mansfield's stories that du Maurier learnt her trick of composing a memorable first line. Both Mansfield's 'Bliss' and du Maurier's 'The Apple Tree' begin *in media res*: 'Although Bertha Young was thirty she still had moments like this when she wanted to run instead of walk';[xi] 'It was three months since she died when he first noticed the apple tree'.[xii] This mode compels immediate identification with the protagonist and encourages narrative empathy, something that is subverted later for dramatic effect as the

stories increasingly become 'narratives of madness, told from within'.[xiii] 'Bliss' and 'The Apple Tree' centralise marital disharmony against a bourgeois domestic backdrop, using symbols from nature to explore psychological states and epiphanic moments. A modernist focus on time is apparent in the form and structure of the stories: 'The Apple Tree' surveys a twenty-five-year marriage framed within one seasonal year that starts in early Spring, whilst 'Bliss' sketches the life of a married couple within a single day. Both stories illustrate self-deception as the greatest danger to health and happiness, and unconscious, not conscious desires, as primary behavioural motivation.

The unconscious is vulnerable when individuals undergo trauma, and both stories set the potential for personal epiphany in a context of the trauma of loss. The threshold state of bereavement, literal and metaphorical in these texts, is a potent catalyst for the transition into the speaking subject, and the 'in-between space of the garden' where much of the action occurs, shows that liminal spaces, and indeed the stories themselves, 'are occupied only on a transitory basis'.[xiv] This is apt, because both stories are preoccupied with the challenge of a personal trauma (infidelity and bereavement respectively) which could serve as a catalyst for growth, or as confirmation that a character cannot develop beyond the patterns of stasis in which they find themselves caught. Both Bertha and Buzz fall into the latter category, and this aspect of their characters is drawn against the persistent and, to them, unsettling vitality of the trees in their gardens. The abiding naivety of Bertha Young's immature worldview makes the reader question her childlike interpretation of events, she totters on the verge of womanhood without finally making the crossover. Likewise, in 'The Apple Tree' du Maurier offers her male protagonist, Buzz, as a man who is trapped in a pattern of interpreting everything through his guilty fixation with his dead wife. His lack of self-knowledge is illustrated by his determination to destroy the apple tree which is emblematic of his frustrated anger towards her in death as well as in life.

Du Maurier presents the reader with the character of recently-widowed Buzz, a man preparing to enjoy his wife-free retirement in a new pattern of lengthy foreign holidays and visits to the local pub. This bachelor idyll is disturbed, however, when he notices the seasonal changes in two apple trees in his garden, one of which reminds him of his wife, and the other of a Land Girl with whom he shared an illicit wartime kiss. Unable to shake off the memories of either woman, his increasingly erratic behaviour parallels his obsessional malice towards the older tree and his increasing affection for the younger one. His mania escalates in response to a series of minor events, after which Buzz sees the older tree's blossoms as ugly, the fruit rotten, the logs unburnable and their smoke dangerous, and he is finally successful in chopping down the hated tree. Determined to dispose of the evidence, he behaves as if it is the remnants of a body rather than the logs from a tree in his own garden: 'The logs lay there [...] one charred limb above another, black and huddled, like the bones of someone darkened and dead by fire. Nausea rose in him. He thrust his handkerchief into his mouth, choking' (131). Buzz, with even the onomatopoeia of his name dependant on the existence of a 'midge', is found to be unable to live without the tree: unable to provide for himself, unable to entertain himself, and unable to remain sane.

'Bliss' presents Bertha's apparent happiness as being a symptom of hysteria arising from a lack of sexual intimacy with her husband, Harry. This is hinted at in the reader's first encounter with the pear tree, about which Bertha 'couldn't help feeling, even from this distance, that it had not a single bud or a faded petal' (99). Her perception of the tree is governed by how she feels about it, and this feeling arises in a woman who lacks self-knowledge until she is faced with the 'strange and almost terrifying' possibility that '[f]or the first time in her life [she] desired her husband. Oh, she'd loved him – she'd been in love with him, of course, in every other way, but just not in that way.' (107-8)

The story takes place on a Spring evening during which Bertha's fears and preoccupations are projected onto the tree which remains in a state of changeless perfection – neither immature ('not a single bud') nor ageing ('not a single [...] faded petal'), rather it is in 'fullest, richest bloom' and stands between the stages of fertilisation and fruiting timelessly (99-100). Its immaculate stasis grips Bertha with both its beauty and its implied stagnant, unbearable permanence. The narrative implies that this is the moment that both are caught in, and both are presented as incapable of change because Bertha, and therefore the pear tree that she sees as her proxy, resist, fear, and flee from the thought of change – at least as far as provoking it herself. Yet, the sensual and sexually charged verbs used to describe the moonlit pear tree, 'stretch […] point […] quiver [...] grow […] touch', signify that the pear tree will be fertilised, bear fruit, and complete its natural cycle whereas Bertha's life will remain the same (106). At the end of the story, and after witnessing indications of marital infidelity, her plaintive cry of 'Oh, what is going to happen now?', is answered in the last word which is 'still' (110). This parallels the denouement of 'The Apple Tree' where Buzz's shout of 'let me go' is addressed to the inanimate tree stump, and is met with silence and 'darkness' (159).

In these darkly-skewed versions of marriage, the trees serve as an objective correlative for clandestine desires, and a reminder of that first taste of forbidden fruit in Genesis. The trees in both stories are a transformational force, crystallising the doubts, fears, hopes and dreams of characters in liminal states (new motherhood, bereavement) and spaces (thresholds, gardens). The seamless dipping into the thoughts of Bertha and Buzz reveal their inner preoccupations and a tendency to project their emotions onto external objects. ‘The Apple Tree’ reveals Buzz’s guilty preoccupation with his dead wife, Midge. At the beginning of the story Buzz immediately notices the tree and identifies it with her: 'It was a trick of the light perhaps. […] the likeness was unmistakable' (114). This builds until at the end of the

story Buzz kills the tree, which is in his mind an attempt to make Midge die a second time, thinking as he approaches it '[s]he was almost within reach' (158).

Both stories show two women competing for one man's attention, and both men are attracted to women who are unlike their wives. Names have a heavy significance in these sexual triangles of temptation and exclusion, and both of the 'other women' are suitably titled. In 'Bliss' it is the taciturn Pearl whose name suggests beauty and purity, who fascinates Harry with her maturity, sophistication, and poise; for Buzz it is May the Land Girl who is as young and fresh as the season her name evokes. The name 'Pearl' evokes the image of a precious, desirable object indicating high status for the wearer, but the precious jewel is also made by an irritant, a grain of sand, over time. Du Maurier, like Mansfield, puns heavily on names in the text and May is a Spring month of burgeoning fecundity in nature as well as a verb of ability and permission. 'I may' is equivalent to 'I can', a pertinent detail in a plot centralising sexual infidelity. The nineteen year old May is 'cheerful and pretty and smiling […] when she smiled it was as though she embraced the world' (122), whereas Midge is described as being 'dejected [...] stooping […] worn out' and Buzz sees her as a 'fundamental blight upon good cheer' (114-5). Buzz calls May a child even though he desires her as a woman, whilst Bertha regards her youth as an advantage, overstating the blessings of her life in a way that undermines the argument even as she makes it:

> Really – really – she had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals. She had an adorable baby. They didn't have to worry about money. They had this absolutely satisfactory house and garden […] and their new cook made the most superb omelettes . . . (100)

The final superfluous statement trails off into nothingness, rendering the previous statements suspect and the whole passage unconvincing. This listing of superficial details strongly marks Bertha's lack of conviction that she has a happy marriage; conversely, Buzz's constant reiteration of Midge's faults hints at a deep regret over a *not* unhappy marriage.

Significantly, it is Spring in both narratives, the season of rising sap, increased energy and sexual activity that produces fruit, and babies. The sensuousness of the adjectives describing the fruit in 'Bliss' is saturated with the language of desire: the apples are '*stained* with strawberry pink', the pears '*smooth* as silk', and the grapes have 'a silver *bloom*' (my italics, 96). Bertha has developed an enthusiasm for a woman she has recently encountered, Pearl Fulton, with whom her husband, Harry Young, is having an affair. Bertha considers Pearl '"a find"' (98), resulting in a personal betrayal on two counts, as she has unwittingly brought another one of the 'beautiful women who have something strange about them' into her home, and into her marriage (99). 'Why be given a body?', 'Why have a baby?' (95, 97) are the unanswered and unanswerable questions Bertha asks herself and – implicitly – the reader, unable to articulate answers in a social system in which she is a decorative object rather than a functioning, speaking subject. On a first reading Bertha appears to be a woman whose domestic situation positions her as diametrically opposed to Midge in 'The Apple Tree'. Bertha is a happy wife delighting in her marriage, baby daughter, friends, home, and staff, whereas Midge carries the 'impossible burden' of 'dreary routine of unnecessary tasks' through 'interminable changeless years' (114-5). However, when Bertha wonderingly states 'How idiotic civilisation is!' (95), she is tacitly commenting on her own idiocy in maintaining a complicit silence regarding her lack of status and power. There is the sense that the feelings of this young wife will grow until they become Midge's 'long-term reproach', a resentment deeply felt but unspoken and dangerous. Domestic authority is a recurring theme in twentieth-century women's writing and Mansfield's and du Maurier's feminism is implicit, not explicit, yet while it is not a political principle, 'its underlying presence is everywhere'.[xv] This implicit feminism shows itself in the foregrounding of female desires; the acknowledgement and exploration of the traditionally female domestic sphere; and in the way that these stories, and the works of Mansfield and du Maurier more broadly, scrutinise the

roles that woman are given or create for themselves in homes, relationships, and power structures. Thirty years before Midge's tale of unending domestic responsibilities, Bertha irresponsibly forgets her keys 'again', and is consequently treated like a child by the staff, including the nurse who does not trust her with her own baby. For Bertha, the pear tree's beauty, stability, and fruition are a natural complement to her position as wife and mother: 'And she seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life' (100). What she cannot yet see is that having successfully married within her class and produced a child, she now has a merely social and decorative function.

Desire – legitimate and illicit – unifies and unites the stories. Midge wants Buzz's attention, and she has evidently not had it; he will not even touch the tree that is her avatar. In 'Bliss' it is Spring and startlingly, Bertha 'desire[s] her husband for the first time'. In parallel to du Maurier's fecund apple trees, which are potent symbols of two sexually unfulfilled dead women, the pear tree in Mansfield's story is in full bloom:

> The windows of the drawing room opened onto a balcony overlooking the garden. At the far end, against the wall, there was a tall, slender pear tree in fullest, richest bloom; it stood perfect, as though becalmed against the jade-green sky. Bertha couldn't help feeling, even from this distance, that it had not a single bud or a faded petal. (100)

'[B]ecalmed' is cruelly ambiguous in describing Bertha through the tree which stands as her proxy. She is without purpose as a mother, wife, or housekeeper, and is therefore as becalmed as the pear tree she regards as symbolic of her life. In her misreading of its symbolic plurality she mirrors Buzz in 'The Apple Tree', whose delusions conflate his deceased wife with a tree and cause his presumably fatal entrapment by its stump in wintry darkness. Buzz is so determined to pursue his vendetta that he loses sight of all judgement and follows a course of action that leaves him injured and alone in the snowy garden. At the end of the story we see the discrepancy between the real and the perceived as Buzz shouts '"let me go", as though the thing that held him there in its mercy had the power to release him' (159). This is a clear

indication that we should doubt both Buzz and Bertha as witnesses, because we are clearly shown that their world-views are inaccurate and partial.

In 'Bliss' Bertha's sartorial choices simulate the image of the tree: in a white dress with green stockings and shoes and jade beads, she is the daytime image of the tree, while Pearl is the nighttime vision dressed in ethereal silver. Significantly, Pearl Fulton is dressed as a goddess, as Artemis-Diana, 'with a silver fillet binding her blonde hair', deities symbolised by the moon. These are apposite and balanced costumes for the two women in this story, one of whom is the figurehead of Harry's household and the other the mistress of his secret desires.

In the climactic scene Harry throws down Pearl's coat, puts his hands on her body, turns her violently towards him and whispers, '[t]omorrow' – the promise of a future assignation (100). In passion Harry is grotesquely and bestially transformed into an animal with quivering nostrils and a 'hideous grin', while celestial Pearl retains her 'sleepy smile' and 'moonbeam' fingers (109). The fingers are suggestive of Pearl's magically enchanting abilities as a woman who has caused not only girlish Bertha to 'fall in love with her' (99), but who also has Harry within her grasp. Bertha plans to tell Harry what the two women have shared when they are in bed together that night: an act of intimate relation planned after non-existent intimate relations, which places the 'new and mysterious' Pearl right in between them in the marital bed.

Both Buzz and Bertha are subject to extreme states of fear charged with sublimated sexual violence:

> At his last words something strange and almost terrifying darted into Bertha's mind. And this something blind and smiling whispered to her: 'Soon these people will go. The house will be quiet – quiet. The lights will be out. And you and he will be alone together in the dark room – the warm bed. . . .' (107)

This Lawrentian passage recalls the short story 'The Blind Man' in its evocation of the mysteries of erotic sensuality, but Mansfield, like du Maurier, privileges trust and intimacy

over sex.[xvi] The pathos arises from the fact that both focalisers feel the loss of that which they never had: a fulfilling marriage. The *leitmotif* of the cats in 'Bliss' echoes the behaviour of mistress and adulterer: the black cat (Harry) follows the grey one (Pearl) while Bertha looks on, stammering, unsure and unable to articulate the implications of what she witnesses. It is notable that in her most adult role, that of hostess, Bertha misses the significant fact that both Harry and the sole unaccompanied female guest are the only ones late for dinner. In 'The Apple Tree', Midge also sees evidence of marital infidelity and stands staring at the couple made by her husband and the nubile Land Girl. She never mentions their intimacy though years pass, whilst Bertha's childlike and immediate plea of 'What will happen now?' correspondingly positions her as a cipher in a grown-up world: without the power to direct events, both wives are solely reactive.

To Buzz, the apple tree symbolises his wife – dejected, depressed, weary and over burdened – and it is only through the proxy of the tree that he is able to even come close to confronting the awful reality of Midge's life. The 'clamouring brothers and sisters' are the old tree's intemperate overabundance of apples, and a reminder of the fruitlessness of the marriage. Buzz will not even touch the tree that reminds him so strongly of Midge, and earlier in the story he yawns, taking up a book while she anxiously waits, in the hope of amorous advances.[xvii] This raises the issue of whether the lack of children results from the husband's sexual indifference, and suggests that his impotent fury at the tree is provoked by his fury at his own impotence. Midge is 'eager yet uncertain' and 'desperately anxious to attract' her husband (135) – descriptions that also apply to Bertha Young in 'Bliss'. In spite of his wife's desire for intimacy Buzz looks elsewhere for flirtation, finding his wife's attempts to please him as pathetic and detestable as the old apple tree which, once she is dead, constantly evokes her memory. Du Maurier specialises in writing weak middle-aged men of questionable sexuality – James Fenton, Maxim de Winter, Buzz – highlighting the

uncomfortable question of whether a marriage minus intimacy and children is actually a marriage. From Mansfield's narrative the reader initially learns that 'bliss' may not include physical passion as Bertha Young loves her husband Harry, but 'just not in that way' as she understands that he is simply 'different' to her (108). She holds herself responsible for her frigidity and although 'it had worried her dreadfully at first to find that she was so cold' eventually 'it had not seemed to matter' (108). Of course it *does* matter.

Power – sexual, maternal, domestic, economic – is a major theme in both narratives and one example is in 'Bliss' when the nurse transforms Bertha, 'little B's' biological mother, into the pathetic figure of a 'poor little girl in front of the rich girl with the doll' (97). Bertha pleads with the nurse for permission to feed her infant daughter in 'Bliss', whilst in 'The Apple Tree' patriarchal structures are reversed and, with looking-glass polarity, Midge's household routines discomfit Buzz at every turn. The culturally-determined defining features of womanhood and femininity are explored in a subtext that places the metaphor of woman-as-nature-symbol against apparently mundane events. An example of this is Bertha's outfit for the dinner party in 'Bliss': 'A white dress, a string of jade beads, green shoes and stockings. It wasn't intentional. She had thought of this scheme hours before she stood at the drawing-room window. Her *petals* rustled softly into the hall' (my italics, 100). Bertha's metaphorical petals, included in the description as literal, illustrate that she is a woman who will, dryad-like, remain as silent as the tree until the open-ended conclusion of the story. Her naivety ensures that the reader does not have access to her undeceived self, just as we only have access to Buzz when he is at his most self-deceptive, and thus neither character can deliver authentic clues to the realities of their lives. The swift change of tack between direct speech and free indirect thought is a habitual pattern with du Maurier who uses the practice in a Mansfieldian manner to focus attention on the discrepancies between a character's inner life and their interactions with others. In common with Midge in 'The Apple Tree', Bertha and

Pearl are silenced within the text despite the free indirect style used to convey Bertha's inner life. In Midge, du Maurier enacts a rewriting of Ovid's myth of metamorphosis whereby – according to Greek myth – a victim of abuse can escape sexual violence only by being turned into a tree and forever silenced.[xviii] In this latter-day version, Midge's silence does not preclude power, or indeed violent revenge if she is read as an actual revenant haunting Buzz instead of an aspect of his psyche. Bertha is betrayed by the myth of domestic bliss promised by marriage and motherhood and remains helplessly mute, whereas in this reading Midge enacts a startling revenge on her husband through his own belief in the tree as her vengeful avatar. His obsessional mania proves fatal: there is no escape from the inside of your own head. 'Bliss' begins the narrative for which 'The Apple Tree' is a literal closure.

In Dominic Head's thorough examination of the modernist short story, he defines some of the characteristic devices employed by Mansfield and others, devices he cites as particular to the genre. One of these is the 'tension between the narrative voice and its own self doubts'.[xix] Du Maurier is an expert in creating narrators who are hesitant, arrogant, and self-betraying. As Head goes on to state, in Mansfield's writing the complexity of characterisation develops at the exact point where the narrative authority begins to fragment. At the core of each text there is a struggle for articulation, shown by frequent ellipses and tangents, interruptions and abrupt endings, a struggle that shows us human beings at the extremes of human experience.

Mansfield's repeated use of ellipses in thought serves to highlight the omissions in speech, foregrounding the things characters are unwilling, or unable, to say. This is a technique borrowed by du Maurier, as Buzz continually trails off when conflating the apple tree with his wife, whose trademark sigh of 'Oh well . . .' always starts an unfinished sentence, something Buzz interprets as 'part of her long-term reproach' against him (116). Midge is incapable of articulating her feelings even when she witnesses her husband's

betrayal with the Land Girl, and throughout Mansfield's story Bertha Young cannot clothe her feelings in words, whether she is thinking of cats or collusion. The final ellipsis in 'Bliss' comes after those telling words: 'And she saw . . .'; before the apparently factual description of Harry and Pearl together there is an indication of the gap between Bertha's perception and the reality that she chooses not to recognise (110). What is apparent happiness is expressed by Bertha in her irrepressible ability to laugh, to 'laugh at – nothing – at nothing, simply', and this echoes the hysterical laughter of Linda Burnell in Mansfield's 'Prelude' (1917), another wife with no power over her fertility, and thus, her future. 'No, no, I am getting hysterical', says Bertha, caught in the grip of uncontrollable emotion (96). For women, excessive laughter, as Elaine Showalter's book on female madness, *The Female Malady*, illustrates, is a behaviour with potentially dramatic consequences.[xx]

Mansfield and du Maurier's short fiction negotiates the boundaries of patient narratives in which individuals relate their experience of altered mental states and, as Gail A. Hornstein comments: 'We may be frightened as we read such stories. […] Mental patients show us how much terror or suspicion it is possible to feel before collapsing under the weight or committing suicide'.[xxi] Du Maurier's work persistently features patient narratives, and in 'The Apple Tree' she afflicts both Midge, who is sickly while alive, and Buzz, who loses his comfort, sanity, and life. Although Buzz's bereavement elevates him to the status of sovereign master of his household, the garden encircles the house and him; the silent apple tree that embodies Midge, his wife, has more power and significance than she ever did when alive. Buzz imagines the apple tree speaking to him in the bitter tones of Midge's unspoken resentment of twenty-five years of wifehood: 'is this my reward after all I have done for you?' (145) ; his subconscious supplies the barbs she never spoke in life.

In 'Bliss' Bertha cannot articulate her position as object because she cannot comprehend it. This shift from subject to object status is evident to the reader, however, in

the subtle move from ‘want[ing] to […] laugh […] at nothing, simply’ (95), to ‘simply’ running at the end of the story, coming close to actualising her desire but instead manifesting the urge to flee from the truth. Pearl Fulton’s comment echoes nightmarishly in Bertha’s mind: ‘“Your lovely pear tree – pear tree – pear tree!”’ (109), as if the pear tree that Bertha sees as a symbol for her own life now carries the negative attributes of being static, silent and redundant. ‘“Oh, what is going to happen now?” she cried. But the pear tree was as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still’” (110). This lack of movement emphasises Bertha’s lack of capacity to make decisions or be in charge of herself as woman, wife, or mother.

Patient narratives centralise the disenfranchised, marginal, and weak. Drewery applies Kristevan theory to modernist fiction by women, stating that ‘[t]he stories imply that to stay silent, to accept a position that is culturally or linguistically ‘outside’ is to be disempowered, to risk marginalisation’, before adding Judith Butler’s refinement that ‘there cannot be an absolute “outside” from which the boundaries of discourse can be exceeded or countered’.[xxii] The implication that accepting silence is to also accept marginalisation is demonstrated with great force in both of these stories, and this is made more terrifying by the eternal and inescapable boundary that a character's mind presents for them. Unable to exceed or counter such a limit, Bertha and Buzz unknowingly create and accept reduced roles for themselves, subsiding into a passivity that is equivalent to or even enacts the end of life.

These works argue for an understanding of modernism that is uniquely feminine – that the concerns of modernism are especially relevant to the lives of women. This can be seen in the impact of the newly industrial and urbanised culture of the twentieth century and in the social changes effected by two world wars, altering the family unit and women’s lives beyond recognition. Seen from this perspective, du Maurier is not a writer of escapist fantasies; rather, she is a writer of failed escape attempts. Like Mansfield, du Maurier recognises marriage as a potentially dangerous trap rather than an escape to greater freedoms.

In the words of Head: '[m]arriage, far from being the promised state of fulfilment, is presented as destructive of the female'.[xxiii] The female characters in du Maurier's stories either seek a man for financial support or sex, or both – but never for love alone. Mansfield is concerned with concealed hypocrisy, the limits of rebellion and freedom, and both writers present women at all stages of their lives: girlhood, adolescence, courtship, marriage, motherhood, and dotage. If, as Nina Auerbach states, '[r]ebellion is dispossession', then du Maurier's heroines are constantly readjusting their positions in line with male actions, in a world where even 'good women could sap their will'.[xxiv] Both writers are equally convincing in their depictions of male characters whose motivations are authentic to a startling degree. As Auerbach states of du Maurier, in a comment that could easily refer to Mansfield:

> Daphne du Maurier's uncanny fictional ability to become a man without ever revering men or making a case against them is utterly unwomanly – some might even call her self-transformations antiwomanly – but I continue to admire du Maurier's audacity in choosing roles beyond her own, roles she plays with sympathetic penetration.[xxv]

This subtlety of characterisation is more significant when considering the new role of the individual in modernist thought, and this speaks to a new figuring of the male protagonist: often an alienated, disenfranchised, anxious individual, living in fantasy. Fantasy is as central to the genre of short story writing as it is to modernism and these are stories which incorporate dreams, visions, and delusions to work through the major social, cultural and political changes experienced by their authors.

In du Maurier's stories 'Mazie', 'Piccadilly', and 'Panic' (1955),[xxvi] there are the grubby, mean locales and pathetic denizens we associate with Mansfield's stories 'Miss Brill' (1920) and 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1920). Yet, these themes of decay and decline belie narratives which are spiced with the sharp humour characteristic of du Maurier, a humour that tempers her moribund tales with lightness and redeems them from irrepressible gloom, also a notable feature of many of Mansfield's stories. Du Maurier invites us into a conspiracy of mocking laughter which is reminiscent of Mansfield at her ambiguous best, and

while a close reading of Mansfield's stories makes it plain that the most painful of her plots are seasoned with her customary biting wit, du Maurier's tales, so redolent with glee at human flaws and foibles, have yet to be critically addressed.

This essay reveals how, through their short fiction, Mansfield and du Maurier are closely engaged in a negotiation of influence that is made more powerful as a text-presence by the biographical proximity of the authors. Mansfield's influence on du Maurier's writing is clear from the appreciative comments in du Maurier's letters:

> I've been reading 'Bliss' etc, by Katherine Mansfield. The stories are too wonderful […] and some of them leave one with a kind of hopeless feeling. [A] sort of feeling that life is merely repetition, and love monotony. Oh, it's not really that but a kind of helpless pity for the dreariness of other people's lives. […] There is one story called 'The Dill Pickle'. Oh God! and another – I've forgotten the name – about a poor woman – So dreary, hopeless, pathetic, But wonderful, and wonderfully written.[xxvii]

Du Maurier's comments suggest that what caught and kept her interest in Mansfield's writing was the latter's urge to fictionalise lives not customarily depicted, and more importantly, to depict the transgressive and illicit aspects of those lives. The rich seam of textual correlations between du Maurier and Mansfield's writing remains unexamined, yet each writer provides us with a valuable means of accessing the work of the other. This essay begins this examination, but is also intended to be an invitation to wider, deeper, and greater parallel readings of Mansfield and du Maurier. The symbolism of fruit runs through both the stories discussed above, symbolising generation and degeneration, temptation and revulsion, in stories which offer myth in a modernist style.

Notes

[i] Daphne du Maurier, *Myself When Young* (London: Virago, 2004), p. 164. Here du Maurier describes visiting Katherine Mansfield's grave at Fontainebleau as the 'highlight' of a trip to France in 1927.

[ii] Mansfield also wrote a story called ’Autumns: I’, published in *Signature*, 1, 4 October 1915, pp. 15–18, signed ‘Matilda Berry’, later retitled ‘The Apple Tree’ by John Middleton Murry.

[iii] Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 3.

[iv] Mansfield’s ‘Bliss’ and du Maurier’s ‘The Apple Tree’ were both titular stories in the original short story collections. The Virago republication in 2004 of du Maurier’s *The Birds and Other Stories* privileges ‘The Birds’ in the title as the better known du Maurier story, following Alfred Hitchcock’s film adaptation.

[v] Clare Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 8.

[vi] See Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Emma Liggins, Andrew Maunder, Ruth Robbins, eds, *The British Short Story* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[vii] Du Maurier, *Myself When Young*, p. 177.

[viii] Letter from du Maurier to Maud Whaddell, 19 June 1928, pp. 2-4, Special Collections, Exeter Archives, The University of Exeter. Packet labelled ‘Letters to Tod 1920–1930’, EUL MS 206 add.1. Permission to reproduce excerpts from du Maurier’s unpublished letters is given by her son and literary executor, Christopher Browning. ‘It sounds silly, Tod, but I can’t help feeling there's something queer in all this – if K.M. was so terribly interested in us as children and then she died, and then I got mad about her work and longed to write too – it seems as if her influence was knocking about the place somewhere. You’ll think me an awful fool, and don’t tell anyone’.

[ix] Drewery, p. 2.

[x] Drewery, p. 8.

[xi] Katherine Mansfield, 'Bliss', in *Bliss and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1962), p. 95. All further references will be to this edition and placed parenthetically in the text.

[xii] Daphne du Maurier, 'The Apple Tree', in *The Birds and Other Stories* (London: Gollancz, 1952), p. 114. All further references will be to this edition and placed parenthetically in the text.

[xiii] Gail A. Hornstein, 'Narratives of Madness, as Told From Within', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 25 January 2002, <http://www.gailhornstein.com/files/Narratives_of_m.pdf> [accessed 16.7.15].

[xiv] Drewery, p. 3.

[xv] Kate Fullbrook, quoted in Kaplan, p. 11. 'Katherine Mansfield's feminism came about as a matter of course, so much so that overt discussion of it as a political principle is absent from her writing while its underlying presence is everywhere'.

[xvi] D. H. Lawrence, 'The Blind Man' in *England My England and Other Stories* (New York: Seltzer, 1922) pp. 71-97.

[xvii] This scene is evocative of Ernest Hemingway's short story 'The Cat in the Rain' from the collection entitled *In Our Time* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925). Here the American husband stolidly reads on while his wife continually, and vainly, attempts to focus his attention on her.

[xviii] Ovid, *Metamorphosis*. The beautiful naiad Daphne is chased by lustful Apollo and, as she pleads to be spared, her father, the rivergod Pineios of Thessaly, turns her into a Laurel tree. There are also correlations with the character of Ariel in *The Tempest.*

[xix] Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 117.

[xx] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 130.

[xxi] Hornstein, p. 6.

[xxii] Drewery, p. 121.

[xxiii] Head, p. 123.

[xxiv] Nina Auerbach, *Daphne du Maurier - Haunted Heiress* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2000), p. 7.

[xxv] Auerbach, pp. 8-9.

[xxvi] Du Maurier, *Early Stories*, (London: Todd, 1955). The introductory note states that the stories were written between 1927 and 1930 and first published in journals and magazines.

[xxvii] Du Maurier letter to Maud Whaddell, 4 February 1924, pp. 4-6.

Acceptance Information:

From: Todd Martin <tmartin@huntington.edu>
Subject: RE: Final Proofs KM and Psychology
Date: 5 April 2016 14:06:03 BST
To: 'Setara Pracha' <setara.pracha@buckingham.ac.uk>

Dear Setara,

Many thanks for following up. I will make note that you have found no corrections and forward that on to EUP.

The volume should be out this October. I think it will be a great one.

Best,
Todd

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