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Creative Evolution: Symbolist representations of Bergson's duration in the works of Katherine Mansfield

In this paper I examine the influence of key philosophical ideas of the Modernist period upon the work of Katherine Mansfield, examining how her use of symbolism integrates the philosophical concepts of Henri Bergson into her writing. Upon the publication of *Creative Evolution* in 1907, a period of 'Bergsonianism' began, which prompted lively academic debate amongst the intelligentsia. Bergson's subsequent publications, on time and memory, were instrumental in recasting the depiction of human reality in literature. Bergson's philosophy explains how the human intellect comprehends time as both 'le temps' and 'la durée'. The former involves the intellectual spatialisation of time into minutes, hours and days; the latter is our *true* perception of time which is intuitive, the merging of past and present states of consciousness, which form our duration. Bergson's philosophy unravels how the human consciousness is viewed in terms of spatialisation, in the same way that time is understood. This he describes as 'spurious'¹, our true consciousness being a delicately nuanced succession of states which interpenetrate to form a continuous stream. Our duration is the experience of past, present and future states of consciousness simultaneously, triggered by immediate perception of the world around us. In order to act in the present, we must interpret these present perceptions, and invoke memory images from the past, to guide our actions. Each moment we experience is therefore unique; the combination of present perceptions and memory images recalled are unique to each moment. This, Bergson concludes, results in human consciousness being in a perpetual state of becoming, as our conscious states continuously merge into one another².

Throughout his work Bergson reminds us that language, which is essentially static, is an inadequate medium for the expression of the dynamic and fluctuating reality of the human intellect³. Modernist writers seeking new ways of representing such a reality turned towards symbolism as a method to *show* the reader reality rather than attempting to *tell* it. Through examination of three of Mansfield's short stories, I outline the influence of Bergson's philosophical ideas on Mansfield's writing and show how this is expressed through symbolism. It is not my intention to state definitively that Mansfield's works encapsulate Bergson's ideas in any deliberate way, but to suggest that the Zeitgeist of Bergsonianism represents one of the many influences upon Modernist texts. Indeed, the influence exerted by Bergsonianism was itself transitory, interest in his theories diminishing by the time of his publication *The Creative Mind* in 1934, and this not only speaks to the very nature of the world described by Bergson's theories, but also to the nature of literary influence during the Modernist period. As writers sought new ways of representing reality in literature, the relative importance of an influence was as transitory as the nature of human consciousness itself. Bergson's ideas therefore, encapsulate both the temporality experienced by human perception and demonstrate the transitory nature of literary influence. Furthermore, the intertextuality of Mansfield's writing forms part of the construction of her genius, showing that her technique was never a demonstration of artifice for the sake of art. The poetic nature of her writing, her rhythmic style and the integration of both philosophy and symbolism are

not aesthetic but purposeful. She does not engage in artifice for its own sake but to further her social commentary, in particular in relation to the subjection of women to the brutality and hypocrisy of patriarchy. I will show how these techniques, coupled with Mansfield's focalised narratives, demonstrate her ability to integrate some of the key philosophical and intellectual influences of her day into her writing, which in turn, created a new type of short story: a truly Modernist short story.

Bergsonianism

In Bergson's terms, humans cope with reality through objectification. What Bergson refers to as our 'reflective consciousness' (or *le temps*) permits us to counterbalance the fluidity of reality through the objectification of time (90). He explains:

Let us notice that when we speak of time, we generally speak of an homogenous medium in which our conscious states are ranged alongside one another in space, so as to form a discrete multiplicity' (90)

Thus, in order to comprehend reality we think of time in terms of space: hours and minutes form the homogenous character of time. This allows us to 'use clear cut distinctions, to count, to abstract' but our true perception of the world is 'heterogeneous, that of sensible qualities' and Bergson names this Pure Duration (97). He explains that humans apply the same measuring mechanism to inner states of consciousness as we do to objects we perceive externally but states of consciousness are not 'essentially external to one another, and become so only by being spread out in time, regarded as an homogenous medium' (99). When we allow ourselves to experience 'a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another' we are experiencing Pure Duration or *la durée* (104). Bergson gives the example of a melody to explain the qualitative nuances of human consciousness:

Could we not say that, if these notes succeed one another, we still perceive them as if they were inside one another and their ensemble were like a living being whose parts, though distinct, interpenetrate through the very effect of their solidarity? (104)

The very nature of human consciousness then, perpetuates a continuous state of becoming as we experience the qualitative changes in our feelings and emotions which merge into one another. Bergson illustrates:

'Situated between the matter which influences it and that on which it has influence, my body is a centre of action, the place where impressions received choose intelligently the path they will follow to transform themselves into movements accomplished. Thus it indeed represents the actual state of becoming, that part of my duration which is in process of growth'⁴

For Bergson, the present is action; the past, incapable of action, is pure idea. The process of becoming involves the action of the present mingled with the memory images of the past because 'there is no perception which is not full of memories'(24). Based on our interpretation of present perceptions and the memory images of the past, we act. Our

anticipation of the future allied with the memory images recalled from our past create a state of becoming in the present; our states of consciousness interpenetrating one another to form a continuous stream. Each qualitative moment we experience is, therefore, unique: we can never experience the same thing twice because the memory of past experiences coupled with the anticipation of the future brings a state of becoming unique to each moment.

Throughout his work Bergson is conscious of the paradox inherent in attempting to recreate in words (which are essentially static) the fluidity of the human consciousness. He repeatedly refers to language as an inadequate medium to express duration: 'The brutal word, which stores up what is stable, common, and therefore impersonal in human impressions, crushes, or at least covers over, the delicate and fleeting impressions of our individual consciousness'⁵. Writers of the modernist period endeavoured to capture the experience of duration through stream of consciousness narratives and, as I will illustrate in Mansfield's work, the importance of memory on present action. T. E. Hulme writing in 1909 captured the difficulties endemic to trying to confine human consciousness to words:

I always figure the main Bergsonian position in this way: conceiving the constructs of logic as geometrical wire models and the flux of reality as a turbulent river such that it is impossible with any combination of these wire models, however elaborate, to make a model of the moving stream. You cannot hold water in a wire cage, however minute the mesh.⁶

In his seminal work *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, 1899, Arthur Symons, taking up Bergson's point, explains that symbolism is a means of expressing 'the soul, of whatever exists and can be realized by the consciousness,' allowing literature to 'at last attain liberty, and its authentic speech' through evocation; showing rather than telling⁷. Symons' seminal work is both a biography and exposition of the French symbolist movement. He outlines in chronological order the development of a genre of literature at once collective and disparate. The biographical detail provides background as well as motives and ambitions of the key writers of this movement and introduced the principles of the French Symbolists into the British literary establishment. This, like Bergson's work, had a profound influence upon the depiction of human character in literature.

Symons traces the origins of the symbolist movement to Gerard De Nerval who, in his madness created unusual connections, reflected in his poetry through the positioning of disparate images. The use of symbols means that 'words are used as the ingredients of an evocation', creating atmosphere from the 'suggestive quality of their syllables'⁸. In his discussion of Balzac, Symons highlights how life is too fluid to be brought into, or represented by, the fixity of the form of a novel so on occasions the 'closeness and clearness of narration must be sacrificed'(30). Merimée's stories, like Mansfield's, are 'little separate pieces of the world, each a little world in itself' using symbolism to allow 'the thing itself...to stand and speak before the reader', the reader supplying 'for himself the feeling that is needed'(57). Mallarmé echoes these sentiments, affirming that writers who 'use words fluently...disregard their importance' because to 'name is to destroy, to suggest is to create'(195-196). The destruction he speaks of confirms Bergson's concerns that words are

inadequate to represent the fluctuations of the human consciousness and suggests that symbolism is a suitable substitute.

Like Bergson, Symons is concerned to represent the human perception of time as fleeting and fluid. He explains that 'it will be the necessary business of each of us to speculate on what is so rapidly becoming the past and so rapidly becoming the future, that scarcely existing present which is after all our only possession' (324). Symons echoes Bergson's doctrine that '*practically we perceive only the past*, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future.'⁹

Symbolist Representations of Bergson's Duration

Many of Mansfield's stories exhibit evidence of the influence of Bergson's theories. Three stories particularly stand out and are discussed here: *The Swing of the Pendulum*, which was published as one of the German stories in 1911; *A Dill Pickle*, published in 1917 and *Daughters of the Late Colonel*, published in 1921.

In *The Swing of the Pendulum*¹⁰, time frames the narrative through the symbol of the pendulum swinging monotonously, counting out the moments as we approach the deadline imposed upon Viola, and is used to embody the confined nature of a single woman's life. The feeling of entrapment is metaphorically represented by the inevitability of the regular beat of time, as inevitable as Viola's fate and her dependence on men for her meagre existence. Viola, a single woman, has been unable to pay her rent and awaits her lover at 3pm, who may be able to pay her debt so that she does not have to leave her apartment. The narrative opens at 10am and the specification of the time provides the reader with a framework as confining as the nature of Viola's life. The symbol of the pendulum in this story evokes Bergson's theory of time as a specious concept, thus symbolically representing patriarchy as equally inappropriate.

The narrative is focalised through Viola and we experience both her inner states of consciousness and her duration, through the mingling of present perceptions and memory images. She experiences anger at her landlady, revulsion as her 'stumping up the stairs made her feel sick', her frustration at her situation with no 'Money, money, money!' and finally her anger at her lover Casimir who does not understand her situation which is 'intolerable – intolerable!' (p.88). Viola's present perceptions are used as symbols of her emotions, the room looking 'tumbled and grimed' as we experience her frustration and anger (p.88). The hyacinths displayed in her room are symbolic of those qualitative experiences of luxury beyond Viola's reach, expressed in poetic language; they are 'plump' and 'rich' and shine 'like oil' (p.89). These qualitative features are juxtaposed to the quantitative nature of Viola's existence, represented by her lack of money and the framing of the narrative within a set period of time.

Symbolism is used to represent the 'strange man' as he lights a 'delicious cigarette' (p.90). The cigarette represents decadence and luxury, as well as being a phallic representation, and this symbol prompts Viola's change in inner consciousness to one of rage at her relationship

with Casimir: 'Staring at the letter she began braiding her hair – a dull feeling of rage crept through her – she seemed to be braiding it into her brain, and binding it, tightly' (p.90). The luxurious, qualitative image of the cigarette smoke is sharply juxtaposed to the image of Casimir's letter and the struggles in her life that it represents. Viola compares Casimir to the strange man who is successful and wealthy, characteristics which are quantitative rather than qualitative: the man is 'amazingly happy: his heavy clothes and big buttoned gloves; his beautifully brushed hair...and that smile...“jolly” was the word' (p.90). The symbol of the cigarette and the decadence of the man's appearance prompts Viola to remember only the negative aspects of her relationship with Casimir, his 'frightful seriousness', and this recalls Bergson's hypothesis that the recall of memory images is an active rather than passive process, recalling images wilfully rather than randomly (p.90). Consequently, in Bergsonian terms, the mixture of present perceptions and memory images evoke Viola's current state of consciousness of despair and rage. The shifting in time continues as Viola combines past, present and future in a fantasy of a future with the wealthy man and 'instead of the ordinary man who had spoken with her at the door her mind created a brilliant, laughing image, who would treat her like a queen' (p.93). As we experience Viola's duration we are privy to the inner monologue which guides her states of consciousness, moving from despair to excitement in what becomes a 'delicious game' (p.93).

Viola's present perceptions are affected by her emotions as the room which had been 'tumbled and grimed' now becomes 'quite changed – it was full of sweet light and the scent of hyacinth flowers. Even the furniture appeared different – exciting' (p.94). The images conjure childhood memories of games of charades, and past memories are recalled from present perceptions to highlight how Viola is acting a part, a comment upon the need for women to conform to social roles carved out for them through patriarchy. In the confrontation that ensues with the strange man, Viola becomes empowered by her ability to make a choice and refuse his advances. She enjoys 'a sensation of glorious, intoxicating happiness' (p.98) through the realisation that despite her entrapment she still has some freedom. Once again, her states of consciousness are revealed through inner monologue and her lover returns to being the 'beloved Casimir' who 'like her, was apart from the world' (p.98).

This early story gives an indication of Mansfield's burgeoning talent as a writer able to harness current intellectual thinking to make a social comment, and represents an example of the kind of literary influence exerted by Bergson's philosophies. The influence of his theories is no more evident, however, than in Mansfield's story *A Dill Pickle*¹¹, which depicts a brief encounter in a café of two previous lovers. The action of the plot takes place over a matter of minutes but the reader is led through the past six years of the characters' lives as time is shown to be qualitative, evoking memory images which impact on the states of consciousness of the characters in the present. The narrative discontinuity caused by the flashbacks and free indirect discourse serve to mirror the attempt of the human consciousness to deal with the durational flux of reality. Perception is not linear and structured but fragmented and dynamic; the handling of time fluctuating continuously between past and present.

The story begins *in medias res* with the line ‘And then, after six years, she saw him again’, plunging the reader immediately into Vera’s consciousness by simultaneously referring to the past and the present (181). The abrupt opening of the narrative serves to highlight to the reader that this will be a snapshot of someone’s life, a significant ‘moment’ where we will be exposed to the sensory perceptions of the characters and thus their states of consciousness.

The opening sentence places the relationship in time and ‘from thence forward, with no overt statement, the former intimacy between the two is developed as earlier events filter through the static situation in the present’.¹² The two characters are suspended in time so that the reader can experience their duration, delving into the memories of their past together. The man is almost unable to recollect Vera: ‘How strange. Really, for a moment I didn’t know you’ (p.181). The focalisation allows the reader access to Vera’s state of incredulity at his failure to recognise her: ‘Incredible! He didn’t know her!’ (p.181), the exclamation marks signalling to the reader that the narrative is focalised and these are Vera’s thoughts, her state of consciousness. Much later in the story the implication of this discrepancy in their memories of the relationship reveals Mansfield’s social comment. The couple discuss their lives since their relationship ended: ‘Yes, I have been to all those places that we talked of, and stayed in them long enough to – as you used to say, “air oneself” in them.’ Vera’s response to his adventures is a simple ‘How I envy you’ (p.184). The juxtaposition of his life of adventure and her sheltered existence throws in to sharp relief the difference in the lives of a single man and a single woman. He has been able to achieve all that his heart desired, she has not. The two characters serve different narrative functions, emphasising this disparity. The narrative is focalised through Vera so we read both her thoughts and what she says, but the man’s verbal responses are the only key to his thoughts: our perceptions of him are guided by Vera’s perceptions. At times, Vera’s thoughts and words are contradictory, for example when asked if she understands the man’s description of the peasants’ kind nature, Vera has to fantasise to imagine it but answers ‘yes, I know perfectly what you mean’ (p.186). He rambles on about his adventures, her responses are shorter, even curt and the syntax reflects the restrictions of her life, the richness of his. For example, he describes his time abroad: ‘Russia was all that I had imagined, and far, far more. I even spent some days on a river boat on the Volga. Do you remember that boatman’s song that you used to play?’ (p.184). After this enthusiastic sentence, Vera simply answers ‘yes’.

In Bergsonian terms, the man is unable to recall immediately his relationship with Vera because he has to sort through the many memory images of the past six years, which are filled with exciting exploits in foreign lands. He explains, ‘After I had recognised you today – I had to take such a leap – I had to take a leap over my whole life to get back to that time’ (p.187). Vera’s recall is far easier and she is able to select the memory image, triggered from the perception of him in the café, at once, because she has led a humdrum existence since they parted. Her memory images are far less complex and far more easily recalled and suggest financial hardship. Her syntax reflects this as her responses remain curt: ‘No, I’ve no piano’ and ‘Sold, ages ago’ (pp.184-5). These curt responses also highlight the Bergsonian idea that language is an inadequate medium and Mansfield represents this through a series of

‘dysfunctional and miscomprehending conversations’¹³ such as the one here between Vera and her previous lover.

The memory of Vera’s relationship with this man is triggered from symbols encountered by her perception: ‘Very carefully, in a way she recognised immediately as his ‘special’ way, he was peeling an orange’ (p.181). The symbolism here serves a dual purpose: in Bergsonian terms it facilitates the recall of memory images in Vera’s consciousness, triggering *her* state of consciousness: the feeling evoked by the symbol itself. This in turn is revealed to the reader as we both ‘read’ the symbol and read the narrative focalised through Vera, experiencing the state of consciousness with her. In this sentence, Vera reacts to the symbol of the orange by recalling her feelings for her past lover; she becomes incredulous that he cannot remember her, showing the reader that this relationship is far more important to her than it is to him, a situation that has reversed over the years. Additionally, *we* read the symbol of the unwrapping of an orange as a sensuous image, an undressing image and we are aware that Vera and this man were once lovers. The intimacy revealed from Vera’s knowledge that he carries out this action in his ‘special’ way confirms the symbol’s indication. This unwrapping image also signals to the reader the gradual revelation throughout the narrative of the details of their relationship; it anticipates the temporal shifts to come, and the unveiling of a history.

The focalisation through Vera furthers the exploration of Bergson’s concept of duration. The action of the story takes place over a short period of time, roughly the amount of time it takes to read the story, but through analepsis the period of duration covered is far more extensive. Time is experienced as qualitative rather than quantitative, through the shifts from the present to the past, as each character recalls memory images from their relationship together. The flashbacks and interior monologue affect the handling of time. The past and future are ‘strained through the meshes of the present’.¹⁴ Additionally, this narrative discontinuity reflects the consciousness trying to make sense of reality: it is not linear, structured and passive but disjointed, fragmented and dynamic. In turn this demonstrates the fluidity of identity. As Vera remembers the days with her lover she suddenly:

Felt the strange beast that had slumbered so long within her bosom stir,
stretch itself, yawn, prick up its ears, and suddenly bound to its feet, and fix
its longing, hungry stare upon those faraway places. (p.184)

In this metaphoric and poetic sentence, Vera recalls her dreams of travelling with her lover, her adventurous spirit, symbolised as a ‘beast’ inside her, awakened briefly, triggered by her reminiscences. The word beast suggests to the reader something uncontrollable and at the same time outside the boundaries of normality: a desire that does not fit with social mores. The image leads Vera to fantasise about what it would be like to experience life in Russia:

With his supper in a cloth on his knees, sat the coachman. ‘Have a dill
pickle,’ he said, and although she was not certain what a dill pickle was, she
saw the greenish glass jar with a red chilli like a parrot’s beak glimmering
through. (p.186)

The shifts in focus from the present to the past to the future give the reader a glimpse of Vera's identity through her states of consciousness: analepsis is being transformed into prolepsis. This is Vera's duration; the experiencing of time as qualitative. Mansfield is able to evoke a social comment here through the application of these philosophical ideas: Vera longs to be that young woman again, the woman for whom world travel was possible, but the prohibitive nature of patriarchal society means that for a single woman this is not possible. The man confirms this with his statement to Vera (you were) 'Born out of your time' (p.188).

The evocation of past images is personal, and the dichotomy of the images conjured of the same events recalled by Vera and her lover, accents the personal nature of perception, and highlights the confined nature of Vera's life. Each of us experience reality differently because each experience is tempered by the personal recollection of memory images (an active rather than passive process) as we engage with reality in the present. This dichotomy of perception also speaks to the nature of literary influence itself. The ability to describe the Modernists as a coherent group has eluded scholars because the very nature of the literature does not lend itself to collective description. Indeed, writing in 1911, Ford Madox Ford despaired of 'whether there exists any school of conscious Literary Art in England today', instead there being 'nothing but a formless welter of books without any tendency as without any traditions or aesthetic aims.'¹⁵ Bergson's philosophies emphasise the personal nature of perception and it is no wonder that reactions to literary influences at this time produced an assemblage of such diverse writings; each writer interpreting these influences in personal and unique ways.

In *A Dill Pickle*, the man's memory of the day at Kew Gardens was 'fine and warm' seeing 'bright colours' but Vera remembers him being a 'maniac about the wasps' and 'how she had suffered' (pp. 182-183). In these few short sentences symbols create changes in the emotions of the characters. For the man these memory images are triggered by the sound of her voice, for him a 'haunting memory' (p.182). For Vera, warmth and coldness are symbolic, eliciting memories of their relationship and signalling her state of consciousness in the present. The symbols of warm and cold permeate the narrative, setting up the dichotomy of the characters' personalities which drove them apart six years ago, and showing how different their lives have become. Vera mentions that she cannot bear the present cold weather and is interrupted by her ex-lover and recalls how:

She used to feel then as though he, quite suddenly, in the middle of what she was saying, put his hand over her lips, turned from her, attended to something different, and then took his hand away, and with just the same slightly too broad smile, gave her his attention again. (p.182)

His interruption here, and her metaphoric description of it, symbolise the balance of power between them and are representative of a woman's place in society as a whole. Her current existence is experienced as cold, symbolising her barren and unfulfilled life: 'the older one grows - the colder' (p.182) and his interruption of her description of the present symbolises that this is the result of patriarchy. In this short passage, her states of consciousness anticipate and overlap with one another in Bergsonian style. She moves from the shame associated with the memory of his reaction to the wasps, to the feeling of ecstasy in his company, evinced by

the 'warmth, as it were' (p.183) of the memory image. In Bergsonian terms, this is a reflection on the softening of the memory image and adds to the idea that the balance of power in this relationship has shifted. It also signals that memory is an active not a passive process. The narrative moves through Vera's states of consciousness from one qualitative state to another, experiencing her duration; her merging of past and present images.

In addition to the symbols of warm and cold, there are two further symbols which provide an antithesis between these two characters' lives. The 'luxury' of the 'delicious, fresh cigarettes' symbolises all that the man has been, and all that Vera cannot achieve (p.184). The expensive cigarettes are both a phallic image and representative of his decadent, extravagant and egotistical lifestyle. They are a sensuous image, like the unwrapping of the orange, indulgent and pleasurable. He has been able to fulfil his dreams as he confirms 'I have carried out all those journeys that we planned' (p.184). By contrast, as Vera gets up to leave, she has 'buttoned her collar again and drawn down her veil' (p.187). The drawing down of her veil finally signals to the beast within her, that she will return to her closed existence; to the existence in which she is forced to hide her true self, symbolically represented as the beast, in order to comply with society's rules. This image of closure is in juxtaposition to the symbol of the orange; the unwrapping image associated with the man and which opens the narrative. These two images frame the narrative: one of opening the other of closure. They also symbolically represent the two characters and the antithesis of their lives: the orange the symbol of the man – free, open and natural; the veil symbolically represents Vera – closed, hidden, and controlled.

Mansfield's purpose in evoking memory from symbolic images in *A Dill Pickle*, allows for the marrying of two concepts: the ability to represent duration in narrative without the restriction of language and the ability to demonstrate the relationship between past images and present states of consciousness. The symbolic images evoke in the characters the memory images from their past, which allow them to act in the present and create the current state of consciousness: for the reader the symbolic images allow the narrative to speak without words, evoking those states of consciousness which 'stand and speak before the reader'.¹⁶

The theme of the confinement of women's lives is explored further in the story 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel'. Once again the narrative begins *in medias res* with the line 'The week after was one of the busiest weeks of their lives'¹⁷ and we are immediately plunged into the collective consciousness of the two daughters: 'their minds went on, thinking things out, talking things over, wondering, deciding, trying to remember where...' (p.52). The ellipsis here gives the reader the sense of time passing and of the daughters' minds running on and on, their states of consciousness mingling and interpenetrating in true Bergsonian style. At this point the reader is not aware that 'the week after' refers to the death of the daughters' father and 'the remainder of the story is an expansion of the implications of these opening words, in scenes alternating between present and past with occasional shuddering glances into the empty future'.¹⁸ Time almost becomes one of the characters in this narrative.¹⁹ The divisions of the narrative add impetus to this argument. The narrative is divided into eleven sections which suggest linear progression of time but the divisions are arbitrary, the narrative is punctuated by temporal shifts in time through polyphonic

focalisation, giving the reader access to the consciousness of several characters. I would assert that Mansfield divides the narrative into sections to mirror how humans divide time by their intellect. 'The structural rhythms of order and temporality represented by the numbered sections are countered by the durational wavering of the sisters' consciousness.'²⁰ We experience the daughters' duration throughout the narrative, experiencing their states of consciousness in intuitive time and these divisions of the narrative serve to emphasise how this differs from our use of time by the intellect.

Time is also used symbolically in the narrative to show how the daughters are unable to free themselves from their father's influence. In deciding whether to send their father's watch to Ceylon, Constantia comments "And of course it isn't as though it would be going – ticking I mean", said Constantia... 'at least', she added, 'it would be strange after all that time if it was' (p.62). The watch and its ability to continue ticking is symbolically representative of the Colonel. He may be dead but like the watch he is still very much alive (and ticking) and influencing the daughters. It is significant that the daughters wish to pass the watch to another male member of the family, almost as if they are passing on the patriarchal influence it represents.

The extent of the Colonel's influence is revealed through comedy and symbolism. At the funeral Josephine has 'a moment of absolute terror...to think that she and Constantia had done this thing without asking his permission. What would father say when he found out ... 'Buried. You two girls had me *buried!*'" (p.57). Bergson's philosophy is parodied here to demonstrate the danger of oppression upon women. The mingling of past memory images (the funeral) with fantasy of the future shows how Josephine and Constantia are incapable of uncontrolled action as a result of the enduring influence of their overbearing and demanding father. They have become what Fullbrook describes as 'pathetic creatures [...] so stripped of the capacity for independent action by their life-long deference'.²¹ Bergson's philosophy that action in the present is based upon current perceptions guided by memory images provides the basis of Mansfield's attack upon the cruelty of patriarchy. The Colonel's enduring influence is also stressed through symbolism when the daughters decide to clear their father's room. Josephine comments 'How could she explain to Constantia that father was in the chest of drawers?' (p.59) and even as they enter the room their actions are tempered by their lifelong habits: 'But Constantia said, as she always has said on these occasions, 'No, Jug, that's not fair. You're eldest'' (p.58). Their lives have become a matter of habit and the narrative is punctuated with reference to habitual activities. In the bedroom scene Josephine has to stifle laughter, remembering how the sisters had giggled often which 'must have been habit' (p.52) and in responding to condolence correspondence, Josephine writes out twenty three times 'We miss our dear father very much' (p.53), symbolically reiterating the repetition and monotony of their lives.

The use of irony adds another level to Mansfield's technique when focusing attention on the damaging effects of patriarchy. When considering what must be done about Kate, Constantia says "'Isn't it curious, Jug", she said, "that just on this one subject I've never been able to quite make up my mind?"' (p.67). The sisters, of course, have never had to make decisions of their own and the ending of the narrative bears out that they will continue in their referencing

to their father's memory in making future decisions. In this respect, Mansfield evokes Bergson's philosophy that memory guides present action, providing a parody of it to make her point. Constantia's daydream reemphasises this point: 'But Constantia's long pale face lengthened and set, and she gazed away-away-far over the desert, to where the line of camels unwound like a thread of wool... (p.54). Bergson uses the metaphor of a spool to represent life, winding up into a ball of memory and the images here serve to seduce the reader into believing that the daughters are waiting for change, that they are in a state of becoming. The ellipsis provides the idea of thoughts running on, the nuances of the states of consciousness of Constantia. Ironically, without realizing it, the two sisters are experiencing the new, each new state of consciousness must, by definition, be different from the last, despite being embedded in the memory images they recall of looking after their father. But the indoctrination they have received from their closed existence leaves the reader in no doubt that the state of becoming will continue indefinitely. These sisters know only this way to live and no other.

The temporal shifts in the narrative enable the reader to experience the daughters' duration, and this provides Mansfield with another opportunity to parody Bergson's concept of humans being in a perpetual state of becoming, by suggesting to the reader that the sisters are incapable of change. Through Josephine's consciousness it is revealed that 'The rest had all been looking after father, and at the same time keeping out of father's way. But now? But now?' (p.69). Mansfield is able to evoke pathos in the reader through focalisation. We experience Josephine's state of feeling lost. Throughout the narrative the reader is seduced into believing that the daughters are capable of change; that they are in a state of becoming independent of their father's influence. Constantia reiterates this sense of change: 'She wanted to say something to Josephine, something frightfully important, about – about the future and what...' (p.70). We are privy to both daughters' consciousness as they are dealing with the challenges they now face. As Kaplan explains 'Mansfield searched for methods to convey the interconnectedness of individuals' sense of reality as well as the pressures of the moment, the sudden breakthroughs into deeper levels of consciousness' (167). She is able to achieve this through the exploitation of Bergson's philosophy of the perpetual state of becoming and the consciousness' reliance on past memory images.

The use of symbolism furthers Mansfield's ability to relate form to meaning. The narrator tells us 'The thieving sun touched Josephine gently. She lifted her face. She was drawn over to the window by gentle beams...' (p.69). The ellipsis here allows the reader to believe that Josephine is capable of change, that her longing for the sun on her face, which symbolically represents freedom, means that she is in a state of becoming. By contrast then, their life with their father is symbolically represented as sunless, dark and cold: 'But it all seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn't real. It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself. What did it mean?' (p. 71). As the sun represents freedom, the moon represents naturalness and vitality, and freedom from boundaries. Fullbrook discusses how Mansfield was accused of 'cruelty and sneering in the story',²² explaining that Mansfield wanted the story to lead up to the end of the narrative where the daughters turn to the sun only to find that it is not there: 'Josephine

was silent for a moment. She stared at the big cloud where the sun had been. Then she replied shortly, "I've forgotten too" (p.70). Nevertheless, I believe that Mansfield projects, through the symbolism of the 'big cloud', a representation of the Colonel's influence and command over the daughters that means they are incapable of change, that their habitual referencing to their father will continue. The emphatic 'I've forgotten too' signals to the reader that the struggle is over, the state of becoming has ceased; the daughters will remain at their father's command through their memories forever.

The symbols used in *The Daughters of the Late Colonel* are used to represent the colonel and what he stands for: he stands for structure, routine, and the traditional, including traditional representations both of time and of women. The symbolism here is synecdochic of patriarchy: the Colonel a synecdochic representation of stereotypical portrayals of both women and time. The symbolic representation of the Colonel is the link to Bergson's theories through the concept of quantitative experiences: the concept of spatialisation of time and our perceptions of the world, our objectification of everything. This traditional perception is as spurious as the patriarchy that the Colonel represents, and so he stands in direct opposition to Bergson's theory of true perception, representing the traditional image of human perception as he does traditional perceptions of the role of women. By diametrically opposing him to Bergson's theories, Mansfield uses the influence of current philosophical ideas to show up the redundancy of patriarchy.

Mansfield's Unique Style

Bergson's theories as a literary influence are evident in Mansfield's adoption of symbolism to depict states of human consciousness. The memory images of her characters are evoked by symbols perceived by them in a reality that is changing and dynamic. The fragmentary nature of reality is expressed in Mansfield's depiction of time in her stories: a short narrative covering only a short span of clock time is interjected with immediate and distant past memories representing duration. The symbols used to evoke the memories in her characters in turn speak to the reader, to conjure the state of consciousness of the character by suggestion rather than explication. Mansfield's quest in exploiting these techniques is examination of societal codes through parody: highlighting the human experience and in particular showing the reader the confinement of women's lives.

In *The Swing of the Pendulum*, the concept of time frames a narrative which comments upon the life of a single woman, the interior monologue depicting Viola's states of consciousness which are triggered by symbols of violets and cigarettes. *A Dill Pickle* represents a more sophisticated use of the concept of duration. The narrative discontinuity and symbolism show the reader how the characters deal with the durational flux of reality. The symbolism serves a dual purpose: it triggers the memories and the state of consciousness in the character but at the same time gives an indication to the reader of the nature of that perceptive response. In *The Daughters of the Late Colonel*, the deceptive nature of the division of the narrative serves to underscore Bergson's philosophy that human consciousness is not linear but gathered from memory images from the past, and perceptions in the present. Parody of Bergson's theories

reveals the Colonel as synecdochic of patriarchy: representative of structure and homogeneity, diametrically opposed to the Bergsonian definition of human perception.

Bergson's influence over intellectual thinking during the Modernist period was transitory, and this in itself, is indicative of the environment in which Modernist writers worked. His philosophies emphasise the personal nature of perception, each experience unique to each individual. This emphasis speaks to the nature of literary influence at this time and goes some way to explaining the diversity in literature and art of the period. In Mansfield's writing, Bergson's influence manifests itself as a unique interpretation of human perception, creating a new genre of short story writing. Her writing is not aesthetic but purposeful: her stories each a social commentary, particularly in relation to the subjection of women to the brutality and hypocrisy of patriarchy.

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¹ H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2001) p.98

² H. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. By Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2004) p. 178.

³ H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2001) pp.131-132 (Further references to this work will be given after quotations in the text).

⁴ H. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 178.

⁵ Bergson, *Time*, pp.131-132.

⁶ T. E. Hulme, 'New Philosophy', *The New Age*, No 773, Vol. V, No 10 (July 1 1909) p.198.

⁷ A Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1919) p. 9.

⁸ Symons, *Movement*, pp.91-92.

⁹ Bergson, *Matter*, p.194.

¹⁰ K. Mansfield 'The Swing of the Pendulum' in *In A German Pension* (London: Hesperus Press Ltd, 2005) p.87 (Further references to this work will be given after quotations in the text).

¹¹ K. Mansfield 'A Dill Pickle' in *Bliss and Other Stories* (London: Penguin Group, 1962) p. 181. (Further references to this work will be given after quotations in the text).

¹² S. Berkman, *Katherine Mansfield: A Critical Study* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971) p.171.

¹³ A. Bennett, *Katherine Mansfield* (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 2004) p.27.

¹⁴ Berkman, *Mansfield*, p.155.

¹⁵ F. M. Ford, 'The Critical Attitude' in Faulkner, *The English Modernist Reader, 1910-1930* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986) p.35.

¹⁶ A. Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1919), p.57

¹⁷ K. Mansfield 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' in *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (London: Penguin Group, 2007) p.52. (Further references to this work will be given after quotations in the text).

¹⁸ I. Gordon, *Katherine Mansfield* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1954) p.21.

¹⁹ A. Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) p.327.

²⁰ A. Smith 'Katherine Mansfield and Rhythm' *Journal of New Zealand Literature* No. 21 (2003) p.119.

²¹ K. Fullbrook, *Key Women Writers: Katherine Mansfield* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986) p.124.

²² Fullbrook, *Mansfield*, p.124.