

“Dare we . . . limit life to ourselves?”: Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, and the Fly^{*}

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I. Woolf and Mansfield: Their Rivalry and Friendship

Virginia Woolf's friendship and rivalry with Katherine Mansfield has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years. Woolf's initial reservations of Mansfield's “[*stinking*] like a—well civet cat that taken to street walking” (*DVW* I, 58; emphasis mine) implies her uneasy feelings toward Mansfield's sexually questionable lifestyle,¹⁾ as noted in her diary entry of 11 October 1917. Meanwhile, Mansfield confesses her dislike of the Woolfs referring to them as “the Woolves” in her letter to her lover John Middleton Murry privately on 16 and 17 February 1918, and using a similar expression related to olfaction—“They are *smelly*” (*CLKM* II 77; emphasis original). Mansfield's envy of Woolf's life is obvious, as revealed in her letter to Murry; “There is always in her writing a calm freedom of

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1) Sue Thomas notes that “in the 1910s the word cat was still in use as a term for a prostitute” (70).

expression as though she were at peace—her roof over her—her possession round her—and her man somewhere within call” (*CLKM III*, 127-28; 30 Nov. 1919). On the other hand, Woolf discloses her competitive feelings with Mansfield in her final letter to Mansfield: “Damned Katherine! Why can’t I be the only woman who knows how to write,” referring to E. M. Forster’s evaluation—“*Prelude* and *The Voyage Out* were the best novels of their time” (13 Feb. 1921).² Woolf’s dubious glance at Mansfield’s “callowness & hardness as a human being,” together with her suspicion of Murry/Mansfield’s simultaneous amorous relationships with Ottoline Morrell,³ leads, in fact, to her hostile comments on Mansfield’s “Bliss,” where Mansfield’s conception is “poor, cheap” (*DVW I*, 179; 7 Aug. 1918). And Woolf saw “spite” in Mansfield’s review of her *Night and Day* (*DVW I*, 314; 28 Nov. 1919). Mansfield, on the other hand, did not want to openly reveal her dislike of Woolf’s *Night and Day* straightforwardly in the review, for fear of offending Woolf, although she thinks that Woolf’s novel is “a lie in the soul” (*CLKM III*, 82), as she notes in her private letter to Murry on 10 November 1919. Woolf and Mansfield’s off-and-on relationship, considering Mansfield’s negative review of Woolf’s *Night and Day* and Woolf’s somewhat cynical refusal of Mansfield’s “Bliss,” might well appear quite competitive and loaded with jealousy.

However, despite their rather guarded approach to each other at first and the cautious distanced review of each other’s work, their mutual passion for writing, especially for a new form of fiction, along with their sense of solidarity as women, led to a strong fellowship, as their correspondences and diary entries reveal.⁴ For

2) I cannot find this letter of Woolf to Mansfield from *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: 1912-1922*. I quote this diary entry from Sarah Ailwood’s interesting essay, “Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf and Tensions of Empire during the Modernist period.” Ailwood notes that this letter “indicates that [Woolf] was not afraid to confront her[Mansfield] about their rivalry” (255-56). Ailwood considers the Mansfield/Woolf relationship as “symbolic of the broader tensions of empire during the modernist period” (265).

3) Murry has amorous feelings for Morrell at that time, and Mansfield, in turn, has dubious feelings toward Morrell. In “Bliss,” Mansfield might be reflecting their triangular relationship in the complex liaisons among Bertha, Harry, and Pearl.

all the challenges that existed in paying regular visits or talking together, due partly to Woolf's being bedridden and mainly to Mansfield's tuberculosis and the subsequent intermittent overseas trips, they certainly seemed to enjoy each other's company. Woolf's suspicion about Mansfield's "cheapness" disappears in their first meeting, as soon as they engage in talking about writing, and she finds Mansfield "so intelligent & inscrutable that she repays friendship" (*DVW* I, 58). Woolf's diary entry of 28 May 1918 also reveals a typical reaction to Mansfield; though at first noticing Mansfield's "marmoreal" attitude, Woolf feels they "[a]s usual . . . came to an oddly complete understanding" owing to their shared "love of writing" (*DVW* I, 150; emphasis mine). When they met again on 31 May 1920, the "steady discomposing formality & coldness" at the beginning soon vanished, and they "as usual, talked as easily as though 8 months were minutes" (*DVW* II, 44; emphasis mine). Woolf's suspicion of their friendship being "entirely founded on quicksands" (*DVW* I, 243; 18 Feb. 1919) often changes, as their relationship progresses, into her confirmation that they have reached "some kind of durable foundation" (*DVW* I, 291; 12 July 1919). Mansfield's happy recollections of her day spent with Woolf and Woolf's works are also contained in her letters: her confession of her joyous rereading of "The Mark on the Wall" (*CLKM* II, 170; 14 May 1918), her being "proud of [Woolf's] writing [i.e. "Modern Novels"]" (*CLKM* II, 311; 10 April 1919), and her praise for Woolf's "bird's eye" in "Kew Gardens" which "sees the lovely reflections in water that a bird must see" (*CLKM* II, 333-34) in her letter to Ottoline Morrell on 27 June 1919—all of these remarks reveal her admiration for Woolf's works. Their shared communication as a writer is expressed in their making "a public of two" (*DVW* I, 222; 30 Nov. 1918), as Woolf acknowledges. Similarly, Mansfield admits to Woolf after visiting for the weekend in August 1917

4) Although "K. M. [(Katherine Mansfield)]" was first mentioned by Woolf in a diary entry of 18 August 1917 when they began to discuss the publication of Mansfield's "Prelude" in Hogarth Press, as Anne Olivier Bell, the editor of Woolf's diaries, notes, Woolf had contacted Mansfield "probably towards the end of 1916" (*DVW* I, 43: n. 18). And their relationship continued through 1921 up to Mansfield's leaving for France to be treated in Guerdijeff Institute.

that they both “have got the same job,” and they “should both, quite apart from each other, be after so very nearly the same thing” (*CLKM* I, 327; letter to Woolf on c. 23 Aug. 1917).

Woolf’s appreciation of Mansfield’s intelligence⁵⁾ and their friendship seems to be founded on a certain solidarity between women. Woolf finds that “talk[ing] to Katherine” is much easier than sitting and listening to John Middleton Murry’s “orthodox masculine thing about Eliot”; “[t]he male atmosphere is disconcerting,” while she takes solace in Mansfield who “gives & resists as [Woolf] expect[s] her to” (*DVW* I, 265; 17 April 1919).⁶⁾ On 31 May 1920, Woolf felt “once more as keenly as ever [...] a common certain understanding between [them]—a queer sense of being ‘like’,” regardless of Murry’s interruptions, as they “chatted as usual” about literature and their stories (*DVW* II, 44-45). Given these observations, Antony Alpers’s accusation of Woolf’s being “cursed with a rival-complex” especially because Mansfield was “a confident, healthy young woman of twenty-eight” (198) while Woolf was already 34 years old when they first met, sounds rather prejudiced, since Alpers’s comments trivialize their professional competition as something merely similar to a catfight. When Woolf confides, at the news of Murry’s second marriage, that “K.[Katherine Mansfield] & I had our relationship; & never again shall I have one like it” (*DVW* II, 317; 17 Oct. 1924), she acknowledges their persistent affinity, somewhat similar to, and perhaps stronger than, Murry’s love. Woolf, who has had with Mansfield “2 hours priceless talk,” as recorded in her diary entry of 5 June 1920 (*DVW* II 45), suffered after Mansfield’s death from a loss of “something in common” that she “shall never find in anyone else” (*DVW* II, 227; 16 Jan. 1923).

Alper’s observation that it was Leonard Woolf, and perhaps not Virginia, who

5) Though disliking Mansfield’s stories, Woolf asks herself, “if [Mansfield] were not so clever she couldn’t be so disagreeable” (*DVW* II 138; 15 Sep. 1921).

6) Quoting Woolf’s diary entry where Woolf and Mansfield “are not to be left alone; their husbands stay on, watching over them” although they want to long to talk, each with the other (20 April 1919), Kaplan points out their common feminist aesthetics (1991: 145).

made the class-biased “masculine error” about Mansfield, as disclosed by his reference to “Virginia’s disliking Katherine’s ‘cheap scent and cheap sentimentality’” (203), sounds convincing. Yet, his strong argument that “Katherine Mansfield in some way helped Virginia Woolf to break out of the mould in which she had been working hitherto” (201) adds fuel to the impassioned debate over the issue of who is the true modernist innovator. The question that Angela Smith has asked at the beginning of her book, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, as to “why Woolf was haunted by Mansfield, ‘that faint ghost’” (7) seems to provide a more proper departure point for our research into images shared by Woolf and Mansfield, which are connected to their modernist and feminist exploration of what lies under the male-dominated, human-oriented world. Smith adequately points out their common characteristics such as “their obsession with writing” that “linked with their experience as ‘edgewomen’,” together with “their abjection in illness, their bisexuality, their responses to childlessness, and their complex gender relationships with their editor husbands and with their fathers” (31). David Daiches well grasps each writer as a modernist, noting the seemingly opposite approaches of Woolf’s request to look within and Mansfield’s calling for “a clearer vision with which to look out” (192).⁷⁾ Yet, Daiches’s attention to Woolf’s “purely personal sense of significance” (193) is questionable, since, summarizing Woolf’s dominating theme merely as abstract and philosophical, and being suspicious of Woolf’s “certain lack of body in her work” (195), Daiches seems blind to Woolf’s material, somatic, and feminine consciousness infused in her text. Ann McLaughlin, aptly pointing out an uneasy sisterhood in her 1983 study (152), focuses in her study on the ideas and techniques in Woolf’s and Mansfield’s works. Her detailed depiction of each writer’s life and works, along with her close analysis of similar themes and passages in their stories, demonstrate Woolf and Mansfield’s doing the same job.⁸⁾ Patricia Moran investigates two

7) Daiches well grasps their differences: “To accept the traditional schematization was unartistic to Joyce, meant the lack of objective truth to Katherine Mansfield, and meant the presentation of the unimportant and the trivial to Virginia Woolf” (193).

writers' complicated feminist engagement with bodily issues in *Word of Mouth: Body Language in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf*. Moran focuses on their shared "matrophobia," yet with an intention of "restor[ing] Mansfield to her position as a key figure in the development of British women's modernism," while decentering Woolf (15). Gerardo Rodriguez Salas and Isabel Maria Andres Cuevas's investigation into Woolf and Mansfield's "use of the grotesque, particularly in connection with ideas of femininity and maternity" can supplement Moran's elevation of Mansfield, because their study highlights Mansfield and Woolf's shared "desire to transgress the conventions of a suffocating patriarchal society" (140). In 1991's *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*, Sydney Janet Kaplan also argues for feminist aesthetics both in Mansfield and Woolf, finding their "heading for the same place"—each being a woman and modernist writer.⁹) Kaplan notes the ambiguities-fraught relationship between Mansfield and Woolf (146), but she warns, quite convincingly, against "overemphasiz[ing] their competition and thus play[ing] into the stereotype of women as enemies, conspiring against each other for the favors of men" (146). To "explore the creative consequences of their interaction" (Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield*, 146) will be most beneficial to Woolf/Mansfield studies. Their formal and thematic interests unfold as we take a closer look at the embodied images and tropes that intersect in Woolf's and Mansfield's stories.

8) McLaughlin's extensive observation in this article is quite helpful in understanding the strong affinity between the two writers, both in their life and works. Especially see pp. 153-58.

9) Sydney Janet Kaplan's recently published book, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence*, tries to correct her previous harsh portrayal of Murry as a cold unsympathetic husband, focusing more on Murry's life and works than in her 1991 book. Nevertheless, she observes extensively the intimate and shared connection between Mansfield and Woolf, which persists.

II. The Nonhuman World and the Fly

Mansfield's and Woolf's stories are filled with images of nature—flowers, fruits, plants, trees, birds, fish, cows, the sea, the sky, snakes, toads, snails, and insects, to list a few. The gnarled, seldom-blooming aloe with “long sharp thorns that edged [its] leaves,” in Mansfield's “Prelude,” is a metaphor for Linda's complicated emotional life of love and hatred, sensitivity and cruelty, fertility and sterility, as a woman and mother (115). The “tall, slender pear tree” that is “in fullest, richest bloom” as seen by Bertha Young in her state of manic bliss remains simply “as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still” even after Bertha's discovery of the adulterous affair between her husband and the secret object of her lesbian desire, Pearl Fulton (“Bliss” 177, 185). The “baby owls crying ‘More pork’ in the moonlight” stand for Leila's limited, childlike life (“Her First Ball” 267). In Laura's garden, roses, “the only flowers that impress people at garden parties,” come out and bow down as though they have been “visited by archangels” in “The Garden Party,” designating the Sheridans' privileged class status, in its sharp contrast with “the garden patches” in the neighborhood of Scott, the dead carter, where “there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans” (336, 343).

This fascination with the connection between nature and human is echoed in Woolf's novels and short stories. *Mrs. Dalloway* begins with the famous, rather perplexing sentence—“Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself” (3). Woolf, making a parallel between flowers and Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway's reviving desire for life, connects Clarissa's desire for flowers with Clarissa's feeling of odd affinity with the unknown Septimus achieved during her party at the end of the novel. This novel deals, as McLaughlin argues, with a similar existential problem as Mansfield's “The Garden Party”—“the absurd, almost existential juxtaposition of horror and gaiety”—only with its being developed “far more extensively” (“An Uneasy Sisterhood,” 159).¹⁰ Mrs. Ramsay's meditation on life and death flows against a backdrop of the sea in *To the Lighthouse*. The snake engorged with a toad

that is trampled by Giles, in *Between the Acts*, can be read as a symbol of “the predator/prey dynamic that suggestively evokes the political paralysis engulfing Europe” (Tromanhauser 75), signaling that human beings are endangered by another merciless war just around the corner. Woolf’s *Flush* is a book where a spaniel lapdog functions as a narrator/protagonist observing Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s life.

Merely by taking a look at their works, as roughly outlined above, Woolf’s and Mansfield’s shared interest in the biosphere is apparent. Vicki Tromanhauser’s intriguing paper, “Animal Life and Human Sacrifice in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*,” affirms that the narrative in *Between the Acts* “deconstructs the human/animal divide by undermining the sense of mastery upon which such a distinction rests” (80). The cows and other natural elements fill the awkward gap between the acts designed by La Trobe, widening the limits of a man-made play to including something not quite subservient to human projects, while also with effacing the omniscient narrator’s voice. Tromanhauser’s argument that Woolf reverses “the anthropomorphizing strain” by “abruptly assimilat[ing] the human to the bovine” (79) in this novel can provide a valuable clue to discussions of Woolf’s and Mansfield’s presentation of the non-human world. Melinda Harvey’s study, in “Katherine Mansfield’s Menagerie,” of Mansfield’s “critique of anthropocentrism and the pursuit of an animal-centred discourse” (202) is in line with Tromanhauser’s view, offering another important reference to Mansfield’s and Woolf’s connection with the biosphere, particularly with animals.

Firmly founded on Jacques Derrida’s call for “poetic thinking” where “thinking concerning animal” is feasible, while “philosophical knowledge” does not encompass the animal, Harvey starts her discussion by pointing out that “friends and acquaintances often linked Mansfield to the animal” (203). It is true that

10) McLaughlin’s reading of Woolf alongside with Mansfield, focusing on the similar images, passages, and themes, are quite helpful. Yet, her statements are not sometimes quite correct: for example, “Laura, the heroine, discovers” the death of Scott, the carter, not “in the midst of the party” (159), but in the midst of *preparation* for the party.

Mansfield and Murry address each other as two tigers in their letters—‘Wig’ for Mansfield, ‘Tig’ for Murry. Interestingly, Woolf and her intimates also employed animal nicknames; Leonard is ‘Mongoose’ to Virginia, and Virginia ‘Mandrill’ to Leonard in their playful fantasy of courtship, and Virginia signed herself usually ‘Billy(goat) to her sister Vanessa.¹¹⁾ Woolf was also surrounded by companion animals, such as dogs and cats, and even a marmoset, called Mitz. Animals frequent these two women writers’ stories; some actively participate in human dramas, and others seem to simply be there side by side with human beings. We become, therefore, engaged in the exploration of the sphere outside of the human-dominant space in Woolf and Mansfield, asking—“Dare we, I asked myself, limit life to ourselves?” (192)—, the very question that the Rev. G. W. Streatfield in *Between the Acts* throws to the spectators gathered to watch La Trobe’s pageant.

Both Woolf and Mansfield have a keen interest in small, obscure, and marginalised beings. The fly is a recurrent image in Woolf’s and Mansfield’s life and works. The fly is the image Mansfield frequently uses to identify her miserable feelings in particular. When she stayed alone in Bandol, longing to go back to England and to Murry but deterred because of the war, and, in addition, when she was diagnosed that her lungs were affected with tuberculosis, she compared herself to a drowning fly in her letter to Murry. In a letter of 11 January in 1918, she tells him that she feels “like a fly who has been dropped into the milk jug & fished out again but is still too milky & drowned to start cleaning up yet” (*CLKM* II: 8). On the last day of 1918, when she faced a resurgence of depression, Mansfield saw herself as the unfortunate fly once more; ““And God looked upon the fly fallen into the jug of milk and saw that it was good. And the smaller Cherubims & Seraphims of all who delight in misfortune struck their silver harps & thrilled: How is the fly fallen, fallen”” (*JKM* 153). As Vincent O’Sullivan and Margaret Scott note in their

11) See, for example, Virginia’s letter to Leonard of November 1912 (*LW* II, 12). Reginald Abbott notes in detail “‘human’ animals in Bloomsbury” (282, n. 8): Virginia was ‘Goat’ to Vanessa, Vanessa was sometimes ‘Sheepdog,’ Virginia’s self-adopted nickname was ‘Sparrow’ for her friend Violet Dickinson, Emma Vaughan was nicknamed as ‘Toad,’ to quote a few.

“Introduction” to *Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield: 1918-1919*, Mansfield uses this trope of the fallen fly “at the center of one of her best-known stories” (xiv). This story they refer to is one of the last stories written by Mansfield, poignantly titled “The Fly.”

The imagery of the fly is echoed in Woolf’s stories. In *Jacob’s Room* a woman is battering at someone’s door in the rain, while Jacob is engrossed in reading Plato in his room. This woman who is not allowed inside is depicted as “a fly, falling from the ceiling, had lain on its back, too weak to turn over” (110). The powerlessness of woman, identified with the image of a fallen fly, does not, however, seem inevitably fixed. Woolf suggests weaknesses in the constraints of male-dominated society, as implied in the scene where Jacob feels strongly against women’s taking part in King’s College Chapel; Jacob’s deprecating gaze at the women in the chapel, criticizing them as the ones who “[destroy] the service completely” like dogs, being “as ugly as sin” (33), discloses Jacob’s immaturity and reveals the unknown narrator’s oblique critique of Jacob’s prejudice against women. These depictions of women, together with the voices of the marginalized women, including Mrs Flanders, Mrs Jarvis, and perhaps the narrator, turn the reader’s attention to the irreducibility of fly-like women, implying “Jacob’s insecurity as a privileged reader” (Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf*, 214).

In *Orlando*, flies assert their own reality, taking a dominant position over Harry in a war between Orlando and Archduke Harry. The “game called Fly Loo” that Orlando proposes to Archduke is a simple “device . . . needing only three lumps of sugar and a sufficiency of flies,” which helps to overcome “the embarrassment of conversation,” or rather the absence of conversation (174). Yet, it serves not merely to fill in a boring time during the Archduke’s courtship, but, more importantly, to avoid “the necessity of marriage” (174) to the Archduke where Orlando might be merely reduced to “the Pink, the Pearl, the Perfection of her sex” (172). Archduke Harry who cannot distinguish a dead fly from a living one weeps shamelessly when he discovers Orlando’s cheating, i. e. Orlando’s use of a dead blue-bottle fly for her advantage. Harry—who has shot at “an elk in Sweden,” “the

reindeer [...] in Norway,” and an “albatross”—surrenders to Orlando’s fly, the only weapon Orlando can take, since her sex prevents her from “knock[ing] a man over the head or run[ning] him through the body with a rapier” (173, 174-75). Woolf’s playful use of a fly in this novel indicates the possibility of a power reversal—the victory of Orlando, the weaker sex, over the ‘masculine’ Archduke Harry, and, with a slight leap of the logic, the victory of the feeble fly over the majestic elk. Furthermore, it is the fly that chooses which bottle it sits on and decides the victor of this game, although a blue-bottle fly needs to be sacrificed on behalf of Orlando; the fly serves as Orlando’s co-actor as well as her weapon.

We can find a use of similar images of the fly and the toad in *Orlando* and in Mansfield’s letter to Murry mentioned above. Woolf’s humorous description of the fly, which was sluggish in a wintry cold and “often spent an hour or so circling round the ceiling” and “a small toad” that is dropped into Harry’s shirt to finally push Harry out the door and out of Orlando’s life (*Orlando* 174, 176), reminds us of Mansfield’s self-mocking presentation, though with much pathos, of herself as a drowned fly and of her feet, wet in “piercing cold,” as “2 walking toads” (*CLKM* II, 6; 11 Jan. 1918). The fly intrigues us in particular; this small insect is often chosen by Mansfield and Woolf for their stories, with containing compelling reference to our ordinary life.

III. The Death of the Fly and the Power of Otherness

“The Fly” was written when Mansfield stayed at the Victoria Palace Hotel in Paris receiving a cure under Dr. Manoukhin and suffering excruciatingly from her illness in 1922. This story risks being viewed merely as a story of the purposeless death of a fly, without a close analysis of the significance of the fly and its death, as observed in parallel with Mansfield’s wretched state during her last days and with the self-mocking portrait of herself as the fly in a letter to Murry and in her journal as we’ve briefly observed above. Kaplan reads the fly in this story as

meaninglessly killed by the boss, with the comment that this “unnerving portrait of victimisation, grief and suffering” might result from Mansfield’s identification of herself with a fly, reminding us of the insect image of Mansfield herself in her letter (Kaplan, *Circulating Genius*, 160). Kaplan’s discussion regarding Mansfield’s feeling of wretchedness due to her physical suffering as accrued to tuberculosis and her own moment of insecurity and terror caught in the abject trope of a fly is interesting, since it grasps Mansfield’s experience of illness and “the darkest disintegration of the self,” in the context of the “experience of liminality, inhabiting as a constant rather than transitional state a limbo between life and death” (23). However, Kaplan’s understanding, though beneficial, does not pay much attention to the fly, eponymous hero of “The Fly.” Similarly, Sylvia Berkman, noting that Mansfield’s “The Fly” “incorporates a despair” Mansfield has experienced, reads this story just as “a relentless, grim depiction of the caprices of destiny” (Berkman 137, 138), without giving a proper place to the fly. Berkman’s observation of the shared gift of Mansfield and Woolf—“intense appreciation of the significance of minute detail” (76)—rightly marks both women writers’s contribution to a modern literary world. And her view that Mansfield’s drawing of insect life in “The Fly” results from her reading of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* or Anton Chekhov’s story, “Small Fry,” is certainly informative (194). However, her conclusion that Mansfield has failed to fulfill “a necessary function in literature” (202), for having given up the struggle to grasp the dualism of life and submitting merely to the dark side without “resolv[ing] into a harmony” (196), is suspect, because her critique seems to rely too much on her reading of Mansfield’s personal life in parallel with the story.

“The Fly” begins with the description of Mr. Woodified, an elderly man who is retired; having had a stroke, he is “boxed up” by his wife and daughters in a suburban house (357). On Tuesday, the only day old Woodified is freed from his protective family, he starts for “the City” (357) to visit his friend who is simply identified as “the boss,” at his office. Mr Woodified talks about his family’s visit to the grave of Reggie, Woodified’s son, and, about how they happened to come

upon the grave of the boss's son who was also killed in the war six years ago. After more small talk about his family, Mr Woodifield eventually leaves the boss's office. The latter part of the story begins with the boss's preparation for a good cry, affected by Mr Woodifield's reminder of his dead son. He orders his employee, Macey, who has “dodged in and out of his cubby hole like a dog that expects to be taken for a run” (359), to prevent anyone from interrupting him, and begins to remember his son, the heir to his business, the object of his hopes and future. Anticipating a feeling of sadness, the boss then realizes that “[h]e [isn't] feeling as he [wants] to feel” (360). At this puzzling moment he notices a fly, who has fallen into his inkpot and “began to swim” (360) in it. Though at first the boss helps the ink-soaked fly to clean and dry its body by picking it up and placing it on the blotting paper, he begins, out of curiosity, to drop a blob of ink over it. After three blobs of ink, the fly is finally dead. Following this convenient diversion, the boss cannot remember what he was thinking.

There are certainly considerable similarities between “The Fly” and Chekhov's “Small Fry” (1885): the use of the insect and its symbolism; a background environment of an urban space, the office in particular; feelings of being bored, isolate, and repressed; killing an insect; and a sense of the absurdity of life. A certain message—that the inevitable suffering of humans does not necessarily lead to understand the (in)significance of the insect—seems to pervade both stories. “Small Fry” focuses on Nevyrazimov, a petty clerk who is working at the office for extra money on Easter. The cockroach that is “running about the table and [has] found no resting place” (3) looks just like Nevyrazimov who cannot find “a means of escape from his hopeless situation” (3) in poverty and anger, merely boxed within “the same grey walls, the same stop-gap duty and complementary letters” (2) in the office. In “The Fly,” the sense of a miserable, ignominious life is reflected rather in Macey, “the grey-haired office messenger” (359) than the boss.¹²⁾ It is

12) Charles May, comparing “The Fly” with “Misery,” another story Chekhov's, argues that “The Fly” explores “the latent significance of the boss's emotional state” (202). His observation—this story emphasizes “the transitory nature of grief,” regardless of the

evident in the last paragraph of this story; the boss's command to the fly—"Look sharp!"—is repeated to Macey in exact wording—"look sharp," about bringing some fresh blotting-paper (361). At the end Macey is so belittled that he is referred to as "the dog" (361), without properly being called by his name.

The two stories reveal two writers' skill to create a slice of life with emotion-laden significance out of seemingly trivial and ordinary affairs, within an objectively-controlled narrative that merely describes our outer behaviors. However, upon a closer look into the details, the reader notices their dissimilarities. While "Small Fry" simply focuses on the minor clerk, "The Fly" has other characters, intimating the complexity of the boss's emotion. Yet, the most obvious difference lies in the latter part of the story, especially surrounding the ending. The vicarious sacrifice of a cockroach seems to relieve Nevyrazimov's repressed anger, but the boss's emotions appear more complicated. Nevyrazimov is blind to his own cruelty, whereas the boss faces, though for a second, a fear, acknowledging his capability of being cruel to the fly. In "The Fly" an allusion to the inhumanity of war is implied. And, most conspicuously, there are elaborately-woven passages that deal with the interaction between the fly and the boss. Unlike in Chekhov's "Small Fry," where Nevyrazimov slaps the cockroach with his hand and picks it up only to throw it into the fire of the lamp, Mansfield's "The Fly" describes the long process of the fly's struggle to survive: to dry out its wet body when the boss picks it up and places it on a piece of blotting-paper; after "the immense task of cleaning the ink" from its front legs and its wings, the fly "[begins], like a minute cat, clean its face" (360-61). Finally when the fly is "ready for life again" (361), the boss

diverse interpretations of the symbolism of the fly itself, "regardless of whether one perceives the creature as a symbol of the death of the boss's grief, his own manipulated son, or the trivia of life that distracts us from feeling" (202-203)—is helpful, but his comment is restricted to only one character, the boss. His view, however, well grasps the similarities between Mansfield and Chekhov, focusing on character as mood, the "minimal dependence on the traditional plot," the "focus on a single situation in which everyday reality is broken up by a crisis" (201), whose characteristics can be applied to Woolf's short stories as well.

begins to drop the ink blobs three times, one after another watching its restoring attempts until it dies. The fly's cleaning, or rather dying, process is (pain)fully described with minute details. Mansfield's "The Fly" "resist[s] definite readings," unlike Chekhov's, owing to "the luminous details," as in Woolf's stories, as Smith rightly makes a comment ("Introduction," xxv).

The fly is the most intriguing and mysterious character in this story, and perhaps the most fully realized. While minor characters are named—Mr Woodfield, Macey, Reggie, even the unseen Gertrude, Mr Woodfield's daughter—, the major characters remain nameless; the boss, the only son of the boss, and the fly.¹³⁾ A parallel between the boss's dead son and the dead fly can be easily drawn.¹⁴⁾ The son and the fly both are killed due to a pointless, inhuman motive. Though the boss has thought he could never recover from the loss of his son and told everybody that "[t]ime . . . could make no difference" (359), he has overcome the death of his only son in less than six years, and so does he quickly forget the death of the fly, despite his meticulous attention to every detail of the fly's movements, and even his consideration of "breathing on [the fly] to help the drying process" (361). Like the old photograph of his son, "a grave-looking boy in uniform," to which the boss does not want to "draw old Woodfield's attention," the existence of the fly appears out of place in the boss's office where "the bright red carpet," "the massive bookcase," and "the table with legs like twisted treacle" give the boss "a feeling

13) Marian Scholtmeijer's reading of this story in the urban context is very interesting. She notes that the nameless boss indicates his being merely "one anonymous boss among others" who runs an undefined business typical in the city, while the nameless fly "holds steadier ownership of its individuality than the man, despite its depending for its life upon human caprice" (165). However, her view—the fly, not being a symbol of "the power of life," for its being finally drowned and thrown away, "extinguishes" "simultaneously the luxuriance in pathos and the hope of a moral cure"—seems to require reconsideration. She does not, in my opinion, give a proper attention to the significance of the ink and the dominance of the fly, which is necessary to turn our attention to an ethical dimension of this story.

14) J. K. Kobler's view that the fly is "a replacement for [the boss's] own wretched state" (61) is different from mine, though I think his comment is also persuasive to a degree.

of deep, solid satisfaction,” especially when electric heating and the treasure of a bottle of whisky are added (357).

The fly is not, however, simply limited to a symbol of the boss’s dead son. In this urban space of an office modernized with technological and scientific innovations and inventions, the existence of the fly is unexpected, and coexistence with the fly might be inexcusable. Nonetheless, the fly is simply there. In this line of thought, Harvey’s interpretation is quite intriguing. Quoting Steven Connor’s observation that “flies are ‘embodiment of the accident, of what just happens to happen, as synecdoches of the untransfigured quotidian,’” Harvey argues, interestingly, that the fly in this story “provides a *trompe l’oeil* effect just as it was used in fifteenth-century paintings” (206); the fly makes this story truly real, by making this story as quotidian as possible, and, at the same time, by making us notice the existence of the fly in our human-dominated world. The fly might refer to what is “the opposite of art” (206), as Connor says, with which Harvey concurs. This fly might have been enjoying the snug office like old Woodfield, avoiding coldness outside, or might have been tasting “the five transparent, pearly sausages glowing so softly in the tilted copper pan” (357). Though it is surprising to have sausages in an office, it is more unexpected to have a fly in the inkpot.¹⁵⁾ The boss uses his pen both to pick up the fly from the inkpot and to drop the ink blob to drown the fly. The boss does not use the ink-filled pen to write, but to kill the harmless fly. If the fly symbolizes what exists at the opposite of art, the ink represents an art that destroys living animals, insects. These metaphors can lead to a discussion of the ethical responsibility of art and literature, together with calling for the necessity of writing engaged with ecological concerns. And if we read the fly which has been rarely visible as a trope for women who occupy merely a subservient space, then, by making the fly prominent in this story Mansfield seems to include women previously neglected in the boss-dominating narrative of “The

15) I agree on Harvey’s opinion; “The real mystery of this story is not what the fly signifies but what the fly is doing diving into the inkpot in the first place” (207). Yet, Harvey stops at noting the significance of the fly, without delving into it in detail.

Fly.” The boss’s massive bookcase may occupy the office merely for display, and his paper-knife is only for flipping *Financial Times*. The fly, on the other hand, does not seem to like the sausages, but has a penchant for the ink. Mansfield’s ink rewrites a world not quite limited to ourselves to tell the forgotten sphere of animals, insects, in this story.

Mansfield’s fly, an ink-lover, reminds us of Lily Everit, the protagonist of Woolf’s short story, “The Introduction” (1925). Lily Everit identifies herself, at the end of this story, with a fly, whose “wings off its back” are pulled by Bob Brinsley’s “clever strong hands” (187). As a fledgling scholar, Lily takes much pride in “her essay upon the character of Dean Swift” (184), which has received three red stars from her professor, the sign of first rate work. Achieved with her pen, these three red stars are the symbol of her true self. However, her understanding of her own existence is swept away in the emotional turmoil at Mrs. Dalloway’s party. When Mrs Dalloway introduces Lily as “the clever one” (185) to Bob Brinsley who is just down from Oxford, the three stars, the indicator of her own proud self, undergo certain changes. Woolf’s feminine sensibility, infuses the delicate flow of Lily’s thoughts and perceptions in this short story. In her first appearance at Mrs Dalloway’s party, Lily perceives it to be “the famous place: the world” (184). In her preparation for Mrs Dalloway’s party, her essay is “untouched like a lump of glowing metal,” though Lily’s outer self is ruffled, with all the necessary adornment—a white dress, ribbons, “a pat here, a dab there”—to be ‘properly’ presentable at Mrs Dalloway’s fashionable party (184). However, as Lily engages in a conversation with Bob, the three stars which represent her inner solidity do not maintain their hardness, nor function as “the cordial” (184) for Lily to hold onto in the grasp of “the whirlpool” (185) of Mrs Dalloway’s drawing-room. To Lily’s horror, they become “troubled and bloodstained” (188). The “great Mr. Brinsley” who pulls the wings off a fly, tramples over her essay as he talks “about his essay, about himself and once laughing about a girl there” (188).¹⁶ Lily is reduced to a wretched fly, attacked and violently killed. Like the

16) Bob’s being a direct descendant from Shakespeare ironically associates him with a

fly in Mansfield's "The Fly," Lily has run into danger by getting closer to ink—the ink that is used to criticize male writers.

Then, it is necessary to examine the process by which Lily, an intelligent young woman, is reduced to a mere fly. With the use of a trope of the fly in opposition to a butterfly, Woolf investigates the im/proper position of woman in a male-oriented society. Surrounded by "Westminster Abbey[,] the sense of enormously high solemn buildings," and "all the little chivalries and respects" of Mrs Dalloway's drawing room," Lily is made to feel that she needs to be "a woman" (185). Interestingly, to be a woman, by getting out of "the comfortable darkness of childhood," is identified with being a "butterfly" coming out of "her chrysalis" (185). This butterfly is nothing but a "frail and beautiful creature," and, being a "limited and circumscribed creature," the butterfly functions as what prevents Lily from "what she liked" (185). Obviously, if she is to become a "woman," Lily needs to keep her distance from the inkpot. Writing an essay on the character of a male writer is not appropriate for a butterfly-woman.

Although "[t]he cheapness of writing paper" is "the reason why women have succeeded as writers before they have succeeded in the other professions," to write reviews on the works of famous men requires a fierce battle with "a certain phantom," i. e. "The Angel in the House," as Woolf asserts in her essay "Professions for Women" (235-36). When Woolf takes "[her] *pen in hand* to review that novel by a famous man," 'The Angel in the House' interrupts and whispers—"Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex" ("Professions for Women" 237; emphasis mine). It is the very voice Lily hears in the middle of Mrs Dalloway's party. Even though "The Angel in the House" is a Victorian ideal, it still haunts Lily's world, as Woolf dramatizes through Lily's emotional conflicts. The butterfly consists of "a thousand facets to its eyes and delicate fine plumage, and difficulties and sensibilities and sadnesses innumerable"

"wanton boy" who kills flies for his sport, as expressed in the lines from Earl of Gloucester in *King Lear*: "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods. They kill us for their sport" (Act IV, scene 1). See p. 140.

(185), characteristics similar to those of Woolf's intruding angel—"intensely sympathetic, . . . intensely charming, . . . utterly unselfish," with sacrificing herself daily, and, most of all, having "[h]er purity" ("Professions for Women" 237). Lily tries to do her part which is laid on her, "accentuating the delicacy, the artificiality of her bearing," and wearing "the traditions of an old and famous uniform" (186). However, the role of pretty adornment, a conventional attribution to a woman, is at odds with her true self.

Her very name involves us in complicated discussions about Lily's subjectivity, her role as a butter/fly, and her place in a rural or an urban life. Lily's true self cannot carry out the role of a pure, angelic woman, while her name implicitly bears an image of a lily-like woman, stereotyped under patriarchy. Yet, Lily has, on the other hand, a deep affinity with nature, since her true self feels happiness in "private rites, pure beauty offered by beetles and lilies of the valley and dead leaves and still pools" (186). However, "the flower's world" (186), expressed by a euphemism to refer to a society, where woman has merely the artificially-constructed female subjectivity, stereotypically either lily or rose, imposes on Lily. This world of "the flower," concomitant with "the towers of Westminster; the high and formal buildings; talk; this civilisation," is "so different, so strange" to Lily (186). The unnaturalness of this world dominated by Bob Brinsley leads Lily to suspect her own truthful subjectivity, as her stars "dulled to obscurity" (186). In this society, Bob is represented as of "direct descendent from Shakespeare," with "his great honest forehead, and his self-assurance, and his delicacy, and honour and robust physical well being, and sunburn, and airiness" (186), whereas Lily is merely a girl who writes "poems presumably" (187). Lily's "shy look, the started look," as compared with Bob's confident, arrogant look, is, ironically, "surely the loveliest of all looks on a girl's face" (187), as observed by the angelic hostess, Mrs Dalloway.¹⁷⁾ Lily comes to realize that she can be merely "a rose for him[Bob] to

17) Beth Daugherty sharply points out that Lily is interested not in Shelley but in Swift, And she properly observes that this misunderstanding of Mrs. Dalloway reveals her "unaware[ness] of the damage done not only to younger women but also to herself by

rifle”; Lily feels she needs to lay down “her essay, oh and the whole of her being, on the floor as a cloak for him to trample on” (186-87). Acknowledging that the butterfly wings are not to be praised, admired, or respected for themselves but “to worship, to adorn, to embellish” the male sex, Lily tries to “crouch and cower and fold the wings down flat on her back” (187-88). At the end of the story these folded wings are more like the wings of a fly than those of a butterfly. Listening to Bob, whose talk is limited to his ego, Lily wishes that “if only [Bob] had not been brutal to flies” (187). Here a hint is so obviously given: Not playing the role of a butterfly, but identifying her being as a mutilated fly, Lily is extremely tormented. This urban, civilized world, with all the “churches, parliaments and flats” does not allow to Lily any “sanctuaries, or butterflies,” in their truest sense (188). Man-made civilization, as defined by religious, political, economical, and scientific achievement, becomes, thus, suspicious. And even Shakespeare seems to be complicit with this process of marginalising women, since Bob’s lineage from Shakespeare is emphasized. Although both Lily and Bob love literature and like reading and presumably writing as well, Lily is no more than an ignoble creature who writes some poems, not criticisms, to Bob. Any comradeship between a clever woman-writer and a direct male descendent from Shakespeare seems out of the question. Lily resembles rather Judith Shakespeare, Woolf’s imaginary sister of William Shakespeare¹⁸); she is also “so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts” (*A Room of One’s Own* 48) in Mrs. Dalloway’s drawing-room, in the microcosm of the world. At the moment of “horror” at a male-oriented civilization, Lily feels crushed under the female-yoke that “[has] fallen from the skies onto her neck” (188). Lily appears, to Mrs Bromley, at the very end of this story, “as if she [has] the weight of the world upon her shoulders” (188). As Beth Daugherty notes, Lily is introduced “not only to Bob Brinsley but also to her role as a woman and the oppression of the

the social system she so ardently supports” (115).

18) For the story of Shakespeare’s sister, see Woolf’s famous essay-book, *A Room of One’s Own* (1926), especially pp. 46-49.

patriarchy” (106). Yet, Lily is also introduced to “the knowledge” (188) of her true calling, in my opinion, which is to criticize and rejuvenate Shakespeare’s civilization, not by using the butterfly’s guile complicit in the predatory ‘civilization,’ but by embracing the fly’s challenge at the margin of the male-dominated center. Lily’s three red stars “burn bright again,” though bloodstained, in the midst of the darkness of brutal civilization. Acknowledging her true role, Lily at the end murmurs that “this civilisation . . . depends upon me” (188). At any rate, Lily is, fortunately, not a Judith Shakespeare; though feeling like a fly, “a naked wretch” (188), she remains on the edge of the inside and the outside of civilization.

A similarly agonizing experience of a woman reflected in the trope of the fly is depicted in Woolf’s “The New Dress” (1925). Although she wants to see everybody else gathered at Mrs. Dalloway’s party as “flies trying to crawl over the edge of the saucer” (171), as her self-consciousness about her unfashionable dress grows, Mabel Waring identifies herself with “[t]hat wretched fly” in the midst of “this creeping, crawling life” (176). Mabel’s feeling of socially inferiority originates from her horror at her own “pale yellow, idiotically old-fashioned silk dress” (171) made by Miss Milan, a dressmaker whose workroom is “terribly hot, stuffy, sordid,” with a smell of “clothes and cabbage cooking” (172). Her initial compassion for Miss Milan and the ‘self-love’ toward herself she has felt in Miss Milan’s little workroom, where Miss Milan measures fit and the length of her dress, changes, once she enters Mrs. Dalloway’s drawing-room. She realizes that her self—“a beautiful woman,” without “cares and wrinkles” (172)—reflected in the mirror of Miss Milan’s workroom, is not true. Instead, in a party full of guests who look like “dragon-flies, butterflies, beautiful insects, dancing, fluttering, skimming,” Mabel self-contemptuously feels herself to be nothing but “some dowdy, decrepit, horribly dingy old fly” (171). As in “The Introduction,” this story focuses on the emotional turmoil of a female character at Mrs. Dalloway’s sophisticated party, but with a different focus. Mabel’s repeated identification of herself with a fly that is struggling and drowning into the saucer pervades the story, and, Mabel not only

identifies herself with a struggling fly but also she is almost paranoid about the trope of the fly. If the image of the fly in "The Introduction" is related to gender issues, this story is controlled by the trope of the fly in its relation to class issues.

Her feeling of inferiority is rooted in her humble family background—"being one of a family of ten; never having money enough, always skimping and paring," together with her sense of failure for not fulfilling her dream of "living in India, married to some hero like Sir Henry Lawrence, some empire builder" (175). Instead Mabel, living in "a smallish house," "without proper maids," with her husband who has simply an "underling's job in the Law Courts" (175) classifies her own self as a sordid, ignoble fly, compared with other guests, especially with Rose Shaw who looks majestic, "like Boadicea" (173) in her dress, "in lovely, clingingly green with a ruffle of swansdown" (175). Her feeling of frustration and the accrued emotional distress of a class consciousness that reflects an internalized snobbism is so tremendous that Mabel is isolated from other guests, incapable of enjoying the party. She looks at a picture on the wall as if she is interested in it, but she makes a parallel between herself and "a beaten mongrel" (173). And the sordid, abject image of a mongrel extends into the image of the fly fallen in the saucer, "'right in the middle,'" which can't get out of it, because of its wings stuck to milk (173). When Charles Burt, one of the guests, observes, "'Mabel's got a new dress!,'" Mabel's hypersensitive mind pictures the poor fly as "absolutely shoved into the middle of the saucer" (173). Even with Mrs Holman, the only guest who tries to make small talk with her, Mabel cannot concentrate on a conversation, nor express any sympathy to her, except acknowledging only her own feeling of anger, being "furious to be treated like a house agent or a messenger boy" (174). Although Mabel has felt compassion with Miss Milan at her workroom, she does not cope with Mrs Holman's thirst for sympathy at Mrs. Dalloway's drawing-room. Considering that Mrs Holman's emotional needs are perhaps similar to Mabel's, that is, a desire to mingle with others and to draw other people's attention and compassion, Mabel's detached and cynical attitude toward Mrs Holman, who is always careworn, and for whom "a thing like a dress [is] beneath [her] notice"

(174), discloses not only the intensity of her feeling of inferiority, but also Mabel's own snobbish class consciousness. As Mabel's "orgy of self-love" (171) is frustrated, Miss Milan's workroom vanishes in her mind, and Mabel draws a parallel between Mrs Holman and a cormorant that is "barking and flapping [its] wings for sympathy" (174), blaming Mrs Holman's greediness. Moving into a corner of Mrs. Dalloway's drawing-room, Mabel identifies herself with the fallen fly, in excruciating emotional torment.

As Susan Dick notes, this story reveals an influence on Woolf from Chekhov and Mansfield.¹⁹ Chekhov's story, "The Duel," includes the same passage—"Lies, lies, lies!"—, which is mentioned twice in "The New Dress." The first remark of "Lies, lies, lies!" (172) is related to Mabel's acknowledgement of Robert Haydon's typical society-talk, a "quite polite, quite insincere" response to her self-deprecating words (171); Mabel says it to herself the second time, after going through the formality of thanking her host Mr. Dalloway—"I have enjoyed myself" (177). Emphasizing 'lies' at the beginning and end of the party reveals Woolf's critical view of the meaningless, hypocritical nature of society. Furthermore, as a great admirer of Chekhov, Woolf along with Mansfield seems to reflect a sceptical view of human beings in a modernized society via Mabel's voice—people are simply "something meager, insignificant, toiling flies" ("The New Dress," 171). This proclamation of Mabel's might be one of Chekhov's messages in "Small Fry." Evoking Mansfield's short story, "The Fly," Woolf also discloses a certain aspect of the meaninglessness of a modern, civilized life; the conspicuous trope of a struggling fly dominates "The New Dress," just as Mansfield's fly occupies a prominent place in the narrative. Reducing herself to the wretched fly, Mabel asks herself—"where had she read the story that kept coming into her mind about the fly and the saucer?" ("The New Dress" 176). This story that keeps coming into Mabel's mind could be Mansfield's "The Fly," or Chekhov's "Small Fry" or "The Duel," and this sentence might imply Woolf's acknowledgement of her debt to Mansfield and/or Chekhov.²⁰ Their mutual fascination with a small, abject, and

19) See Dick's notes 1-2, on p. 303.

marginalized being, in short, converges into the fly, whether it craves for ink or milk, and, describing the death of the fly, Woolf, along with Mansfield, engages us in political and ethical concerns.

“The New Dress” also shares some similarities with “The Introduction.” For example, there are descriptions that depict the protagonists’s love for the natural environment and their recollection of those moments identified with the true self or of the very “delicious moments” (“The New Dress,” 175) as a means of coping with suffering and a way of escaping from the limits of Mrs. Dalloway’s party. Left alone on the blue sofa, and gazing at her own image of the yellow fly reflected in the blue pool, Mabel holds herself aloof from the things happening in Mrs. Dalloway’s drawing-room. Mabel recollects her “delicious” moments—“reading the other night in bed, . . . or down by the sea on the sand in the sun, at Easter . . . a great tuft of pale sandgrass standing all twisted like a shock of spears against the sky, which was blue like a smooth china eggs, so firm, so hard, and then the melody of the waves” (175), and so on. It seems that we see in Mabel a middle-aged Lily. Lily’s true self enjoyed nature and loneliness like Mabel. Furthermore, if Lily gives up her writing and chooses a married life, she might similarly find herself identifying with a fly who is struggling to crawl out of the saucer but drowned, because of its wings stuck to the milk on the table of cups and saucers along with the party food. The ordeal of humiliation at Mrs. Dalloway’s party drives Mabel into regretting her lack of a profession, blaming her own “odious, vacillating character” (173).²¹⁾

20) Mansfield translated Chekhov’s letters into English, together with S. S. Kotliansky, the Russian writer and critic. And, as McLaughlin notes, it was Mansfield who introduced Kotliansky to Woolf (“The Same Job,” 377, n. 26). The Russian influence on Woolf is tremendous, as Woolf deals with Russian writers in several essays. Woolf categorizes Chekhov as a “spiritualist,” at the opposite of Edwardian materialists. See “Modern Fiction,” especially pp. 152-53.

21) Mabel asks herself why she was “not being seriously interested in conchology, etymology, botany, archaeology,” like Mary Dennis or Violet Searle who is “cutting up potatoes and watching them fructify” (173).

The true nature of Mrs. Dalloway's party is under investigation in this story. Mabel's experience of divine moments seems far from her experience of emotional distress at Mrs. Dalloway's sophisticated gathering. The party consists of many people, engaged in all kinds of human emotions, such as alienation, jealousy, envy, ridicule, hypocrisy, despair, and snobbism. Furthermore, Mrs. Dalloway's drawing-room, with all its riches and sophistication, ironically discloses the animality of humans, as evidenced in the depiction of human beings using animal imageries – Mrs Holman's being a greedy cormorant, Mabel's own feeling of being a beaten mongrel, a canary-like Miss Milan, Charles Burt and Rose Shaw “chattering like magpies” (175), and, above all, Mabel's being reduced to “the wretched fly” (176). Mabel's dream of escaping from Mrs. Dalloway's suffocating drawing-room leads to her dreaming of her changed future – “She would go to the London Library tomorrow”; “She would find some wonderful, helpful, astonishing book”; “she would walk down the Strand and drop, accidentally, into a hall where a miner was telling about the life in the pit” (176). However, it is dubious whether she “would become a new person,” especially because Mabel is still too conscious of clothes; her dream of “wear[ing] a uniform,” to be “called Sister Somebody,” is due to the fact that “she would [then] never give a thought to clothes again” (176). The ending is not auspicious. Leaving the party, thanking to Mr Dalloway, saying the usual “[l]ies, lies, lies,” Mabel wraps herself, “round and round and round, in the Chinese cloak she [has] worn these twenty years” (177). Her shabby, old coat that she wraps round and round and round seems to symbolize the difficulty of change especially at the age of 40. Her self-consciousness and feeling of inferiority are unlikely to disappear whenever she confronts the wealthy upper classes. The figure of a floundering fly that dominates throughout the story embodies Mabel's dilemma and her paralysis.

Whereas Lily's identification with the fly which is mutilated by Bob and the fly killed by the boss in “The Fly” are linked with the image of the inkwell, Woolf's use of the image of the fly drowned in milk is intriguing. In the context of Mrs Dalloway's party, the milk is necessary for drinking coffee or tea. When

Mabel feels herself merely being reduced to a fly, with its wings stuck to milk in the saucer, we recollect T. S. Eliot's famous modern poem, "The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." In this dramatic interior monologue of an urban man, Prufrock, in his complex feelings of isolation, insecurity, hesitation, longing, regret, frustration, and disillusionment, expresses the futile nature of society in its repetitive coffee drinking rites.²²⁾ The fly, its wings stuck with milk and incapable of escaping from a boxed, regulated life, might be a symbol of suffering modern human beings who lead a repetitive, meaningless existence in an urban context. "The New Dress," therefore, reveals Woolf's bleak vision of an urban, civilized, sophisticated world, in which a fly-like woman of hypersensitivity flounders in the milk.

Woolf's use of the image of the fly in two stories might indicate that Mansfield's faint ghost still pursues her. As McLaughlin notes, Woolf's use of Mansfield's trope of the fly, along with other images, affirms that "they shared numerous areas of interest in their writing" ("The Same Job," 381). Woolf acknowledged, in her letter to Jacques Raverat, that Mansfield "possessed the most amazing *sense* of her generation so that she could actually reproduce this room, for instance, with *its fly . . . to the life*" (*LWW* III, 59: 30 July 1923; emphasis mine). Woolf surely pays attention to Mansfield's fly, which endows a world its reality. It is certainly true that Woolf "was able to give many of Mansfield's brilliant innovations a new and larger life in her own work," as McLaughlin comments, emphasizing a synergistic effect emerging from the intertextuality of their works ("An Uneasy Sisterhood," 160). Woolf's and Mansfield's mutual inclusion of the image of the fly into their stories makes us turn our attention to the fly, a barely visible insect. Woolf uses it as a symbol of feminine abject subjectivity or a sensitive woman's psychology captured in miserable moments of humiliation, and

22) See the lines: "For I have known them all already, known them all; / Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, / I have measured out my life with coffee spoons" (2260).

Mansfield for an ordinary life where flies exist, often referring to a dark side of human situation. The significance of the fly and the depiction of its death intimates that we also belong to nature as struggling flies, nature itself. Yet, both writers' depictions of flies exceed our anthropomorphic desire to capture these non-human beings and box them into our human world. Rather, the two writers' shared interest in small insects, the fly in particular, reflects their modernist awareness of the irreducibility of the non-human world and their acknowledgement of the power of otherness.

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Abstract

“Dare we . . . limit life to ourselves?”:
Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, and the Fly

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The relationship between Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield has attracted considerable attention in recent years. Acknowledging their sisterhood, this paper focuses on their embrace of the biosphere, evidenced in the various images of the natural sphere scattered in their works. Both Woolf and Mansfield have a keen interest in small, obscure, and marginalized beings. The fly is in particular a recurrent image in their life and works. The image of the fly Mansfield frequently adopts reveals her feelings of loneliness and despair, accrued to her illness. In Woolf, flies often appear as oblique referrals to a resistance to patriarchal desire and a totalitarian narrative, as depicted in *Orlando* and in *Jacob's Room*. We delve into Mansfield's "The Fly" in parallel with Woolf's "The Introduction" and "The New Dress," focusing on the prevalent image of the fly. The eponymous hero of Mansfield's "The Fly" exceeds its conventional place of a sacrificed small insect, disrupting the urban drama of paralysis. In Woolf's "The Introduction," we investigate the trope of butter/fly as revealed by the diminution of Lily, together with the im/proper position of woman in a male-oriented society. Another short story of Woolf's, "The New Dress," deals with a female protagonist who identifies herself with the wretched fly stuck to milk in the context of a bourgeois public sphere. Both Woolf and Mansfield reveal an animality already within our human sphere, and, at the same time, the irreducibility of the non-human world. The fly challenges our understanding of our place in the larger world, suggesting the power of otherness.

■ **Key words** : Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, the death of the fly,
“The Fly,” “The Introduction,” “The New Dress”
(버지니아 울프, 캐서린 맨스필드, 파리의 죽음, 「파리」, 「소개」,
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