I put all the unfinished MSS I had brought with me here in a row last night and [...] reviewed them – & told them that none of them were really good enough – to march into the open (Ugh! No – I cant even in fun use these bloody comparisons. I have a horror of the way this war creeps into writing... oozes in – trickles in.)1

In a letter to John Middleton Murry from February 1918, Katherine Mansfield explicitly acknowledges the unintentional influence of the ongoing war on her own rhetorical structures, using the metaphors of creeping, oozing and trickling to describe its pervading effects. Her parenthetical distaste for these 'bloody comparisons' admits the disjunction between the situation she is recording (her evaluation of her literary manuscripts) and her descriptive mode. Both her deliberate and unintentional incorporation of military discourse results in a hybridised figurative language in her writing, which can tell us about the effect of the Great War on literary language more generally, as well as on Mansfield in particular.

This special issue of Katherine Mansfield Studies examines, in Kate McLoughlin’s succinct phrase, ‘what happens when war and words are brought together’.2 It addresses Mansfield’s engagement with the First World War – the ‘Great War’ – and its impact on her writings. Like the reclamation of women’s war writings that we have already seen in relation to Woolf and others, Mansfield’s literary response to the key political event of her time – one which postcolonial scholars are still demonstrating was truly global – is key to our understanding of her developing writerly style. It is in her responses to this event that we find a ‘political Mansfield’, commenting on the public events of her time, and the articles in this volume provide us with a greater understanding
Katherine Mansfield and World War One

of Mansfield in her socio-historical context. In providing new and different readings of Mansfield’s explicit and implicit war stories, these essays refine and extend our understanding of these particular stories and their genealogy, and more broadly illuminate the specific and more general influences of the war on Mansfield’s evolving technique. They jointly suggest the importance of the influence of the war on Mansfield’s literary language, and simultaneously for Mansfield’s own particular brand of modernism. Conversely, these articles demonstrate Mansfield’s literary skill in her explicit war writings, going beyond the subject matter to provide further analysis of her narrative mode and technique. They continue to develop our ideas of what constitute war writings, and in so doing, expand the field of First World War studies, as well as Mansfield studies.

Vincent O’Sullivan has asserted that, ‘[f]rom any perspective, the most important public event in Mansfield’s lifetime was the First World War’. What were Mansfield’s experiences during the war that she variously characterised as a ‘terrible, tedious calamity’, ‘that dark place’ and ‘this bloody war’? In February 1915, Mansfield travelled alone into the war zones to visit Francis Carco, stationed in Gray, France, which provided the inspiration for one of her best-known war stories, ‘An Indiscreet Journey’ (written in 1915), as well as being recounted in her notebooks and two extant letters. On her trip to visit Carco, was Mansfield, as O’Sullivan notes, ‘perhaps the first to record the effects of gassing’ on the men at the front, or did she, as Mary Burgan suggests, move ‘in the closed circle of her own sensibility in which the actual suffering of the wounded French soldiers seen along the way [intrudes] only as so many touches of local color’? Mansfield’s journey to the war zone gave her a privileged perspective on the effects of the war at first hand that was not usually afforded to civilians, particularly women; as O’Sullivan observes, ‘[f]or a civilian, Mansfield saw a good deal of the war’. Similarly, Mansfield’s experience of the first air raids in Paris in March 1915, and subsequently the three-week bombardment of Paris in March and April 1918, provided her with an experience and stimulus for her writing ahead of many of her contemporaries. The accidental death of her brother Leslie (Chummie) Beauchamp in a hand-grenade accident during a training session on 6 October 1915 (the accurate date of his death, as confirmed by J. Lawrence Mitchell in this volume), as well as the deaths of a number of her close friends, including the poet Rupert Brooke in April 1915 and the writer Frederick Goodyear in May 1917, was the cause of great suffering for Mansfield. As has been noted by other critics, Murry wrote in the commentary to his Definitive Edition of her Journal, that ‘no single one of Katherine’s friends who
Introduction

went to the war returned alive from it’. Mansfield’s frequent sojourns abroad because of her illness meant that she participated in a similar isolation and distance from loved ones that characterised the civilian experience of the war. Reading through her letters, one is struck by Mansfield’s acquaintance with a range of male and female figures, both publically and privately engaged with the war, who jointly covered the spectrum of political responses to it.

Prominent literary and cultural histories of the war have traditionally been concerned with the male experience of battle. The Great War has been depicted as a break from the past, inaugurating, or at least being seen to inaugurate, a new ‘modern’ era and modes of thought. More recently, however, studies of First World War writing have broadened in their scope to examine previously neglected aspects of the conflict. There has been a surge of critical attention paid to women’s First World War writing. There have also been a number of historical studies of the broad variety of women’s wartime experience, and the accessibility of women’s wartime writing has increased through a number of useful anthologies and new editions.

This edition of Katherine Mansfield Studies falls into what Santanu Das has identified as ‘the “second wave” of war criticism [...] marked by two important trends: interdisciplinarity and diversification of concern’. The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War illustrates this revisionist mode, as well as the entry of the genre into the critical commonplace and on to university syllabi. Studies of First World War rhetoric have discussed the recruitment of authors as propagandists, or analysed the political premises inherent in language itself. A number of scholars have begun to consider the connections between First World War and modernist writing. Studies of popular culture and the war, as well as publishing histories, have broadened the field of war writing to include popular literature and magazines. The inherent problems of ‘authoring war’ have been discussed. Other examinations of war writing have been increasingly interdisciplinary, such as studies of the bodily, corporeal experience in wartime and its expression, and have also begun to focus on racial and colonial aspects of the war. One very recent development is the increasing interest in First World War short stories, seen in the review in this issue of Ann-Marie Einhaus’s The Short Story and the First World War, published in July 2013: a useful antidote to an otherwise surprisingly sparse subfield of First World War studies. The centenary commemorations of the outbreak of the First World War, beginning in 2014, will result in the further development – even explosion – of this field in surprising and novel directions, in both the academic and popular spheres.
Katherine Mansfield and World War One

How does Mansfield fit into this field of First World War studies? Not very obviously, is the short answer. There has been a surprising reluctance to view Mansfield as a war writer, and the body of criticism that does so remains a very small field. This perception of Mansfield as curiously divorced from her socio-historical context is reflected in the very limited number of stories included within collections of First World War women’s writing, or First World War short stories; only ‘An Indiscreet Journey’ and ‘The Fly’ are regularly anthologised. Usually, Mansfield’s depiction of the war is critically focused on these stories, and on her journal responses to Leslie’s death. Con Coroneos and Angela Smith have further provided highly original readings of these stories, and both Christiane Mortelier and Gerri Kimber have expanded our understanding of Francis Carco and wartime France. Christine Darrohn and Ariela Freedman have highlighted the significance of the war in ‘The Garden Party’. But what about those stories which explicitly or implicitly discuss the war, stories such as ‘Spring Pictures’, ‘Two Tuppenny Ones, Please’, ‘Late at Night’, ‘The Common Round’ (‘Pictures’), ‘Prelude’ or ‘A Dill Pickle’? Or stories with titles obviously influenced by their wartime context: ‘Last Words to Youth’, ‘The Lost Battle’ or ‘Love-Lies-Bleeding’? What about Mansfield’s descriptions of her experiences of air raids in her letters from early 1915 and early 1918, or her descriptions of herself in militarised language throughout 1919? O’Sullivan has stressed Mansfield’s understanding of the war’s larger significance, placing her ‘among the group of writers who understood early on how the First World War brought a permanent fragmentation of what living in Europe implied’. Anne Fernihough and Lee Garver have emphasised Mansfield’s political engagement, reading In a German Pension (1911) as satirical commentary on contemporary socio-political issues. Unlike Woolf, who has been increasingly recognised in her wartime context, there have been no sustained studies of Mansfield and the war. In fact, Woolf is perceived as far more closely linked with the war than Mansfield, even though Mansfield lost an immediate family member. This perception is perhaps indicative of the dearth of criticism on First World War short stories, as opposed to Woolf’s predominant medium of novels.

A number of the essays in this issue provide new readings of Mansfield’s stories, tracing influences and developing previous assessments of these works. The 2013 winner of the Katherine Mansfield Society’s Essay Prize, Josiane Paccaud-Huguet, illuminates Mansfield’s arguably best-known war story, ‘An Indiscreet Journey’, putting it in a different light for readers. Drawing on Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Giorgio Agamben, and on the notion of jouissance, Paccaud-Huguet
Introduction

makes the case that this story ‘mingles from the start the eroticism of love with the theme of death’ and compares the form of the narrative with that of the fairy tale and the mystery play. This is a story which is both a specific war story, and not a specific war story; Paccaud-Huguet calls attention to the timelessness and the ‘timeless present’ of this text, which is ‘the hallmark of Mansfield’s contemporariness to her time’. In a series of close readings of the text, Paccaud-Huguet presents us with the means by which Mansfield encodes the action of war in the narrative, exemplified in her reading of the bottle breaking in the café: a moment which ‘is surely more significant than the whole epic narrative of a battle’ (19).

In a different vein, J. Lawrence Mitchell’s more biographical essay challenges the idea that Mansfield and Murry were oblivious to the war, arguing instead that Mansfield ‘was fully aware of what was happening around her’ (28). He makes humorous the common misperception of Mansfield as unengaged, noting that it is odd that the author of a story such as ‘Stay-Laces’, which demonstrates her ‘scorn for such wilful ignorance and such callous indifference to anything outside one’s own circumscribed world’ (33), could be accused of similar behaviour herself by critics. Mitchell notes ‘the acuity of Mansfield’s observation’ (31) and her conscious attempts to educate herself about the war. He draws an admittedly speculative but none the less interesting link between Mansfield’s early patriotic writing published in the newspaper and Chummie’s voluntary enlistment, and provides a new genealogy of the story ‘Stay-Laces’, suggesting it was likely penned before, rather than after, Chummie’s death. Mitchell posits a potential reading of Mansfield’s relationship with her brother, suggesting a particular kind of special bond between the pair. This wide-ranging essay provides us with a scholarly example of how biographical knowledge can illuminate our understanding of the writing.

Isobel Maddison’s discussion of Mansfield’s ‘writing game’ reminds us of the importance of publication context. Focusing on the sketches that constitute In a German Pension (1911) and the original publication of some of them in the New Age, Maddison investigates the original appearance of stories that Mansfield later refused to republish. These give us an insight into the pre-war moment when fears of a war with Germany were becoming increasingly justified, as well as an important early example of Mansfield’s ‘flair for mimicry’ (43). Maddison emphasises a number of important factors contributing to these sketches: the significant influence of A. R. Orage and Beatrice Hastings on Mansfield’s ‘literary apprenticeship’ in the New Age, her own miserable personal experience in Bad Wörishofen in Bavaria, and the context of
Katherine Mansfield and World War One

anti-invasion fiction. Maddison reminds us that many, including Orage and D. H. Lawrence, held a far more nuanced view, continuing to hold German culture in great esteem, and that the New Age ‘became a vehicle for independent and competing discussions of German life’ (45). Her readings of stories such as ‘Germans at Meat’ and ‘Bavarian Babies’ therefore complicate our understandings of these texts, as she discusses their wider publication context, such as letters from readers which object to the caricatured view of German people and culture that Mansfield presents. Maddison offers a reading of a fascinating story, ‘The Breidenbach Family in England’, a story that we cannot attribute without doubt to Mansfield, which provides the counter-perspective of a German family holidaying in England.

Helen Rydstrand provides a more theoretical perspective on ‘An Indiscreet Journey’ and ‘Two Tuppenny Ones, Please’. Using the ideas and terminology of Henri Lefebvre’s Elements of Rhythmanalysis, Rydstrand is interested in ‘the strange tension between the ordinary and the extraordinary in wartime’ (56). She traces the concept of rhythm as an important intellectual context for Mansfield’s work, demonstrating its proliferation as an idea across a variety of disciplines. Depicting the war through the everyday and the ordinary has been seen as a modernist technique, and ‘Mansfield’s use of rhythmic linguistic technique to explore and represent the ordinary’ (62) extends our understanding of her modernism. Rydstrand also discusses the importance of the short story form, both for the immediacy of its response to the war and for its fragmentary, plotless nature: particularly fitting for the representation of an ongoing war. We then find familiar stories explained in unfamiliar ways; the victim of gassing whose eyes ‘brimmed and spilled, brimmed and spilled’ in ‘An Indiscreet Journey’ is here described as ‘the permanent disturbance of this soldier’s rhythm (his everyday life)’ (64). Similarly, Rydstrand notes that the three-part structure of ‘An Indiscreet Journey’, each part reiterating the last, mimics the wartime experience of ‘monotony and anxious anticipation’, resulting in what Rydstrand terms ‘a novel method of mimesis’ (61, 66).

The next two essays both examine the development of ‘The Aloe’ into ‘Prelude’, neither of which is typically considered as a war story. Alex Moffett’s essay presents us with a textual history of ‘Prelude’, which traces Mansfield’s deletion or moderation of the militaristic language and imagery of ‘The Aloe’ as she developed it. Moffett suggests that in this revision, ‘the war moves from a metaphorical yet tangible presence in the text, to a seeming andsignifying absence’ (70). An important factor in this conscious revision of imagery was the death of Mansfield’s brother, Leslie, which Moffett argues ‘inaugurated for her a different set
Introduction

of representational strategies for dealing with the First World War’ (71). He suggests that after Leslie’s death, the war ‘most frequently asserts its presence through absence’ (71), citing ‘The Fly’ and ‘The Garden Party’ as examples of this. In Mansfield’s revision of the text of ‘The Aloe’ into ‘Prelude’, the war became ‘an ominous undercurrent rather than a persistent metaphorical reference point’ (76). One striking example is the elimination of Doady Trout, and her persistent fantasies of ‘some shocking catastrophe’ (77) occurring to her family members. Similarly, Moffett suggests that the excised episode of Kezia’s birth in ‘The Aloe’ recalls Mansfield’s writing about the Paris air raids. Moffett links the repression of referentiality in ‘Prelude’ as entirely in keeping with Mansfield’s consideration of the effects of the war on literature: that it could not be mentioned ‘bang out’, but that it had to be present.²¹

Working as a neat complement to Moffett’s essay, Richard Cappuccio’s piece suggests that ‘[b]y 1916 elements of the war had been integrated into the everyday lives of children’ (85–6), and provides a contextual reading of wartime culture apparent in ‘The Aloe’. He links Kezia’s experience of walking around the empty Burnell house with the experience of civilians attempting to comprehend the erasure of home for combatants, noted by Allyson Booth. He juxtaposes Mansfield’s writing with combatant narratives, comparing the fragments that Kezia observes in the home with the fragments of bodies seen in a passage in All Quiet on the Western Front, arguing that ‘[t]he two scenes [...] share the struggle to find coherence among arbitrary remains’ (87). Similarly, Cappuccio draws attention to wartime material culture; Kezia’s observation of a forgotten lump of soap is linked to Sunlight Soap, ‘a product that was later advertised as particularly tied to the war effort’ (87). Cappuccio offers an extended reading of this story, plus a short reading of ‘Stay-Laces’ and a concluding discussion of Mansfield’s literary response to the death of Leslie, noting how imagery such as Pat slaughtering the duck constitutes an exploration of fate and the prefiguring of violence to sons. Cappuccio argues that ‘The Aloe’ is ‘a tale of ominous foreboding, a tale of paternal hubris, and a tale of the foreshadowed tragedy of Linda’s pregnancy’ (94).

Finally, Erika Baldt’s essay offers a reading of ‘The Daughters of the Late Colonel’ – a text not normally considered a war story – in the context of classical mythology. Rather than the common interpretation of the war as a break in history, Baldt highlights the continuity, rather than the division, of the war, ‘drawing parallels between women’s experiences of conflict through the ages to the contemporary moment’ (98). In this way, ‘a correlation can be found between the Great War and both classical and contemporary mythology’ (100). Baldt argues that
Katherine Mansfield and World War One

Mansfield, like many of her contemporaries (prominently T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound), used ‘ancient texts to filter and reflect on the Great War’ (100), and suggests that the particular intertexts for this story are *Titus Andronicus*, the myth of Philomela and Procne, and Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*. Baldt suggests that, much like the treatment of women in these myths, Josephine and Constantia are the victims of trauma inflicted by their military father.

The three creative pieces in this issue, a short story by Emily Perkins entitled ‘After the Pictures’ and two poems, one by Kevin Ireland and one by the late Seamus Heaney, which mentions Mansfield, demonstrate the inspiration she provoked and continues to provoke. Mirosława Kubasiewicz offers a thoughtful gloss on Heaney’s poem. The reports in this issue further our understanding of Mansfield in a more general sense. David Bradshaw enlightens our understanding of Mansfield’s relationship with J. W. N. Sullivan, an important figure who previously has been curiously absent from Mansfield studies, as Bradshaw notes. His analysis of their complex and frequently volatile relationship suggests that Sullivan may have had more affection for Mansfield than has hitherto been suggested. Gerri Kimber’s report offers a comprehensive account of C. K. Stead’s longstanding creative and critical engagement with Mansfield, in which his own ‘war novel’, *Mansfield* (2004), occupies a prominent place. She creates three tables that map ‘how Stead uses Mansfield’s writing to construct his novel’ (145), and how he draws on the works of both Woolf and Mansfield to compose his two poems, ‘Jealousy I’ and ‘Jealousy II’. Robin Woodward’s report on Virginia King’s 3.4-metre-high Mansfield monument, ‘Woman of Words’ (2013), in Wellington reminds us of the intense labour involved in creating this work of art. This is the only statue of Mansfield in the world, and King chose to present Mansfield ‘[w]rapped in her writing and defined by her own words’, with ‘[h]er dress, hair and ribbon [. . .] all formed in text’, as Woodward notes (161, 160). The intense attention to detail, such as the emphasis on Mansfield’s hands because of Mansfield’s frequent references to hands and gloves in her writings, is remarkable. With a regard for the labours of other writers that would have impressed Murry in his frantically dashed-off *Times Literary Supplement* reviews of 1916, no less than six reviews in this issue provide readers with an update on all that is current in Mansfield and modernist studies more generally, a particular highlight being C. K. Stead’s long review of Janet Frame’s 1974 novel, *In the Memorial Room*, unpublished until 2013.

Together these contributions allow, indeed urge, us to reassess Mansfield’s engagement with the First World War and its impact on her writing. By providing a greater understanding of Mansfield in her socio-
Introduction

In the political context, we can extend our understanding of the genealogy of a number of her war-related and apparently non–war-related stories, and consider the profound influence of the war on her developing technique and type of modernism. One thing that we are prompted to consider whilst reading is the extent to which Mansfield’s wartime experience not only influenced, but also provoked her literary experimentation: whether or not her modernism was a particular brand of ‘civilian modernism’, in Allyson Booth’s formulation. In this year of the centenary of the Great War, this issue of Katherine Mansfield Studies demonstrates that we should both reconsider our ideas of what constitutes war writing and reconsider Mansfield’s acute renderings of ‘this bloody war’. It reminds us to consider Mansfield – amongst her many other masks – as a war writer.

Notes
9. These acquaintances included Rupert Brooke, Frederick Goodyear, Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon (whom Murry helped draft his ‘Declaration’ in 1917).
Katherine Mansfield and World War One


18. O’Sullivan, p. 16.


