



Departamento de Filloxía Inglesa e Alemá

FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

The Postcolonial Short Story: Katherine Mansfield and Jean Rhys

Cristina Arufe Moares

TRABALLO FIN DE GRAO EN LINGUA E LITERATURA INGLESAS

DIRECTORA: LAURA MARIA LOJO RODRIGUEZ

LIÑA TEMÁTICA: LITERATURA EN LINGUA INGLESA

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UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

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FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA



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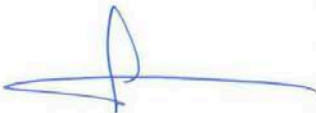
Título: THE POSTCOLONIAL SHORT STORY: KATHERINE MANSFIELD AND JEAN RHYS

Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

As a literary genre, the short story has often received less critical recognition in comparison with other narratives, most prominently, the novel. Insights offered both by critics and practitioners of the short story have often emphasized the genre's peripheral nature, which Frank O'Connor famously encapsulated as the expression of 'submerged population groups' in his seminal work *The Lonely Voice* (1962). However, more recent critical approaches to the short story have emphasized the genre's connection with aesthetic and formal innovation due to its brevity and freedom from conventions: such is the case of Dominic Head's groundbreaking study *The Modernist Short Story* (1992), where he convincingly argues that modernist authors explored new approaches to fiction in their short stories, whose innovations predated techniques to be found later in their novels. Prominent examples of this are Virginia Woolf's *Monday or Tuesday* (1921) or James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914). This dissertation departs from this premise, aiming to examine the various ways in which the twentieth-century short story is a genre "particularly suited to the representation of liminal or problematized identities", as speaking "directly to and about those whose sense of self, region, state or nation is insecure" (Hunter, 2007). This consideration has served as a vehicle for minority groups to correlate their marginal identities with different themes that were not being taken into account in mainstream culture. Taking Hunter's assessment of the short story as particularly suited to problematize liminal identities, along with Head's consideration of the genre as especially apt for innovative approaches to fiction, this dissertation will explore what may be called the "postcolonial short story" by focusing on the short narratives of two postcolonial women writers: Katherine Mansfield and Jean Rhys, respectively. Both of them were born in English colonies -Mansfield in New Zealand and Rhys in Dominica- and both encapsulate in their short stories concerns pertaining to their 'peripheral' nature, gender and identity.

Santiago de Compostela, 5 de novembro de 2018.

SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

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SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. Overview of the Modernist Short Story in England	4
2. Postcolonial Theory	7
3. Authors: Katherine Mansfield and Jean Rhys	10
3.1. Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923)	10
3.2. Jean Rhys (1890-1979)	11
4. Katherine Mansfield “The Garden Party” (1922)	13
5. Jean Rhys “Let Them Call It Jazz” (1962)	22
6. Conclusion	31
Works Cited	34

Introduction

Despite the popularity of the short story form among readers and practitioners, the genre still continues to be regarded as inferior to other narrative forms, most notably, the novel, and that is especially so in England, the country that took pride in the invention of the novel back in the eighteenth century. However, and unlike the novel, the short story is more prone to freedom and innovation, mostly due to its brevity and to its lack of prescriptive norms regarding its form. This fact explains, as Dominic Head has argued (1992), why the short story anticipated Modernist aesthetics in the work of writers such as Virginia Woolf or James Joyce, whose innovations in the short story form predated those of their novels.

The short story form has always functioned in a different way than the novel, both formally speaking and in ideological terms, as Frank O'Connor famously argued in his landmark study *The Lonely Voice* (1962): "Always in the short story there is this sense of outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society" (2011, 87). For O'Connor, the short story is especially suited to represent liminal identities, of marginalized submerged groups, such as those belonging to the postcolonial realm.

Departing from these premises, this dissertation aims to examine the various ways in which particular minorities have used the short story form as a vehicle to express a reality that was silenced by the Empire. Such invisibility becomes the more evident in the case of colonial women writers, whose voice has often been repressed due both to gender and national identity. This fact has motivated my choice of the two authors here under examination: Jean Rhys and Katherine Mansfield. Both writers spent her childhood years in the English colonies (Rhys in the Caribbean and Mansfield in New Zealand) and were

able to capture in their stories their perception of a gendered, colonial reality at the turn of the twentieth century.

Being informed by some key concepts related to postcolonial literary theory, this dissertation examines issues dealing with postcolonialism and gender through the analysis of Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party" and Jean Rhys's "Let Them Call It Jazz", which offer two different, yet complementary, versions of the colonial experience as seen by women. Mansfield's "The Garden Party" is presumably set in New Zealand and focuses on a day in the life of the Sheridans, a settler family that stands at a crossroads between their privileged, upper-middle class values and their own reproduction of the colonizers' hegemonic discourse. On the other hand, Rhys' story takes place in London, and focuses on the many adversities that Selina Davis has to face and overcome as a mulatta woman coming from Martinique in the 1950s as part of the so called "Windrush Generation".

A more personal motivation for the choice of this topic relates to my own experience as a student of postcolonial literature, which revealed my own lack of familiarity with non-Eurocentric cultures. My own reading of both Mansfield and Rhys's stories gave me access to a reality that has not been consistently examined by traditional history, the more evident in the case of women writers and their own experience of the colonial reality.

This dissertation is divided into two main chapters: the first one offers a theoretical framework centred on a brief approach to the modernist short story in England, and on questions which relate to, on the one hand, the form's underrated critical considerations and, on the other, its possibilities to voice the concerns and anxieties of marginalized population groups writing from the margins. The second chapter focuses on postcolonialism by, more specifically, addressing the construction of colonized countries

through the lens of the Empire. To do so, I briefly describe the critical relevance for the purposes of this dissertation of terms such as the “other”, the “subaltern” or “colonial discourse and I relate these to the experience of women writers in a postcolonial world. The third chapter provides a critical analysis of the stories here under examination, namely, Katherine Mansfield’s “The Garden Party” and Jean Rhys’s “Lets Them Call It Jazz”, which both provide illuminating accounts of the colonial reality as rendered by women writers.

1. Overview of the Modernist Short Story in England

In England, the short story form has often been regarded as a marginal literary form in comparison with other major genres such as the novel, often considered a much more prestigious, mature and sophisticated literary expression. While in the United States the modern short story gradually consolidated as a major literary genre as early as in the mid-nineteenth century, in England its boost did not take place until the late nineteenth century. Even though examples of the short story form can be traced back to earlier periods, as French writer Guy de Maupassant said, in England the reading public still preferred fiction “rather by the volume than by the page” (Hunter 2007, 6).

As Ian Watt explained in his ground-breaking study *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), the novel appeared in England as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution and of the middle-class which had fostered the change, whose values and ideology the realist novel clearly reflected in an instructive manner. However, and as the nineteenth century drew to an end, many readers preferred shorter narratives which required less time to read. As a result, the short story progressively gained more relevance, a fact which has also to be seen within the context of the proliferation of the so-called “little magazines” and periodical publications, which demanded short forms to supply their demands (Krueger 2014, 8). Although the growth of the periodicals market had been taking place since 1840s, it reached its peak between the 1880s and 1890s, and magazines like *The Strand Magazine*, *The Sketch*, *Harper’s Magazine* and *Story-Teller* contributed to the popularity and consolidation of the form. At first, magazines published serialized novels, but during the 1890s their editorial policy shifted towards the publication of short stories from different authors in each number (Krueger 2014, 15). In this sense, *The Yellow Book* was

also a very influential magazine – despite the periodical’s short-lived nature (from April 1894 to July 1897), it was quite relevant to the short story form, especially in terms of heading publications to the direction it took in the era of the so-called High Modernism (Head 2016,5).

In this sense, the modern short story came progressively to be perceived towards the turn of the twentieth century as a distinct literary form, different from the tale or from the condensed novel, which some Victorian authors had published. More attention was paid to the formal aspects of the form, which led to experimentation with methods such as omission, implication or suggestion, to name just a few.

From the genre’s inception, many critics and practitioners have attempted to defend the distinctiveness of the short story from other narrative genres, most notably, from the novel. One of the most persistent and influential theories of the short story was articulated by Irish writer Frank O’Connor in his seminal study *The Lonely Voice* (1962). As this title already indicates, the short story is, for O’Connor, the preferred form to convey the marginalized experience and the liminal identities of submerged population groups, either ethnical, sexually or gender related. As O’Connor sees it, the form, unlike the novel, is specially suitable to represent the realities of these groups and their interactions with different aspects of life: “The novel can still adhere to the classical concept of civilized society, of man as an animal who lives in a community, the short story remains by its very nature remote from the community” (O’Connor 2004, 13).

Unquestionably, the colonial subject could be a perfect correlate of one of those “submerged population groups” that O’Connor describes and, thus, the short story may provide a vehicle for the representation of their marginalized voices and their liminal identities, often posed in an interstitial position between the metropolis and the colony. In

this respect, Adrian Hunter has significantly emphasised the correlation between the short story and the postcolonial subject by arguing how the genre “is particularly suited to the representation of liminal or problematized identities” (Hunter 2007:138). In this respect, contemporary critics of the short story, such as Paul March-Russell (2009) and Adrian Hunter himself (2007) have drawn on the notion of “minor literature” – as first articulated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1986) – to explain the colonial subject’s expression of their marginalized identities and subjectivities through the short story form. In this sense, Hunter argues how the short story performs one of the major characteristics which Deleuze and Guattari assign to minor literatures, namely, the deterritorializations of a major language, a minor literature is not that written in a minor language, but rather appears in a major one, and in the case of postcolonial literature, in the colonizers’ language.

The second characteristic which Deleuze and Guattari attribute to minor literature is its political nature, which is the more evident in the case of postcolonial literature, which often concerns the identity and emancipation of a particular people from the metropolis. Finally, Deleuze and Guattari assign a third feature to minor literature, which connects with its collective value. This is closely tied to the previous notions argued above, since the political nature of postcolonial literature is inseparable from its collective value. The writer of minor literature also creates a necessary collectivisation when producing a piece, since he/she speaks on behalf of what O’Connor would term as a submerged population group. The voice of the individual turns into a collective one which may also contain a political agenda, often a major concern in what we call “postcolonial literature”.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the short story acquired a popularity in England that it had never had before. The genre became a great vehicle for women to

launch their careers as writers. It allowed them to redefine the feminine roles that were usually given to them by male authors, to break free from the coded social roles established for them and represent things differently from the way male authors did. “These writers’ attempts to narrate transgressive experiences deeply engage with the actual and imaginative borders that demarcate women’s lives during this period.” (Krueger 2014, 2). Women, as a submerged population group, fit in O’Connor’s theory of the short story as the most suitable genre to these liminal identities to express themselves. This literary form enabled them to voice her concerns as a group placed on the margins of society, usually left unheard and misrepresented by male figures. “By offering disruptions in seemingly already-constituted entities of femininity and masculinity, women can actually rewrite themselves and the world” (Krueger 2014, 4).

2. Postcolonial Theory

The term postcolonial started to be used in the 1970s as a way to describe the historical processes of decolonization, as well as entailing a reaction against the power structures in European colonial history from the eighteenth century to the present. During the next decade, it evolved into a concept to also address the cultural aftermath of either the colonial past or the liberating postcolonial moment that was taking place (March-Russell 2009, 246). Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1977), entailed an enlightening critical reflection on the various ways in which the Western world represents Eastern cultures, grounded on the hegemony of white, middle-class Eurocentric discourse:

[...] Dealing with the Orient [...] by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said 1977, 3)

This construction, which Said describes as a fantasy, by no means related to the actual representation of indigenous cultures, since they are rarely allowed to speak with a voice of their own. Said here also explains how colonialism is dependent on the alleged Eurocentric superiority with respect to the “other”, any individual that is separated from the hegemonic subject, which lies at the core of the binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized. In this sense, colonized “other” is invariably described in opposition to the metropolis, who tries to produce its own colonial discourse as a means to justify the colonial practices in the colonized territories, thus obliterating economic and racial abuse against the indigenous population.

Likewise, in her seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (2006) Gayatri C. Spivak uses the term “subaltern” to refer to those subjects that are denied voice and forced into expressing themselves in accordance with the viewpoint of the colonizer. Spivak also explains how the representation of Eastern countries – although presented by western authors as something objective – is a fabricated construct created through a discourse of binary opposition between East and West countries, where the latter would stand for civilization, advancement and enlightenment. Along with Said and Spivak, Homi Bhabha has also examined how Eurocentric discourse has represented the colonized “other”, which often entails the existence of epistemic violence by imposing a Eurocentric linguistic order to the colonised world. This concept becomes particularly significant for the purposes of this dissertation, since it proves how Eurocentric domination is not only exerted in military or political terms, but also through the use of language and the construction of a particular discourse which legitimizes domination:

The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity. It is well known that Foucault locates epistemic violence, a complete overhaul of the episteme, in the redefinition of sanity at the

end of the European eighteenth century. But what if that particular redefinition was only a part of the narrative of history in Europe as well as in the colonies? What if the two projects of epistemic overhaul worked as dislocated and unacknowledged parts of a vast two-handed engine? (Spivak 2006, 31)

The empire imposes its own language and culture on the colonized territories, which often implies superseding native language and culture, thus producing an ideological and social conflict in the colonized subject, who often internalizes the colonizer's hegemonic discourse and perpetuate the allegedly immutable and natural values which the metropolis represents. "The discourse of Orientalism, its internal consistency and rigorous procedures, were all designed for readers and consumers in the Metropolitan West" (Said 1977, 336).

Gender has played a very important role in understanding the mechanisms which intervene in producing particular images of the colonized subject. As is well known, colonial discourse entails feminization of the colonized territories, often described as feminine in contrast with the masculine values represented by the metropolis. As a result, the female colonized subject often experienced a double sense of oppression, both on account of their race and also of their gender. In fact, indigenous women were often perceived as sexual objects reduced to their reproductive function, as Spivak explains, "the subaltern has not history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shallow" (Spivak 2006, 32).

In this sense, Spivak also explains how the female colonized subject has often been ignored by traditional feminist discourses primarily addressing the concerns of a white, European, middle-class, heterosexual faction of women. As a result, traditional feminist discourses have failed to address other forms of oppression, such as those entailed by ethnic minorities or women.

As a result, and as Mohanty explains in “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (1984), Third World Women are often presented as a “homogeneous powerless” group, often located as implicit victims of particular socio-economic systems” (1984, 338). As a result, Mohanty argued for the necessity to discard “the notion of women as a homogeneous category to women in the third world colonizes and appropriates the pluralities of the simultaneous location of different groups of women in social class and ethnic frameworks” (1984, 351).

3. Authors: Katherine Mansfield and Jean Rhys

The authors here to be discussed are both women that experienced in the first person the reality of colonialism. Jean Rhys was born in 1890 in Dominica and Katherine Mansfield, born in 1888 in New Zealand, both countries being at the time part of the British Commonwealth. Both writers spent most of their childhood and adolescence in those colonies, which enabled them to acquire an acute vision of the reality of colonialism. As a result, Rhys and Mansfield introduced their own viewpoint of the colonial situation in their short stories (Rhys also in her novels) from the perspective of women, which undoubtedly added a different perspective on the issue. They both offered, as J.M. Wilson states, “the possibility of cross-border dialogues in a transnational framework – giving the other a voice if not a presence to transfigure European representation” (Wilson 2013, 5).

3.1. Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923)

Unlike Rhys, Katherine Mansfield never faced social ostracism on account of ethnicity, as none of her family members or ancestors were natives or creoles. Mansfield was born

in Wellington to a wealthy family, although a feeling of unbelonging always accompanied her. In 1903, Mansfield moved to England and also travelled around Europe, which opened up for her a world of possibilities, to the extent of experimenting a sense of alienation and displacement upon her return to her homeland. Mansfield's life experienced a turning point when her brother died at the battle front during the Great War, which paradoxically entailed a more positive vision of her homeland in her writing.

Mansfield returned permanently to England in 1908 where she began to develop her role as a writer. During the course of her first journey in Europe Mansfield met a number of *fin-de-siècle* artists, yet her return to England in 1911 would imply a significant turning point in her development as a writer, then becoming acquainted with *avant garde* movements and actively participating in different magazines such as *The New Age* (1894-1938) *Rhythm* and *Blue Review* (1911-1913) (Wilson 2013:14). Mansfield published five collections of short stories before her untimely death, with which she achieved the reputation of being one of the most brilliant writers of the modernist short story in English, by combining both Europe and New Zealand's cultural perspectives.

3.2. Jean Rhys (1890-1979)

Jean Rhys was daughter to a Welsh doctor and a Creole mother. During her childhood, she had a difficult situation at home, her father often being absent from the household, while the mother (and her aunt) were extremely hard on Rhys, a situation which he resented and reflected in her diaries:

I've done my best, it's no use. You'll never learn to be like other people. There you are, there it was. I had always suspected it, but now I knew. That went straight as an arrow to the heart, straight as the truth. I saw the long road of isolation and loneliness stretching in front of me as far as the eye could see, and further. I

collapsed and cried as heartbrokenly as my worst enemy could wish. (Moran 2007: 155)

In her stories Rhys often mirrored this conflicting bond with her mother, many of her women characters never seem to reach independence: they are always submissive to a male figure of authority, as shown for instance in the characters of Antoinette and Anette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Through part of her life, Rhys' sense of abandonment remained, until she managed to overcome the trauma caused by her mother's abuse: "Gradually I came to wonder about my mother less and less until at last she was almost a stranger and I stopped imagining what she felt or what she thought" (Moran 2007: 157).

Rhys' sense of dislocation and her understanding of her own ethnicity meant for the writer a lifelong struggle in identity terms, which is also at the core of most of her narratives. Rhys always felt distant from both the black and white community, being an outsider for both of them: for the black community she was often called white cockroach (as is the case of Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*), although in Dominica she had a privileged social position and was part of the social elite. Like many adolescents in her situation, Rhys left Dominica in 1907 and moved to England to continue her education. However, Rhys' sense of displacement increased in the metropolis, where she felt uneasy as a result of her own estrangement with England, her culture and with what she regarded as a hypocritical society. Racial prejudice was unquestionably present in her sense of alienation, being a white creole, to the point of desiring to "abstract myself from my body" (Savory 1985, 13).

In Europe Rhys had a complicated life – she struggled with alcoholism, depression, prostitution, three failed marriages, a miscarriage and multiple visits to asylums, but she was never able to return to her beloved Dominica (excepting a short visit in 1936) due to her difficult economic and personal situation. In spite of the tragic events of her personal

life, Rhys was still able to write multiple short story collections, such as *The Left Bank* (1927) or *Sleep It Off Lady* (1976), as well as three novels, *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966).

4. Katherine Mansfield “The Garden Party” (1922)

“The Garden Party” was written between 1920 and 1922, and first published in the *Weekly Westminster Gazette* in 1922. As some critics have suggested, this story shows Mansfield’s pessimism after the death of her brother Leslie Heron Beauchamp, a situation which meant for Mansfield to open the doors of memory to their childhood in New Zealand” (Kobler 1990, 14):

Now – now I want to write recollections about my own country. [...] because in my thoughts I range with him over all the remembered places. [...] I long to renew them in writing. [...] I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the old world. It must be mysterious, as though floating—it must take the breath. [...] but all must be told with a sense of mystery, a radiance, an afterglow, because you, my little sun of it, are set. You have dropped over the dazzling rim of the world. (Wilson 2013, 10)

Shortly after the publication of this story, Mansfield was diagnosed with tuberculosis, which would eventually cause her death in 1923, an event which also conditioned her writing, especially in what relates to her vision of life and death. “The metaphysical and spiritual reconfiguration that determined Mansfield’s reorientation towards what became her life’s project – to write a new version of her childhood – is marked by the incorporation of death as an integral part of her life and spiritual richness” (Wilson 2013, 5). In fact, many of the stories which Mansfield wrote during this period

revolve around the central theme of death, as is the case of “The Daughters of the Late Colonel”, “Life of Ma Parker”, “Six Years After” or “At the Bay”, among many others.

The story opens in media-res with the preparations for a garden party hosted by the upper middle-class Sheridans. The family are busy trying to impress their guests with glamorous details, which must be approved of by Mrs Sheridan: the flowers, the marquee, the piano and the food must be perfect to match the Sheridan’s social status at the party.

In the middle of the festive atmosphere, the Sheridans learn that one of the laborers living downhill from their house had been killed in a tragic accident, leaving a wife and five orphaned children. When one of the Sheridan children, Laura, hears the news, she believes that the right thing to do is to cancel the party as a sign of respect for the family of the deceased man. However, when Laura suggests it to her family, she is unpleasantly surprised by their lack of empathy and compassion, and decide to continue with the preparations for the party - “To Laura’s astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously. [...] Laura had to say ‘yes’ to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother’s sofa and pinched the cushion frill” (Mansfield 2006, 205). After Laura’s insistence to cancel the party, Mrs Sheridan decides instead to send a basket of leftovers to the dead man’s house, the Scotts, to be taken by Laura herself. Despite her reservations to do so, Laura eventually goes to the wake carrying the basket, and is led to the room where the corpse is being mourned, which provokes in her a feeling of uneasiness. When Laura returns to her house, her brother Laurie stops her in an inquisitive mood, and wants to know how she feels after the event. The story closes abruptly, having Laura unable to make sense of the contradictory feelings which the situation has triggered in herself.

In this story the Sheridans represent what postcolonial theory has termed as settler families, sent by the metropolis to the colonies to ensure the good course of the empire and the prevalence of the colonisers' values. Although references to particular places are not explicit in the story, the setting has been identified with Mansfield's childhood home in Tinakori Road, Wellington, New Zealand. Even though settlers were considered by the metropolis as somehow inferior due to their possible contamination with the colonial environment, they also represented an elite in the colony, evident in this story in the Sheridans' wealth. The party itself becomes a token of their privileged position in the colony, shown in the abundance of food, music and waiters for the garden party, all chosen with care and extravagance to reflect the Sheridans' affluence: "[There was a] shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies—canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems." (Mansfield 2006, 200).

The narrative establishes a sharp contrast between the luxurious house of the Sheridan settler family in the first half of the story and the indigenous population, introduced in the second part of the story, here represented by the Scotts neighbourhood. The wealthy family estate of the Sheridans and their sophisticated lifestyle is described in contrast with the deteriorated cottages of the neighbourhood which, although physically "far too near", are socially separated by "a broad road":

They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys. (Mansfield 2006, 204)

When Laura crosses this road in order to take the basket of leftovers to the Scotts, she is not only physically trespassing borders, but also metaphorically speaking, since she

is to enter another world, and a different reality completely unknown to her up to that moment:

The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade [...] Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. (Mansfield 2006, 208)

According to Hubert Zapf, “the sharp opposition of above and below, of an upper and a lower sphere which visually enforces the sense of social difference” is especially at work in the depiction of – the cottages, which “were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house” (Zapf 1985, 51). Therefore, the opposition between these two spaces moves beyond mere physicality, since it deals with class differences, which marks a sharp distinction between the Sheridans and the Scotts, or, in other terms, between the privileged and the oppressed, or the colonizer and the colonized. In the narrative, the Sheridans see themselves as superior, which is evinced by the fact that they did not want their children to be in contact with those living in the cottages: “When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch”. (Mansfield 2006, 204).

In the narrative terms, social difference is also suggested by the terms which the narrator uses to describe the Sheridans' preparations for the party and the Scotts' wake, respectively. The Sheridans' arrangements for the garden party take place in the early hours of a glorious morning. The light, the sun and the beautiful weather seem to predict the party's success, since everything “was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer” (Mansfield 2006, 197). However, as the party comes to an end in the evening and night

starts to fall, an oppressive sense of darkness anticipates of Laura's encounter with a different reality she is yet unacquainted with. As Laura approaches the Scott's household, in other words approaches death, night comes in, helping to establish the dualism between the rich and the poor, and ultimately representing the cycle of life, from birth to death.

Mansfield uses additional elements which, though apparently insignificant, help to emphasise social difference: the hat that Mrs Sheridan asks Laura to wear is a symbol of their upper middle-class status. The hat first appears when Laura is trying to cancel the party due to the death of the workman. Mrs Sheridan, trying to change the subject, asks Laura to try on a hat that is "much too young" for her. Laura, who first refuses to do so, eventually agrees, and muses on the relevance of appearances when seeing her own reflection in the mirror:

There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant? Perhaps it was extravagant. (Mansfield 2006, 205-206)

Although she does consider afterwards the Scotts' grief at their loss, she eventually decides to momentarily forget about them and enjoy the party, encouraged by her glamorous look with her new hat on. By doing so, Laura casts aside sympathy for the Scotts and becomes infatuated by her own beauty, focusing on the selfish and comfortable lifestyle of an upper-middle class family:

Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan... (Mansfield 2006, 206)

Later, when Mrs Sheridan sends her with the basket of leftovers to the Scott's, realizes that the hat is completely inadequate for the situation, signalling in a too conspicuous manner her social status: "And the big hat with the velvet streamer—if only

it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be.” (Mansfield 2006, 208). Laura realizes that the hat becomes a token of her frivolous, expensive and superficial lifestyle, and she hopes the Scotts would be able to “forgive my hat” (Mansfield 2006, 210). The whole situation also enhances Laura’s sense of guilt for his careless life, her enjoyment of the party and her lack of sympathy towards less privileged others

As a settler family, the Sheridans perpetuate the colonial discourse, and its attached values. Their impressive garden, with which the story opens represents not only an evident sign of their elevated social position, but is also used to make the English lifestyle prevail: the garden party hosted by the Sheridans emulates the ones held in the English countryside, in which expensive details such as the marquee and a music band by the tennis court are carefully chosen to signal the Sheridans’ class of privilege. In fact, the reader could perfectly believe that the story is set in England rather than in New Zealand, as there are no clear spatial references, excepting Laura’s mention of the “karakas-trees” (Mansfield 2006, 198):, an evergreen tree commonly found in the island. Significantly, this tree, as the only native element in the garden, wants to be hidden by Mrs Sheridan, as she wishes to put the marquee against them to hide them, which ultimately reveals a wish to tame and control the colonized territory:

Against the karakas. Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee? (Mansfield 2006, 198)

In “The Garden Party” Mansfield uses a third-person narrator, whose perspective is largely restricted to Laura’s vision, the story’s major focalizer. The narrative’s use of selective omniscient, thus reproduces Laura’s viewpoint in free indirect speech, allowing the reader to access the character’s thoughts. Laura’s perspective, however, elaborates on an idea of how the other members of the family are, comfortable in their own privileged

position and oblivious of the suffering of others. Through the use of free indirect speech, Laura is rendered as the most compassionate character in the story, but also as the most socially aware member of the family: “From the very beginning of the story, Mansfield establishes a series of dichotomies that differentiate Laura from her family, only to undermine them.” (Dunn 2008, 204).

As opposed to the Sheridan’s wish to control the native land by the social preparations which the garden party entails, Laura simply appreciates the garden for what it is, admiring the “silent splendour” of the karaka tree.

Neither Mr Sheridan nor Jose show compassion for the dead young man or for his family, s evinced by their reservations to cancel the party: "If you’re going to stop a band playing every time someone has an accident, you’ll lead a very strenuous life.[...] "You won’t bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental.” (Mansfield 2006, 204). Finding no sympathy in Jose, Laura turns to her mother for support, but finds a similar reaction: “It’s not very sympathetic to spoil everybody’s enjoyment as you’re doing now.” (Mansfield 2006, 205). Laura is puzzled by her mother’s lack of sympathy towards the suffering of others, and is unpleasantly surprised to see that her mother’s only concern relates to the party’s success, which she does not want to see spoiled with a dead man in her garden:

“Mother, a man’s been killed,” began Laura.

“Not in the garden?” interrupted her mother.

“No, no!”

Oh, what a fright you gave me!” Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees. (Mansfield 2006, 205)

In the narrative Laura is depicted as different to her family, because of her special sensibility. When she greets the workman coming to set the marquee, she does so in the following way: “Good morning [...] copying her mother’s voice. But that sounded so

fearfully affected that she was ashamed” (Mansfield 2006, 198). Laura is confused by, on the one hand, her reluctance to believe in “absurd class distinctions” and, on the other, her family inheritance and values, which tell her to act “business-like” with those regarded as inferior (Mansfield 2006, 198).

Laura’s confusion is, in a sense, reflected in the narrative’s description of the party arrangements. All actions taking place at the Sheridan’s house are not described in a coherent order but rather as a series of snapshots, conveying an image of chaos and acceleration:

“Now, Laura,” said her mother quickly, “come with me into the smoking-room. I’ve got the names somewhere on the back of an envelope. You’ll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home to-night? And—and, Jose, pacify cook if you do go into the kitchen, will you? I’m terrified of her this morning. (Mansfield 2016, 202)

The party itself occupies very little space in the narrative, becoming an insignificant event that divides the two important moments of the story: the bright and careless preparations before the party and the gloomy atmosphere which characterises Scott’s death and his wake in the neighbouring cottage. Therefore, as the narration move towards the second phase – after party – the narrative space starts to decelerate: “And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed” (Mansfield 2006, 206). The story shifts to a different kind of motion when Laura leaves the house and heads to the Scott’s house: “How quite it seemed after the afternoon” (Mansfield 2006, 208). As Zapf has suggested, such a decreasing narrative pace is also evinced by the story’s language, which shifts from quick motion towards words accumulating immobility, signalled by the use of the past tense. Significantly, Laura’s language designates hesitation and compulsively slowed down motion: she “drew near,” and, afterwards, she “walked up,” “knocked,” “followed,” (Zapf 1985, 49)

Finally, when Laura is in the room with the deceased man, it feels as if time was paused for a moment:

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy... happy... All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content. (Mansfield 2006, 209-210)

As a result, the narrative “moves from the feverish, artificial activism of the garden party, from which death is apparently excluded, to the transcendent tranquillity of the death scene which, paradoxically, becomes the medium for Laura’s insight into life.” (Zapf 1985, 50).

This deceleration of the narrative rhythm towards the end of the story relates to the epiphanic moment when Laura sees the corpse of the dead man. The epiphany was a common feature of modernist short stories, where the emphasis was put on a single moment or relevant experience. Laura’s encounter with the other, marks her “awakening of social conscience that separates her from her frivolous and privileged family, or as an initiation, via the encounter with death, into adulthood” (Dunn 2008, 203). It makes her realize about the questionable social order in colonial society. Epiphanies are a common feature in Mansfield’s stories as a way to acknowledge the obscure aspects of life, although often, her characters:

[...] turn away from these uncomfortable visions, or the visions are reducible to something bleaker and more mundane: the upholding of “absurd class distinctions” in Laura’s case. [...] Life’s sparkling surface sometimes illuminates its darker, deeper underside, even if only to banish it again to the margins (Dunn 2008, 209).

5. Jean Rhys “Let Them Call It Jazz” (1962)

Most of Rhys’ short stories are situated in three major locations: Dominica, France and England. Significantly, all these places represent different things in the writer’s personal development, England being the place where she spent most of her life, but for which she developed a growing animosity. In an interview before her death, Rhys explained, “I was so unhappy in England. I was delighted to get away” (Lonsdale 1997). Revealingly, England is depicted as a negative and unwelcoming place not only in Rhys’s stories, but also in a large number of diasporic narratives: “In many post-war narratives of the city [...] London is represented as a hostile diasporic space in which the migrant occupies a liminal position”. In this sense, migrants in the city are “in a limbo, caught, in London, between their homeland and a diasporic home, but they also a route forward, however uncertain, towards adaption or assimilation.” (Naidu and Thorpe 2018, 28,29).

This hostile relationship between the colonized and the colonizer comes out as a result of the episodes of colonization, and due to the unequal relationship of power established between both forces. Therefore, the experience of the migrant in the metropolis is based on encounters with racism, sexism and other types of discrimination. This is what happens to the protagonist of Rhys’ story “Let Them Call It Jazz”, Selina Davis, a mulatta woman arriving in London during the 1950s. Selina moves to the metropolis in search for a better life, but what she finds there is a hostile situation where she has to face racism and marginalization on a daily basis. The story opens with her being kicked out by her landlord of the Notting Hill apartment she lives in. While at a bar, Selina meets a man, Mr Sims, who offers her help. He provides her with an apartment, where she establishes an unfriendly relationship with her neighbours, that will eventually lead her to jail. Unable to

defend herself in court, Selina feels abandoned in prison. There, her only silver lining comes when she hears an inmate singing a song – the Holloway song. After being released from jail, Selina starts to learn the way to survive in the metropolis and is able to find a place to live and a job. After a man listens to her whispering the song, he ends up commercializing it changing it as he pleases, in a way Selina dislikes. Selina first feels sad about it, but soon realizes how it does not really matter, since the song is just part of the nothingness she owns.

The spatial references in the novel also have postcolonial connotations. Selina arrives in London during the 1950s, a period when many Caribbean people left their own country after the Second World War. In that sense, Selina belongs to the generation of immigrants arrived in England on board of the legendary “Windrush”, as such, she is discriminated, despite her status as British citizens. The story’s initial Notting Hill location has also special significance, since many migrants from the Caribbean established their residence there. Many Afro-Caribbeans arrived at the neighbourhood during the 1950s, and tensions escalated with white population due to problems with housing, violence and poverty. White youths, with the support of far-right groups, started to spread the animosity, with leaflets urging to “Keep Britain White”. Riots started in the summer of 1958, as fascist groups aggressively attacked black families and their properties, leaving many migrants seriously injured (Exploring 20th Century London, n.d). However, when Selina moves to Mr Sims’ apartment, this is located in an area where not many immigrants live, one of the reasons behind the animosity of her neighbours towards her (Ropero 2001, 24, 25).

In the narrative, Selina plays the role of the Other, of the outsider coming to the metropolis and, as such, encountering problems in terms of class, race and gender. She is throughout the whole story mistreated by every character (the pimp, the neighbours, the

police officer) because of her migrant condition which provokes her being constantly seen as inferior. After being withheld from her savings, she accepts the help from Mr Sims, who takes her to what Selina believes is an apartment – she is unaware that it is, indeed, a former brothel. As a result, Selina’s neighbours believe she is one of Mr Sims’ prostitutes and treat her not only as inferior due to her low social class, but also due to the colour of her skin, which makes her different from the white prostitutes from London: “It’s disgraceful’ he says, talking to his wife, but loud so I can hear, and she speaks loud too – for once. ‘At least the other tarts that crook installed here were white girls,’ she says.” (Rhys 2017: 159). Besides being racially and professionally marginalized, Selina also experiences double colonization, as she is not only mistreated because of her race: in fact her condition as a sexually desirable woman is also questioned, since one of her neighbours wonders about her skills as prostitute and treats her as a mere sexual object: “You’re not a howling success at it certainly.” (Rhys 2017:159)

The story is rendered by a first-person narrator, which provides the reader with a better insight of Selina’s personal experience and allows access to her thoughts and her subjective point of view of the events narrated. Rhys emphasises Selina’s otherness and the conflict between both worlds partly through the use of language: Selina uses Caribbean Creole rather than standard English – a fact which further enhances her position as an outsider and her sense of alienation. Selina’s use of patois “presents a complex new voice, one that challenges conventional sexual, racial and class paradigms in its determination not to be silenced” (Naidu and Thorpe 2018: 33). This has the immediate effect of highlighting the character’s sense of otherness but also of special uniqueness in the story. As an example, Selina uses the zero copular construction, where the verb to be is missing, such as “these people terrible liars” typical of Caribbean Creole. Selina only uses standard English to quote others, but patois is her preferred language when talking about herself.

As the narrative unfolds, however, Selina mixes both varieties. According to Czarnecki, the power effect is that “the patois on the page comes across differently to the eye, defamiliarizing standard English and necessitating the reader's careful attention to the printed words.” (Czarnecki 2008, 22). By doing so, Rhys amplifies the reality of a marginalized voice and by “refusing to relinquish her patois, Selina highlights the subjectivity of racial, national, and linguistic boundaries built upon hegemonic lies” (Czarnecki 2008, 26).

As Afsari-Mamagani explains, the narrative emphasises Selina’s “dialogic conflict” in having a reference system completely different to the one she encounters in London. Since “those sharing a language create (or inherit) a system moving toward stability and agreement upon the relationship of signifiers to their signified concepts.” (Afsari 2012). This linguistic conflict produces a tension that leads to an impossibility in the process of communication with the other and, as a result, Selina constantly misinterprets what others say. In the conversations she maintains with the neighbours while she is in the lodging provided by Mr Sims, Selina explains how “there’s not wall here and I can see the woman next door looking at me over the hedge. At first I say good morning, but she turn away her head, so afterwards I don’t speak” (Rhys 2017, 153). Selina’s inability to successfully communicate with others results in a sense of progressive isolation and silence, since she cannot use “the sweet quiet voice deemed ladylike among the white and upper-class. Selina, on the other hand, cannot afford quiet womanhood” (Afsari 2012).

As Selina cannot fully comprehend the cultural framework and the referential system of the British, a sense of confusion arises in her when trying to interact with other characters. This marginalization is not only social but also institutional, as the judicial system also abandons her. In Mr Sims’ flat, Selina spends her nights drinking, dancing

and singing. The neighbours are constantly mistreating her and telling her to leave. This tension between keeps escalating, and the icing on the cake comes when Selina breaks one of their windows:

I pick up a stone and bam! through the window. Not the one they are standing at but the next, which is of coloured glass, green and purple and yellow. I never see a woman look so surprised. Her mouth fall open she so full of surprise. [...] At last I say 'Well, I'm sorry. An accident. I get it fixed tomorrow early. 'That glass is irreplaceable' the man says. 'Irreplaceable'. 'Good thing', I say, 'those colours look like they sea-sick to me. I buy you a better window glass'. He shake his first at time. 'You won't be let off with a fine this time' he says. (Rhys 2017, 159)

After this incident the neighbours decide to call the police, accusing Selina of being a prostitute and complaining about the constant disturbance. When the police officer arrives to her house and it shows her the paper to arrest her, Selina cannot understand what the document actually says, nor the reasons why she is being arrested: "He show me a paper and I look at it, but I don't read it." (Rhys 2017, 160). This document escapes Selina's referential world, and therefore it holds no meaning for the character, who cannot reach a full comprehension of it. Later in the narrative, when Selina is in court, she is unable to express herself, although she tries to, as she knows the system will always be oppressive towards her:

I want to say this in a decent quiet voice. But I hear myself talking loud and I see my hands wave in the air. Too besides it's no use, they won't believe me, so I don't finish. I stop, and I feel the tears on my face. 'Prove it.' That's all they will say. They whisper, they whisper. They nod, they nod. (Rhys 2017, 161-162)

Selina feels powerless and unable to react, and eventually she ends up in prison. There the loss of her will to live reaches a peak "There is nothing I want now. It's no use. If they leave me in peace and quiet that's all I ask." (Rhys 2017, 163). Selina stays in prison in silence, observing the behaviour or other inmates, but without interacting with them, which could be understood as a sign of defeat, "as concession rather than resistance. Isn't silence what the oppressor wants? (Czarnecki 2008, 28). She opts for silence until she finds hope in a song sung by another inmate: "But as we go in I ask the woman in

front who was singing, ‘That’s the Holloway song,’ she says. ‘Don’t you know it yet? She was singing from the punishment cells’ (Rhys 2017, 164).

Although for Selina, communication with the English people seems to fail, she is capable to find refuge in music, since “the song represents for her a form of dialogue to which she can connect” (Afsari 2012). It is in the world of music that Selina feels safe and free, which relates to, as Naidu and Thorpe explain to the relevance of the musical rhythms in Caribbean culture: “The literature’s vitality has drawn deep from the area’s flourishing oral culture, from its folktales and performance narratives, its calypsos, and from the tall stories told on the evening verandah or around the rum-shop table” (Naidu and Thorpe 2018, 32). Throughout the story music is the only element through which Selina is able to find release and psychological satisfaction. For instance, when she first arrives into Mr Sims apartment she believes that “it is not a place to be alone in I tell you” (Rhys 2017, 152) and she decides to turn to alcohol (another element she constantly uses as a coping mechanism) and to music: “After I drink a glass or two I can sing and when I sing all the misery goes from my heart. Sometimes I make up songs but next morning I forget them, so other times I sing the old ones like ‘Tantalizin’ or ‘Don’t Trouble Me Now’” (Rhys 2017, 152).

As the title of the story indicates, music plays a key role in the narrative as a response to Selina’s inner moods and feelings. Whenever she experiences an unpleasant incident, she turns to music. After being unable to reach Mr Sims by telephone, she decides to turn to dance and music to try and forget for a while about her problems: “Then a song comes in my head, I sing it and I dance it, and more I sing, more I am sure this is the best tune that has ever come to me in all my life” (Rhys 2017, 158). Selina uses music as a way to defy those who constantly try to marginalize her who understand her singing as just noises: “Then I start to sing so she can understand I’m not afraid of her. The husband call

out: If you don't stop that noise I'll send for the police. 'I answer them quite short. I say, 'You go to hell and take your wife with you.' And I sing louder" (Rhys 2017, 156).

In the narrative Selina shows a position of resistance towards the inhabitants of the metropolis. which as Laguarda states, signals Rhys' (and other writers' in her position), the impossibility to find a homeland, triggered by a feeling of unbelonging:

Yet the colonial experience, for Rhys as for others, does not only bring dislocation: the position on the margins gives a perspective, a difference of view, what Iain Chambers calls the "oblique gaze of the migrant," from which the homeland's values and institutions can be appraised and judged: it leads not just to "pain" but to anger and resistance. (Laguarda 2018, 163)

In such a position of resistance, Laguarda identifies three different strategies employed in the story to subvert to colonial power. One of those strategies concerns the comparison between the values of Selina's homeland and those of England. In fact, Selina accuses the colonizers of the same things the colonized are accused of: Selina is believed to be an alcoholic by her neighbours, when at the opening of the story her landlord is "drunk already at that early hour" (Rhys 2017, 150). However, as Bueno has suggested, the use of this particular strategy "leads readers to think that very often the colonizers project their own fears and repressed desires on the colonized" (Bueno 2018, 163).

Furthermore, Selina's desperate wish to fit in the metropolis leads her to emulate the values, manners and behaviour of the colonisers, an attitude which has been defined by Bhabha as "mimicry", or "camouflage, in the strictly technical sense. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background but, against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare" (Bhabha 1994, 85). Mimicry is, therefore, used to describe the relationship between colonizer and colonized after the discourse of the colonizers penetrate on the indigenous community. This results in the colonized subjects' adoption of the habits imposed, but they do so in a peculiar way and reproduce it in a different manner, which, according to Bhabha is "one

of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. [...] Mimicry is, thus, the sign of double articulation, a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which appropriates the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha 1994, 85, 86).

Selina’s process of development in the narrative is, therefore, not one of rejection, but rather of transformation into submission, reshaping her identity to fit in her new home. By adopting British values and customs, Selina realizes that communication between herself and the British is re-established. However, this also means that, as a subject, she will always have to endure a feeling of otherness and displacement, entailed by her efforts to live up to the expectations of “proper” English behaviour.

After being released from prison at the end of the story, Selina realizes that the best thing she can do in order to survive is to comply with the colonizers’ modes of behaviour and values, even though she feels this is, somehow a betrayal to her own convictions and culture. Selina’s experience in jail leads her to abandon her initial position of resistance for the sake of survival in the metropolis, which entails her oblivion of her own roots, culture and values in order to adopt a more British lifestyle. As a result of her experience in prison, Selina learns how to survive among English people. It is only after prison, that Selina abandons her victimizing discourse in order to become a survivor: “I’m not frightened of them anymore – after all what else can they do?” (Rhys 2017, 166). After her unpleasant stay in prison, Selina has learned “what to say and everything go like clock words” (Rhys 2017, 166), even if her strategies of survival entail dishonest behaviour: “I lie and tell them I work in very expensive New York shop. I speak bold and smooth faced, and they never check up on me.” (Rhys 2017, 166).

This attitude is also exemplified in her reaction towards the dispossession of the Holloway Song. When Selina is at a party at her friend’s Clarice, she starts to whistle the

song she had heard in jail and which had, for her, such positive connotations. One of the guests seems interested in the song and asks Selina to sing it again: “the man comes up to me and says, ‘Let’s hear that again’. So I whistle it again (I never sing now) and he tells me ‘Not bad’” (Rhys 2017, 167). But when the man plays the song, he performs it in a different way, by “jazzing it up” (Rhys 2017, 167). Selina, not happy with the way the man has changed the song, tries to show her disconformity, “but everybody else say the way he do it is first class” (Rhys 2017, 167). The man ends up selling the song, already taking advantage of the marginalized subject and without fully crediting Selina, since he only sends her a note and 5 pounds. At first, she cried because “the song was all I had” (Rhys 2017, 167), but then she realizes that the fact that the man had stolen the song for her is not important, for the memory of the inmate’s song will be kept unique in her mind forever: “She sing to me and she sing for me”. In a sense, Selina’s song becomes a metaphor of her own process of cultural transformation: she has also been dispossessed from her culture and values to survive in a hostile environment, but deep inside she still continues to be her old self, that which is unchanging, immutable and unique despite appearances: “So let them call it jazz’, I think, and let them play it wrong. That won’t make no difference to the song I heard” (Rhys 2017, 167).

6. Conclusion

As this dissertation has aimed to prove, the narratives here under examination represent different realities of the colonial experience, as seen from the perspective of the colonizer and the colonized, respectively. Jean Rhys “Let Them Call It Jazz” shows the reality of colonial British subjects who emigrated from the colony to the metropolis in search for a better life through the figure of Selina Davis, thus portraying the colonial other as a victim of the imperial system. In Katherine Mansfield’s “The Garden Party”, however, the narrative depicts the privileged situation of the settler families in the colonies through the Sheridans’ relationship with the indigenous population.

I have here analysed both short stories and their contexts, their characters, their plots and the importance of elements such as time and space, in order to give critically examine the extent to which each story addresses the colonial experience from different perspectives. In a sense, such experiences depicted in both narratives fictionalize the writers’ concerns and anxieties as colonial subjects, as well as their ambivalent relationship with the metropolis. Just like Selina, Rhys had problems with alcoholism throughout her life, and “as her alcoholism worsened, Rhys went through some years of fighting with neighbours and tenants living in the house she and Max had in Beckenham, a suburb of south London” (Savory 1985,10). Likewise, Rhys was even “briefly confined in a women’s prison for psychiatric evaluation” (Savory 1985, ix). In Mansfield’s New Zealand stories, the writer found a way to remember her dead brother and the families depicted in this narrative closely resemble her own: “The fictional Burnells and the fictional Sheridans – [are] both [...] surrogates for her own Beauchamp family” (Kobler 1990, 115).

Despite the different colonial situations which informed each one of the narratives, both stories overtly address the importance of a sense of identity for both main characters, which relates to a larger anxiety concerning national identity to be found in a large number of colonial and postcolonial narratives. Both Selina and Laura struggle hard to find her place in their respective societies: Selina, although a legitimate citizen of England (a title given to those living in any British colony by 1949), could not really find her place in London by being herself, and she had to find alternative strategies to fit in by emulating the colonizer's behaviour. Likewise, "The Garden Party" Laura has also a hard time trying to identify and accept herself as part of a privileged minority in the colony, not being able to fully comprehend the different social treatment given to those groups regarded as inferior in the social hierarchy of the colonies.

Furthermore, this dissertation has examined the above-mentioned narratives within the conventions of the short story tradition, a genre which has been prone to the representation of liminal identities. My critical analysis of Mansfield and Rhys's narratives has shown how both writers employed the short story to articulate a position of resistance against hegemonic colonial discourse, either in the colony or in the metropolis. Furthermore, these short stories also address the particular reality of women in the colonial context, which raises issues related to the partnership between gender and literary genre. Rhys and Mansfield's short stories have also to be seen within the larger context of Modernism, in which the short story form played a seminal role in consolidating Modernist techniques and aesthetics through the use of innovative techniques and new modes of writing that Modernist writers would later consolidate in their longer narratives. However, for those writers that occupied a marginalized position in terms of national identity, the short story form was often chosen as a suitable vehicle to represent their

particular realities, and their liminal position, both as individuals and as part of the group affected by the colonialism.

In this sense, both Mansfield and Rhys' short stories also address the problematics of gender representation, since in the narratives (and, most notably, Rhys's "Let Them Call It Jazz"), women characters are victims of the problematic of double colonization, as women and as colonial subjects. This dissertation, however, has not addressed a critical comparison between the representation of women characters in female and male (post)colonial authors, respectively. In this sense, further research could possibly examine how the above-mentioned double discrimination works in men and women's postcolonial narratives, thus testing whether gender representation varies, if so, in a wider corpus of literary texts.

Finally, the short stories written by authors such as Katherine Mansfield or Jean Rhys, whose personal experience was tinged by the riddles, anxieties and contradictions of colonialism, continue to offer an insight a reality that not been properly acknowledged or assimilated by mainstream culture, since the privileged are the ones given a voice, while minorities are often left unheard.

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