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Van Gogh's Yellow Flowers: The Influence of Post-Impressionism on Mansfield and Woolf

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M. A. Seton Hall University, 2019

A Thesis

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In

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Seton Hall University
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This Thesis, “Van Gogh’s Yellow Flowers: The Influence of Post-Impressionism on Mansfield and Woolf,” by Gabriella M. D’Angelo, has been approved for submission for the Degree of
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Abstract

In a letter to Dorothy Brett, Katherine Mansfield responds to Van Gogh's painting of sunflowers explaining, "That picture seemed to reveal something that I hadn't realised before I saw it. It lived with me afterwards. It still does... They taught me something about writing, which was queer—a kind of freedom—or rather, a shaking free" that she felt after experiencing his painting (O'Sullivan, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 4: 333). The aesthetic emotion resided with her thereafter, as she claimed: "I can *smell* them as I write" (O'Sullivan, *TCLKM*, 2: 333). French paintings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by Van Gogh and Cezanne illuminated ordinary aspects of life. Roger Fry, a painter, critic, and a member of the Bloomsbury group established the Post-Impressionist movement and its aesthetic theory, which contributed to the transition of British culture. Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf utilized the aesthetic emotion to deliver the individual's experience to the public. I will analyze Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and "Kew Gardens," and Katherine Mansfield's "Bliss" and "Prelude," to explore how the female authors incorporate Post-Impressionist elements such as fruit, flowers, and painting to produce the aesthetic emotion within their audiences.

Van Gogh's Yellow Flowers: The Influence of Post-Impressionism on Mansfield and Woolf

Roger Fry defines the Post-Impressionistic aesthetic theory through the emotions it evokes, explaining, "when the artist passes from pure sensations to emotions aroused by means of sensations, he uses natural forms which, in themselves, are calculated to move our emotions, and he presents these in such a manner that the forms themselves generate in us emotional states" (Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," 37). Mansfield and Woolf incorporated perception of human consciousness through suspended moments in time to deliver the "means of sensations" (Fry, *EIA*, 37). Their work depicts artistic representations of lived experience and the "innate capacities" of an androgynous mind (Fry, *An Essay in Aesthetics* 22). Post-Impressionism influenced Mansfield and Woolf to apply the aesthetic theory of painting to literary form. The aesthetic emotion they experienced while viewing the French paintings, became the objective of their writing, and they intended to provoke a similar emotional reaction in their readers. Mansfield and Woolf insisted on delivering an emotional response that would move the British public, as well as the world, to a greater perspective on reality and a deeper sense of the self, where two genders could be perceived and united together in a single person.

Mansfield and Woolf deliver their artistic representations by adhering to the Post-Impressionist form, where moments are suspended in time to illustrate specific imagery similar to the achievements of still life paintings by Cezanne and Van Gogh. The achievement of Post-Impressionism, as Fry intended, "joins the ephemeralness of sense-data to the timelessness of universals; it gives in retrospect a necessity to the contingent moment" (Banfield 496). The duration of these moments is uncertain because of its "timelessness," but it relays significance to the narrative; a moment where the viewer reflects and responds with provoked emotions. The audience observes the timeless moment, which allows them to experience and meditate on its

timelessness and detail. The response, however it may vary, is provoked by their individual experience with the moment. Woolf and Mansfield created “contingent moment[s]” in their stories, where a single moment of the narrative reflects a “timelessness” that is designed to relay an aesthetic emotion. Within these moments, Mansfield and Woolf establish a series of elements that achieve the Post-Impressionist design. The imagery of flowers, fruit, and paintings maintain the aesthetic and produce an emotion that alludes to an artistic representation. Angela Smith quotes Mansfield on her differentiation between art and life: “An aesthetic emotion is what we feel in front of a work of art—one doesn’t feel an aesthetic emotion about a thing, but about its artistic representation” (Smith 147).

Virginia Woolf’s work largely focuses on the narrative of individuals, more commonly women, and their inability to define their own lives because of the social, cultural, and familial restrictions that oppress them. With the influence of Fry’s philosophy, Woolf achieved the Post-Impressionist technique in *To the Lighthouse*, which she articulates in her literary manifesto, “Modern Fiction”:

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms. [...] Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. (106)

Woolf insinuates that every detail of an image or moment is captured touching on every aspect that shapes it. Each of those details conveys an artistic representation that manifests an aesthetic emotion. The significance of each detail intends for observation and meditation on a moment that

transcends time for the viewer, where the whole consciousness is provoked to participate freely. By vividly establishing the setting and the objects with which the characters interact in her stories, Woolf presents an aesthetic emotion that offers sensations of the individual experience. Fisher proposes, "Painting, both representational and abstract, seems to offer a permanence and unity that elude narrative, a medium that must depend on the unreliable agency of language for its symbolic power" (91).

While visiting France in 1909, Roger Fry discovered Paul Cezanne's paintings three years after his death. Cezanne's use of shapes and arrangement of objects in still life paintings aroused Fry's fascination: "he has been becoming more and more absorbed in the work of Cezanne in particular [...] his excitement transmitted itself. Everybody must see what he saw in those pictures—must share his sense of revelation" (Woolf, *Roger Fry: A Biography* 152). Fry's enthusiasm encouraged him to introduce modern French paintings to Britain. He staged two exhibitions at the Grafton Galleries, establishing the Post-Impressionist movement. The exhibition of 1910, "Manet and the Post-Impressionists," presented Gauguin and Cezanne's work to the British public. In the second exhibition, in 1912, Fry featured the work of Picasso, Van Gogh, and Matisse. Fry felt the movement of the French paintings relied on "a model of perception in which the brain constructs images from sensory input and these images then evoke an effective response" (Gillies 151). The characteristics of Post-Impressionism that distinguished the paintings from other artistic movements were its vibrant colors and distinctive brush strokes. The artists prioritized the abstract form over realism to convey their memories, emotions, and perception of the world from which Fry developed his theory on aesthetic emotion. Fry's theories and criticism regarding Post-Impressionism became especially influential to the

Bloomsbury circle's artists and writers, which contributed significantly to the aesthetics of British modernism.

Fry's model maintained his position that "art is universal, transcending time and place" (Gillies 151). Mansfield and Woolf incorporated the theory of Post-Impressionism by capturing moments that transcend time and place within their narratives. These suspended moments characterize images of the French still life paintings, allowing the "model of perception" to take place, evoking the aesthetic emotion. Fry emphasizes that an artist's form should resemble the reality of actual life in their paintings rather than an imitation of life or imaginative life. In her biography of Roger Fry, Woolf articulates,

They [Post-Impressionist painters] do not seek to imitate form, but to create form, not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life. By that I mean that they wish to make images which by the clearness of their logical structure, and by their closely-knit unity of texture, shall appeal to our disinterested contemplative imagination with something of the same vividness as the things of actual life appeal to our practical activities. (Woolf, *RF*, 178)

The paintings propose an image that conveys an equivalent of life but captivates the imaginative mind. The primary objective to creating the aesthetic emotion is to "aim not at illusion but at reality" (Woolf, *RF*, 178).

Virginia Woolf became close friends with Roger Fry. They often discussed their work and agreed that "the arts of painting and writing lay close together," recognizing that the same emotional aesthetic applied to painting could be applied to fiction (Woolf, *RF*, 239). She was motivated as a writer to develop her work using the aesthetic principles to convey her artistic representation of the lived experience. Woolf's sister, Vanessa Bell, influenced and changed her

“views on aesthetics,” and Bell’s Post-Impressionist paintings gave her “infinite pleasure” (Nicolson 257). Woolf asked Bell if she would design the title page for “Kew Gardens” and sent her a copy of the short story for review (Nicolson 257). Bell’s and Fry’s aesthetics motivated Woolf, and they acknowledged her achievement. Fry would go so far as to write letters to Woolf discussing her brilliance in achieving the aesthetic and developing a captivating narrative. Fry wrote to Woolf claiming, “Lots write well enough, but they don’t create a new and personal medium as you do” (*LRF* 486).

Still life paintings, particularly those featuring flowers and fruit, became a prominent symbol of Post-Impressionism for Mansfield in her stories. After Mansfield attended Fry’s “Manet and the Post-Impressionists” exhibition, she was compelled by Van Gogh’s sunflowers. Mansfield expressed, “That picture seemed to reveal something that I hadn’t realised before I saw it. It lived with me afterwards. It still does... They taught me something about writing, which was queer - a kind of freedom - or rather, a shaking free” (O’Sullivan, *TCLKM*, 2: 333). Similar to Woolf, Mansfield was greatly inspired by her experience at the exhibition and unified the new philosophy of Post-Impressionism with her writing as well. However, Mansfield’s and Woolf’s relationships with Fry differed, reflecting how they individually incorporated Fry’s theory within their work.

Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield met in February, 1917, a month after Virginia and Leonard Woolf established the Hogarth Press. They began as acquaintances and fostered a relationship as colleagues since Woolf was interested in publishing Mansfield’s work. It was after Mansfield’s publication of “Prelude” in July of 1918, that Woolf and Mansfield became regularly acquainted. Woolf asked her sister if she wanted a copy of “Prelude,” requesting, “Tell me what you think of it, and should you say that you like it as much as Kew Gardens, I shant

think less highly of you; but my jealousy, I repeat, is only a film on the surface beneath which is nothing but pure generosity” (Nicolson 388). Woolf and Mansfield’s friendship was “intimate but guarded, mutually inspiring but competitive” (Lee 381). Woolf admired Mansfield’s work and sought the acknowledgement of Mansfield’s talents from the other Bloomsburies. Mansfield, a middle-class immigrant from New Zealand, did not fit into the Bloomsbury group, and she knew it. Woolf saw Mansfield as “decidedly an interesting creature... very amusing and sufficiently mysterious” (Nicolson 383). Despite their difference in social status and class, they often discussed their passion for writing, and they admired one another in that they actually “cared” about writing in comparison to their colleagues (Nicolson 388). Mansfield wrote to Woolf in a letter disclosing, “You are the only woman with whom I long to talk work” (Nicolson 392). Woolf and Mansfield were never reluctant to communicate their genuine thoughts of criticism and praise towards one another’s work. Woolf wrote to Violet Dickinson claiming that “Prelude” was “the best thing she has done yet” (Nicolson 248). However, Woolf’s response to Mansfield’s “Bliss” was rather contrary to her reaction to “Prelude.” Woolf claimed that “Bliss” was “so hard, & so shallow, & so sentimental” (Nicolson 388). Kaplan suggests, “Woolf frequently expressed discomfort over Mansfield’s past, at what she took as intimations of the younger woman’s promiscuity. Mansfield’s sexual impulsivity might have insinuated itself disturbingly into Woolf’s consciousness. It seems that Mansfield’s New Zealand upbringing had given her more physical freedom than Woolf’s” (Kaplan 149). However, the two women similarly aimed to convey their individual experiences, sharing social restrictions and gender inequality.

While Woolf and Mansfield demonstrate different upbringings and status, they connected through their shared experience as women writing in a male-dominated atmosphere. Angela

Smith evinces, “between Woolf and Mansfield, [there was] a connection premised on their shared artistic goals and fostered via the conversation they both prized so highly about their work as innovative women writers” (Smith 137). Their discussions and time spent with one another relieved the two women writers of patriarchal restraint. They were able to reflect on their work, which established an artistic and individualistic female voice in their narratives.

Although Mansfield communicates in her letters her negative perceptions about the Bloomsburies, she claims a different opinion about Woolf. In a letter to Dorothy Brett, Mansfield writes, “She's the only one of them that I shall ever see but she does take the writing business seriously and she is honest about it and thrilled by it. One cant ask more” (O’Sullivan, *TCLKM*, 2: 169). Mansfield became a major influence on Woolf, and Woolf felt that Mansfield was the only person with whom she could consult about her work. Anthony Alpers confirms, “the evidence is very strong that Katherine Mansfield in some way helped Virginia Woolf to break out of the mould in which she had been working hitherto” (Alpers 251–2). Woolf found Mansfield to be a brilliant writer, and Woolf intended to be sincere, in her reviews, just as Mansfield was sincere while criticizing Woolf’s work. In 1920, when Mansfield published her book, *Bliss and Other Stories*, Woolf thought Mansfield’s writing enjoyable and praiseworthy once again after her first reaction towards “Bliss,” expressing her distaste for the short story. Woolf sent Mansfield an admiring letter, claiming, “I wish you were here to enjoy your triumph—still more that we might talk about your book—For what’s the use of telling you how glad and indeed proud I am?” (Nicolson 449). Her admiration, however, was not one-sided. Mansfield reciprocated Woolf’s appreciation.

Mansfield read and reviewed much of Woolf’s writing, where she praised her talents while also suggesting possibilities for improvement. Mansfield wrote to Woolf in response to

reading her recently published “Kew Gardens,” which she refers to as Woolf’s “Flower Bed”: “Yes, your Flower Bed is very good. There’s a still, quivering, changing light over it all and a sense of those couples dissolving in the bright air which fascinates me” (O’Sullivan, *TCLKM*, 2: 327). She later wrote again to Woolf referring to “Kew Gardens,” “I immediately re-read your story; its quality is exquisite. I have a queer feeling about the conversations. I don’t feel that I understand in the least what is being said — any more than the snail did — or the flowers” (O’Sullivan, *TCLKM*, 2: 318). As Mansfield demonstrates her appreciation for Woolf’s story, she follows with her criticism of specific areas where Woolf could potentially improve. Smith confirms, “Mansfield’s talk, her willingness to share ideas, and her encouragement of Woolf seem to confirm this sense of affinity as well as acting, at this crucial point in Woolf’s career, as a gift-sphere in which Woolf could test her newly emerging experiments with form” (Smith 137). In a letter to Ottoline Morrell, who introduced the two women, Mansfield writes,

I understand exactly what you say about Virginia—beautiful brilliant creature that she is and suddenly at the last moment, turning into a bird & flying up to a topmost bough and continuing the conversation from there... She delights in beauty as I imagine a bird does. (O’Sullivan, *TCLKM*, 2: 333-34)

While they faced their differences personally, the women maintained a close friendship and built a female community for themselves to thrive as writers in a patriarchal society.

While Woolf maintained a close relationship with Fry, Mansfield did not similarly admire him. Woolf, Mansfield, and Fry’s letters suggest there was evident hostility between Mansfield and Fry. Mansfield was considered an outsider to the Bloomsburies, and felt much of the group, including Fry, were “gossip-mongers” (O’Sullivan, *TCLKM*, 2: 336). She discloses her thoughts on Fry in a letter to Ottoline Morrell: “I want to see the French pictures— I can’t

bear Roger's art criticism: this patting on the head & chucking under the chin is so tiresome” (O'Sullivan, *TCLKM*, 2: 351). Fry's and Mansfield's perspectives on the theory of aesthetic emotions were rather diverse considering Fry came from an elitist family with a talent for criticism, and Mansfield was the “little colonial” with a talent for art and a conscious awareness of the class issues that set her apart from the Bloomsburies (Alpers 21). Gillies confirms, “Her way of seeing and being in the world—and how she represents them in her fiction—drew attention to the act of perception, and it also helped her to devise a markedly new form of fiction and an aesthetics that were different from both the British ‘norm’ of the day and Bloomsbury’s” (Gillies 157). Mansfield establishes a difference in her approach to the aesthetic emotion, considering her diverse past and social status in comparison to the Bloomsbury group. Gillies describes the nature and emphasis of Mansfield's approach to the aesthetic emotion in comparison to Fry's, suggesting that Mansfield presents the “emotions and personal complications” of the everyday world. She naturally saw “the boldness of color, the importance of line and form, the interplay of light and shade, and the dynamism of nature that comes to be associated with modern art,” and her stories display that vision (Gillies 157). In contrast with Mansfield, Fry's perspective “shaped as it was from his own unique perceptual baseline—emphasizes the interplay of forms, colors, lines, and dynamism” (Gillies 157). Fry's vision demonstrates the imaginative life over the everyday world. Their difference in perspective led to the divergence in their aesthetic approaches, and Fry expressed dissatisfaction with Mansfield's work. He wrote to Woolf claiming, “No, I don't think I shall ever be able to read Katherine Mansfield” (*LRF* 486). Mansfield was rather proud of her individuality, and considering her judgment of Fry's character, she was unconcerned with his opinion.

Woolf, playing the liaison between her two friends, admired much of Mansfield's work and continued to suggest that Fry should acknowledge her talent and artistic representation. Fry countered Woolf's praise and envy of Mansfield because he did not see Mansfield in the same light as Woolf in terms of writing and friendship. Woolf wrote to Roger Fry, "I'm coming up tomorrow to say goodbye to Katherine Murry. She goes away for 2 years. Have you at all come round to her stories? I suppose I'm too jealous to wish you to, yet I'm sure they have merit all the same. It's awful to be afflicted with jealousy. I think the only thing is to confess it" (Nicolson 438). Woolf admits to her envy, however, she hopes that he would accept Mansfield and her individuality. Fry was transparent with expressing his feelings regarding Mansfield and disapproved of Woolf's jealousy towards Mansfield's work. Fry responded to Woolf, "But really I wish you had more cause for jealousy; I don't think you have any because there's hardly anyone else who seems to me to have any idea of what the essential texture of pros should be" (*LRF* 486). While Fry and Mansfield shared similar interests in art, writing, and criticism, their differences in social status, past, and culture prevented their friendship. Mansfield felt similarly distanced from many Bloomsbury members; however, she fostered intimate relationships with a few, including Virginia Woolf.

Mansfield and Woolf both focus on the human psyche and women's roles under patriarchal restraint in their writing, while also advocating an ideal union between genders within the single mind, which would allow the greatest form of expression to the human soul. Mansfield and Woolf reveal the "innate capacities" of human nature through the androgynous mind, if it can be achieved, unrestricted by social and cultural constructions and formalities. Both authors use the aesthetic theory of Post-Impressionism in literary form to deliver a glimpse of longing

within their characters' unconscious minds. The aesthetic imagery evokes an emotional response, which, to both of these writers, is ideally an androgynous one. Fry articulates,

I mean this, that since the imaginative life comes in the course of time to represent more or less what mankind feels to be the completest expression of its own nature, the freest use of its innate capacities, the actual life may be explained and justified by its approximate here and there, however partially and inadequately, to that freer and fuller life. (*An Essay in Aesthetics* 22)

The "innate capacities" that society often rejects because of social constructions of gender, prevent the psyche from expressing "its own nature" (Fry, *EIA*, 22). Mansfield and Woolf apply the aesthetic emotion within their writing for the public to experience "actual life," where it is "explained and justified" to a "freer and fuller life" (Fry, *EIA*, 22). Actual life becomes clear in the timeless moment, where the external conditions of culture and society are absent, allowing the reader to observe reality from a truer and genuine perspective.

Woolf's interest in the human mind and the potential of uniting the two sides of gender was expressed most clearly in *A Room of One's Own*. She describes the narrator's discovery of the androgynous mind, where it flourishes to employ its innate capacities:

Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought. But it would be well to test what one meant by man-womanly, and conversely by woman-manly, by pausing and looking at a book or two. (*A Room of One's Own* 99)

Either gender lacks in some form or another by strictly abiding by its socialized gender.

However, to unify both sides of the masculine and feminine, Woolf suggests, “the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties” (99). Mansfield was sexually androgynous herself considering she was a bisexual. Janet Sydney Kaplan describes “Mansfield's non-conformist sexuality” as, “she was suspicious of the idea of an essential self or sexual nature because it is 'indicative of underlying truth' about her real self” (212). Mansfield’s contemplation regarding a “real self” influenced the depiction of the characters in her stories. Additionally, Mansfield’s opinion regarding gender expression, which differs from sexuality, promotes individuality and equality. In her journal, Mansfield claims,

We are firmly held with the self-fashioned chains of slavery. Yes, now I see that they are self-fashioned, and must be removed...To weave the intricate tapestry of one’s own life, it is well to take a thread from many harmonious skeins—and to realise that there must be harmony. Not necessary to grow the sheep, comb the wool, colour and brand it—but joyfully take all that is ready, and with that saved time, go a great way further.

Independence, resolve, firm purpose, and the gift of discrimination, mental clearness—here are the inevitables. Again, Will—the realization that Art is self-development. The knowledge that genius is dormant in every soul—that that very individuality which is at the root of our being is what matters so poignantly (Mansfield, *Journal*, 36-37).

Mansfield’s female characters are presented with the external conditions that restrain them; however, they reveal their desire for individuality. Their masculine attributes in conjunction with their femininity “challenge social and political constraints” (Wheeler 133). Mansfield establishes a human experience in her fiction that reaches beyond traditional social boundaries and rejects gender categorization to express androgyny. Smith confirms that, similarly to Woolf,

Mansfield's writing "is preoccupied by artistic representations of lived experience, but also by the search for forms which evoke an aesthetic emotion in the viewer, not a preconditioned response to familiar stereotypes" (Smith 147). With the influence of Cezanne's composition for still lifes, for instance, "putting a coin under a jug to place it at a tiny angle, destabilizing the potential tranquility of the composition," Mansfield and Woolf's established a "form and narrative voice that allowed the reader to experience the destabilizing of the symbolic order, creating not imitating the life of the human consciousness" (Smith 151).

Kathleen Wheeler discusses Mansfield's artistic representation of the individual's experience, exploring human psychology in relation to social boundaries. In the chapter, "Katherine Mansfield," in *'Modernist' Women Writers and Narrative Art*, Kathleen Wheeler analyzes Mansfield's short story, "Bliss," and the illustrations of Post-Impressionistic elements. She analyzes the particular moments where fruit and flowers evoke an aesthetic emotion in Bertha. She continues by claiming that Mansfield achieves the artistic representation of the individual's experience by "seeking their emphasis, their relative unity, within the consciousness of a character, thus providing a powerful focus for the externalities of social relations" (126). Whereas Wheeler analyzes the sexual and social struggles that restrain individuals, in the chapter, "Impersonation / Impersonality," Sydney Janet Kaplan discusses the constructions of gender and sexuality that govern the social and cultural realm of Mansfield's characters, who individually develop through the exploration of their unconscious minds. Kaplan discusses Mansfield's initial stage of duplicity, which she was disturbed by at first but later experienced her duplicity as an "adolescent awakening" (170). Kaplan asserts, "Mansfield's own bisexuality provided the impetus for newer, more elastic definitions of self" and defies sexual repression by utilizing it for artistic expression. She broke out of her dualism and embraced "trying on 'all

sorts of lives,” where she asserts herself through “impersonation” (170). Kaplan references Foucault in “the discourse on modern sexual repression” to suggest that Mansfield’s impersonation provided her with “a sense of freedom” (173). Mansfield’s sexual freedom, Kaplan claims, establishes a belief in “a superiority based on the power of the artist to live more fully and speak about the experiences ordinary people fear to pursue” (173). Conceding the restrictions on sexual freedom, Pamela Dunbar’s “What does Bertha Want?: A Re-reading of Katherine Mansfield’s ‘Bliss’” examines the power of repressed impulses concerning sexual desire and the consequence of arrested development. Dunbar asserts that desire pursues satisfaction, however, “desire exists in close association with fear” (133). Dunbar articulates that “Bertha’s anxieties, and the repressions which they have given rise to, are not envisaged by Mansfield—nor indeed by Bertha herself—as a purely private malaise,” but rather, “they have their being within a social context—that of the arty metropolitan upper middle class” (Dunbar 135). Bertha is a “maladjusted figure,” which Dunbar asserts as a “representative of her times, of her sex, and of humanity in general (138).

Angela Smith discusses anxieties of repressed desire and free expression in her analysis of Mansfield’s “Prelude” and Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, in her book, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*. Smith focuses the resemblance between the structures of the two works, where the “preoccupation with liminality, being on the edge, is reflected in the idiosyncrasy of the form” (94). Smith articulates “Prelude” and *To the Lighthouse* “pivot on a series of thresholds and rites of passage” (94). From both stories, Smith analyzes the women of each generation either embracing or struggling with their gender identities and mothers transmitting gender roles to their children. The mothers’ individual relationship with their domestic role influences the following generation’s clarity or confusion with gender identity,

depending on if the mother has abandoned their child “in limbo” after creating them in their own image (94). Smith points out that the painting in *To the Lighthouse* and the garden in “Prelude” each function as “a liminal space,” where the women “see differently” than they do “in a male-dominated daytime world” and confronted with “the power of the phallus” (98-99).

Smith’s argument acknowledges the influence of a male-dominated atmosphere, illustrating the individual’s experience while discovering her gender identity in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*; however, in “*To the Lighthouse*: purple triangle and green shawl,” Jane Goldman asserts that Woolf includes specific colors that imply “painterly analogies,” depicting the overarching shadows of feminine oppression and vibrant colors of “feminist revelation” (168). Goldman carefully examines the “chiaroscuro of the Ramsays” and “the feminist prismatic” of Lily Briscoe and her painting. With Roger Fry’s aesthetic theory and Clive Bell’s “Significant form,” Woolf was influenced by the artistic representation during Fry’s first exhibition, as well as the political events that took place during the suffrage movement. Goldman articulates that Lily dipping “her brush into *green* paint,” implies her “sense of triumph over the patriarchal match-making aspirations of Mrs. Ramsay,” while “the purple triangle and Mrs. Ramsay’s green shawl” highlights the significance of the suffrage movement (180). While Goldman explores the feminist model, suggesting Woolf’s use of Post-Impressionist aesthetics aid the aesthetics of the women’s suffrage movement, Jane Fisher suggests, in “‘Silent as the Grave’: Painting, Narrative, and the Reader,” that Lily Briscoe’s painting achieves the Post-Impressionist technique, which “provides the occasion for the literal re-remembering of Mrs. Ramsay in Lily’s memory” (Fisher 105). She discusses Lily’s painting as a medium for expression and “apparently triumphs over words” (Fisher 105). However, Jonathan Quick discusses the foremost influence of Post-Impressionism on Woolf’s “Kew Gardens” and *To the Lighthouse* in “Virginia Woolf, Roger

Fry, and Post-Impressionism.” In order to achieve the short story’s unity, Quick suggests, Woolf constructed “this sort of compositional association of ideas through images, rather than any narrative interest or continuity” (557). In developing *To the Lighthouse*, Quick reveals that “the emphasis on expressive form and ‘relations’ which had been the main themes of Bell and then Fry helped to show her the way” for creating an appropriate structure for the novel (566).

In “Kew Gardens” and *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf applies Fry’s and Bell’s theories to establish various moments suspended in time to convey the artistic representation of the lived experience for women. Similar to the still life, “Woolf’s ‘scene making’ presents tableaux vivants, a still capturing of life in arrested movement” (Banfield 496). In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf presents Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay individually experiencing transcendence, “consumed in the moment, with the timelessness of logical form” (Banfield 496). Lily Briscoe, an artist, anguished with uncertainty concerning her career as a painter and role in society, projects her hardship through the aesthetics of her painting. Lily, although values her relationship with Mrs. Ramsay, tries to understand Mrs. Ramsay in terms of the generation before her. She criticizes the conventions of gender roles and particularly the restrictions of the domestic role, considering Lily watches Mrs. Ramsay submit to Mr. Ramsay’s authority and dominance.

Mrs. Ramsay’s timeless moment demonstrates the consciousness of the domestic role while also observing the male gaze. During the dinner party, hosted by Mrs. Ramsay, Rose arranges “in the middle a yellow and purple dish of fruit” (*TTL* 97). The arrangement of fruit evokes an emotional response within Mrs. Ramsay, similar to the fruit featured in Cezanne and Van Gogh’s still life paintings. In the stream of her consciousness, Mrs. Ramsay observes,

What had she done with it, Mrs. Ramsay wondered, for Rose's arrangement of the grapes and pears, of the horny pink-lined shell, of the bananas, made her think of a trophy

fetched from the bottom of the sea, of Neptune's banquet, of the bunch that hangs with vine leaves over the shoulder of Bacchus. (*TTL* 97)

The arrangement's colors and shapes stimulate Mrs. Ramsay and to her, the fruit resembles the same desirability as Neptune's banquet. The moment illustrates the arrangement of the fruit provoking an aesthetic emotion in Mrs. Ramsay, which Fry suggests, "the forms themselves generate in us emotional states" (Fry, *EIA*, 37). However, previously to the transcended moment, Mrs. Ramsay's emotional state is cheering, considering she is entertaining guests with a dinner party. She demonstrates contentment with her domestic role, and the sight of the fruit bowl explicates her existing emotions. The manifestation of the fruit arrangement "thus brought up suddenly into the light it seemed possessed of great size and depth, was like a world in which one could take one's staff and climb hills, she [Mrs. Ramsay] thought, and go down into valleys, and to her pleasure" (*TTL* 97). Her emotional response expounds an abundance of inspiration and excitement. Mrs. Ramsay's individual experience, as a woman, characterizes a traditional and domestic role in the novel. Mrs. Ramsay thrives in her domestic duties, tending to her guests and hosting a dinner party. Yet, the moment of her exhilaration suggests potential beyond her domestic role. She finds herself motivated with great potential that exceed her limitations; however, she only applies them to the domestic space as expected.

Mrs. Ramsay's moment of rapture is then interrupted with the sight of Augustus's hunger, "she saw that Augustus too feasted his eyes on the same plate of fruit, plunged in, broke off a bloom there, a tassel here, and returned, after feasting, to his hive. That was his way of looking, different from hers. But looking together united them" (*TTL* 97). The moment depicts the difference between men and women's perception and function within society. Mrs. Ramsay and Augustus's responses to the fruit arrangement allude to the diversity of their experiences.

Mrs. Ramsay's gaze conjures appreciation and astonishment permitting it to remain assembled, where Augustus enacts his hunger and desire to possess and dismantle the fruit arrangement. Their behavior characterizes much of their gender's assigned role and performs the expected traditional attitudes of men and women. However, their united gaze brings them together. Mrs. Ramsay is aware of Augustus's gaze, and she finds contentment in their unity rather than affliction with his actions. Mrs. Ramsay allows and submits to masculine behavior, abiding by her social role within the domestic atmosphere. Yet, this encounter stages the complications with the inequality of genders, where traditionally, women are obligated to stand by masculine behavior, accept men as their superior, and endure the dismantling of their admired treasures. Mrs. Ramsay is denied the ability to possess her treasures. She allows Augustus to take possession of the fruit and fulfill his urge, while she stands back and observes. If Mrs. Ramsay felt she was granted the agency to possess the object of desire for herself, which her gaze insinuates this desire, then she would perform outside of the feminine, a masculine demeanor similar to Augustus. Her truest nature urges to possess her desires, but acting on that desire would appear untraditional for the social standard. Mrs. Ramsay demonstrates a longing to act in a truer form of expression but restricts herself from doing so and instead, tolerates the entitlement and assertive behavior that is traditionally expected from a man. Her experience as a woman demonstrates how the individual differs in male-domineering space, considering Lily Briscoe pursues a dissimilar role as a woman than Mrs. Ramsay.

Lily portrays a masculine female who strives for autonomy. Her transcendence differs from Mrs. Ramsay's, demonstrating the difference in response and aesthetic emotion, pertaining to their knowledge. Coming from a generation with Victorian sentiments, Mrs. Ramsay is obedient to cultural and social tradition, but her mind demonstrates behavior that abides by a

submissive feminine role. Lily Briscoe, however, expresses annoyance and intolerance of men's entitlement and authoritative behavior. She embodies the evolution of the woman's role and the sensations of the modernist era. While observing Lily, Mrs. Ramsay acknowledges, "She would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; she was an independent little creature" (*TTL* 17). Lily's untraditional feminine demeanor is apparent in a social space, and Lily knows this about herself, insisting, "she need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation. She was saved from that dilution" (*TTL* 102). Lily depicts an androgynous mind, where the thought of performing a domestic role would be degrading for her. Woolf conjures the timeless moments that feature Lily with fruits and flowers but more prominently, paired with her painting.

Lily depicts a modern woman in a transitioning culture who struggles to express herself in a male-dominated atmosphere. Lily loathes the remarks of Charles Tansley, who claims "women can't paint, can't write" (*TTL* 159). Her frustration with patriarchal culture hinders the process of her artistic representation and uncertainty with her role in society: "Always (it was in her nature, or in her sex, she did not know which) before she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting she had a few moments of nakedness" (*TTL* 215). Her difference in gender expression exposes her lack of conformity within society, giving rise to her anxieties. The influence of patriarchal culture causes her to feel "like an unborn soul, a soul reft of body, hesitating on some windy pinnacle and exposed without protection to all the blasts of doubt" (*TTL* 215).

However, Lily comes to a realization through transcendence in the final passage while finally completing her painting. Her painting "with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across" characterizes a Post-Impressionist style. The vibrant colors and brush strokes that

create an abstract form was “its attempt at something” (*TTL* 208). Lily’s “attempt” intends to display her artistic representation and freest form of expression, which has been developed “with the teaching of experience and the growth of character” (Fry, *EIA*, 24). Lily’s androgyny has allowed her to discover a true sense of herself and “reflects the highest aspirations and the deepest aversions of which human nature is capable” (Fry, *EIA*, 24). As Lily stands before her picture, she observes,

It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (*TTL* 208)

Lily’s fatigue demonstrates her journey working up to the completion of her painting at the end of the novel. Her fatigue represents her exertions as a woman living in a patriarchal society, refusing to abide by a traditional domestic role that is pushed on her. It also signifies Lily’s battle with her artistic potential after she is told that women cannot paint, acknowledging that it would be hung in an attic and destroyed. Lily’s blurred vision articulates her uncertainty and emotional burden. Yet, the “sudden intensity” reveals Lily experiencing an aesthetic emotion while processing the site of her finished painting. She “saw it clear for a second” as though her vision had been distorted for the majority of the time or as Woolf explains as “not fully conscious” (129). Lily’s clarity depicts “a moment of being” as Woolf translates as an impressionable moment where the mind is fully aware (129). Additionally, Lily’s clarity insinuates Fry’s intention for the aesthetic emotion, where it grants “freedom from necessary external conditions” (Fry, *EIA*, 24). She contemplates earlier in the novel, “For how could one express in words these

emotions of the body? express that emptiness there?" (*TTL* 178). Lily's painting has produced an emotional response that has allowed her to look at reality with clear sight that extinguishes the external conditions of patriarchal constructs and allows for her androgynous expression. Lily painting becomes the aesthetic symbol that brings the novel together and embodies the individual experience, "combining what Mrs. Ramsay has thought of as definitively gendered differences" (Smith 109).

In the short story, "Kew Gardens," the entire narrative functions as a suspended moment in time with integrated moments of character dialogue, some of which demonstrate the psychological limitations of gender binaries. The story features an abundance of floral images set within the Kew Gardens of London, vividly describing the flowers' colors, shapes, and sizes as if Woolf were painting the image with her prose. Woolf intentionally creates the short story with the garden as its focal point, similar to a painting "reminiscent of Matisse and Seurat in its use of unmixed colors and the highly stylized subject of the park promenade" (Quick 557). The narrative transitions from pictorial elements of flowers to observing characters and back again. Meditating on the flowers surrounding them, admiring their beauty, Woolf emphasizes the setting's importance and relays an artistic representation of experience. As Quick confirms,

the pictorial elements of 'Kew Gardens' produce an ensemble of spatial and mental volumes quite unlike a scene perceived by 'ordinary sight' [...] It is this sort of compositional association of ideas through images, rather than any narrative interest or continuity, by which the unity of 'Kew Gardens' is constructed. (Quick 557)

Each suspending moment relays an aesthetic that evokes an emotional response. Rather than focusing on main characters, Woolf transitions between multiple perspectives of strangers to demonstrate the diversity of the individual experience within society ranging in gender, age, and

class. The focus on the garden conjures a larger narration using ideas and images to communicate a unity of the characters that establishes the cultural and social context, as well as the humankind's psyche. Each character encountered in the story appears to be preoccupied, dwelling within their thoughts. Woolf illustrates the characters in "moment[s] of being," which projects their desires and a longing that they lack in real life. Banfield defines the moment, with reference to Woolf's "A Sketch of the Past," as "a kind of Proustian involuntary memory, [...] the 'extreme distinctness' of childhood vision guarantees its retention, its engraved permanence: 'I still see the air-balls, blue and purple.' So does the fact that 'something happened so violently that I have remembered it all my life'" (Banfield 491).

The first people the narrative observes walking in the garden are a married couple, Eleanor and Simon: "The man was about six inches in front of the woman, strolling carelessly, while she bore on with greater purpose, only turning her head now and then to see that the children were not too far behind" ("Kew Gardens" 46). The man, Simon, walking in front of Eleanor indicates his superiority and lack of interest in his wife, depicting the literal and emotional distance in their marriage. As she walks behind her husband, she gazes at the flowers, but constantly interrupts herself by "turning her head now and then" to check on her children. Eleanor's domestic obligation to "see that the children were not too far behind" expresses the social expectations of mothers as caretakers (46). However, for the strolling characters, the garden represents an escape from their external conditions, where they can reunite with their free thoughts in the tranquility of nature, an atmosphere that conjures significant memories of past happiness. Woolf demonstrates that the imagery naturally provokes viewers to visit the depths of their consciousness; yet, the social and cultural influences in their lives are inescapable and remain with them unconditionally. Eleanor expresses, "Doesn't one always think of the past, in a

garden with men and women lying under the trees? Aren't they one's past, all that remains of it, those men and women, those ghosts lying under the trees... one's happiness, one's reality?" (47). Such memories are depicted as "moments of being," as articulated in Woolf's essay, "A Sketch of the Past." Woolf reveals, "one's life is not confined to one's body and what one says and does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions" ("A Sketch of the Past" 73). The garden embodies a space of liberation from the "background rods or conceptions" of the external world (73), which allows characters to engage with past memories that exert their "happiness" and "reality" ("Kew Gardens" 47). Their memory projects their truest desires, insinuating the absence of happiness in their current lives.

Eleanor expresses a longing for simplicity similar to a child's life, which contrasts with her role as a mother. Tending to her children, while simultaneously attempting to keep up with her husband who purposely walks in front of her, quite literally positions Eleanor in the middle juggling her obligations. She must constantly interrupt her gaze on the flowers and is unable to explore the garden independently. Eleanor shares that for her, "one's happiness, one's reality," was a kiss:

Imagine six little girls sitting before their easels twenty years ago, down by the side of a lake, painting the water-lilies, the first red water-lilies I'd ever seen. And suddenly a kiss, there on the back of my neck. And my hand shook all the afternoon so that I couldn't paint. I took out my watch and marked the hour when I would allow myself to think of the kiss for five minutes only—it was so precious—the kiss of an old grey-haired woman with a wart on her nose, the mother of all my kisses all my life. (48)

Eleanor's timeless moment, provoked by her gaze on the flowers, presents a "precious" memory of as a careless child without obligation and instead freely painting. The "kiss" on the back of her

neck is the most impressionable for her as it caused her hand to shake “all the afternoon” and was unable to continue painting. The “old grey-haired woman,” who was “the mother of all my kisses all of my life,” presents a significant figure, one who enacts a maternal role to Eleanor (48). However, “the mother” of her kisses may as well imply a pre-oedipal moment for Eleanor communicating an early stage of sexual desire towards women. This would further suggest that Eleanor embodies an androgynous mind. In her childhood memory, she describes yet another meditation of memory from the consciousness of her childhood self, where she waits five minutes before thinking about her kiss again. The memory delivers her the “happiness” and “reality” she suggests are evoked “in a garden” while “lying under the trees” (47). Eleanor’s memory, having taken place twenty years ago, still resides in her consciousness with vivid detail as if she relived that timeless moment once again. The garden functions as an atmosphere, with recurring Post-Impressionistic elements, for individuals to distance themselves from the restrictions of society and explore their inner desires.

Mansfield’s “Bliss” also establishes the social and cultural influence in the individual’s experience. She incorporates Post-Impressionist elements that evoke an aesthetic emotion, revealing the repressed desires that lie within her character’s consciousness. Mansfield delivers her narrative using free indirect discourse, which employs the omniscient narrator to provide an external perspective with the glimpse of her character’s consciousness. The omniscient narrator follows Bertha Young, a young housewife, through her day while exalting the luxuries of her upper middle-class life. Bertha prepares for her dinner guests, touching up fruit display on her dining room table: “There were tangerines and apples stained with strawberry pink. Some yellow pears, smooth as silk, some white grapes covered with a silver bloom and a big cluster of purple ones. These last she had bought to tone in with the new dining-room carpet” (“Bliss” 146).

Bertha takes control over her possessions, independently, to demonstrate her ability to construct them in her way. As she arranges the fruit bowl on the dining room table, Wheeler asserts, the moment depicts “a metaphor of artistic creation and composition, is itself a still-life composition in language” (130). She gazes at her arrangement, which evokes a timeless moment for Bertha: “When she had finished with them and had made two pyramids of these bright round shapes, she stood away from the table to get the effect—and it really was most curious. For the dark table seemed to melt into the dusky light and the glass dish and the blue bowl to float in the air” (“Bliss” 146). She puts together the fruit bowl in her image, and steps back in the dark and cold room, indicative of societal space and society, and admiring at her creation in awe, imagining the bowl floating in the air. Her gaze appears to temporarily, stop time and produces an emotional response in Bertha: “This, of course in her present mood, was so incredibly beautiful...She began to laugh” (“Bliss” 146). Bertha is overjoyed with the image of fruits stacked in perfect pyramids that she has created, similarly resembling Mrs. Ramsay’s gaze at the fruit arrangement in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*. A moment suspended in time, where the character’s thoughts and emotions are provoked by the Post-Impressionist image, more particularly an arrangement of fruit similar to those of Cezanne’s paintings.

Angela Smith confirms that Mansfield’s use of fruit in “Bliss” resembles the Post-Impressionist aesthetic and signifies a mood or movement. She asserts, “These fruits are equivalent of Cezanne’s apples and oranges that are about to topple; their sensuous colour and disembodied intensity convey a sense that something is about to happen to the woman creating a picture by making a composition of the fruit” (Smith 152-153). Mansfield purposely incorporates illustrations of fruit to employ the still life painting and communicate Bertha’s aesthetic emotion. The illustration of fruit stopped in a moment just as they “are about to topple” conveys an

aesthetic response in the viewer and indicates the proceeding events with Pearl Fulton. Bertha's intensity towards the proceeding moments suggests an anticipated unification of her masculine and feminine self, where she hopes to engage with her sexual androgyny. Her life, as an upper-middle-class woman, socially restricts her truest desires and expressions that derive from her innate capacities. And while Bertha recognizes her bliss, she perceived it as an irregular feeling, too overly joyed, and tries to correct herself by keeping intact with the performance of her social role: "'No, no. I'm hysterical.' And she seized her bag and coat and ran upstairs to the nursery" ("Bliss" 146). She calls herself "hysterical" to disregard her excitement as if it was taboo. While she attempts to return to more traditionally appropriate behavior, she is unable to contain herself. Bertha uses the fiddle metaphor to illustrate the absurdity of society's normalities and construction. She first uses it to describe herself: "Oh, is there no way you can express it without being 'drunk and disorderly'? How idiotic civilization is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?" (Mansfield 145). Her constant anxiety to filter her emotions reveals her objection to social constructions and a process of discovering her true self: "Even if the women as individuals fall into inauthenticity again, their experiences represent a stage in the process of individuation of a female self" (Kubasiewicz 61). In her social atmosphere, she cannot act on her ambiguous behavior and instead, returns to her expected domestic self. Bertha hesitates to establish her sexual androgyny "without offending against 'civilization'" (Dunbar 130).

However, Mansfield presents yet another timeless moment of Bertha standing beside Pearl as they gaze at her pear tree. Without speaking, they were "understanding each other perfectly, creatures of another world, and wondering what they were to do in this one with all this blissful treasure that burned in their bosoms" ("Bliss" 153). The uncertainty of what to do

with the “blissful treasure” indicates Bertha’s hesitation to act freely in a society that rejects female behavior outside of the domestic space. The moment allows Bertha to observe reality clearly, where she engages with and becomes aware of her innate capacity. The pear tree illustrates the passion and desire burning between them in the transcendent moment; “In its serenity and stillness, invoked throughout, in its perfection, its silverness, it is suggestive of a realm of stillness and eternity” (Wheeler 129). The “realm of stillness and eternity” alludes the timeless moment resembling Virginia Woolf’s “moment of being,” where the “imaginative moments [are] charged with an intensity of feeling and insight distinct from more ordinary life” (129). The two women stood “side by side looking at the slender, flowering tree. Although it was so still it seemed, like the flame of a candle, to stretch up, to point, to quiver in the bright air, to grow taller and taller as they gazed” (“Bliss” 153). The growth and flowering of the tree symbolize the flourishing desire and excitement of the intimate relationship. The description of the two women together suggests that their relationship is “of another world” because it would not be acceptable in their patriarchal culture. They understand “each other perfectly” both described as “creatures” because of their masculine behavior. They do not abide by the stereotypes of their culture because of their androgyny. Dunbar asserts, “‘Bliss,’ then, is preoccupied with Katherine Mansfield’s vision of the complex, and distinctive, nature of female desire, and the way in which this has been conditioned by the prevailing cultural context” (Dunbar 138). The aesthetic emotion relieves viewers of their external conditions and presents a representation of the human psyche that suggests an androgynous mind. Despite the biological sex of Mansfield’s characters, in regards to Bertha, the female demonstrates masculine traits and tendencies alongside feminine attributes. Mansfield’s artistic representation of the lived

experience allows for the comprehension of an androgynous person; one that steps outside of the familiar stereotypes of her culture.

The pear tree embodies Bertha's true, androgynous self: "And she seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life" ("Bliss" 148). The tree fully bloomed suggests that her homosexuality has allowed her to develop a real sense of herself. The aesthetics resemble Clive Bell's "Significant form, where Bertha discovers "a sense of ultimate reality" while gazing at the pear tree (Kaplan 183). Bertha depicts a masculine and feminine sense of herself in unison within her moment of transcendence. Anderson explains,

The flowering pear tree is a composite symbol representing in its tallness Bertha's homosexual aspirations and in its full, rich blossoms, her desire to be sexually used...the open flowers image her female sexual self, but the meaning and object of the tree's tall assertiveness, the "masculine" part of her sexual feelings, eludes her conscious recognition. (400)

The assertiveness of the pear tree becomes a mirror to observe herself in an authentic state. Her unconscious feelings contradict her feminine role, and Bertha ignores the indications of her homosexual and "assertive" feelings to avoid any tribulation within her social and familial life. The "masculine part of her sexual feelings," as mentioned previously by Anderson, threatens the domestic as well as male space. Bertha may as well be a threat to her husband, Harry, considering he has intentions with Pearl. Yet, Harry becomes competition for Bertha once she discovers that Pearl and Harry have a secret and intimate relationship of their own. Although Bertha's consciousness may perceive Pearl and Harry's encounter with jealousy over Harry, unconsciously, where Bertha's true feelings reside, she harbors jealousy over Pearl.

Similar to “Bliss,” Mansfield’s “Prelude” emphasizes individuality and self-realization. Mansfield presents two generations of women, who share a similar longing that surfaces to their conscious minds through timeless moments while gazing at flowers. The Victorian wife, Linda, performs as expected by her husband, Stanley, providing him with emotional support and sexual satisfaction while producing children and maintaining a domestic atmosphere. Linda feels obligated to tend to her domestic role and the unborn child she carries that she claims, “Stanley made,” excluding herself from the process and “implying both resignation and abjected resentment” (Smith 98). She suppresses her melancholy in order to keep herself, children, and her mother and sister financially supported by Stanley. However, Linda finds liberation from her domestic obligations and marriage through transcendence, which is evoked by her time spent in the garden. Aroused by gazing at the plants, and flowers, Linda experiences a particularly euphoric feeling from the aloe plant, allowing her oppressed desires to ascend. Mansfield illustrates the aloe with radiance: “the high grassy bank on which the aloe rested rose up like a wave, and the aloe seemed to ride upon it like a ship with the oars lifted. Bright moonlight hung upon the lifted oars like water, and on the green wave glittered the dew” (“Prelude” 110). The imagery illuminates the shapes and motion of the aloe as it transforms into a “ship with the oars lifted” (110). This timeless moment reflects Linda in a heightened sense of consciousness, and she asks her mother, “Do you feel it, too [...] Don't you feel that it is coming towards us?” (110). Linda refers to “it” as a “feel[ing]” liberation coming toward her, and considering her mother has undergone a similar experience tending to the domestic role of the late 19th century, she wonders if her mother can feel it too. Linda “spoke to her mother with the special voice that women use at night to each other as though they spoke in their sleep or from some hollow cave,” which alludes

to a shared experience and depicts a space free of male dominance, allowing Linda to speak freely (110).

Linda's timeless moment of transcendence within the garden signifies the space as medium for clarity. Shortly after Linda asks her mother about the feeling, her moment of transcendence continues with her focus on the budding aloe:

She dreamed that she was caught up out of the cold water into the ship with the lifted oars and the budding mast. Now the oars fell striking quickly, quickly. They rowed far away over the top of the garden trees, the paddocks and the dark bush beyond. Ah, she heard herself cry: "Faster! Faster!" to those who were rowing. ("Prelude" 110-11)

Linda reveals a desire for escape "quickly, quickly" from her current life on the "ship with lifted oars" that transformed from the aloe plant (110), functioning as "the crossing place from one world to another" (Smith 99). Linda yearns for liberation and cries out of desperation, "Faster! Faster!" (111). Linda proceeds forward, rowing "far away over the top of the garden trees" (111). In this moment, Linda imagines herself in a "traditionally male role, taking command of a ship and escaping into exploration," her imaged voyage depicts "an alternative to the journey she has reluctantly embarked on towards childbirth" (Smith 99). She hopes that no one would follow her including Stanley, but wonders what would happen if she actual left him. When it came to Stanley's sexual appetite, Linda recalls there were "times when he was frightening—really frightening," claiming that Stanley was "too strong for her," and she "had three great lumps of children already" (111). Linda wanted to say "the most coarse and hateful things" (111). Linda counters the "hate" she experience for Stanley by considering his positive characteristics (111). She recalls, "how tender he always was after times like those, how submissive, how thoughtful. He would do anything for her; he longed to serve her (111). Her description insinuates that she

admires and appreciates Stanley the most when he is “submissive” and “thoughtful” (111). Linda desires her relationship when Stanley “serve[s] her,” characterizing Linda in an overtly dominant and authoritative role, but she despises Stanley when he enacts a dominant role, especially during their sexual encounters. The thought of her submitting to Stanley and her children provokes her desire for liberation. However, Stanley’s submissive demeanor brings her comfort in staying with her family. Linda’s ideal marriage consists of her playing the authoritative role. Her satisfaction and happiness with her husband’s obedience expresses Linda’s androgyny with regard to gender expression.

Woolf and Mansfield have accomplished the aesthetic emotion in their writing, originating from the Post-Impressionist influence of painting by Van Gogh, Cezanne, and other French painters. In introducing those painters to the British public, Fry articulates that “with the teaching of experience and the growth of character the imaginative life comes to respond to other instincts and to satisfy other desires, until, indeed, it reflects the highest aspirations and the deepest aversions of which human nature is capable” (Fry, *EIA*, 24). Although both Woolf and Mansfield were influenced differently by Roger Fry, their relationship with one another established a community of their own to express and share the individual’s experience of the twentieth century. Mansfield and Woolf depict the androgynous mind through individual experiences, which are subjected to the division of gender binaries enforced by patriarchal culture. Images of fruit, flowers, and paintings in their narratives allow the observer to be engulfed by timeless moments, alleviating her from the exterior world. Transcendence joins the spiritual mind with the physical body, allowing unconscious desires to penetrate the conscious mind. Additionally, while Mansfield and Woolf illustrate the aesthetic emotion with a focus on the female experience, they show how each sex lacks the components of the other by residing in

their confined space assigned to that gender's role, inevitably limiting their capacity to act and think freely. Each expresses the yearning for an androgynous self conveyed through timeless moments of artistic apprehension.

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