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Spaces of Being:

Finding a Sense of Place in Katherine Mansfield's "Prelude" and "Bliss"

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Abstract

This essay examines how the characters experience a sense of place in two of Katherine Mansfield's modernist short stories, "Prelude" (1918) and "Bliss" (1918). Geographers have during the past century developed and problematized the relation between space, place, and human beings. The concepts of space and place are means for us to better understand our place in the world by relating ourselves to other people as well as our surroundings. We experience a sense of place when we can find a sense of security in a physical place, in the company of another person, or by the attachment to a material object. The analysis of Mansfield's "Prelude" is conducted on an individual level in order to differentiate how the characters form a sense of place in shared spaces. It focuses on how children and adults, and men and women form a sense of place in relation to being inside or outside the home. The analysis of "Bliss" focuses primarily on one character and concerns a societal sense of place, i.e. how a sense of place can be a place in society and not just a place in something that is familiar.

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Introduction

> I've just finished my new book […] I've wandered about all sorts of places – in and out […] It is so strange to bring the dead to life again […] And then the place where it all happens. I have tried to make it as familiar to 'you' as it is to me […] And too, one tries to go deep – to speak to the secret self we all have – to acknowledge that. (*Letters* 232)[1]

A lot of emphasis is usually put on Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand origin. Like many other modernist writers, she was indeed a mobile one, and her own experience of living in various parts of the world has certainly influenced her writing. She was born in New Zealand, moved to Europe, and returned to New Zealand only to move back to Europe again. It is interesting to consider the importance of setting in Mansfield's stories in relation to her residing in multiple countries, at different ages at that. The passage above is one of many where she ruminates about the process of creating her fiction, and the places that she talks about should be read as being both imaginary and real. She acknowledges that we as readers interpret things differently, which she in her fiction realizes by portraying characters that often experience discrepancies in apprehending what surrounds and pervades them. What Mansfield calls the 'secret self' is that part of every individual that grows out of necessity to fit in different social constructs and settings. Simplified, the 'secret self' is a persona that differs from the real and true self, the latter being the private part of the self that remains unseen in social situations. Marco Antonsich states that "[t]he relationship between identity and place is one of the most recurrent themes in geography" ("Identity and Place"). This assertion reflects Mansfield's writing, which often deals with more or less implicit questions of precisely identity and place.

The theoretical framework for this essay will largely be based on the work of geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, a leading scholar within the field of space and place theory, whose books *Topophilia* (1974) and *Space and Place* (1977) helped to advance research on the concepts of space and place. In a slightly simplified way, Tuan describes the two concepts respectively as following: space signifies "openness and freedom" (50), but

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[1] This quotation is extracted from a letter that Mansfield wrote to Dorothy Brett about her then new story "At the Bay," which she explained was "a continuation of *Prelude*." Additionally, Seeing that Mansfield was a frequent user of ellipsis in her writing, brackets will from here on be used to make clear that something has been omitted other than that of Mansfield's own omission.

"[t]o be open and free is to be exposed and vulnerable," and what we experience as freedom can quickly turn out to be threatening (54). Place, on the other hand, is created by getting attached to something, and is hence characterized by stability and security, somewhere one can dwell and get a sense of affinity (54). Tim Cresswell talks about place in a philosophical sense as "a way of being-in-the-world" (12). This idea suggests that our sense of place is affected by the way we see ourselves in society, and how we interact with our surroundings. Even though a sense of place is something that we create for ourselves, it is difficult to disregard and escape the influence of the state of the world and our position in it.

Space and place are two terms that often appear together. This essay will primarily focus on the latter, and how the characters create or experience a sense of place in Katherine Mansfield's short stories "Prelude" (1918) and "Bliss" (1918). These stories have been chosen because they are situated in different geographical settings, the former in a fictional New Zealand and the latter in a fictional London, and it is exciting to see how national differences affect how the characters form a sense of place. These stories also depict groups of people that experience their common spaces differently. "Prelude" portrays three generations of the Burnell family, extended by spouses and close relatives. "Bliss" portrays a smaller family of husband, wife, and toddler, with a nanny and party guests that temporarily extend the social construct. Looking at these social constructs, it is interesting to investigate how multiple people experience their own sense of place in shared spaces, i.e. spaces that are accessible for more than one person but approached and analyzed differently by everyone.

This essay will look at how the characters in these two stories experience place. It will argue that a sense of place is highly individual and that Mansfield's characters are affected by where they reside and what state of their life they are in. "Prelude" is told from the points of view of both children and adults whereas "Bliss" is told solely from the point of view of Bertha Young. Tuan claims that we appreciate place "viscerally" and that "[a] function of literary art is to give visibility to intimate experiences, including those of place" (162). Hence, it is imperative to consider the different points of view when discerning a sense of place, because children lack the life experience that adults have, and therefore cannot form a sense of place on the same premises. The belief here is that Mansfield's stories offer an idealized picture of

childhood in comparison to adulthood that moreover seems to be pervaded by discrepancies in the sense of the self. Presumably, children are not as aware of their way of being-in-the-world, whereas adults are probably more inclined to either know their place in the world, or to suppress it due to the constrictive rules of society.

Mansfield frequently portrays characters that act as their 'secret self.' Nancy Grey explains that the term questions "the concept of the self as a singular entity" (78), and that it further embraces the modernist preoccupation of subjectivity. Mansfield herself was aware that we show different sides of ourselves in different environments and social gatherings, and has been famously quoted on the subject: "True to oneself! which self? Which of my many – well really, that's what it looks like coming to – hundreds of selves?" (*Letters* 173). The 'secret self' does not seem to appear when a story is told from a child's point of view, which suggests that the division of the self is something that emerges at a later stage in life. On another note, modern societies experienced a change of pace in everyday life, making the world as a whole a more accessible place for a larger quantity of people and their 'secret selves.' The change of pace is significantly represented in the fragmented and elliptical narratives that define modernist fiction, and Mansfield subtly weaves this into her stories.

The assumption is that space and place are concepts that are always in flux, partly due to the mobility of modernity that inhibits anything from ever being constant. Because the concepts of space and place are fluid to the extent that their physical appearance change over time, and, moreover, with the perspectives of different people, the flux will force itself upon the self as a consequence, making the self vulnerable for division. Mansfield's characters are tied to a state of flux because, like space, they are never constant; they evolve, which complicates the creation of a sense of place. This is especially true of her adult characters who are usually aware of the divides in society, but her child characters are also in flux because they are transitioning into the adult world. Additionally, particular objects are specifically tied to the characters and their experience of place, and these objects further help to explain the relationship between flux and stability in relation to the characters.

The essay will begin by introducing theories about space and place. The theory focuses on subjective perception and how we as humans relate to other people when we form an understanding of place. This section will also try to delineate the concept of the

'secret self' and how Mansfield herself related to this divided self. The first section of the analysis will begin by addressing the physicality of place brought about by the Burnell family's move from their old to their new home in "Prelude." It will continue to analyze how the family members individually perceive the new home in terms of place. Considering the dichotomies of children and adults on the one hand, and men and women on the other, the analysis will focus on the individual consciousnesses of the characters, following Mansfield's narrative technique. In addition, the section will take into account how the characters' apprehensions of place are affected by being inside in comparison with being outside. The second part of the analysis will foremost concern Bertha's sense of place in relation to the other characters in "Bliss." It will argue that her sense of place cannot be found in a conventional place, such as home. Rather, her place as such is in a larger sense a place in society.

Becoming Aware of Space and Place

Theories about how we relate to and experience space and place help us understand who we are and what place we have in the world, and Antonsich states that "any identity has place-related implications" ("Identity and Place"). As with many areas concerning fiction in general, and modernist fiction in particular, space and place theory is largely subjective, which is an issue that Cresswell stresses throughout *Place: A Short Introduction* (2004). Joanna Kokot discusses Mansfield's relation to modernist fiction. Mansfield's way of representing the inner life of characters through "limiting the narrative point-of-view," her portrayal of what Virginia Woolf would later call 'moments of being,' and her seemingly plot-less fiction, Kokot writes, make reader participation especially important because it emphasizes "the subjectivity of perception" (67). One explanation why space and place are inherently difficult concepts to define is because of their fluid and subjective nature. Experience affect how we perceive space and place, consequently making them unstable concepts that are almost exclusively subdued to subjective interpretation.

Space and place are not opposites but rather codependent concepts. Tuan stresses their codependency by stating that "if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (6). We experience and form an understanding of the world around us with the help of our senses. Tuan pays particular interest to "kinesthesia, sight, and touch" as means to establish "the awareness of space" (12). If you reach for something you engage your limbs to move in space. If you look at something you know that there has to be something between your eyes and that particular object. Either way, space is something that is relative to what we can experience with our senses. With our senses, we are able to create a cognitive apprehension of spatiality, and we form a general sense of space primarily based on what we can see and feel. Tuan refers to space as movement because without movement we would not be able to estimate and apprehend space:

> Space […] is given by the ability to move. Movements are often directed toward, or repulsed by, objects and places. Hence space can be variously experienced as the relative location of objects or places, as the distances and expanses that separate or link places, and – more abstractly – as the area defined by a network of places. (12)

Thus, space is something that is defined by its relativity to place, and place would not exist without space, because one of the functions of place is to find stability in something that is pervaded and characterized by mobility.

A sense of place is created when the otherwise unacquainted space has become familiar. Moreover, the concept of place is largely associated with "stability and permanence" (Tuan 29). When orientating ourselves in space we are somewhat emotionally disconnected from it. The space itself has no meaning but functions as a means to an end of becoming a place because "[s]pace is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning" (136). Secure space becomes place, but security is not attainable if we do not dwell. Tuan argues that it is out of biological necessity that we resort to pause; we need to dwell in order to get nourishment and rest, and dwelling opens up for us to form attachments to things, people, and spaces (138). When we stay in one place, in the literal sense of the word, we allow ourselves to get comfortable, and "[w]hen space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place" (73). Considering

the codependency of the two concepts helps to unify the idea mentioned in the introduction, about space being open and free but threatening and unstable, whereas place is safe and stable.

Space-time is an expression for explaining that we cannot move in space without moving in time, and space reversely changes over time. Space-time complicates the permanence of place, and can be more easily understood if we contemplate the movements of the earth. As asserted above, place is discerned as a pause in movement through space. When we move, time does not stand still, making the relationship between time and space unbreakable. Doreen Massey exemplifies this with reference to that the surface of the earth has not looked the same forever because the continental drift has utterly changed its physical appearance. This means that if place is connected to, or dependent on, space, then place cannot be constant; it will change location (*For Space* 131-135). The world's physical appearance is perpetually changing due to factors such as globalization and immigration. That the world is constantly moving makes it difficult for people to stay in one place long enough to form an attachment to it, and traveling, commuting, or moving to another city easily interrupt the process of creating a sense of place. Creswell argues, though, that "place […] need not have any fixed location at all" (22). Place does not need to be *somewhere*, rather it is *something* (7).

Place is not only established by location but also by the materiality of that location which can furthermore help create a collective sense of place. Cresswell states that "places almost always have a concrete form," and even if we are dreaming or fantasizing about a make-believe place, it is still made up of things that we recognize (7). Materiality is of value to us because we assign meaning to things so that they come to represent our "feelings […] and thoughts" (Tuan 17). Hence, place is more than simply a matter of *where* but also a matter of *what*. Massey notes that mobility causes a "speed-up" in society, which creates a fragmentary reality (*Space, Place and Gender* 146). She continues her discussion on space-time claiming that mobility compresses space in such a way that it induces "disorientation, a sense of the fragmentation of local cultures and a loss […] of a sense of place" (162). The things that constitute place have been chosen out of what we through experience have come to find important. A reason why place is subjective is because we choose our own material objects to define it. An objective sense of place can be a bit ambiguous, but there are such places. Examples are

"landmarks" and traditions that tie a people together so that they form a shared identity: as a result, a "loyalty to place" is achieved (Tuan 159).

The idea that objects help to create a sense of place is especially relevant when it comes to children. Children often have their favorite belongings and Tuan claims that "[p]lace, to the child, is a large and somewhat immovable type of object" (29). This object can take the form of another human being:

> Intimate occasions are often those on which we become passive and allow ourselves to be vulnerable, exposed to the caress and sting of new experience. Children relate to people and objects with a directness and intimacy that are the envy of adults bruised by life. Children know they are frail; they seek security and yet remain open to the world. (137)

But it is not as simple as to say that a human being is a place. Human beings are emotional beings and we are at times unable to fully control our actions or behavior. Because of this, we are not as constant and enduring as inanimate objects (139-40). Nonetheless, as Tuan states, place "is a concretion of value" (12), and a person can certainly be of value to someone. That particular person becomes an object just like a lamp or a flower and is hence tied together with place, blurring the boundaries between place and object. Furthermore, place connotes and contains a sense of security because it is based on the fact that we revisit or create something that is familiar. Having this in mind, it is reasonable to believe that a person can be associated with place because a sense of place is built on familiarity and security, which another human being can be able to provide.

Children and adults experience temporal differences when apprehending place. Tuan discusses the ideas of Eugene Ionesco who observes that children's temporal comprehension stretches no further than the present, whereas adults recollect the past and future more vividly (186). Herein lies the big difference between how people of various ages create a sense of place. When we base our sense of place on experience, the adult has an advantage that the child does not have, and furthermore the adult has a sense of time that the child does not possess. Additionally, when we think back on our childhood it usually appears to be fixed to a certain set of emotions, and when we experience too many changes in our own life as well as the state of the world, we are inclined "to evoke an idealized and stable past" (Tuan 188). Because they are not as

experienced, children perceive and analyze their surrounding less extensively than adults do, making it easier to create simpler memories. In light of this, it is not surprising that we resort to memories of our childhood in order to ascertain a sense of place, because they are not affected by the adult's way of looking at things.

If we consider that human beings are products of their past experiences, it means that we cannot easily disregard what events have made us who we are. Woolf's famous concept 'moment of being' is used to address the pivotal moments in life that shape who we are because we become more aware of ourselves as well as the world around us. Angela Smith analyzes 'moments of being' in Mansfield's stories, stating that they "pivot on fleeting disruption, when an established way of life is jolted by something other, strange and disturbing" ("Introduction" x). Disruptions like these can be found in possibly all of Mansfield's stories, with varying destructive or mending forces. One of the most essential stories where the disruption is particularly important is "Bliss" when Bertha irrevocably witnesses the scene of her husband's adultery, and this will be discussed towards the end of this essay.

The 'secret self' complicates the process of creating a sense of place because multiple selves entail multiple senses of places. A divided self is a product of being able to adapt oneself to varying social environments, and is also affected by age. In a way, the knowledge of having been a child who did not worry about consequential thinking is enough to create what Mansfield expressed was a feeling of "secret disruption" within herself (qtd. in Smith "Introduction" xiii). She learned to customize herself to different social situations, which would suggest that many relations were ultimately inauthentic: "But don't lower your mask until you have another mask prepared beneath – as terrible as you like – but a mask" (*Letters* 81). Scarcely surprising, the 'secret self' is not present in her child narratives. Rather, the indication of a divided self is something that shows up in the narratives of some of her more ambivalent characters, like aunt Beryl in "Prelude" who has various masks prepared for the social situations that she faces.

Thus, people can also be obstacles when it comes to finding a sense of place. As mentioned, subjectivity is pervasive of this process because a sense of place is something that exists within a person, which is a reason why a divided self can be created. Hence, one individual's place is affected by other individuals' perceptions of the same space:

> Solitude is a condition for acquiring a sense of immensity. Alone one's thoughts wander freely over space. In the presence of others they are pulled back by an awareness of other personalities who project their own worlds onto the same area. Fear of space often goes with fear of solitude. To be in the company of other human beings – even with one other person – has the effect of curtailing space and its threat of openness. (Tuan 59)

According to Tuan, we are unable to escape the fact that "people crowd us" not only physically but also mentally (59). Massey expounds this theory by claiming that "just as personal identities are argued to be multiple, shifting, possibly unbounded, so also […] are the identities of place" (*Space, Place and Gender* 7). This is somewhat problematic in relation to creating a sense of place because in order for us to get to know our own self as well as other people's selves, we need "[p]rivacy and solitude" (Tuan 65). While we need solitude to get to know ourselves, we also want the company of other people because they render the threatening space harmless. That we crowd each other's minds and places is true of a globalized world in which a "sense of identity [is] forever challenged by mobility" (Cresswell 53).

Concluding this theory section is a brief account of how the dichotomies inside and outside affect place. Andrew Thacker opens *Moving Through Modernity* (2003) with the words of Ford Madox Ford: "'We live in spacious times'" (1). Drawing on this statement, Thacker refers both to physical space and how the mind moves "between inner thoughts and outer reality" (5). In a narratological sense this means that we get a better understanding of a character's mind by how this person perceives its outer reality. According to Cresswell, the outside and inside define each other (102), similarly to how we define ourselves in comparison to other people. The clearest example of this, discussed by Thacker, is how mobility increased the divide between the outside and the inside of "domestic rooms," which is frequently portrayed by the "gendering of spaces in modernism" (6). Gendering of space is frequent in narratives that take place in the city, which is why the countryside is often portrayed in a more idealized way, probably because we think that it is spared of the influences of mobility. The analyses of "Prelude" and "Bliss" will show that it is not as simple as to say that the countryside is a less gendered space. What is more, these stories are affected by mobility, domesticity, and the natural world alike when it comes to defining the characters' senses of place.

Finding an Individual Sense of Place in "Prelude"

"Prelude" is one of Mansfield's longer short stories, and it takes off in the haste of the Burnell family's move from the city out to the New Zealand countryside, setting the tone of the story that is "characterized by a restless movement" (Smith "Introduction" xix). As touched upon in the introduction, the first story in the series about the Burnell family has a "fluid narrative perspective" (Smith *Literary* 16). The family members are peculiarly individual, and they do not seem to share either specific family values or an outlook on life. This opens up for the possibility to analyze a sense of place from multiple perspectives, especially because the story portrays people who are at different stages in life and of both sexes. Be it the three daughters who are more or less open to explore new grounds, the young mother unable to reconcile her self with her life, the father who is egotistically oblivious to his family's anxieties, the aunt who does not feel as if she belongs anywhere, or the matriarch who appears to have come to terms with her place in life, they all have a different sense of place.

At the very beginning of the story, it becomes clear that the characters perceive the world differently, and what is more, that there is a distinction between children and adults. The family is split up; the father and aunt are already at the new house, the mother and grandmother are on their way there together with the eldest daughter, and the two youngest children are left behind because "[t]here was not an inch of room for Lottie and Kezia in the buggy" (79). This is the very first sentence of the story, and the reader is already faced with the fact that the characters occupy different places. There is no physical room for the children and they are left "on the patch of lawn just inside the gate" looking at the buggy taking a part of their family to their new residence (79). The scene illustrates how the smallest children have a different perspective, both literally and physically, than the rest of the family. Further into the story, it will be shown that the youngest daughter, Kezia, is the person who is most vulnerable to and subconsciously aware of the distinction between children and adults. Even if the story is told from multiple points of view, combining the narratives of children and adults, Kezia is the closest "Prelude" gets to a protagonist.

The location is revealed when the storeman takes Kezia and Lottie to their new house. He mentions the Picton Boat, which establishes the setting as somewhere near

Wellington because the boat was a shuttle to and from the city at this time (382). The location is narrowed down by the description of the route they are taking "along new roads" (382), possibly referring to the roads that lead the way from Wellington to Mansfield's hometown Karori. But the most explicit reference to location is when Lottie and Kezia look back on what they are leaving behind:

> Everything looked different – the painted wooden houses far smaller than they did by day, the gardens far bigger and wilder. Bright stars speckled the sky and the moon hung over the harbour dabbling the waves with gold. They could see the lighthouse shining on Quarantine Island, and the green lights on the old coal hulks. (83)

The sisters are forced to see things in a new light, and the signposting of Quarantine Island is an obvious indication that the home in the city was a restrictive place.[2] The name invokes an incarcerating feeling, and the Burnell girls are slowly realizing that the house was small and confining, and the garden outside an obstacle keeping them from crossing the border to the outside. What is more, they are having more than a change of scenery; they are moving from one place to another.

Mansfield has the ability to create atmosphere in such a way that places which usually connote safety are instead pervaded with a sense of uneasiness. The home can be regarded as the most concrete place that is supposed to be secure and welcoming (Cresswell 93), but in many of Mansfield's stories, it is precisely the opposite, although not for all characters. At first, she may seem to be describing a carefree existence, joyous and ethereal. But as easily, she invokes a feeling of something not being quite right. Grey argues that Mansfield not only has the ability to cause "tension" within the literary space but also in the reader, subverting the image we have of our competence and ability to analyze the text at hand (80). Grey continues to claim that "[i]t is not outside our comfortable expectations as readers to encounter characters that do not see themselves clearly; but we, self-aware and practiced in the art of reading critically, are supposed to" (81). Tensions in "Prelude" often arise when the story is told from a child's point of view. Furthermore, the father, Stanley, is quite oblivious to anything that does not concern him personally, making his egotism frustrating to understand.

[2] In the explanatory notes for the Oxford edition, Quarantine Island refers to "[s]ome Islands in Wellington Harbour […] used as a quarantine station for immigrant ships, and was subsequently an internment camp for aliens during wartime" (382).

Kezia represents a child's growing awareness of space and place. The Burnell family's old home is depicted as desolate and ghostly. Before leaving the old home, Kezia explores the empty building that was once an inhabited place:

> Nothing was left in [the kitchen] but a lump of gritty yellow soap in one corner of the kitchen window sill and a piece of flannel stained with a blue bag in another. The fireplace was choked up with rubbish. […] she trailed through the narrow passage into the drawing-room. The Venetian blind was pulled down but not drawn close. Long pencil rays of sunlight shone through and the wavy shadow of a bush outside danced on the gold lines. Now it was still, now it began to flutter again, and now it came almost as far as her feet. Zoom! Zoom! a blue-bottle knocked against the ceiling. (81-82)[3]

The old home is dark, dirty, and narrow, giving an abandoned impression (just like Kezia temporarily is). It is not portrayed as a welcoming place, and one of the reasons for this is that no one needs it to be. The Burnell family lived there but they have left and it has now played its part. Mansfield's long descriptions of setting also provide the reader with greater understanding of the minds of her characters. In the passage above, Kezia's perception of the old house reveals that she is highly aware of the space she is in. She scans the room from the fireplace to the window to the ceiling, getting a comprehensive view of the room. Her perception emphasizes her growing awareness of the world around her, which will expand once the family move to their new house.

Kezia's vivid imagination heightens her perception of the place she is in, which is further amplified by the lively portrayal of nature. Children live in the present, and Kezia is not able to recall any pleasant memories of the house because her perception of it is exactly as it is now. In her eyes, the house is presently something threatening:

> Kezia liked to stand so before the window […] the day flickered out and dark came. With the dark crept the wind snuffling and howling. The windows of the empty house shook, a creaking came from the walls and floors, a piece of loose iron on the roof banged forlornly. Kezia was suddenly quite, quite still, with wide open eyes and knees pressed together. She was frightened. She wanted to call Lottie and to go on calling all the while she ran downstairs and out of the house. But IT was just behind her, waiting at the door, at the head of the stairs, at the bottom of the stairs, hiding in the passage, ready to dart out at the back door. (82)

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[3] A blue-bottle is a fly that "lay their eggs on the carcasses of dead animals, and the larvae … feed on the decaying flesh" ("blow-fly"). Its Latin name is *Callipora Vomitoria*.

Here, the natural element of the wind makes the house come alive. Just as Mansfield described the Maori house in her journal, nature helps to personify an inanimate object, proving its superiority over the passive man-made building. In this particular case, nature is tied to Kezia and how she perceives the dark. The oppressive darkness encapsulates her from all sides, making it impossible to feel safe, which proves to be a deep contrast to the new house where "strange beautiful excitement seem[s] to stream from [it] in quivering ripples" (85). That the house lacks light indicates that the old home is restrictive and unable to thrive, which inhibits Kezia from finding a place there. She wants things to come into the light, suggesting that she is aware of her ignorance about the world and her place in it. Concretely, the little lamp that her grandmother wishes her to carry around the new premises symbolizes her growing awareness and curiosity (85). The lamp becomes a symbol for Kezia's curiosity and enlightenment, and the object is continually associated with her in the later story "The Doll's House" (1922) where it points to her growing awareness of social injustices.

That a person can be a source of stability is conveyed both by Kezia and her mother Linda. As mentioned in the background section of this essay, Tuan asserts that "[t]he child learns to associate persons with specific places" (30). In this case, her sister Lottie's presence is enough to make Kezia at ease. Lottie symbolizes stability for Kezia, and is thus able to, unconsciously, comfort her little sister. Hence, she also creates a sense of place for Kezia, unlike the physical place of the house. Kezia's mother Linda, on the other hand, watches her own mother in the kitchen: "There was something comforting in the sight of her that Linda felt she could never do without. She needed the sweet smell of her flesh, and the soft feel of her cheeks and her arms and shoulders still softer" (96). In this thought, Linda, who is otherwise portrayed as quite miserable in her role as mother and wife, regresses into her child-self who longs for the comfort of her mother. This is almost the only time in the story when Linda is at ease, and it is undoubtedly no coincidence that she conveys this feeling from the perspective of her younger self. In other words, her mother is the strongest connection she has to her earlier life without husband and children. Mrs. Fairfield becomes the kind of "immovable object" that Tuan claims that children relate to, and she additionally represents "an idealized and stable past" that Linda yearns for.

Linda's seeming regression prevents her from taking responsibility for her children because she is in fact a child herself, which emphasizes her affinity with Kezia. Conversing, Mrs. Fairfield highlights Linda's negligent attitude towards her daughters:

> 'I wish you would go into the garden and give an eye to your children; but that I know you will not do.'
> 'Of course I will, but you know Isabel is much more grown up than any of us.'
> 'Yes, but Kezia is not,' said Mrs. Fairfield.
> 'Oh, Kezia has been tossed by a bull hours ago,' said Linda, winding herself up in her shawl again. (96-97)

Linda refrains from the role of the caring mother, jokingly dismissing her children's need for parental guidance. Subtly, she addresses her unwillingness to embrace adulthood, strengthening her dichotomized relationship to Kezia who is unaware of anything other than being a child. Like Kezia, Linda experiences the inside of the home as a confining space. Her bedroom walls are covered with a floral wall-paper which has "a habit of coming alive," making her feel pressed into a corner (92); "she could hardly escape from them. […] THEY knew how frightened she was; THEY saw how she turned her head away as she passed the mirror. What Linda always felt was that THEY wanted something of her" (93). This passage bears a close resemblance to Kezia's perception of the old house, thus illustrating Linda's childlike state and her unease with her situation. The flowers are symbols of nature, but as they are mere depictions they point to the artificiality of her life inside the home. Linda is drawn to nature just like her children, proving that being inside does not secure you a sense of place. More likely, her child self is longing to explore the freedom of nature, like her daughters are able and to some extent forced to do.

The children are able to become further aware of their relation to space and place when they are outside in the garden. Lottie and Kezia "had been turned out after breakfast and told not to come back to the house until they were called" (92). There is once again a palpable division between Linda and her children because they are a constant reminder of her missing childhood. However, by turning them out she is claiming the space that she so wishes to be released from, thus paradoxically reinforcing her own imprisonment. What is interesting is that the two little girls experience the

outside in different ways. The garden is situated between the home that is supposed to be comforting, and the threatening vastness of the space beyond the gates, and Lottie is "always getting lost or losing people only to find them again, to her great surprise, round the next tree or the next corner" (92). She seems to be simply unaware of her own place, but she manages to come back to something, indicating that she is subconsciously drawn to the familiar. Kezia on the other hand has no real place in the house, which is implied by the fact that she has not even got a bed of her own, but shares a bed with her grandmother (87). Instead, Kezia is drawn to nature and seeks to find her place by deliberately exploring the garden.

Kezia is balancing between a child's stable sense of place and becoming aware of a world beyond this. Linda's belief that her daughter is unrestrained does not correspond with Kezia's experience: "Kezia had seen a bull through a hole in a knot of wood in the paling that separated the tennis lawn from the paddock. But she had not liked the bull frightfully" (97). There is something keeping her from crossing the border between the comfort of the family home and the outside world, and she apprehends the threat that comes from transgressing one's own boundaries. Instead, she takes to the garden, which proves to be something other than a secure part of the family space:

> She did not believe that she would ever not get lost in this garden. Twice she had found her way back to the big iron gates they had driven through the night before, and then had turned to walk up the drive that led to the house, but there were so many little paths on either side. On one side they all led into a tangle of tall dark trees and strange bushes with flat velvet leaves and feathery cream flowers that buzzed with flies when you shook them – this was the frightening side, and no garden at all. (97)

As Kezia conveys, this part is "no garden at all," but rather an obstacle of her transition from being a child to growing up. Although she is many years from becoming an adult, the haunting imagery of the garden shows that Kezia is getting to know the subconscious parts of her self, capturing "the fear and excitement of being between states" as Smith explains it ("Introduction" ix). Tuan believes that "[c]hildren know they are frail; they seek security and yet remain open to the world" (137). Kezia frequently finds her way to the front gates that lead her into the security of the new home. The gates keep her inside, yet there is something alluring about what exists on

the other side of the gates. Wandering through the garden almost becomes a ritual where the subconscious goal is to find familiarity, which in Kezia's case is out in nature, within moderate reach of her family.

While Linda is secluding herself, staying indoors and trying to escape her maternal and marital responsibilities, Kezia is drawn to explore the immensity of the garden with an openness that her mother seems to have lost. Linda somewhat humorously suggests that she thinks her daughter is uninhibited by the adult's awareness of consequence, and driven by the careless curiosity of a child. In accordance with Tuan, Linda's adult self is envious of Kezia's freedom of not yet being "bruised by life." Once Kezia has overcome her fear of the garden, she can expand her sense of place so that it will stretch further than the place of a child. She will then have gained the experience she needs to form an individual sense of place beyond the comfort of a child's sense of familiarity. Linda and Kezia are thus going in disparate directions, Linda longing for her past while Kezia is seeking to find her place in the future. Linda wants to go back to a time when she was unaware of the restrictions of marriage and motherhood, and she resents her daughter for having the freedom that she desperately wants.

Linda shatters the Burnell family's polished surface by proving that being a wife and mother does not guarantee you a sense of place. Smith writes that moments of "[d]isruption is a characteristic of Mansfield's European stories as of her New Zealand ones" ("Introduction" xxxi). In "Prelude," these disruptions frequently arise in the presence of Linda, when the reader is recurrently faced with the apathy she displays toward her children and husband. For example, she leaves her youngest daughters behind during the move for the sake of "'absolute necessities that [she] will not let out of [her] sight for one instant'" (79), she has an uncanny dream of her unborn child turning into a bird that causes her to imagine herself "driving away from everybody and not even waving" (91), and her nagging feeling of disapproval towards her husband gets stronger further into the story. In addition, Smith highlights that Mansfield's "stories focus on luminous details which resonate within the story and gain significance in the reader's mind in retrospect because they elude definition" ("Introduction" xxiv). One detail that certainly eludes definition is the aloe, which has been amply discussed in relation to the understanding of Linda's character.

When confronted with the aloe in the middle of the driveway, Linda's sense of place can be more easily understood. In something similar to a 'moment of being,' she vents the thoughts about her husband that have been instigated by the large plant:

> It had never been so plain to her as it was at this moment. There were all her feelings for him, sharp and defined, one as true as the other. And there was this other, this hatred, just as real as the rest. She could have done her feelings up in little packets and given them to Stanley. She longed to hand him that last one, for a surprise. (115-116)

Thinking about her feelings in packets, Linda conveys a sense of imprisonment, and that she is thus restrained to do what she really wants to do. She is not the only one who disrupts the perfect image of the family constellation, but she is by far the most radical one. From the outside it looks like Linda is living the ideal middle class life with a loving husband, caring family, and children. Even so, she is not happy, which seems to be a consequence of her having been forced into an adult life that she was not ready for. She has two sides of herself that she shows on different occasions, and this thought seems to belong to her real self, whereas when she is with her family, and husband in particular, she adopts her 'secret self.' Linda is not comfortable either in her home or with her family, and her sense of place can be better analyzed as being a societal one, that is to say, a place as a woman in society, more than an individual one. She has this in common with Bertha in "Bliss," who will be analyzed in the next section of this essay. Although her mother does seem to provide her with a sense of security, Linda feels comforted from the perspective of her young self, and the sense of place that she experiences in the company of her mother thus belongs to the past and not the present.

There is a discrepancy between Linda and Stanley's respective apprehension of their life together. While the reader is secretly let in on Linda's resentment of her husband, Stanley is oblivious of his wife's feelings, having turned her into a child-producing machine. On his way home from work he thinks: "By God, he was a perfect fool to feel as happy as this!" (102). He applies his perception of his marriage on a couple of cherries, stating that they are a "perfect little pair of Siamese twins" (99). Linda and Stanley are not twins, though, and their perception of place is vastly different. When Linda is looking about their bedroom she notices that "[a]ll the furniture had found a place – all the old paraphernalia" (91). In a later discussion of how to furnish

the drawing-room, "Stanley had set his heart on a Chesterfield and two decent chairs" but "Linda liked it best as it was…." (114). Furthermore, he has even left an empty seat to his unborn son at the end of the dining-room table (101), which is a stark contrast to Linda's revulsion from her children. Stanley has an idea of what his family should be like, but he is blind to what is actually going on in his own home. In this way, Stanley Burnell's character represents the patriarchal structures of place, controlling the domestic sphere without particular consideration of his wife or children.

Stanley also shows discrepancy in his own sense of place, which to some extent can be seen as a result of trying to be the ideal modern and mobile man. The reader is given an insight into his consciousness when he is on his way home from work:

> Burnell was impatient to be out of the town. He wanted to be home. Ah, it was splendid to live in the country – to get right out of that hole of a town once the office was closed; and this drive in the fresh warm air, knowing all the while that his own house was at the other end, with its garden and paddocks, its three tip-top cows and enough fowls and ducks to keep them in poultry, was splendid too. (99)

When he approaches the home, his perception changes:

> A sort of panic overtook Burnell whenever he approached near home. Before he was well inside the gate he would shout to anyone within sight: 'Is everything all right?' And then he did not believe it was until he heard Linda say: 'Hullo! Are you home again?' That was the worst of living in the country – it took the deuce of a long time to get back.… But now they weren't far off. They were on the top of the last hill; it was a gentle slope all the way now and not more than half a mile. (100)

What is noticeable in the first passage is that Stanley goes against the modern currents of urbanization and longs for a life away from the enclosing "hole of a town." Instead, he embraces nature and longs for familiarity, opposing the modern man that he tries to be both at the house and before the men at the country club. In the second passage, his panic is induced out of fear that his life will not be as he left it, suggesting that he cannot deal with abrupt change in his perfect world. This is further emphasized on the same journey home where he engages in a reverie of what he would want the family's forthcoming weekends to be like, relishing in the thought of routine (100). As discussed

in the theory section, Massey argues that space-compression through traveling has created a fragmentary, and thus elliptical, apprehension of reality. Stanley's sense of place is likewise affected by being away from the home too much, and he is not able to keep up with the changes. To compensate, he tries to create the perfect place with the perfect house and family so that things will not get unfamiliar during the time that he is not there. He avoids being alienated from the home by regaining control over the domestic and thus preventing it from becoming unfamiliar. Consequently, Stanley's sense of place is changing from being genuine to artificial, due to modern mobility.

It is implied that their husbands have affected both Linda and her mother's sense of place. While Linda secretly ruminates about her aversion towards her husband and the implicit power structures that pervade the domestic sphere, Mrs. Fairfield is a character that is "complicit with patriarchy" (Smith "Introduction" xxxiv). Mansfield famously wrote in journal that she believed that women "[were] firmly held with the self-fashioned chains of slavery" and because they were self-made, they had to "be self-removed" (*Letters* 35). This is evidently true for Linda who does not let anyone know how she really feels about her domestic prison, and does nothing to change her situation. In the dream about her unborn baby, Linda's father is with her. The dream becomes rather disagreeable when her father at the sight of her birdlike child gaping for food, lets out a "loud clattering laugh" (90), as if to scorn her. There is an incestuous implication in the dream when her father is handing her the child, but it also signals that she is dreaming about the likeness between her father and her husband. Similarly, she is realizing her likeness to her mother, suggesting that both of them have been manacled with "self-fashioned chains of slavery." Mother and daughter are both complicit with patriarchy since they do not try to subvert the power structure, and this affects their ability to form a sense of place on their own terms.

Contrary to Linda, however, Mrs. Fairfield has come to terms with her place in life, and is at ease in her domesticity. After the move, Linda sees her mother in the kitchen and senses her mother's presence: "'This is the first time I've been in the kitchen. It says 'mother' all over; everything is in pairs'" (95). It is noteworthy that Mrs. Fairfield organizes everything in pairs, emphasizing that she is not used to being alone, but rather coupled with someone, suggesting that she has never had a room or a life of her own. Linda's statement, however, illustrates that her mother has managed to make

the kitchen her own, and Linda's feeling about her correlates with Mrs. Fairfield's perception of herself:

> It was hard to believe that she had not been in that kitchen for years; she was so much a part of it. She put the crocks away with a sure, precise touch, moving leisurely and ample from the stove to the dresser, looking into the pantry and the larder as though there were not an unfamiliar corner. When she had finished, everything in the kitchen had become part of a series of patterns. She stood in the middle of the room wiping her hands on a check cloth; a smile beamed on her lips; she thought it looked very nice, very satisfactory. (94)

Despite the fact that Mrs. Fairfield has managed to turn the kitchen into her own place, her own thoughts prove that she is complicit with what norms pervaded a society where women were assigned places within the domestic sphere. In Mrs. Fairfield's case, though, she displays no aversion to this placement. Rather, she is the only one in the Burnell family who is clearly comfortable with herself and her sense of place, which is further amplified when Linda asks what is on her mind:

> I haven't really been thinking of anything. I wondered as we passed the orchard what the fruit trees were like and whether we should be able to make much jam this autumn. There are splendid healthy currant bushes in the vegetable garden. I noticed them to-day. I should like to see those pantry shelves thoroughly well stocked with our own jam.… (116)

Mrs. Fairfield does not display any worry, suggesting that she is the one character that actually is comfortable with her state of being. Simply, she seems to have found her sense of place with being with her family and keeping to physical places that she finds comforting, like the kitchen. Her sense of ease also grows when she is close to nature, which Kezia and Stanley also experience as a source of comfort. That she has found a sense of place can also be understood by her security of self, because unlike her daughter Beryl, Mrs. Fairfield does not display indications of having multiple selves.

Lastly, the person who most evidently lacks a sense of place is aunt Beryl, who displays some ambivalence towards what she wishes her life to be like. At first glance, it appears as if she liked living in the city, and even if she describes the old home as an "awful chubby-hole in town" (117), she expresses feelings of alienation and unease about the new home in a letter to her friend Nan: "It's pretty certain nobody will ever

come out from town to see us, because though there is a bus it's an awful old rattling thing with black leather sides that any decent person would rather die than ride in for six miles" (117). It was not her choice to move out to the country, and she theatrically exaggerates her misery by stating that "'[o]ne may as well rot here as anywhere else'" (96). As mentioned earlier, Smith claims that a restless movement pervades Mansfield's stories, but Beryl is an exception to the rule, instead portraying a restless passivity. She analyzes her prospects in a reflection about her mother: "'It's a weary world. Of course mother simply loves the place, but then I suppose when I am mother's age I shall be content to sit in the sun and shell peas into a basin. But I'm not–not–not'" (117). Beryl puts into words that finding a sense of place might actually be easier with age, and explicitly mentions her discontent with her current situation. Beryl does not even try to feel at home at the new house, which is portrayed by her multiple selves.

The presence of Beryl's 'secret self' complicates the understanding of her sense of place. Miroslawa Kubasiewizc describes Beryl as being "aware of her own inauthenticity" (56), which is shown when she studies herself in the mirror: "'I am so miserable – so frightfully miserable. I know that I'm silly and spiteful and vain; I'm always acting a part. I'm never my real self for a moment'" (119). We are also told that "[i]t was her other self who had written that letter," and "[i]t not only bored, it rather disgusted her real self" (118). There is something pathological about her inauthentic behavior, which could be a consequence of society's imposing images of ideal lives:

> If she had been happy and leading her own life, her false life would cease to be. She saw the real Beryl – a shadow … a shadow. Faint and unsubstantial she shone. What was there of her except the radiance? And for what tiny moments she was really she. Beryl could almost remember every one of them. At those times she had felt: 'Life is rich and mysterious and good, and I am rich and mysterious and good, too.' Shall I ever be that Beryl for ever? Shall I? How can I? And was there ever a time when I did not have a false self? … But just as she had got that far she heard the sound of little steps running along the passage; the door handle rattled. Kezia came in. (119-20)

Beryl is in fact living her sister's life, which inhibits her from being her authentic self. To illustrate, Kubasiewiz stresses Beryl's vocation of finding a husband and this is portrayed even clearer in "At the Bay" (1922). In "Prelude," though, Beryl has to settle for a life in envy of her sister, a life that Linda ironically does not want. Symbolically, it

is Kezia who interrupts Beryl's self-loathing. Kezia represents new possibilities and freedom that Beryl seems to have lost, just like her sister Linda.

To briefly sum up this section, when studying the Burnell family, it becomes clear that the family relations complicate the characters' sense of place. The most noticeable connection between the family members is that they all have a perception of the home, but the relation to the home is not necessarily the same. Stanley is distraught by the mere thought of his house but feels free outside the gates of the property; Kezia experiences a haunted house in the city in comparison to the garden at the new house that, although threatening at times, opens up for her to explore and become aware of herself; Linda is suffocating within the walls of her home, but when she goes outside and faces the aloe she admits to herself why she is unhappy, and is overcome with self-awareness; Beryl tries to live her sister's life, which inhibits her to form her own sense of place. Only Mrs. Fairfield appears to have found her sense of place, presumably because she has had the time to do it. Although the family members have different approaches to finding their individual sense of place, the way they experience these places are quite realistic. Mansfield manages to create convincing characters because she shows that they are individual visceral beings that must create their own sense of place on their own terms, as they are all affected by implied past experiences. The connection to the home is also important when analyzing Bertha's sense of place in the next section about "Bliss."

Discovering a Societal Sense of Place in "Bliss"

If the most present dichotomies in "Prelude" are those of children and adults, and to some extent men and women, "Bliss" is more concerned with the latter, as well as that of inside and outside. Unlike "Prelude" which gives insight into the mind of more than one character, "Bliss" is centered on the consciousness of Bertha Young, and Andrew Gurr describes the story as offering "epiphanies of English life" (42). Bertha thinks of herself as a modern woman, but while she is trying to convince herself of this, it becomes clear that she is in fact epitomizing the conventional middle-class woman in

London who is restricted by the norms of patriarchy. Being forced to stay inside results in a division of the self, and the home becomes a place for the divided, seemingly fake, self to thrive, while the outside gives hope of a perfect life. In relation to this, Bertha turns her home into a kind of doll's house where she can be seen as a child who is watching and engaging in a perpetual play in her world of make-believe.

As with all canonical writers, there are interpretations of their work that are agreed to be more or less correct. "Bliss," being one of Mansfield's most famous short stories, is such a canonized text which seems to have certain truths ascribed to it: the blooming pear tree symbolizes Bertha's blooming sexual desire, Bertha's lust is actually for Pearl more than her husband (something that scholars pertinently link to Mansfield's own lesbian relations), the characters are products of a post-Darwinian reality pervaded by the survival of the fittest.[4] Stepping away from the more conventional readings of "Bliss," another approach to the story is to analyze the characters' sense of place. Approaching a story with a certain theoretical framework forces any scholar to look beyond what can be seemingly overt answers in the text. This analysis will hopefully yield an understanding of "Bliss" as having to do with the difficulty to feel at home in society, and not just with suppressed sexuality.

Mansfield generally creates room for women from different social classes and ages in her fictional spaces. Ana Belén López Pérez discusses the role that Mansfield's women have in society,[5] and highlights patriarchal structures that control women, making the point that the city is usually regarded "as a male domain" (128). Industrialization had increased mobility, which enabled women to access and cover the grounds of public spaces. However, the supposed new freedom was thwarted by men that had long claimed the city, and who now "enclosed" women to "the house and home" to maintain their hold of the public space (128-30). Bertha's place in the city appears not only to be that of a woman but also that of a child:

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[4] Thomas Dilworth argues for a Darwinian reading of the story in "Monkey Business: Darwin, Displacement, and Literary Form in Katherine Mansfields 'Bliss'" (1998), as does Judith S. Neaman in "Allusion, Image, and Associative Pattern: The Answers in Mansfield's 'Bliss'" (1986). Scholars who discuss the underlying lesbian attraction are among others Walter E. Anderson in "The Hidden Love Triangle in Mansfield's 'Bliss'" (1982), Dominic Head in *The Modernist Short Story* (1992), and Rhoda B. Nathan in "The Life as a Source" (1988). Pamela Dunbar discusses Bertha's overall sexuality in "What Does Bertha Want?: A Re-Reading of Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss'" (1988).

[5] The essay is concerned about "the evolution of Western cities" (128). There is a brief mentioning of New Zealand and Wellington (130). Otherwise, the essay is mainly focused on the European cities that Mansfield implicitly wrote about, London in particular.

> Although Bertha Young was thirty she still had moments like this when she wanted to run instead of walk, to take dancing steps on and off the pavement, to bowl a hoop, to throw something up in the air and catch it again, or to stand still and laugh at – nothing – at nothing, simply. (174)

The "although" sets the tone of this sentence, implying that Bertha's feelings are not those of an adult, and the stress on her age suggests that her childlike impulses are unfitting. When she is later given a compliment on her culinary skills, "she almost could have wept with child-like pleasure" (181). She continues to reflect on her emotional state: "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?" (174). Her reflection implies that she has been brought up to conform to the norms of public behavior, where women were observably considered to be "drunk and disorderly" if they strayed too far from what was considered to be the right rules of conduct. Bertha's reflection about being "like a rare, rare fiddle," unable to remove herself from her case, foreshadows what is to be known about her life.

Bertha's sense of place is threatened when her daughter, Little B, is introduced. Little B is taken care of by Nurse, or Nanny as Bertha calls her. Both names verbally marginalize Nanny as the domestic servant, reinforcing her status as an employee and not part of the family. Belén López Pérez notes that "[c]lass meant that women could be positioned as marginal" not only by men but also by other women (129). Nanny, though, has claimed the nursery as her domain, which is shown in her authoritative care of the baby, best emphasized when Nanny reenters the room "in triumph and seizing *her* Little B" (176). She shows her disapproval of Bertha's presence there, and she is not afraid to stand up to her mistress, employing professional measures to prove her authority over the child's upbringing: Little B "oughtn't to be changed hands while she's eating" and Bertha should not "excite her after her supper" (176). In this way Nanny criticizes Bertha's ability to take care of her own daughter, which marginalizes Bertha in her own home. This implies that Bertha does not have control of her life, and her sense of place is narrowed down because the supposedly inferior employee has claimed a piece of her space.

Nanny's attitude towards her mistress helps shed light on Bertha's childlike naivety. As touched upon above, the boundaries between mistress and servant are blurred in Bertha and Nanny's relationship, especially by the fact that Nanny talks to Bertha as if she were a child. Bertha "[does] not dare" to question Nanny, and with "her hands by her side, like the poor little girl in front of the rich little girl with the doll," she watches the nurse with her daughter (175). The complicated relationship to her daughter is further proven by Bertha's insecure display of motherly affection: "'You're nice – you're very nice!' […] 'I'm fond of you. I like you'" (176). The way she talks to her daughter emphasizes Bertha's undeveloped childlike manner, once again amplifying the likeness between her daughter and a doll. Bertha continues to liken her daughter to an inanimate object: "How absurd it was. Why have a baby if it has to be kept – not in a case like a rare, rare fiddle – but in another woman's arms?" (176). Here, Bertha repeats the simile from earlier, indicating that both she and her daughter are "rare, rare fiddles" locked up in their cases. By drawing a parallel between her own body and her child, Bertha suggests that her daughter is born into a world where her life will presumably look like her mother's. Additionally, the line reversely reinforces the image of Bertha being a child, or rather, a doll just like her daughter.

Considering that Bertha behaves like a child with a doll, the house as a space can be seen as a doll's house.[6] It is meticulously decorated and made up, just like Bertha's life, and she tries to make the house perfect for the coming guests: "she had bought [purple grapes] to tone in with the new dining-room carpet" (175); "she stood away from the table to get the effect […] the dark table seemed to melt into the dusky light and the glass dish and the blue bowl to float in the air" (175); "She went into the drawing-room and lighted the fire; then, picking up the cushions, one by one, […] she threw them back on to the chairs and the couches. That made all the difference; the room came alive at once" (177). The house is implied to be dead, which resonates with a doll's house in the sense that it is uninhibited. When Bertha tries to create the perfect atmosphere by lightening a fire, it shows her growing awareness of the space she is living in, and what her place is in this space; she is living in an artificial home, leading a make-believe existence. In relation to the inside of the house, it can hardly be a

[6] It can be argued that Mansfield generally thinks of middle-class houses as doll's houses. An illustrative example is the seemingly self-explanatory "The Doll's House," where Mansfield continues the story about the Burnell family, and stresses the issue of the marginalization of a lower social class.

coincidence that Mrs. Norman Knight is “keen on interior decoration” (177); as a woman she is bound to the home, creating fake worlds for other people, and fake seems to be symbolic for the middle class in general.

Mansfield’s new modern English society seems to be deprived of personality and soul. As discussed, the Young home is to a large degree a mere construct of an ideal home; a dollhouse where Bertha fidgets with fruits and fires to make something apparently dead come alive. When she first enters the house, she lets out what can be interpreted as a nervous laugh and exclaims: “No, no. I’m getting hysterical” (175). When Bertha is outside she is struck by the alertness of natural freedom and she starts to question why she is not allowed to behave in certain ways. Once she gets within the walls of her home, though, she begins to break down. By subtly weaving hysteria, a mental condition originally ascribed to women, into the story, Mansfield seems to be criticizing women’s domestication. She proves that hysteria is not biologically inherent to a woman, rather it is imposed upon her by the restrictive, patriarchal society that confines Bertha to her own home, depriving her of the connection to the outside and nature.

That Bertha is a grown up woman who behaves like a child can be explained by the fact that she has multiple selves. Chantal Cornut-Gentille D’Arcy draws a parallel between Mansfield’s narrative technique and Freud’s discourse on “sexuality or psychic disorder” where he claims that the conscious and unconscious part of the self respectively are not aware that the other exists, and this inhibits the former to realize “that repressed and unacknowledged desires motivate [our] behavior” (246). Cornut-Gentille D’Arcy continues to explain that the whole of Mansfield’s fiction is more or less concerned with portraying and problematizing the duality of the mind where the subconscious is always trying to penetrate the conscious surface (247). The free indirect discourse connected to Bertha is filled with sarcasm, making it difficult at first to discern if what she is letting out is the truth or simply *her* own truth. It is not explicit whether Bertha uses sarcasm to cover up for her ignorance or, rather, denial about her present life situation, or if the narrator is belittling Bertha’s inability to see herself clearly, ultimately creating the tension observed by Grey.

Mansfield's protagonist is not instinctively aware that she creates her own world of make-believe. Bertha tries to convince herself that she is living the ideal life, exemplified by her thoughts about her marriage and everyday life:

> Really – really – she had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals. She had an adorable baby. They didn't have to worry about money. They had this absolutely satisfactory house and garden. And friends – modern, thrilling friends, writers and painters and poets or people keen on social questions – just the kind of friends they wanted. And then there were books, and there was music, and she had found a wonderful little dressmaker, and they were going abroad in the summer, and their new cook made the most superb omelettes…. (178)

This passage reveals multiple inconsistencies about Bertha and her seemingly perfect life. The relationship to her husband is described in terms of being "really good pals," which does not convey the kind of consuming love that she is trying to convince herself that they have; she thinks of the baby as *hers* and not *theirs*, which is odd considering she mentions everything else as things "they" possess. Additionally, their social circle appears to be superficial, because she states that their friends are "the kind of friends they *wanted*" (emphasis added), suggesting that these people are part of the perfect constellation rather than genuine relations. At the end, her mind wanders off to superfluous and meaningless things, pointing to the mere meaninglessness of her own existence. She tries desperately to convince herself that her life is perfect, but it turns into an attempt to create an ideal sense of place according to the norms of society; it ends up being "absolutely satisfactory" and most "splendidly" made up.

When the guests have arrived, the scene of the party quickly turns into a performance of a play, stressing the characters' inauthenticity. When Bertha admires the crowd, "the kind of friends they always wanted," she ponders:

> They were dears – dears – and she loved having them there, at her table, and giving them delicious food and wine. In fact, she longed to tell them how delightful they were, and what a decorative group they made, how they seemed to set one another off and how they reminded her of a play by Tchekof! (181)

When Bertha observes her guests, it invokes an image of a child playing with her toys in the doll's house, creating her perfect place with her setup. Paying close attention to the ensuing dialogue, Bertha's thoughts become almost self-fulfilling. The conversation appears nonsensical as the characters seem to be talking to themselves more than to each other. They continue their own subject as disguised replies to what someone else has just said, invoking the Chekhovian tendencies that Bertha alludes to.[7] Moreover, it is unlikely a coincidence that Mr. Norman Knight is a playwright, that Eddie Warren makes a living of writing, and that Harry leads a double life. What these men occupy themselves with emphasizes the fakeness of the "decorative group," and suggests that they are playing their parts in the perfect construct. That the characters assume roles also indicate that they are participating as their 'secret selves.' Thus, due to the fact that the characters for all intents and purposes are not real, they can have no sense of place, just like the fake Beryl in "Prelude" is unable to find a sense of place.

The feeling of bliss awakens the unconscious part of Bertha's self. She has been taught to conduct herself in society in a certain way, but the feelings that she experiences go against the way of 'being-in-the-world' that she is used to. She begins to "ardently" desire her husband (184), which goes against the structure of their marriage and them being "such good pals" (176), and she demands to be alone with her child, which is apparently not something that happens everyday, allowing her suppressed motherly affections to get some room. The feeling of bliss arises when she is physically outside, seemingly free from the house that serves as a metaphor for women's domestication in patriarchal society. Once she gets inside the house, the feeling gradually disappears, and her transient freedom with it. The house is a cold place in comparison to Bertha's new blissful state, the warmth of her freedom, and when she enters the dining-room "[s]he hardly dare[s] to look into the cold mirror" (174), afraid that she might see the side of her that dwells within the confining walls, to her surprise it is her new "radiant" self that is looking back at her (174). Unfortunately, Bertha's new glow fades away the longer she is inside.

The home becomes a dwelling for the divided self. Bertha is portrayed as

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[7] Mansfield was a great fan and largely influenced by Chekhov. Her story "The-Child-Who-Was-Tired" (1910) was criticized for its obvious likeness to Chekhov's *Sleepy* (1888), and the playwright continued to influence Mansfield's work (Gurr 45). One of these prominent Chekhovian features is the portrayal of the character's difficulty to communicate, which in "Bliss" is especially potent when they are in the drawing-room having coffee (182). Inserting Chekhov into her narrative is likely homage to the artist.

displaying two sides of herself, one outside the home and one inside the home, and she is not the only one who experiences this division: "(In their home and among their friends [the Norman Knight's] called each other Face and Mug)" (179). Something seemingly innocent such as nicknames asserts people's keenness to adopt different personas depending on what place we appear to be in. The clue here seems to be that this is happening inside the home, and the names additionally invoke the childishness of their nature, again referring to the doll's house imagery. Furthermore, the nicknames Face and Mug are rather childish ones, amplifying the performative aspect, as well as the possibility that they are dolls who have been named by a child, like Bertha.

Approaching the end of the story, Bertha's old domesticated self is penetrating the surface: "'Good night, good-bye,' she cried from the top step, feeling that this self of hers was taking leave of them for ever" (184). This is further symbolically indicated as "Eddie and she were left by the fire" (185). For one last time, Bertha experiences the artificial warmth, and also the warmth of her ignorant bliss that is connected to the childlike part of herself. When she witnesses her husband's adultery, her warm, imaginary sense of place is disrupted and replaced with an unfamiliar but harshly cold, true, and adult reality. Bertha is forced to acknowledge her doll's house life and domestic reality where her husband is free to move outside the home, while she is forced to live on the inside. Discerning a difference between how people act inside and outside further suggests that something is happening outside that makes it possible for this division to happen. If the inside is portrayed as incarcerating and uneventful, the outside is rather pervaded with mobility and unpredictability.

Mobility lures in the periphery of the story, inhibiting the characters from establishing a sense of place. Little is known about the other characters in the story. Except a brief account of Mr. Norman Knight and Eddie Warren's professions, and Mrs. Norman Knight's interest, what is known about the group is that they are all "victims of time and train" (184). Highly affected by the increased mobility that pervades society, Harry "love[s] doing things at high pressure" (180); Bertha says of Pearl that "'[s]he lives in taxis'" (180); and Eddie Warren tells them about his drive there: "I have had such a *dreadful* experience with a taxi-man; he was *most* sinister. I couldn't get him to *stop.* The *more* I knocked and called the *faster* he went" (179). In this way, Mansfield incorporates the notion of "speed-up" that Massey discusses in

Space, Place and Gender. The characters seem to be utterly unstable in every sense of the word, especially considering that none of them are even capable of showing their real selves to the others, but persistently present their 'secret selves.'

The increasingly mobile way of living causes alienation. Except for in the description of the Young garden, almost everything that is known about the outside world is that taxis are always in near proximity: "You won't have to walk more than a few yards" (184). That the characters seem to often use means of transport implies that they are jumbled about in space-time, and they are consequently never rooted long enough to form a sense of place and belonging. Not only are they unrooted, but the speed-up stops them to form attachments to people as well as places. Eddie Warren points to another consequence: "I shall be *so* thankful *not* to have to face *another* drive *alone* after my *dreadful* experience" (184). The dejected Eddie Warren is the only one who outright expresses his resentment at this new way of, what can seem according to him, *not*-being-in-the-world, and divulges his fear: "'I saw myself *driving* through Eternity in a *timeless* taxi'" (179). The London society that Mansfield depicts with the help of her characters is hence a place pervaded with anxiety and fear of being lonely, and the attitude towards a possible change is highly pessimistic.[8]

Immobility does not automatically entail a sense of stability though. One might think that Bertha staying put confined to the home when everyone around her is increasingly in motion would be a source of stability, that not being forced out into the fragmented world would allow her to create a sense of place. However, lack of mobility can make a place just as fissured as the pervasive mobility. Tuan writes that "[m]any years in one place may leave few memory traces that we can or wish to recall; an intense experience of short duration, on the other hand, can alter our lives" (185). What Tuan expresses here is an idea which is similar to Woolf's idea about the 'moment of being,' and this is something that Bertha experiences. Tuan suggests that a sense of place has to be compared to our experiences, and if we lack experience then sense of place is difficult to create. Thus staying indoors prevents Bertha from getting the experience she needs to form a place. It is easy to read the adulterous incident in the hall

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[8] In a letter to S.S Koteliansky, Mansfield wrote about feeling alienated in the London society, and her feelings are reflected in "Bliss": "I am very much alone here. It is not really a nice place […] It is so very temporary. It may all be over next month […] I don't belong to anybody here" (*Letters* 80).

as the disruptive moment that shatters Bertha's life. Still, her 'moment of being' is likewise tied to her appreciation of the rooted pear tree.

The pear tree gains symbolic meaning in relation to Bertha's rootedness. Early on in the story, Bertha highlights her affinity with the pear tree, the "symbol of her own life," and she unintentionally dresses to look like it (178). Her view of the tree is that it is "perfect" (177), thus projecting her desire of a perfect life onto the natural object. The moment is disrupted when Bertha sees a grey cat followed by its shadow self lurking at the bottom of the tree, an image which will gain its meaning at the end of the story. Bertha's assimilation to the tree comes full circle in the very last sentence: "But the pear tree was as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still" (185). The affinity that she has felt to the tree starts to become clear; she thought they shared beauty and sensuality in a harmonious balanced life, but what they actually share is their rootedness, and thus their inability to move from their physical places.

Bertha has the stable life that Pearl wants, and Pearl has the freedom of mobility that Bertha is deprived of. When Eddie Warren and Pearl exit the story "like the black cat following the grey cat" (185), it elucidates the fact that Bertha connects Pearl to the image of the two cats lurking beneath the pear tree. The black cat disrupted Bertha's serene moment with the pear tree, and Pearl has likewise disrupted her illusion of having the perfect life, of being the perfect pear tree. Dilworth argues that Pearl is in fact Bertha's other but "that they share the same happiness" (142). It is true that Pearl and Bertha have a mutual love interest in Harry, but, moreover, they are each other's other because they want something that the other one has. The inability to move connects Bertha and the pear tree, which is also what Pearl covets, emotionally exclaiming "'Your lovely pear tree – pear tree – pear tree!'" (185). Pearl and Bertha each seem to be searching for something that the other apparently has.

Pearl and Bertha come to represent each other's real self. Expounding the argument above about both women longing for what the other has got, Pearl can be seen as the woman who envies the child who has not yet been bruised by life, which leads back to Bertha's arrested development discussed earlier. The image of the cat and the shadow also points to the revelation of the divided self. Without the shadow, that is to say Pearl, Bertha would not have to acknowledge that the part of her that she wants to be real does not exist. This way, the seemingly free Pearl becomes a reflection of

Bertha's real self; Pearl represents what Bertha's private, unseen self really wants. The two women who, like everyone else, only act their parts inside the home reaffirm the house as being a dwelling for the 'secret self.' Pearl's mere existence disrupts Bertha's alternate reality, and forces her to reevaluate her position in life as well as in her home.

Rounding off this analysis is a brief account of what Bertha has in common with Linda in "Prelude," in the sense of place. Neither of them has the life that they secretly want, and they both allow themselves to be deeply affected by the men in their lives, making them settle for their sense of place. Bertha's last sigh of dejection implicitly suggests that she has accepted her place in the domestic space of her house: "'Oh, what is going to happen now?'" (185). Even though her utterance does not foreshadow what actually will happen next, in light of the previous discussion, Bertha does not try to rebel but rather seems annoyed at the fact that her ideal life has proved to be merely a polished surface. In the end, neither of them is truly comfortable in the home or with their life in general, and they have been analyzed on an individual level to show that their sense of place is largely societal. Bertha's implied resignation emphasizes the correlation to Linda by the fact that they are both being complicit with patriarchy. When they are inside the patriarchal domestic home they act as their 'secret selves,' but when they come in contact with nature, their real selves emerge.

The aloe and the pear tree function as means to evoke Linda and Bertha's real selves. These women characters are most true to themselves in the presence of the two trees, which is why the plants come to symbolize their lives. While Linda reads the aloe as representing her thoughts and her latent rejection of sexuality, Bertha projects her resignation on the pear tree. The pear tree stands firm in the garden, and nature's creatures circulate around it. Similarly, Bertha stands firm in her home, with people fluctuating around her. The pear tree cannot control what affects it, and Bertha cannot control who will affect her life. Whereas Linda resorts to regression to find a sense of place, Bertha can be seen as not having reached adulthood yet, and she is struggling to find a sense of place. By portraying the young mothers as children, Mansfield's shows that imposing values form society prevent them from creating an adult sense of place. This is also what the end of "Bliss" entails: Bertha's entry into adulthood due to the realization that her world is but a shadow of the perfect life that she wishes she had. The

tree is a creation of nature, and Bertha is forced to realize that her life is nothing near as natural, but rather meticulously polished and decorated, just like a doll's house.

Thus, Bertha's sense of place is not threatened either by lack of materiality or social fulfillment, but rather her place in society. Her sense of place is hence more tied to Creswell's philosophical way of being-in-the-world than to how Tuan creates a sense of place built on familiarity, security, and materiality. Nothing in this urban London story is authentic, making it impossible for any of its characters to form a sense of place because they themselves are not authentic. Not even the protagonist is allowed to have her sense of place, which is also a result of the ideal imposed on women at the time. Contrary to her own belief, Bertha is living up to the standards of the conventional middle-class woman who is bound to the home, and is not as modern as she would like to believe.

Conclusion

This essay has primarily used Yi-Fu Tuan's theoretical framework of the concepts of space and place in order to analyze characters' senses of place in Katherine Mansfield's short stories. The main focus of the essay has been to examine the individual character's sense of place in her New Zealand story "Prelude," while her European story "Bliss" has been approached from a larger, societal perspective. The sense of place in "Prelude" proved to be more concrete than in "Bliss," because the members of the Burnell family convey their thoughts about their physical surroundings, like the home and garden, in a more detailed way than Bertha does. Another reason why "Prelude" offered a more concrete reading is that the Burnell family covers larger ground in comparison to Bertha Young who only moves from the near proximity of her home to the inside of it. The Burnell family's ostensible freedom allows them to access multiple places both inside and outside, making their ability to form a sense of place greater than that of Bertha who is basically confined to one space.

In "Prelude," Mansfield lets her narrative wander freely between the minds of her characters, which enables them to individually convey what they are feeling about

their surroundings and their way of being-in-the-world. There is a difference between how children and adults form a sense of place. Kezia's sense of place is chiefly affected by her mother who forces her outside, resulting Kezia not feeling comfortable inside the home. Rather, she is more connected to nature, which serves a place for her to become aware of herself and the world. Similarly, the adults do not seem to be particularly comfortable inside the walls of the home, except for Mrs. Fairfield. Like Kezia, Linda seems more at ease outside the home, and this is also where she displays her real self. Aunt Beryl and Stanley are the most affected by mobility, which has caused Stanley to worry about being alienated from the home, and Beryl to develop multiple selves to display for different people.

In "Bliss," the portrayal of Bertha Young's consciousness helps to elucidate what it is like being a wife and mother in a middle-class household in 1920's London. Even though she does have an individual role, she is living according to conventional standards of a middle-class wife and mother at the time. She appears to be free and authentic at first but once she gets inside the home there is a shift and her life is portrayed more like a performance. The superficial conversations that the characters have invoke the feeling of a child playing with dolls. Bertha demonstrates childlike tendencies throughout the story, and her likeness to a child endures due to the fact that she is engaging in perpetual play. The pear tree symbolizes Bertha's awakening but also that she settles for a life that she does not want, displayed by the lack of indication of trying to change her life. The pear tree, and thus nature, here becomes Bertha's only connection to something that is real.

Mansfield's stories, being roughly a century old, have been vastly analyzed, but there are yet essays to be written on Mansfield and space and place. Hopefully, this essay will prove to be helpful in understanding "Prelude" and "Bliss" from a perspective dealing with space and place, where the conclusion is that the characters ultimately form a sense of place according to their own subjective senses, experiences, and way of being-in-the-world.

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