The Writer in Exile

States of In-Betweenness in Two Short Stories by Katherine Mansfield

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Abstract

This dissertation traces the imprint of exile in two short stories by Katherine Mansfield. Through a close reading of 'At the Bay' and 'The Garden Party', I want to focus on the way in which the development of the characters is inextricably linked to the places they inhabit, and argue that Mansfield's exile position is reflected in the unity of character and place, the liminal 'in-between' spaces, the use of symbolic landscape and the nostalgic rendering of New Zealand. In relation to the nostalgic descriptions, the archetypal image of the Garden of Eden and the utopian aspects of the pastoral Arcadia will be central to the discussion.

This enquiry places Mansfield's stories in a larger context of postcolonialism. Salman Rushdie and Edward Said's views on exile will be central to the discussion, as well as Homi K. Bhabha's theory of liminality, which will be related to Victor Turner's theory of rites of passage. The characters in Mansfield's stories experience in-between moments when they move from one mental state to the other. In my view, the attempt to describe transitory moments in order to preserve them is a reflection of her exile position.

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Lastly, I wish to thank my parents, sisters and wonderful friends for supporting me, putting up with me and for lending their ears in the occasional moments of frustration. I would particularly like to thank Jannike Elmblom Berger and Eirik Laugerud for the early morning coffee hours, Siren Frøytlog Hole, Tom Tolstrup Andersen and Kristin Borgenheim for all the lunch breaks throughout this year, and Solveig Skaland for helping me with proofreading.

Contents

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Katherine Mansfield has been on my list of favourite writers ever since I read the short story 'The Garden Party' in an introduction course on British literature. I remember that the short story had a profound effect on me as a new student of literature, and I was fascinated by Mansfield's style, subtlety and complex narrative structure. The mental note that Mansfield was a writer I would like to look further into has stayed with me throughout my studies, and has not been weakened although I did not come across Mansfield's stories in any other academic settings. After having completed several courses on postcolonial literature, it struck me that no reference had been made to Mansfield's New Zealand background in the introductory course. Throughout the lecture, seminar discussions and recommended secondary reading she was presented as one of the British modernists, and 'The Garden Party' was presented as a prime example of the modernist short story in English. The story does serve as a prime example, and Mansfield could certainly be loosely grouped with the British modernists, but the fact that the story was written by a New Zealander in exile at a time when New Zealand had been a relatively independent Dominion within the British Empire for fourteen years is problematic and should not be ignored. It cannot be expected that an introductory course must cover all the theoretical approaches to any given text, but I do think the fact that Mansfield was not born in England is central to understanding many aspects of her stories. This realisation has left me with an interesting topic to explore. Reading Mansfield with her colonial background in mind, with particular focus on her status as a writer in exile, does indeed produce alternative interpretations of her stories.

Critics have been eager to categorise Mansfield, and her literary afterlives are numerous and conflicting. She has proven to be a writer who is hard to pin down and the task of penetrating and dismantling the various categories is challenging. This is partly due to the notion that Mansfield inhabited contradictory and ambivalent positions throughout her literary career. The very concept of categorising writers has been used as a method of oppressing particularly female writers – even the term 'female writer' is a category. Some of the labels attributed to Mansfield certainly constitute a devaluation, and could be assigned to the out-spoken misogyny of past times. Although they seem almost comical to the modern eye, they do all the same mirror the hardships and unfair treatment many female writers have suffered.

Mansfield called herself 'the little Colonial',[1] and she has been referred to as 'the savage from New Zealand',[2] a doomed femme fatale,[3] a bohemian writer balancing on the fringes of the Bloomsbury group,[4] a marginalised female writer, a pioneer of the low status short story genre, and, according to friend and contemporary writer D.H. Lawrence, she was a writer who never fully succeeded because she was devoted to the short story format and did not develop her writing in the more reputable novel form.[5] In other words, Mansfield was considered marginal due to her gender, native origin and choice of genre.[6] The very attempt to make a nuanced presentation of Mansfield shows that she falls in-between established literary categories. A sense of in-betweenness is also typical of the exile position she inhabited, where she rested in-between homes, geographical locations and cultural identities. The starting point of this dissertation is the notion that Mansfield was a key modernist writer who revitalised the short story genre by treating the in-between experience of exile within a modernist literary form. In the course of this dissertation I will argue that Mansfield's exile position is reflected on several levels: through the unity between character and place, the use of symbolic landscape, the liminal places and spaces and the nostalgic rendering of New Zealand. In relation to the nostalgic descriptions, the archetypal image of the Garden of Eden and the utopian aspects of the pastoral Arcadia will be central to the discussion. I wish to broaden the scope of my enquiry by exploring the meeting points between postcolonialism and modernism. The characters in Mansfield's stories are often on the brink of something new and unfamiliar, they are vagrants, on the move, with a disturbed sense of social and cultural belonging.[7] They experience transitions from one state to another as they inhabit or cross over the liminal spaces of the bay, garden, holiday home, windowsill, gate, road and hallway. Mansfield's exile experience explains the recurrent treatment of images and tropes relating to home, homelessness, journeys, boundaries and states of in-betweenness. I will focus on two

[1] Bridget Orr, 'Reading with the Taint of the Pioneer: Katherine Mansfield and Settler Criticism' in *Critical Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Rhoda B. Nathan (New York: G. K. Hall, 1993), p. 54.
[2] Ali Smith, 'Introduction' to *The Collected Stories by Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. x.
[3] Orr, p. 49.
[4] Orr, p. 49.
[5] Roger Robinson, 'Introduction' in *In From the Margin: Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Roger Robinson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), p. 1.
[6] Few female writers from the pre-war era have been exempted from the scrutiny and sexist remarks of their male contemporary critics. Mansfield was naturally no exception. These remarks are by far outdated, and serve as examples of a discourse which has no place in literary research today. Remarks of this kind might seem provocative and even pathetic, but they nevertheless serve as examples of the ordeal of being a female writer in the early twentieth century and constitute a peripheral part of the body of Mansfield criticism.
[7] I owe gratitude to Roger Robinson's *In from the Margin: Essays on Katherine Mansfield* for providing an interesting angle and starting point.

short stories: 'The Garden Party' and 'At the Bay',[8] and show how the postcolonial issue of exile is brought to the forefront through the rendering of a symbolic New Zealand landscape. In my view, Mansfield's attempt to describe transitory moments in order to grasp, capture and preserve them is a reflection of her exile position.

This dissertation will combine postcolonial theory, which is one way of focusing on context, with close reading, which is text-specific. This is where the general meets the particular. In order to investigate Mansfield's exile position and the imprint it made on her stories, biography will be central, but not essential. She expressed herself not only through the medium of short stories, but also on a more private level, through journals, notebooks and letters. Selected passages from Mansfield's personal writings will help illuminate her awareness of the exile position she inhabited and the way it affected her aesthetic attitude. However, Mansfield's views on her situation and the circumstances under which the short stories at hand were produced are interesting, but cannot serve as the ultimate key to understanding the stories. At the same time, life and literature cannot be viewed as entirely separate units. In the case of Mansfield, I will argue that the circumstances under which she produced the short stories reflect the colonial condition of settlement and exile as well as other matters of universal value. I believe this context has been an area of neglect in Mansfield criticism and that is why it deserves further attention.

Any study which focuses on the interplay between author and text risks the sin of committing the 'intentional fallacy'. As proposed by W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley in the influential essay 'The Intentional Fallacy', one of the pitfalls of literary criticism is to look for the author's intention in any work of literature. As they proclaim, '[...] the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable […]'.[9] Correspondingly, Roland Barthes' epitaph 'The Death of the Author' claimed that author and text should not be equated, and wanted all traces of biography and author's intent removed from the field of literary research. Barthes argued: 'To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final significance, to close the writing'.[10] In Barthes' opinion, writing is 'the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin'.[11] This view of literature precludes a postcolonial approach, where the context of both the writer's voice and origin is crucial.

[8] Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Stories* (London: Penguin Books, 2007). All further references to the short stories are to this edition and the page numbers will be placed parenthetically in the text.
[9] W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and C. Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy' in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* ed. by W. K. Wimsatt Jr. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p. 3.
[10] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1990), p. 147.
[11] Barthes, p. 142.

Although some of their axioms are still relevant, for instance the focus on textual evidence found through the method of close reading, the field of literary research has naturally developed since Wimsatt, Beardsley and Barthes made their mark on the field of literary theory. I will propose the opposite approach: to give a text an author can open it up to new interpretations. This view is supported by more recent developments in literary theory, which show a return to context and the author, enabling literary scholars to focus on a wider frame of reference. Tendencies in literary critical approaches including feminist literary criticism, new historicism, queer theory and postcolonial literary theory show that critics have managed to break loose from the somewhat constraining hegemony of the New Critics and post-structuralists. As a consequence, in the other end of the scale, it may be argued that no works of literature are independent of their context. The approach to literature which forms the basis for and underpins this dissertation is the contention that no works of literature can exist in a vacuum. Kate Fullbrook has made a succinct articulation of this basic assumption: '[...] works of art do not exist in a timeless aesthetic zone, free from history. The notion of the autonomous aesthetic object has, for the time being, been removed from the baggage of the literary critic'.[12] In her study of Mansfield's stories, Fullbrook contests the very idea of ahistorical art, and argues that this idea has been replaced by a view of literature which pays attention to context and the historical circumstances of both the reader and the writer. As a consequence, the field of contemporary literary research has become increasingly eclectic, displaying the ability to combine approaches where it is possible and productive.

Colonial Contexts: Katherine Mansfield and the New Zealand Experience

Mansfield fits the pattern of many colonial writers who moved into exile at a young age. She was born Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp[13] in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1888. Her parents both descended from pioneers who had been silversmiths in England before they headed for the Australian goldfields in 1861. They later moved to New Zealand, where the family quickly rose on the social scale. Katherine's father, Harold Beauchamp, became director of the Bank of New Zealand and was knighted for 'distinguished public service, particularly in

[12] Kate Fullbrook, *Katherine Mansfield* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1986), p. 11.
[13] Mansfield wrote under the pen name 'Katherine Mansfield', a name she derived from her maternal grandmother, and her professional name is used in academic literary research. Although I do acknowledge that this was not her name by birth, I will refer to her pen name consistently throughout this dissertation.

connection with financial matters'.[14] Kathleen Jones describes the Beauchamp family as part of a commercial class which was in the process of underpinning the colonial aristocracy.[15] The family shared the sentiment of many settlers in the region: England was 'Home', New Zealand was 'out there'.[16] Due to their stable financial situation, the Beauchamp family could afford to send their children to school in England, and in 1903, at the age of 15, Katherine and her sisters left for England for the first time, where they attended Queen's College in London from 1903-1906. When Katherine returned to New Zealand, the impression of her native island had been radically altered by her experiences in the metropolitan centre. To her, New Zealand had become 'a small petty world', and she longed for her 'kind of people and larger interests'.[17] She found herself constantly 'homesick for England' and expressed her thoughts and feelings in journals and notebooks.[18] An awareness of the colonial context she was born into was also expressed through poetry included in her personal writings. Angela Smith argues that in the following early poem, 'To Stanislaw Wyspiansky', Mansfield expressed a conventional view of New Zealand as having no history until it was colonised. This is a play with colonial conventions, which Mansfield at the same time undermined:[19]

> From a little land with no history,
> (Making its own history, slowly and clumsily
> Piecing together this and that, finding the pattern, solving the problem,
> Like a child with a box of bricks),
> I, a woman, with the taint of the pioneer in my blood,
> Full of a youthful strength that wars with itself and is lawless,
> I sing your praises.[20]

The cultural environment in Wellington was far less stimulating than the milieu Mansfield had been part of in London. Although she had ready access to books and read the classics of the Western canon at great length, New Zealand at the time did not have a vibrant literary

[14] Heather Murray, *Double Lives: Women in the Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1990), p. 4.
[15] Kathleen Jones, *Katherine Mansfield: The Story-Teller* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 15.
[16] Antony Alpers, *Katherine Mansfield* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1954), p. 35.
[17] Gillian Boddy, '"Finding the Treasure," Coming Home: Katherine Mansfield in 1921-1922' in *In From the Margin: Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Roger Robinson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), p. 171.
[18] Alpers, p. 76.
[19] Angela Smith, 'Landscape and the Foreigner Within: Katherine Mansfield and Emily Carr' in *Landscape and Empire: 1700-2000*, ed. by Glenn Hooper (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p. 152.
[20] 'Landscape and the Foreigner Within', p. 152.

scene and offered no intellectual circles she could turn to. Musicians and touring theatrical companies did visit Wellington and put on performances, but they were always passing by on their way to the next destination, which reinforced the impression that culture was something that happened elsewhere, and had to be imported.[21] New Zealand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was to a great extent aware of its existence as a dependency, which functioned as 'a cultural transplant, cut off from the faraway metropolis'.[22] Isolated and far away from the metropolitan centre, the New Zealand community Mansfield was born into had retained and preserved English conventions.[23]

Mansfield had returned to New Zealand intent on becoming a published writer. Her first paid publication appeared in the periodical *The Native Companion* in 1907, the same year the colony of New Zealand was declared a Dominion within the British Empire. The fact that some of her stories were published when she lived in New Zealand might indicate that a certain degree of opportunity existed there. However, Mansfield could not escape the impression that New Zealand was socially barren, with fixed conventions, religion and morals, and the distance to the Old World turned out to be too long.[24] At the age of 20, Mansfield returned to London in July 1908, determined to become an artist, gain experience and try out different lifestyles. She had the habit of putting on acts and doing impersonations, and in a letter to a friend she articulated this urge: 'Would you not like to try all sorts of lives? One is so very small'.[25] She was affiliated with the modernist literary scene in London, where she met her future husband, writer and literary critic John Middleton Murry. Murry was the editor of the literary journal *Rhythm*, where Mansfield worked as co-editor and critic. This was also the medium through which most of her stories were published. Although she was called 'the underdog of the Bloomsbury group', the high social status offered to her, albeit colonial, did nevertheless enable her to walk in and out of various social and intellectual circles.[26] Mansfield fell ill, and the years spent in Europe were marked by constant shifts between locations in search of a cure for tuberculosis, combined with an incessant lack of

[21] Alpers, p. 80.
[22] Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, *Katherine Mansfield* (London: Macmillian Press, 1981), p. 4.
[23] Hanson and Gurr, p. 10.
[24] Alpers, pp. 94-95.
[25] Alpers, p. 109.
[26] C. K. Stead, 'Katherine Mansfield: The Art of the "Fiction"' in *In the Glass Case: Essays on New Zealand Literature* (Auckland: Auckland University Press), p. 30.

money. Although she received financial support from her father, the allowance did not allow an extravagant lifestyle.[27]

Her first collection of short stories, *In a German Pension*, was published in 1911, and *Bliss & Other Stories*, the second collection, was published in 1921. The two short stories which will be thoroughly analysed in this dissertation were published individually, but both were included in the collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories*, published in 1922. 'At the Bay' first appeared in the *London Mercury*, a monthly literary journal, and 'The Garden Party' was published in the *Westminster Weekly Gazette* in 1921. The stories were written during a stay in Montana, Switzerland, at a time when Mansfield's health was deteriorating. She underwent a series of radiation treatments for tuberculosis throughout 1922, but died of a severe haemorrhage on 9 January in Fontainebleau, France.[28] Although she had deliberately put a distance of 11682 miles between herself and her native home, it was the setting of the garden parties, summer houses and the landscape of New Zealand itself she returned to in her final stories.

What is striking about Katherine Mansfield as a writer is her ability to at the same time invite and resist categorisation. Some labels have been actively pursued by the writer herself in the search for a literary identity, and others have been attributed to her. Critics have tried to pin her down and place her where they believe she rightfully belongs, whether in the category 'female writer', 'English modernist' or 'commonwealth writer'. Distance and the idea that Mansfield never felt at home in either place was, according to Lydia Wevers, prerequisites for her work: 'The phenomenon of Katherine Mansfield's work could never be contained by the term 'New Zealand colonial' […], nor can it sit comfortably under the term 'English Modernist'.[29] Many critics have tended to present her as 'marginal'. I would argue that her various personal and literary ambitions are ambiguous. Colonialism in a broad sense presupposes a distance between centre and the margins. The fact that Mansfield was born in New Zealand suggests that she was from the margins of the Empire, and thus inhabited a marginal position. This marginality is enhanced by the fact that she was a female writer in a male-dominated literary world, and to a further disadvantage, she was a modernist writer who struggled to challenge the established literary norm. She was affiliated with the Bloomsbury group, but was not considered one of its central profiles. These are all examples which

[27] Alpers, p. 361.
[28] Saralyn R. Daly, *Katherine Mansfield* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), pp. xv-xvi.
[29] Lydia Wevers, 'The Short Story' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, ed. by Terry Sturm (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 203.

illuminate Mansfield's various in-between positions. The positions Mansfield inhabited, particularly in relation to her colonial status, have been investigated by Elleke Boehmer. According to Boehmer, Mansfield was a writer 'between worlds' both in terms of her ancestry and her literary affiliation. Boehmer describes Mansfield as a 'transient in Europe'[30] but does not make references to any transient aspect of her stories. Looking more closely at the etymology of the word 'transient' I think its relevance not only to Mansfield's literary position, but also to the style and subject matter in the stories, is remarkable. 'Transient' means 'passing by or away with time; not durable or permanent; temporary; transitory […], brief, momentary, fleeting'.[31] These aspects can be traced in her stories and show that the positioning of a writer can indeed have profound effects on the thematic and stylistic content of the writer's works. I would argue that the 'transitory, brief, momentary and fleeting' is reflected in Mansfield's portrayal of glimpses as well as her rendering of characters and landscapes in in-between states in the two stories at hand.

Emma Short has argued that Mansfield's exclusive devotion to the short story format embellished her sense of in-betweenness because the short story format was considered marginal in modernist literature, 'existing somewhere in between the more popular forms of the novel and poetry'.[32] Mansfield did not experience the degree of attention which has been given her work posthumously, including critical and popular readings, and in the course of her lifetime, Mansfield remained in-between recognition and being unknown to the public, affiliation and alienation, as well as in-between feeling at home either in margins of the Empire or the metropolitan centre. Her in-betweenness is enhanced by her colonial background, gender, social class and choice of literary form and genre. She expressed the feeling of alienation her colonial background produced in her personal writings:

> I am the little Colonial walking in the London garden patch – allowed to look, perhaps, but not to linger. If I lie on the grass they positively shout at me: 'Look at her, lying on *our* grass, pretending she lives here, pretending this is her garden, and that tall back of the house, with the windows open and the coloured curtains lifting, is her house. She is a stranger – an alien. She is nothing but a little girl sitting on the Tinakori hills and dreaming: "I went to London and married an Englishman, and we

[30] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 127.
[31] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.
[32] Emma Short, '"One is Somehow Suspended": Katherine Mansfield, Elizabeth Bowen and the Spaces In Between', unpublished paper presented at The Katherine Mansfield Society Conference 'Shaping Modernism: Katherine Mansfield and her Contemporaries' 26 March 2011, p. 6.

> lived in a tall grave house, with red geraniums and white daisies in the garden at the back'".[33]

Mansfield's colonial background, and her sense of dislocation and alienation, inspired the creation of characters who feel homeless, who rest uneasily in-between ignorance and experience, and who experience significant moments of in-betweenness. Mansfield also reflected on the qualities of great writers, and linked them to a colonial context. She wrote negatively about what she considered to be 'entertainment': '[…] the great writers of the past have not been "entertainers". They have been seekers, explorers, thinkers. It has been their aim to reveal a little of the mystery of life'.[34] Mansfield, then, aligned herself with writers she admired, and sought to define the universal trait which exists in all works of literature by great writers.

The Stories

With Mansfield's articulated longing for intellectual stimulation in the metropolitan centre in mind, surprisingly few of Mansfield's stories are set in England. Close to half of the stories are set in various countries in Continental Europe, mainly Germany and France, and the other half is set in New Zealand. Mansfield's characters are 'outcasts, exiles, minorities and fringe dwellers'.[35] They are often on the move, which seems to suggest that their cultural identity is not fixed but rather subject to transition and change. The context of transit is repeated, either literally in the form of journeys, or metaphorically, in the shape of the mental journeys of shifting thoughts, associations and moods. All major characters experience moments of significance, which is Mansfield's version of epiphanies, and the context the moments occur in have a metaphorical dimension which reflects impermanence. Wevers argues that the most significant feature of Mansfield's fiction is her ability to describe significant moments in flashes, at a crucial stage when the characters are able to reach beyond themselves. Mansfield

[33] Ian A. Gordon, 'Introduction' to *Undiscovered Country: The New Zealand Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Longman, 1974), p. xi.
[34] Mary H. Rohrberger, *The Art of Katherine Mansfield* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1977), p. 10.
[35] Roger Robinson, 'Introduction: In from the Margin' in *Katherine Mansfield: In from the Margin*, ed. by Roger Robinson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), p. 4.

achieves this with a 'concentrated focus on the particular as suggestive of something beyond itself'.[36] This applies to the two stories which will be analysed in this context. The members of the Burnell family in 'At the Bay' stay in a temporary location, their summer house, which is a space where various epiphanies occur, some of great and some of minor importance. The characters reflect on the passing of time, gender roles, family structure, the mortality of human life, the longing to travel as well as sexual liberation, and the epiphanies they experience are often sparked by particular natural elements in the landscape. In some instances the epiphanic moments are not fully realised, leaving the characters in states in-between experience and knowledge. Laura in 'The Garden Party' is physically and mentally on the brink of adulthood, and is persuaded to leave the garden to visit the widow of a dead neighbour. After having seen the body, it is uncertain to which extent her knowledge about life and death is increased. Both stories reflect impermanence and the anxiety of transitoriness in different ways.[37] The physical New Zealand landscape serves as a parallel to the mental landscapes of the characters, and displays unity in the way in which they reflect each other. The significance of the physical landscape comes into force through the analysis of its symbolic quality, which shows that the landscape is more than a passive backdrop.

The short stories Mansfield produced towards the end of her life show a return to the New Zealand setting. These are the stories where the imprint of exile can be identified and which problematise the exile experience, and also show that a return to the New Zealand setting turned out to be productive. It was a deliberate choice which marked a shift in style, structure and subject matter. Mansfield wrote in her journal:

> Now – now I want to write recollections of my own country. Yes, I want to write about my own country till I simply exhaust my store... Ah, the people – the people we loved there – of them, too, I want to write. Another 'debt of love'. Oh, I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World. It must be mysterious, as though floating. It must take the breath. It must be 'one of those Islands'...[38]

Angela Smith argues that the phrase 'our undiscovered country' reveals that Mansfield experienced writing as a 'process of exploration', both of the experienced, literal landscape,

[36] Wevers, p. 220.
[37] Wevers, p. 220.
[38] Mansfield in Hanson and Gurr, p. 16.

but also of a metaphorical landscape.[39] Moreover, this quote shows that Mansfield had a specific motivation for writing her New Zealand stories. The 'store' she wanted to 'exhaust' was 'a storehouse of memories'.[40] Here, Mansfield made it clear that her memories and experiences specifically located in a New Zealand setting provided the main source of material in the stories she was to produce in the subsequent years. She wanted to render the places she remembered from her childhood, and present the distinctiveness of the New Zealand landscape to the readers of 'the Old World'. In a way, she entered the role of a reversed colonial explorer, by wanting to rediscover and recapture something which had in fact already been discovered. Mansfield had a pioneering approach to fiction and compared fiction itself to a hidden country: 'People have never explored the lovely medium of prose. It is a hidden country still – I feel that so profoundly'.[41] Wevers argues that this quote displays Mansfield's literary ambitions, and presents an image of New Zealand as an 'undiscovered' territory. Not only did Mansfield renew 'the remembered places', she also renewed and re-invented them both culturally and textually, and brought these places into a new context: that of modernist European fiction.[42] The New Zealand stories show a development in literary technique and increased refinement, and they are the stories in which Mansfield found the form she became noticed for. Andrew Gurr claims that the attention paid to the 'intensely remembered incidents rather than constructed tales', is a significant part of the form.[43] The act of looking back is central in this connection, and seen in relation to the stories she wrote, it is clear that Mansfield did what she set out to do. This is why the quote resembles a literary manifesto which set the premise for the final stories she wrote. It is a passage with a turn of phrase which is both poetic and memorable as she directs attention toward memory, roots and the project of decreasing the distance between the 'Old' and 'New' world. As I will argue as the dissertation develops, Mansfield's wish to create literature which was 'mysterious, as though floating' is reflected in her descriptions of the landscape, and 'the people we loved there' are transformed into characters placed within a dynamic New Zealand landscape.

[39] 'Landscape and the Foreigner Within', p. 141.
[40] Gurr, p. 45.
[41] 'Landscape and the Foreigner Within', p. 141.
[42] Wevers, p. 219.
[43] Gurr, p. 53.

Mansfield Criticism: State of the Art

Mansfield's stories have attracted widespread critical attention, and the body of critical material is extensive. At first glance the material might seem chaotic and stretching in divergent directions, but Mansfield criticism falls neatly into six main categories: readings with a strong biographical bias, feminist criticism, readings with focus on period, genre and purely narratological readings. Readings with emphasis on her New Zealand origin make up the final category. Although marginal in Mansfield criticism as a whole, these readings have recently come into sharper focus. The most prominent and productive critics who have focused on her New Zealand background include Vincent O'Sullivan, Ian A. Gordon, Roger Robinson, Mark Williams and Lydia Wevers. O'Sullivan has edited several collections of Mansfield's stories as well as her personal writings, and has been a promoter for an essential New Zealand quality in her fiction. As editor of several collections, he has been able to influence readers by presenting her stories with emphasis on her native origin. Williams and Wevers have made considerable contributions, particularly with their readings of the early New Zealand stories.

Several feminist literary critics have made valuable contributions to the field. In tune with her critical affiliation, Kate Fullbrook in *Katherine Mansfield* (1986) focuses on gender patterns. The complex relationship between Mansfield and Woolf has also been the subject of critical enquiry, with Angela Smith's *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (1999) being the most influential. Smith compares Mansfield and Woolf's preoccupation with liminal spaces to the modernist epiphany and goes a long way in claiming that the literary projects of the two authors strongly resemble each other.

Readings which focus on genre are numerous, and also less controversial than the preceding categories of criticism. *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism* (1990) by Julia van Gunsteren includes in-depth analysis on the similarities between Mansfield's stories and the Impressionist movement. Her discussion of symbolism has been useful in the investigation of the symbolic quality of Mansfield's landscape.

Biographies on Mansfield flourish, which is not surprising considering the short, yet eventful, life Mansfield led. She was associated with the Bloomsbury group and the modernist literary scene and left behind vast amounts of correspondence and personal writings which constitute a solid base for biographical research. It is, however, vital to review this material with a critical eye. Most of the letters, journals and notebooks were edited by Mansfield's husband, author and literary critic John Middleton Murry. Other critics, among them Jeffrey

Meyers and Ian A. Gordon, have questioned Middleton Murry's motifs and accused him of lack of objectivity and credibility as a critic of Mansfield's work. Through the editing of her personal writings, Middleton Murry created a manipulated image of Mansfield which critics strongly object to.[44] It is the creation of a Mansfield 'cult' critics have been particularly critical of, and the worshipping of an image of the author which is far from nuanced. This 'cult' emphasises the tragic aspects of her life such as her illness, financial trouble and unstable mental condition, well in tune with the stereotyped image of the suffering artist or 'doomed femme fatale'. The notion that Mansfield pursued a bohemian lifestyle and had an ambiguous sexual orientation adds to this image. The 'Mansfield cult' becomes increasingly problematic when critics create a tendentious image of the author, using this image as basis for understanding her stories. C. A. Hankin's *Katherine Mansfield and her Confessional Stories* (1983) serves as an example. Other critics who have read the stories in light of biography include Anthony Alpers and Anne Friis, who have both presented a better-rounded and more objective image of author and stories. Recent publications include the biography *Katherine Mansfield: The Story-Teller* (2010) by Kathleen Jones, *Katherine Mansfield and the Modernism Marketplace* (2010) by Jenny McDonnell, *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays* (2011) and *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism* (2011) by Janet Wilson and Gerri Kimber.[45] These publications show that Mansfield's stories are of current critical interest and by far an out-dated field of literary research.

Postcolonial Theory

The interdisciplinary field of postcolonial theory is vast, complex and somewhat challenging to get a complete overview of. Its branches are far-reaching, stretching into and combining the fields of psychology, philosophy, feminism, politics, anthropology and literary theory.[46] Postcolonialism in literary studies grew out of Commonwealth literature, a term which emerged in academic discourse in the 1950s to describe literature from the former colonies of

[44] Ian A. Gordon, 'Katherine Mansfield in the Late Twentieth Century' in *The Fine Instrument: Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Paulette Michel and Michel Dupuis (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 2001), p. 18.
[45] The two volumes by Janet Wilson and Gerri Kimber were published too late in spring 2011 for me to acquire and read them. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to be present at the conference hosted by The Katherine Mansfield Society, 'Shaping Modernism: Katherine Mansfield and her Contemporaries' at the University of Cambridge in March 2011, where Wilson and Kimber were keynote speakers. Although I would have liked to obtain copies of these two books, it is a relief to know that I am familiar with much of the content.
[46] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 23.

the British Empire.[47] The term presented a celebratory view of literature from the former colonies, and proved to be insufficient to deal with the aftermath of colonialism following the struggle for independence. 'Postcolonialism' is a more nuanced approach which confronts the effects, mostly negative, of colonialism such as racism, exploitation and cultural dependence,[48] and has been considered a more appropriate and applicable umbrella term. Theories of power relations, cultural imperialism, identity, national culture, representation, ethnicity, race, language and diaspora are some of the areas it comprises. It also includes theories of exile, place and displacement. All in all, it attempts to evaluate all the effects of Imperialism and colonial rule.

Many attempts at defining postcolonialism have been made. The following definition could serve as a point of departure:

> We use the term 'post-colonial' [...] to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. [...] We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted.[49]

The 'holy Trinity' of postcolonial theory consists of the critics Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Edward Said. A work which has been both heavily influential, but also severely criticised, is *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. First published in 1989, it addressed postcolonial issues and helped build the foundation for postcolonial literary theory. Although ground-breaking at the time of its publication, *The Empire Writes Back* is now considered to be somewhat out-dated. John McLeod argues that Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin do not consider gender differences between the writers they discuss, nor do they account for national differences, and they take for granted that all writers from former colonies write against colonial discourses.[50] Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have been accused of making generalisations, over-simplifying complex matters, as well as applying the same yardstick to former colonies with divergent histories. Some of the definitions presented in *The Empire*

[47] McLeod, p. 10.
[48] McLeod, p. 16.
[49] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 2.
[50] McLeod, pp. 27-28.

Writes Back are, however, still useful. The critics do not commit the fallacy of placing all former colonies in the same category, and they distinguish between 'settler' and 'invaded' colonies. New Zealand falls into the category 'settler colony', which also includes Canada, the United States and Australia. All settler colonies were occupied by European colonists, who transplanted the dominating culture to a foreign location. In this way, they retained a non-Indigenous language.[51]

The short story has been a genre particularly apt to treat colonial and postcolonial issues, and it is associated with many writers from former colonies.[52] The genre tends to flourish in cultures which are not completely developed, in other words it is 'the mode preferred by those writers who are not writing from within a fixed and stable cultural framework.'[53] It has traditionally held a strong position in New Zealand, and its privileged status can be partly explained by the fact that the reading public was a fairly small and homogenous group. The tradition of publishing short stories in local periodicals, journals and magazines enabled the writers to address a local readership, but this form of publishing was fragile and often of short durability.[54] Novels were published at 'Home', i.e. in Britain, especially aimed towards a British readership. When national awareness started growing in New Zealand in the 1920s and onward, many writers chose to follow the tradition strengthened by Mansfield and Frank Sargeson, another influential New Zealand writer, and chose the short story form deliberately to distance themselves from Europe and its hegemonic cultural discourse.[55] The colonial condition marked by ambiguities and anxieties is allegedly more easily articulated through the medium of short fiction.[56]

According to Wevers, Mansfield did not employ a colonial narrative model with emphasis on descriptions of 'local colour', oral narrative, stereotypes and the landscape as subject in her latest New Zealand stories, but three of the earlier New Zealand stories already mentioned could fit this pattern: 'The Woman at the Store', 'Ole Underwood' and 'How Pearl Button was Kidnapped' all have a strong regional flair.[57] However, the later stories set in New Zealand have a distinctively different set of features. Although the distinction between the early and later stories proposed by Wevers is valid to some extent, I would argue that the

[51] *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 25.
[52] See for instance the short stories of R. K. Narayan, Alice Munro, Ben Okri, and Nadine Gordimer.
[53] Wevers, p. 203.
[54] Wevers, p. 203.
[55] Wevers, p. 203.
[56] Wevers, p. 205.
[57] Wevers, p. 216.

landscape as subject, an aspect which Wevers ascribes to the earlier stories, features even more prominently in the later stories. Even though the later stories present a softer and more subdued version of the landscape, the fact that it is personified and clearly both reflects and provokes change in the characters who inhabit it, makes the landscape an active force rather than a passive backdrop.

Placing New Zealand

The British Empire brought binary oppositions into play. At the core of the Imperial ideology lay the assumption that Imperial Europe was the 'centre', and the rest of the world became as a consequence the 'margin' or 'periphery' of culture, power and civilisation.[58] New Zealand was first discovered by Polynesians 925 AD, and saw an increase in Maori migration from 1350 onwards. The islands were already inhabited when the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman landed on the western coast in 1642, and immigration from the Imperial centre proliferated in the years following James Cook's mapping of the coastline in 1769. New Zealand became a Crown colony in 1841, achieved self-government in 1856, and was declared a Dominion of the British Commonwealth in 1907. The first major white settlements date back to 1850, and consisted mainly of workers and farmers who 'dreamed not of escape, of ease from degradation and brutality, but of an establishment, a rational and easy transformation of their homeland into a purified – and to a degree – democratised "brighter Britain" at the Antipodes'.[59] To put into perspective how short the history of Wellington as settlement is, Gurr points out that it was founded less than fifty years before Mansfield was born. Because cultural values evolve at a slower pace than political changes, the community Mansfield grew up in was imitative of suburban England.[60] Jeffrey Meyers draws a picture of the intellectual environment prevalent in New Zealand towards the end of the nineteenth century, and points to the fact that a settler community is bound to be concerned with material rather than intellectual matters because the pursuit of material comfort was the main motivation for most

[58] *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 32.
[59] Joseph and Joanna Jones, *New Zealand Fiction* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), p. 5.
[60] Gurr, p. 35.

settlers.[61] This 'raw pioneering country', as Meyers calls it, rejected culture, and was conservative, conformist and diligent.[62]

At the core of any settler culture lies a contradiction. This contradiction is accounted for by Stephen Turner in the essay 'Being Colonial/Colonial Being', in which he argues that the colonial subject wants to subordinate the new place to the dominant culture of the home country, and to aim for the highest degree of similarity as possible. But, at the same time, the colonial wants to be of, and feel at home in, the new place.[63] This self-contradiction represents the discontinuity of settlement, which is expressed in the stories at hand. New Zealand in the early twentieth century could be considered an outpost of the British Empire, at least by geographical standards, and the fact that it consists of islands could create a sense of island mentality and isolation. D.M. Davin describes islands at a crossroads, 'no longer English and not yet New Zealand'.[64] The rise of a national consciousness was sparked by the poet R. A. K. Mason, whose poems first appeared in 1923. This is coincidentally also the year of Mansfield's death. Mason's poems sought to define the distinctiveness and essential character of New Zealand, and set off a whole movement attempting to do the same. During the 1920s, there was a shift from a colonist to a national mentality particularly expressed through poetry celebrating New Zealand's uniqueness. Throughout the decade, the sense of the island's isolation, physical character and history was defined and put into sharper focus.[65] Mansfield did not experience this rise in national consciousness. We should not speculate whether or not this would have changed her attitude toward her native home, but simply state that the lack of national consciousness maintained a cultural gap which made her, and other New Zealanders, look back to the Old World.

Space and Place

Postcolonialism is inextricably linked to place. Although not always explicitly discussed, place is always central to any postcolonial inquiry. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and

[61] Jeffrey Meyers, *Katherine Mansfield: A Darker View* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002), p. 2.
[62] Meyers, p. 2.
[63] Stephen Turner, 'Being Colonial/Colonial Being' in *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, No. 20, 2002, p. 40. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20112341> [Accessed 28 February 2011]
[64] D. M. Davin, 'Introduction to New Zealand Short Stories' in *Readings in Commonwealth Literature*, ed. by William Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 94.
[65] Andrew Gurr, 'The Two Realities of New Zealand Poetry' in *Readings in Commonwealth Literature*, ed. by William Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 101.

Tiffin, a sense of place is important because it is embedded in cultural history, legend and language, and it becomes a concept of struggle when colonialism creates a shift by interfering.[66] This interference can create a feeling of displacement in the people who have moved to the colonies. In post-colonial texts, the place the characters inhabit is of great importance because it problematises both cultural and political matters.[67] It is also a highly relevant source of identity and belonging and, as a possible consequence, it can induce feelings of homelessness and alienation. With reference to the succeeding discussion of modernism and postcolonialism, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin draw a parallel between place in colonised societies and the discontinuity caused by modernity 'in the links between time, space and place in European societies', which is often treated in modernist texts.[68]

The sense of place in Mansfield's stories forms the basis for some of the aspects this dissertation sets out to discuss. Before attempting a detailed analysis of the stories at hand, certain aspects of place and space in general need to be clarified. First of all, the spatial segment in any fictional text is often of great importance to the characters who inhabit it because place is linked to identity formation.[69] Secondly, it is problematic to clearly define the concepts of place and space. What de Lange et al. articulate as a point of departure in the introduction to the collection of essays called *Landscape and Place: From Modernism to Postcolonialism*, is their understanding of both terms and the way they are presented in literary texts. They claim that the concept of place is an element of space, and uphold that 'place' has a distinctly spatial and temporal quality. It is a fixed concept, while 'space' is more indeterminate.[70] Thirdly, and most importantly, the term 'landscape' negotiates the difference between space and place. A landscape is rooted in a specific area or region, and can consist of several places. This is a quality which space does not have to the same extent.[71] The stories that will be analysed in this context are set in New Zealand, and they both problematise the relationship between character and place.

Another distinguishing feature of the distinction between place and space is the notion that place deals with issues of identity: 'If places are no longer the clear supports of our identity, they nonetheless play a potentially important part in the symbolic and psychical

[66] Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 161.
[67] Attie de Lange, Gail Fincham, Jeremy Hawthorn and Jakob Lothe, *Literary Landscapes: From Modernism to Postcolonialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2008), p. xiii.
[68] *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 161.
[69] de Lange et al., p. xiii.
[70] de Lange et al., p. xv.
[71] de Lange et al., p. xiv.

dimension of our identifications. It is not spaces which ground identifications, but places'.[72] De Lange et al. go on to argue that space becomes place by being named.[73] This is why the setting of Mansfield's stories can be referred to as 'place' rather than 'space'. Place, then, can be seen as an integration of nature and culture,[74] which is clearly expressed in the stories at hand.

By focusing on landscape and how it functions in a colonial setting, this dissertation is underpinned by a social constructionist approach to place. According to Tim Cresswell, this approach deals with the particularity of places but is mostly concerned with the underlying social processes. This approach involves descriptions of the distinctive features of a given place, but also the wider process of constructing place in general under the conditions of postcolonialism:[75]

> The idea of place encompasses both the idea of the social activities and institutions that are expresses in and through the structure of a particular place […] and the idea of the physical objects and events in the world […] that constrain, and are sometimes constrained by, those social activities and institutions.[76]

In the social construction of place, meaning linked to materiality is central. Materiality, 'the very fabric of a place', is also a product of society.[77] In Mansfield's New Zealand stories, materiality creates meaning by the symbolically charged elements in the landscape.

Modernism and Postcolonialism: A Common Ground

'Modernity and modernism are rooted in Empire',[78] Bill Ashcroft and John Salter argue. This is reflected in the awareness of place in postcolonial discourse. Even when place is not part of

[72] de Lange et al., p. xvi.
[73] de Lange et al., p. xvi.
[74] Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Conventry: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 18.
[75] Cresswell, p. 51.
[76] J. E. Malpas in Cresswell, p. 31.
[77] Cresswell, p. 30.
[78] Bill Ashcroft and John Salter, 'Modernism's Empire: Australia and the Cultural Imperialism of Style' in *Modernism and Empire: Writing and British Coloniality 1890-1940*, ed. by Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 293.

the main focal point of any given postcolonial enquiry, it is always implicit in the issues discussed. The treatment of issues relating to place presents a point of intersection between postcolonialism and modernism, because modernism is also concerned with the individual subject in place: 'Place does not merely denote landscape but refers to the process of representation itself; it refers to the struggle of a displaced society trying to find the words and the images with which it might constitute a reality that was separate, marked by difference rather than diversity'.[79] Ashcroft and Salter argue that one of the main problems treated by modernist artists between the wars was this: 'What does it mean to be alive in this place?'[80]

According to Patrick Williams, modernism as a movement has been more self-conscious than preceding movements. By this, he means that modernist artists have to a large extent been concerned with self-definition through programmes and manifestos.[81] Mansfield did not assign to a specific literary programme, and she did not comply with one unified or comprehensive aesthetic theory, but she did reflect on form and style, and articulated her artistic goals in her critical and personal writings.[82] The act of looking back, which is inextricably linked to her position as a writer in exile, as well as the stylistic impact of using memory to create fiction, is articulated in a personal letter:

> I always remember feeling that this little island had dipped back into the dark blue sea during the night only to rise again at beam of day, all hung with bright spangles and glittering drops . . . I tried to catch that moment – with something of its sparkle and its flavour. And just as on those mornings white milky mists rise and uncover some beauty, then smother it again and then again disclose it, I tried to lift that mist from my people and let them be seen and then hide them again.[83]

Although Mansfield's life was unconventional, she nevertheless fits a pattern linked to modernism and migration within the Empire. Mansfield was part of a cultural elite; she was one out of many writers who moved into exile at a young age as part of the migration of

[79] Ashcroft and Salter, p. 304.
[80] Ashcroft and Salter, p. 305.
[81] Patrick Williams, '"Simultaneous Uncontemporaneities": Theorising Modernism and Empire' in *Modernism and Empire: Writing and British Coloniality 1890-1940*, ed. by Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 13.
[82] Mary H. Rohrberger, *The Art of Katherine Mansfield* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1977), p. 8.
[83] Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Vincent O'Sullivan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), vol. 1, p. 331.

intellectuals to the metropolitan centre which Said has called the 'Voyage In'.[84] Here, Mansfield became part of an intellectual environment in the metropolis. Paradoxically, many writers of modernist literature in English have been exiles and émigrés, for instance the central figures of Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats and Henry James.[85] This tendency is also reflected in Mansfield's position. The modernist narrative technique she employed, where the perspective is fragmented, 'double-voiced' and expresses incompleteness, reflects colonial disorientation.[86] Boehmer claims that Mansfield's technique is symptomatic of the writing of her own time, and at the same time it reflects the 'internal incompleteness' by representing her geographic displacement. The portrayal of New Zealand as a magical lost world, is, according to Boehmer, an expression of a formal disjunction which is characteristic of modernist writing.[87]

Exile, Expatriatism and Liminal Spaces

Many writers who find themselves placed in a foreign setting look back to their home country in search of literary material. The condition of exile is inevitably an in-between position which can be both limiting and liberating. The sense of in-betweenness caused by migrancy can cause disillusionment, pain, fragmentation and discontinuity,[88] but it could also be a creative force and source of new modes of expression. In order to discuss the effects of exile in general, and Katherine Mansfield's situation in particular, we need to define the concept. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, exile is 'enforced removal from one's native land according to an edict or sentence; penal expatriation or banishment; the state or condition of being penally banished; enforced residence in some foreign land'. This definition reflects the involuntariness of exile, the notion that exile is a condition which is forced upon a subject. If we maintain the aspect of removal from one's native land, but add the aspect of voluntariness, the term 'expatriation' is well suited to describe the position of many writers throughout history. An expatriate is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 'of, or pertaining to, or being an expatriate; living in a foreign country especially by choice'.

[84] Williams, p. 25.
[85] Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés: Studies in Modern Literature* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 9.
[86] Elleke Boehmer, '"Immeasurable Strangeness" in Imperial Times: Leonard Woolf and W. B. Yeats' in *Modernism and Empire: Writing and British Coloniality 1890-1940*, ed. by Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 107.
[87] Boehmer, p. 107.
[88] McLeod, p. 216.

These distinctions draw different images of the exiled and the expatriate writer. Whereas the exiled writer is associated with the displaced fugitive, the expatriate is merely living abroad in search of comfort. Are the distinctions really that straight-forward? A clarification and a more careful distinction might be useful in this context. Mary McCarthy has distinguished between various degrees of exile. She regards the exile as 'a bird forced by chill weather at home to migrate but always poised to fly back', constantly waiting for the chill weather to change.[89] Gurr expands on McCarthy's distinction between 'exile' and 'expatriate' by arguing that the expatriate tends to be a migrant, constantly on the move between metropoles.

The term 'creative exile' seems to combine elements from the terms 'exile' and 'expatriatism'. Whereas the definition of 'exile' seems exclusively negative, suggesting bereavement and displacement, 'expatriation' suggests freedom and personal benefits from living abroad. What the term 'creative exile' suggests, is a condition of voluntary removal from one's native land, which is a premise for the pursuit of artistic goals and productivity, but which at the same time might induce a sense of alienation, loss and displacement. Salman Rushdie's views support the creative benefits of exile, but do not exclude the negative consequences altogether. In the influential essay 'Imaginary Homelands', he claims that the author in exile will always be influenced by the distance to the home country to some extent, a distance which is destined to put its mark on the writing regardless of whether the author defines himself as 'exiled', 'emigrant' or 'expatriate':

> It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands […]. It may be that when the Indian writer who comes from outside India tries to reflect the world, he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost.[90]

[89] Andrew Gurr, *Writers in Exile*: *The Identity of Home in Modern Literature* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1981), p. 18.
[90] Salman Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands' in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 428-429.

In Rushdie's view, the position of being 'out-of-country' can enable the writer to address subjects of universal appeal more directly. Mansfield has expressed the same urge as Rushdie to 'reclaim' and 'look back' to her 'undiscovered country', and her literary production shows that the 'broken mirror' can be as valuable as the one that is unflawed.[91]

Edward Said has also investigated the complex links between exile and literature, and presents a view in conflict with Rushdie's idea of the value of exile. Said's outlook on the concept of exile is markedly negative, and focuses on the limiting effects of exile. According to Said, exile is a 'condition of terminal loss', 'an unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home', which involves the 'crippling sorrow of estrangement'.[92] Said traces the history of exile in modern European thought, and argues that although exile is associated with trauma, it has nevertheless been transformed into an enriching motif of modern culture:

> Because exile […] is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past. They generally do not have armies or states, although they are often in search of them. Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people. The crucial thing is that a state of exile free from this triumphant ideology – designed to reassemble an exile's broken history into a new whole – is virtually unbearable and virtually impossible in today's world.[93]

Said addresses the kind of exile which is often the consequence of censorship, banishment and political prosecution, but it does apply to self-imposed exile as well. Voluntary exile could also be a state of 'never being satisfied, placid, or secure.[94] It is hard to decide whether or not Mansfield experienced the sense of displacement caused by exile which Said describes. Known circumstances of her life may, however, indicate that she could identify with some of the negative aspects being in exile can induce. Writers from settler colonies tend to treat recurrent thematic aspects in their writing: exile, the problem of defining home, as well as the physical and emotional confrontations with the 'new' land.[95] The dialectic relationship between the 'Old World' and the 'New World' is often treated in literature from settler

[91] Rushdie, p. 429.
[92] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001), p. 173.
[93] Said, p. 177.
[94] Said, p. 186.
[95] *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 27.

colonies. The distance between the old and new world creates a gulf, and, according to Allen Curnow, the new represents 'something different, something nobody counted on'.[96] This gulf also invites the treatment of in-between positions, and negotiation between the dominating culture and the settler culture. Wevers argues that displacement figures on two levels in Mansfield's fiction: physically, in her choice of setting, and figuratively, as her characters are often in transit.[97]

In the field of postcolonial theory, the in-betweenness of the exile position is one of the aspects critics have focused on. Homi K. Bhabha, one of the most influential postcolonial critics, has, among many related issues, been preoccupied with diaspora and exile. In the introduction to *The Location of Culture*, he states that it is characteristic of our time 'to locate the question of culture in the realm of the *beyond'*.[98] People who live 'border lives' between nations, experience situations characterised by thresholds, boundaries and barriers. Borders are ambivalent and full of contradictions, and function as intermediate locations where the subject can move beyond a barrier.[99] Bhabha argues:

> [...] the 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past [...], we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.[100]

McLeod stresses that these categories might seem like binary oppositions, but in Bhabha's view they rather represent a crossing. Rather than being binary oppositions, they function as categories which commingle and conflict, and this negotiation involves the act of crossing over from one state to the other. Bhabha's reflection on the word 'beyond' involves an emphasis on transitoriness, as well as the terms 'liminal', 'interstitial' and 'hybrid'.[101]

In the course of this dissertation the term 'liminality' will be central. 'Liminality', as the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* will tell us, is 'a transitory or indeterminate state between culturally defined stages of a person's life; [...] a state occupied during a ritual or rite

[96] *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 136.
[97] Wevers, p. 219.
[98] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 1.
[99] McLeod, p. 217.
[100] Bhabha, p. 2.
[101] McLeod, p. 217.

of passage, characterised by a sense of solidarity between participants'.[102] The word 'limen', from which the term derives, means threshold, which in psychology indicates 'the threshold between the sensate and the subliminal, the limit below which a certain sensation ceases to be perceptible'.[103] Bhabha relates liminality to race and cultural hybridity, two postcolonial aspects which will not be relevant in this context. His use of the term 'liminality' may, however, also be linked to the modernist epiphany, making it a useful term to describe the process characters undergo when they enter liminal spaces in-between ignorance and knowledge. Bhabha explains: '"Beyond" signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future; [...] – the very act of going beyond'.[104]

Mikail Bakhtin relates in-betweenness to the chronotope of threshold, and other related spaces such as the street, hallway and staircase. Bakhtin focuses on the possibilities of the threshold, which facilitates events and epiphanies, but also argues that it can represent a break or moment of crisis in life.[105] The threshold is often symbolic and metaphorical, and when it figures in literature, time is instantaneous. By this, Bakhtin means that time has no duration and surpasses biographical time. In the space of the threshold, time becomes 'palpable and visible' and hence functions as the primary mode for materialising time in space.[106] As the analysis of the threshold experiences in the following chapters will show, the materialising of time in space is one way of imbuing landscape with significance beyond verisimilitude or realism.

Liminality and threshold experiences may also be related to rites of passage.[107] In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structures*, Victor Turner creates a theoretical basis for the ritual processes which involve 'thresholds, transitions and margins'.[108] Turner cites Arnold van Gennep, who defined rites of passage as 'rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age'.[109] Furthermore, van Gennep identifies three phases in the process of transition: separation, margin and aggregation. The first phase involves detachment of the individual from the group. In the liminal period, the individual enters an ambiguous

[102] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.
[103] Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2007, p. 117.
[104] Bhabha, p. 6.
[105] M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 248.
[106] Bakhtin, p. 249.
[107] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine, 1995), p. xvi.
[108] Turner's theory about liminality originally described the processes in rites of passage in the Ndembu tribe in Africa, but he argues that it has proven to be applicable to analyses of rites in myths, literature, politics as well as utopian ideas, which fits well with the topic at hand (*The Ritual Process*, p. 94).
[109] *The Ritual Process*, p. 94.

territory which carries few of the attributes of the past or coming state.[110] The passage is consummated in the third phase, where the individual once again regains stability. In her readings of Mansfield's short stories, Emma Short has identified three categories of liminal spaces.[111] The first category, which figures most frequently in Mansfield's stories, includes the transitional spaces. These spaces exist literally in-between one place and the other, and include windows, balconies, gardens, doorways, coastal locations, staircases, hallways and various means of transport such as omnibuses, buggies and trains. This is where transition tends to occur. The second category includes spaces which are associated with temporary visits, such as hotel rooms, shops, cinemas and cafés. The third category includes the uncanny spaces such as other people's houses, holiday homes or vacant houses.[112] Mansfield expressed her fascination with the transitional in-between spaces in a letter of 1921:

> Don't you think the stairs are a good place for reading letters? I do. One is somehow suspended. One is on neutral ground – not in one's own world nor in a strange one. They are an almost perfect meeting place. Oh Heavens! How stairs do fascinate me when I come to think of it. [...] People come out of themselves on stairs – they issue forth, unprotected.[113]

Turner argues that the attributes of liminality and 'threshold people' are ambiguous because these persons 'slip through the network of classification that normally locates states and positions in cultural space'.[114] As Turner eloquently sums up: 'Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial'.[115] This is why I would argue that Turner's concept of liminality serves as a useful model for the study of exile, and helps illuminate Mansfield's preoccupation with the unstable liminal spheres. As I will elaborate in the later discussion of the short stories, Turner's theory fits well with Laura's development and coming-of age process in 'The Garden Party', which reflects liminality by following the pattern of the rite of passage, whereas liminality in 'At the Bay' is expressed through the constantly changing atmospheres, in-between moments and glimpses the characters experience.

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[110] *The Ritual Process*, p. 94.
[111] Short, p. 4.
[112] Short, p. 4.
[113] *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, p. 4.
[114] *The Ritual Process*, p. 95.
[115] *The Ritual Process*, p. 95.

Concluding Remarks

The condition of exile can be reflected in works of literature. Katherine Mansfield's short stories 'The Garden Party' and 'At the Bay' both bear the imprint of the creative exile she wilfully moved into, and the effect of looking back is reflected in her choice of setting and in the descriptions of characters and place. She was undoubtedly devoted to the New Zealand setting, and the New Zealand landscape is, using Rushdie's metaphor, represented in 'fragments of broken mirrors', and remains a fictional country of the mind. Mansfield did not only look back to her native home, she also looked back in time, and promoted nostalgic images of the familiar places she remembered from her childhood. Mansfield's life fits Bhabha's description of a 'border life', and the social status offered by her colonial background could have inspired her fascination with threshold experiences, boundaries and barriers. The characters in the two selected stories by Mansfield all figure in liminal spaces and 'moments of transit' between the culturally defined stages of a person's life such as for instance childhood and adulthood. The postcolonial concerns reflected in the stories are brought to the forefront through the symbolic rendering of the New Zealand landscape.

CHAPTER 2: 'At the Bay'

This chapter will present a close reading of 'At the Bay' and direct special attention to the connections between place and character. Three characters stand out and will be more closely examined: Beryl, Linda and Jonathan. These characters all experience in-between moments and epiphanies, and their experiences are at the threshold. I will argue that the epiphanies are triggered by elements in the New Zealand landscape, such as the sea, the fuchsia bush and the flowers on the manuka tree, in a way which creates unity and correspondence. The characters express failed or gained insight as a response to the landscape they are part of. In this way, characters and landscape are intimately connected. In the course of this chapter I will argue that two main aspects reflect Mansfield's position as writer in exile: firstly, the recurrent descriptions of liminal states which figure in the exterior worlds and the interior worlds of the characters, and secondly, the emphasis on nostalgic images of New Zealand. In this connection, I find the use of pastoral conventions particularly decisive.

Structure and Content

'At the Bay' was first published in 1921. It is one of Mansfield's longer stories, and like in 'Prelude' and 'The Doll's House', the Burnell family constitutes the main cast of characters. Both 'Prelude' and its sequel 'At the Bay', involve the structure Mansfield called 'the Prelude method', which means that the text 'unfolds and opens'.[116] The traditional plot is replaced by a chain of sections which 'unfold and open' as the narrative presents the thoughts, epiphanies, conversations, visions and mundane activities of the members of the Burnell family and some of the people who inhabit the Bay, throughout a single summer's day. The duration of one day from sunrise to sunset marks the temporal structure. The narrative opens with a long description of a morning scene: 'Very early morning. The sun was not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay was hidden under a white sea mist' (205). The first living creatures introduced are a flock of sheep and their shepherd. As the people who inhabit the bay wake up, the readers are introduced to the cast of characters. Grandma Fairfield, her daughters

[116] Ian A. Gordon, 'Introduction' to *Undiscovered Country: The New Zealand Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Longman, 1974), p. xix.

Beryl and Linda, Linda's husband Stanley Burnell and their children Kezia, Isabel, Lottie and an un-named infant boy make up the Burnell family. Other characters of relevance are the servant girl Alice, the neighbours Mrs. and Mr. Harry Kember, and Linda's brother-in-law Jonathan Trout. The first section introduces the personified landscape which enfolds in a morning scene, where the shepherd guides his sheep across the bay as the sun rises. In section 2, only 'a few moments after' (208) the shepherd and sheep move out of sight, Stanley Burnell wants to have a swim in private and is annoyed when Jonathan is there before he reaches the water. Jonathan experiences a feeling of well-being when he is lifted by the waves. It is evident that Stanley is domineering in the household. In section 3, the mood is markedly lifted when he finally goes to the office. Section 4 is devoted to the exciting childhood universe of the Burnell children Isabel, Lottie and Kezia, who go hunting for treasures in the sand, section 5 focuses on the women and children with their designated private time on the beach, and Beryl reveals her insecurity in front of Mrs. Harry Kember, and at the same time, Linda enjoys a moment of solitude under the manuka tree in the garden. In section 6, the reader is invited to follow Linda's thoughts on childbearing, childrearing and the passing of time. Kezia and Mrs. Fairfield have a conversation inside the bungalow during siesta time. In section 7, they talk about Mrs. Fairfield's son who died. Section 8 stands out from the rest. The reader follows Alice, the servant girl, who pays a visit to Mrs. Stubbs, the owner of the local shop. Descriptions of the children's games occur in section 9 as they have gathered in the washing-house to play cards. As darkness falls, they are frightened when Jonathan's face appears in the window. Jonathan is the focaliser in section 10, where he calls on Linda. He tries to articulate his sense of entrapment. Linda welcomes Stanley home from the office in section 11, and he apologises for his foul mood earlier that day. Beryl is the focaliser in the final section. She is up late at night and longs for a lover. Harry Kember appears in the garden and wants her to join him for a midnight stroll. When she realises he is drunk she rejects his sexual advances. Echoing the opening section, the story draws to a close when the day is over with the following concluding sentence: 'All was still' (245).

In 'Prelude' we come upon the Burnell family in the process of moving between houses. The two stories share certain thematic aspects: Linda's uninterested attitude towards childbearing and childrearing is displayed through her reluctance to 'give an eye to the children' (32), Stanley's dominance is reflected in the way his mood swings affect the entire household, Beryl is constantly picturing an imaginary lover and fears isolation in the countryside, and the children have a world of their own with games, vivid imagination and

intense sense perceptions. The title reflects beginnings, promise and the process of settling in a new house, but in the course of the story, the family never gets completely settled. The process of moving signifies a journey, which in Kezia's experience is 'into unknown country, along new roads with high clay banks on either side, up steep, steep hills, down into bushy valleys, through wide shallow rivers. Further and further' (17). Once they have reached their destination, the notion that the members of the Burnell family move between rooms that are only partly furnished, underlines the liminal quality of this particular location, but also the story as a whole.

Crescent Bay is the location of the Burnell family's summer house. The landscape in 'At the Bay' functions as the frame of the narrative, and the reader is initially introduced to a landscape virtually without people.[117] The physical landscape Mansfield describes in the beginning is characterised by distances, empty spaces, sky and water.[118] The landscape is enclosed in the area of the bay, with the sea in one end and the bush-covered hills in the other. The lush vegetation of the bay area is neatly rendered, as is the beach, which is used for recreation. Along the bay, a series of bungalows are scattered. Behind the bungalows, there is a 'vast mountainous country' with ravines, passes and 'dangerous creeks and fearful tracks that led to the water's edge' (224). The cast of characters is isolated on the coast.

The story is set during the summer holiday. This is a time of year which is markedly different from the rest of the year; it is temporary and the habits of everyday life come to a halt. Only Stanley Burnell still commutes to the office. The summer holiday, as a parallel to the process of changing house rendered in 'The Prelude', reflects impermanence and an in-between state.[119] In some sense, the rhythm of life reaches a slower pace during summertime, which in turn stimulates mental journeys which move outside the usual patterns of thought. In short, it enables the characters to reflect. The context of transit is not as evident in 'At the Bay' as in 'Prelude', 'The Voyage', or 'Honeymoon', but it is significant that the Burnells are in a temporary location and not their permanent home. Developing the idea of the summer house and its significance, I would argue that the characters are displaced for a short period of time. As already mentioned in the introduction, Wevers has argued that displacement in general figures on two different levels in Mansfield's fiction: physically, in her choice of

[117] Wevers, p. 245.
[118] Stead, p. 30.
[119] Wevers, p. 220.

setting, and figuratively, as the characters are often in transit.[120] Thus, in the story at hand, the context of transit is evident on a literal level, as the characters move around the bay and stay in the temporary location of their summer house, which is not their permanent home. But more importantly, I would argue that the context of transit is present on a metaphorical level through the emphasis on the transitoriness of the shifting atmospheres, the epiphanies the central characters experience as well as the mental journeys they undertake when their minds wander. The main characters are constantly rendered on transition points where they wander from one mental state to the other. It is in these particular moments, which will be thoroughly analysed as this chapter proceeds, the characters are able to reach beyond themselves.

The story does not have one single protagonist, and the shifting perspectives allow several of the characters to reveal their thoughts through interior monologues and visions. Although no protagonist is at the centre of the narrative as a whole, there is one main focaliser in each section. Mansfield employs a partially retrospective technique. When the minds of the characters wander, the reader becomes intimately acquainted with their complex mental make-up as their qualities are expressed through flashbacks and visions. Although the content of the short story includes both mundane events associated with everyday life, as well as existential reflection concerning life and death, Mansfield switches back and forth and does not linger on either trivial or grave issues. A telling example is the scene where Kezia and Mrs. Fairfield, her grandmother, are taking their siesta. Kezia observes that Mrs. Fairfield's eyes wander, which she interpretes as a sign that her mind also wanders. Mrs. Fairfield is thinking about her son, William, who died, which leads to a conversation about life and death. Mrs. Fairfield explains that everybody has to die, and that 'we're not asked […]. It happens to all of us sooner or later' (226). Kezia responds with astonishment when she grasps the extent of this realisation: '"Promise me! Say never!"' (227) she says and starts kissing her grandmother. The grave moment passes by quickly:

> 'Say never, say never, say never', gurgled Kezia, while they lay there laughing in each other's arms. 'Come, that's enough, my squirrel! That's enough, my wild pony!' said old Mrs. Fairfield, setting her cap straight. 'Pick up my knitting'. Both of them had forgotten what the 'never' was about (227).

[120] Wevers, p. 219.

Mansfield made it clear that she had a specific motivation for writing her New Zealand stories. As mentioned in the introduction, she had a 'store' she wanted to 'exhaust'. The 'store', according to Gurr, was 'a storehouse of memories'.[121] 'At the Bay' is a perfect example of how past experiences may be suitable material for fiction. The fact that Mansfield employed material from her childhood in the New Zealand stories is acknowledged by many critics, but to what extent the characters and places mirror actual people and places, is perhaps less emphasised. Alpers has compared actual biography to the characters who figure in Mansfield's stories, and displays a close linkage. He argues that Mansfield's wish to describe her native home was 'her duty, her object, and her achievement',[122] and by doing so, she introduced a new human experience to literature. When her family moved from Thorndon to Karori, a move similar to one the Burnell family made in 'Prelude', they did not move into a ready-made neighbourhood as the case would be had they been a family moving in England. As Alpers points out, the area they moved into had been covered by forest only fifty years earlier, and it was populated by colonists who also had been uprooted from the 'well-defined English social strata'.[123] Alpers contends that the loneliness and deprivation this experience caused became the 'indispensable element' of this particular story.

Although the text is not characterised by a marked colonial discourse, it is nevertheless subtly present. Evidence of a colonial experience is embedded in the narrative, especially through the use of imagery associated with colonialism. Beryl fans herself with a 'heart-shaped Fijian fan' (228). Another example is Linda, who sits in a steamer chair thinking of her childhood dream of sailing 'up a river in China' (221). Steamer chairs were originally used as furniture on boats, hence the name, and China was part of the Empire. Linda seems to reflect on the mobility of people within the Empire. Tropes relating to journeys are also part of her vocabulary as she uses the metaphor 'awful journeys' to describe her pregnancies (223). Another example is Jonathan, who compares his work situation and role as breadwinner and head of a family to that of a convict: 'Tell me, what is the difference between my life and that of the ordinary prisoner? The only difference I can see is that I put myself in jail and nobody's ever going to let me out' (237). He wants to travel and explore the 'vast dangerous garden, waiting out there, undiscovered, unexplored' (237). The children represent other aspects of exploration. C. A. Hankin points to the fact that the Burnell girls are compared to explorers: 'Seen from behind, standing against the skyline, gesticulating largely

[121] Gurr, p. 45.
[122] Alpers, p. 323.
[123] Alpers, p. 322.

with their spades, they looked like minute puzzled explorers' (214) as they search for 'treasures' in the sand. Pip exclaims: 'Look what I've discovered' (215).[124] These examples demonstrate that the colonial discourse of exploration, journeys and discovery is repeated. The actual journeys of the colonists serve as parallels to the inward journeys of the main characters. The notion that their minds wander signifies mental journeys, which shows that colonial concerns are metaphorically at play.

Place

The places characters inhabit are of great importance in colonial and postcolonial texts. Being a source of identity and belonging, they can also have the opposite effect: that of homelessness and alienation. D. E. S. Maxwell argues that it is quite understandable that exiled writers from the white Commonwealth countries took a special interest in the features of their physical surroundings in order to make sense of their present situation. Although the experiences of white Commonwealth writers are diverse, Maxwell argues that what they hold in common is an attachment to a remote society and culture. This attachment is evident in the rendering of the writers' surroundings.[125] This is why, according to Maxwell, the natural descriptions in these works of literature cease to be merely decorative. Rather than being merely decorative or function as 'pantheistic clichés', the natural description 'becomes a functional part of the artistic structure of the work' and thus contributes to the meaning of the text.[126] This is certainly the case of Mansfield's New Zealand stories. Mansfield employs images and symbols from the natural surroundings to create meaning, and seen in relation to each other, the images and symbols form a pattern which deserves further attention. Francine Tolron claims that both plants and animals appear as recurrent images in Mansfield's New Zealand stories.[127] She goes on to argue that the imagery is an important feature of Mansfield's style, which is marked by 'a sensibility almost morbidly alert to detail and to the evidence of the senses, to colour and shape, to the feel, smell and sound of things. . . an exultation in life, movement and beauty and an appalled shrinking before the crude, the ugly

[124] C. A. Hankin, 'Katherine Mansfield and her Confessional Stories' in *Critical Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Rhoda B. Nathan (New York: G. K. Hall, 1993), p. 34.
[125] D. E. S. Maxwell, 'Landscape and Theme' in *Commonwealth Literature: Unity and Diversity in a Common Culture*, ed. by John Press (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1965), p. 83.
[126] Maxwell, p. 83.
[127] Francine Tolron, 'Fauna and Flora in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories' in *The Fine Instrument: Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Paulette Michel and Michel Dupuis (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 2001), p. 166.

and the cruel'.[128] The vivid landscape Mansfield evoked is partly created by the repeated rendering of sense impressions and onomatopoeia. According to Rohrberger, the sense impressions do not function as a backdrop. Rather, they help 'create atmosphere, delineate a character's feelings, or to specify areas of thematic concern'.[129] Rohrberger claims that the details 'provide the texture of an experience' and that the reader is persuaded to become 'immersed in the sensory'.[130] If we look more closely at the first section, we find numerous examples. The sense impressions include hearing through the singing of birds and the sound of the little streams flowing, sight through the meticulously rendered details in the descriptions of the sheep and the sea-mist, touch through the smooth stones and the cold fuchsia bush, smell through the sheep with their noses bowed to the ground, as well as the smell of the sea and the whiff of eucalyptus from the tree. Taste is the only sense which is not rendered in the opening section. Rohrberger relates the rendering of sense perceptions to memory and images. She argues that humans think in mental images, not verbalisations. Memories also take on the shape of images, and if a writer wants her audience to take part in the same experience, she needs to choose the details carefully. In addition to the visual, the language also needs to reflect the vocal, the aural, and in the case of Mansfield, also the olfactory and kinesthetic. According to Rohrberger, Mansfield makes the landscape come alive by evoking colour, sound, touch and movement, and makes the landscape seem palpable.[131] This, in turn, reflects the act of looking back and how memory works. Mansfield described a landscape she had not seen for more than ten years. Although images can stay fixed in memory for a lifetime, one needs to make a conscious effort in order to turn them into fiction. Mansfield has completed the task of verbalising images from her childhood by turning static memories into dynamic images, and embellished the images to create shifting atmospheres and moods. The way Mansfield has used images from her 'storehouse of memories' reflects how the human mind works and the way we remember images, flashes and glimpses that are incomplete. However, Mansfield has found a way of tying it all together by using the New Zealand landscape in full. The landscape runs as a *leitmotif* throughout this story, and its constantly changing character and atmospheres are at the very centre of the narrative.

[128] Tolron, p. 166.
[129] Rohrberger, p. 106.
[130] Rohrberger, p. 106.
[131] Rohrberger, pp. 119-120.

In a study of Virginia Woolf's preoccupation with boundaries, fluidity and threshold experiences in *The Voyage Out* (1915), Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik argue that 'landscape' in fiction adheres to two different levels, one literal and one metaphorical.[132] As this particular story by Mansfield echoes certain aspects of *The Voyage Out*, their starting point is valid in this connection. Horner and Zlosnik employ the term 'landscape' literally, meaning the setting or background of the narrative. The realist conventions demand a setting. In the case of 'At the Bay', the landscape described is realistic in the sense that it is geographically placed in a particular bay on New Zealand. Although the descriptions of the landscape include specific details, only subtle hints show that this setting is distinguished from the stories by Mansfield which are set in various European locations. The details are not embellished to create a regional flair, although some are distinctly New Zealand. For instance, Linda rests under the 'manuka tree' (220), which is a small tree native to New Zealand and Australia. Another tree native to New Zealand is the 'toi toi' (205). The lifestyle of the family is also marked by the climate, as Stanley and Jonathan go for a morning swim before work, and the women and children have several hours every day set aside for beach activities. The warm climate, especially during summertime, induces the members of the family to take their siesta in the middle of the day (225). These habits are not embellished, which shows that they are part of life on the islands. The use of the word 'paddock' to describe 'a vast tract of rural land'[133] is also distinctly New Zealand, and draws attention to the uniqueness of the landscape. The family's summer house is a bungalow (208), a building with an unquestionable colonial origin. This particular type of building was formerly maintained by the Government of India.[134] The fact that the family's summer house is a bungalow is significant in many ways. For one, it emphasises the cultural exchange the Empire brought about, and serves as an example of how objects from other colonies gained foothold in new locations. Furthermore, the bungalow reflects transience and temporality due to its original utilisation. Originally, bungalows were built on the main lines of thoroughfare in India and functioned as resting rooms to accommodate travellers. It provided a fairly modest shelter with the bare essentials needed for an overnight stop.[135] The bungalow's traditional area of application accentuates temporality by the fact that this is the family's summer house, and not their permanent home.

[132] Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, *Landscapes of Desire: Metaphors in Modern Women's Fiction* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), p. 74.
[133] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.
[134] Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive* (London: Linguasia, 1989), p. 129.
[135] Yule and Burnell, p. 129.

These details all contribute to the creation of a landscape which, by closer examination, is far from any European setting.

'Narrative landscape' may also be employed metaphorically and refer to the structure of the text.[136] One narrative landscape is the metaphorical configuration of the sea and the house. As the succeeding discussion will show, the landscape in Mansfield's stories functions both literally and metaphorically. The landscape in 'At the Bay' is interesting because it is foregrounded, personified and directs attention to New Zealand, making it suitable to a postcolonial enquiry. At the same time, the landscape assumes significance beyond itself though the symbolically charged elements embodied in it. The emphasis on a dynamic landscape through descriptions which are, in the context of the short story, embellished and emphasised, inarguably draws attention to place. The focus on place is decisive, and this is where we find the strongest flair of postcolonialism in the story. Although it may serve as a counter-argument that the text is not overtly concerned with postcolonial issues, the focus on place seen in relation to Mansfield's position as a writer in exile, does indeed support a postcolonial reading.

Another aspect of the location is the notion that the bay enfolds a microcosm.[137] This microcosm consolidates place, action and the thematic content of the story, which is centered on life, death, human experience and the passing of time. The fact that all is encapsulated in the same area and held in the frame of one single day enhances this impression. Ali Smith introduces the idea of microcosm in relation to 'At the Bay', but her attention is directed toward the social aspects of the microcosm. She argues that the relationships between the characters display what they are keeping 'at bay', whether it is gender battles, the shortness of life or the battles between various selves.[138] The idea of the bay as a microcosm also enhances the isolation of the place. The awareness of other places and alternative ways of life involves longing. Jonathan wants to explore 'the vast dangerous garden, waiting out there' (237). Linda remembers the time she sat on the veranda in her childhood home in Tasmania, and her father promised that they would 'cut off somewhere, we'll escape. […] I have a fancy I would sail up a river in China' (221). If the world 'out there' is to be encountered, the characters must transcend the boundary the sea represents. Although they dream of escape, both Linda and Jonathan are unable to transcend that boundary, and they remain passive and isolated.

[136] Horner and Zlosnik, p. 74.
[137] 'Introduction' to *The Collected Stories*, p. xxiii.
[138] 'Introduction' to *The Collected Stories*, p. xxiii.

The attention is drawn to landscape by various means. First of all, the landscape functions as a frame to the story. The Burnells do not figure in the first section, and their absence creates the impression that the landscape exists on its own premises. Walter Allen claims that this narrative strategy establishes the Burnells in a wider context of nature and time.[139] Even though no-one besides the shepherd is awake, the landscape is changing and evolving, and there are descriptions of intense activity: 'the splashing of big drops on large leaves' (205), 'myriads of birds were singing' (207), 'big spots of light gleamed in the mist' (206) and 'The sun was rising' (206). The fact that the first section in its entirety is dedicated to a lengthy description of the landscape is far from irrelevant. It brings attention to the New Zealand landscape and warns the reader that this is central to the themes and structure. The descriptions of the exterior world are recurrent throughout the narrative and accompany the scenes. The first part of section 7 serves as an example:

> The tide was out; the beach was deserted; lazily flopped the warm sea. The sun beat down, beat down hot and fiery on the fine sand, baking the grey and blue and black and white-veined pebbles. It sucked up the little drop of water that lay in the hollow of the curved shells; it bleached the pink convolvulus that threaded through and through the sand-hills.[…] Over there on the weed-hung rocks that looked at low tide like shaggy beasts come down to the water to drink, the sunlight seemed to spin like a silvery coin dropped into each of the small rock pools. They danced, they quivered, and minute ripples laved the porous shores (224).

In a narrative without a coherent plot, and where the scenes exist relatively independently of each other, the landscape provides 'unity of impression'. Poe's definition of unity of effect or impression, as he outlined in his 'Review of Twice-Told Tales',[140] and which has been followed by many other critics, was a quality which Mansfield pursued. The landscape provides a framework where the interior and exterior worlds of the characters can be explored.[141] Although the attention is drawn to landscape by means of framing and unity of impression, the most important feature is the way descriptions of landscape are dominated by recurrent images which are charged with symbolic significance.[142] The use of symbols

[139] Walter Allen, *The Short Story in English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 175.
[140] Edgar Allan Poe, 'Review of *Twice-Told Tales'*, in *The New Short Story Theories*, ed. by Charles E. May (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), p. 60.
[141] Anne Holden Rønning, 'Katherine Mansfield, British or New Zealander – The Influence of Setting on Narrative Structure and Theme in *The Fine Instrument: Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Paulette Michel and Michel Dupuis (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 2001) p. 129.
[142] Rohrberger, p. 105.

contributes to the density of the narrative, and also directs attention to the meaning of place in Mansfield's fiction. In turn, the landscape interacts with and reflects the characters. Landscape and characters seen in relation make up a thematic unity.

Landscape and Symbols

The authors of the 'Introduction' to *Literary Landscapes: From Modernism to Postcolonialism* remind us of an established truth: it is impossible for a writer to 'portray characters who are not somewhere'.[143] They make the valid point that it is the task of any writer of fiction to describe *how* the characters are where they are, because it relates to cultural and political matters. The notion that the characters in 'At the Bay' are placed in a settler environment with distinct references to the Empire is reflected in the symbols and imagery, as well as inscribed in the experiences of the characters. An investigation of the symbolic landscape and the way the characters interact with the natural elements will therefore illuminate postcolonial aspects of the story.

The sea is the most prominent natural element in the landscape, and its presence is marked throughout the narrative. The personified sea functions as subject in some sections, with the ability to mark the passing of time: 'The tide was out; the beach was deserted; lazily flopped the warm sea' (224). It is both forceful and mysterious: 'It looked as though the sea had beaten up softly in the darkness, as though one immense wave had come rippling, rippling – how far?' (205). The sea inhales and exhales: 'Ah-Aah!' (205). Not only does this resemble breath or a sigh; it also suggests a distinctive rhythm by the short 'Ah' followed by the elongated second 'Aah'. The sea changes appearance several times, it is depicted as 'sleepy' (205), 'glittering' (206), 'bright' (206), 'warm' (220) and 'the quick dark came racing over the sea' (234). By focusing on the ebb and flow and constant change as the prime quality of the sea, it represents metamorphosis, closely linked to the metamorphoses the characters experience and undergo. Traditionally, the sea as symbol represents the primordial creation, 'the mysterious immensity from which everything proceeds, and to which everything returns'.[144] This fits well with the story at hand. The sea represents something eternal, and takes on the quality of eternity, and at the same time, the everyday experience of the

[143] de Lange, Fincham, Hawthorn and Lothe, p. xiii.
[144] Ad de Vries, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1974), p. 406.

characters who spend their time diving into it, both in a literal and metaphorical sense. The mysteriousness, which is enhanced by its constantly shifting qualities, also endorses this interpretation. To expand on the meaning of creation and eternity, the sea is often associated with flux, death and the passing of time. The narrative constructed around one single day draws attention to the aspect of time, as well as the characters' repetitive mental preoccupation with death, the shortness of life and the passing of time. Hence, the narrative as a whole, with emphasis on the minute changes in light, atmosphere and sea rhythm renders flux.

The sea representing change and flux is a well-known literary motif. Several critics have noted the resemblance between *The Waves* (1931) by Virginia Woolf and 'At the Bay'.[145] Ann Banfield draws a parallel between the descriptions of landscape in the interludes in *The Waves* and 'At the Bay', which both include an unpeopled landscape and the recurrent motif of the waves.[146] It is, however, Woolf who drew inspiration from Mansfield's story, as the novel was published in 1931, nine years after 'At the Bay' was written.[147] Another example of intertextuality which is further away in time and genre, but which has helped lay the ground for the sea as a motif of change and transformation is Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* The term 'sea-change' figures in a song sung by the sprit Ariel in act 1, scene 2:

> Full fathom five thy father lies,
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes,
> Nothing of him that doth fade,

[145] Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, *Katherine Mansfield* (London: Macmillian, 1981), p. 99.
[146] Ann Banfield, 'Time Passes: Virginia Woolf, Post-Impressionism, and Cambridge Time' in *Poetics Today*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Fall 2003, p. 472.
[147] Comparisons of this kind may undermine the argument that Mansfield's imagery is related to her position as writer in exile. *The Waves* is a novel which at first glance strongly resembles 'At the Bay' stylistically, in relation to perspective, and in the use of sea imagery to describe the passing of time. Reading it more closely, it is, however, evident that there are marked disparities in the ways the two authors employ setting. *The Waves* includes references to several places such as Oxford, Cambridge and London, but the interludes, which are the parts of the text which most strongly echo 'At the Bay', are universal and not geographically placed. The interludes are isolated from the rest of the text by the use of separate sections and italics. It is also important to note that the interludes figure without characters. Although the narrative includes echoes of the motif of the waves, the characters are not directly influenced by their surroundings. The interludes highlight the thematic content, but are not part of the sensory experiences of the characters as they are in 'At the Bay', where Mansfield pursued an integration of place and character. Although Woolf, like most modernist writers, was influenced by the process of colonisation to some extent, it did not make a profound effect on her personal circumstances. Had Mansfield been influenced by Woolf, and not the other way around, this might have undermined the whole argument that Mansfield's descriptions of landscape are closely related to her position as writer in exile. Fortunately, it was Woolf who was inspired by Mansfield, as *The Waves* was published as late as 1931. Woolf revealed her debt to Mansfield's innovative style and confessed in her journal: 'I was jealous of her writing - the only writing I have ever been jealous of' (*Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, p. 37.)

But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
[…]
Hark, now I hear them.[148]

This song resonates well with the story at hand. 'Sea change into something rich and strange' represents the metamorphosis many of the characters undergo. They 'suffer' the sea-change in many senses of the word 'suffer', which can point in different directions. It can mean 'to go or pass through, be subject to, undergo, experience', 'to endure, hold out, wait patiently', or 'to be affected by'.[149] The various meanings of the word 'suffer' reflect the pain of change. As the more thorough analysis of the characters and the epiphanies they experience will show, the word 'suffer' signifies a process. Wordsworth likewise used sea imagery, which can be read as a symbol of eternity in 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality: 'Our souls have sight of that immortal sea which brings us hither'.[150] To Joseph Conrad, the sea was something alien that should be conquered or endured.[151]

In addition to the 'sea change' which functions on a metaphorical level in Mansfield's story, yet another allusion is more distinct. The line 'Those are pearls that were his eyes' resonates well with the 'round pearls of dew' (205) in the first paragraph of the story. The existence of this allusion to *The Tempest* (as well as to the more loosely connected texts by Wordsworth and Conrad) asserts that Mansfield was well versed in the literary tradition to which she made her contribution, and shows that she employed images and symbols with a strong cultural significance. But most importantly, it shows her ability to use sea imagery intertextually as a response to well-known works of literature from the British canon. Shakespeare and Wordsworth, two writers among many, helped establish these symbols. In addition to the symbolic meanings already mentioned, the sea could also stand for fertility, sexual desire, loneliness and purification.[152] The sea is undoubtedly an ambivalent symbol. It could both represent a boundary and its opposite, and in this story, it is the symbol which problematises the settler consciousness to the greatest extent. In Mansfield's story, the sea stands to represent more than its conventional symbolic meaning. It does certainly have

[148] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2000), p. 178.
[149] *The Oxford English Dictionary Online.*
[150] de Vries, p. 406.
[151] de Vries, p. 406.
[152] de Vries, p. 406.

extended connotations to island inhabitants compared to those who are living on the continent. New Zealand not only consists of islands, the islands are also isolated by the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, it could be argued that to a small and isolated settler colony like New Zealand, the sea was the boundary which marked the distance between centre and periphery, and bore the promise of whatever was 'out there'. With this in mind, the sea also marks the inherent difference of the colony, as the sea becomes the main symbol of their isolation. With this multitude of meanings in mind, it is far from groundbreaking that Mansfield used sea imagery pervasively; it is a rich and complex symbol which generates interpretation. What is interesting is the way Mansfield used elements from the natural setting as the basis of the entire narrative. The landscape is not a passive backdrop; it is a driving force and producer of meaning. This was Mansfield's way of drawing attention to place.

Liminal Spaces, Liminal States: The Suspended Moment

The phrase 'at the bay' is repeated throughout the story, which draws attention to place and shows the inhabitants' attitude of familiarity towards their surroundings. Angela Smith points to the fact that the bay in itself is an in-between place, because it is 'an area of protection between the land and the open sea that is not entirely safe'.[153] In this way, the sea represents a boundary, and thus the coastal location becomes a liminal space in-between land and sea. Smith argues that the mist in the opening sequence of the story shows that boundaries do exist, although they are hidden:

> Very early morning. The sun was not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay was hidden under a white sea-mist. The big bush-covered hills at the back were smothered. You could not see where they ended and the paddocks and bungalows began. The sandy road was gone and the paddocks and bungalows on the other side of it; there were no white dunes covered with reddish grass beyond them; there was nothing to mark which was beach and where was the sea (205).

[153] Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 166.

The bay in itself is a liminal space, and fits into the category of transitional spaces according to Short's taxonomy.[154] Furthermore, the liminality of this particular story is enhanced by the notion that it opens in the liminal space between night and day, and the characters are introduced, still unnamed, on the border between sleep and wakefulness. As the sheep pass through the bay, we are told that 'their cry sounded in the dreams of little children… who lifted their arms to drag down, to cuddle the darling little woolly lambs of sleep' (207).[155] Dunbar presents the poignant argument that the 'marginal nature of the scene' functions as a metaphor for the characters' states of mind. [156] In my opinion, this serves as an affirmation of the affinity between character and place.

The story includes several liminal spaces. As mentioned above, the bay is a liminal space in-between sea and land, the bungalow is a liminal building and the garden is a liminal space which functions as an extension to the house and therefore exists in-between the private and public sphere. The windowsill is a liminal space which also fits into the category of transitional spaces. The observer is inside looking out, or vice versa, capable of being in one space and looking directly onto another. As we will see in the following discussion, it is a place for longing and increased knowledge, and in some cases transgression. The stile is another liminal space. It is a place of crossing from one property to the next. In section 4, the children all climb over the stile to enter the beach. Once on the beach, they see one of the Trout boys who 'pattered in and out of the water' (215). The characters seem to be attracted to the liminal spaces, appreciating the opportunities they offer.

Liminal spaces can also be created temporally. The opening section is set in early morning, favouring the transitional period between darkness and light. The rising mist marks the transitional moment because the sunlight makes it dissolve: 'The sun was rising. It was marvellous how quickly the mist thinned, sped away, dissolved from the shallow plain, rolled up from the bush and was gone as if in a hurry to escape; big twists and curls jostled and shouldered each other as the silvery beams broadened' (206). As already mentioned, the summer holiday is a liminal space which is created temporally. Another liminal space created temporally is nighttime. Beryl is up late at night when the garden is deserted and the rest of the family is asleep. She is in a liminal state, free from the social constraints the community imposes on her:

[154] Short, p. 6.
[155] Dunbar, p. 159.
[156] Dunbar, p. 159.

> Why does one feel so different at night? Why is it so exciting to be awake when everybody else is asleep? Late – it is very late! And yet every moment you feel more and more wakeful, as though you were slowly, almost with every breath, waking up into a new, wonderful, far more thrilling and exciting world than the daylight one (241).

It is evident from these examples that Mansfield described situations and a setting which are not entirely fixed, but open to change. The liminal spaces are unstable, and at the same time full of potential.

As a parallel to the liminal mental states of the characters, the narrative is pierced by descriptions of moments when the atmosphere and light suddenly change. These uncanny moments involve anxiety, as Kezia and Lottie experience when dusk falls:

> While they were playing, the day had faded; the gorgeous sunset had blazed and died. And now the quick dark came racing over the sea, over the sand-hills, up the paddock. You were frightened to look in the corners of the washhouse, and yet you had to look with all your might. […] Suddenly Lottie gave such a piercing scream that all of them jumped off the forms, all of them screamed too. 'A face – a face looking!' shrieked Lottie. It was true, it was real. Pressed against the window was a pale face, black eyes, a black beard (234).

In general, the descriptions of landscape and the changing atmosphere serve as parallels to the series of small epiphanies and failed epiphanies where the characters experience sudden shifts in perception; where they either enter or fail to enter a new zone of enlightenment. Several of the descriptions of the natural environment are presented without the presence of characters:

> The sun had set. In the western sky there were great masses of crushed-up rose-coloured clouds. Broad beams of light shone through the clouds and beyond them as if they would cover the whole sky. Overhead the blue faded; it turned a pale gold, and the bush outlined against it gleamed dark and brilliant like metal (238).

This passage directs special attention to the liminal states of dusk and dawn, and the attempt to capture the in-between atmospheres these moments evoke. Returning to Bakhtin's

theorisation of the threshold experience, I would argue that Mansfield used the chronotope of the threshold to time in space and making time visible.[157] In my opinion, Mansfield's careful rendering of the shifts between light and shadow, as well as the ebb and flow of the sea, is what makes time become visible. The materialisation of time in space adds significance to the landscape. If the passing of time is the central thematic aspect of the story, it is brought to the fore through the descriptions of landscape. This is also the main source of unity between character and place because Mansfield aligns the 'moments of suspension' with the sea's rhythm of ebb and flow. In a pivotal passage from her journal, Mansfield's articulates her version of the modernist epiphany, which she calls 'glimpses':

> And yet one has these 'glimpses', before which all that one has ever written (what has one ever written?) – all (yes all) that one has ever read, pales… The waves, as I drove home this afternoon, and the high foam, how it was all suspended in the air before it fell…. What it is that happens in that moment of suspension? It is timeless. In that moment […] the whole life of the soul is contained. One is flung up – out of life – one is 'held', and then – down, bright, broken, glittering on to the rocks, tossed back, part of the ebb and flow.[158]

The suspended moment, where 'the soul is contained', is what Mansfield wanted to describe. Interestingly, she used the metaphor of the waves to describe the workings of the human mind. In addition to 'glimpses', she used alternative terms to describe the epiphany, among them the 'blazing moment' and 'central point of significance'.[159] According to Mansfield, the epiphany should replace plot and function as an ordering principle:

> We must be very sure of finding those central points of significance transferred to the endeavours and emotions of the human beings portrayed […] The crisis, then, is the chief of our 'central points of significance' and the endeavours and the emotions are stages on our journey towards or away from it.[160]

Julie van Gunsteren's treatise *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism* deals primarily with the question of genre and Mansfield's aesthetic approach. Nevertheless, as the

[157] Bakhtin, p. 250.
[158] *The Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield: A Selection,* ed. by C. K. Stead (London: Allen Lane, 1977), pp. 169-170.
[159] van Gunsteren, p. 79.
[160] van Gunsteren, p. 80.

narrative strategy of replacing a traditional plot with epiphanies as an ordering principle is a distinguishing feature of literary impressionism, van Gunsteren makes valid observations on Mansfield's widespread use of epiphanies and symbols. According to van Gunsteren, the characters who experience the 'glimpses' in Mansfield's stories discover 'the disparity between illusion and reality', which is often 'presented either in a positive or negative sense'.[161] In these glimpses, they experience a transcending moment where a certain image appears and vanishes. According to van Gunsteren, the glimpse poses the choice of remaining passive or becoming active.[162] If we take a closer look at the glimpses the characters in the story at hand experience, it is evident that the choice is posed, but the glimpses persuade neither Jonathan, Beryl nor Linda to become more active. What the glimpses do achieve is a wider perspective on matters of life and death and the shortness of life. In this sense, the glimpses are negative, but the effect of increased awareness is, however, positive.

Characters

Beryl Fairfield: Character on the Brink

Beryl Fairfield is the central character in section 5. When the women and children are at the beach, Beryl engages in a conversation with Mrs. Kember. Beryl reveals her shyness and insecurity when she hesitates to undress in front of the others: 'Beryl turned her back and began complicated movements of someone who is trying to take off her clothes and to pull on her bathing-dress all at one and the same time. […] But Beryl was shy. She never undressed in front of anybody. Was that silly?' (219). She has an infatuation for Harry Kember, married to her friend, a man who often figures in her daydreams. According to Beryl, he is 'a most perfect illustration in an American novel rather than a man. Black hair, dark blue eyes, red lips, a slow sleepy smile, a fine tennis player, a perfect dancer, and with it all a mystery' (218). Beryl's thoughts circle around Harry Kember, who inspires an erotic awakening. In section 12 he comes to see her and she meets him in the garden. The situation, which Beryl seems to think is a romantic late-night rendezvous, is suddenly reversed when she finds out he is drunk, and she rejects him: 'She slipped, ducked, wrenched free. "You are vile, vile," said she' (244).

[161] van Gunsteren, p. 80.
[162] van Gunsteren, p. 154.

Beryl embodies many of the features Mansfield's characters hold in common. Her situation is in-between adolescence and adulthood, and she remains on the threshold, in search of experience and sexual transgression. Her wish to cross the threshold is closely linked to her social behavior and sexual development. She wants to connect with the people around her, but she experiences difficulties in doing so. Actual communicative situations are cluttered by her narcissistic, self-conscious and over-active mind, and she finds that it is impossible to truly express her thoughts and feelings. Her responses are evasive:

> Poor old mother, she smiled, as she skimmed over the stones. Poor old mother! Old! Oh, what joy, what bliss it was to be young... 'You look very pleased', said Mrs. Harry Kember. She sat hunched up on the stones, her arms round her knees, smoking. 'It's such a lovely day,' said Beryl, smiling down at her (217).

Beryl is a lonely and isolated character, and her isolation is illustrated by her inability to express herself as well as her role in the family. Beryl is unmarried, and remains in an in-between position in the Burnell family. Her roles as sister, daughter and aunt demand participation in family life, but she remains a caretaker without any real authority and her position is not clearly defined. This induces a sense of loneliness: 'It is lonely living by oneself. Of course, there are relations, friends, heaps of them; but that's not what she means. She wants someone who will find the Beryl they none of them know, who will expect her to be that Beryl always. She wants a lover' (242). This shows that Beryl exists in a liminal space within the family structure.

It is far from irrelevant that Beryl, of all the characters in the story, is repeatedly described sitting by the window. Windows traditionally symbolise a gateway to knowledge and wisdom. They could also signify communication, and the lover standing by the window is a recurrent literary motif.[163] Moreover, in connection to literature, the window is a place where a woman can contact her lover, or vice versa.[164] It is also a place where isolated people long for communication beyond the invisible barrier provided by social constructs. The window is also a widely used symbol of longing, which is in tune with section 8. Placed by the window, Beryl is looking out onto the garden and her mind wanders: 'Beryl, sitting in the window, fanning her freshly washed hair, thought she had never seen such a guy' (228).

[163] de Vries, p. 502.
[164] de Vries, p. 502.

However, in section 12, the window becomes not only a place for longing, but also transgression: ‘She jumped off her bed, ran over to the window and kneeled on the window-seat, with her elbows on the sill’ (241). Here, Beryl engages in an interior dialogue with her imaginary future lover: ‘Take me away from all these other people, my love. Let us go far away. Let us live our life, all new, all ours, from the very beginning. Let us make our fire. Let us sit down to eat together. Let us have long talks at night’ (242). Eventually, Harry Kember appears: ‘Beryl smiled, bit her lip, and gazed over the garden. As she gazed, she saw somebody, a man, leave the road, step along the paddock beside their palings as if he was coming straight towards her. Her heart beat. Who was it?’ (243). The request to join him persuades her to cross over the boundary the windowsill represents, and she moves from her room, across the windowsill, over the veranda into the garden in quick succession: ‘Beryl stepped over her low window, crossed the veranda, ran down the grass to the gate. He was there before her’ (244). Physically, a window is a border between inside and outside, house and garden, but in this case it symbolises a psychological border. In this case, the crossing over does not lead to increased experience. Beryl is in the middle of a sexual awakening, and the crossing over of boundaries might create the expectation of increased experience. Her wish to transgress and transcend is thwarted, and leaves her none the wiser.

Beryl, Jonathan and Linda all experience feelings of elevation inspired by the elements in the landscape. The sensibility toward her natural surroundings is a trait Beryl holds in common with many of Mansfield’s characters. One example of her developed sensibility figures in the final passage, where the intensity of her feelings inverts and manipulates sense impressions:

> But the beautiful night, the garden, every bush, every lead, even the white palings, even the stars, were conspirators too. So bright was the moon that the flowers were bright as day; the shadow of the nasturtiums, exquisite lily-like leaves and wide-open flowers, lay across the silvery veranda (241-242).

Tolron makes the apt observation that elements of nature in Mansfield’s stories become objects of admiration, and even inspire feelings of ecstasy. The quote above demonstrates how Mansfield combines images to ‘materialize the feeling of plenitude which overcome the

characters'.[165] Although the point Tolron makes is valid, it does not fully apply to the passages in the text where the characters map their thoughts into the landscape. In this quote, the landscape is not exclusively a source of inspiration; Beryl also projects her thoughts and feelings onto the landscape. Thus, this quote is a telling example of Beryl's interiority rather than merely the exteriority of the surroundings.

In other passages, Beryl reveals her longing and openness toward new experience, exemplified by her outstretched arms and outward gaze:

> The water was quite warm. It was that marvellous transparent blue, flecked with silver, but the sand at the bottom looked gold; when you kicked with your toes there rose a little puff of gold-dust. Now the waves just reached her breast. Beryl stood, her arms outstretched, gazing out, and as each wave came she gave the slightest little jump, so that it seemed it was the wave which lifted her so gently (220).

In this passage, the way Beryl acts when she engages with the elements in the landscape reflects her personality. In the same manner as the other central characters in the story, Beryl projects, or in Dunbar's term 'maps'[166] her thoughts and feelings onto the landscape. It is not a personified landscape in itself which provides the answer, but what the character reads into it. One example is the onset to the failed seduction scene, where Beryl muses by the window:

> But the beautiful night, the garden, every bush, every leaf, even the white palings, even the stars, were conspirators too.[…]. But when Beryl looked at the bush, it seemed to her the bush was sad. 'We are dumb tress, reaching up in the night, imploring we know not what,' said the sorrowful bush (241-242).

The use of the word 'conspirators' suggests that she feels an affinity with the landscape based on the notion that she imagines herself to be in love. After she has agreed to come out into the garden, she is frightened and confused by the situation. In this moment, the landscape takes on a threatening flair, reflecting her feelings:

[165] Tolron, p. 166.
[166] Dunbar, p. 167.

> ‘That’s right,’ breathed the voice, and it teased, ‘You’re not frightened, are you? You’re not frightened?’ She was; now she was here she was terrified and it seemed to her everything was different. The moonlight stared and glittered; the shadows were like bars of iron. Her hand was taken (244).

It is worth noticing here that the negative feedback is rendered as heavy. The expression ‘bars of iron’, which suggests heaviness and imprisonment, stands in marked contrast to the sensation of lightness she experienced earlier that day: ‘[…] it seemed it was the wave which lifted her so gently’ (220). Furthermore, it is the ‘pit of darkness’ underneath the fuchsia bush which prevents her from following Harry Kember any further despite his lures: ‘Come along! We’ll go just as far as that fuchsia bush. Come along!’ The fuchsia bush was tall. It fell over the fence in a shower. There was a little pit of darkness underneath. ‘No, really, I don’t want to,’ said Beryl (244). The fuchsia bush represents a border she is not willing to cross over. In the end, Beryl realises that Harry Kember is drunk, and she refuses to play a part in what seems to be a seduction plot: ‘What was she doing? How had she got here? The stern garden asked her as the gate pushed open, and quick as a cat Harry Kember came through and snatched her to him. […] She slipped, ducked, wrenched free. “You are vile, vile,” said she’ (244). Because she seeks experience, she enters a zone that is in-between innocence and experience, Beryl remains a character merely on the brink of experience. She is described at a transition point in a liminal state of being.

Linda Burnell: ‘Glimpses, moments, breathing spaces of calm’

Section 6 is devoted to Linda Burnell. When the other women and children go to the beach, she remains isolated in the garden to look after her baby, where she sits in a steamer chair under the manuka tree. Whereas the window becomes a significant symbolic place for Beryl along with the spot underneath the fuchsia bush, the manuka tree is relevant to Linda. The tree has small white flowers, is relatively small and is exclusive to New Zealand and the southern part of Australia. These flowers drop down on Linda and become a source of contemplation. The notion that they are wasted is ‘uncanny’:

> Pretty – yes, if you held one of those flowers on the palm of your hand and looked at it closely, it was an exquisite small thing. Each pale yellow petal shone as if each was

> the careful work of a loving hand. The tiny tongue in the centre gave it the shape of a bell. And when you turned it over the outside was a deep bronze colour. But as soon as they flowered, they fell and were scattered (221).

Flowers are a product of the landscape, and in this case they reflect a distinctly New Zealand landscape. The flowers on the manuka tree inspire thoughts concerning life and death, and the meaninglessness of life. In Linda's view, the flowers are altered once they lose their petals. They change character from being an 'exquisite small thing' into 'a horrid little thing' (221), thus reflecting life's meaninglessness: 'Why, then, flower at all?' (221) [167] Linda continues to observe the plants in the garden, and to her, they represent the material joy of life, which is also transient. Because she observes them with affection, the flowers take on the glittering hue which is symptomatic of Mansfield's version of the New Zealand landscape:

> Dazzling white the picotees shone: the golden-eyed marigold's glittered; the nasturtiums wreathed the veranda poles in green and gold flame. If only one had time to look at these flowers long enough, time to get over the sense of novelty and strangeness, time to know them! But as soon as one paused to part the petals, to discover the under-side of the leaf, along came Life and one was swept away. And, lying in her cane chair, Linda felt so light; she felt like a leaf. Along came Life like a wind and she was seized and shaken; she had to go. Oh would it always be so? Was there no escape? (221)

This is yet another example of passages where elements of nature become objects of admiration and inspire transient feelings of ecstasy.

Linda and Jonathan are very much alike. They both suffer from the limitations of gender roles and the constraints family life has imposed on them, and the sections devoted to them are marked by recurrent images of escape. Linda dreams of 'cutting off' (221) with her father and sail up a river in China, acting like 'two boys together'. Wevers compares this sense of companionship to the 'mateship of colonial itineracy'.[168] Both Linda and Jonathan are restless, rootless and anti-domestic, and they feel captured by their circumstances.[169] Had it been up to her, Linda would not have had children. The fact that she has felt the social pressure to start a family has become her 'grudge against life':

[167] Tolron, p. 170.
[168] Wevers, p. 221.
[169] Wevers, p. 221.

> Yes, that was her real grudge against life; that was what she could not understand. That was the question she asked and asked, and listened in vain for the answer. It was all very well to say it was the common lot of women to bear children. It wasn't true. She, for one, could prove that wrong. She was broken, made weak, her courage was gone, through child-bearing. And what made it doubly hard to bear was, she did not love her children. […] No, it was as though a cold breath had chilled her through and through on each of those awful journeys; she had no warmth left to give them (223).

Linda is a woman broken by child-bearing, and does not treat her children affectionately. A loving feeling surprises her when she suddenly feels able to connect to her baby emotionally. The use of suspension points is predominant in the sections devoted to Linda and Stanley, which strengthens their affinity. It creates a gap which functions as a liminal space in-between silence and articulation, between forming a thought and leaving it without conclusion. In most cases, the feeling is reduced to a glimpse which passes by quickly:

> Linda was so astonished at the confidence of this little creature . . . Ah no, be sincere. That was not what she felt; it was something far different, it was something so new, so . . . The tears danced in her eyes; she breathed in a small whisper to the boy: 'Hallo, my funny!' But by now the boy had forgotten his mother. He was serious again (223-224).

Linda is receptive and she has a developed sensibility. Similarly to Beryl's projection of feelings onto the landscape, Linda also reads emotions into it: 'But to-night it seemed to Linda there was something infinitely joyful and loving in those silver beams. And now no sound came from the sea. It breathed softly as if it would draw that tender, joyful beauty into its own bosom' (239). This shows yet another of the characters' interpretation and experience of the qualities of the sea.

Jonathan Trout – The Colonial Vagrant

Jonathan Trout is a character who embodies isolation, displacement and the desire to travel. He works as an office clerk, but seems to be discontent with his work situation and his responsibilities as provider for his family. He has the desire to travel, to 'fly out again' (238) and 'cut off to sea' (238). His longing to go abroad displays a colonial awareness of

something ‘waiting out there’ which needs to be discovered and explored. In section 10 he tries to articulate his sense of isolation to Linda, his sister-in-law:

> Tell me, what is the difference between my life and that of an ordinary prisoner. The only difference I can see is that I put myself in jail and nobody’s ever going to let me out. […] But as it is, I’m like an insect that’s flown into a room of its own accord. I dash against the walls, dash against the windows, flop against the ceiling, do everything on God’s earth, in fact, except fly out again. […] And all the while I’m thinking, like that moth, or butterfly, or whatever it is, ‘The shortness of life! The shortness of life!’ I’ve only one night or one day, and there’s this vast dangerous garden, waiting out there, undiscovered, unexplored (237).

Imagery relating to captivity is recurrent in the section devoted to Jonathan. He compares himself to an insect ‘flown into a room of its own accord’, eager to fly out into the freedom of the open air. Furthermore, he aligns his life situation to that of a captive: ‘Tell me, what is the difference between my life and that of an ordinary prisoner. The only difference I can see is that I put myself in jail and nobody’s ever going to let me out. That’s a more intolerable situation than the other’ (237). Jonathan feels captured by his work situation and his responsibilities as provider for his family. When he longs for something else, it is not freedom in New Zealand, but something outside the islands. Jonathan goes a long way in trying to articulate his thoughts, but as many of Mansfield’s characters, his attempt is thwarted and he is unable to fully express himself. This failure enhances his sense of isolation:

> Suddenly he smiled at Linda and said in a changed voice, as if he were confiding a secret: ‘Weak . . . Weak. No stamina. No anchor. No guiding principle let us call it’ […]. ‘It’s all wrong, it’s all wrong’, came the shadowy voice of Jonathan. ‘It’s not the scene, not the setting for ... three stools, three desks, three inkpots and a wire blind’ (238-239).

Jonathan’s search for words in this passage is without result. ‘Not the setting for...’ remains an incomplete sentence followed by suspension points, and the objects ‘three stools, three desks, three inkpots and a wire blind’ symbolise a work situation he feels trapped by. The wire blind prevents any inward or outward view. Jonathan draws a picture of the office he works in, and

at the same time transforms it into a metaphor of isolation and disillusionment. Because of his failure to fully articulate his thoughts, Jonathan remains on the threshold of expressing himself, but he is unable to cross over to a condition of increased expression.

In section 2, where Stanley and Jonathan go for a swim, the sea is once again able to influence the mental activity of a character. The rhythm of the sea and the sensation of being weightless stimulate Jonathan emotionally and he experiences a small epiphany:

> At that moment an immense wave lifted Jonathan, rode past him, and broke along the beach with a joyful sound. What a beauty! And now there came another. That was the way to live – carelessly, recklessly, spending oneself. He got onto his feet and began to wade towards the shore, pressing his toes into the firm, wrinkled sand. To take things easy, not to fight against the ebb and flow of life, but to give way to it – that was what was needed. To live – to live! (209)

Jonathan imagines the rhythm of the sea to be the ideal rhythm of life itself. The combination of its energy, momentum and easiness becomes an ideal to strive for, but this juxtaposition enhances the impression of Jonathan's stagnation.

Jonathan experiences well-being when he is lifted by the waves. In this elevated state, Jonathan thinks the morning echoes back to him: 'And the perfect morning, so fresh and fair, basking in the light, as though laughing at its own beauty, seemed to whisper, "Why not?"' (209). Note here the use of the verb 'seem', which creates uncertainty. The way it is formulated, it draws attention to the subject who is observing the landscape. Although constantly shifting, and inarguably personified in some passages, the landscape in this quote is not whispering, but the observing subject thinks the landscape is whispering. Thus, the observing subject, in this case Jonathan, projects his own assumptions on the landscape.

Although Jonathan experiences a sense of well-being when he takes a swim, the sea represents the opposite of firmness and stability. Both Stanley and Jonathan lose control in the water in some sense.[170] Stanley's swim is shorter than he had planned because Jonathan appeared before he did. Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr claim that this mirrors domination of the sea; if Stanley cannot dominate the sea and have it to himself, he would rather retreat. C. A. Hankin supports this view, and argues that Stanley's behaviour mirrors colonial explorers

[170] Hanson and Gurr, p. 101.

and their wish to conquer the sea and new territories. His exclamation 'First man as usual! He'd beaten them all again' (208) exemplifies his attitude.[171] Jonathan, conversely, 'stays in too long and comes out feeling ill, having yielded in all his life, too much'.[172] Hanson and Gurr illustrate their argument by this passage from the text, which represents a sudden reversal: 'He ached all over; it was as though someone was wringing the blood out of him. And talking up the beach, shivering, all his muscles tight, he felt too his bathe was spoilt. He'd stayed in too long' (209). Jonathan's epiphany in the water is merely a glimpse, and does not offer a prolonged sense of elevation or lasting insight.

Characters in Place

In a wider context, place has always been an important element in the short story genre.[173] Exactly how important, if important at all, has however been questioned by critics concerned with the modernist movement. Oddly enough, one extreme stance was held by Somerset Maugham, who claimed that setting was an old-fashioned element of storytelling, useful only to create verisimilitude or for putting a character in a particular mood. Other than that, he maintained, setting is dispensable.[174] Critics tend to disagree. Valerie Shaw has pointed out that the scene of action often contributes to the total effect of a story, which in turn reflects the relationship between characters and place.[175] '"Setting"[176] is neither a background nor a catalyst to action', she argues.[177] The function of setting in 'At the Bay' becomes even more indispensable if we look at the descriptions of place in light of these critical observations. To counter Maugham's argument, I would argue that Mansfield used descriptions of place successfully both to create verisimilitude and to put characters in various moods. If I use Shaw's argument, the landscape in 'At the Bay' does indeed contribute to the total effect of the story. I am tempted to turn Shaw's negative 'neither/nor' contention around and argue that the setting in Mansfield's story is *both* a background *and* a catalyst to action. The story is characterised by the absence of external action, but what does take place is the shifting moods

[171] Hankin, p. 231.
[172] Hanson and Gurr, p. 101.
[173] Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Longman, 1983), p. 150.
[174] Shaw, p. 153.
[175] Shaw, p. 150.
[176] Shaw uses the term 'setting'. I, however, prefer the terms 'place' and 'landscape', which are more consistent with postcolonial discourse. Although I will build on Shaw's account of setting in relation to the short story genre, I will primarily use the terms 'place' and 'landscape' in the following discussion.
[177] Shaw, p. 153.

and atmospheres in the natural landscape and the mental landscapes of the characters. Thus, setting does indeed function as a catalyst to the characters' trains of thought, because it is both provoking and reflecting their conscious and unconscious thoughts. Hence, characters and landscape are tightly linked, which is expressed in various passages in the text. It is particularly evident in the passages where the characters experience 'glimpses'. As the quote by Wevers in the introduction showed, the moments when the characters are able to reach beyond themselves are achieved by a 'concentrated focus on the particular as suggestive of something beyond itself'.[178] The particular in the New Zealand stories are elements from the landscape, and thus, the landscape is able to influence the characters on a mental level. For instance, the scenes where Beryl and Jonathan immerse themselves in the water, irrespective of each other, serve as examples of union between character and place. The scene where Linda rests under the manuka tree also adds to this argument. The flowers on the manuka tree are particular, and to Linda, they have meaning related to the passing of time and the mortality of human life. Beryl only hears a 'vague murmur' from the sea in the final section, but the notion that a cloud 'small, serene, floated across the moon' marks a change of atmosphere which suggests that her moment of adventure has passed.

I would argue that the descriptions of landscape are prominent and foregrounded in the text, an effect which is partly created by the use of landscape as a framing device. As mentioned above, the initial paragraphs of the story introduce the reader to a landscape without people, which is echoed in the final sentence: 'All was still' (245). This device is particularly effective because it allows the landscape to function as a frame through which the family and the beach society are seen.[179] As a consequence, the landscape becomes dominant, and places the characters within a larger cultural and geographical whole. Furthermore, the images and symbols are by definition more than merely decorative elements; they are meant to express the inner workings of the characters' minds. The way the characters navigate within the landscape is also of significance. Some passages involve a movement from one place to another, which triggers a change in perception and thought. In general, characters in transit experience a change:

> The idea that the inner lives of fictional characters is 'magnified' when people are shown 'in transit' is of enormous importance to any discussion of 'place' in the short

[178] Wevers, p. 220.
[179] Wevers, p. 221.

> story, […] techniques for sharpening impacts by making characters 'behold afresh' do not necessitate the description of long epic journeys. What is important is the heightening of consciousness, and this can be achieved by moving a character from one room to another.[180]

This corresponds well with the story at hand because a 'heightening of consciousness' is achieved as the characters move around the bay. One obvious example is the scene where Stanley goes for a morning swim. Stanley is described running out the back door of the bungalow:

> A figure in a broad-striped bathing-suit flung down the paddock, cleared the stile, rushed through the tussock grass into the hollow, staggered up the sandy hillock, and raced for dear life over the big porous stones, over the cold, wet pebbles, on to the hard sand that gleamed like oil. Splish-Splosh! Splish-Splosh! The water bubbled round his legs as Stanley Burnell waded out exulting. First man as usual! He'd beaten them all again (208).

Movement in itself presupposes space to walk around in, and this movement stimulates thoughts and results in a heightening of consciousness. Stanley's movement from the moment he opens the door of the bungalow until he reaches the water also helps establish the geography of the bay and reflects the restlessness of the characters. In section 10, Linda is walking around the garden when Jonathan comes to pay her a visit: 'He had meant to be there before, but in the front garden he had come upon Linda walking up and down the grass, stopping to pick a dead pink or give a top-heavy carnation something to lean against, or to take a deep breath of something, and then walking on again, with her little air of remoteness' (235). Yet another example is Beryl's movement from her room, over the windowsill into the garden. 'Beryl stepped over her low window, crossed the veranda, ran down the grass to the gate. He was there before her' (244). Beryl does not move a far stretch, but it is significant all the same: '[…] now she was here she was terrified and it seemed to her everything was different' (244).

The personified landscape draws attention to New Zealand's distinctiveness. In the articulated vision of the direction her fiction would take, Mansfield made it clear that she

[180] Shaw, p. 153.

wanted a return to the New Zealand setting, to her 'own country' and 'the people we loved there' in a landscape which is 'mysterious, as though floating'. Place and atmosphere are the basis on which she builds these narratives, and it is thus indispensable. She did not set out to tell one particular story, but to describe a particular landscape inhabited by people she remembered from her childhood. It is possible to argue, then, as Shaw does, that atmosphere in some cases is not an element which is 'added to the story', but rather 'a necessary condition without which the story simply could not be told'.[181] It is possible, she argues, to achieve 'the perfect integration of atmosphere, action and characters […]'.[182] Van Gunsteren makes a similar claim by arguing that mood and atmosphere, 'the fusion of the characters' consciousness with the world at large […] creates a unity between visual appearance and mental reality'.[183] The unity inherent in the landscape is recorded through the sense experience of the unnamed observer in the first section. Mansfield describes a mixing of the elements: 'The breeze of the morning lifted in the bush and the smell of the leaves and wet black earth mingled with the sharp smell of the sea' (207).[184] The elements in the natural landscape also reflect each other, which also creates a sense of unity: 'The far-away sky – a bright, pure blue – was reflected in the puddles, and the drops, swimming along the telegraph poles, flashed into points of light' (206).[185]

In an enquiry which focuses on characters in landscape, we cannot escape the importance of nature and the fundamental attitude the writer has to it. Many critics have compared Mansfield's attitude to nature to the basic assumptions of the Romantic poets,[186] who above all sought unity with nature, of which Wordsworth is the obvious example.[187] In the previously quoted passage from her journal, where she describes 'the moments of suspension', Mansfield displays an attitude to nature which is inspired by Romantic conceptions: 'One is flung up – […] part of the ebb and flow'.[188] I would argue that the following quote displays Mansfield's affinity to the Romantic poets. She believed there was one superior guiding principle of life, 'something at the back of it all':

[181] Shaw, p. 186.
[182] Shaw, p. 186.
[183] van Gunsteren, p. 83.
[184] Dunbar, p. 160.
[185] Dunbar, p. 160.
[186] This notion is supported by Pamela Dunbar.
[187] C. A. Hankin, *Katherine Mansfield and her Confessional Stories* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), p. 234.
[188] Anne Friis, *Katherine Mansfield: Life and Stories* (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1946), p. 66.

> You see, I cannot help it. My secret belief – the innermost 'credo' by which I live life is – that although Life is loathsomely ugly and people are terribly often vile and cruel and base, nevertheless there is something at the back of it all – which if only I were great enough to understand would make *everything* everything [sic] indescribably beautiful. One just has glimpses, divine warnings – signs – Do you remember the day we cut the lavender? And do you remember when the Russian music sounded in that half-empty hall? Oh, those memories compensate for more than I can say – .[189]

Anne Friis conversely argues that Mansfield's attitude serves as a counterpart to the attitude of the Romantic poets.[190] She points to the emphasis they put on 'moments of mystical apprehension, of passing into oneness with the universe', a oneness with the universe which Mansfield only received glimpses of and therefore never fully obtained. Yet, I would still maintain that there is still a strong resemblance between Mansfield's and the Romantic poets' attitude to nature. The longing for unity and the search for the moments where some kind of revelation could occur are basic assumptions they hold in common. Moreover, the joy in nature which Mansfield's characters occasionally experience, which borders on the sublime, is undoubtedly related to a Romantic mode of thought.

Archetypal Images: Pastoral Conventions and Postcolonialism

Mansfield's position as a writer 'out of country', and the act of looking back and attempting to reclaim a lost past, resulted in a nostalgic rendering of New Zealand. This applies to the dreamlike atmosphere she created, but most importantly to the use of pastoral conventions. Nostalgic images are frequent, particularly expressed in the descriptions of landscape. This claim is supported by Gordon, who argues that Mansfield recreated the 'romantic dream-world' of an Arcadian country.[191] Mansfield conjures a dreamlike atmosphere by describing a translucent physical environment with emphasis on light and shimmer. Examples from the text are numerous: 'And now big spots of light gleamed in the mist. […] Now the leaping, glittering sea was so bright it made one's eyes ache to look at it' (206), 'Overhead the blue faded; it turned a pale gold, and the bush outlined against it gleamed dark and brilliant like metal' (238), 'rounds pearls of dew' (205), 'silvery, fluffy toi toi' (205), and 'silvery veranda' (242). In Mansfield's fictional New Zealand, every element in the landscape is idealised and

[189] Mansfield in Friis, p. 66.
[190] Friis, p. 66.
[191] Gordon, p. xviii.

rendered in its utmost extremity. The notion that the elements are stretched to the limit adds to the impression of a nostalgic dream-world: 'myriads of birds were singing' (207), 'big drops hung on the bushes and just did not fall' (205), 'all the pinks and marigolds were bowed to the earth with wetness' (205), 'the sun beat down, beat down hot and fiery on the white sand' (224) and 'Broad beams of light shone through the clouds and beyond them as if they would cover the whole sky' (238). However, I would argue that not all the descriptions are idealised. There is a constant mingling of realistic and non-realistic aspects. Although the realistic descriptions dominate, at times the elements in the natural environment take on the hue of mysteriousness. The grass is described as 'blue' (205) in the first section, and the moon transforms the landscape to resemble daytime: 'So bright was the moon that the flowers were bright as day; the shadow of the nasturtiums, exquisitely lily-like leaves and wide-open flowers, lay across the silvery veranda' (242). The realistic aspects are enhanced by the uncertainty and ambivalence which underpin the narrative both in landscape and mindscapes, and create a sense of psychological realism. Beryl articulates a sense of ambivalence in section five: '. . . but nothing was ever certain, nothing definite' (219). The uncertainty is also created by descriptions of the exterior world, which often figure in relative terms. Few absolute truths are established, an impression which is created by the use of nominal phrases. Several examples can be found in the first section: 'It looked *as though* the sea had beaten up softly in the darkness' (205), '*Perhaps* if you had waked [*sic*] up in the middle of the night you *might have seen* a big fish flickering in at the window and gone again' (205), 'For a time they *seemed to* be always on the same piece of ground' (206), 'carelessly, *as if* thinking about something else' (206, my emphasis). These subtle hints draw attention to the relativity of human perception, and moreover, they enhance the mysteriousness of the landscape.

The pastoral conventions Mansfield employed also contribute non-realistic aspects to the narrative. 'Pastor' is Latin for 'shepherd'. The pastoral as a literary genre originates from the Greek poet Theocritus who depicted life among Sicilian shepherds in the third century B.C. The traditional and more enduring pastoral is derived from Virgil, who imitated Theocritus. Pastoral life is a mythical golden age depicting shepherds and sheep in an idealised natural setting, often observed by the urban poet who longs for the simplicity of country life.[192] The traditional pastoral has evolved over time. In general, as a term, it could be applied to all works of literature which portray 'a withdrawal from ordinary life to a place apart that is close to the elemental rhythms of nature, where the protagonist achieves a new

[192] M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Forth Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993), p. 141.

perspective on a former mode of life amid the complexities and conflicts of the social world'.[193] A way of life which is inextricably linked to the elemental rhythms of nature is indeed expressed in the story at hand, and some of the characters gain new insight into the structures of the social world they are part of. Jonathan is dispirited when his dreams of going abroad are thwarted by the realisation that he is not free to travel due to family obligations. Likewise, Linda's musing under the manuka tree comes to a halt when her obligations in the social world demand her attention: 'And, lying in her cane chair, Linda felt so light; she felt like a leaf. Along came Life like a wind and she was seized and shaken; she had to go. Oh dear, would it always be so? Was there no escape?' (221) The mental journeys, when the characters retreat and dream of alternative realities take on the hue of pastoral utopianism. All the characters are attuned to the 'elemental rhythms of nature', particularly expressed by changing atmospheres of darkness and light, and the ebb and flow of the sea which marks the passing of time.

The first section of 'At the Bay' describes a morning scene where a shepherd herds his flock of sheep across the bay. He is a 'lean upright man, in a frieze coat that was covered with a web of tiny drops, velvet trousers tied under the knee, and a wideawake with a folded blue handkerchief round the brim. One hand was crammed into his belt, the other grasped a beautifully smooth yellow stick' (206). The shepherd is presented as a stereotype, and fulfills certain expectations of how a solitary shepherd should look: he is a 'grave, fine-looking old man' (207). His sensibility is fully developed, and he displays openness towards the elements: 'As he walked, taking his time, he kept up a very soft light whistling, an airy, faraway fluting that sounded mournful and tender' (206). The fact that the word 'fluting' is used to describe his whistling sound is a reminder of the pastoral convention, where the shepherds traditionally played the flute. Unlike the other characters presented later in the story, he is not struggling with the concept of, or against the passing of time. He is a mythical figure in keeping with the tradition.

In tune with the modernist concern with beginnings and opportunity, it is interesting to note that Mansfield employed yet another mythical model. The model of the creation myths of oral works of literature is reflected in the opening passage, particularly in the descriptions of sky, sea and land.[194] Dunbar argues that the first section owes a debt to the creation-myth in the way water invades the earth, and precipitates a fertilization of the land. 'A heavy dew had

[193] Abrams, p. 142.
[194] Dunbar, p. 159.

fallen', 'big drops hung on the bushes', 'the marigolds […] were bowed to earth with wetness, 'drenched were the cold fuchsias, 'round pearls of dew lay on the nasturtium leaves', 'the sea had beaten up softy', 'an immense wave had come rippling' (205).[195] The examples are numerous.

As already mentioned in the introduction, Rushdie has described what happens when a writer 'out-of-country' attempts to re-create the images and atmosphere of the writer's remembered past. Gillian Boddy claims that 'At the Bay' is a fitting example for the process of writing from a distance:

> 'At the Bay' is a fascinating example of the process of turning fact into fiction. Much of the detail of the story is authentic, called back into existence in 1921, in Switzerland, on a chalet balcony overlooking a valley toward the snow-covered mountains. There, the writer revisited nineteenth-century Wellington Harbour in the very early morning, acknowledging to J. C. Squire that 'to have been back to the Bay – after twenty one years no less – was a joy'.[196]

The act of looking back to a lost time and place has resulted in what Jane Stafford and Mark Williams calls 'retrospective glamour'.[197] The contention that Mansfield has created a glamorous image of her native home might find resonance in descriptions of dream-like atmospheres with emphasis on light, shimmer and mysteriousness. The use of pastoral conventions serves to enhance this impression, and the fact that Mansfield employed pastoral conventions is interesting when we look at this story in a postcolonial context. By employing conventions which are placed at the very centre of British literature and even the British canon, the story reflects centrality. But, the setting described is far from central in a colonial context. In a discussion of the pastoral conventions employed, the argument posed by Ali Smith becomes particularly apt: Mansfield wrote both from the centre and margins of literary tradition and geographical place.[198] The pastoral is a utopian genre, and in a postcolonial context, it has been most widely used in the United States and New Zealand.[199] In New

[195] Dunbar, pp. 159-160.
[196] Boddy, p. 182.
[197] Jane Stafford and Mark Williams, 'Fashioned Intimacies: Maoriland and Colonial Modernity' in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, No. 37, 2002, p. 41. <http://jcl.sagepub.com/content/37/1/31.citation> [Accessed 17 September 2010]
[198] 'Introduction' to *The Collected Stories*, p. xxv.
[199] Lyman Tower Sargent, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Utopias' in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. by Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 209.

Zealand, people even believed that they had succeeded in creating their version of utopia, and called the islands the 'godzone'.[200] The idea of utopia in settler colonies is a mixture of the process of colonisation from the time of the first settlement to the present.[201] Utopianism is recurrent in works produced by writers from settler colonies, but whereas utopianism is commonly used as an expression of a hopeful future, Mansfield rather uses utopianism to depict an idealised past.

The effect of the pastoral tradition is complex, especially when we look at the story in a light of postcolonial theory. It draws attention to one of the possible stylistic and thematic results writing from a distance might produce. In the case of Mansfield, the effect of being in exile has been a creative force, rather than an impediment. Through her New Zealand stories, she put emphasis on the New Zealand landscape and the importance of landscape in itself, and she created a New Zealand 'of the mind'. The rendering of romanticised and nostalgic images of New Zealand is partly due to the use of pastoral conventions, which also helps emphasise the mythical and mysterious landscape. All in all, it questions the effect of exile on the rendering of places left behind.

Concluding Remarks

The characters' perception of time is one of the main aspects of the story. This aspect is inextricably linked to the landscape, which is the marker and producer of time. Most importantly, it is the sun, the moon, and the ebb and flow which mark the passing of time. Sudden changes in atmosphere and light, either distinct or almost imperceptible, stimulate sudden changes in the minds of the characters. The rhythm of the sea, 'the ebb and flow of life', as Jonathan regards it, is the most central element of the landscape which is able to influence the characters. In other words, human experience in this way presupposes closeness to the sea. If we focus on the colonial aspects of the story, it may serve as a counterargument that Mansfield could have written a story with the same thematic content set by any English, French or Italian seaside. I, for one, will argue that this is not the case. The particular focus on landscape is more complex than that, and the nostalgic rendering of the New Zealand landscape is inarguably linked to Mansfield's position as a writer in exile.

[200] Sargent, p. 209.
[201] Sargent, p. 215.

The preoccupation with geography and place is a postcolonial concern, especially with regard to writers in exile. Secluded in an isolated settler colony, Mansfield expressed a thirst for experience and a wish to 'try *all* sorts of lives',[202] a statement which shows her level of reflection on the links between literature and experience, in her case a colonial experience. Being born into a settler colony and a family who regarded themselves as exiles, she experienced a 'double exile'; once she entered the metropolitan centre, she realised that her exile position had been perpetuated. Longing was a state she was used to, and this particular kind of longing, away from the peripheries and to the centre, is also reflected in her character descriptions. The three main characters hold one thing in common: they all long for something which is out of their reach. Ultimately, this is related to the colonial landscape they inhabit and the social constraints put upon them by the settler community. Jonathan wants to go overseas, but his dreams are thwarted by his responsibilities toward his family. Linda longs to escape the constraints family life has put on her and dreams of travelling up a river in China. Beryl suffers from a feeling of uneasiness with her role in the household, and dreams of being taken away by an imaginary lover. Her attempt to enter a questionable sexual union with a married man ends by the garden gate when she realises that Harry Kember is not the man she has been dreaming of. Although they all exist in seemingly idyllic surroundings, none of the characters are grounded and happy with their current location or stage in life. All in all, the possibility of activity and mobility is there, but it is left unexplored, and the characters remain passive in the isolated coastal location.

The central characters who figure in 'At the Bay' are all extremely aware of, and attuned to, their surroundings. Alternately, their thoughts and feelings are shaped by the shifting atmospheres the landscape creates, or their feelings are projected onto the landscape. Characters and landscape are transitional, constantly on the move between liminal spaces. This is why 'At the Bay' displays unity of character and place. The descriptions of landscape function both on a literal and metaphorical level. On a literal level, it narrows the focus on New Zealand and its distinctiveness. On a metaphorical level, natural elements such as the sea, the sun, the manuka tree and the fuchsia bush relate to thematic aspects of the story. Even though it is a story with a complex thematic structure, we can ascertain that the characters' perception of time is the most central thematic aspect of the story, which is brought about by the unity between landscape and characters.

[202] 'Introduction' to *The Collected Stories*, p. x.

The act of looking back to an unspoilt past is demonstrated in the use of pastoral conventions which manifest Mansfield's affinity with English literary conventions. The use of pastoral conventions directs attention to the landscape. Mansfield has delicately rendered an image of a New Zealand environment which is nostalgic, 'as though floating', which is a suitable setting for the investigation of complex human relationships and experiences which are tainted by a colonial experience. By creating fiction based on her colonial background, Mansfield re-created, re-designed and re-captured an idealised version of the New Zealand landscape, which is symptomatic of the exiled position she inhabited.

As the preceding discussion has shown, the examples of instances in the text where descriptions of landscape directly spark the characters' reactions, beyond mere observations, are numerous. We also find passages in the text where the characters are not directly influenced by the landscape, but rather project their thoughts and feelings onto it. In the course of this chapter, I have established that the landscape is far from neutral. On the contrary, it is the centre of attention. The union between place and character stands its ground.

CHAPTER 3: 'The Garden Party'

Mansfield's exile experience is reflected in her preoccupation with place. This is particularly expressed in the way she employed symbols and images which display unity between characters and place. This chapter, devoted to 'The Garden Party', will mainly focus on Laura Sheridan and the way in which her development as a character is related to the landscape rendered in the story. Through the method of close reading, the analysis will show that 'The Garden Party' highlights and brings into play the complex relationship between characters and place, liminal spaces and a nostalgic rendering of a New Zealand setting. The descriptions of the garden, and how the characters exist in it, bear the imprint of imperialism. They provide ample opportunities for exploring the spaces and states of in-betweenness, which reflect Mansfield's exile experience. Although social class is not the issue to be explored in isolation in this context, it is nevertheless inextricably linked to postcolonialism, because the markers of social class demonstrate the affiliation with English customs and traditions which are typical of settler societies in the British Empire.

Structure and Content

To present an original reading of 'The Garden Party' is an ambitious undertaking. Numerous critics have analysed this particular story, which has become a classroom favourite, and along with 'The Fly', it has become Mansfield's most frequently anthologised story.[203] Both 'At the Bay' and 'The Garden Party' belong to the same segment of Mansfield stories which were published towards the end of her career, after her proclaimed return to the New Zealand setting in her work. Accordingly, neither of the stories belong to the segment of those with a more distinct flavour of 'local colour', such as for instance 'How Pearl Button was Kidnapped' and 'The Woman at the Store', which were written in 1912. Both stories at hand are inarguably modernist, with focus on shifting perspectives, epiphanies and characters in in-between states. The most striking trait the two stories hold in common, and which is the focus of this enquiry, is the way in which the landscape is imbued with symbolic significance, and the way the development of the characters are tightly interwoven with the landscape. The

[203] Hankin, p. 236.

landscape functions as more than a backdrop, and it provokes and reflects change and progression. Ultimately, both stories deal with the issue of death, which is emphasised by symbols from the characters' surroundings. With that said, 'The Garden Party' is in many ways dissimilar to 'At the Bay'. Most importantly, the plot has a linear structure and is centred on events that are sequential: the preparation and execution of the party, its aftermath and Laura's visit to the widow of the diseased neighbour. Both 'At the Bay' and 'The Garden Party' take place during one single summer's day, but the stories are dissimilar in terms of narrative structure. 'The Garden Party' is markedly shorter than 'At the Bay', it is not divided into sections, and it includes fewer characters than 'At the Bay'. If we discount these traits, the stories are, however, well suited for the same undertaking, as they are concerned with how characters exist in their given place, how their physical and mental landscapes are marked by liminality, and how the use of archetypal images and pastoral conventions contributes to a nostalgic rendering of the New Zealand landscape.

As mentioned above, the plot of the story unfolds on one single day. The garden, just like the bay, is described in its most intense and idealised state. The reader is introduced to a garden resembling an earthly paradise, where the personified bushes display their piety by bowing to the ground. In the first passage of the story, 'the perfect day' is described:

> Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold as it is sometimes in early summer. […] As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels (245).

In addition to the archangels and the pious bushes, Mrs. Sheridan has ordered cream-puffs from Godber's, a name which has a clear allusion to God. Since dawn on the day of the party, the unnamed gardener has been up early putting the finishing touches to the lawn and plants. The remaining preparations are all laid out as the Sheridans eat their breakfast, and before they have finished, the workmen arrive to put up the marquee. Laura gives instructions and interacts with the workmen. Her immature, but reflective, mind is concerned with matters of social class:

> Why couldn't she have workmen for friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these. It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions (247).

Although Laura confesses that she does not feel constrained by these distinctions, 'Not a bit, not an atom…' (248), she nevertheless displays an oversimplified and superficial attitude toward complex class distinctions. To her, it is all the matter of behaviour and mannerisms on the surface level:

> Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl (248).

As the story progresses, and after more preparations have been made, a significant event occurs. One of Godber's men, who has just delivered cream puffs to the party, tells Sadie and Hans, who work for the Sheridans, that a neighbour by the name of Scott has been killed when he was thrown off his horse. Laura, who has been left in charge of the party preparations, instinctively wants to call off the party, but she is contradicted by her sister Jose: 'My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant' (253). Contradicted by Jose and her mother, Laura reluctantly agrees to carry on with the party: 'To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously' (255). The topic of the dead neighbour is soon forgotten when Mrs. Sheridan places her hat on Laura's head and she catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror.

The party is briefly described. Laura and all the guests seem to exist in perfect harmony with the garden: 'Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans' garden for this one afternoon, on their way to – where?' (256-257) After the guests have left, Laura's father, who have recently returned from the office with her brother, brings up the topic of the dead neighbour. Mr. Sheridan has additional information about the neighbour and expresses sympathy for the wife and children left behind. This is the reason

why Mrs. Sheridan suggests Laura should go down to the widow with a basket of left-over food from the party. Laura agrees reluctantly, and as daylight turns to dusk she walks down the hill where 'the little cottages were in deep shade' (259). Laura seems frightened and nervous when she approaches the gate of the house, where a group of people have gathered. Scott's sister-in-law welcomes Laura, but she finds the cottage small and claustrophobic. She feels captured in the 'gloomy passage', and enters the 'wretched little low kitchen' which is 'lighted by a smoky lamp' (260). She feels uneasy and wishes to leave the basket quickly and return home, but is persuaded to walk into the room where the dead body lies. Seeing the corpse makes her puzzled, but at the same time more at ease:

> There lay a young man, fast asleep – sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. […] What did garden-parties and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy… happy… All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content (261).

The impression of harmony left by the dead body overwhelms Laura, and she starts to cry. She also realises that she has worn her mother's extravagant hat inappropriately, and she begs Scott's forgiveness before she rushes out. When she meets her brother Laurie on the corner of the lane, she is unable to articulate her experience of an alternative reality. '"Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life –,"' (261). The narrative ends with Laurie's ambiguous echo question which remains unanswered: '"*Isn't* it, darling?" said Laurie' (261).

Laura Sheridan: Banished from the Garden of Eden

The central mental landscape of 'The Garden Party' belongs to Laura Sheridan. She is one out of many of Mansfield's young girl protagonists[204] who are on the brink of adulthood. As the story begins, Mrs. Sheridan tells her daughter that she wants to leave the preparations 'to you children this year' (245). In her mother's words 'the artistic one' (246), Laura, is put in charge of the party arrangements, and as she welcomes the workmen who have come to put up the

[204] Other young girl protagonists figure in for instance 'The Little Governess', 'The Young Girl', 'Je ne parle pas Francais' and 'Her First Ball'.

marquee, she mimics her mother's voice: '"Good morning," she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, "Oh – er – have you come – is it about the marquee?"' (246) Laura is very much aware of 'these absurd class distinctions' (247), but despises 'stupid conventions' as she struggles to find a balanced attitude. She has what Anders Iversen calls 'a questioning mind', exemplified by her ability for self-reflection: 'Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all' (258).[205] The various discoveries Laura makes in the course of the day, and her growing sense of independence and difference, make her assert her independence more or less successfully. She is also increasingly aware of her individual identity as different from the identity of the Sheridan family as a whole. The hat is inextricably linked to Laura's identity and personal development. Black, it becomes a symbol of death as it foreshadows her visit to the cottages, but more importantly, it becomes a symbol of social class, which is inextricably linked to identity. The hat, then, becomes the object through which Laura can test her own identity as belonging to, yet separate from, the rest of her family. Almost reluctantly, Laura wears the hat:

> 'Darling!' Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. 'My child!' said her mother, 'the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!' And she held up the hand-mirror (255).

The fact that Mrs. Sheridan places her hat on Laura's head suggests a transferral of gender expectations and the slight corruption this involves. As a parallel, expectations toward the male members of the family are also reflected through the symbol of hats. When Laura's father and brother, Laurie, get ready in the morning, they are seen in the hall 'brushing their hats ready to go to the office' (248). Exemplified by the use of hats, Laurie is groomed to walk in his father's footsteps by being an apprentice at the office, whereas Laura is trained by her mother to become the perfect hostess and ruler of the female domestic sphere by wearing a lace frock and elegant hat. This view is supported by the fact Mrs. Sheridan interrupts Laura's telephone conversation to urge her friend to wear 'that sweet hat she had on last

[205] Anders Iversen, 'A Reading of Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party"' in *Orbis Litterarum*, vol. 23, 1968, p. 7.

Sunday' (248). The hat is also the object through which Mrs. Sheridan diverts the attention away from Laura's attempt to call off the party. At first, Laura looks away and refuses to look at her reflection in the hand-mirror her mother holds up. However, when Laura catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror in her own bedroom, she is captivated by her elegant reflection: 'There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that' (256). This shows that Laura is easily seduced by her own vanity, but also that her sense of identity is in transition and subject to transformation. The hat gains significance throughout the day as Laura receives compliments from her brother and the party guests: '"Darling Laura, how well you look!" "What a becoming hat, child!" "Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking." And Laura, glowing, answered softly, "Have you had tea?"' (257) All dressing is a form of self-representation, and it is possible to announce identity in dress.[206] However, the feeling of wearing the hat drastically changes once Laura is outside the garden. Instead of enjoying the attention it brought inside the garden, she now wishes she had worn something else: 'How her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer – if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be' (259). Laura becomes increasingly self-conscious as she approaches the cottage, and ends the visit by apologising to the dead man for wearing the hat: '"Forgive my hat," she said' (261). By apologising for the extravagant hat, she asks forgiveness for her vain and superficial traits, but most importantly, she apologises on behalf of her family for the rigid class division she does not want to be associated with, yet inescapably is part of.

Place

Social Class and the Postcolonial Landscape

In tune with the social constructionist approach, place can be seen as an expression of the wider social process under the condition of postcolonialism.[207] The elements in the landscape described in the story, as well as the way in which the characters relate to it, express processes of colonialism. As already mentioned in the introduction, the environment Mansfield portrayed in her later stories is that of her New Zealand childhood. New Zealand in the late nineteenth century had not yet developed a sense of national consciousness, and was prone to

[206] Wevers, p. 217.
[207] Cresswell, p. 51.

be imitative of England. The community Mansfield remembered from her childhood resembled suburban England, but placed in an overseas location, the divide between social classes was reinforced. Furthermore, because the pursuit of material comfort was the main motivation for most settlers emigrating to New Zealand, the settler community was bound to be more concerned with material rather than intellectual matters.[208] Class divisions and the occupation with material comfort are indeed reflected in the story at hand. The emphasis on material comfort and luxury shows a preoccupation with the surface level and markers of social status. The topographical details of the garden are subtly rendered and reflect the upper middle class environment the Sheridans belong to. There is grass, a lily-lawn and the house has a porch. The fact that Mrs. Sheridan has to shout from the house in order to be heard by Laura in the garden, as well as the notion that Laura is able to move around freely, suggest a sizable property:

> 'Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!' a voice cried from the house.
> 'Coming!' Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office (248).

Settlers in British colonies tended to transplant English customs to a foreign location. The hegemonic cultural discourse of the English upper middle class is overtly expressed in 'The Garden Party', both through mannerisms, language, social decorum and the emphasis on objects with social connotations such as cream-puffs, lilies and thirteen kinds of sandwiches. The Sheridans also have a piano, chesterfield furniture, the house includes a smoking room, a dining room, they have their own private tennis-court and they depend on hired help around the house. The careful planning and execution of the party show that it is particularly the women in the Sheridan family who strive to obtain the highest degree of similarity to the English culture as possible. The household is run by the female members of the family, and Laura's father and brother display a distanced attitude toward domestic issues. They are not involved in the party arrangements, and return from the office after the guests have left. Markers of social class are exaggerated almost to the point of comedy by the female part of the family, which reflects the widely held sentiment that New Zealand was imitative of England and functioned as a cultural transplant from the metropolis. Critics support the image

[208] Meyers, p. 2.

of a socially divided New Zealand that Mansfield describes. Cheleen Ann-Catherine Mahar claims that it was common for prosperous settlers to flaunt cultural capital such as 'large estate houses, servants, music rooms, libraries and private education, in addition to hunts, concerts and dances […]'.[209] Laura's father is a businessman and the family is wealthy and clearly in the process of maintaining the social class they have constructed themselves into. In stark contrast, the poor in New Zealand suffered from bad living conditions, unemployment and malnutrition.[210] The Sheridans fit well into the image of a socially divided settler society. They are promoters of domestic bourgeois values displayed through their maintenance of social conventions, which are brought to the forefront by the social occasion of the garden party.

As already mentioned in chapter 2, Ali Smith has introduced the idea of social microcosm in Mansfield's stories.[211] The garden is indeed also a microcosm. This effect is partly created by the intense and detailed descriptions of the elements in the garden, but more importantly through the carefully maintained division between the inside and the outside. The workmen, who come from the outside to put up the marquee, are alien in Laura's eyes. She objectifies them and observes them with keen amazement: '"Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were", she thought' (247). Laura finds their behaviour interesting: 'Someone whistled, someone sang out, "Are you right there, matey?" The friendliness of it, the – the –' (248). Laura is unable to pinpoint why she finds the behaviour of the workmen so appealing, which emphasises their difference. Richard Brock supports the links between colonialism and the idea of the garden as social microcosm:

> Beyond the house, the family's domestic space is clearly demarcated by the cultivated garden, with its deliberate arrangement of familiar British plants emphasizing total dependence of the family's economic and social status, as well as its value system, on the colonial centre. The domesticated space of the garden exists in sharp contrast to the recently settled land beyond it, which is glimpsed only rarely, but in which we find depicted the often brutal realities of the agriculture and dangerous manual labour that are necessary to maintain the economic structures which permit the colonial family's starkly incongruous existence in the midst of such terrain.[212]

[209] Mahar, p. 76.
[210] Mahar, p. 77.
[211] 'Introduction' to *The Collected Stories*, p. xxiii.
[212] Richard Brock, 'Disapprobation, Disobedience and the Nation in Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand Stories' in *Journal of New Zealand Literature,* vol. 24, No 1, 2006. <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/display/printView.do?area=abell> [Accessed 18.05.2010]

The value system of the Sheridans, then, depends on the colonial centre to be maintained. The human labour is exemplified in the story by Scott, the neighbour who dies when he is thrown off his horse. However, the contrast between the inside and outside seems more marked to the female members of the family. Whereas the domestic sphere is the centre for the women, the male members of the family move in a larger area outside the garden. The female members of the Sheridan family are oblivious to the structures which maintain their social status at the expense of others and seem perfectly happy to focus on the pleasant aspects of their existence and to ignore whatever exists outside the garden gates. This is the attitude Laura wishes to challenge.

As in 'At the Bay', descriptions of place are central in the text. But whereas the landscape in 'At the Bay' is wild, dominated by the natural ebb and flow of the sea, the surroundings in 'The Garden Party' are manipulated, cultivated and strictly controlled, and take on the hue of artificiality. This effect is enhanced by the gardener who 'had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine' (245). The notion that the lawn is shining accentuates the artificial quality of the garden. It suggests that the Sheridans and the people they employ can mould, rearrange and transform the domestic space to suit the image they wish to promote.[213] The female members of the family are in the continual process of constructing place by re-shaping, re-modelling and manipulating the natural elements in the landscape. Even the weather and the blooming of the roses seem to be controlled by Mrs. Sheridan.[214] In a sense, the Sheridans are imposing cultural significance onto the natural elements. This is a way of constructing identity. In my opinion, the colonial trait of conquering and mastering land is evident in the opening passage. In the course of the day, the Sheridans are in firm control of the landscape. Fullbrook, who has made a thorough analysis of the story, claims that the characters are 'prototypical colonials', who even seem to be in control of the weather on the day of the party. The weather seems to support the values of the Sheridan family:[215] 'And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for the garden party if they had ordered it' (245). This turn of phrase suggests that the Sheridans compare the climate to something which can be bought.[216] Donald S. Taylor and Daniel A. Weiss make the valid point that the garden party represents the dream world of the Sheridan

[213] Diane McGee, *Writing the Meal: Dinner in the Fiction of Early Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 118.
[214] Durix, p. 177.
[215] Fullbrook, p. 118.
[216] Magelaner, p. 113.

family, who are shown in the process of editing and rearranging reality for their own pleasure. They claim that the first paragraph has a dream-like quality where 'the Sheridans order nature – lawns are mowed and swept and flowers bloom on schedule in delineated beds'.[217] This applies above all to the description of the roses: 'Hundreds, yes literally hundreds, had come out in one single night' (245). It is particularly the female characters who control this transformation, as they are in complete control of the domestic sphere. The reality they are in the process of re-arranging does naturally not include the grief caused by the accidental death of a poverty-stricken neighbour. Carole Froude Durix has also commented on the Sheridans' control of their surroundings and argues that 'the control of the uncontrollable' underlines the importance of the facade they wish to perpetuate. This is a facade they want to present to the outside world, but which also makes them blind to their own way of life.[218]

The details in the garden space display a mixture of English and New Zealand flora. The roses and lilies are clearly imported from Europe. At first glance it may seem like a traditional English garden, but details such as the karaka tree show that this is far from any European setting. The description of the karaka trees also involves an awareness of colonialism and island mentality:

> Against the karakas. Then the karakas would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendor. Must they be hidden by the marquee? (247)

In fact, the only truly New Zealand element in the garden is hidden away and covered by the marquee. This suggests a subversion and devaluation of the original New Zealand elements. The description of the trees 'growing on a desert island' might refer indirectly to the garden itself, which also functions as an isolated social microcosm cut off from the rest of the world. The tree also displays an awareness of the Empire and the processes of imperialism it involves. The fact that the story is set on an island which, at least in the minds of the colonisers, used to be a desert island, proud and solitary, is not acknowledged. I would argue

[217] Donald S. Taylor and Daniel A. Weiss, 'Crashing the Garden Party' in *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1958-1959, p. 361.
[218] Carole Froude Durix, 'Point Counterpoint: Both Sides of the Broad Road in Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party" and Witi Ihimeara's "This Life is Weary"' in *The Fine Instrument: Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Paulette Michel and Michel Dupuis (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 2001), p. 177.

that this suggests a refusal to accept history and the processes of imperialism which marks the New Zealand environment the Sheridans inhabit. In this way, the karaka tree symbolises imperialism in its full context. One of the processes of imperialism involves import and export of goods. Consequently, it was common among the middle and upper class in New Zealand to import flora and fauna from England, because imported plants signified cultural capital.[219] This is a small part of the larger picture of colonisation which includes destruction of the native New Zealand forests, civilisation of the bush and a complete reconstruction and transformation of the landscape. The import of English animals, trees and flowers, as well as fertilizers used in farming, was part of what Mahar calls 'a colonial assault' against the land and the Maori population which was both cruel and persistent.[220] The flowers in the garden, then, represent mechanisms of imperialism which are far from the image of an idyllic world which is described. With the colonial assaults in New Zealand in mind, the idealised descriptions of the garden stand in stark contrast to actual historical circumstances.

Matters of social class are central to the story. The contrast between the bright garden on the top of the hill and the dark cottages 'at the very bottom of a steep rise' (254) is made very clear, and the spatial opposition between above and below also reflects the characters and their class affiliation. This contrast is directly stated in the narrative:

> They were little mean dwellings painted in a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke that came out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys (254).

Moreover, the mannerisms and vocabulary embellish the social stratum of the Sheridans. However, the meaning of words may also be subverted. Ali Smith is right to the point when she argues that words such as 'perfect' and 'extravagant' are repeated as if to question what the words really mean.[221] She goes on to argue that the story satirises the absurd social conventions of the upper middle class, such as the importance of wearing the right kind of hat or serving the right kind of food, but most importantly, the story asks why the characters are unable to deal with an alternative reality. This 'other' reality, exemplified by the dead

[219] Cheleen Ann-Catherine Mahar, 'Landscape, Empire and the Creation of Modern New Zealand' in *Landscape and Empire: 1770-2000*, ed. by Glenn Hooper (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p. 76.
[220] Mahar, p. 77.
[221] 'Introduction' to *The Collected Stories*, p. xv.

neighbour, is a reality the Sheridans wish to ignore. The way of dealing with the issue of man's mortality is displayed in the scene where Laura and Jose give a satirical version of a song before the guests arrive. The choice of material and the affected way of performing displayed by the use of italics are reminiscent of a melodramatic act: 'This Life if *Wee*-ary / A tear – A Sigh' (250). There is a strong sense of denial in the way the news about the neighbour is handled; both with regard to denial of death and human mortality as well as denial about alternative modes of life outside the garden gates. Mrs. Sheridan's emphatic interruption is a telling example. As long as the accident did not occur in the garden, she does not have to deal with it: '"Mother, a man's been killed," began Laura. "*Not* in the garden?" interrupted her mother' (255). In a postcolonial perspective, this denial can be linked to colonial guilt. The notion that no alternative reality exists outside the garden gates, the shallowness of the Sheridan household, as well as the light atmosphere in the garden, suggest suppression. Laura being the only exception, the characters in the later New Zealand stories refuse to deal directly with the effects of colonialism.

The mix between English and New Zealand elements is described throughout the narrative, and the result is a hybrid blend of traditional English customs with a hint of exoticism. Godber's men deliver cream puffs, a traditional English dessert, and the Sheridans serve fifteen types of sandwiches including 'cream-cheese and lemon-curd' (251) and passion-fruit ices. The manners and customs associated with the English upper middle class social life scene are also kept intact. Certain phrases from the party serve as examples: '"Never a more delightful garden party..." "The greatest success..." "Quite the most..." Laura helped her mother with the good-byes. They stood side by side by the porch till it was all over' (257). Throughout the party, Laura has played the role of the perfect hostess, who takes care of the guests: '"Have you had tea? Won't you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices are really rather special"' (257). The following quote illustrates the kind of social events girls of the upper middle class were expected to partake in: 'Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these' (247). The English sensibility which marks the behaviour in the Sheridan household functions as a simulacrum of England.[222]

[222] Bennett, p. 40.

Landscape and Symbols

Place in fiction has both a literal and a symbolical value and serves both geographical and metaphorical ends.[223] Mansfield made use of fixed associations of the garden and the road to portray certain kinds of experiences and made use of the liminal spaces which facilitated change and progression. The way Mansfield employed symbols and images displays unity between place and characters. In this context, the garden has a double function; it is both a real and a symbolic place. It is at the same time the Garden of Eden, a strictly archetypal place with specific characteristics. But, as Hankin points out, it also resembles Mansfield's childhood home in Tinakori Road as she remembered it.[224] Whereas the sea, the fuchsia bush, the flowers on the manuka tree and the window-sill are central symbols in 'At the Bay', other objects are imbued with symbolic significance in 'The Garden Party'. The garden, road, lilies, Laura's hat and the pervasive contrast between light and darkness, up above and down below all have a symbolic significance tightly linked to Laura's development as a character.

The garden as archetypal image will receive attention in due course, but first we may establish its symbolic quality apart from its function as archetype. The garden is a symbol of life, development and natural growth. It signifies 'a growing into maturity', but also the inevitable withering of flowers and plants. As a parallel to life itself, the garden party set during one single day is 'the brief moment men enjoy between cradle and grave'.[225] The lushness of the garden, and the descriptions of the vibrant flowers at their prime suggest life and fertility, stand in stark contrast to the motif of death which is introduced later in the story. But most importantly, the garden is a symbol of social class. The isolation of the garden suggests wealth, as the Sheridans are able to embellish some elements and exclude others. The walls of the garden, and the fact that it has a closed gate, enable them to ignore the alternative reality outside the gate, and to invite only the people they want to include on the exclusive inside. In other words, it is the perfect place for the Sheridans to celebrate their social status and flaunt their material success. On this particular occasion, this success is displayed through vast amounts of flowers. The lilies signify showiness because it is the

[223] Lutwack, p. 31.
[224] Hankin, p. 236.
[225] Magelaner, p. 112.

garden plant which grows highest.[226] This fits well with Mrs. Sheridan's motivation for ordering an abundance of lilies and placing them where they will be seen:

> 'I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse'. […] 'Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please,' said Mrs. Sheridan (249-250).

Canna liles; the kind of lilies Mrs Sheridan ordered from the florist, usually come in shades of pink or red. In the story, the canna lilies are 'big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive' (249), which reflect the energy, life and vividness symptomatic of the Sheridan household. However, the lilies Laura wishes to bring to the cottages are white arum lilies. Traditionally, in a European context, white lilies signified purity, chastity and heavenly bliss, often called 'the flower of paradise'.[227] This is well in tune with the primeval quality of the garden as well as Laura's initial purity and innocence before she leaves the garden and is faced with an alternative reality and the corruption of death. Often used in funerals, lilies are also a sign of death, grief and sorrow.[228] It is therefore far from coincidental that Mrs. Sheridan urges Laura to bring lilies to the widow instead of any of the other flowers from the garden. Ultimately, Laura does not bring the lilies. As Jose point out, they will 'ruin her lace frock' (258). Although Laura does not bring the lilies to the cottages, she is still associated with their symbolic meaning of purity and innocence. According to Sam Hynes, the recurring flower imagery in Mansfield's stories fits the theme of lost innocence and draws a parallel between the innocence of childhood and the beautiful, delicate and transitory flowers.[229]

Laura's hat is a symbol of her social class and the fact that it is black is far from irrelevant. Black is the colour of death and grief, and that is why it is fitting that Laura wears this particular hat when she goes to see the widow. But she put it on before the party, even before she heard of the death of her neighbour. In this way, the black hat foreshadows the death of the neighbour and represents something alien to the lighthearted atmosphere in the garden. The gold daisy ornament, however, serves as a connection to the garden, representing

[226] de Vries, p. 298.
[227] de Vries, p. 298.
[228] de Vries, p. 298.
[229] Sam Hynes, 'The Defeat of the Personal' in *The Critical Response to Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Jan Pilditch (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 68.

vanity, extravagance and artificial cultivation. It also makes the hat more elegant, which perpetuates the female elegance portrayed in the story. It helps underline the difference between the garden and the cottages.

Liminal Spaces, Liminal States: Passing through the Garden Gate

In terms of liminality, Laura's journey to the cottages can also be read as a journey of initiation or a 'rite of passage'. Returning to Turner's treatment of van Gennep's definition of the three phases (separation, margin and reaggragation), it is evident that the phases are reflected in Laura's development as a character. The first phase, separation, involves detachment from a set of cultural conditions.[230] These conditions apply both to social class and Laura's role within the family. Angela Smith also links Laura's development in 'The Garden Party' to Turner's definition of liminality, to 'a crossing-place from one state of being to another'.[231] According to Smith, Laura undergoes a transition from mimicking her mother's behaviour and copying her view of the world to questioning her mother's basic assumptions. Throughout the day of the party, Laura is testing her attitudes and behaviour and her place within the family as well as the social class she is affiliated with. This is particularly evident during the preparations of the party, as well as the discussion following the information about the dead neighbour. As the story opens, Laura copies her mother's voice when she greets the workmen, but thinks she sounds 'fearfully affected' (246). The telephone conversation, where Laura talks to a friend who has been invited to the party, also reveals the act of mimicking her mother's voice: 'Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. "Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday." "Mother says you're to wear that *sweet* hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye."' (248) However, as the day progresses, Laura feels increasingly different from the rest of her family, and attempts to express resistance against the family consensus. When Laura hears the news about the diseased neighbour, she expresses her difference of opinion. She instinctively wants to call off the party, but needs to consult her mother first: 'Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said as they had used to say on those occasions, "I'm going straight up to tell mother"' (254). Note here the verb tense, 'used to', which suggests a questioning of the habit of telling their mother. Yet another example is Laura's observation of the karaka tree. She thinks it is a shame to cover up the tree by putting

[230] *The Ritual Process*, p. 94.
[231] *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, p. 7.

the marquee in front of it. Although she appreciates the aesthetic quality of the tree, she is unable to decide on the reason for her reluctance. The fact that she questions the act of covering the tree suggests a growing unease with, and critique of, the colonial system she is part of, which values English roses and lilies above the natural New Zealand plants. In the case of the karaka trees, Laura fails in stating her difference of opinion, and the marquee is put up in front of the karakas. After the guests have left, Laura reflects more explicitly on her sense of being different: 'Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from the party. Would the poor woman really like that?' (258). This development shows that the stage of separation is a gradual process, well in tune with the rite of passage.

The second phase of van Gennep's process is called 'margin', which is a liminal period where the individual enters an ambiguous territory.[232] What is interesting is the fact that Mansfield imbues not only objects but also changes in atmosphere with symbolic value. One example is the change in atmosphere when the garden party is coming to an end and Laura and Mrs. Sheridan say goodbye to the guests: 'And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed' (257). This change in atmosphere suggests a transition from one part of the day to the next, and introduces the marginal phase of the rite of passage. It is far from coincidental that Laura embarks on her journey to the cottages 'down below' just as the day is turning to night. The ambiguous liminal state of dusk is clearly portrayed: 'It was just growing dusky as Laura shut the garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade' (258-259). By leaving the garden, Laura is entering an undiscovered world.

Roads in general terms symbolise adventure and change.[233] The road Laura crosses as she leaves the garden signifies a journey, and when she closes the garden gate and enters the road, she crosses into an in-between place which is neither her home nor the property of her neighbours. The root of the word 'liminal' recurs in the word 'limbo' (from 'limbus' in Latin) which means edge or border.[234] In the medieval tradition, limbo signified the 'undefined region of undefined character between Heaven and Hell' most commonly associated with people who were not baptised.[235] The area Laura enters has indeed an undefined character, an impression created by the shift from sunlight to dusk, as the lane is described as 'smoky and dark' (259). Her sense perceptions indicate that this is unknown territory, and the narrator

[232] *The Ritual Process*, p. 94.
[233] Lutwack, p. 31.
[234] *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, p. 10.
[235] de Vries, p. 299.

records everything as if it is seen for the first time. Laura, who has displayed a sensibility and perceptiveness toward the natural elements in the garden, is confused, and her sense perceptions are muddled and non-distinctive: 'Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. […] A low hum came from the cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on' (259). Although the liminal space of the road represents estrangement and instability, it is also a space which facilitates change and progression. I would argue that the phase of the margin not only applies to the liminal space of the road. The entire passage from the point when Laura moves through the garden gate until she meets Laurie outside the cottages is a consecutive line of liminal spaces relating to the margin phase. When Laura reaches the cottages, she has to enter yet another gate: 'This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. […] The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was as though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here' (259). Laura has to cross the threshold and enter the hallway, which is another liminal space in-between the rooms in the house with a clear function: 'Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom, where the dead man was lying' (260). This sense of in-betweenness is well in tune with Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope of threshold. The threshold experience involves a crisis and change in life, and is charged with emotion and value. Laura's experience when she enters the house of the diseased neighbour is emotional, and also involves a crisis which is resolved when she sees the dead body:

> There lay a young man, fast asleep – sleeping so soundly, so deeply that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. […] What did garden-parties and lace frocks matter to him? He was far away from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane (261).

To Laura, seeing the dead body offers a resolution which is an antithesis to the material ideals upheld by the rest of the Sheridan family. In my opinion, it affirms the rising feeling of difference Laura has had throughout the day and hence the idea that her identity exists independently from the collective identity of her family. The fact that she apologises for the hat supports this interpretation: 'Laura gave a loud childish sob. "Forgive my hat," she said'

(261). Laura's sense of in-betweenness is enhanced by the notion that she rests somewhere in-between childhood and adulthood. Her insecurity and childlike behaviour is revealed through the 'childish sob', yet she shows independence through her vigorous determination to leave the cottage on her own: 'And this time she didn't wait for Em's sister. She found her way out of the door, down the path past all those dark people' (261).

Finally, the third phase involves reaggregation depending on the interpretation of the final phrase. Reaggregation is the phase where the individual is once again in a stable state. In the case of Laura, it is, however, uncertain to which extent she reaches this phase. This is due to the open-ended narrative which produces conflicting interpretations. Seeing the dead body certainly offered some kind of increased knowledge about human mortality, but the ambiguous ending questions the degree of knowledge or insight Laura has gained from her experience. The final passage also reflects Mansfield's preoccupation with the inadequacy of speech to express feelings and knowledge.[236] The failure to fully articulate gained or failed insight is evident in the interior monologues by several characters in the 'At the Bay', but the problem is reinforced and more clearly articulated in 'The Garden Party'. The story is, according to Fullbrook, 'radically inconclusive'.[237] I will develop this argument further by claiming that the open-ended structure creates a liminal space in which the characters continue to exist. The ambiguous ending rests in the meaning of the final phrase:

> 'No,' sobbed Laura. 'It was simply marvellous. But, Laurie –' She stopped, she looked at her brother. 'Isn't life,' she stammered, 'isn't life –' But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.
>
> '*Isn't* it, darling?' said Laurie (261).

In my opinion, the ending produces two diverging interpretations. On the one hand, Laura's development shows a movement from innocence into experience if we believe she learns the profound nature of man's mortality. Laura is able to transgress both the psychological and physical space by walking out through the garden gate and facing up to the issue of mortality, which the other members of the family wish to ignore. This interpretation rests on the close bond between brother and sister, demonstrated by the fact that Laurie finishes Laura's sentence. This is significant because it presupposes a mutual understanding. Laurie is older

[236] Kobler, p. 78.
[237] Fullbrook, p. 123.

than Laura, [238] which implies a higher level of maturity. He might have grasped the concept of man's mortality at an earlier stage. In this interpretation, which supports van Gennep's idea of reaggregation, Laura assumes that Laurie understands her experience, but this is undercut for the reader by his final response.[239] As the discussion in the previous chapter showed, the characters in 'At the Bay' experience series of epiphanies, or glimpses, some of which fail while others induce a higher level of understanding. In the first interpretation of the final phrase, it can thus be argued that the ending of 'The Garden Party' is a climactic epiphany rather than one part of a series of minor epiphanies. On the other hand, in the alternative interpretation, Laura 'eludes aggregation', which presents a more pessimistic view of the final phrase. It suggests that it is uncertain to which extent Laura gains knowledge by increased experience, and whether or not Laurie understands the experience she is trying to articulate. The use of italics adds a superficial quality to the response ('*Isn't* it'), which echoes an empty upper middle class phrase. The fact that Laurie's response is no more than an echo question also creates uncertainty. Through the dialogue earlier in the story, Laurie has shown his manner of speech, which mirrors mannerisms of the upper middle class. For instance, his reply to Laura's question 'Oh I do love parties, don't you?' is 'Ra-ther' (248), and he exclaims: '"My word, Laura! You do look stunning," said Laurie. "What an absolutely topping hat!"' (256). With this superficial manner of speech in mind, the final phrase is emptied of meaning. However, the two conflicting interpretations of the ending do not undermine the liminality inherent in the story. Quite to the contrary: the reluctance towards conclusion perpetuates the liminal aspects. Mansfield favoured the open-ended narrative and several of her stories conclude in the middle of the action taking place. The reader is denied resolution, which creates the impression of never reaching arrival.[240] In my opinion, the radically inconclusive ending is also promoted by the notion that Laura is at a transition point between childhood and adulthood, between innocence and experience. The ambiguous ending could therefore suggest that she remains in an in-between state between two clearly defined stages in life. Relating this notion to the metaphorical quality of the journey to the cottages, she is yet to arrive at a full understanding, and remains in a liminal state 'betwixt and between' as the story draws to a close. The continual dusk adds to the argument that the whole ending section forms a liminal space. The clear opposition between the cheerful

[238] Their exact age is not established, but Laurie is Laura's senior and goes to the office with their father every day, which indicates that he is in the proper age for apprenticeship. Angela Smith suggests that Laura is 16 years old (*Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, p. 141).
[239] *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two*, p. 144.
[240] This point was made by Emma Short at the KMS Conference 26 March 2011.

atmosphere, sun and blue sky at the day-lit garden party and the 'dark and smoky' cottages of the twilight hour, induces the reader to presuppose that darkness eventually will fall. But, there is no mention in the narrative of complete darkness. This creates the impression that the final scene is in a timeless zone.

The previous chapter presented the argument that the bay, where the narrative of 'At the Bay' is situated, is a liminal space. I would like to extend this notion and argue that the importance of the liminal space is enhanced by the story's title, which also applies to 'The Garden Party'. The garden space is liminal because it is an in-between place which serves as an extension to the house. The garden is in-between nature and civilisation; it is natural but at the same cultivated. It is in-between the private and public sphere. Laura's change and increased maturity seem to depend on an ambivalent liminal space to facilitate the transition. The period of transition between childhood and adult age is at the core of the narrative. Whereas the window-sill becomes a central symbol of transgression for Beryl in 'At the Bay', the garden gate is of great significance for Laura. According to Smith, Mansfield often used the garden gate to symbolise the child who is able to cross the barriers adults are confined by.[241] The fact that Laura exits the garden through the gate marks a shift in the story. By leaving the garden, which is bright, cheerful, offering safety and familiarity, and entering the dark and gloomy road outside, Laura crosses a boundary the family has been eager to maintain. When Laura crosses the broad road on her own, she sees the lane which is 'smoky and dark', lined by 'the mean little cottages' (259). Although she is not physically in the garden, she still carries 'inside her' (259) the 'kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass […]' (259). This mental recollection shows that she is still in-between two states; she recognises that the surroundings have changed radically, but she is still mentally at the party. As she approaches the cottage of the widow, she is suddenly struck by doubt: 'It was a mistake to have come; she knew it all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now? No, too late. This was the house' (259). When she arrives at the cottage, Laura crosses yet another threshold: the literal threshold of the doorway. This shows that crossing the threshold in a metaphorical sense can have immediate effect. Once Laura enters the doorway, she is faced with mortality. This marks a point of no return.[242] After being faced with the dead man, and with increased knowledge about human mortality, life will never be the same for Laura.

[241] 'Landscape and the Foreigner Within', p. 155.
[242] Short, p. 12.

The garden gate is a central symbol in 'At the Bay'. To Beryl, it represents the possibility of sexual transgression, and the fact that she does not move through the gate is significant. To Laura, the gate represents increased experience in a different sense. The garden gate is a recurrent motif in Mansfield's fiction which signifies increased knowledge and experience, but it represents a radical, not a gradual shift. By leaving the garden, entering the liminal space of the road, and crossing the cottage threshold, Laura becomes in Victor Turner's phrase a 'threshold person'. The transitional moment is not unambiguously unproblematic. Short argues that the act of crossing the threshold can have an unsettling effect and points to the fact that Laura is reluctant to be led through the doorway and dark passage into the bedroom: 'The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom, where the dead man was lying' (260).[243]

The contrast between high and low fits into Turner's concept of liminality. According to his theory, liminality presupposes 'that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is to be low'.[244] This is exactly what Laura experiences on her journey to the cottages, which makes her act, according to Fullbrook, as an 'intermediary between two worlds'.[245] By this, she suggests that the world of the garden with its light atmosphere, luxury and outstanding privilege stands in stark contrast to the poverty-stricken world Laura encounters in the cottages. Fullbrook argues that this act forces Laura into the role of outsider.[246] Mansfield herself functioned as an intermediate between two worlds, that of the 'New world' of New Zealand and the 'Old world' of the metropolitan centre in London. Laura's role as outsider might reflect the exile experience in more ways than one. Banished from the Garden of Eden, she is also an outsider in terms of experience. The exile experience is reflected in the way Laura moves from inclusion to exile, which shows how fragile the insider position can be. In this story, the boundary between inside and outside is marked by the garden gate, which links Laura's journey to colonialism: 'The garden gate becomes the boundary between two seemingly irreconcilable worlds, a boundary whose crossing becomes a highly significant and often transgressive event'.[247]

[243] Short, p. 11.
[244] *The Ritual Process*, p. 97.
[245] Fullbrook, p. 120.
[246] Fullbrook, p. 120.
[247] Brock, p. 1.

Characters in Place

Archetypal Images: The Garden of Eden, the Underworld and Postcolonialism

The attributes of any given place depend on its relative position to other places. Consequently, the vertical structure of the place relations with regard to the garden on the hill and the cottages down below reflects the antithesis between heaven and hell. In his account of the rhetoric of place, Lutwack points to the fact that ancient cosmologies identified an upper, middle and lower level with a hierarchy of values attached to the various levels. More specifically, Christian cosmology identified heaven in the upper level and hell in the lower level, which implies a polarisation of extremes which leaves the area in-between ambivalent and undefined.[248] This corresponds well to the story at hand, as it places the Sheridan residence on the top of a steep hill and the cottages 'down below'. The archetypal image of the Garden of Eden featured in the story is prominent and cannot go unnoticed. The use of biblical allusions is apparent in the first passage where 'the green bushes bowed down as though they were visited by archangels' (245). This notion is strengthened by the fact that Godber's men deliver the news of the dead neighbour. Laura is banished from the garden, albeit for a while, and as a parallel to Adam and Eve, she gains experience, and the ambiguous ending suggests that her level of knowledge is increased. Adam and Eve, however, gained too much knowledge. The story thus poses the question whether or not Laura will be able to return to the garden with ease. At any rate, the garden will never be the same.

I would argue that the employment of the archetypal image of the Garden of Eden links this story to 'At the Bay', where the use of pastoral conventions also presents a version of the colonial utopia. The Garden of Eden presupposes an antithesis, a fall from grace, and in this context, the underworld presents the counterpart of paradise. The contrast between paradise and hell marks the structure of the story and Laura's character development, and prompts her to embark on a journey which clearly resembles Orpheus' descent to the underworld. Laura's journey also alludes to the Valley of Death. The focus on the topography of the garden and the enclosed space as a self-contained world supports this impression. It is significant that Mansfield mixed classical, Christian and archetypal images. The classical imagery is subtly present in the description of the sky 'without a cloud' (245). The sunlit sky was favoured by the Greek poets to the extent that literary critics coined the term 'Greek

[248] Lutwack, p. 39.

light' to describe the light writers in the twentieth century used to establish an affinity to classical antiquity. In the mythic story, sunlight signified immortal beauty.[249] Additionally, several critics, among them McGee and Durix, have commented on the apparent resemblance between Laura's journey to the cottages and Orpheus' descent to the Underworld. Although the parallel can be supported by evidence, I would argue that only certain aspects coincide. In my view, some aspects of Laura's journey resemble the archetypal model, whereas others do not. The traditional myth of Orpheus as it is rendered by Ovid and Virgil is the story of his attempt to win back Eurydice, his wife, from eternal death in Hades. The only condition was that he could not look back as she followed in his footsteps until they were both safe in the upper world, but the attempt failed because his love for Eurydice made him look back too soon.[250] The evident contrasts in 'The Garden Party' between light and darkness, up on the hill and down below support the archetypal model. Moreover, the word 'passage' is repeated and the house resembles a labyrinth, as if it were the tunnel to the underworld.[251] A big dog runs by Laura when she ventures outside the garden. Durix compares the dog with Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guarded Hades.[252] The dog fits into the setting of the neighbourhood and thus helps create verisimilitude, but it also takes on a mythical quality. In addition, both Orpheus and Laura have an artistic sensibility. Laura is described as 'the artistic one', a character trait which serves as a parallel to Orpheus, who was a poet and musician. Finally, the fact that Laura has to cross a broad road could allude to the river Styx, which Orpheus is ferried over in order to reach Hades. These aspects strengthen the archetypal model of the descent to the Underworld, but other aspects of Laura's journey deviate from the model. In my opinion, Laura's motivation for going to the cottages departs from that of Orpheus. Whereas his journey is sparked by the wish to save his loved-one, Laura is persuaded by her mother to visit the dead neighbour, and she goes reluctantly: '"But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?" said Laura' (258). The myth of the underworld descent includes a return from the land of the dead, either with a loved-one, an object of quest or increased knowledge. The return to the garden is undercut for the reader, and Laura has not brought an object or loved-one back from the underworld. How much knowledge she will return with is also uncertain. Although several aspects of Laura's journey deviate from the myth of the underworld descent, and Durix and McGee's claim accordingly represents an

[249] Lutwack, p. 54.
[250] Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 377-381.
[251] McGee, p. 120.
[252] Durix, p. 183.

oversimplification, I would still argue that it illuminates the landscape Laura moves around in. It strengthens the contrast between the inside and outside of the garden and shows that Mansfield used elements from the natural surroundings and imbued them with mythical significance.

'The Garden Party' is a widely read and thoroughly analysed story. What might be introduced as a new perspective is the notion that the archetypal images in 'The Garden Party' can be linked to colonialism and Mansfield's exile position. The Edenic myth is in fact part of a system of settler myths which promoted a romantic, vague and nostalgic version of the New Zealand landscape, and turned away from the brutalities of the treatment of the Maori population.[253] The decorative use of local flora, which in this case is a mix of plants deriving from England and New Zealand, is also part of this convention. Yet another aspect of the story can be linked to the exile experience. The underworld descent is one of the original narrative models of the exilic experience.[254] It involves banishment, a journey and loss of innocence through experience and knowledge, which sums up Laura's progression in the story.

The Edenic myth promotes utopian traits in 'The Garden Party'. Works of literature depicting the future of the colony in utopian terms have been produced in many settler colonies. These utopias represented a way of looking to the future and shaping various developments in the colony.[255] Descriptions of the garden include the same plenitude as the descriptions of the surroundings in 'At the Bay', which enforces the utopian aspects of the stories, where every element is described at its peak. 'Literally hundreds' of the roses had come out during the night, and Mrs. Sheridan makes a point out of the fact that she has ordered too many lilies: 'And I suddenly I thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies' (249). The lilies are also presented in their most extreme state: 'There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies – canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems' (249). In fact, both the earthly Paradise depicted in 'The Garden Party' and the arcadia presented in 'At the Bay' are typical narrative models in settler literature. Interestingly enough, Mansfield drew upon settler myths, but reversed them by looking back and not forward. She was not preoccupied with the bright future, but the lost past of colonial

[253] Mahar, p. 77.
[254] Seidel, p. 13.
[255] Sargent, p. 206.

New Zealand, which she brought back by re-creating it in fiction in nostalgic and utopian terms. Eden is the original Arcadia of Christian culture, both being unspoilt and harmonious.[256] Gifford has pointed to the fact that commentators have argued that nostalgia is an essential element of Arcadia, and thus indirectly a part of Eden. In my view, this fits well with Mansfield's employment of the archetypal images, which also demonstrates Mansfield's knowledge of, and affinity to, English literature.

Unity of Character and Place

Returning to Maxwell's theory of place discussed in chapter 2, 'The Garden Party' is yet another example of how Mansfield's use of natural descriptions cease to be merely decorative. Rather than being a backdrop, or a 'pantheistic cliché', the descriptions of place form an integral part of the action and become a functional part of the structure of the story. The unity of character and place is marked in 'The Garden Party' because the physical journey Laura undertakes reflects her mental journey from childhood towards adulthood. Like Jonathan and Beryl in 'At the Bay', she is finely attuned to her surroundings, which reflect her mental state. The liminal space she enters when she closes the garden gate is ambiguous and complex. The dusk suggests a liminal space between light and darkness, which also applies to the transition point Laura inhabits between childhood and adulthood, innocence and experience, as well as the distinction between life and death she is soon to discover.

Nature and characters exist in close relation to each other in Mansfield's later New Zealand stories. Examples of passages in the text where the characters experience feelings of elevation as a response to the natural surroundings are fewer in 'The Garden Party' compared to 'At the Bay'. Laura does, however, experience a sense of well-being when she observes the play of light in the garden:

> But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silvery photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it (249).

[256] Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 32.

On the one hand, the quote might indicate that Laura's mood is affected by the freshness of the surroundings, and that she is internalising aspects of the outside world. But, on the other hand, it might signal that Laura is projecting her elevated mood onto the surroundings, by reading certain characteristics into it which reflect her mental state. All the same, Laura is very much aware of her surroundings, she is perceptive and has an eye for detail which she holds in common with many of Mansfield's characters: 'She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast' (249). At one point in the text, the characteristics of the canna lilies directly reflect Laura's energy and open attitude towards life as they are described as 'wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive' (249).

Smith and McGee have both noted the fact that several of Mansfield's landscapes function as finely constructed microcosms. McGee expands on the idea of microcosm and argues that the occasion of the party sets up new boundaries and creates a space which is clearly defined psychologically and in terms of physical space.[257] The confined space of the garden, then, serves as a metaphor for the narrow-minded attitude of especially the female members of the family, as well as the wish to create a boundary by shutting out an alternative existence outside the garden gate. Although I think the idea of the garden as microcosm with a twofold function valid, I would like to develop this idea further by arguing that Laura's journey to the cottages underpins and facilitates her mental journey and serves as an example of unity between character and place. As already mentioned, Laura's perceptiveness and sensibility make her internalise aspects of the outer world. When she leaves the garden and dusk falls, she is physically influenced by the change in atmosphere. Whereas she 'skimmed' (248) across the lawn during the preparations of the party, with almost birdlike movements, she is hunched as she hurries down the lane: 'Laura bent her head and hurried on' (259). This shows that her behavior is influenced by her surroundings and the change in atmosphere, as she feels out of place and tries to protect herself.

Settlement implies taking control of, and possessing, land in a foreign location. If we relate this to the notion of microcosm, the argument that the construction of the garden as a microcosm, as well as the impression that the Sheridans have a strict control even of the weather and the natural elements in the garden, is plausible. The discontinuity and break with the old country, and moreover, the sense of past which marks the remembered places, prompts

[257] McGee, p. 119.

the settler to take possession of a place 'and making it into your own image'.[258] This is precisely what the Sheridans are in the process of doing throughout the day of the party. They emphasise the English aspects to suit the image of gentility they want to maintain, which leaves them in the process of re-creation in all their activities and endeavours. The English customs and mannerisms which have already been mentioned serve to reinforce the English identity the Sheridans wish to promote. Moreover, importations such as the cream-puffs and the lilies all reflect the settler condition inherent in the story.

Several passages which focus on the preparation of the party reflect beginnings and opportunity. Even the house welcomes initiative: 'All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud' (249). Smith argues that Mansfield throughout her literary production was preoccupied with 'beginnings, stories set in spring, stories which hymn nature's own anarchy of rebirth, or (famously in that story all about beginnings, "Prelude"), stories from a child's point of view'.[259] Laura could still be considered a child, at least in the initial parts of the story. If we consider her transition, she is also on the brink of adulthood, which implies a beginning. The primeval quality of the garden, with focus on beginnings, reflects Laura's age and the notion of being on the brink of adulthood. Inherent in the notion of beginnings lies its antithesis: the end. Dunbar argues that the narrative, with its 'metaphor-burdened summer's day from dawn to darkness', reflects the life span of a human being.[260] Accordingly, when Laura leaves the garden and undertakes her journey to the cottages, she is prefiguring her life development.[261] Repeating the notion that the garden can be seen as growing into maturity, I argue that Laura is also in the process of doing so. This is yet another example of the unity between character and place.

Memory, Fiction and Postcolonialism: The Act of Looking Back

Descriptions of geographical places in literature will always have a twofold quality; although rooted in fact, they tend to be read symbolically. All places, whether they are inspired by geographical reality or fantasy, have the inherent possibility of being transformed into

[258] 'Being Colonial/Colonial Being', p. 41.
[259] 'Introduction' to *The Collected Stories*, p. xxiii.
[260] Dunbar, p. 170.
[261] Dunbar, p. 170.

utopias. The descriptions of the garden, with their emphasis on light, lushness, vitality and plenitude, are indeed utopian. Iversen compares the world of the garden to Mansfield's remembered image of New Zealand as she describes it in one of her letters: 'in the early morning there I always remember feeling that this little island has dipped back into the dark blue sea during the night only to rise again at gleam of day, all hung with bright spangles and glittering drops'.[262] Mansfield reflected on the value of memory in her critical writings as well as her personal writings. In her view, the creation of fiction founded on remembered places from her past constituted a kind of memory play. By choosing to write stories set in the New Zealand remembered from her childhood, Mansfield put emphasis on memory and its influence on fiction, and the aesthetic attitude to memory is articulated in her critical writings. In the introduction to *The Critical Writings of Katherine Mansfield*, Clare Hanson argues that memory was an important component of Mansfield's aesthetic theory, placed at the centre of her writing process.[263] According to Hanson, Mansfield's sense of memory was twofold: it was both selective, capturing and isolating the features of a specific event, and synthetic, meaning that memory is the object of manipulation by superimposing remembered images. In this way, experience can be reconstituted through the process of reworking and re-evaluation. The latter part is the one most easily related to Mansfield's latest New Zealand stories, which, according to Hanson, have a polished stylistic quality.[264] In a review in the literary journal *Athenaeum*, Mansfield discussed her vision of Memory, with a capital letter, which she thought idealised the past:

> There is one who could not live in so tempestuous an environment as her mind – and he is Memory. […] It is true that life is sometimes very swift and breathless, but not always. If we are to be truly alive there are large pauses in which we creep away into our caves of contemplation. And then it is, in the silence, that Memory mounts his throne and judges all that is in our minds – appointing each his separate place, high or low, rejecting this, selecting that – putting this one to shine in the light and throwing that one into the darkness. […] we feel that until these things are judged and given its appointed place in the whole scheme, they have no meaning in the world of art.[265]

[262] Iversen, p. 8.
[263] Clare Hanson, 'Introduction' to *The Critical Writings of Katherine Mansfield* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), p. 10.
[264] Hanson, p. 12.
[265] Mansfield in Hanson, p. 12.

This quote is significant because it shows that the exile experience cannot be separated from Mansfield's aesthetic attitude. In my opinion, the act of 'rejecting this, selecting that' can be seen as an affirmation of her exile position and the process of reclaiming a lost past. This process is undoubtedly active in the mind of any writer of fiction, but it is intensified when a writer moves into exile. Moreover, I believe this process is related to Rushdie's contention that the writer in exile creates fictions, not actual cities or villages, and that the exile temperament enables the writer to address matters of universal appeal in a more direct manner. Mansfield's treatment of the themes of longing, the passing of time as well as the mortality of human life are indeed universal. At the same time, as the characters in Mansfield's stories mirror members of the Beauchamp family, and more importantly, as the places rendered are actual remembered places from her childhood, this act of looking back is also in Said's words the need to 'reassemble an exile's broken history into a new whole'.[266] The unity of character and place expressed in both stories is therefore typical of the settler culture Mansfield was born into and reflects a wish to bridge the gap between the old and the new world. This unity may also be seen as an attempt to remedy the rupture and sense of dislocation and alienation inherent in the exile condition. Through the act of looking back, she hoped to discover a pattern of purpose which underpinned life. The quote by Mansfield in chapter 2 used in the discussion of the fundamentally Romantic attitude which underpinned her view of nature may also be related to the act of looking back to an unspoilt past: her 'credo' of life, the notion that there is 'something at the back of it all' which may be perceived through 'glimpses, divine warnings – signs',[267] also applies to the retrospective rendering of a New Zealand childhood.

Concluding Remarks

Place becomes a matter of importance for most writers in exile. In the case of 'The Garden Party', place is not embellished in the regional sense of 'local colour', but rather in the way the physical landscape influences and mirrors the mental landscapes of the characters. In the course of this chapter, I have argued that the physical landscape with the flowers in the garden, the road, the cottages and the garden as space in itself facilitate Laura's journey and coming-of-age process. In the beginning of the story, Laura embodies the moral qualities of

[266] Said, p. 177.
[267] Mansfield in Friis, p. 66.

the garden, but as the story progresses, she experiences a growing unease which makes her question and test the basic assumptions of the moral universe she inhabits. The fact that she is willing to transcend the boundary the garden gate represents, and enter the unknown world of the road and the cottages downhill, shows a merging of the physical journey with her development as a character. In this way, the landscape serves as an active force rather than a passive backdrop, and shows how narrative descriptions of landscape can create meaning beyond the function of creating atmosphere or verisimilitude. The fact that narrative landscapes can create meaning points to the importance of place itself, which in turn reflects the postcolonial aspects of the story. Moreover, the archetypal images of the Garden of Eden and the descent to the Underworld clearly support a colonial reading of the story, as utopianism has held a strong position in the settler society Mansfield was born into. The idea of the garden as an isolated microcosm, as well as its quintessential English attributes, also serve to illuminate the mechanisms of imperialism at play, where the garden serves as a simulacrum of genteel English upper middle class life. In short, Laura *is* the garden, the journey and the breaking free from a constraining moral universe. By being temporarily exiled from the garden, growing in maturity and gaining new perspectives, Laura embodies the positive qualities of exile.

Mansfield's widespread portrayal of liminal spaces and places, with reluctance towards conclusion, as well as the descriptions of characters who embark on mental and physical journeys closely related to the places they inhabit, reflect her position as a writer in exile. Her tendency to combine opposing elements and the continual shifts in mood and manner also derive from her exile experience. As a response to tradition, modernity and the colonial process of settlement, she chose to return to a nostalgic and innocent image of her childhood New Zealand as well as to articulate a critique of colonial culture. By moving to the metropolitan centre, she found the means to distance herself from the culturally stifling environment in Wellington, but simultaneously to treat the experience of rupture it involved. In my view, Mansfield's means of bridging the gap and treating the exile experience of dislocation was to create stories which promote unity between characters and place. By re-creating landscapes of the mind she promoted a vivid image of New Zealand which served as the basis for critique of colonial culture.

Conclusion

The contradictory and ambivalent in-between positions Mansfield inhabited throughout her life, both in terms of her position as a writer and her colonial status, provided a starting point for this enquiry which has focused on the way in which the effect of exile is reflected in her later New Zealand stories. States of in-betweenness permeate and serve as one of the main motifs in the two stories I have chosen to analyse, 'At the Bay' and 'The Garden Party', and in the process of writing this dissertation, Mansfield's in-between positions have been re-accentuated. As mentioned in the introduction, Mansfield has been labeled 'female writer', 'modernist' and 'Bloomsbury writer'. Throughout the process of writing this dissertation it has, however, become apparent that inherent in the notion of in-betweenness and literary categories lie the danger of forcing Mansfield into new categories. The labels 'colonial writer', 'New Zealand writer' or 'writer in exile', labels that I have used myself in this dissertation, may be no more innocent, because the focus on context and the attempt to extricate Mansfield from categories which limit readings of her stories might simply produce new constraining categories. My goal has therefore been to perceive the categories not as exclusive or conclusive, but rather as flexible and interchangeable, each reflecting a kind of experience which highlights different aspects of her stories. As a parallel to the characters she created, Mansfield's position as a writer remains 'betwixt and between'.

Descriptions of place are central to understanding Mansfield's later New Zealand stories. Through a detailed close reading of the two stories, it has become evident that the descriptions of landscape function both on a literal and metaphorical level. On a literal level, it narrows the focus to New Zealand and its distinctiveness, its geographical position and island mentality. On a metaphorical level, elements such as the sea, the sun, the manuka tree and the fuchsia bush relate to thematic aspects in 'At the Bay', such as the passing of time, the shortness of human life and the colonial condition of longing, isolation and cultural dependency the characters experience. Most importantly, Mansfield's emphasis on place comes into sharper focus by serving as a parallel to the personal development of the characters. The central characters who figure in 'At the Bay' are all extremely aware of, and attuned to, their surroundings, and the various elements in landscape are able to influence the mental states of the characters who inhabit it, which shows that landscape and characters are closely linked. This is particularly evident in the scene where Jonathan's mood is elevated

when he takes a swim. The movement of the waves and the feeling of weightlessness inspire a momentary mental glimpse about the ideal life. Similarly, Linda reflects on the shortness of life and the toils of childbirth as she observes a flower which has fallen from the manuka tree and will soon wither away. Beryl perceives the fuchsia bush in the garden to be the limit beyond which she cannot transgress, and by remaining inside the garden, she refuses Harry Kember's sexual advances. These examples all show that a concentrated focus on the particular suggests something beyond itself, and the fact that the particular objects in this context are elements from the natural surroundings adds importance to the New Zealand landscape. Set during a single summer's day, the rhythm of the sea marks the temporal structure of the story. The ebb and flow of the sea induces the characters to reflect on the passing of time and the shortness of human life. The sea also gains significance by the fact that it is the element which isolates the settlement from the rest of the British Empire. The fact that the landscape is personified, symbolically imbued and clearly both reflects and provokes change in the characters who inhabit it, makes it an active force rather than a passive backdrop. In short, place in Mansfield's stories functions as an integration of nature and culture.

The in-betweenness of the landscape is created by the constantly shifting atmospheres and changes between light and darkness. For instance, the opening scene in 'At the Bay' has a seamless quality where the rising of the mist is meticulously rendered. In addition, the atmosphere changes when darkness falls. The in-betweenness the characters experience is induced by the glimpses they experience. The glimpses rarely form a complete vision, which leaves the characters in liminal states. Mansfield's stories serve as examples of the meeting points between postcolonialism and modernism, where the modernist epiphany fits well with Bhabha's theory of liminality, which characterises one aspect of the exile experience.

The act of looking back to an unspoilt past is demonstrated in the use of pastoral conventions which manifest Mansfield's affinity with English literary conventions. The use of pastoral conventions in 'At the Bay' directs attention to the landscape, and helps create a utopian version of the New Zealand landscape which is typical of the exile position she inhabited. Mansfield employed symbols and allusions which mark her affinity to, but also her difference from, Western cultural and literary history. The intertextual references in 'At the Bay' to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the use of the pastoral conventions so intimately connected to the Virgilian pastoral tradition, and the employment of the archetypal image of the Garden of Eden demonstrate that she was well versed in the Western canon. I would argue

that by making references to the classical tradition but at the same time placing it in a New Zealand landscape marks a profound difference from the tradition. By merging this tradition with descriptions of natural elements so profoundly different from any European setting, Mansfield created a special fusion which makes her stories original.

In 'The Garden Party', the landscape is cultivated and marked by sharp contrasts. The garden functions as a social microcosm where the Sheridan family have constructed themselves into a simulacrum of English upper middle class life. The garden they inhabit is lush and luxurious and resembles an earthly paradise where the weather and the elements in the garden are described in their ideal state. Conversely, the alternative reality outside the garden gate is markedly different, where poverty and bad housing characterise the neighbourhood. Whereas the garden is light and colourful, the rest of the neighbourhood is dark, worn and poverty-stricken. As a parallel to 'At the Bay', the elements in the landscape are imbued with symbolic significance, but in 'The Garden Party' their function as markers of social class is more emphasised. For instance, the roses, lilies and cream-puffs are importations from the metropolitan centre to re-create the highest degree of similarity to the English cultural landscape as possible. The careful planning and execution of the party, as well as the decorum and mannerisms displayed in the dialogue, also show that it is particularly the female members of the family who strive to uphold the social standards of the bourgeois domestic sphere. The landscape in 'The Garden Party' gains significance because it facilitates and underpins Laura's development as a character. Her journey from the garden, through the gate, across the road, down the hill into the house where the dead neighbour lies fits the pattern of the rite of passage, including the stages separation, margin and aggregation. The archetypal images strengthen the link between Laura and landscape. The opening scene in 'At the Bay' presents an old shepherd herding his flock through an unpeopled landscape. The scene clearly invokes pastoral conventions, which creates an image of an idealised New Zealand landscape. Similarly, the garden in 'The Garden Party' alludes to the Garden of Eden, with its emphasis on the distinction between the inside and the outside and the fact that it looks like it has been visited by archangels. Thus, the pastoral scene and the archetypal image of the Garden of Eden present two versions of the colonial utopia. The aforementioned contrast between the light atmosphere and colourful environment of the garden and the bleak neighbourhood where Laura visits the widow of the diseased neighbour serves to enhance this impression. Although Laura's motivation for going downhill differs from that of Orpheus, the story nevertheless alludes to Orpheus' descent to the underworld, where the dog, the broad

road and the literal descent downhill supports the argument. Laura's development as a character is particularly strengthened by the archetypal image of the garden, which expresses both the social class in the settler society as well as the Garden of Eden, which anticipates a loss of innocence and the theme of death.

In 'At the Bay', glimpses serve as an ordering principle which replaces the traditional plot and reveals the lack of continuity which is a prototypical modernist concern whereas in 'The Garden Party', the glimpses have a different function. In this story, the significant glimpse, or epiphany, occurs in the final sentences when Laura tries to articulate her increased awareness of man's mortality. In a wider perspective, the liminal spaces destabilise the characters for a limited period of time. The liminal spaces offer possibilities the non-liminal spaces do not. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the rendering of liminal spaces and states is a reflection of Mansfield's exile position.

The term 'exile' has negative connotations and suggests bereavement and displacement, whereas 'expatriation' has the positive connotations of personal freedom and benefits from living abroad. Although Mansfield benefited from living in Europe and being part of a literary milieu which was both liberating and highly inspirational, the term 'expatriation' is closely linked to the community of mostly American modernist writers based in Paris in the 1920s. That is why the term does not fully comply with Mansfield's situation. I have argued that the term 'creative exile' is best suited to describe Mansfield's position because it reflects both the condition of voluntary exile and the removal from one's native land which stimulates artistic creation and productivity. Additionally, it includes the more ambivalent effects such as longing and a sense of loss. The writer in exile, whether voluntary or not, will always be influenced by the distance to the home country to some extent, which can be expressed in various ways. Mansfield's expressed urge to look back and reclaim a lost past is reflected in the stories at hand. In an enquiry which employs postcolonial theory on modernist works of art it is vital to distinguish between the different motivations for moving into exile. Postcolonial theory in relation to the British Empire tends to treat the issue of exile in connection with immigration in Britain which increased in the post-war period after the arrival of the Empire Windrush, the first boat with migrant workers from the Commonwealth. These theories are more concerned with the ways in which matters of race, ethnicity, the subaltern subject, mimicry and unequal power structures are expressed in works of literature. Although these aspects are reflected in Mansfield's earlier New Zealand stories, such as for instance 'How Pearl Button was Kidnapped' or 'The Woman at the Store', they are less

central in the later New Zealand stories. However, the exile experience is more clearly reflected in the later stories. Mansfield fits well into the modernist movement because it by and large had an international orientation. Her situation involved a deliberate move from the margins to the metropolitan centre of the British Empire in search, not of financial stability, but of culture and experience. Mansfield's creative exile induced a sense of living a border life between nations, which is reflected in her preoccupations with threshold, boundaries and barriers. The recurrent moments of transit create areas of tension where transformation, difference and identity are brought to the forefront. This affirms the idea that the writer in exile can see her native home in a clearer light from a distance. In the case of Mansfield, the geographical and cultural distance to her native home enabled her to address matters of universal appeal more directly.

Employing postcolonial theory on a writer from a settler colony can be challenging. In the process of writing this dissertation, it has become evident that the influential 'holy trinity' of postcolonial theory – Said, Bhabha and Spivak – tends to call attention to writers from the former invaded colonies, with theoretical emphasis on Asia and Africa. The criticism which deals with settler colonies is marginal in a wider context of postcolonial theory. In my opinion, a possible explanation could be that the former settler nations in question are considered more similar to the Western culture, and thus less interesting for postcolonial enquiries. However, it is my contention that this similarity, which is most overtly expressed in 'The Garden Party', makes it even more suitable for a postcolonial enquiry. Although many relevant critics and texts deal with the particular history and circumstances which are exclusively 'New Zealand', critical writing which deals with settler colonies in general is far from the dominant strand of postcolonial theory. It may even be argued that the area has been overlooked in a larger frame of reference.

In general, the task of close reading texts with the poetic quality, degree of density, complex structure and suggestiveness Mansfield's stories have is undeniably both challenging and rewarding. The texts are certainly suitable material for close reading, which reveals complexities and ambiguities inherent in the texts. Although this dissertation is built on the foundation of postcolonial theory, it has nevertheless benefited from Victor Turner's theory of liminality to describe the imprint of the exile experience in Mansfield's stories. The theory of liminality has unmasked Laura's rite of passage in 'The Garden Party', and on a more abstract level, it has illuminated the liminal spaces and states in 'At the Bay'. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the concept of liminality provides a useful model for the study

of exile, and helps illuminate Mansfield's preoccupation with the unstable liminal spheres. The in-betweenness can be summarised in the threshold, which is one of several recurring liminal spaces such as the street, hallway and staircase. The threshold is also a means of materialising time in space. Through the threshold, time becomes both palpable and visible. The materialising of time in space is one way of imbuing landscape with significance beyond verisimilitude or realism.

The discussion presented in this dissertation only investigates a small part of a much larger field of study: the effect of exile on writing. The later New Zealand stories are suitable for this undertaking, and the findings in this dissertation clearly show that the imprint of exile is marked in the use of archetypal images, the nostalgic rendering of the landscape and the characters in in-between spaces. Given the opportunity, it would be interesting to widen the scope of a similar enquiry by looking at the liminal spaces and states in other New Zealand stories by Mansfield. 'Prelude', where the Burnell family are shown in transit as they move between houses, and 'The Voyage', where Fenella goes on an overnight boat trip to live with her grandparents after the death of her mother, both include physical journeys which inspire change and mirror the mental progression of the main characters. Similarly, an enquiry which focuses on the earlier stories set in the metropolitan centre, or which figure characters restlessly travelling the European continent, might also reveal the significance of liminality and the moments of transit which reflect the effects of exile. 'The Little Governess', 'The Journey to Bruge', 'An Indiscreet Journey' and 'Pension Séguin' all involve characters in transit, which shows that Mansfield treated this motif repeatedly in various stories.

Mansfield's means of bridging the gap between the old and new world was to create stories with a unity of characters and place. Her response to tradition, modernity and the colonial process of settlement resulted in a nostalgic rendering of New Zealand as she remembered it from her childhood. By doing so, she also articulated a critique of colonial culture, which was socially divided and culturally dependant on the metropolitan centre. The postcolonial approach links Mansfield to authors who, irrespective of time and place, have treated an exile experience through fiction. In an increasingly globalised world, these mechanisms are still at play; this links Mansfield to a wider frame of reference. In conclusion, this enquiry has traced the imprint of exile in two stories and presented Mansfield as a reversed colonial explorer with a pioneering approach to fiction. Her act of rediscovering, recapturing and reinventing a lost past resulted in a renewal of the short story genre, while at the same time, she extended the definition of excellent writing without overthrowing tradition.

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