A Synthesis of Theme and Style: "Prelude" as a Turning Point in the Fiction of Katherine Mansfield

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Katherine Mansfield's contribution to modern British fiction has been virtually ignored in recent years; the two major periods of critical attention to her work were in the 1920's (right after her death) and the early 1950's. Critics of both groups have given extensive consideration to Mansfield's experimentation—dependent of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce—with interior monologue, shifting narrative perspective and moments of revelation. However, analyses of Mansfield have predominantly ignored her concerns as a woman writer. Mansfield examines women's roles and women's sexuality in nearly all of her stories; she probes women's circumstances from their own perspective and shows the effect of the male on the female world.

Mansfield's development as an exponent of women's concerns is a subject well worth critical attention. For a full appreciation of her artistic achievement this development must be seen in relation to the refinement of her technique. I would argue that it is not until the story "Prelude," approximately one-third of the way through her canon, that Mansfield cultivates the aesthetic sophistication necessary for a rounded portrayal of womanhood. Her earliest stories, particularly the German Pension stories, are crudely rendered. They have neither the depth of characterization nor the subtlety of style necessary to uphold their ambitious theme.

"Prelude" is a pivotal work in Mansfield's career. In this piece she presents a community of women stratified by age and class investigating their sexuality, struggling with the role of women in a world controlled by men. The contrasts of age and class fuse "Prelude" into a sort of compressed bildungsroman: each segment of the life-cycle is revealed, but the simultaneous presentation highlights the relationships among the stages. The stylistic
devices of interior monologue, a shifting narrative point of view and intricate patterns of imagery entwine the women's lives and draw together the threads of Mansfield's earlier stories in an artistically successful, poetic piece. Further, "Prelude" paves the way for Mansfield's later, successful stories. The stylistic techniques of "Prelude" are carried over into later works as is the theme of communities of women shaped by men, and the issue of rebellion versus stultification.

In claiming "Prelude" as a breakthrough in Mansfield's fiction I will demonstrate the crude rendering of prototypical themes and character types in her early vignettes and show the glimmerings of technical experimentation in two longer stories. The stories I have selected encompass a group of some thirty works beginning with the 1911 collection, In a German Pension. In determining sequence, I am accepting the fairly reliable chronological ordering of Mansfield's eighty-eight stories in the Knopf 1937 edition of her collected fiction. "Prelude" will be represented as the merger of stylistic innovation and theme: a subtle fusion of interior monologue, detailed imagery, and themes of sexuality brought about through the presentation of a cluster of women and a renewed consciousness of life's mysteries. Finally, from the remaining fifty-seven stories--mostly written between 1920 and 1922--I have chosen two later pieces which exemplify the continuing influence of "Prelude." Both stories emphasize the effects of male control over groups of women; both utilize interior monologue and psychological age fragmentation. But the lush settings of "Prelude" are replaced by enclosed spaces and a layer of sophisticated satire replaces "Prelude"'s lyrical prose. Thus, the later stories do not imitate "Prelude," but use it as a point of departure.
Revulsion against sexuality and childbirth is a recurring theme in Mansfield's first volume of short stories, *In a German Pension* (1911). The bestial is constantly allied with the corporeal and both are prominent attributes of Germans. In the somewhat slapstick "Germans at Meat," the supping natives speak unappetizingly of food and confide graphic details of intimate health matters and sexual experiences; their crudity ascends to a peak, though, when childbirth and nutrition are combined. The Widow, who has just cleaned her teeth with a hairpin, confides that she has given birth nine times: "A friend of mine had four at the same time. Her husband was so pleased he gave a supper-party and had them placed on the table. Of course she was very proud."

Sexuality and childbearing continue to be linked in "Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding" and "At Lehmann's," but these stories also point to male control as a shaping force of female sexual revulsion. The protagonist of "Frau Brechenmacher," a subservient married woman with five children, attends a wedding with her brutish husband. Towards the end of the evening's festivities, Herr Brechenmacher presents the newlyweds with a coffeepot. Inside the groom finds a baby's bottle and two cradles. He "dandles" the gifts before his bride encouraged by the crowd's laughter. The gifts reinforce his control over her destiny: his taunting implies knowledge of his conjugal ownership of her sexuality and of her fertility. Frau Brechenmacher, who until this point had been enjoying the party, suddenly feels painfully identified with Theresa:

Frau Brechenmacher did not think it funny. She stared round at the laughing faces, and suddenly
they all seemed strange to her. She wanted to go home and never come out again. She imagined that all these people were laughing at her, more people than were in the room even—all laughing at her because they were so much stronger than she was.

The joke that has been played on Theresa has been played on Frau Brechenmacher—she too sold her right to her sexuality and reproductivity.

Although Frau Brechenmacher lacks the sophisticated characterization of Linda Burnell in "Prelude," she does have a moment of questioning a woman's purpose: "Na, what's it all for?" (FB, p.61). Nevertheless, she realizes the inevitability of her situation; her only weapon against life is to ineffectually throw her arm across her eyes as her husband lurches towards the bed (FB, p.62).

"At Lehmann's" is the story of an ingenuous German housemaid's discovery and subsequent rejection of her sexuality. Sabina, as opposed to her pregnant mistress, is depicted as young, vigorous and unaware of her sexuality. Although she knows that her mistress is about to give birth, Sabina does not understand how conception occurs:

She knew practically nothing except that the Frau had a baby inside her, which had to come out—very painful indeed. One could not have one without a husband— that she also realised. But what had the man got to do with it?

Sabina is soon jolted into sexual awareness by a young male patron. He has no name precisely because he needs none: it is the mere fact of his maleness that is important, not his personal identity. Upon his entrance Sabina feels a strange, warm sensation (AL, p.74); the male conception of female sexuality acts as a
catalyst for Sabina, prompting a secret self-examination of her body later that night.

The next morning the Frau goes into labor and Sabina is left in charge of the inn. As she ruminates inconclusively over life's mysteries the Young Man returns. He follows Sabina into the cloakroom, and once again Sabina discovers a sensual warmth flowing through her. The Young Man kisses Sabina, but as he places his hands on her breasts Frau Lehmann gives a final shriek echoed by a baby's cry. In a flash Sabina seems to connect her sensual feelings and their consequences. She tears herself from her urging partner and rushes from the cloakroom. Male influence sparks Sabina's discovery of sexuality; a man forces her first sexual encounter, and the Frau's screams warn her of the price women pay for surrendering sexually to a man.

Both "At Lehmann's" and "Frau Brechenmacher" contain prototypical Mansfield characters. Sabina is our first glimpse of Beryl in "Prelude": both characters share a naive perspective on sexuality as well as a contempt for older women whose sexuality has been actualized. Yet the false revelation foisted on Sabina is not forced on Beryl. Beryl's growth is more natural and more successful. In "Frau Brechenmacher," the Frau and her husband are the first of a series of characters with attributes of Stanley and Linda Burnell. Daly comments on Herr Brechenmacher as Mansfield's original Stanley, but ignores the glimmers of contemplation and consciousness in Frau Brechenmacher that later characterize Linda Burnell (Daly, p.33).

Ultimately, however, none of the German Pension stories are thematically complex, and their heavy-handed rendition assures their
lack of technical success. Neither the third nor the detached first
person narration adds depth to the stock characters Mansfield chooses
to people the early stories. The reader quickly tires of crude
Germans, vulgar men, oppressed lower-class women and chaste scullery
girls. The plots of the stories are predictable and the resolutions
forced, especially in "At Lehmann's." In all of the stories obvious
dichotomies of good and bad are established: Frau Brechenmacher
versus her husband, Sabina versus Frau Lehmann. The lack of
ambiguity divorces the characters from reality; they become
personifications of corruption and innocence. In the first person
narratives the Germans' vulgarity is a continual foil for
Mansfield's British persona. The fastidious narrator is intended to
be a counterpoint to the offensive Germans, yet her contempt, her
lack of compassion, discourages reader identification. She offers
no alternative, positive model of sexuality, only flouts the
Germans' bestiality. Her sterile detachment makes her character as
flat as the Germans' in their slapstick crudity.

Gordon comments that Mansfield regularly infused her own
experience into her prose (Gordon, p.7). Some of the bitterness of
the German Pension persona, then, has biographical basis. At the
age of nineteen, within a year of her arrival in London, Mansfield
became pregnant, married another man, left him the day after the
marriage, was sent to Bavaria by her mother, and miscarried her
child (Gordon, p.8). Her bitterness towards the Germans and
attitude towards sexuality is thus understandable. Nevertheless,
the technique of the stories is as unsophisticated as the persona's
crude jabs at Germany. Mansfield later reviled the German Pension
stories and, in spite of their popularity among readers, refused to
allow their republication. Although the German Pension stories are of dubious success, they afford glimmers of themes handled competently by a later, more sophisticated Mansfield. Technically the stories are clumsy but not qualitatively barren. Daly points out that Mansfield flirts with interior monologue and perspective shifts in "Frau Brechenmacher" (Daly, pp.32-33). Again, this is a foreshadowing of the later, more adept writer of "Prelude."

After the publication of In a German Pension, Mansfield continued to write vignettes for small literary magazines, but she also wrote several more developed stories. "The Woman at the Store" (1912), and "Something Childish but Very Natural" (1913), once again center on themes of sexuality and male control, but they are stylistically and thematically more successful than the German Pension stories: they show the beginnings of Mansfield's maturation as a writer.

"The Woman at the Store" sets up relationships between women and men more skillfully than the earlier stories. The narrator is more sympathetic than the German Pension persona, and her description of characters more realistic. This is partially due to the story's setting: in "Woman at the Store" Mansfield's persona is in her native land, as indicated by her familiarity with the vocabulary of New Zealand bush country. It is true that the narrator remains partially detached; her identification with and acceptance by the men in her group make her asexual, somehow above male domination. However she retains enough sense of female community to pity the storekeeper as a woman and to approach her on those terms: "'Good Lord what a life...Imagine being here day in, day out, with that rat of a child and a mangy dog. Imagine bothering about ironing. Mad,
of course she's mad...8 The men, on the other hand, approach the woman sexually, primarily concerned with her "25 different ways of kissing" (WAS, p.129). Interestingly enough, the woman succumbs to the latter approach. In her youth, the woman at the store was "as pretty as a wax doll," (WAS, p.129) and sexually in demand. Giving herself to Jo recalls those days and resurrects her feelings of attractiveness. The woman was ruined by her dependence on male sexual attention. When her husband removed her from her admirers, forced pregnancy upon her, then left her for protracted periods of time, her life disintegrated. She asks the travellers the same question Frau Brechenmacher and, later, Linda Burnell ask:

'It's six years since I was married, and four miscarriages. I says to 'im I says...If you was back at the coast I'd 'ave you lynched for child murder. Over and over I tells 'im--you've broken my spirit and spoiled my looks and wot for...Wot for?' (WAS, p.131).

Eventually the kid's drawing reveals that the woman shot her husband, an act of revenge against the male world.

"The Woman At the Store" presents the male effect on female sexuality, but it also shows Mansfield's incipient interest in groups of women. The narrator's attempt to communicate with the woman, and the covert observance by the kid (who is a girl) of the narrator as she bathes in the stream hint at Mansfield's interest in women's relationships, which comes to fruition in later stories. The ending of "The Woman at the Store" exhibits some of the forced melodrama of "At Lehmann's," but as a whole the story is more skillfully rendered. There is more ambiguity in character type in the story; the lines of good and evil are somewhat blurred, and the narrator is more compassionate.
"Something Childish but Very Natural" also takes up the issue of sexuality, but the stylistic elements of this story are more noteworthy than the thematic. Mansfield's characterization of Henry, for example, merits some attention. Henry is less coarse, less bestial than earlier male characters. His innocence rivals Edna's and, although the pursuer of a sexual relationship, he never forces himself upon his companion. Critics do not point to Henry as a prototype of Stanley Burnell. In actuality, Henry embodies the eager, apologetic side of Stanley, the side that tempers Stanley's bestiality and makes him a more complex character than Herr Brechenmacher or the Young Man in "At Lehmann's." Mansfield's depiction of Henry signifies a move away from her earlier crude, judgemental treatment of male characters.

In "Something Childish," Mansfield also develops involved, almost poetic patterns of imagery for the first time. Images of dreaming and ambiguities between sleeping and waking life pervade the story, radiating from the poem which gives the piece its title. Dreams and reality threaten to merge more than once during Edna's and Henry's odyssey. Before their second meeting, Henry stands in the station wondering whether or not Edna will appear. He grows tired as his anxiety mounts and dreamily shuts his eyes; when he opens them, Edna is standing before him (SC, p.169). Later, during an evening stroll, the two walk by an idyllic cottage. They stop and Henry weaves a web of fanciful thoughts of the two of them living together in the little house. The couple becomes so transported by the fantasy that they believe it real, and Henry moves towards the door. Suddenly he runs back to Edna: "'Let's go away at once. It's going to turn into a dream'" (SC, p.177). The
dream has supplanted reality, and their true situation has become a dream. Finally, the story's dream imagery becomes so muddled that Henry is unable to discern whether he wakes or sleeps (SC, pp.182-183). He receives Edna's telegram as if in a dream; it appears as if Henry will remain eternally in the darkened garden. The garden, a common symbol of sexuality, is also prominent in "Prelude." However, a garden also connotes paradise. Perhaps the garden's darkness in this story represents the impossibility of retaining purity when merging physical and platonic love; the sexual must taint the innocence of Henry's and Edna's pristine affection.

Bird and moth imagery, prevalent in "Something Childish," is also present in several of Mansfield's later stories, including "Prelude." Moths, creatures who rush blindly towards a tantalizing destruction, are common symbols of victimization in Mansfield. 10 Henry's vision of a little girl as a moth in "Something Childish" has parallel implications about Edna (SC, p.182). The movement of the little girl (significantly dressed in white) towards the adult, sexually prepared Henry recalls the rushing of Edna's chaste love towards Henry's sexual passion. Both imply innocence flying towards destruction.

Zinman also comments upon bird imagery in Mansfield. She points out the frequency of birds as symbols of victimization and escape, with specific reference to "Something Childish" (Zinman, p.460). However, since bird imagery is integral to "Prelude," I will postpone its discussion until later in this essay.
Critics agree that the death of Mansfield's younger brother, Leslie Heron Beauchamp ("Chummie"), had a profound impact on her life. Chummie visited Mansfield and her lover John Middleton Murry in February 1915, before his military regiment went to the front lines of World War I. Mansfield's journal during that period reflects the siblings' deepening relationship: it is filled with records of their conversations and vignettes of their youth in New Zealand. Alpers idealizes Chummie's effect on Mansfield with perhaps more poetic license than fact:

It was the fugitive hours she spent with Leslie at Acacia Road that made sure at last of Katherine's rediscovery of all those affections and affinities to which she owed the very quality of her imagination and to whose repudiation all her rootlessness in England was due. The reconciliation with her past and with her country—the one thing she needed to unite her divided talents—was on the point of being accomplished (Alpers, p.208).

Her journal shows that Chummie's death in October of that year shattered Mansfield. She writes that she only lives to record the legacy of their youth together in New Zealand, to recreate what has come to represent a paradise lost (journal, p.90). She often addresses her journal to Chummie, speaking to him as a poet might speak to a muse. During this time she is unable to sleep with Murry; when she embraces him his body seems to melt and turns into Chummie's (journal, p.95). Finally she writes a signed resolution in her journal that signifies the beginning of "Prelude":

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. Not only because it is 'a sacred debt' that I pay to my country because my brother and I were born there, but also because in my thoughts, I range with him all over the remembered places...I long to renew them in writing...It must be mysterious, as though floating... especially I want to write a long
elegy to you...perhaps not in poetry. Nor perhaps in prose. Almost certainly in a kind of special prose (journal, pp.93-94).

Events and characters in "Prelude" do loosely correspond with events in Mansfield's childhood, but the story is much deeper than a mere reminiscence.13 Mansfield's obsession with the tragic mystery of Chummie's death sparked a contemplation of the rich mysteries of life. Chummie came to represent the loss of presexual innocence: Mansfield mourns the death of her childhood world through her brother. His death became impetus for a loving rededication to her New Zealand childhood. The emphasis on mystery in "Prelude" separates the piece from her earlier, straightforward stories; it indicates a concern with life-cycles and the complexities of maturation.

Critics generally point to the fluid narrative perspective used in "Prelude" as the basis for claiming the story as revolutionary. Throughout her early stories Mansfield experiments with narrative voice; she seems unable to alight on a satisfactory form for presenting her stories. "Prelude" is the first piece that makes extensive use of interior monologue. Mansfield's dips into each character's consciousness--particularly into the childhood world of Kezia--deepen the reader's ties with the characters in a way unprecedented in earlier works. Richard F. Peterson articulates the success of "Prelude"'s form most succinctly: "Narrative perspective is critical to the atmosphere of truth Katherine Mansfield creates in "Prelude." By allowing the third person point of view to be controlled by the vision of one of the Burnells, rather than the author's vision, she offers a world in which impressions constitute reality."14
Yet it is not solely the narrative perspective that contributes to the aura of truth in "Prelude." Narrative technique is just one of a series of devices that fuses the story's main female characters, that intertwines their lives until they become as one continuous life linked from youth to age by thematic concerns and imagery. Increasingly as she moves towards "Prelude," Mansfield makes use of linking imagery as evidenced in "Something Childish." In "Prelude," the varied uses of birds, flowers, the colors red and white, and contrasts of order and symmetry pervade the story uniting the characters and linking the episodes of the piece. The culmination of the imagery, like the thematic climax, is in Linda's revelation; themes and imagery merge in Linda's consciousness of her situation and decision to accept her fate.

"Prelude" has none of the forced resolutions of earlier stories. Its final episode ends with an elipsis signifying a continuation, inviting the reader to draw her own conclusions. "Prelude," then, is not really a story at all, it is a moment: a slice of the Burnells' lives seen from their perspectives. The reader is initially thrust into the center of the action, and, later, just as ceremoniously ushered out by the final elipses. The episodic style underscores the veracity of the piece. The sporadic episodes, moments in themselves, contribute to the overall impressionistic style of the story. The numbered sections provide Mansfield with the freedom to transcend her former, stilted style: they allow her to skip chronological events during the story's three-day time span, to change narrators effortlessly and to emphasize contrasts in situations.
Thematically, the characters, revelations, and subject matter of "Prelude" are eminently Mansfieldian. The women into whose minds we have been dropped are concerned with unravelling the web of sexuality, with discovering what it means to be female. However, the writer of "Prelude" is more compassionate than the earlier Mansfield. Certainly there is ambivalence in "Prelude," but there is also hope. The younger women observe the older women, learning from them, weighing the older women's similarities and dissimilarities to themselves in order to puzzle out the mystery of sexuality. The simultaneous depiction of four stages of the life-cycle forges "Prelude" into a compressed bildungsroman. As in a single life-cycle, there is a moment of revelation, an epiphany at a mature stage of one's life. This culmination is in Linda. Kezia and Beryl, both impressionable, illustrate the choices Linda has already made. The serene Mrs. Fairfield offers a shred of tempered hope; she is what Linda may become—if she survives the present.

Kezia, the youngest of the four protagonists, is as yet unaware of her sexuality; she is confused and unnerved by encroaching consciousness. Kezia is immediately established as a fastidious child, frowning at Mrs. Samuel Josephs' disordered apparel (p.221). However, she is also a contemplative character; her thoughts relate closely to Linda's. For instance, Kezia wanders through her deserted house, finally stopping before a window. As she gazes through the glass, an ominous wind howls and the sky darkens: "Kezia was suddenly quite, quite still, with wide open eyes and knees pressed together. She was frightened...IT was just behind her, waiting at the door, at the head of the stairs, at the bottom of the stairs, hiding in the passage, ready to dart out the back door"
Kezia is afraid of the unknown. And the unknown is not only the change of houses, but the change from childhood to adulthood--the changes of sexual maturation. Later, Linda is oppressed by an equally frightening "THEY." Kezia, then, implicitly looks towards the two mother figures in her life--Linda, her contemplative, restless natural mother, and Mrs. Fairfield, her orderly sedate nurturer--for role models. Kezia struggles to integrate her sense of order with her pensive glimmerings that sexuality is not an orderly proposition.\textsuperscript{15}

Kezia is hesitantly curious about sexuality, yet repelled by its power; her ambivalence surfaces in her confusion about gender roles. In section three, she innocently asks the storeman the difference between a ram and a sheep. The natural answer is that a ram is male and a sheep female. Yet the storekeeper chooses to answer, "Well, a ram has horns and runs for you" (p.225). Kezia, like Linda, hates rushing animals; both mother and daughter dream of omnivorous creatures with swelling heads. Linda's contempt for Stanley is linked to his "jumping on her like a Newfoundland dog" (p.258), and Kezia appears to hate boys for similar reasons (p.221). The storekeeper's comment, then, reflects an attitude of women towards men throughout the story: men rush, frighten, overwhelm. To say that a ram rushes is to imply the animal is male. Kezia immediately tries to minimize the threat of male dominance by stroking the hairy, peltlike sleeve of the storekeeper. She finds reassurance in the storekeeper's docility, and her touch expresses curiosity about her relationship to this other, beastlike, being. Later, as Burgan points out, Kezia treats her grandmother as a lover, kissing her and whispering, "Come to bed soon, and be my Indian brave"
Kezia, in her naivete, confuses the taming of the storekeeper with the tameness of her grandmother; she is as intrigued by her love for one as she is by her attraction to the other.

The eighth of the story's twelve sections begins with an amusing conversation between "Mrs. Jones" and "Mrs. Smith" (p.245). As the reader progresses, certain inappropriate statements make the women's identities suspect:

'Good morning Mrs. Jones.'
'Oh good morning, Mrs. Smith. I'm so glad to see you. Have you brought your children?'
'Yes, I've brought both my twins. I have had another baby since I saw you last, but she came so suddenly that I haven't had time to make her any clothes yet. So I left her..." (pp.245-246).

Kezia, Lottie and Isabel are obviously playing "big ladies." Their perception of childbirth shows a fundamental ignorance of the gestation process, but it illumintes their conception of female gender roles. Women have babies--frequently, mysteriously, and without warning or control. Finally, that afternoon, Kezia's horror at the headless duck is quieted by the discovery of Pat's earrings (p.252). The earrings, a sign of femininity, upset her youthful ordering of male and female attributes: they shock her out of her tantrum. Kezia has tamed the hirsute storekeeper, she has addressed her grandmother as a male, and now she has discovered a man wearing female accessories; gender roles just will not keep still.

In her struggle with gender roles, Kezia exhibits anxiety about her own sexuality. In section five, Kezia dashes ahead of her sisters (pp.233-234). When the domineering Isabel questions her destination she replies, "Oh, just away..." (p.234). Following this
statement is the line "Then she did not hear any more." The "she" in this sentence is ambiguous—it seems to refer to Kezia, but it soon becomes apparent that it is Linda who no longer hears. The ambiguity of subject links Linda's contemplation to Kezia's aims: both strive to go "just away." Further, Linda's tracing of the red poppy on the wall recalls Kezia's experience with the paper parrots the night before (p.226). Linda continues to trace the poppy which bursts forth sensually: "...she traced a poppy on the wallpaper with a leaf and a stem and a fat bursting bud... She could feel the sticky, silky petals, the stem, hairy like a gooseberry skin, the rough leaf and the tight glazed bud" (p.234). The flower's opulence is overdone: it becomes gruesome.

Similarly, when Kezia walks through the garden the plants overwhelm her. Kezia enters the garden after rejecting a bull which "she had not liked frightfully" (p.238). Like a ram, a bull has horns and "rushes at you." Kezia turns away from the animal's unsettling maleness and walks towards the garden. When she reaches her destination the path diverges: "...one side... led into a tangle of tall dark trees and strange bushes with flat velvet leaves and feathery cream flowers that buzzed with flies when you shook them--this was frightening and no garden at all" (pp.238-239). Kezia shies from the dark, tangled garden just as she shies from the dark contemplative part of herself, the part that knows sexuality cannot be controlled. Instead, she turns to the other side of the drive where the landscaped, ordered garden lies; on this side the flowers are in boxes and the paths are neat and ordered. Even so, as Kezia threads amongs the flowers they seem to overwhelm in their luxury, to menace in their sensuality:
The camellias were in bloom, white and crimson. You could not see a leaf on the syringa bushes for the white clusters. The roses were in flower... cabbage roses on thick stalks, moss roses... pink, smooth beauties opening curl on curl, red ones so dark they seemed to turn black... a certain exquisite cream kind with a slender red stem and bright scarlet leaves. The red-hot pokers were taller than she... (p. 239).

Even the colors of the flowers, predominantly shades of red and white, are sexually suggestive. And, although this side of the garden purports to be ordered, all of the box edges lead into "a deeper and deeper tangle of flowers" (p. 239). Kezia sits surrounded by the fertile plants, then suddenly, without warning, finds herself out of the garden.

Kezia's flight from the garden seems to surprise her as much as it does the reader. Quickly, she hurls herself into the grass and rolls over and over down the hill. At the bottom she has an idea: "She wanted to make a surprise for grandmother... First she would put a leaf inside [an empty match-box] with a big violet lying on it, then she would put a very small white picotee, perhaps, on each side of the violet..." (pp. 239-240). Again Kezia orders a threatening sexual experience by minimizing it: she changes the lush garden into a small, manageable picture--enclosed and harmless--to present to Mrs. Fairfield, the incarnation of symmetry.

On her way to execute her plans, Kezia encounters her other role-model, her mother. Linda and her daughter stand in contemplation of the ominous aloe plant:

'Mother, what is it?' asked Kezia.
'That is an aloe, Kezia,' said her mother.
'Does it ever have any flowers?'
'Yes, Kezia,' and Linda smiled down at her, and half shut her eyes. 'Once every hundred years' (p. 240).
Linda's suggestive answer and dreamy smile indicate an unwillingness to disclose life's mysteries. As Burgan notes, Linda cannot, will not, ease Kezia's anxiety (Burgan, p.405). Rather, Linda reinforces her daughter's confusion, galvanizes the contemplative, fearful side of the little girl.

In the end, it is Kezia who ushers the reader out of "Prelude." She has entered her Aunt Beryl's room to announce lunch. When Beryl leaves, Kezia examines her Aunt's dressing table: "Kezia crossed too, and unscrewed a little pot of cream and sniffed it. Under her arm she carried a very dirty calico cat" (p.263). Kezia, still childlike, is not ready to face the next step in her sexual life-cycle: she is not interested in putting the make-up on her own face. The cat topples the jar and it flies across the room. Kezia seizes the jar, replaces it and quickly leaves the room: "Then she tip-toed away, far too quickly and airily..." (p.263). Kezia's dilemma remains unresolved. She is too young to embrace the accoutrements of femininity: in rejecting the cream she rejects the trappings--and the traps--of adult womanhood. Kezia will remain sexually dormant for awhile longer and so forces the reader out of the story--there is no reason to stay, nothing else will be revealed. Even so, Kezia's uneasy flight indicates fear of pursuit. In truth, sexuality will pursue Kezia, and sooner or later it will catch her.

Beryl, Kezia's adolescent aunt, is somewhat removed from the other women. She is at the next stage of womanhood: a stage of immersion in romantic fantasy. Beryl no longer fears her sexuality--it electrifies her. Love, to Beryl, is admiration; she stands before her window in the evening inventing throngs of men,
each fascinated by her beauty (pp.230-231). Later, while strumming the guitar, she envisions her own beauty and creates a worshipping lover to concur with her opinion (pp.244-245).

Beryl's romantic visions do not include children. Although surrounded by children and by women whose lives have been shaped by childbearing, Beryl is oblivious of the pain womanhood can entail. Beryl barely acknowledges the family's children. She indulges Mrs. Fairfield's fastidiousness but holds it in contempt: "Mother's deliberate way of doing things was simply maddening. It was old age, she supposed, loftily" (p.237). Beryl longs for chaos and adventure; she has long since relinquished Kezia's childish desire for order. Finally, Beryl regards Linda as "mysterious" (p.260). Linda has what Beryl ostensibly wants, but the older woman is not happy. Beryl refuses to relate Linda's situation to her own; she allows her sister to remain mysterious. Nevertheless, Beryl's songs reveal a link in the destiny of the sisters. Beryl sings two songs. In the first, she never gets beyond the initial couplet: "How many thousand birds I see/That sing aloud from every tree..." (p.238). The song echoes Linda's dream of that morning, but Beryl never reaches its conclusion. Beryl only thinks of romantic love, not of love's burdens. She may sing of the birds, but, unlike Linda, she stops before the birds consume her. Her second song is also an echo of Linda's situation. Stanley and Linda are in their room as Beryl sings. Linda sees the moon, a symbol of female fertility, shivers, and goes to her husband (p.244). Beryl's tune is a love song, but in her lyric the isolated lovers only press hands. The final line she sings is "Even the moon is aweary..." (p.245); to Beryl this is merely another romantic image. To Linda it is fact; she is weary of
her fertility and Beryl, some day, may join her. In the meantime, Beryl steals the sensual poppies from Linda's hat for her own dress (p.260). Beryl's flowers are not like Linda's wallpaper poppy: they bloom with the proper amount of romantic opulence. Beryl is not yet overwhelmed by sensuality.

Beryl perpetuates her romantic fantasies by dividing men into two categories: the flattering lovers of her dreams (who do not exist) and the real men who are contemptible brutes. Although she abhors the real men (p.260), she flirts with them when there is a shortage of dream men—specifically, she toys with her brother-in-law. Beryl has the vigor Linda lacks, and Stanley appreciates her. Beryl devours food while her sister waves it away (p.227, 255), and she will play cribbage with him in the evening, fantasizing about the red and white pegs (pp.255-256).

Beryl is aware of her falseness. In the story's last section she chastizes herself before a mirror. But even her scolding is a ruse; she is quickly lost in self-admiration. She catches her slip, however, and laments her game-playing more bitterly than ever. Still, her self-deprecation is fleeting—she jolts back to her role when called upon to make a public appearance (p.262). Beryl's momentary grasp of her own falsehood foreshadows Linda's revelation; perhaps Beryl too will reach a crisis of discovery some day. For now, though, Beryl's youth and frivolity preclude true revelation. That is better left to older, more experienced women. She is merely one step ahead of Kezia: she has discovered her sexuality, and revels in it, but she does not understand its implications. Beryl and Kezia are like the moths circling Linda's lamp (p.256); they circle around their emerging sexuality attracted, slightly repelled,
but unaware of the true danger. Linda warns the moths, "Fly away before it is too late. Fly out again" (p.256). However, she chooses to remain aloof to her sister and daughter; she does not warn them of the danger of their situation.

Linda is at a later stage of sexuality than either Beryl or Kezia. Hers is a dark, disillusioned musing. Linda has discovered that romantic fantasies are nothing more than illusions. Reality is the world of Frau Lehmann—a world in which perpetual pregnancy replaces sexual passion. Linda abhors sex and, as Ann L. McLaughlin points out, "links sexual submission with death."17 Her languorous infirmity is frequently contrasted with Stanley's vigor: Linda's delicate stomach revolts when her husband offers her a piece of "tip-top meat" (p.227), while Stanley leans back contendedly to pick "his strong, white teeth" (p.227). Burgan comments on the difference between Linda's dream-self and her waking vision of Stanley: "Linda Burnell wakes from her nightmare of sexual betrayal and personal annihilation to the sight of her commonplace husband doing his sitting-up exercises. His glowing good health and confidence contrast to Linda's incessant struggle with a biological destiny that she does not want" (Burgan, p.404).

Linda has no maternal instinct. On moving day she perceives her owl-eyed daughters as extra baggage: "...she waved a white hand at the tables and chairs standing on their heads on the front lawn. How absurd they looked! Either they ought to be the other way up or Lottie and Kezia ought to stand on their heads, too" (p.220). Linda's indifference to her children does not extend to her mother. Mrs. Fairfield continues to treat Linda as a child, and Linda revels in her mother's undemanding nurturance. After Stanley is safely
gone, Linda brightens and develops an appetite—a sign of vigor (p.237). She and Beryl sit in the kitchen sharing gingerbread while Mrs. Fairfield brews tea (p.237). Linda's dependence on her mother signifies a desire to escape sexual destiny: allowing Mrs. Fairfield to treat her as a child momentarily relieves Linda of the anxiety of familial demands. Linda's lover-like description of Mrs. Fairfield is a more articulate version of Kezia's feelings, described earlier:

[Linda] needed the sweet smell of her flesh, and the soft feel of her cheeks and her arms and shoulders still softer. She loved the way her hair curled, silver at her forehead, lighter at her neck, and bright brown still in the big coil under the muslin cap. Exquisite were her mother's hands, and the two rings she wore seemed to melt into her creamy skin. And she was always so fresh, so delicious (p.238).

Linda does, in fact, treat her mother the way Stanley treats Linda: the daughters' affections are absolute, but demanding, and she forces the burden of child-rearing upon her mother.

Linda yearns for escape from the demands of the nebulous "THEY." She reverts to a helpless, youthful state with her mother, and it is in Mrs. Fairfield's company that Linda sees the aloe for the second time. This climactic scene bears similarity to Linda's first encounter with the aloe. Again the daughter (this time Linda) is anxious and the mother composed. Linda imagines the aloe as a boat protecting her with its "long, sharp thorns" (p.257). The aloe, only fertile once a century, will protect Linda from her own frequent fertility. Contemplating the aloe Linda realizes the absurdity of life: "How absurd life was—it was laughable, simply laughable. And why this mania of hers to keep alive at all? For it really was a mania, she thought, mocking and laughing" (p.258).

Linda has been through three phases of the female life-cycle. She
is aware of the irony of Kezia's vain attempt to order her sexuality, and the illusion of Beryl's romantic dreams. A woman's life, she has discovered, is one of pointless progeneration and she envisions its senseless continuance: "'What am I guarding myself for so preciously? I shall go on having children and Stanley will go on making money...'" (p.258).

Linda's self-mockery leads Daly to believe that Linda's conclusion is negative (Daly, p.69). While admitting that Linda represents a stage of womanhood, she does not recognize the continuum among the women. Daly's analysis stops at the aloe; Linda, however, continues. Had the segment of "Prelude" stopped with Linda's revelation at the aloe her situation would be hopeless. As it is, there is a denouement after Linda's revelation which becomes a discovery in itself, and establishes further ties between mother and daughter. Linda is unaware of her path as she contemplates the aloe; she walks with her head down, oblivious of her surroundings (p.258). When she emerges from her reverie, she is standing in front of a grove of trees. The trees are a culmination of "Prelude"'s central sexual imagery. Throughout the story birds, flowers and the colors red and white have represented sexuality. Linda looks up to find herself in front of "...red and white camellia trees. Beautiful were the rich, dark leaves spangled with light and round flowers that perched among them like red and white birds" (pp.258-259). Linda reaches a decision before the tree, a decision to accept life and her destiny. She crumples a fragrant leaf from the tree and offers it to Mrs. Fairfield. Her gift suggests an acquiescence to the next phase of the life-cycle, an acceptance of the order and nurturance Mrs. Fairfield represents.
Linda's urgent need to know her mother's thoughts is a tentative plea for guidance: she wants to know what is in store for her, what she will be thinking, what she should be thinking, to be initiated into the final phase of life.

Nevertheless, the reader feels a sadness in Linda's acceptance, a flavor of resignation. There is not an even trade-off at any turn of the life-cycle: Beryl has lost Kezia's honesty in her quest for romance, and Linda has lost her vigor in her move from dreamy adolescence to wife and motherhood. In order to progress to the next phase of female sexuality Linda will have to relinquish her spark of contemplative rebelliousness. Linda's rebellion has been silent; Stanley remains unaware of her discontent (pp.257-258). The price of rebellion is too dear, its articulation too painful for Linda. Linda's release of rebellion allows her to survive; she rejects the unanswerable and accepts her role—and life.

Mrs. Fairfield has survived the childbearing years to reach complacent, asexual old age. She has once again reached a stage of order by outliving male sexual presence. She has created her own world, which she controls, built on the indispensable nurturance intimated by her name. Mrs. Fairfield's circumscribed world superimposes order and beauty on the routine of daily life (p.236). Her role in the lives of her children and grandchildren is exemplified by a brooch she wears: "At her throat there was a silver crescent moon with five little owls seated on it..." (p.236). Mrs. Fairfield has tamed Linda's omnivorous dream birds; they remain a weight around her neck, but a beautiful weight. The five birds, recalling the five younger women in the story (including Isabel and Lottie), are perched on the moon, a symbol of female sexuality.
Mrs. Fairfield has mothered all of them in one way or another, but is now above and beyond them: she has triumphed over sexual obliteration. Yet in order to reach a world in which "everything is in pairs...a series of patterns" (pp.236, 237), Mrs. Fairfield has sacrificed contemplation: she never questions her role. Even upon retiring, a time for reflection, Mrs. Fairfield remains aloof from the contemplative indulgence of the others. Whereas the secret thoughts of the rest of the family are unfolded in section four, Mrs. Fairfield retires silently: "...the old woman only...sighed again, took out her teeth and put them in a glass of water beside her on the floor" (p.231). There is hope for Linda in embracing Mrs. Fairfield's lifestyle—it certainly bodes relief from her existential agony—but there is also a melancholy in Linda's capitulation to her fate, in becoming blind to all but thoughts of the coming season's jam (p.259). In "At the Bay," a sequel to "Prelude," Linda's character has changed: she has begun to take on the role of a nurturer. Her maternal feelings are kindled by her newly born son. In the evening she sits complacently before a sunset; at peace with herself, she is able to pity and attempt to ameliorate the anxiety of her romantic brother-in-law (ATB, pp.293-294).

It is worth mentioning the extra twist that class stratification adds to "Prelude"'s community of women. The coarseness of Alice the serving girl clashes with the delicate contemplations of the wealthier women, especially with Beryl; antagonism frequently surfaces between Beryl and Alice. The two women appear to be near the same age; Alice, however, has neither the time nor the freedom for Beryl's romantic revery. The serving girl's dreams are confined
to covert readings of macabre pop-psychology (p.252). Her pretensions towards propriety are merely a caricature: "She was 'dressed.' She had on a black stuff dress that smelt under the arms...a lace bow pinned on to her hair...her comfortable carpet slippers were changed for a pair of black leather ones that pinched the corn on her little toe..." (p.252). The problems with Alice's apparel are echoed in Beryl's comment on her own more elegant dress which ends the section: "'The only thing to do...is to cut the sleeves out entirely and just have a broad band of black velvet over the shoulders..." (p.254). Alice resents Beryl and Beryl is repulsed by Alice. For all her ridiculous imitations of society, Alice has the independence Beryl lacks. Alice is useful, has control over her life, and a modicum of independence through her work that Beryl desperately wants (p.230). The contrast between the practical, resentful serving girl and her dreamy oft victimized mistress becomes a prominent theme in Mansfield's later stories.

The life-cycle emergent in "Prelude" is inseparable from the examination of female sexuality. Although sexuality is the story's central theme, it signals the emergence of the theme of male control which is developed in later stories. The emphasis on sexuality in "Prelude" indicates Stanley's impact on the women. He shapes their lives, decides their fate. The women are stultified by male rule: their obsession with sexuality is an attempt at self-definition in a world where men dictate destiny. Stanley is responsible for the story's setting: he decided that the Burnells should move. During his first self-satisfied journey home from work, Stanley outlines his plans for the future (p.242). He indiscriminately dictates the lives of his wife and children, establishing them as accessories to
himself. Finally, Stanley forces Linda's pregnancies upon her and is to blame for her infirmity and anxiety:

There were times when he was frightening—really frightening. When she just had not screamed at the top of her voice; "You are killing me." And at those times she had longed to say the most coarse, hateful things... "You know I'm very delicate. You know as well as I do that my heart is affected, and the doctor has told you I may die any moment. I have had three great lumps of children already... (p.258).

It is apparent, too, that Stanley will continue to exact "great lumps of children" from his wife: "That is where my boy ought to sit," thought Stanley. He tightened his arm around Linda's shoulder" (p.244). Still, Stanley's brutality is tempered by his puppyish good intentions. He dotes on Linda and longs to make up for his overwhelming sexuality: "...how tender he always was after times like these, how submissive, how thoughtful. He would do anything for her..." (p.258). The reader is more sympathetic towards Stanley than towards the cardboard Herr Brechenmacher. Stanley's flaw is not his tyranny but his simplicity: he views his family as an extension of himself and the private mystery of his wife's sexuality confuses him.

III

The innovations of style and theme in "Prelude" enrich Mansfield's later works. In "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" and "The Dove's Nest," Mansfield continues her experiments with section divisions, fluidly shifting point of view, and most importantly, with psychological fragmentation of age among pairs of women, a technique related to the division of a single life-cycle among four women in "Prelude." As in "Prelude," male control is the catalyst of
the age fragmentation. However the later stories carry male
domination to an extreme: in both stories deceased males continue to
define the lives of their female survivors. Nevertheless, neither
"The Daughters" nor "The Dove's Nest" is a repetition of "Prelude";
the differences in setting, tone and characterization insure the
singular accomplishment of the later stories. The women's
rebellions in these stories are silent, the consciousness of
rebellion and its risks too painful to articulate. Finally, both
stories develop the theme of antagonism between women of different
classes touched upon lightly in "Prelude."

"The Daughters of the Late Colonel" tells the story of two
unmarried sisters during the week after their father's death. The
interior monologue shifts effortlessly from Constantia to Josephine,
creating a dither of character ambiguity. The narrative
perspective, however, only underscores the sisters' lack of
individuality. Constantia and Josephine have been stunted by their
father's domination. Unmarried, they submitted to him at the
expense of their adulthood. Magalaner notes the significance of the
father's occupation: he is a military man who demands discipline and
subservience. As an officer he turns individual men into faceless
troops; as a father he robs his daughters of individual identity
(Magalaner, p.92). The story's title accurately describes the
women--they are the daughters of the colonel, no more.

The colonel's domination has arrested the daughters' emotional
development. Josephine and Constantia's ages are ambiguous at the
outset and, in fact, are never stated. The opening scene finds
the sisters in bed chatting like adolescents. Josephine's ludicrous
vision of her father's head and her suppressed hysteria lead the
reader to believe that the sisters are quite young; their identification with mice and birds underscores their youthful helplessness. The reader soon discerns, however, that the sisters are middle-aged.

In "The Orphans of Time" Don W. Kleine points to the story's sectional structure, derived from "Prelude," as an indication of the sisters' stultification. He divides the story's twelve sections into categories of child and adult. When the sisters are alone they revert to youthful behavior; in public they act as adults (Kleine, p.427). It is only in the final section that the child and adult in each sister merges for a moment.

Mansfield's skilled weaving of significant patterns of imagery in "The Daughters" recalls the technical achievement of "Prelude." The images of time in the story particularly add to our sense of the sisters' arrested development. Time belongs to men. The colonel dictated how his daughters spent their time while he lived, and, after his death, the only possession the sisters part with is his watch; it means nothing to them, so they present it to another man. The sisters float freely through life unsure of whether clocks are fast or slow. The women play havoc with the present--they delve into the past with no warning and move easily from silently invoked memories to present conversations: "'Speaking of Benny,' said Josephine. And though Benny hadn't been mentioned Constantia looked as though he had" (DLC p.473). Magalaner observes that the daughters' obfuscated conception of time allows Mansfield to take liberties with the story's chronology (Magalaner, p.93). If time is unimportant to the sisters it is irrelevent to the framework of the story. Mansfield mixes the week's events slipping from past to present as easily as the protagonists.
The adult or public sections (i.e., sections 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9) show the sisters' inefficacy. It is only when they are alone that they show strength, rebellion and loss. Alone the sisters are free, equal: they understand one another. It is when they are alone in the colonel's room that Constantia defies her father by locking the wardrobe (DLC, p.472). Although comically represented, Constantia's rebellion is the sisters' first affirmative action and the readers' first glimpse of the sisters' dissatisfaction. But the daughters' true consciousness of their situation lies in the final section. Josephine turns to the sun and then towards a photograph of her mother:

The sunlight thieved its way in...Josephine watched it... When it came to mother's photograph...it lingered as though puzzled to find so little remained of mother... Why did the photographs of dead people always fade so? wondered Josephine...Would everything have been different if mother hadn't died...If mother had lived, might they have married? (DLC, pp.481-482).

Constantia's thoughts are more violent. She stands before an enigmatic Buddha thinking not of the sun, but of the moon. While Josephine ponders marriage and motherhood Constantia yearns for actualized sexuality. As in "Prelude," the moon is an obvious female sexual symbol. Like Kezia, sexuality both frightens and compells Constantia. Although she is uncontrollably attracted to the moon, it also makes "the horrible dancing figures on the carved screen" leer at her (DLC, p.482). And the sea, for all its draw, overwhelms with its power, its manipulation, and its mystery (DLC p.483).

This climactic section contains the only sexual imagery in "The Daughters," an important distinction between that work and
"Prelude." The sisters' sexual stultification is reflected in the story's setting: whereas lush images fill the pages of "Prelude," "The Daughters" is domesticated—it unfolds solely within a contained environment. Unlike the Burnells, Josephine and Constantia appear sadly comic in their sterile, circumscribed world. The touch of satire in this story indicates Mansfield's artistic maturation: one scarcely believes this is the heavy-handed satirist of In a German Pension.

Constantia's revery in the final section signifies recurrent thoughts of rebellion. Her moonlit sexual crucifixions have been as silent as Linda's evening contemplations of life's absurdity. Like Linda, Constantia was afraid to sever the ties of dependency, afraid to find out what lay beyond her present life. Even the articulation of rebellion pains the sisters. Neither can translate her deepest thoughts into speech; instead they try to goad one another into speaking:

"Go on, Con," said Josephine. "No, no, Jug; after you," said Constantia. "No, say what you were going to say. You began," said Josephine. "I...I'd rather hear what you were going to say first," said Constantia. "Don't be absurd, Con." "Really, Jug." "Connie!" "Oh, Jug!" (DLC, p.483).

But it is too much to ask the women to admit to a wasted past and a hopeless future. After several false starts they each feign forgetfulness and a cloud covers the catalyst of illumination, the sun. Time has played its final trick on the sisters: it has passed them by leaving them no words with which to articulate their despair. Unlike Mrs. Fairfield who has survived male domination to create her own nurturing world, the sisters cannot escape their
father. His influence has been too profound; it has arrested the growth of a regenerative inner life. The closing words of the final section assures that their girlhood remains horrifyingly immutable, their rejection of their mature selves complete:

Then Constantia said faintly, "I can't say what I was going to say, Jug, because I've forgotten what it was...that I was going to say." Josephine was silent for a moment. She stared at a big cloud where the sun had been. Then she replied shortly, "I've forgotten too" (OLC, p.483).

However, the sisters do not live in a vacuum. Although their lives are devoid of men, they are constantly exposed to women. Kate, the contemptuous serving girl, and Nurse Andrews round out their community of women. Again, the story is similar to "Prelude": both stories feature four major female characters, although the roles of the women differ in each piece. The sisters' terror of Kate emphasizes their inefficacy. Female servants view their mistresses with a perceptive, condescending eye throughout Mansfield's fiction. Kate realizes that she is in the dubious position of serving servants. The daughters are subservient to the colonel; to be beneath the daughters is an indignity that Kate resents. Kate becomes "an enchanted princess" tragically forced into servitude by "the old tabbies" (DLC, p.466). The sisters, sensing this, submit to Kate's domination as easily as to their father's. To challenge her would be the beginning of rebellion, an assertion of adulthood that might cause an avalanche of revelation. The price of an independent action, such as accusing Kate of stealing (DLC, p.479), is too great. Instead, the sisters remain docile busying themselves with small, safe decisions: debating whether or not to ask Kate for water (DLC, p.473). Nurse Andrews
also caws the sisters. The nurse's vulgarity offends their delicate manners, yet to reprimand her demands initiative the sisters do not possess. It is easier for them to turn away, to stare at the tablecloth or count imaginary camels (DLC, p.466). Their arrested development and fear of rebellion places them in a position below the independent working women. It would be too risky for them to assert superiority over anyone—even a servant. Superiority is a quality of men, and a criterion for independence; the sisters cannot face either one. They will continue to live as timid spinsters stifled by the memory of their father.

The protagonists of "The Dove's Nest," like Constantia and Josephine, survive a dominating male relative. Once again, the delineators of the characters' ages are blurred. Mrs. Fawcett, like Constantia and Josephine, incorporates both child and adult into her personality; she too has been subservient to a publicly prominent male. Ineffectual without her husband, she invokes his presence in order to make an adult decision: "'It was so strange...I suddenly seemed to hear Father say to me "Ask him to lunch." And then there was some—warning. ...I think it was about the wine. But that I didn't catch—very unfortunately...""23 The birdlike Mrs. Fawcett retains her only shred of adult dignity through Milly.

Milly's feelings towards her mother are ambivalent, and the source of her age fragmentation. As a daughter, she respects Mrs. Fawcett and depends upon her maternal nurturance. Nevertheless, Milly has had little exposure to men and can neither understand her mother's dependency on her deceased father nor the enraptured light in Mrs. Fawcett's eyes when she meets Mr. Prodger (DN, p.627).
Milly's detachment from male domination gives her a measure of independence and, at times, makes her appear older than Mrs. Fawcett. Their mother-daughter roles occasionally reverse, emphasizing both Mrs. Fawcett's foolishness and Millie's discomfort with encroaching womanhood: "Mother made her feel so big, so tall. But she was tall. She could pick Mother up in her arms. Sometimes, rare moods came when she did. Swooped on Mother who squeaked like a mouse and even kicked. But not lately. Very seldom now..." (p.627). Mansfield further refines her satire in "The Dove's Nest" by reserving it for only one of the protagonists. The satiric representation of Mrs. Fawcett is lovingly rendered, almost as if Milly had written it. The touch of comedy allies the reader with Milly; the reader feels the edge of embarrassment in the adolescent daughter's devotion to her mother.

Mrs. Fawcett's dependence on male definition so discomfits Milly that she longs to escape: "Milly looked out of the window. She hated Mother going on like this. But of course she couldn't say anything. Out of the window there was the sea and the sunlight silver on the palms, like water dripping from silver oars. Milly felt a yearning--what was it?--it was like a yearning to fly" (DN, p.628). Milly's vision of flight recalls Linda's vision of the aloe in "Prelude"; both women dream of deliverance by plants with thornlike leaves. Milly, like Linda, feels uncomfortable with her sexual destiny, but her unease is in its nascent stages; her inexperience precludes understanding.

The colonel's daughters sink into disuse after his death. Mrs. Fawcett, however, seeks to recapture the lost male control. The story, then, emphasizes female dependency more than rebellion. As
in "The Daughters," though, rebellion remains a thematic undercurrent through Milly. Mrs. Fawcett's husband gave her status; without him she lacks definition. Again, this is reflected in the contemptuous attitude of the servants. Yvonne scorns her mistresses' eating habits, but she joyously combs the local market for delicacies to serve Mr. Prodger (DN, p.629). Even Marie's macabre temperament thrills at the opportunity to cut flowers for a gentleman's "tomb" (DN, p.630). When the great day arrives the servants treat their mistresses with renewed respect: "Now all was changed. Marie filled their glasses to the brim as if to reward them for some marvellous feat of courage. These timid English ladies had captured a live lion, a real one, smelling faintly of eau de cologne..." (p.635). Miss Anderson, Mother's Catholic companion, studies American politics in honor of Mr. Prodger's visit. Mansfield seems to indicate tension between Miss Anderson and Mrs. Fawcett: both appear intent on capturing Mr. Prodger. The theme remains undeveloped, however, in the completed portion of the story.

What is apparent is the range of the women's reactions to the entry of a man after a respite from male control. Mrs. Fawcett's ties to her husband loosen, and her memories of him begin to fade (DN, p.636). Miss Anderson eagerly proves her worth as a companion in her discussion of American hotels (DN, p.635). Even Milly brightens: her cheeks flush, her smile dazzles and her eyes, formerly unremarkable, become "flower-blue" (DN, p.636). Milly's animation in Mr. Prodger's presence seems to set up a conflict between her awakening sexuality and her discomfort with her mother's dependency on male definition. Milly appears to be poised between Kezia and Beryl. Like Kezia, Milly's sexuality unnerves her, but...
she is beginning to discover the power and pleasures of flirtation. Thus, while the issues are different than in "Prelude," the situation remains much the same: a group of women, varied in age, coming to terms with their roles in a world governed by men.

The women in "The Dove's Nest" show signs of sexual vigor absent in "The Daughters." As in "Prelude" and "The Daughters," the setting of "The Dove's Nest" reflects the state of the characters' sexuality. The piece blends the settings of the other two stories: it takes place on the exotic Riviera, and Milly observes the lush, sexually evocative scenery outside her villa window, but the story's action occurs within doors. The women are isolated in their dove's nest: sexuality and the male world remain outside. Mr. Prodger becomes the agent of the exotic outside world: even his country, America, has thrilling foreign connotations to the British women (DN, pp.635-636).

The combination of "Prelude"'s technical innovations and experimentation in the use of satire and setting indicate "The Dove's Nest" might have been a new apex in Mansfield's career. In 1922, however, Mansfield stopped writing; she believed that her tuberculosis was symptomatic of a spiritual deficiency and if that could be cured her health would be restored (Alpers, p.329). In October, 1922, Mansfield entered the Gurdjieff institute in Fontainbleau, France. The communal life of the institute promised psychic rejuvenation. Mansfield died there in January, 1923. "The Dove's Nest" and scattered fragments of other unfinished stories, then, are Mansfield's final legacy.

A review of Mansfield's work from In a German Pension to "The Dove's Nest" displays a spectrum of increased technical and thematic
achievements. Her early stories afford a glimmer of the sophisticated Mansfield, but "Prelude" is her true breakthrough in terms of both theme and style. Her emphasis on "mystery" adds depth to the Burnells and, later, to the Pinners and the Pawcetts. The skillful use of communities of women linked by imagery and deep psychological ties allows a graceful examination of character and situation in "Prelude" and makes way for age fragmentation in other works. Finally, the pivotal use of interior monologue, fully developed in "Prelude," reveals the fictional world naturally, through the thoughts and feelings of its characters.

What remains is to assess Mansfield's vision of womanhood. No example of a positive male-female relationship emerges in an analysis of her fiction. If, as Gordon claims, Mansfield writes from her own experience, this hopeless vision of human relationships makes some sense. Although an obvious improvement over her first short-lived marriage, Mansfield's journal indicates that her relationship with John Middleton Murry was difficult; much of the time they spent apart was by choice (journal, p.62). Mansfield became despondent when separated from Murry for several months, though, and reuniting with him inevitably became an obsession which she feared was not returned (journal, pp.192, 196, 240).

If Mansfield's view of relationships distresses, however, her view of individual potential inspires. The problem with the sisters in "The Daughters" is that they lack all but the faintest flicker of a regenerative inner life. Mrs. Fairfield's beauty stems from her rich inner life, from the fulfillment she finds in her dedication to maternity. Linda, too, exhibits a richness in her contemplation of the lush mysteries of sexuality. And one cannot ignore the
profundity of Kezia's childish imagination, the depth of her innocent insights. Mansfield sought to illuminate the beauty of the inner life and the poignance of its arrest. Ultimately, Mansfield reaches no conclusions about the mysteries of womanhood; she simply depicts the struggle to understand and points out its beauty:

Beauty triumphs over the ugliness in Life. That's what I feel. And the marvellous triumph is what I long to express...Life is, all at one and the same time, far more mysterious and far simpler than we know. It's like religion in that. That's how it seems to me (journal, p.453).
1 An excellent comparison of Mansfield's technique to Joyce and Woolf may be found in Saralyn Daly, Katherine Mansfield, from Twayne's English Author Series, Sylvia Bowman, ed. (New York: Twayne Publishers, inc., 1965), p.114. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Daly"

2 "Prelude" was published by Virginia and Leonard Woolf on The Hogarth Press in 1918. The transaction marked the beginning of a rocky friendship between Virginia Woolf and Mansfield.

3 Katherine Mansfield, The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield, John Middleton Murry, ed., (New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1980). Subsequent page number references for Mansfield's stories are to this volume. Ian Gordon discusses the difficulties in tracing the development of Mansfield's work. Her original four volumes, with the exception of In A German Pension, mix stories of various dates. See Ian Gordon, Katherine Mansfield, from the Writers and Their Work Series, Bonamy Dubree, ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), p.6. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Gordon."

4 "Germans At Meat," p.39. Subsequent references to this story will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the initials "GAM."

5 Mary Burgan's "Childbirth Trauma in Katherine Mansfield's Early Stories," in Modern Fiction Studies, 24, No. 3 (Autumn 1978) uses both "Frau Brechenmacher" and "At Lehmann's" in her analysis of childbirth in Mansfield. Her study, however, deals solely with childbirth's effects on women; it neglects the controlling role of the male in these stories. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Burgan."

6 "Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding," p.61. Subsequent references to this story will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the initials "FB."

7 "At Lehmann's," p.73-74. Subsequent references to this story will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the initials "AL."

8 "The Woman at the Store," p.128. Subsequent references to this story will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the initials "WAS."

9 "Something Childish but Very Natural," p.165. Subsequent references to this story will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the initials "SC."
ENDNOTES

10 Toby Silverman Zinman, "The Snail Under the Leaf: Katherine Mansfield's Imagery," in Modern Fiction Studies, 24, No. 3 (Autumn 1978), p. 462. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Zinman."

Critical support for this statement may be found in the following sources:

Antony Alpers, Katherine Mansfield (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1954), p. 209. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Alpers."

Daly, p. 62.

Marvin Magalaner, Katherine Mansfield, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 76. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Magalaner."

12 John Middleton Murry, ed. Journal of Katherine Mansfield, (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1954), pp. 83-88. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Journal."

"Prelude" began as a much longer story, "The Aloe." Alpers notes that the two versions are dissimilar in style and content (Alpers, p. 213). Sylvia Berkman goes to great lengths to prove the difference between the stories in Katherine Mansfield: A Critical Study (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 90-102. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Berkman." I will leave the interested reader with those competent studies and move on to other issues.

14 Richard F. Peterson, "The Circle of Truth: The Stories of Katherine Mansfield and Rosemary Lavin," in Modern Fiction Studies, 24, No. 3 (Autumn 1978), p. 386. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Peterson."

15 Daly develops the theme of Kezia's sense of order in her assessment of "Prelude," but to a different end. She holds that Kezia and Linda balance between Mrs. Fairfield's serenity and the menace of the aloe. I believe Kezia wavers between Linda and Mrs. Fairfield, trying to synthesize their conflicting personality elements in herself. Daly also states that Linda concludes negatively, an opinion I do not share, and her analysis ignores much of the story's essential imagery.

16 Burgan, p. 403.
ENDNOTES

17 Ann L. McLaughlin, "The Same Job: The Shared Writing Aims of Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf," in Modern Fiction Studies, 24, No.3, p.371. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "McLaughlin."

18 Magalaner traces the etymology of each character's name, pp.31-32

19 "At the Bay," p.280. Subsequent references to this story will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the initials "ATB."

20 Alpers notes that Mansfield deleted her only statement of the sisters' ages from the story's manuscript. Josephine is 42, Constantia 38 (Alpers, p.309).

21 Don W. Kleine, "The Orphans of Time," in Modern Fiction Studies, 24, No.3 (Autumn 1978), p.427. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the word "Kleine."

22 "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," p.470. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the initials "DLC."

23 "The Dove's Nest," p.627. Subsequent references to this source will be contained within the text of this essay indicated by the initials "DN."
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I. Fiction


II. Non-fiction


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I. Books


II. Articles


Magalaner, Marvin. "Traces of Her 'Self' in Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss.'" In Modern Fiction Studies, 24, No.3 (Autumn 1978), pp.413-422.


FOURTH HOUR READING LIST

Katherine Mansfield, Complete Short Stories
Journal of Katherine Mansfield
Letters of Katherine Mansfield, Vol.1
Letters of Katherine Mansfield, Vol.2

Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out
A Room of One's Own
To the Lighthouse
excerpts on KM from Woolf's diary, Vols. 1-2

Anton Chekhov selected stories

James Joyce The Dubliners

Katherine Anne Porter, Complete Short Stories (selections)

Willa Cather, Uncle Valentine and Other Stories (selections)

Nina Auerbach, Communities of Women (introduction and chapter 1)