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„Ignorance is bliss? Repression and suppression in
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1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, Sigmund Freud's theory about the unconscious and how it affects mental health led to a growing interest in the human mind and the inner workings of the psyche. The motivation behind specific actions and the emergence of certain emotions were not only investigated in medicine and psychology. Literary works, too, increasingly dealt with inner workings and gave valuable insights into the psychological make-up of various actions and conditions. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the emergence of psychoanalysis coincided with the emergence of modernist short fiction. Just as psychoanalysis uncovers the fragmented nature of the various aspects of self and identity, so do short stories depict the fragmented self and inner struggles of their characters. While novels typically have a clear plot structure and the story time stretches over a longer period of time, short story writers often set the focus of their stories on one main event that only takes place over a short period of time. This lends itself to depicting thoughts and inner workings of the stories' characters. Short fiction in the modernist literary period abandoned common patterns of novels by adopting a more experimental writing style better suited to represent the psychological mechanisms and incongruencies within the characters. These include features such as "paradox, ambiguity, ellipsis, fragmented view of personal identity, limited action, etc." (Sacido 10). Therefore, modernist short fiction is ideal to investigate the consequences of suppression and repression.

One of the most prominent short fiction writers at that time was Katherine Mansfield. She was most likely familiar with Freud's theories since she lived in the time where Freud's ideas spread. Moreover, Moira Mitchell argues that Mansfield often discussed Freud's theories with D.H. Lawrence (997). Chantal Cornut-Gentile D'Arcy states that

[...] the dates of publication of Freud's early work [...] could suggest that they formed the theoretical groundwork for Mansfield's *oeuvre* since all her stories highlight, in one way or another, the mode in which the mind's depths work against its conscious intentions – something which the then revolutionary practice of "psychoanalysis" was intended to reveal. (247)

I agree that it is very likely that Mansfield was familiar with Freud's work since his theories were prevalent in the time Mansfield lived and Mansfield discussed Freud in her inner circles. It is, therefore, very probable that Freud's ideas influenced her

representation of the inner workings of the human psyche. Moreover, Mansfield believes in the fragmented nature of the human psyche as well as the multiplicity of self and the conflicts that arise from the different parts of the self being disconnected from one's identity (Ascari 47). In one of her letters Mansfield states: "True to oneself! Which self? [...] For what with complexes and suppressions, and reactions and vibrations and reflections – there are moments when I feel I am nothing but the small clerk of some hotel without a proprietor who has all his work cut out to enter the names and hand the keys to the wilful guests." (qtd. in Ascari 47) Her thoughts in this letter clearly demonstrate that the author believes in the fragmented nature of one's self, and that certain mental parts are in conflict with each other, which can lead to problems of identity. Furthermore, in this passage the existence of suppression is acknowledged by Mansfield, which shows her familiarity with this defense mechanism.

It is no surprise, therefore, that Mansfield's texts prominently depict and explore the mental life of her stories' characters (Korte 133). This makes her short fiction particularly suitable for investigating the human mind. Specifically, Mansfield's short stories cover psychological issues such as the denial of parts of one's self. They often depict a conflict between unfulfilled desires and the inability to express them due to social conventions. As a result, the characters of Mansfield's short fiction often show signs of using repression and suppression as a means to resolve the tension between the inner and outer reality and between unfulfilled desires and social expectations.

This makes Mansfield's work particularly suitable to study human behavior and distill valuable insight from her stories by analyzing the motives and actions of the respective characters. In particular, her short stories "Bliss" (originally published in 1918 in the *English Review*), "Miss Brill" (originally published by the *Hogarth Press* in 1918), and "Je ne parle pas français" (originally published by the *Heron Press* in 1920), the objects of this thesis' analysis, deal with the protagonists' struggles to reconcile deep inner desires with expectations imposed on them by society. As I will demonstrate, these characters all use suppression or repression as a means to cope with those struggles. Since suppression and repression are not only mechanisms frequently used by fictional characters but are also common practice in the real world to rid oneself from unwanted sensations, an analysis of the consequences the characters experience due to the use of these defense mechanisms can give

valuable insight for one's own life about the effectiveness of suppression and repression. It can also give insight into how it affects our overall well-being. In fact, various studies have shown that the suppression of feelings, thoughts, parts of identity and expressions can ultimately have detrimental effects on mental health (Beals et al. 868), intimate relationship formation (Butler et al. 61), life satisfaction (English and John 315) as well as physical health (Westen 1082). Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the consequences of repression and suppression on well-being and happiness. In addition, this thesis will try to uncover how these defense mechanisms are depicted in Katherine Mansfield's short fiction.

I propose that suppression and repression are not beneficial strategies to deal with unpleasant thoughts and sensations. They might alleviate negative sensations for a short period of time but in the long run, the use of these defense mechanisms negatively affects the quality of relationships, self-esteem, as well as resilience and overall well-being. By analyzing the three aforementioned short stories as well as examining current findings in the field of psychology and sociology on the effects of suppression on various important areas of human life and aspects of one's mental state and how they relate to the characters in the stories under analysis, I will try to answer the question whether repression and suppression are good means to cope with unpleasant mental content. Furthermore, by analyzing the literary devices Mansfield uses in the three short stories, I will try to uncover how repression and suppression are represented in literature without the need of covert descriptions that these psychological phenomena are in place.

In order to analyze the representation of repression and suppression in the short stories as well as their effects on well-being and happiness, I first have to establish what repression and suppression are. Therefore, I will begin my thesis by giving a brief overview of the origins of these terms and lay out Freud's original theory on these defense mechanisms. In *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, which is a comprehensive dictionary of psychoanalytic terms, suppression and repression are defined as follows: "In a broad sense: [suppression is a] mental operation tending to eliminate distressing or unwelcome contents (ideas, affects, etc.) from consciousness. When suppression is understood in this way, repression is seen as a specific mode of suppression." (Laplanche and Pontalis 438) Both are often referred to as defense mechanisms against unwanted thoughts and feelings. According to Freud, "*the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping*

it at a distance, from the conscious" ("Repression" 147). While this distancing from mental content is conscious or preconscious in suppression, repression is unconscious. Therefore, the repressed content is not as easily accessible compared to the content of suppression (Boag 164). However, I will argue that a distinction between suppression and repression is not useful for this thesis' purposes, since the findings of various studies on suppression or repression can also be applied to the respective other defense mechanism. Therefore, it makes no difference to make a distinction between these two terms because the results of the studies that I will discuss in my thesis are valid for both coping mechanisms and a distinction will only complicate matters without any sizeable benefit. Moreover, I agree with Matthew Hugh Erdelyi's argumentation that it was Anna Freud who made the distinction between the two terms while Freud himself frequently used suppression and repression interchangeably (499). I will show that Erdelyi's reasoning is valid and will furthermore present a working definition of suppression for this paper's analysis in chapter 2.

The subsequent chapter will deal with significant studies about the efficacy of suppression and its underlying mechanisms. Since the pioneering work of Freud on repression and suppression, several studies followed which investigated these defense mechanisms. Among one of the most prominent studies was Daniel Wegner's investigation of the effectiveness of suppression to avoid specific thoughts. In his seminal study he could demonstrate that the suppression of thoughts about a white bear subsequently lead to a heightened frequency of that thought compared to people who did not try to suppress white bear thoughts (Wegner, Schneider, et al. 7). Many studies followed that confirm Wegner's findings and highlight the paradoxical effect of suppression, which states that suppression seems to lead to the very effect one tries to avoid, namely a higher frequency of intrusive thoughts and emotions. Some of these as well as studies which seem to contradict Wegner's findings will also be discussed in chapter 3. One widely accepted explanation for the inefficacy of suppression is Wegner's ironic process theory which states that for suppression to work, two cognitive processes are necessary, namely the "intentional operating process" and the "ironic monitoring process". While one process operates to attain a certain desired outcome, namely the avoidance of unwanted mental content, the other process constantly monitors the environment for any cues that might compromise suppression. However, under cognitive load the operating process lacks

necessary cognitive resources to function properly. As a result, the monitoring process dominates. This, however, leads to a heightened awareness of the one thing the suppressor tries to avoid (35). This will be discussed in chapter 3.

Furthermore, in order to understand why modernist short fiction is so potent in examining psychological phenomena, the features of modernism as well as the short fiction genre will be discussed in chapter 4. I will show that various factors at the beginning of the 20th century were conducive for a heightened interest in the inner workings of human behavior. In addition, I will argue that the short form with its experimental literary devices and its brevity is ideal to depict the human psyche and human behavior.

One who was a master in writing short stories and depicting complex psychological phenomena was Katherine Mansfield. Her stories deal with the mental life and inner states of her characters (Korte 133). She was interested in the inner workings of the mind rather than superficial events happening in the world she lived in (Lang 22). She was not preoccupied with external factors like circumstances, appearances, and events that happened to her characters. Instead, her interest lied in how the stories' characters lived through these experiences and how they processed them in their mind. As a consequence, many of her stories deal with psychological phenomena such as repression and suppression.

In a considerable amount of Mansfield's stories the protagonists have deep inner desires which do not find an outlet and cannot be expressed out of fear (Edensor 89). Just like Freud, Mansfield noticed that inner desires and outer expectations can often be in conflict with each other and that an incongruence between inner and outer self can lead to mental health problems and feelings of inauthenticity and alienation from one's sense of self. In many of Mansfield's stories the author explores the inner conflict that arises from the impossibility to integrate all the competing and irreconcilable parts of one's self to a whole, well-rounded identity (Bennett 12–13; 16). Katherine Mansfield realized that there is a difference between what one feels and what one expresses and shares with others. She also realized that there are unconscious workings of the mind that are hard to grasp and often unknown to not only others but even to oneself. This fascinated the modernist writer. Mansfield has set herself the task to write about human action, human thought processes and exploring the unconscious in her stories. However, as Andrew Bennett argues:

Mansfield [...] realizes that she has presented herself with an impossible, paradoxical task as a writer, the task of 'facing' the human truth of the self as unknowable: she presents herself with the task of writing the unknown, with articulating the 'living mind' as, pre-eminently, that which cannot be known, cannot be articulated. (21)

So, in order to solve this problem, Mansfield experimented with the short story form. She was a pioneer in innovating this literary genre and used novel techniques and literary devices to depict the inner struggles the stories' characters had to go through. Her stories are often compared to impressionist paintings because rather than having a plot, they seem to paint a picture of the mood and atmosphere her characters find themselves in (Hanson and Gurr 24). The plotlessness of Mansfield's stories, the lack of clear narrative structures and the non-existent development of characters make her stories very unique and resemble more a "psychological study" than a narrative (Bennett 14). Bennett explains:

One of the things that marks Mansfield's mature stories is the way that they appeal to but finally resist psychological or psychoanalytic analysis or commentary, the way that they hint at but also diverge from any appeal to or investigation of the unconscious. Mansfield's work is remarkable, not least, for the extent of her restraint, restraint in the first place of authorial commentary on issues of psychological motivation. Mansfield effectively transforms the short story and does so, in part, by a refusal to define an origin – an explanation – for people's actions or a 'secret' core of personality. (15)

This shows that Katherine Mansfield rather sets the focus on the immediacy of her character's perceptions and experiences rather than having to attend to commentaries and descriptions (Lang 16). This allows the readers to tap into the character's consciousness. The stories are told from the protagonists' lens and nothing is said what cannot be perceived by the protagonist's point of view or what is unknown to the characters (12). Therefore, the readers of Mansfield's short stories experience the protagonist's point of view and have to make sense of the narrative without any guidance from the author or narrator. This enables Mansfield to depict inner states and inner conflicts without explanations, preambles, and interpretations. Just as the unconscious is often ambiguous and not graspable, so do Katherine Mansfield's stories enable readers to come to their own conclusions while at the same time experiencing psychological phenomena through the protagonists' eyes. They can vicariously experience the characters' mental state rather than being presented with a prefabricated interpretation. In that sense, Mansfield's stories are

full of depictions of the thoughts and feelings of their characters but lack sufficient explanations what those thoughts and feelings mean. This, in turn, means that Mansfield has to use various literary devices in order to avoid direct descriptions but nevertheless portray workings of the human mind. In chapter 5 I will, therefore, uncover various techniques Mansfield uses to represent suppression and repression in the three short stories under analysis. In particular, I propose that Mansfield is able to portray these psychological phenomena through free indirect discourse, ellipses and dashes, contradictions and mismatches within the story as well as through the use of symbols.

Finally, this thesis will contain the analysis of the consequences that arise out of suppression in “Bliss”, “Miss Brill” and “Je ne parle pas français”. By analyzing symbols, metaphors, plot development and the thoughts and actions of the stories’ characters and by comparing them with findings on repression and suppression in scientific literature in the field of psychology and sociology, I will examine how these defense mechanisms affect the characters’ well-being and degree of happiness. While many theories on repression and suppression build on and accept the basic ideas of Freud (Cohen and Kinston 412), a pioneer in this field, and while his ideas will be discussed in this thesis as above-mentioned, I will mainly set the focus of my analysis on other more recent psychologists who examined these two defense mechanisms. I justify this approach based on various reasons. First of all, some scholars argue that Freud’s view on the unconscious was too narrowly focused on issues of sexuality and drives of the id and that, therefore, his interpretations of human conditions do not allow for a broader and more comprehensive look at the origins of mental processes (Wijsen 91; 95). According to Roy Baumeister, Karen Dale and their colleagues, for example, defense mechanisms are more likely to protect self-esteem rather than to guard against violent or sexual urges (1082). One could argue that Mansfield lived in the times of Freud and that, therefore, her stories should be analyzed through the lens of Freudian ideas. However, Mitchell points out that during Mansfield’s discussions with D.H. Lawrence about Freud’s theories, she “was, apparently, always ready to highlight the points on which she disagreed.” (997) Mansfield did not believe in Freud’s exaggerated focus on sexuality. She was convinced that there are more motives for human actions than just sexual drives. This is also reflected in the stories under analysis that not solely revolve around the suppression of sexuality but also around feelings of inadequateness, inauthenticity

and the feeling of a split self due to the impossibility to reconcile one's own inner desires with the behavior that is expected by society. I, therefore, want to provide a broader review of studies on suppression and repression and interpret Mansfield's stories in the light of more recent findings in psychology and sociology to draw attention to an interpretation of suppression, which goes beyond Freud.

In all three stories under analysis, the protagonists use suppression or repression as a means to cope with distressing or undesired thoughts and feelings. Bertha feels stuck in her marriage and is frustrated by her inability to express herself due to social expectations. She, therefore, escapes into a constant state of bliss through suppressing every negative thought that emerges into her awareness. Similarly, Miss Brill fabricates a more desired reality through the suppression of negative mental content in order to cope with feelings of sadness and loneliness. Finally, Raoul also uses suppression as a method to push aside the truth of his unsuccessful life and the unbearable intense feelings he does not want to experience. While in all three stories suppression seems to alleviate some of the pain and suffering the characters would otherwise experience, I will analyze which consequences arise due to the use of suppression and repression in the character's lives. I propose that in these three stories repression and suppression appear to be beneficial in the short run but detrimental to the characters' well-being in the long run. I will demonstrate that these defense mechanisms can lead to a deep feeling of alienation and inauthenticity, weakened relationships and the inability to make positive changes to sustainably improve overall life satisfaction and well-being. This thesis will, therefore, try to examine whether my hypothesis of repression and suppression being an unhealthy means to deal with undesired thoughts and feelings is justified.

2. What is repression/suppression?

In order to review the effects of repression and suppression on the human psyche, I first need to define these terms and discuss their origin. Furthermore, the difference between repression and suppression needs to be specified.

2.1. Freudian theory of repression

The concept of repression is usually associated with Sigmund Freud. He is believed to be the founder of repression theory and most of the repression research that followed after him is based on his original ideas (Boag 165). Therefore, examining Freudian theory on repression is essential for understanding this concept. According to James Strachey, Freud was probably introduced to the term “repression” by the psychologist Johann Friedrich Herbart (143). Herbart used the term to describe how competing ideas need to be inhibited, so that other ideas can enter consciousness. He believed that the number of thoughts consciousness can entertain is limited. Therefore, in order to think about certain things, other thoughts have to be abandoned. The repressed thoughts can, however, come into consciousness again by inhibiting, in turn, the thoughts that are currently in one’s consciousness (Erdelyi 500).

While Freud partially agreed with Herbart’s view that thoughts need to be inhibited for other thoughts to replace them, he did not view repression as simply a necessary means to let certain thoughts emerge into consciousness. Instead, Freud believed that repression was a form of defense against unpleasant thoughts and undesired impulses. In fact, in his early writings, Freud used the terms repression and defense almost interchangeably (Strachey 144).

The psychologist first noticed the workings of repression when he experienced a patient’s resistance to his treatment. He recognized that Elisabeth was reluctant to answer certain questions almost as if she fought against allowing those thoughts to enter her consciousness (Billig 20). After she replied that she saw nothing, Freud observed the following:

[...] she had allowed a long interval to pass during which her tense and preoccupied expression of face nevertheless betrayed the fact that a mental process was taking place in her. I resolved, therefore, to adopt the hypothesis that the procedure never failed: that on every occasion under the pressure of my hand some idea occurred to Elisabeth or some picture came before her

eyes, but that she was not always prepared to communicate it to me, and tried to suppress once more what had been conjured up. (“Studies On Hysteria” 153)

Freud concluded that patients who showed such signs of resistance had to have some painful, distressing or shameful thoughts, which they wished to forget. He interpreted the resistance to let those thoughts become conscious as a way of defense against distressing mental content (268-269). He reasoned that “[t]he patient’s ego had been approached by an idea which proved to be incompatible, which provoked on the part of the ego a repelling force of which the purpose was defence against this incompatible idea.” (269). As a result, the unpleasant idea had to be pushed out of consciousness, it had to be repressed.

However, Freud believed that the thought did not just disappear but that traces of the incompatible thought were still left in the depths of the mind (269). Rather than vanishing, those thoughts moved from the conscious to the unconscious. Michael Billig even recognized this key element in the word for ‘repression’ in Freud’s mother tongue: “The German word, which Freud generally, but not invariably, used to describe repression was *Verdrängung*, which literally means ‘pushing away’ or ‘thrust aside’. A repressed idea is one that has been pushed aside, or driven from conscious awareness.” (15) This pushing aside, Freud noticed, was not always something of which his patients were aware. In the case of Elisabeth, who repressed that she was in love with her brother-in-law, she did not seem to know of her feelings prior to Freud’s treatment. “With regard to these feelings she was in the peculiar situation of knowing and at the same time not knowing” (“Studies On Hysteria” 165). Her feelings towards her brother-in-law, thus, escaped consciousness but were latent in another part of her mind. Freud realized that the workings of the mind cannot be exclusively explained by consciousness and concluded that consciousness is only the tip of the iceberg and that a considerable part of the human mind is unconscious:

We can go further and argue, in support of there being an unconscious psychical state, that at any given moment consciousness includes only a small content, so that the greater part of what we call conscious knowledge must in any case be for very considerable periods of time in a state of latency, that is to say, of being psychically unconscious. When all our latent memories are taken into consideration it becomes totally incomprehensible how the existence of the unconscious can be denied. (“The Unconscious” 167)

This discovery of the unconscious is considered one of Freud’s key insights. While some of his ideas might be controversial and not universally accepted, even by

psychoanalysts (Cohen and Kinston 412), the existence of the unconscious and its influence on affect and behavior has been proven in various studies and is today considered as a fact (Westen 1094).

The unconscious is the place Freud believed repressed thoughts are located. It contains thoughts that are inaccessible and hidden to one's awareness. However, these thoughts can become preconscious and then potentially enter consciousness again. Repression is described as a force which tries to stop unconscious thoughts from becoming conscious (Billig 16). This shows that different mental processes can work in parallel and are often in opposition to one another. Cognitive and motivational forces of the unconscious can be in conflict with those of the conscious (Westen 1062). Thus, the human mind is in constant tension between conscious wishes and desires and the incomprehensible forces of the unconscious that may harbor competing wishes and desires (Billig 12-13).

The question arises how these competing forces are reconciled, how unpleasant thoughts are kept at a distance and if there is some kind of agency that controls what will enter consciousness and what will be repressed. Freud offered an answer by suggesting that the mind can be split into three parts, namely the id, the ego, and the superego. According to Freudian theory, the id is driven by instinctual demands, the super-ego is driven by influences from the external world as well as aspirations for an ideal self and the ego constantly mediates between the id and the super-ego. Freud believed that the ego is responsible for the act of repression by fighting against the drives of the id in favor of the demands of the super-ego ("Neurosis And Psychosis" 150). In that way the ego tries to keep unwanted thoughts in the unconscious and stops them from entering into the conscious by means of repression ("The Unconscious" 180). Repression is, thus, considered a defense mechanism of the mind.

Furthermore, Freud stated that after repression takes place, the repressed content does not disappear completely from the mind, but instead is moved to the unconscious. However, since only the mental content but not the affect attached to the repressed material can become unconscious, a subsequent event called "return of the repressed" can occur. In this phase the repressed content can appear again in a distorted way. This may manifest itself in the form of symptoms, dreams or Freudian slips ("Further Remarks" 170-175). The return of the repressed is evidence

that repressed content is never fully removed from the mind. It shows that the ego constantly needs to prevent it from entering consciousness again. Freud believed that it is not simply enough to repress an unpleasant content once in order to stay unconscious but rather that repression requires “persistent expenditure of force” in order to not risk a failure of repression (“Repression” 151). This shows that repression is an effortful process and requires mental resources.

Freud’s contributions to the clarification of the unconscious and its processes are undoubtedly valuable. Especially his thoughts on the workings of repression as a way to avoid unpleasant perceptions by pushing them into the unconscious have been important in explaining certain phenomena that can be observed not just in psychopathology but also in everyday life. It seems that repression is part of a normal life and is frequently used (Billig 38). While many of Freud’s ideas have been rejected by other psychologists and even psychoanalysts and while the theory of repression is not unified and consists of many contradicting hypotheses, most researchers in this field agree that repression is not only a useful construct but an observable and substantiated mental process (Cohen and Kinston 412). Nevertheless, more recent empirical studies on repression and suppression have shown the need to rethink some of Freud’s ideas and, furthermore, have brought valuable new insights about the consequences of repression and suppression (Baumeister, Dale, et al. 1112). This paper will, therefore, not only draw from Freud’s theory of repression but will also consider more recent studies on repression and suppression. Some of these findings will be discussed in chapter 3.

2.2. Difference between repression and suppression

While repression is the term Freud most frequently used in his writings, another term for describing mental processes, which seek to push away distressing thoughts, is suppression. In Jean LaPlanche’s and J.B. Pontalis’ dictionary of psychoanalytic terms, it is defined as follows: “In a broad sense: [suppression is a] mental operation tending to eliminate distressing or unwelcome contents (ideas, affects, etc.) from consciousness. When suppression is understood in this way, repression is seen as a specific mode of suppression.” (438) In this sense, suppression is the umbrella term for various mental processes of which repression is only one. Thus, repression would be a form of suppression.

However, LaPlanche and Pontalis go on to say that the terms have never been clearly defined by Freud (438). As a result, their usage is often ambiguous and open for interpretation. Inevitably, different researchers and psychoanalytic writers assign different concepts and ideas to those terms. So, even today there is no universal agreement on the definition of repression and suppression (Boag 165; Wilson and Dunn 495).

Anna Freud probably suggested the most widely accepted distinction between repression and suppression. She states that both suppression and repression involve mental processes of removing mental content from consciousness. However, while suppression is a conscious act, repression happens unconsciously (Erdelyi 500). Various researchers, however, challenged this distinction. Simon Boag, for example argues that both repression and suppression can either be unconscious or conscious (164). He believes that “[b]oth repression and suppression are unconscious in the first instance and require being attended to, to become conscious.” (175). As mentioned in the previous section, Freud argues that the ego is responsible for the execution of repression. At the same time, he states that the ego is the part of the mind that mediates between the conscious and unconscious and is, moreover, responsible for volition:

We have formed the idea that in each individual there is a coherent organization of mental processes; and we call this his *ego*. It is to this ego that consciousness is attached; the ego controls the approaches to motility – that is, to the discharge of excitations into the external world; it is the mental agency which supervises all its own constituent processes [...]. (“The Ego And The Id” 17).

Boag concludes that if the ego were the driving force for repression, yet at the same time the part of the mind responsible for voluntary action, repression must initially be an intentional, and therefore conscious, act. (166). In fact, a telling passage in Freud’s early writings seems to justify this view: “[...] it was a question of things which the patient wished to forget, and therefore *intentionally* repressed from his conscious thought and inhibited and suppressed.” (“Studies On Hysteria” 10; emphasis added). In conclusion, repression presupposes an intentional act in which content is removed from one’s awareness. Thus, initially this process cannot be unconscious. Boag, thus, suggests that repression should not be viewed as anything different from suppression. Rather, the only thing, he argues, that differentiates these two mental processes is “the relative ease of knowing both the target and process”

(176). As a result, repression and suppression should be viewed as similar defense mechanisms that only differ in terms of the degrees of how much knowledge or how much awareness of these processes is involved. Similarly, Timothy Wilson and Elizabeth Dunn believe that “[s]uccessful suppression shares all the features of repression except one, namely people’s awareness of the attempt to remove something from awareness.” (495) Thus, while suppression means knowing about the process of removing thoughts from consciousness, repressors are not aware of this process. The only difference between repression and suppression, therefore, seems to be an epistemological one (Anspaugh 435).

Another researcher who questions Anna Freud’s distinction between suppression and repression is Matthew Hugh Erdelyi. He also suggests that both can be seen as extremes on opposite ends of one and the same mental process and suggests that Freud himself believed that they describe the same mechanism. “Sigmund Freud, actually, used repression and suppression interchangeably and insisted on ‘the unity of mental life’ across the conscious-unconscious continuum, so that ‘repression’ could be *both* conscious and unconscious.” (499) Erdelyi argues that mental processes do not all of a sudden become something completely different just because they turn from being conscious to unconscious (500). Billig comes to the same conclusion and argues that suppression is not different from repression and should, therefore, be treated equally (27). Erdelyi’s and Billig’s argumentation seems reasonable and I agree that repression and suppression describe the same phenomenon and that a distinction is not useful. It seems like Freud himself would have supported this idea. In one of his writings he states that “[t]he theory of repression, which is essential to the study of the psychoneuroses, asserts that these repressed wishes *still* exist – though there is a simultaneous inhibition which holds them down. Linguistic usage hits the mark in speaking of the ‘suppression’ [...] of these impulses.” (“The Interpretation Of Dreams” 235). All in all, this shows that differentiating between repression and suppression is difficult and problematic. There is still no consensus on how to definitively define repression and suppression and how, or if at all, a distinction between the two terms should be made.

2.3. Working definitions of repression and suppression

In order to investigate the workings and consequences of repression and suppression in Katherine Mansfield's short stories, I need to define the terms beforehand. However, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, a clear definition of the two terms is problematic and does not exist. As already mentioned, some theorists argue that only one term, either repression or suppression, should be used for both processes and that no distinction between those two terms should be made (Billig 24). Billig, for example, only relies on the word "repression" for both conscious and unconscious processes that involve the withdrawal of thoughts for his theory of repression (26).

Moreover, since both suppression and repression share the same principal, results from studies about suppression can be translated to repression as well (Baumeister, Dale, et al. 1085). In addition, it is difficult to investigate unconscious processes. Several attempts to empirically prove the unconscious aspect of repression have failed (Wilson and Dunn 513). Therefore, most studies that have investigated the effects of keeping mental content outside of awareness, have been done on suppression.

This paper follows the argument that using both repression and suppression as two separate processes is not useful. Therefore, I will regard repression and suppression as one and the same mechanism to push aside unwanted thoughts and feelings from consciousness. I will make a distinction in so far as acknowledging that repression is more unconscious and suppression more conscious on the above-mentioned continuum but that ultimately both terms denote the same mental process. Therefore, throughout the paper both terms will be used interchangeably.

For this paper, I will use Erdelyi's definition of repression (and suppression respectively):

Repression, essentially, is a *consciousness-lowering process*. It consists of a class of operations that reduces the accessibility to consciousness of some target material. Repression, further, is *instrumental* in bringing about a discernible goal – for example, preventing the span of consciousness from being breached or preventing some intolerable psychological material from entering consciousness. (502)

In simpler words, repression and suppression are means to keep undesirable mental content from awareness.

3. Efficacy of suppression

While Freud mainly studied repression in neurotic patients, repression and suppression can also be observed in mentally healthy people. Most people suppress distressing thoughts occasionally in their everyday lives (Wegner, Schneider, et al. 5). As Sadia Najmi and Daniel Wegner point out “[u]nwanted thoughts have unusual gravity – an attractiveness that makes it easy for the mind to move toward them but difficult for it to move away” (114). As a result, a relief from these unpleasant thoughts is often difficult to obtain and people seek for ways to avoid undesirable thoughts and feelings by trying to control their thoughts. Suppression seems to be an obvious choice (Szasz 201). It appears to be a fast and efficient way to immediately feel better and, therefore, many people rely on it. However, the question arises whether suppression is really an effective means against undesired mental content. Paul Lucian Szasz, for example, observed that although depressed people tend to rely more on thought suppression than non-depressed people, they often fail at suppressing distressing thoughts and as a result, feel even more depressed (199). This shows that suppression might not be as effective as believed by those who use it as a coping mechanism.

3.1. The paradoxical effect of suppression

One of the first researchers to empirically examine the efficacy of suppression was Daniel Wegner (Barnes et al. 132). In his seminal study subjects were asked to report their stream of consciousness into a tape recorder. They were divided into two groups of which the first was asked to think about a white bear while the other group was instructed not to think about that specific animal. In a subsequent period, the instructions were reversed. The occurrence of white bear thoughts was measured by both counting the frequency of white bear mentionings in the recorded stream of consciousness as well as by asking the participants to ring a bell whenever the thought of a white bear emerged in their thoughts (Wegner, Schneider, et al. 6-7).

Results showed that suppression was not successful in ridding participants of the target thought. Suppressors had a higher frequency of white bear thoughts than the expression group. Wegner and his colleagues, therefore, conclude that suppressed thoughts lead to a subsequent increase in thought frequency. They call this phenomenon the rebound effect (7). Furthermore, the researchers believe that constant efforts to suppress could possibly lead to obsessive thoughts because due to the rebound effect and the desire to suppress these thoughts, the frequency of them will inevitably increase (12). If Wegner's findings were universally true, this would mean that suppression is a poor choice for coping with unwanted thoughts.

However, since Wegner's initial study several studies examining the rebound effect led to mixed results. A meta-analysis of these studies shows that while some studies could confirm and repeat Wegner's findings, others did not show an initial enhancement effect, which states that thoughts increase in frequency even during the suppression period. Equally, they could not confirm any rebound effect. It seems that various studies seem to contradict each other as well as Wegner's findings (Abramowitz et al. 684-685). Going through a vast amount of studies about the efficacy of suppression, Jonathan Abramowitz and his colleagues conclude that while there seems to be some evidence for the rebound effect, the meta-analysis does not support the initial enhancement effect (695). This suggests that suppression could be successful in reducing or even eliminating unwanted thoughts from awareness for a short period of time, but might not be effective in the long run (699). It seems that the longer one suppresses thoughts, the more likely those thoughts will increase in frequency.

One possible reason why some studies were unable to confirm the initial enhancement or rebound effect might be how a study measures target thoughts. Wegner's studies counted the number of times white bear thoughts appeared. However, suppression can also lead to a rebound effect of thoughts similar to the ones suppressed, and thereby also confirm the influence of suppression on the mental content of the suppressor. Lizabeth Roemer and Thomas Borkovec, for example, examined whether suppression might influence the emergence of thoughts related to the suppressed thought. They divided participants into three groups and instructed them to either think of anxious, depressing or neutral target situations. Subsequently the researches divided those groups even further by asking one half of each group to suppress, while the other half was encouraged to think of the situation.

Measurements were taken of how many times the situation entered the subjects' consciousness. (469). The experiment suggested that they were, in fact, able to suppress the target thoughts during the period in which they were instructed to suppress. This would suggest that an initial enhancement effect does not exist, which seemingly confirms Abramowitz's conclusion that there is inadequate evidence for target thoughts increasing during suppression. However, the researchers observed that participants were not able to suppress indirectly associated thoughts. They noticed significantly more thoughts that were indirectly related to anxious or depressed target situations than neutral targets. They concluded that suppression still seemed to influence thoughts even though the specific target thought had successfully been suppressed (472). This shows that it might not be enough to measure the specific thoughts that are suppressed in order to measure the efficacy of suppression.

In the above-mentioned study, suppression of anxious thoughts led to more anxiety at the end of the session than the expression of anxious thoughts, which, in turn, led to a decrease of anxious feelings. Roemer and Borkovec state that "although suppression, compared with expression, leads to fewer concurrent negative affect statements, trying not to think of a situation increases the negative affective experience subsequently associated with that situation" (473). This can lead to a never-ending cycle, in which one suppresses a thought because of the negative emotion associated with it; this emotion, in turn, makes intrusive thoughts more likely. Further attempts to suppress are the consequence, which starts another cycle of suppression and emotional rebound. A possible way out of this is exposure and habituation that cause the thought to no longer being negatively associated and therefore making suppression unnecessary (473). So, while suppression might prevent the target thought from entering consciousness, it can still lead to emotional rebound effects and the emergence of related thoughts and emotions. This hinders the potentially more effective alternative of exposure, which enables habituation.

Since Wegner's initial study introduced the idea of a rebound effect of suppressed thoughts, many studies led to mixed results of whether a rebound effect unfolds after suppressing thoughts and feelings or not, as mentioned above. However, various studies were able to confirm the rebound effect and showed its effect in other areas as well. They highlight that not only thoughts can subsequently increase in frequency when suppressed, but that certain mood states, pain, prejudice and addictive

behavior are also some of the things that can have detrimental effects on people when they are being suppressed.

One such example is the experience of pain. In a revealing study, Delia Cioffi and James Holloway were able to show the negative impact of suppression of pain on the perception of its severity. They divided participants into three groups, a distraction, a monitoring and a suppression group, while participants were immersing one of their hands into freezing cold water. The distraction group was instructed to distract themselves from the pain with thoughts about their home, the monitoring group was asked to focus on their bodily sensations and the suppression group had to try and suppress the painful sensations and remove the unpleasant bodily sensation from their awareness. The researchers then measured how long the participants could hold their hands in the icy water before the pain became so intolerable that they had to pull them out. Subsequently they had to rate their pain every 20 seconds and were told that there would be another test during which their heart rate and skin conduction level was measured. This was followed by a vibration test during which the participants, who had been told that they would feel a vibration on their necks, which could range from being pleasant, unpleasant or somewhere in between and were asked to rate the sensation. In fact, all the vibrations were of the same strength and had been previously rated by a control group as neutral (276-277). Results indicated that the suppression of pain did not lessen the experience of the unpleasant bodily sensation but was rather detrimental for the participant's well-being. While the monitoring group had the fastest recovery rate, suppression seemed to slow down the recovery process and participants in that group rated the perceived pain higher for a longer period of time. Interestingly, the distraction group also recovered faster than the suppression group. Cioffi and Holloway reason that it is easier to follow instructions on what to do rather than what not to do. People seem to have a hard time following negatively formulated goals rather than positive ones and it appears to be easier to take action rather than avoiding action. One participant reported: "I tried not to think of anything at all until I felt pain. Then that's all I could think about." (279). This is in line with another study, which showed that focusing on a specific distractor could prevent the rebound effect from occurring (Wegner, Schneider, et al. 10). Another interesting finding was that suppressors also rated the neutral sensation as being more unpleasant than those who did not suppress (Cioffi and Holloway 280). This clearly shows that the suppression of pain can have a negative impact on the

subjective experience of pain and can lead to a rebound effect of unpleasant bodily sensations.

Suppression also seems to directly influence mood while mood, in turn, also seems to influence suppression. In an experiment by Richard Wenzlaff and his colleagues, participants who suppressed a thought during a particular mood were more likely to have the same thought again when they were in a similar mood. Conversely, they also experienced the mood they were in while suppressing when they expressed the corresponding formerly suppressed thought. This suggests that the context of suppression is important for the rebound effect as well as the reinstatement of that particular mood state once suppression is lifted (506). The researchers argue that thoughts are most likely suppressed during negative mood states. Due to the bond between mood and thought suppression, a person can then find himself or herself thinking of a whole array of negative thoughts that were suppressed while being in a bad mood. This could mean that when one is in a bad mood, a vast amount of negative unwanted thoughts might enter consciousness. Wenzlaff and his colleagues believe that this might explain “why it seems so difficult for people to ‘think themselves’ into a positive mood, whereas they are normally very capable of working their way into the blues by thinking alone.” (507) So, due to the bond between mood and suppression, chronic suppression could ultimately result in negative thoughts appearing in various mood states.

This, in turn, may mean that suppression can lead to a high frequency of negative thoughts and result in depression. Indeed, Daniel Wegner and Sophia Zanakos were able to show that suppression is related to depression. They conclude that “[t]he link between thought suppression and depression suggests that any tendency to suppress thoughts, even without a strong desire to avoid depression, may be tied to depression.” (631). Szasz also argues that thought suppression and depressive rumination are associated with depression and that suppression in depressed people leads to a higher frequency in intrusive thoughts than had suppression not occurred. In a weak mental state, suppression leads to more ruminative thoughts and these in turn lead to higher levels of depression. In other words, the attempt to avoid depressive thoughts can lead to the very thing the subject tries to avoid, namely depressive rumination and feelings of greater depression (205-206). This again points to the paradoxical effect of suppression in that the very things that are suppressed ultimately increase in frequency.

All in all, it seems that suppression might exacerbate the one thing suppressors try to stop from happening, namely a high prevalence of negative thoughts, feelings or behaviors. Najmi and Wegner recognize that unwanted thoughts attract our attention and once entered into consciousness are difficult to eliminate (122). They call these problems “the *ease of return* to suppressed thoughts, and the *difficulty of escape* from suppressed thoughts”. (115) The researchers were able to show that unwanted thoughts enter consciousness more easily, once they have been suppressed, which leads to a paradoxical effect of suppression. Wenzlaff and Wegner recognize the paradoxical nature of suppression as well and advise against this coping mechanism to avoid psychological pain. They state:

What has compelled the interest of the scientific and clinical communities is that suppression is not simply an ineffective tactic of mental control; it is counterproductive, helping assure the very state of mind one had hoped to avoid. The problem of thought suppression is aggravated by its intuitive appeal and apparent simplicity, which help mask its false promises. (83)

Although suppression is often used to rid oneself from negative mental content, numerous studies suggest that it is an ineffective coping mechanism and can even be detrimental to one’s well-being.

3.2. The ironic process theory

Given that suppression can often lead to heightened thinking about the suppressed mental content, the question arises why suppression is so ineffective and what may possibly explain the paradoxical effect of suppression. A reasonable explanation might be that suppression does not lead to a higher frequency of intrusive thoughts but that rather a higher frequency of thoughts leads to a heightened use of suppression as a means to cope with these undesirable thoughts. Wegner and Zanakos, however, could show that suppression is not only the *consequence* but can also be the *cause* for negative affect. They argue that suppression can both be a reaction as well as the reason for negative mental states. This, in turn, can lead to a detrimental cycle of distress, suppression and subsequent higher distress and so on (619). So, suppression on its own might be responsible for several unpleasant mental states and there seem to be various processes resulting from suppression that have

a direct effect on the heightened emergence of undesirable thoughts and could explain why suppression can lead to the very thing it tries to avoid.

Wegner offers one of the most accepted theories on why the paradoxical effect of suppression occurs. He argues that mental control is achieved through two processes, namely the “intentional operating process” and the “ironic monitoring process”. Whenever one desires a certain mental state, the intentional operating process strives to create the desired outcome by searching for ways how this state can be achieved. The monitoring process, on the other hand, is responsible for avoiding any thoughts and sensations that are detrimental to the desired outcome. It searches for environmental cues and inner thoughts that can lead to a potential failure of the mental control process. Whenever the monitoring process registers such a risk factor, it signals the potential failure to the operating system. As a result, the intentional system starts searching for ways to prevent the undesired mental state. It directs thoughts and actions towards the desired outcome and away from the opposite mental state (35-38). These processes also seem to operate when one tries to suppress mental content. While the monitoring process constantly looks for thoughts and sensations relevant to the suppressed content and whenever suppression failure is imminent, the operating system starts working to ensure that the suppressed thoughts do not enter consciousness.

The paradoxical effect of suppression seems to result from a failure of the operating system. Indeed, Wegner argues that while the ironic monitoring process happens automatically without any conscious effort, the intentional operating system is resourceful and requires mental capacity. As a result, the operating system might fail in times when mental capacity is depleted. Therefore, in times of stress, time pressure or times of high cognitive load, the operating system might not be able to function properly while the monitoring process continues to operate unaffected (39). This, in turn, means that during suppression the mind still searches for thoughts and sensations associated with the suppressed content but now there is no system in place that prevents those thoughts to emerge into consciousness. Thus, suppressed thoughts increase in frequency. Najmi and Wegner also believe that suppressed thoughts are difficult to escape under stressful conditions:

Like the gravitational field surrounding a body of great mass, suppression under load makes a thought easy to return to and difficult to escape. Thus, suppression of an unwanted thought may ironically turn into an *idée fixe*,

incessantly returning the thought to itself and precluding other thoughts from entering into awareness. (122).

It seems that while suppression might be beneficial in times where one does not experience high levels of stress or cognitive demands, the more cognitive resources are depleted, the more likely suppressed mental content will enter consciousness (Beevers and Meyer 865). Thus, the ironic process theory explains why suppression often leads to the very opposite it intends to do and why suppression is not a suitable coping mechanism in the long run.

Since Wegner's first proposal, various studies could confirm the validity of his ironic process theory and show that cognitive capacity is limited and directly affects the efficacy of suppression. Wegner himself conducted one of these studies. The foundational belief of his experiment was that "[...] in suppression, two things need to be done. One function of a suppression process is suppression per se and the other is remembering what it is that must be suppressed." (Wegner and Erber 904) Daniel Wegner and Ralph Erber argue that suppression makes the suppressed thoughts hyperaccessible (904). In the experiment, participants had to respond to certain words with word associations and were either asked to suppress or concentrate on a specific target word. In order to predict the effects of cognitive load, the participants had to complete the task both under time pressure and without such a cognitively demanding constraint. Confirming Wegner's and Erber's hypothesis, the suppression group significantly gave more target thoughts as a response to word associations under time pressure compared to when they were not constrained by a time limit. They also used the target words more frequently compared to the concentration group (905-906). This shows that the depletion of cognitive resources affects the efficacy of suppression and that suppressing certain mental content makes it hyperaccessible and leads to an increase in frequency once cognitive resources are depleted.

Depression is another mental illness that seems to demonstrate that suppression is not a suitable coping mechanism once mental capacity is low. Wegner, Erber, and their colleagues show that the more cognitive load is imposed on a person, the less able one is to control his or her mood (1097). Therefore, suppression might not be a good way to cope with depression. Richard Wenzlaff and Ann Eisenberg demonstrate that formerly depressed people can effectively suppress depressive thoughts under low cognitive load conditions but show the same negative bias as

dysphoric individuals when they experience high cognitive load (41). So, although suppression could be a good means to avoid negative thoughts and prevent negative bias, it is a very unreliable emotion regulation mechanism because suppression leads to failure under cognitive load. Thus, whenever life becomes stressful, suppression is likely to lose its efficacy.

Furthermore, studies could show that the negative effects of suppression are not only heightened under cognitive load but that conversely, due to the mental effort suppression demands, it can deplete cognitive capacity and result in poorer cognitive performance. Hugo Alberts and his colleagues, for example, could show that participants who were instructed to suppress their emotions while watching a sad video performed worse on a subsequent self-control task than participants who were asked to accept their emotions or did not receive any instructions at all (866). This demonstrates that people who try to control their emotions through suppression use substantial amounts of cognitive resources that would otherwise facilitate self-control.

In various experiments, Roy Baumeister and his colleagues suggest that suppression depletes mental resources and can result in poorer performance. In one of their experiments, participants either had to suppress their cravings for chocolate or were free to eat as much chocolate as they liked. Results show that the suppression of urges can lead to lower motivation and achievement. Those who had to suppress their cravings for chocolate quitted solving difficult and frustrating puzzles significantly faster than those who did not have to resist temptations (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, et al. 1254-1256). The researchers conclude that suppression replenishes mental capacity. They call this process “ego depletion” and reason that “[t]he core idea behind ego depletion is that the self’s acts of volition draw on some limited resource, akin to strength or energy and that, therefore, one act of volition will have a detrimental impact on subsequent volition.” (1252) In other words, suppression comes with the cost of depleting valuable mental resources that are needed for other cognitive tasks.

The ego depletion theory extends to more than just task performance. Among the numerous cognitive abilities that are impacted by suppression is also the processing of information. Jane Richards and James Gross could, for example, show that suppression of emotions can lead to impaired memory (1038). All In all, the above-mentioned studies confirm the negative impact suppression has on cognitive ability

and mental capacity. So, although suppression might elevate one's mood in the short run, it comes with the cost of detrimental effects on performance and overall mental strength.

3.3. Alternatives to suppression

By now it is conceivable that suppression is not the most effective method to deal with negative thoughts and emotions and can, furthermore, lead to undesired outcomes that impact mood, performance and mental health in the long run. So, the question arises if there are better ways to cope with unpleasant feelings. Various studies have shown that indeed other methods might be better suited to meet emotionally challenging thoughts and emotions in order to ensure long-lasting mental health and well-being.

In a meta-analysis, for example, Amelia Aldao and her colleagues compared six emotion-regulation strategies, namely acceptance, avoidance, problem solving, reappraisal, rumination, and suppression, on their effects on levels of anxiety, depression, eating and substance-related disorders. Results show that avoidance, suppression and rumination correlate with symptoms of psychopathology while problem solving, acceptance and reappraisal have a positive influence on mental health (231). So, although suppression is often used as a means to decrease symptoms of psychopathology, it seems to be an ineffective strategy that can worsen one's mental state.

One study could show that concentrating on an alternative target rather than focusing on not thinking about the target material decreases the thought frequency of the undesired mental content. Yi-Jen Lin and Frank Wicker believe that concentration does not activate the monitoring process and, “[t]herefore, if one wants to get rid of unwanted intrusive thoughts, framing one's mind to achieve an alternative goal might be a better idea [...] than focusing on trying to avoid those thoughts.” (2935) Richard Wenzlaff and Danielle Bates could similarly show that compared to suppression, a concentration strategy is more effective in achieving desired outcomes. In their experiment, the goal of the participants was either to create positive statements or to avoid negative statements out of scrambled words. They could observe that the concentration group formulated significantly more positive statements than the

suppression group and concluded that how one frames goals seems to be important because this will influence how the monitoring process operates and on what content it will focus. While both concentration and suppression might lead to the same results, namely the avoidance of intrusive thoughts, when one's cognitive load is low, suppression might fail when one is under stress or in a cognitively demanding situation. Therefore, positively rather than negatively formulated goals seem to be the preferable choice (1205-1210). Following the ironic process theory, when formulating positive goals rather than goals that try to avoid negative content, the monitoring process will search for environmental cues that facilitate a positive outcome. In contrast, when formulating negative goals, the monitoring process will constantly look for risk factors that could lead to the undesired state. As a result, the mind will be preoccupied with content it tries to avoid. This, in turn, can lead to a heightened awareness of negative thoughts and an increase in intrusive thoughts whenever cognitive resources are low.

Acceptance is another emotion-regulation strategy that is preferable over suppression. Rachel Barnes and her colleagues could show that accepting negative thoughts and the experience of unwanted mental states leads to more desirable outcomes and less psychological symptoms (144). Beevers and his colleagues agree that trying to avoid or escape unpleasant feelings can often lead to more problems than experiencing them in the first place. They believe that accepting negative sensations rather than pushing them aside seems to be preferable because

[m]ore effective forms of mental control either alter the nature of the monitoring process or prevent its invocation altogether. These methods include changing the goal of mental control from avoidance (e.g., try not to be sad) to an approach (e.g., try to be happy) orientation, challenging unwanted thoughts with skills learned through cognitive therapy, and using acceptance-based strategies such as mindfulness training. (143)

In other words, when one learns to accept and endure negative mental states, he or she will acquire tools and ways on how to approach negative feelings. As a result, negative mental states will not have as much power anymore to affect one's well-being. Therefore, no matter in which state one finds himself or herself, he or she will have more sustainable ways of how to cope with negative conditions compared to had he or she suppressed negative mental content.

All the above-mentioned findings lead to the conclusion that suppression might not be the most effective and certainly not most sustainable way to deal with negative thoughts and feelings. Although suppression seems to be an easy way to get rid of current negative thoughts, it is not advisable to rely too heavily on this method because it can lead to deleterious outcomes. There seem to be better ways to deal with negative mental states and situations that can be just as easy and invaluable more sustainable in the long run.

4. Modernist short fiction and psychology

As already mentioned, Sigmund Freud's theory of repression influences theories about this defense mechanism to this day. His thoughts on the human mind and how it operates have also had an impact on culture and literature. The literary epoch he lived in, and that he undoubtedly impacted, was modernism. Inner struggles, hidden desires and psychological phenomena, including repression and suppression, are one of the major topics that are explored in modernist fiction. In this literary period writers began to examine human nature and unconscious motives and drives that governed human behavior as never before.

4.1. Features of modernism

The literary genre of modernism emerged in a very chaotic, progressive and tumultuous time. At the turn of the 20th century society went through a considerable amount of changes that shaped a novel way of living and thinking. The Industrial Revolution led to the move of masses into the cities and resulted in an ever-growing urbanization. There was also a vast number of technological advances that left an imprint on society. Extensive poverty as well as great wealth were found side by side. Politically, people started to question old Victorian values and the old world order (Wilson 9–10). Furthermore, there was a rise of feminism and the battle for women's rights started to gain momentum (Poplawski 565). Scientific, philosophical, political, societal, and religious changes shifted the way people lived, thought and experienced the world.

The First World War was the major political event in the modernist period. According to Leigh Wilson, it deeply affected people's feelings about and their perception of the

world and that “what was lost was at a most fundamental level a sense of ‘at homeness’ in the world. For those who experienced the war, the world had become an alien place.” (41) Paul Poplawski argues that the First World War had a considerable impact on modernist literature. It led to a greater examination of how the complex nature of human action can be depicted by not only content but also by form (560). The war not only seemed to influence the content of modernist fiction but also how writers were able to reflect the content of their stories in modes of writing.

New scientific discoveries and philosophical ideas were also responsible for reshaping society’s values and beliefs. The loss of faith in religious, philosophical and ideological dogmas led to a distrust and consequently a questioning of set norms and conventions. Rather than following those conventions, modernists sought their own truth (Butler 57). All the innovations of that time resulted in the desire to see the world with different eyes, to come up with new ideas, new innovations, new perceptions of the world and the way things were (Wilson 8). Modernists were quite opposed to the pre-existing cultural norms and ideologies (Poplawski 546–47). This led to a radical change in the way people thought and also in the way authors wrote fiction. Old conventions were no longer valid.

There were a couple of events that were probably responsible for these changes. For example, advances of science led to the decrease of religious power. Finding truth now seemed to be achieved through scientific experiments rather than religious beliefs. Charles Darwin’s evolution theory, which was declared just a couple of years earlier, left an imprint on people’s beliefs and led to a heightened questioning of religious claims (Wilson 23-24). People realized that human evolution was not determined by God’s will but rather followed biological principles. One of the philosophers who famously questioned the dominance and authority of religion at that time was Friedrich Nietzsche. His philosophical ideas highly influenced people’s way of thinking in that time. He stated that human lives are not determined by God’s will. Instead, he advocated human agency and the power of individuals (Wilson 26–27). Nietzsche believed that individuals had power and potential and did not rely on the benevolence of an omniscient god. Furthermore, he questioned the dominance of society’s moral values, norms and conventions.

Probably influenced by Nietzsche’s ideas, modernists started to question values and norms that were taken for granted for such a long time but might not be true for the

individual. Resulting from that was also a focus on the individual rather than society and an inward-look at human nature rather than outward appearances (Childs 18). The interest in individual experience and perception was shared by all the artists of that time. As Christopher Butler points out: “A respect for the individual’s *subjective point of view*, and a distrust of conformity and group consciousness [...] is a major aspect of modernism.” (55) In other words, modernists no longer wanted to conform but rather started embracing their own subjective views of the world.

Another important thinker who had a major impact on modernist views was Albert Einstein and his theory of relativity. The importance of his work for a considerable amount of people in that time was his idea that there is no absolute truth and that everything is relative and subject to individual perspective (Wilson 61). As a consequence, many modernist writers abandoned the idea that truth can be told directly. They deviated from the idea of realism, which had at the center the idea of being able to depict the world as it is, and instead gravitated towards a more differentiated and subjective view of the world. Modernists realized that it is impossible to fully grasp reality and so, literature cannot depict it either. Therefore, modernist writing often depicts the obscure and intangible (19–20). Reality was not as easily accessible anymore as people from the previous generation thought it to be. Readers in the modernist period had to make sense of the story they were reading rather than being presented an obvious and fully comprehensible narrative.

The belief that reality might be an individual construct left many people believe that there was nothing to hold on to anymore. As a result, religious beliefs started to lose their certainty. Numerous people at the beginning of the 20th century felt lost and without any guidance and purpose. It was probably no coincidence that it was this time that psychoanalysis and the growing interest in the inner workings of the human mind started to emerge (Childs 46–47). Sigmund Freud was one of the most important figures of these psychological discussions and significantly shaped the way people thought of the self and human agency. Freud’s theories about hidden forces that drive human behavior and the unconscious were highly discussed in modernist times. Even when people were not directly in touch with his work, Freud’s ideas influenced the thinking of society in general and were part of this time’s body of thought. So, while some writers may not have read Freud directly, the idea of unconscious forces that determined human actions were very prevalent in the modernist period (Wilson 29).

The exploration of psychology in modernism also changed writers' thoughts and feelings about personality. Human beings were no longer seen as fixed entities with unchangeable behaviors and traits but rather as individuals with a multitude of often conflicting feelings and emotions that are in constant flux. Influenced by psychoanalytic findings, writers started to understand the importance of unconscious thoughts and feelings. They started focusing on internal rather than external factors of their protagonists (Poplawski 583). Unlike in realist fiction, modernist writers focused less on describing outward appearances, setting, status of the characters, their jobs or other external traits, but rather set the focus inwards on feelings, motives, thoughts and perceptions of their characters (Childs 80). As a result, modernism is not only known for its innovations and questioning of old conventions, it is also known for its inward look and preoccupation with how the human mind works.

This inward look and interest into unconscious drives impacted content and form of modernist fiction. Psychological theories found way into literature. Modernist writers were eager to represent human nature as accurately as possible by weaving in all the complexities and conflicts of the human mind into their stories (Wilson 77). Prior to modernism, novels usually were clear-cut stories with reasonable human action, explainable motives, a comprehensible narrative and a trustworthy narrator. However, findings such as Freud's theory of the unconscious challenged the view that human beings are always rational and reasonable. More and more modernist writers started to reflect this way of thinking in their works and showed the irrational nature of human behavior not only in the story line but also in their way of writing (80). Poplawski states that there was

[...] a growing fascination in the literature of this period with the inner life of the individual and with new techniques for exploring and depicting that life, particularly in relation to questions of language, perception and meaning. This was the golden age of the psychological novel. (570)

This led to the emergence of novel literary devices, which were more suitable to depict the complex nature of the human mind.

One of the most salient literary changes that happened as a result of experimentation, innovation and the exploration of the hidden forces that drive human behavior, was the change of the relationship between the reader and the text. Modernist writers challenged readers of their stories to think for themselves. In their stories, they often displayed multifaceted perspectives and ambiguous plots which

forced the readers to forensically take the story apart and read between the lines. Modernist stories gave room to multiple interpretations and one had to actively engage in the story and in thought processing to understand the deeper meaning of the text and fill in the gaps of what was not directly told. The authors of that literary period gravitated towards the obscure and mysterious where meaning is relative, and perception is but a subjective point of view. This was also a result of the previously mentioned influence of Nietzsche's, Einstein's and Freud's work (571). While in prose of the previous period the readers were usually guided through the narrative by descriptions and preambles, readers of modernist literature had to navigate their way through confusing texts on their own by interpreting and making sense of the narrative as the story unfolded. Now readers were not handed full explanations and reasoning behind plots and story lines anymore but had a harder time grasping the meaning behind the works of modernist artists (Childs 4). This resembles the method of psychoanalysis, which emerged at about the same time. The psychoanalyst similarly had to examine the incomprehensible unconscious and had to make sense of the patient's behavior by thinking about hidden meanings and analyzing what is beyond the immediate, observable, and tangible perception.

Furthermore, there was a shift from omniscient trustworthy third-person narrator to a more subjective, more multifaceted story-teller. Modernists abandoned the notion that truth is obtainable and can be depicted objectively. They rather believed that meaning is relative and reality is a matter of subjective perception (32–33). So, modernist fiction challenged the view of a reliable, rationally thinking, omniscient narrator by providing the readers with a more interesting narrator who might have hidden unconscious drives and desires that impacted his or her story-telling.

All in all, modernism heralded a more nuanced way of thinking about human behavior. It tried to depict the complex nature of human beings. Edward Mozejko describes the difference between the preceding literary genre of realism and modernism as follows: "In most general terms, it can be said that realism exalts the principle of *representation* and modernism fosters *deformation* or: if realism claims *objectivity* of presentation, the main aesthetic tenet of modernism actualizes itself through extreme *subjectivity*." (27–28) Individual experience, different perspectives and points of view, things unsaid in the story but that are implicitly woven into plots for the reader to uncover are all features of modernist fiction.

4.2. Features of modernist short fiction

Not only did modernism emerge as a result of many events and changes at the beginning of the 20th century, but the short story also became increasingly popular as a distinct literary form. New technological advances and changes in publishing practices allowed for a growing number of little magazines and periodicals. This development was closely linked to the emergence of short stories because they could be marketed more easily than longer forms and read in one sitting, which made it more attractive for readers, hence more profitable to being published in the growing number of independent little magazines (Gillies and Mahood 25). So, among other reasons, changes in the way literary material was published and consumed were in favor of the emergence of short stories.

Another reason why the short story form gained popularity at the beginning of the 20th century was its capability to reflect the zeitgeist of those times. According to Barbara Korte, the short story was so well received in that time because of its “suitability for capturing the *condition moderne* with its sense of hurry, fragmentation and uncertainty” (115). As was mentioned above, people felt alienated and became aware of the fragmented nature of the self. Short stories were better suited to depict these timely tropes than novels. According to Wilson, “[t]he length of the short story, rather than narrowing down possibilities, provided the modernist writer with a fitting form to represent the fragmentation, fleetingness and unsatisfied yearning which they saw as characteristic of modernity.” (87) So, although short stories were known before, in modernism they really became an important and distinct literary form.

In order to speak about short stories, I first need to address whether every story that is short is a short story or whether this literary form has some distinct features. Korte defines it as follows:

The ‘true’ short story, according to most critics, is not just a story that is short. There is a special quality to its shortness, it has calculated brevity and makes maximum use of its restricted scope. Its elements of content have been carefully selected and shaped so as to give an impression of special unity, a particular economy of means, concentration and artfulness of composition. It has a particular suggestiveness, allusiveness and importance of ending and closure, and it invites a degree of reader participation not – or at least less frequently – found in longer pieces of narrative, or in other forms of short prose. (5)

So, short stories are not just shorter novels but are an independent literary form that

stands out from novels in many ways. A common feature of short stories, for example, is that the form of the stories reflects the content through innovative literary devices (Sacido 10). According to Barry Pain, another major difference between novels and short stories regards the relationship between the reader and the text:

The novelist gives more to the reader and asks less of him. The short-story writer gives less and asks more. What is the trend of the reader's thought after he has finished a story? In the case of the novel, the thought goes back to what the reader has been told in the novel. He is satisfied. He has the information that he requires. He can turn it over in his mind. But the artist of the short story makes the reader's thought spring out of the story and open wide. He sends it out and beyond the actual facts recorded in the story into the facts suggested. (qtd. in Sacido 39)

As a result, the short story is not as easily comprehensible as the novel and only capable readers who are willing to go beyond the text and fill in the gaps and unravel what is said between the lines are able to make sense of the deeper meaning of the text. This is similar to psychoanalysis, where the therapist also needs to be attentive and aware of the fact that there are more hidden meanings behind what patients tell or are themselves aware of.

It is, therefore, no coincidence that the short story is well suited to depict psychological phenomena. Like the human psyche can be chaotic, flexible, and elastic, so the short story is not restricted to any one structure. According to Adrian Hunter, short stories are "marked by indirection, indeterminacy, suggestion, subtlety and ambiguity, which were considered more suitable for rendering the subjective, inner experiences and external conflicts of individual characters." (qtd. in Sacido 3) This is one of the reasons why short stories are ideal for depicting character's inner lives and unconscious workings such as repression and suppression.

Short stories also differ from novels in terms of their content focus. They do not set the focus on the plot but rather on creating a certain impression and mood. Kelly Walsh and Terence Murphy go so far as to say that modernist short stories are plot-less. They argue that the plot in short stories is not as important as other stylistic devices and that "the complexity of modern experience is best reflected or conveyed by means of disunity or 'dis-enablement', 'liminality' or openness, and above all, by a rejection of the 'plotty story'". (153) So, by not having to adhere to a coherent and eventful story line, writers of short stories can more intensely explore the inner lives of characters and the psychology of human experience.

A major inspiration for modernist short fiction writers was the Russian writer Anton Chekhov. Chekhov did not set the focus of his works on the story line and plot but rather on “mood, atmosphere and psychological state.” (Wilson 88) He used the brevity of the short story to depict mental states of the stories’ characters without any unnecessary literary embellishments and wrote enigmatically with often only hinting at certain things rather than directly depicting them. Chekhov’s strength lay in weaving complex psychological phenomena and intense experiences into the seemingly boring and ordinary lives of his characters. So, while at first glance his stories only seem to depict the banal and ordinary, a second look reveals a rich and complex inner life of his protagonists. Chekhov believed that just as there are hidden forces within a person, certain things cannot be fully grasped and expressed and are, therefore, impossible to overtly depict in stories. Wilson explains: “While characters cannot fully express these things, Chekhov’s stories reveal the ‘terrible’ within scenes of ordinary life without preaching or direct comment, but in such a way that the reader is clearly supposed to be provoked and disturbed.” (88–89) So, influenced by Chekhov, modernist short stories increasingly became reflections of the chaotic nature of the human mind.

Furthermore, modernist short stories typically center around one small incident in the protagonists’ lives. As Clare Hanson states, “[t]he emphasis of modernist short fiction was on a single moment of intense or significant experience.” (55) Rather than elaborating on events over a longer period of time and, thus, establishing a coherent plot with a chronological order of events, writing in the shorter form enables writers to intensely explore how certain seemingly minor incidents impact their characters’ thoughts and feelings and, thus, their characters’ mental states. David Trotter argues that novels can also depict mental states like discomfiture but that they depict other things as well. However, he argues, feelings of unease can be the whole focal point of short stories. So, rather than describing events that lead to certain unpleasant outcomes, the unpleasantness itself can become the central topic of short stories (7). In line with the focus on one single moment, many modernist short stories revolve around epiphanies. As Hanson states, “the ‘epiphany’ or ‘blazing moment’ came to form the structural core of modernist short fiction”. (55) An epiphany is described as “a sudden revelation and illumination in which ordinary perception is momentarily transcended.” (Korte 129) The focus on such insightful moments in modernist short stories is also conducive for depicting repression and suppression. A brief moment of

clarity can help the reader grasp the idea of the protagonist's previous suppression of thoughts and feelings. This allows a better understanding of the workings of such defense mechanisms.

A common feature of modernist short fiction is its ability to depict this rich inner life with very few words. Rather than explaining and commenting on the character's actions, modernist writers enable the readers a glimpse into the characters' inner thoughts and feelings by using a narrative voice that, while mostly in third person, allows a subjective point of view of certain characters (Wilson 89). This is also a major difference between realist and modernist short stories. In realist short fiction the inner lives, thoughts and feelings of characters are represented and told. However, in modernist short fiction thoughts and feelings are not represented through stating and explaining them, but rather by letting the thoughts and actions characters express speak for themselves (Drewery 86). In other words, while realist fiction represents the inner lives of the characters directly, modernist short stories implicitly depict the mental states of their characters.

Symbolism is another very important feature in modernist short fiction. The brevity of the short form makes it necessary to convey a lot of meaning with only few words. Using symbols to hint towards a certain underlying reality is typical of modernist short fiction. The use of symbols and poignant passages forces the readers to interpret what is being said and fill in the gaps to make sense of what is written. This is very similar to psychoanalysis where although not much is said, the way in which certain things are said and what is not said at all can speak volumes and suggest deeper meanings. The psychoanalyst, just as the reader of modernist short fiction, has to think of the implicit meaning and deeper explanation of what is in front of him or her and analyze thoughts, utterings and actions on their deeper meaning.

All in all, modernist short stories have a considerable number of features, which lend themselves to depicting psychological phenomena such as repression and suppression. The experimental nature, the interest of the time to look inwards and the nature of the short story form are all ideal prerequisites to explore psychological phenomena in modernist short stories. Just as in psychoanalysis, the reader needs to be aware that just as the human mind is complex and often elusive, there is also more to the short story than what is overtly presented. The often enigmatic and ambiguous nature of short stories is ideal to depict the equally mysterious workings

of the human mind, which is also often hard to grasp and its unconscious meanings difficult to decipher.

5. Representation of suppression

As discussed above, modernist short stories are ideal to depict unconscious drives and forces that govern human action. However, the question arises how authors of short stories achieve this goal and, in particular, how Katherine Mansfield succeeds in depicting repression and suppression without overtly describing that these psychological phenomena are in place. Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr state that Mansfield's stories are often compared to Impressionist paintings that focus on "tone, colour and texture" (24). Every word, every phrase and every symbol in her stories seems to be portentous (22). Moreover, Mansfield believes in showing rather than telling. Instead of relying on descriptive statements and preambles, she edits her stories to have the effect of immediacy and to be void of any unnecessary explanations (Lang 13-16). This makes it particularly challenging to understand the meaning of the stories and to decipher the significance of seemingly irrelevant utterings and actions of the characters that could imply deeper meanings. As a result, when analyzing Mansfield's stories, it is not only important to look at *what* is written but also at *how* it is written. The way the characters talk and interact could reveal how they feel and what unravels in their minds. Stutters, repetitions, incomprehensible thoughts and the like can all convey a deeper meaning and suggest a specific mental state. This is also apparent in the three short stories under analysis. Mansfield portrays repression and suppression without directly stating that the characters use these defense mechanisms. However, reading the stories one can assume that the characters use repression and suppression as a means to cope with distressing mental content.

In "Bliss", the protagonist Bertha leads a seemingly perfect life. She has a wealthy husband, a beautiful home, a lovely baby daughter, interesting friends, and a comfortable life. Throughout the story Bertha celebrates her life and is – seemingly – in a constant state of bliss. However, as the story progresses, it becomes clear that Bertha's life is not perfect at all but rather, that Bertha suppresses and ignores everything that might put her in an unpleasant state in order to convince herself that she has this perfect life she so much desires. Similarly, in "Miss Brill" the protagonist

seems to be enjoying life. Miss Brill loves going to the park and feels like she belongs to a greater community. However, throughout the story, one can sense that she deals with feelings of loneliness and struggles to accept her ageing. In order to cope with her unpleasant inner state, Miss Brill suppresses various thoughts and feelings. Finally, in “Je ne parle pas français” the protagonist is portrayed as a selfish, cynic, unsuccessful writer who does not care about other people but only himself and does not have the ability to truly feel genuine emotions. However, at a closer reading Raoul Duquette seems to be a hurt man who has gone through a considerable amount of pain and suffering and decided to not let anyone close to him anymore in order to avoid having to go through traumatic experiences again. He tries to do so by constantly suppressing parts of himself that might make him vulnerable. In all three stories, therefore, repression and suppression are central tropes. However, the defense mechanisms are never directly stated. The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to identify some of the most important techniques Katherine Mansfield uses to depict repression and suppression in these short stories without overtly stating that her characters use them as a means to cope with unpleasant thoughts and feelings.

5.1. Free indirect discourse

One way to represent repression in stories is to enable a glimpse into the mind of the characters and to facilitate tracing their thought processes and sense that they are suppressing mental content. Mansfield achieves this through one of her signature narrative styles, the use of free indirect discourse. Claire Drewery describes this literary device as a technique “in which the voice of a third-person narrator converges seamlessly with the depicted character through various devices such as shifts in pronouns, adverbs, tenses and grammatical modes.” (86) In this narrative style it is not clear where the narrator ends and the character begins, the borders are blurred. This metalepsis creates the impression that the thoughts and feelings of the characters of the story are directly portrayed without any coloring and commentary of the narrator. The second paragraph of “Bliss” is a good example of this technique:

What can you do if you are thirty and, turning the corner of your own street, you are overcome, suddenly by a feeling of bliss—absolute bliss!—as though you’d suddenly swallowed a bright piece of that late afternoon sun and it burned in your bosom, sending out a little shower of sparks into every particle, into every finger and toe? . . . (1)

These are not the narrator's thoughts but Bertha's. The manner of speech rather reflects Bertha's way of talking and thinking than that of an omniscient neutral narrator. For example, the exclamation and repetition of "bliss-absolute bliss!" seems to belong to the thought process of an agitated person rather than an objective observer. This suggests that the story is told from the perspective of the protagonist with all her rich emotional inner life rather than a neutral narrator. The question at the beginning of the paragraph "What can you do if you are thirty" also suggests that Bertha, who is thirty herself, is wondering about this question rather than an omniscient narrator. Hanson and Gurr argue that free indirect discourse allows "the author-as-narrator to *appear* to disappear from the text." (131) Therefore, the reader is left with the impression that the story is told from the perspective of the protagonist. Everything that is said seems to be colored by the protagonists' perception of reality.

As already mentioned, Mansfield does not overtly state that the protagonists of the stories are suppressing mental content. Instead, one who reads her stories can sense that the characters are using suppression as a coping mechanism by getting a glimpse into the characters' minds and, as a result, being able to vicariously experience their defense mechanism. Annabelle Lukin and Adriana Pagano argue that free indirect discourse enables the author to portray the "hidden depth of the individual psyche" by representing the thought process of a character without the need of any explanations and lengthy comments (99). This allows Mansfield to depict suppression without having to overtly describe the mental state the characters are in. Rather than commentaries, one who reads Mansfield's stories witnesses the state the characters are in by being able to partake in the characters' thoughts and perceptions. This can be shown in this example of "Miss Brill":

The band had been having a rest. Now they started again. And what they played was warm, sunny, yet there was just a faint chill—a something, what was it? —not sadness—no, not sadness—a something that made you want to sing. The tune lifted, lifted, the light shone; and it seemed to Miss Brill that in another moment all of them, all the whole company, would begin singing. (3)

In this passage, Miss Brill does not allow feelings of sadness to emerge. She suppresses any feeling that could potentially lead to an unpleasant state and quickly replaces her sense of a "faint chill" with feelings of joy and uplifting sensations. The suppression is apparent in the thought process of the protagonist: "not sadness- no, not sadness". It becomes clear that whenever thoughts of sadness appear, Miss Brill does not allow those thoughts to continue.

Bertha rids herself from every unpleasant thought as well and does not allow any thoughts into her awareness that would deter her state of bliss. This suppression is also apparent in her word choice, which is represented by free indirect discourse: “Really—really—she had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals.” (5) The repetition of “really” suggests that Bertha tries to convince herself that everything is fine. Furthermore, “good pals” is a peculiar word choice for a married couple, which suggests that the married couple is not “as much in love” after all. However, Bertha does not allow herself to question her marriage. The way she thinks about her relationship with Harry hints at the suppressed state of her feelings towards her marriage. By allowing access into Bertha’s and Miss Brill’s thought processes, Mansfield is able to portray suppression and repression without the need to ever mention that the characters use these modes of coping with unpleasant mental states.

Another way to depict the thoughts and feelings of the main character is first-person narration. “Je ne parle pas français” is one of the few short stories Mansfield wrote in first-person (Hanson and Gurr 65). Both free indirect discourse and first-person narration allow the readers to look inside the minds of the characters, to retrace their thought processes, and, therefore, sense that the characters might suppress mental content. Raoul is able to self-reflect on his suppression but nevertheless chooses to push aside unpleasant memories: “About my family—it really doesn’t matter. I have no family; I don’t want any. I never think about my childhood. I’ve forgotten it.” (4) Looking at these thoughts, it becomes apparent that he decides to suppress unpleasant thoughts about his childhood and the sexual abuse he experienced as a child. He denies being a victim and instead reinterprets the suffering and pain to something more positive and therefore, suppresses his true emotions about the abuse: “I suppose I was in a state of more or less physical excitement” (5). By being able to access Raoul’s thoughts, one can recognize Raoul’s suppression of painful emotions or more specifically the lack thereof.

5.2. Ellipses and dashes

Another technique Mansfield uses to depict repression and suppression are ellipses, dashes and unfinished sentences. They indicate that something is unsaid and

suppressed. Ellipses suggest that there is more than is being told and that the characters of the stories do not finish their thought processes in order to suppress the continuation of thoughts that might lead to unpleasant mind states. These ellipses are indicated by three dots.

As already mentioned, in order to detect suppression in Mansfield's short stories, it is equally important to look at the subtext and what is not being told as to look at the plot itself. Peter Childs rightly observes that "[i]n terms of form, Mansfield's work is characterised by obliquity and hiatus, such that what is not said in her stories is as important as what is." (136) Unfinished sentences can, therefore, have great significance and point to the unwillingness of the characters to think certain things through (Pracha 181). They suggest that the protagonists stop themselves from continuing their thought process and allowing certain thoughts to emerge in order to avoid the pain and suffering that might result from them.

Bertha, for example, tries to be in a constant state of bliss and controls where her mind wanders. She even corrects herself if it might lead to negative thoughts: "No, that about the fiddle is not quite what I mean," (1). This is an example where Bertha previously criticized society and the inability to express herself freely within constraints of society's conventions. However, she immediately corrects herself that she did not mean that because that way she does not have to acknowledge that she is frustrated how things are. Throughout the story Bertha suppresses various thoughts in order to stay happy. She does not allow herself to follow through a thought process that might endanger her feelings of joy and make her realize that her life is not as blissful after all. This is apparent when she thinks about all the things she has:

Really—really—she had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals. She had an adorable baby. They didn't have to worry about money. They had this absolutely satisfactory house and garden. And friends—modern, thrilling friends, writers and painters and poets or people keen on social questions—just the kind of friends they wanted. And then there were books, and there was music, and she had found a wonderful little dressmaker, and they were going abroad in the summer, and their new cook made the most superb omelettes. . . (5)

On first glance, this might sound like the depiction of a desirable life but in between the lines it seems that Bertha tries to convince herself that this is true. After all, she "really-really [...] had everything". Setara Pracha observes that as the list goes on,

Bertha mentions more and more irrelevant and ridiculous things that make one wonder whether Bertha believes in her satisfaction herself or whether she is deeply unsatisfied with her marriage and tries to suppress her true feelings for her husband and her life in general (176). The odd list of things for which Bertha is grateful leaves the impression that the logical continuation of the thought process would lead to a 'but' and the revelation of the truth of how Bertha really feels. However, the three dots indicate that the protagonist is unwilling to think this list through and instead suppresses any thoughts that question the seemingly perfect state of her life. The same defense mechanism can be observed when Bertha thinks about traits of her husband: "And his passion for fighting—for seeking in everything that came up against him another test of his power and of his courage—that, too, she understood. Even when it made him just occasionally, to other people, who didn't know him well, a little ridiculous perhaps. . . ." (6) The three dots suggest that something is missing. This missing piece of thought train might be Bertha's disapproval of her husband, which she does not allow herself to fully experience. It almost seems as if Bertha herself, not only other people, believes that Harry is ridiculous at times. However, this perception of her husband would contradict her spotless image of a happy marriage. Therefore, Bertha stops her thought process and suppresses any bad thoughts about her husband. Polly Dickson agrees that Bertha leaves a considerable amount of thoughts and feelings towards her husband unsaid and this lack of expression "speaks volumes." (17) Although Bertha seems to be unhappy with her current state, she does not dare to consciously think about that and chooses to push those thoughts aside indicated by unfinished trains of thought.

Raoul also frequently chooses to suppress his true emotions, which is indicated by an ellipsis in the following example: "You see, by this time, according to my rule of not looking back, I had almost forgotten Dick. I even got the tune of his song about the unfortunate man a little bit wrong when I tried to hum it. . . ." (10) Raoul clearly still has strong feelings for Dick and is disappointed and hurt about the way they parted. However, he does not allow himself to fully experience heartache and instead tries to convince himself that he is over Dick and does not even remember him properly anymore. The dots, however, reveal the hidden truth that Raoul still feels deeply hurt and chooses to not feel these painful emotions to their full extent.

Another device Mansfield uses to covertly depict suppression is the use of dashes. This is most prominently used in "Miss Brill", where the content between the dashes

frequently represents the thoughts that help the character to suppress unpleasant states and propel her in a more favorable state. This is demonstrated in this example: “Now there came a little ‘flutey’ bit—very pretty!—a little chain of bright drops.” (1) The exclamation leaves the impression that Miss Brill needs reassurance that she enjoys the music and being in the park. It seems as if she unconsciously senses that her afternoons in the park are not at all perfect, but she instead chooses to suppress these negative thoughts and thinks herself into an enjoyable experience.

This need of reassurance is also noticeable when Miss Brill realizes that her fur is not in the best shape and is probably too shabby to wear. However, once again, Miss Brill suppresses any negative thoughts that might lead to discontent and instead reassures herself that everything is fine: “But the nose, which was of some black composition, wasn’t at all firm. It must have had a knock, somehow. Never mind—a little dab of black sealing-wax when the time came—when it was absolutely necessary...” (1) The notion that Miss Brill is suppressing the bad state of her fur is further highlighted by the insistence that “she really felt like that about it” (1) as if the reader and herself need more convincing.

This makes the reader wonder whether Miss Brill is to be trusted or whether she might bury her true feelings. This is also apparent after Miss Brill overhears the conversation of the young couple that despises her. This scene is followed by a longer dash probably marking Miss Brill’s denial to deal with the painful truth of how she is perceived by others. Hanson and Gurr argue that this realization “is too unbearable and [Miss Brill’s] new knowledge cannot be admitted to consciousness at this moment. Hence the ellipsis which follows the speech of the young couple.” (81) They convincingly observe that Miss Brill does not process what she has just heard and rather suppresses this painful epiphany, which is indicated by the dash and the lack of any thoughts about that incident.

5.3. Contradictions and mismatches

The suppression of the three protagonists is also apparent in the way they perceive reality as opposed to how reality actually looks like. Throughout the story, we are able to follow the characters’ thought processes and are able to see their point of view. However, between the lines one can also assume what is actually happening

and how the objective truth might look like. As Emily Perkins observes, Mansfield's stories often explore the tension between "seeming and being" (26). The comparison between the characters' perception and the actual unfolding of events allows for the realization that the characters suppress certain truths and mental content from their awareness.

In "Bliss", for example, Bertha perceives herself to be constantly happy and interprets every single incident she faces throughout the story as blissful. For example, even though her marriage is void of passion and intimacy, Bertha is delighted how they are "really good pals" (5). This is an unusual word choice for lovers and an outsider understands that this word choice points to an unfulfilled marriage void of romantic feelings. However, Bertha suppresses this reality and instead perceives Harry and her "as much in love as ever," and that they "got on together splendidly" (5). Clearly, there is a mismatch between perception and reality due to Bertha's suppressed true thoughts and feelings towards her marriage.

Moreover, Bertha tries to ignore unpleasant truths that are hard to deny. When Bertha first senses that Harry and Pearl might be more than just acquaintances, she chooses to look away and perceives her observation differently: "And she saw . . . Harry with Miss Fulton's coat in his arms and Miss Fulton with her back turned to him and her head bent." (11) Pracha argues that these three dots before Bertha describes what she sees indicate "the gap between Bertha's perception and the reality that she chooses not to recognise." (181) Although Bertha unconsciously already knows what is happening, the ellipsis shows that she still tries to suppress this painful truth. This indicates a mismatch between her chosen perception and the undeniable truth.

In "Miss Brill", there is also a mismatch between the protagonist's perception of the world and reality. Miss Brill perceives the people around her as friendly and herself being part of a larger community while, in fact, she is very isolated and lonely. Her perception is demonstrated in this passage: "Even she had a part and came every Sunday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all." (3) This clearly shows that Miss Brill feels like people would notice if she were missing. Therefore, she perceives herself to be important within the park's community. This, however, is in direct contrast to the actual truth voiced by the young couple: "Why does she come here at all—who wants

her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?" (3) Contrary to Miss Brill's perception, she is not part of a group but rather seems to be a nuisance for the young couple. Miss Brill completely suppresses feelings of loneliness and sadness and we are able to understand the character's use of this defense mechanism by comparing Miss Brill's point of view with actual facts. We can recognize her unwillingness to face the truth even after it is impossible to deny her harsh realization. After she is finally able to understand that her perception of being part of a larger community where she is loved and appreciated, is wrong, the subsequent thought process of Miss Brill does not include any reflection on this painful truth. Thus, the lack of the protagonist's acknowledgement of the unpleasant reality indicates her suppression.

Raoul also suppresses an inconvenient truth. He perceives himself to be a successful writer: "I am going to make a name for myself as a writer about the submerged world." (5) Here we can see that Raoul has high aspirations and believes that he will one day be recognized for his talent. He also believes that he is a desirable popular man: "I've never yet made the first advances to any woman." (6) By stating that he never has to make the first move, one can sense that Raoul believes to be so desirable and popular that everyone wants to approach him first. However, throughout the story one can suspect that this is not true. Raoul has no real friends and has to work as a prostitute because he does not make enough money as a writer. Through this mismatch between Raoul's favorable perception of himself and the actual reality, his suppression of the truth is apparent.

Another way how Mansfield represents suppression without having to overtly state its existence is through a mismatch between an expected reaction to certain circumstances and the actual reaction of the characters. Throughout all three stories under analysis the protagonists find themselves in unpleasant situations but fail to respond to those situations accordingly with understandable negative emotions. This mismatch between what a person is expected to feel in those situations and how the characters react point to their suppression of negative thoughts and feelings.

Bertha, for example, does not get angry at Harry for being late but instead chooses to react in a more pleasant way that allows her to stay in a state of bliss: "Bang went the door open and shut. Harry shouted: 'Hullo, you people. Down in five minutes.' And they heard him swarm up the stairs. Bertha couldn't help smiling; she knew how he

loved doing things at high pressure. What, after all, did an extra five minutes matter?” (6) One would expect Bertha to be annoyed by Harry’s tardiness. Instead, Bertha smiles and even thinks highly of him in that moment. This leaves the impression that Bertha is actually burying her true feelings about Harry’s behavior and instead chooses to have more pleasant thoughts.

Moreover, after Bertha finds out about her husband’s affair, one would expect her to feel angry, sad or furious. However, Thomas Dilworth rightly observes that Bertha’s response lacks strong emotions that would be expected in this situation and rather seems to react passively (147). An appropriate and understandable emotional response is missing. Instead, there is a lack of all those feelings. Hence, Mansfield is able to show that Bertha once again suppresses her true feelings in order to avoid any negative emotional states.

Miss Brill is also suppressing an understandable reaction to her situation. After finding out that the young couple despises her and that she might not be loved by all the people in the park after all, an understandable reaction would be sadness, frustration or desperation. However, there is no trace of any of those feelings in her thought process: “She sat there for a long time. The box that the fur came out of was on the bed. She unclasped the necklet quickly; quickly, without looking, laid it inside. But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying.” (4) Although her body reacts to this unpleasant realization, Miss Brill suppresses any acknowledgement of her sadness. The complete lack of emotional processing of this painful experience points to her suppression.

5.4. Symbols

Finally, one of the most important techniques Mansfield uses to represent suppression in her stories is the use of symbols and imagery. Korte argues that Mansfield uses symbols to depict unconscious mental content (132). Julia van Gunsteren also states that certain symbols in Mansfield’s stories reflect the emotions of characters (qtd. in Holá 14), emotions that might otherwise not be depicted through the thoughts of the characters because they are being suppressed.

In all three short stories under analysis, the protagonists are associated with certain inanimate objects. Bertha compares herself to a pear tree, Miss Brill is likened to her fox fur and Raoul often describes himself as a dog. All these comparisons are

portentous and contribute to the understanding of the story within the brevity of the short form. They, furthermore, highlight certain traits and inner workings that would otherwise stay hidden and clarify how certain ambiguities are to be understood. This enables Mansfield to depict psychological phenomena without the need to describe them directly.

For example, throughout "Bliss", Mansfield uses the juxtaposition between hot and cold, passion and indifference to highlight Bertha's sexual repression. Her sexual drives are indicated by symbols of fire and heat (Hanson and Gurr 62). They highlight Bertha's precarious state of being "trapped between opposites" (Childs 90) and her inability to reconcile her passion and sexuality with the life she is actually living. Although she feels "as though you'd suddenly swallowed a bright piece of that late afternoon sun [...] sending out a little shower of sparks into every particle" (1), "[s]he was always cold . . ." (9). Bertha perceives herself as cold, yet at the same time she uses the imagery of heat to describe her current blissful state. This contradiction points to the repression of her actual feelings and her repressed sexual desire. Her feelings towards Harry are, moreover, also portrayed through symbols of temperature: "It had worried her dreadfully at first to find that she was so cold" (10). This points to the lack of passion towards her husband. Yet, "Harry and she were as much in love as ever" (5). This contradiction which is highlighted through the symbols of hot and cold shows that Bertha is in denial about her true feelings towards Harry and her unwillingness to admit to herself that she is unhappy in her marriage and would much rather push those feelings aside in order to stay in a pleasant state. The only time throughout the story Bertha uses heat imagery to describe interactions with another person is when she thinks about Pearl Fulton: "What was there in the touch of that cool arm that could fan-fan-start blazing -blazing -the fire of bliss that Bertha did not know what to do with?" (7) Pearl clearly has an effect on Bertha and is able to "ignite a fire" in the protagonist. This suggests that Bertha has strong sexual feelings towards Pearl. However, later in the story "[f]or the first time in her life Bertha Young desired her husband." (10) Bertha clearly suppresses her homosexuality and directs her feelings towards a more accepted object, namely her husband. Alex Moffett points out that while Bertha always refers to Harry with images of coldness, "the generally prevailing temperatures have been reversed on this night only" (66). This sudden change is very suspicious and most likely points to Bertha's denial of her homosexuality and the unsatisfying state of her marriage. Furthermore, Moffett

argues that when Bertha looks into the mirror, the imagery of hot and cold helps us to recognize “that the external perspective she takes on when looking at herself might give the lie to the internal sensation she feels.” (65) The passage goes as follows: “She hardly dared to look into the cold mirror—but she did look, and it gave her back a woman, radiant [...]” (1) The look into the mirror might reveal to Bertha what she is suppressing. It might show the reality of her life rather than the one she fabricates through suppressing all the negative things in her life. The juxtaposition between the cold mirror and the “shower of little sparks” (1) she feels before looking into the mirror shows the two opposing states she struggles with, namely her desired perception of the world and the actual feelings she is suppressing in order to be in bliss.

Another salient symbol in “Bliss” is Bertha’s lovely pear tree. Throughout the story, Bertha is compared with the tree: “And she seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life.” (4) The fact that Bertha compares her life to the pear tree and the way how she describes this tree reveals how she perceives her own life, namely unblemished, perfect and beautiful without a trace of imperfection: “Bertha couldn’t help feeling, even from this distance, that it had not a single bud or a faded petal.” (4) This shows that Bertha does not allow any negative feelings into her life and strives to have a perfect life that is “in fullest, richest bloom” (4). When Bertha finds out about Harry’s affair, the way she perceives the pear tree as a symbol for herself reveals how she will deal with this unpleasant realization: “But the pear tree was as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still.” (12) By using the pear tree as a symbol of Bertha’s life, Mansfield does not have to state what will happen next or how Bertha will react to this new piece of knowledge. She will regress back into repression. Nancy Gray argues that the last word of the story ‘still’ indicates Bertha’s probable absence of change (83). I agree that this last word is portentous and hints at the likely lack of character development. Bertha will most likely once again choose to suppress negative emotions and thoughts and just as the pear tree stay “as lovely as ever” without taking the chance to admit that she is in an unhappy marriage. The knowledge of the affair will leave no mark on her state. Equating the pear tree with Bertha allows Mansfield to depict Bertha’s willingness to choose repression over acknowledging the true state of her life.

In “Miss Brill”, Mansfield also heavily relies on imagery to depict certain character traits and inner states of the protagonist. Hanson and Gurr, for example, argue that

“[i]n ‘Miss Brill’ all is conveyed obliquely, through concrete imagery and the dramatic device of Miss Brill’s inner monologue. Not once is her inner state alluded to or described directly.” (77) Especially Miss Brill’s suppression of her ageing is revealed through symbols rather than overt descriptions. Her suppression is highlighted through the association of Miss Brill with the poor shape of her fox fur as well as the ermine torque (Drewery 101). The fox fur is not in a good condition just as Miss Brill is not in the best shape anymore and has to deal with being old and marginalized in society. However, Miss Brill denies this unpleasant fact just as she suppresses the real state of her beloved fox fur:

She had taken it out of its box that afternoon, shaken out the moth-powder, given it a good brush, and rubbed the life back into the dim little eyes. [...] But the nose, which was of some black composition, wasn’t at all firm. It must have had a knock, somehow. Never mind—a little dab of black sealing-wax when the time came –when it was absolutely necessary... (1)

Although Miss Brill clearly recognizes the bad shape her fur is in, she convinces herself that this can easily be fixed with “a little dab of black sealing-wax when the time came – when it was absolutely necessary”. Miss Brill deceives herself that the fur is probably beyond repair and she herself decaying as well. Her suppression of ageing is, furthermore, highlighted by the imagery of old and young throughout the story. Juxtapositions of these two opposites are frequently used to depict the difference between the generations (Morse 33). While the young are depicted as happy and social that “laughed and paired and went off arm-in-arm” (2), the elderly are described in a more unfavorable way: “They were odd, silent, nearly all old, and from the way they stared they looked as though they’d just come from dark little rooms or even—even cupboards!” (2) This comparison between old and young seems to reflect Miss Brill’s own perception of how she feels about being old. An unpleasant truth she chooses to suppress.

The way that the young treat the elderly also reveals how Miss Brill’s reality looks like rather than how she perceives it to be. For example, she does not feel offended by the way the younger people in the park treat the elderly and completely suppresses her own struggle with being pushed to the margins of society. This can be observed in this passage: “[...] such a funny old man with long whiskers hobbled along in time to the music and was nearly knocked over by four girls walking abreast.” (2) In this scene the young girls completely fail to see the old man or to step aside to make room for him. Instead the old man is “nearly knocked over” by them without any

subsequent apologies. So, the young treat the elderly very disrespectfully and seem to not care about them. However, Miss Brill responds to this observation by stating: "Oh, how fascinating it was! How she enjoyed it! How she loved sitting here, watching it all!" (2) She completely fails to recognize the rudeness of the young and the way they treat the elderly. She suppresses her own worries of being treated poorly by younger generations and losing importance in social circles by getting older and drifting into the margins of society. Nevertheless, after Miss Brill overhears the young couple talking about her, she has the chance to finally recognize the truth. Nevertheless, Miss Brill chooses to put these negative thoughts far back into her mind and suppresses them. Just as she puts the fur into a box, Miss Brill puts her negative feelings away. The comparison between Miss Brill and her fox fur help Mansfield to depict the protagonist's suppression. The conversation does seem to have left a substantial impression on Miss Brill: "On her way home she usually bought a slice of honey-cake at the baker's. It was her Sunday treat. [...] But to-day she passed the baker's by" (3-4). So, something is clearly different this Sunday because she does not even buy a honey-cake as usual. However, Miss Brill does not acknowledge her feelings and instead denies every evidence of her own sadness. She only heard "*something* crying" (4; emphasis added). The imagery of putting the fur away into a box parallels Miss Brill's sadness and loneliness that is put aside as well. Thus, Mansfield is able to represent repression through this portentous symbolic gesture.

Finally, in "Je ne parle pas français" symbols, comparisons and juxtapositions help Mansfield to depict psychological phenomena as well. Raoul often compares himself to dogs: "All the while I wrote that last page my other self has been chasing up and down out in the dark there. It left me just when I began to analyse my grand moment, dashed off distracted, like a lost dog who thinks at last, at last, he hears the familiar step again." (4); "And the faithful fox-terrier carried it across to him and laid it at his feet, as it were." (17). Raoul buries his loneliness and does not dare to be truly himself. Instead, he plays a role and pretends to be somebody he is not: "He was looking the part; he was the part." (11) Raoul often pretends to be something which he is not in order to live up to his ideal writer self and in order to please other people. The dog analogy is a good example of how Raoul longs for approval and tries his best to be liked by other people by following their lead. He suppresses parts of himself and instead chooses to please other people just as dogs would.

All in all, symbols, comparisons, and juxtapositions enable Mansfield to represent suppression in a very subtle suggestive way. In all three stories the characters experience epiphanies. Bertha realizes that her husband has an affair, Miss Brill realizes that she is not part of a community after all and despised by the younger generation and Raoul realizes that he let down Mouse and did a terrible thing. After these epiphanies all three characters should have clarity because their repression has been lifted in these moments of insight. However, instead of taking the opportunity to change, they go back into repression. This is not stated directly but shown through symbols. Bertha's pear tree is "as lovely as ever and as full of flower and still" (12), Miss Brill "unclasped the necklet quickly; quickly, without looking, laid it inside" (4), and Raoul "never went near the place again" (22). They all run away from their problems and do not deal with them. Instead, they choose suppression as an easier and less painful solution.

6. Consequences of suppression

As shown above, Bertha, Miss Brill and Raoul all use suppression as a coping mechanism. However, the use of repression and suppression seems to have various consequences for the characters. Therefore, the question arises whether suppression is an effective strategy to deal with unpleasant thoughts and feelings and how it affects the characters' well-being. This chapter will examine various areas of the character's lives that are affected by suppression. I will explore how this defense mechanism influences those areas and will particularly examine the consequences on relationships, authenticity, self-esteem, and overall well-being. I will substantiate this analysis through various studies in the field of psychology and sociology to uncover whether suppression is a good means to deal with unpleasant mental states.

6.1. Consequences on relationships

As mentioned in section 3.1, suppression can lead to the very thing one tries to avoid, namely the heightened emergence of suppressed mental content. However, suppression seems to not only have a paradoxical effect on thought frequency, but it also seems to have detrimental effects on the forming of relationships, rapport and

one's likeability. These effects are supported by various studies, which investigated the effects of suppression on interpersonal interactions.

Emily A. Butler and her colleagues, for example, investigated the effects of emotional suppression, which is defined as not showing authentic emotions during an interaction, on rapport and relationship formation. Their findings are alarming. They could observe that expressive suppression can have detrimental effects on rapport and inhibit the formation of close relationships, intimacy and feelings of connection. Compared to a control group, interaction partners who suppressed their emotions during a conversation were perceived as less likable. Moreover, the corresponding conversation partners had less interest in furthering the conversation and getting to know the suppressors compared to those who expressed their emotions (61). It seems that people who suppress their emotions undermine the formation of deep meaningful relationships.

This can be observed in all three stories under analysis. Bertha, for example, is not able to have deep meaningful conversations with her husband, which is apparent when they talk to each other on the phone: "What had she to say? She'd nothing to say. She only wanted to get in touch with him for a moment. She couldn't absurdly cry: 'Hasn't it been a divine day!'" (3) These inner thoughts during the short phone conversation are really telling because Bertha longs for connection with Harry but all she has to say when Harry asks her what she wants is "Nothing. *Entendu*" (3). They have nothing to talk about and Bertha is afraid of saying what she is thinking. This shows that the relationship between Harry and her lacks trust and depth. Bertha suppresses the things she truly feels and does not share her thoughts with her husband. Following Butler's findings, Bertha's suppression could be the very reason why her relationship with Harry is superficial and void of real intimacy and connection.

Moreover, Bertha constantly tries to avoid conflict with Harry. She does not complain about his tardiness, she does not stand up for herself when Harry cuts her off on the phone and it does not seem that she ever expresses her emotions when she feels that Harry is treating her badly. This emotional suppression might also be an important reason for Harry's seeming lack of affection and respect towards Bertha. Tammy English and Oliver John argue that while it might be important to avoid conflict in certain situations, constantly suppressing one's true feelings might come

with the cost of being able to form close intimate relationships with the most important people in one's life (326). In addition, Butler and her colleagues argue that the so-called stonewalling, a process within marriage where the marital partners do not express their true emotions and avoid conflict, can be detrimental for marital satisfaction (50). By avoiding conflict with Harry, Bertha might be able to stay happy for a brief moment, but in the long run her suppression of negative feelings is likely to cause damage to her relationships.

Raoul has no real deep social bonds either. He seems to constantly get acquainted with new people but nevertheless seems to lack any meaningful relationships. He makes it very clear, however, that others approach him frequently: "I've never yet made the first advances to any woman. [...] I've met invariably with not only the same readiness, but with the same positive invitation." (6) So, while a considerable amount of people at first seem to be interested in meeting Raoul, they are probably never interested in furthering the acquaintance because otherwise Raoul would most likely have many friends. This might be explained by Butler and her colleagues' findings that the suppression of parts of oneself could impede the formation of relationships and good rapport. Furthermore, the researchers argue that those who suppress emotions during a conversation experience less affection towards their conversation partners (61). This might explain why Raoul has no true friends and intimate relationships. He is solitary and, furthermore, does not seem to care about other people. After all, he does not "believe in the human soul" (1). Suppression of his true emotions might be an important reason why he lacks connection and true friendships. Although he wants an intimate relationship, his fake façade and the discrepancy between his inner and outer life hinders him to form intimate social bonds.

Miss Brill is another example of how detrimental suppression can be on the formation of deep relationships. She is very isolated and has no friends. It seems that her only friend is her fur, which she treats like a sentient being:

Miss Brill put up her hand and touched her fur. Dear little thing! It was nice to feel it again. She had taken it out of its box that afternoon, shaken out the moth-powder, given it a good brush, and rubbed the life back into the dim little eyes. "What has been happening to me?" said the sad little eyes. Oh, how sweet it was to see them snap at her again from the red eiderdown! (1)

The way she thinks about the fur almost seems as if she talks to a friend. "Dear little

thing!” is an unusual word choice for an inanimate object. Furthermore, Miss Brill’s observation that the eyes of her fur look sad is peculiar for an object that is not able to feel emotions. It seems that Miss Brill perceives her fur as a friend in order to cope with her loneliness. Although she is surrounded by people in the park, she is very secluded. However, Miss Brill suppresses all her negative feelings and pretends to be something she is not. Although she believes that “[e]ven she had a part” within the community, in reality “who wants her?” (3). Allison Tackman and Sanjay Srivastava examined how others perceived people who either suppressed or expressed their emotions while watching a sad or funny film clip. Their findings indicate that people who suppress their true emotions are perceived as less likeable, less approachable and others seem to be less interested in getting acquainted with ones who use suppression to mask their feelings. (581) They, thus, conclude that “suppression is a socially costly strategy”. (575) This study shows that suppression might not only be detrimental for maintaining relationships but also prevents suppressors from forming close relationships in the first place. Miss Brill constantly uses suppression to mask her feelings of loneliness, insecurity, unhappiness and isolation. The suppression of these feelings might lead to a bad first impression and explain why she stays in her state of isolation despite being surrounded by people. The young couple perceives her as unpleasant, annoying and as a “stupid old thing” (3). One reason why the young couple judges Miss Brill so harshly might be the discrepancy between what she feels inside and which emotions she chooses to express.

Another way of how suppression can have detrimental effects on relationships is its negative effect on recognizing the feelings of others. Kristin G. Schneider and her colleagues could demonstrate that revealing one’s own inner feelings and emotions can hinder the recognition of facial expressions of others and, as a result, can also undermine one’s ability to accurately decipher the feelings of others (862). They argue that the mimicry of microfacial expressions is unconsciously used to interpret facial expressions of others for their emotional valence. However, if one suppresses his or her own expressions and feelings, he or she is more likely to suppress micro-expressions of others as well. Thus, suppressors are likely to fail to accurately recognize the feelings and emotions of others (854). This can have potential implications for the degree of empathy the protagonists of the stories under analysis are able to facilitate.

Raoul, for example, has a hard time interpreting what Dick and Mouse truly feel: “They did not expect anything to be different. This was just part of what they were going through—that was how I analysed it.” (15) Raoul is unable to detect Dick’s and Mouse’s needs and rather cognitively thinks about what they might want him to do instead of acting out of compassion and sympathizing with them. He just “analysed it” instead of felt it. This is apparent when Raoul feels the tension between Dick and Mouse and instead of feeling empathy, is entertained: “Horrid, indeed! Ah, why couldn’t I tell her that it was months and months since I had been so entertained?” (18) An understandable reaction to the observation of Dick’s and Mouse’s situation would be feeling sad for them instead of being entertained unless one lacked empathy. Raoul’s suppression of true emotions, thus, may hinder him to act compassionately. As a result, he relies on his analysis rather than gut intuition to comfort Mouse: “I put out my hand—‘Ah, my poor little friend.’ But she shrank away. (False move.)” (21) In this passage Raoul seems very calculated by wondering whether his move was wrong. He does not appear to act out of empathy but rather out of rationale. Raoul seems to have no access to the inner feelings of others and has a hard time to understand how they feel and what they need. He believes that “people are like portmanteaux—packed with certain things” and he does not “believe in the human soul” (1). The before-mentioned findings that suppressors are more likely to lack empathy might be one explanation why Raoul does not seem to care about others and believe in their rich inner life. As Meghan Marie Hammond states:

While the portmanteau certainly is an object that can be repacked and emptied, it is also an object that hides what it holds. So Raoul’s figure of human selfhood in fact allows for the possibility that somebody else’s ‘portmanteau’ has a wealth of inner contents to which he has no access. (102)

This suggests that Raoul is unaware of the inner workings of others. His own suppression of his true emotions might be the reason why he is unable to read others and understand their emotions. This can ultimately lead to a lack of empathy, the inability to interpret others’ wants and needs and, therefore, result in weaker social bonds.

Miss Brill is also unable to recognize what others feel and especially how they think about other people. When she witnesses that another elderly woman is being ignored just as she is being ignored by most of the people in the park, Miss Brill suppresses any feelings of sadness and refuses to see herself in the ermine toque. Instead, she

is unable to interpret the older woman's feelings accurately: "The ermine toque was alone; she smiled more brightly than ever." (2) Clearly there is a mismatch between how hurt the old woman feels being alone and how she is smiling. However, Miss Brill's own suppression of negative feelings does not allow for such an interpretation and, therefore, prevents her from empathizing with a woman that is in a similar state.

Bertha also shows signs of an inability to read other people's thoughts and emotions. She, for example, believes that Pearl feels the same way as she does and completely fails to recognize Pearl's indifference towards her. She also misinterprets Harry's feelings for Pearl and his treatment towards herself. Although there might be signs and signals that Harry is cheating on Bertha, the protagonist's lack of empathy and ability to interpret the emotions of others makes it difficult to detect what is actually going on behind her back. As Harriett Feenstra argues:

[...] Bertha, with her malleable boundaries and overemphasised self-expression, had not previously perceived the true nature of the relationship between her husband and Pearl Fulton, preoccupied as she was with indulging in an almost spiritual form of emotional freedom. [...] The bounded, role-playing self is a moderated version of the unruly multitudinous self, one that sacrifices free expression for long-term sustainability. (65–66)

Feenstra rightly observes that due to Bertha's suppression of experiencing negative feelings, she is unable to see the reality of her relationships and is incapable of interpreting the inner workings of the people she interacts with.

Finally, the suppression of negative feelings might result in an unwillingness to support others in times of need and, therefore, weaken relationships by not being there for each other. Guy Roth and his colleagues argue that the suppression of negative emotions can not only result in denying oneself support and help from others by showing that they are in a difficult state, but that suppressors might not be able to be a support for their partners themselves because supporting one in a difficult situation means being exposed to difficult emotions (909). This might be one of the reasons why Raoul decides to abandon Mouse and why he does not help her. He is so afraid of allowing to feel intense emotions that he would rather act against his own values instead of facing negative emotions and doing the right thing. So, avoiding conflict and unpleasant feelings might prevent suppressors from helping their friends. This can mean that deep meaningful relationships might never be able to form due to a lack of trust and support.

6.2. Consequences on self-esteem and authenticity

As above mentioned, suppression can have deleterious effects on interpersonal relationships. However, numerous studies – some of which will be discussed in this chapter - have shown that suppression can have negative effects on intrapersonal factors as well. By not allowing the expression of specific genuine emotions and thoughts, suppressors inevitably also deny parts of their selves. Suppression is likely to entail incongruences between inner and outer self and might ultimately result in feelings of inauthenticity and incompleteness. This chapter will, therefore, examine how suppression affects feelings of authenticity, self-esteem and feelings of self-worth of the characters under analysis.

Bertha, Miss Brill and Raoul all suppress certain aspects of their selves. Bertha suppresses her sexuality and negative thoughts, Miss Brill suppresses her sadness and decay and Raoul suppresses his past and intense emotions. Although the denial of these traits might briefly elevate the character's mental state, the use of suppression seems to come with a considerable intrapersonal cost. According to Aleksandra Pilarska and Anna Suchańska, it is important for identity formation and a sense of self to integrate all parts of self into one's personality. They argue that it is necessary for the ego and superego to recognize the id's existence and integrate its urges into a unified self (32). The protagonists of the three stories are not capable of doing so. They do not fully integrate their id's desires and impulses into their personality and accept it as part of their identity.

Bertha, for example, suppresses her sexuality and does not admit to herself that she is homosexual or sexual in general. However, the id constantly tries to find outlets for this suppressed part. This is apparent, for example, in the way Bertha perceives herself in the mirror: "She hardly dared to look into the cold mirror—but she did look, and it gave her back a woman, radiant, with smiling, trembling lips, with big, dark eyes and an air of listening, waiting for something . . . divine to happen . . . that she knew must happen . . . infallibly." (1) Although Bertha cannot articulate what will happen, the ellipses suggest the awakening of something later that evening. As we find out as the story progresses, this awakening is her own sexuality. Pilarska and Suchańska demonstrated that a strong and continuous sense of identity that integrates every part of self into a coherent personality is important for mental health. The weaker one's level of personality organization, the more likely one is to form

personality disorders and poor personality functioning (39). This can clearly be observed in “Bliss”. Bertha does not know who she is. She is not in touch with her true emotions and is overwhelmed by her seemingly uncontrollable state of bliss which “she didn’t know how to express it—what to do with it.” (3) Bertha struggles with expressing and understanding herself. The suppression of some of her deepest parts of her self leaves her confused and alienated from herself.

Miss Brill, on the other hand, refuses to acknowledge that she is old, alone and marginalized from society. Instead, she fabricates a more pleasant version of herself in which she is part of a larger community. In order to keep up this façade, Miss Brill has to pretend to be something she is not, “she was part of the performance after all” (3). She is so far removed from her authentic self, that at the end of the story, she even disassociates from herself. Instead of acknowledging that she is deeply hurt by the insult of the young couple at the park, Miss Brill disregards her own tears and instead wonders about their origin: “But when she put up the lid on she thought she heard something crying.” (4) This clearly shows that she is unable to integrate all her good as well as bad parts into a coherent sense of self.

Raoul is not able to be authentic either. Although he is rather unsuccessful and unpopular, he constantly convinces himself that he is a popular promising writer. All the while he deceives himself and tries hard to keep up a good image. As Miroslawa Kubasiewicz observes:

Raoul’s existence is inauthentic as he lets others define his identity – as a pimp and a prostitute. He knows that these roles are socially unacceptable, and that he needs a better identity, but by choosing the role of someone socially acceptable, a writer, rather than genuinely being a writer, he only confirms society’s definition of himself. [...] By refusing to recognize and accept the spontaneous voice of his other self, he relinquishes the opportunity to discover who he really is, and he accepts the values imposed on him by the world in which he lives. (58)

So, the suppression of his inner voice, which tells him who he really is, has detrimental consequences for his sense of self. Raoul seems to be in constant search of an identity instead of just being who he truly is. This, however, seems to result in feelings of being lost and having no real direction in life.

The suppression of the id’s impulses of all three characters, therefore, represents failed attempts to integrate all parts of their selves into a coherent identity. However, the suppression of emotions can not only lead to struggles with identity formation, but

also to a decrease in overall well-being due to feelings of inauthenticity. English and John, for example, argue that an incongruence between inner and outer self due to constant suppression can lead to feelings of inauthenticity (316). The subjective feeling of authenticity, in turn, is a crucial factor for well-being. In their study they show that authenticity mediates the link between suppression and well-being and that suppression can lead to an anxious and depressed mood (325). Although Raoul might experience benefits of his suppression of undesired personality traits in the short run, ultimately it might not only hurt his relationships but also his well-being and life satisfaction. Raoul does partly know that he is fake and plays a role: "He was looking the part; he was the part." (11). This, however, makes it even more apparent that he is inauthentic and that he puts on masks. James Gross and Oliver John argue that people who constantly suppress, experience more negative emotions compared to non-suppressors and a lower level of well-being due to the negative effect suppression has on feelings of authenticity and the painful awareness of not expressing one's true nature (357). By suppressing parts of his self, Raoul seems to not only increase the likelihood of feeling inauthentic but also the likelihood of lower overall well-being.

Bertha is also partly aware that she does not act out her authentic self. She has all those feelings inside of her but does not feel that she can express them. She questions society's constraints on her expressive freedom and seems to be frustrated by the fact that she cannot live life the way she wants to: "How idiotic civilisation is! Why be given a boy if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?" (1) Gross and John argue that people often use suppression of their true feelings at the cost of feeling inauthentic in order to fit in and be liked by others. (354). Bertha questions society and feels like her true identity would not fit in the society she lives in. She perceives society as constricting and limiting to her inner self. It seems that the society she lives in does not allow an outlet for her true feelings and forces her to act appropriately instead of authentically: "Oh, is there no way you can express it without being 'drunk and disorderly'?" (1) This passage makes clear that Bertha suppresses her true feelings and tries to keep a good outward appearance in order to avoid being ostracized by society. Furthermore, she often has to suppress her strong and overwhelming feelings in order to be able to fulfill many of the roles society imposes on her, like being a good wife, mother and hostess. According to Feenstra,

[t]he impact of lived experience or emotion is incompatible with social codes of behaviour, with the roles she must play, and threatens to overwhelm her individuality. Therefore Bertha must suppress her pure emotion, creating boundaries between herself, and the world, that inevitable other from which she is separate. (65)

Bertha needs to suppress her true emotions because otherwise she would violate social codes that are in place to keep her in the secure place within marriage. This results in a tension between her desire of self-expression and the need of being socially appropriate, which ultimately leaves Bertha confused, alienated and frustrated. Diana Menzies and Ben Davidson believe that “[w]hen living behind a false self, and not knowing one’s own true self, it is hard to then offer that true self in any meaningful way with which others can connect. The resultant sense of alienation from the rest of society can be profound.” (48–49) This can be observed in all three stories. Bertha feels like she is not like the others, Raoul is unable to form social bonds, and Miss Brill is very isolated and has no true connections with others. Their suppression of their emotions and the resulting feelings of inauthenticity might exacerbate their state of being lonely and their lack of true meaningful relationships.

Furthermore, suppression can also lead to lower self-esteem. Jennifer Borton, for example, could show that there is a correlation between a high use of suppression of negative self-referent thoughts and low self-esteem (34). In a study that investigated the effects of suppression on mood and self-esteem, Borton and her colleagues could show that participants who suppressed negative thoughts about themselves had lower self-esteem than participants who did not suppress negative self-referent thoughts (184). Borton and Elizabeth Casey believe that the higher frequency of shame-producing thoughts - due to the paradoxical effect of suppression – might be responsible for the negative effect of suppression on self-esteem (241). These consequences are apparent in “Je ne parle pas français”. Raoul has very low self-esteem, which he seems to mask with his grandiosity. He tries to convince himself that he is a successful writer: “The book that I shall bring out will simply stagger the critics.” (5) However, his thoughts reveal that he is a failure. For example, he constantly talks in front of the mirror and tries to convince himself that he is great:

“Since you left Paris,” said I, knotting my black silver-spotted tie in the (also unpaid for) mirror over the mantel-piece, “I have been very successful, you know. I have two more books in preparation, and then I have written a serial story, *Wrong Doors*, which is just on the point of publication and will bring me in a lot of money. (11)

If he truly had self-esteem, there would be no need to list all his current and future achievements in order to feel good about himself. His suppression of not being a good writer and being rather unsuccessful seems to lead to the very thing Raoul tries to avoid by his suppression, namely feeling unsuccessful and having no real self-confidence. Kubasiewicz points out that Raoul seems to recognize at times that he lives a lie and his inner voice frequently tells him the actual truth he is not willing to look at. Therefore, he needs to suppress it. Kubasiewicz remarks that “he does not let that whisper of self-awareness spoil his fun” (57). So, he chooses to suppress his personal reality and instead chooses a more enjoyable perception of himself. However, this defense mechanism does not seem to be successful because he still thinks poorly of himself and frequently questions his greatness. This is demonstrated in the following example: “That proves there’s more in me and that I really am important, doesn’t it?” (6) The question at the end is really telling and points to his disbelief about his importance. It shows how insecure he feels about himself.

Furthermore, Duquette constantly compares himself to a fox-terrier that has “his tail between his legs” (4). Throughout the story these associations with a dog reveal Raoul’s insecurity and his lack of self-worth. His love interest Dick on more than one occasion treats him very poorly. At first the Englishman leaves Raoul on short notice and does not even apologize for the abandonment only to later come back to Paris and ask Raoul for help. At the same time Dick is very rude to Raoul and shows no signs of gratitude. One would assume that Raoul would be angry and would not let Dick treat him that way but instead, his lack of self-esteem makes him wonder how he can please Dick and Mouse and be a “good dog”. For example, after being abandoned by Dick, Raoul could have refused to help Dick and his new girlfriend and not risk letting Dick hurt his feelings all over again. Instead, Raoul chooses to suppress his true feelings and be of service to the one person who treats him poorly:

Having been up for my first ride in an aeroplane I didn’t want to go up again, just now.

That passed, and months after, in the winter, Dick wrote that he was coming back to Paris to stay indefinitely. Would I take rooms for him? He was bringing a woman friend with him.

Of course I would. Away the little fox-terrier flew. (10)

This passage shows that Raoul lets Dick get away with treating him rudely and disrespectfully. The protagonist’s subservient behavior points to a lack of self-worth

and self-esteem. Instead of standing up for himself when Dick shows no signs of respect or gratitude, “the faithful fox-terrier carried it across to him and laid it at his feet, as it were.” (17) By suppressing his real emotions and desires, Raoul is not able to respect himself and demand from others to treat him respectfully as well. He does not have real standards and seems to try to please other people just as a dog does as he is told rather than following his own lead.

Bertha also lacks self-esteem. She suppresses every negative thought about herself in order to stay happy. This, however, makes her weak and powerless. The nurse treats Bertha as if she is incapable of caring for her own child and Bertha seems to be in no control of little B’s upbringing. Instead of showing the nurse that she has a say in raising her child, Bertha allows the nurse to look down on her without making use of her role as a mother and the female head of the house. This passiveness points to Bertha’s lack of self-confidence. It seems that she sacrifices all her standards for being in bliss, which ultimately leaves her passive and powerless in her own home.

Finally, various studies demonstrate the importance of expressing one’s true self in order to be happy and confident. Brian Middleton Goldman and Michael H. Kernis, for example, state that a higher degree of authenticity more likely results in a higher degree of self-esteem and life satisfaction as well as a lower dependence on others to feel self-worth (n.p.). All three characters under analysis show few signs of feelings of self-worth and seem to need the approval of others. Bertha does not know whether her feelings towards Pearl are reciprocated and waits that “perhaps she will ‘give a sign’” (8). She is insecure of whether she could be liked by such a fascinating woman as Pearl Fulton and seeks confirmation externally rather than believing in her own worth. Raoul similarly longs for the attention and love of Dick and constantly needs validation of his worth by others. The way he talks to the imaginary reader suggests that he is insecure about his talent and needs reassurance from others to feel worthy and good about himself: “That’s rather nice, don’t you think, that bit about the Virgin?” (3) The direct question suggests that Raoul questions whether he is all that creative and innovative. He needs confirmation in order to truly believe it. If he were convinced he had self-worth, there would be no need to question his literary talent and there would be no need for any external reassurance. Miss Brill also needs others to like her and appreciate her in order to feel good about herself. Throughout the story, Miss Brill tries to convince herself that she is important to others and is part

of a larger community, which appreciates her presence. This is apparent in the way she perceives herself within the community in the park: “They were all on the stage. They weren’t only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting. Even she had a part and came every Sunday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn’t been there; she was part of the performance after all.” (3) Her whole confidence seems to be built around her perception of having an important part to play in her imagined community. This makes her feeling of self-worth very instable because she is vulnerable to harsh comments by others like the young couple that despises her. Had she self-worth that was coming from the inside and relied on accepting her as she is instead of suppressing unpleasant parts of herself, she would not be so vulnerable to external factors which she has no control over.

6.3. Consequences on well-being

As discussed in the previous chapters, suppression can have negative effects on relationships and self-esteem, which, in turn, can lead to lower degrees of well-being and overall happiness. However, suppression can also have other major negative effects on well-being. These include the negative influence of suppression on action taking, receiving help and support from others, natural habituation of unpleasant emotions, as well as contributing to the onset of various mental disorders.

Through a meta-analysis about the respective studies, for example, Amelia Aldao and her colleagues examined how various emotion-regulation strategies correlated with mental diseases. The researchers argue that suppression correlates to psychopathology, especially to symptoms of anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. Problem-solving and reappraisal, on the other hand, seem to have a positive influence on anxiety and depression (231). Furthermore, Borton and Casey could not only show a *correlation* between suppression, depression and anxiety, but could provide evidence that suppression might also be the *cause* of an anxious and depressed mood. They believe this is due to the increase in the thought frequency of anxious and depressive thoughts as a result of the paradoxical effect of suppression (241). So, it seems that suppression is not only a maladaptive strategy to deal with the stresses of life but can also be the reason why one experiences unpleasant mental states in the first place.

This can also be observed in “Bliss” and “Miss Brill”. The two protagonists of the stories constantly try to push aside negative thoughts. However, the ellipses in Bertha’s thinking and the content between dashes in Miss Brill’s thought process indicate that negative thoughts constantly occur as mentioned in section 6.1. The high frequency of these ellipses and dashes throughout the stories suggest that Bertha and Miss Brill deal with numerous intrusive thoughts. As Najmi and Wegner state, the paradoxical effect of suppression means that suppression increases the emergence of unpleasant mental content (115). Therefore, suppression seems to lead to the very thing Bertha and Miss Brill try to avoid, namely the emergence of unpleasant thoughts and feelings of unhappiness, loneliness and sadness.

One, however, might argue that Bertha and Miss Brill would experience negative mental states anyways due to their difficult life situation. It might be possible that suppression is the only way for the two women to experience some degree of happiness. Cornut-Gentile D’Arcy, for example, argues that “Bliss” addresses the oppression of women that was prevalent in Mansfieldian times due to their status in society as being inferior to men and not having any voice. It is no coincidence that this was the time when women started to fight for their political rights (249). As Pracha rightly observes, women at that time had “a merely social and decorative function.” (177) They were dependent on male figures such as fathers or husbands and hardly ever were able to provide for themselves by pursuing a career. Moreover, women who were not married were ostracized by society and perceived as inferior (Seal n.p.). So, it seems that it was difficult for women to pursue their goals and follow many of their desires because they depended on marriage for survival and needed to appeal to their husbands. One way to cope with this oppressive situation is to suppress desires one is not able to express. Considering that “Bliss” and “Miss Brill” were written in the time these hardships for women occurred, it is not surprising that the two stories deal with problems that arise from social stigmata women had to face in such a society.

Bertha, for example, is dependent on her husband. Although she seems unhappy in her marriage, as mentioned in section 7.1, leaving him is probably not an option for her because it would not only mean being ostracized from society but might also lead to problems of survival. As “[i]ndependence and a career was rarely an option” (Seal n.p.) for middle-class women, such as Bertha, at the time, she would not be able to support herself. So, although Bertha might not be fulfilled in her role as a wife and

mother, she has no other choice than to stay married. Therefore, suppression seems to be a viable option for feeling happiness in her bleak reality as a woman with no voice and no means of her own. She is not able to change something about her situation and suppression appears to be a good strategy to still make her life somewhat enjoyable. Moreover, a study by Gabrielle Liverant and her colleagues shows that suppression is not always a maladaptive strategy to deal with sad emotions but at times might succeed in reducing feelings of sadness in depressed individuals, at least short term (1207). This can be observed in “Bliss”. The free indirect discourse in the story allows a glimpse into Bertha’s thought process. We find out that Bertha is “overcome, suddenly by a feeling of bliss—absolute bliss!” (1). This description of Bertha’s inner feelings clearly shows that she perceives herself to be happy. She is often overwhelmed by her intense feelings and “that shower of little sparks coming from [her bosom].” (1) These are very positive descriptions of one’s perception of life and indicate that Bertha is able to experience moments of joy. However, throughout the story one can sense that Bertha is not completely satisfied with her life and that at times her repression of negative thoughts does not seem to work entirely. Bertha still seems to be aware that something is missing in her life. This is indicated, for example, by the way she lists all the things she is happy about. The ellipsis at the end of this list shows that she is not willing to look at what is missing or what is not ideal in her life:

Really—really—she had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals. She had an adorable baby. [...] And then there were books, and there was music, and she had found a wonderful little dressmaker, and they were going abroad in the summer, and their new cook made the most superb omelettes. . . . (5)

As already mentioned in section 6.2, this passage appears as if Bertha deceives herself and that a “but” would be the natural progression of this list, a progression Bertha suppresses in order to not having to look at the unpleasant truth of her being trapped in a life she does not like. In the story she, for example, questions the precarious state she is in by questioning society’s rules that keep her desires unfulfilled: “Oh, is there no way you can express it without being ‘drunk and disorderly’? How idiotic civilisation is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?” (1) She clearly criticizes the way society imposes certain expectations onto her. However, immediately after she has that

thought, she censors herself and suppresses the resentment that would possibly occur from continuing her thought process of having to live in a society that does not allow free expression of bodily sensations: “‘No, that about the fiddle is not quite what I mean,’ she thought” (1). One might ask why she would first vehemently make an observation with an exclamation mark only to discard it immediately after the thought occurs. This shows that she is not willing to stand by her own negative beliefs about certain things because this would mean having to acknowledge that not everything in her life is perfect. This would jeopardize her feelings of bliss, which she tries to hold on to in order to avoid facing her frustrating life situation.

Just like Bertha, Miss Brill is also in a difficult situation. As mentioned above, unmarried women had an inferior status in the times Mansfield wrote the story. As an older woman without a husband, Miss Brill is marginalized in society and perceived as useless. This is apparent in the way she describes listening to other people’s conversations: “She had become really quite expert, she thought, at listening as though she didn’t listen, at sitting in other people’s lives just for a minute while they talked round her.” (1) Miss Brill clearly longs for human connection because otherwise she would not try “sitting in other people’s lives” and vicariously take part in social interactions. However, this passage also clearly shows that the people in the park ignore Miss Brill almost as if she is not seen. The people “talked round her”. This seems as if the people do not acknowledge her existence and instead avoid any contact with her. The understandable consequence of such a devastating situation would be sadness. This, in fact, does constantly appear in Miss Brill’s thought process: “sad—no, not sad, exactly” (1). In this excerpt it is noticeable that whenever thoughts of sadness occur, however, she suppresses those thoughts in order to avoid facing her unpleasant reality of being isolated from the rest of the people in the park. Miss Brill denies that it is sadness she feels: “no, not sad, exactly”. Suppression helps her to deal with the unchangeable situation of being an unmarried woman without any real human connection.

Both Bertha and Miss Brill try to lead a happy life despite their difficult life situations by suppressing thoughts about their unpleasant yet unchangeable reality. While this seems to work occasionally, suppression nevertheless fails to provide them sustainable happiness. Bertha constantly has to convince herself that “really—really—she had everything” (5) and Miss Brill frequently experiences intrusive thoughts of sadness. Thus, both characters might be able to use suppression to elevate their

unsatisfying mental states for brief moments in time, but this coping mechanism does not seem to protect them effectively from feelings of discontent and sadness.

Another effect of suppression is its negative influence on receiving help and support from others. Robert Levenson argues that “[t]he expressive characteristics of emotion in voice, face, gesture, and posture serve an important function in communicating our emotional state to others. The value of these signals is twofold: first, by allowing others to know how we feel, and second, by influencing their behavior.” (125). This means that emotions can facilitate specific responses and actions from others. A crying baby, for example, can activate certain behaviors from the caregivers like nurturing and caring (125). In addition, disclosing to others enables stigmatized people to get social support which, in turn, is shown to positively affect well-being (Beals et al. 876). This proves that the expression of emotions has an important social function in that it enables others to notice what one might need in a given situation. However, if one suppresses the expression of his or her emotions, others might not be able to detect what the suppressor needs and can, therefore, not offer appropriate help and support.

This can be observed in “Je ne parle pas français” as well as in “Bliss”. Raoul keeps all his feelings to himself and does not confide his true emotions to others. He despises himself as can be seen in this example: “Now the poor dog has come back into the café, his tail between his legs, quite exhausted.” (4) Comparing himself to a dog that has “his tail between his legs” shows that he does not think highly of himself and doubts his self-worth. Sharing his inner life, however, might alleviate some of his negative feelings towards himself. Others might be able to offer him a new perspective on himself and, as a result, help him to shift his own perception of himself from a poor dog to a more respectable person. His suppression of his shameful thoughts, however, and his lack of confiding to others, prohibits Raoul to truly receive much needed reassurance and support from others.

Bertha’s constant suppression of negative feelings also prevents her from getting support from the ones closest to her. Bertha does not let Harry know that she is unhappy and dissatisfied in her marriage and that she longs for more connection with him. This is apparent in Bertha’s thoughts during the short phone conversation with her husband: “What had she to say? She’d nothing to say. She only wanted to get in touch with him for a moment. She couldn’t absurdly cry: ‘Hasn’t it been a divine day!’”

(3) It seems that Bertha does not share her concerns and inner thoughts with her partner. This, however, can have detrimental effects on her well-being because confiding to her husband and not suppressing her true inner state could facilitate Harry's understanding and support. Furthermore, Bertha's unwillingness to express unhappiness prevents the couple to talk about their marital problems. It is possible that Harry would not have cheated on Bertha if they talked about their problems and actively worked on their relationship instead of pretending that everything is fine.

Another negative effect of suppression is its potential to lead to passiveness and inaction. As already mentioned in section 3.2, cognitive ability seems to be a limited resource that is depleted through suppression. Roy Baumeister, Ellen Bratlavsky and their colleagues could show that suppressing urges leads to poorer cognitive performance and negatively influences volition. One of their findings suggests that people who use suppression as a means to control their actions tend to become more passive and struggle significantly more with making decisions and taking action compared to had they not depleted their limited cognitive resources through suppression (1262). This negative effect clearly unfolds in "Bliss". Bertha's frequent use of suppression of negative thoughts and feelings depletes the limited resource necessary to act independently and fight for her own desires. This can be observed throughout the story. Bertha is very passive and has no power over important matters of her life. For example, the nurse dictates how Bertha's own child is raised and Bertha seems to be barely involved in the upbringing of little B, which is apparent in the way she does not express her concerns that the nurse allows a dog to come very close to her baby: "Bertha wanted to ask if it wasn't rather dangerous to let her clutch at a strange dog's ear. But she did not dare to. She stood watching them, her hands by her side, like the poor little girl in front of the rich girl with the doll." (2) It almost seems as if Bertha is an outsider who just observes how her own child is growing up instead of actively taking part in raising the child. Although Bertha perceives some actions of the nurse to be dangerous and potentially harmful to little B, she just passively accepts everything the nurse does, "she [just] stood watching them, her hands by her side" (2). Her unwillingness to experience negative feelings such as conflict hinders her from taking action and being involved in raising her child and telling the nurse about her thoughts and concerns. Dilworth argues, that Bertha's passiveness is even more apparent in the way she responds to finding out about Harry and Pearl's affair. He argues that "[u]tterly passive in the face of her changed

circumstances, she is simply too weak emotionally to compete aggressively for her mate.” (147) So, although the story ends shortly after Bertha’s discovery of her husband’s infidelity, one can assume that just as throughout the whole story, Bertha will choose suppression of negative feelings over taking action and responding emotionally to a distressing situation. The last word of the story “still” indicates that she will stay passive and stagnant (Gray 83). Pracha also believes that Bertha will not be able to take action and that “[t]his lack of movement emphasises Bertha’s lack of capacity to make decisions or be in charge of herself as a woman, wife or mother.” (182) This, however, leaves her vulnerable to being treated disrespectfully and poorly as can also be observed in other instances throughout the story. For example, Harry cuts Bertha off on the phone and comes late to dinner without apologizing. Instead of being angry with him, Bertha chooses suppression as the easier strategy to stay in her desirable state of bliss. However, this might be one of the reasons for the ultimate demise of their marriage.

Raoul, on the other hand, is unable to make bold choices. He perceives his grand moment to be when he recognizes that he did not act to help Mouse. By helping the English woman, he could have completely changed his life for the better as he imagined it: “I begin to dream things like . . . / A little house on the edge of the sea, somewhere far, far away. A girl outside in a frock rather like Red Indian women wear, hailing a light, barefoot boy who runs up from the beach.” (22) His daydreaming shows that he clearly would like a future with Mouse but instead he stays passive and avoids life-changing choices. Moreover, when Dick leaves Raoul and then returns without any apologies for abandoning him on such short notice, Raoul passively lets it happen without standing up for himself:

That passed, and months after, in the winter, Dick wrote that he was coming back to Paris to stay indefinitely. Would I take rooms for him? He was bringing a woman friend with him.

Of course I would. Away the little fox-terrier flew. (10)

In this passage, he just does what Dick asks of him instead of expressing his frustration with the Englishman. Furthermore, Raoul seems to be dissatisfied but nevertheless leads the same life day by day. He goes to the same café, he has the same routine and never actively engages in things that might change his unsatisfying state. Suppressing his authentic self and intense feelings seems to deplete various valuable resources necessary to take action to improve his life.

As demonstrated, suppression leads to passiveness and indecisiveness in the characters under analysis. However, not only the depletion of limited cognitive resources is responsible for the character's inaction. People who constantly suppress negative emotions do not allow themselves to fully experience the pain of certain conditions that need to be changed in order to improve their lives. Therefore, they deprive themselves of important signals that motivate change. According to Charles Darwin's evolution theory, humans evolved with certain aspects that are beneficial for one's survival. Emotions also seem to assume that role (Frijda 112). They help individuals to take necessary actions in a situation that demands change (Averill 102). For example, if one feels pain after touching a hot stove, pain signals to the individual that his or her hand needs to be removed from the hot object. Similarly, if a person feels unhappiness in a given situation, his or her emotions will give him or her valuable feedback that his or her actions are not leading to a desirable state and therefore require actions to improve that state. In other words, emotions work as a feedback mechanism to signal what is working and what needs change and action. So, if one suppressed this important feedback mechanism, the likely consequence would be insufficient motivation to change something about the current state. As Gross and John argue, "suppression involves 'shutting down' emotions in a way that interferes with attention to the emotion, leading to less awareness, less clarity, and, of course, no repair efforts." (354) As a result, emotional suppressors have no understanding of their situation and, therefore, are also not able to see solutions to their problems. By suppressing their negative emotions, they do not recognize that they even have problems in the first place. Suppressors might be able to avoid increased levels of discomfort in the short term by avoiding the expression of unpleasant emotions. However, allowing to experience unwanted emotions might be beneficial in the long run if they are used as an opportunity for self-reflection and taking action (Kennedy-Moore and Watson 197). So, suppression is very likely to hinder problem-solving and finding more beneficial ways of how to deal with distressing situations and to sustainably improve one's life by taking necessary steps to change undesirable life conditions.

In all three stories the protagonists fail to use negative emotions as a motivation to improve their current situation. Bertha, for example, is frustrated about just being a bystander in the upbringing of her own child as mentioned above. If Bertha allowed herself to fully experience her frustration about this situation instead of trying to avoid

any conflict and feelings of resentment towards the nurse, she might recognize how little power she has over her own motherhood and might take action to be more involved in the upbringing of her child.

Similarly, Bertha does not allow herself to fully experience negative feelings about her marriage and, therefore, acknowledge that her marriage is not perfect. Although she senses that her lack of certain feelings towards her husband is something to be worried about, she does not dare to take a closer look at the state of her marriage: “It had worried her dreadfully at first to find that she was so cold, but after a time it had not seemed to matter.” (10) In this passage Bertha is clearly bothered that she has no sexual desire for her husband. After all, up until that point she was not sexually interested in him at all. On the evening the story takes place “[f]or the first time in her life Bertha Young desired her husband. Oh, she’d loved him—she’d been in love with him, of course, in every other way, but just not in that way.” (10) So, Bertha understands that there is something wrong with her being “so cold”, “[i]t had worried her dreadfully”, but instead of taking these worries as an opportunity to notice her unfulfillment in her marriage, she suppresses these worries and tries to convince herself that “they were so frank with each other—such good pals” and that “[t]hat was the best of being modern.” (10) Bertha completely deceives herself that she is in a happy marriage. However, deep down she knows that this is not the case and feels it but chooses to suppress it. By not acknowledging their problems and communicating with each other, Bertha and Harry do not see the need to change something in their relationship. This lack of effort might have also been the reason why Harry cheated on Bertha instead of taking the opportunity to work on their problems and finding a resolution that would have brought them closer together.

Suppression also hinders Miss Brill to take action and change something about her current state. Her constant emerging thoughts of sadness and her mismatched perception of being part of a larger community shows that she does experience loneliness and sadness but suppresses it by fabricating a more desirable reality: “For although the band played all the year round on Sundays, out of season it was never the same. It was like some one playing with only the family to listen; it didn’t care how it played if there weren’t any strangers present.” (1) Of course, Miss Brill *is* a stranger to the band and is not part of the family. However, in her mind she convinces herself that she belongs to an intimate group within the park. Another strategy Miss Brill uses to cope with loneliness is treating her fur like a friend which is apparent in the way

she talks to and thinks about the inanimate object: "Dear little thing. It was nice to feel it again. [...] Oh, how sweet it was to see [the eyes] snap at her again from the red eiderdown!" (1) Jessica Gildersleeve also observes that the fur is "a fetish artificially substituted for the other, absent loved one" (43). It seems that imagining her fur to be a friend and imagining to play an important part in the park's community helps Miss Brill to cope with loneliness. However, this also prevents her to fully feel the impact of loneliness and, as a result of that pain, taking necessary steps to form true relationships and start socializing. Through her suppression of feelings of isolation, she does not acknowledge that she lacks any real friendships and should start interacting with people. It is possible that fully feeling the pain of being alone would provide her the necessary motivation to change something about her state and to actively engage with the people around her, thereby doing the exact thing that might solve the problem of isolation.

Raoul's suppression of his shortcomings also hinders him to take necessary steps to improve his life. He is an unsuccessful, broke writer who pays his bills through prostitution. He does not seem to have any prospects in life. Nevertheless, he has this perfect image of himself and constantly reminds himself that he is going to be a very successful writer soon: "I am going to make a name for myself as a writer about the submerged world. But not as others have done before me. [...] I see my way quite perfectly. Nobody has ever done it as I shall do it because none of the others have lived my experiences. I'm rich—I'm rich." (5) Throughout the story Raoul often perceives himself as an aspiring writer just as in this passage. However, he does seem to be aware that he is unsuccessful: "You literary? you look as though you've taken down a bet on a racehorse!" (11) At times Raoul clearly questions whether he has any talent. Doubts constantly emerge. However, whenever he hears those inner voices telling him the truth about the reality he is unwilling to look at, he quickly suppresses them: "But I didn't listen." (11) Raoul chooses not to listen to his inner critic and suppresses any negative thoughts and parts of himself that might not be pleasant. However, by not looking at the things he is unsatisfied with and fully experiencing the pain of feeling unsuccessful and ashamed, he is not motivated to change anything and robs himself of the chance to improve and better his life by working on himself. Raoul convinces himself that he is a great writer instead of actually becoming the person he wants to be. For example, he could settle his money problems by taking on a decent job until he is able to be financially independent with

just writing instead of constantly hurting his self-esteem by having a shady income source as a prostitute and deceiving himself that he has talent and that success will come eventually.

All in all, the characters fail to recognize that they need to change something in their lives in order to be happy and fulfilled in the long run. Suppressing painful emotions that would motivate them to take action and improve their situations hinders them from any true character development. In all three stories the characters gain valuable insight through epiphanies. Bertha's suppression is lifted when she cannot deny anymore that she has a perfect life after finding out about her husband's infidelity, Miss Brill's suppression is lifted when she cannot deny the painful truth anymore that she is not appreciated as part of a community after overhearing the couple's obvious contempt for her, and Raoul realizes that he denied Mouse his help and that his actions will have dire consequences for the English woman. By lifting their suppression through these epiphanies, the characters might have been able to turn their lives around and use these painful insights to take steps to improve their lives. However, we can assume that these insights will stay unutilized and the characters will once again retreat into suppression. Mansfield's use of symbolism points to this probability. Bertha will stay as still and motionless as the pear tree, which is indicated through the last sentence of the story: "But the pear tree was as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still." (12) We can assume that Bertha will once again retreat into suppression to be in bliss and to stay "as lovely as ever" (12). However, by doing so and not seizing the opportunity to fully experience pain as a motivation for change and development, she will also stay "as still". Similarly, Miss Brill does not allow herself to fully experience her despair about the hurtful conversation she overheard. Instead, she also retreats into suppression which is symbolized through the fur being put away into a box as a sign of her own feelings being suppressed and hidden from view: "The box the fur came out of was on the bed. She unclasped the necklet quickly; quickly, without looking, laid it inside." (4) It seems as if she cannot wait long enough to forget about the incidence in the park and therefore, needs to "quickly; quickly" return to a state of denial that allows her to avoid overwhelming feelings of sadness. However, her suppression hinders her from growing and evolving. Raoul also returns to his usual routines and does not utilize his guilt and shame after denying Mouse his help as a motivation to become a better person. So, the

characters' continuous use of suppression prevents any character development. The three characters instead stay static and stagnant.

Finally, suppression prevents natural habituation of negative thoughts and emotions. It hinders the characters to learn how to deal with negative mental content and how to avoid feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope with distressing thoughts and feelings in potentially distressing future situations. Roth and his colleagues could show that allowing the experience of negative emotions might help to decrease arousal once negative emotions appear again. In their study, they exposed participants to a film that elicited negative emotions and allowed one group to experience negative emotions while the other group had to suppress their emotional response. Compared to the suppressors, the ones who fully felt the negative emotions did not experience them as severely when watching the film for a second time. The suppressors, on the other hand, experienced the film as being less distressing compared to the expression group during the first time of watching. However, they did not experience nearly the levels of decreased negative impact of the film on their emotions as the ones who were able to integrate their emotions in the subsequent exposure to the distressing content. As a result, the researchers conclude that "[i]n daily life, people may encounter a variety of stimuli that elicit negative emotions. Focusing intentional efforts on the processing of those emotions in an integrative way may diminish the emotional and functional costs of repeated exposure to the same (or similar) stimulus." (916) This suggests that suppression hinders habituation to negative emotions and might result in heightened feelings of distress whenever a difficult situation arises that cannot easily be suppressed. In fact, Stanley Rachman agrees that avoidant behavior inhibits suppressors from getting used to negative affects and assigning less significance to unpleasant situations (393). This means that suppressors might experience an unpleasant situation as significantly more unpleasant than had they not suppressed it. This, in turn, makes suppressors vulnerable to feeling negative emotions more intensely than non-suppressors because they never learn how to deal with distressing emotions and do not allow natural habituation to take place. Therefore, the emotional impact of similar situations in the future does not diminish.

This might also potentially risk long-term happiness for the three characters under analysis. Bertha, for example, feels constant joy and does not allow herself to feel any emotions that might compromise this state. As a result, Bertha never learns how

to deal with negative thoughts and emotions. If Bertha accepted unpleasant sensations, she would get accustomed to them and would be able to have a more stable sense of happiness instead of risking feeling hopelessness when emotions occur that are too strong to suppress. When Bertha finds out that Harry is cheating on her, her perfect image of her life is no longer imaginable. However, through her continuous suppression of negative emotions in the past, Bertha is completely overwhelmed and does not know how to cope with this situation: “Your lovely pear tree—pear tree—pear tree!’ Bertha simply ran over to the long windows. ‘Oh, what is going to happen now?’ she cried.” (12) The repetition of the word pear tree almost seems as if she is in an apathetic state and has no control over her mental state anymore. She is desperately looking for answers how to deal with the situation and asks herself “what is going to happen now”. However, since she never learned necessary skills of how to endure such strong negative emotions, she has no idea what to do and instead remains motionless and “still” as if her felt hopelessness made her unable to act. Christopher Beevers and Björn Meyer argue that suppression might alleviate depressive symptoms when one is in a good mental state but might lead to heightened feelings of depression in stressful times (865). This can also be observed in “Bliss”. Although the suppression of negative emotions had worked well as a strategy to be happier throughout the story, the continuation of this technique will most likely be ineffective in the long run. As can be seen at the end of the story, in the face of severe distressing situations, Bertha is unable to cope. Her strategy of avoiding unpleasant sensations and escaping unpleasant situations might lead to the very thing Bertha tries to avoid, namely, experiencing negative situations very intensely and painfully.

Similarly, Miss Brill risks being overwhelmed by feelings of sadness. While she tries to avoid these unpleasant sensations, she never learns how to deal with hardships. However, once her suppression is lifted because circumstances are so painful that she is not able to suppress sadness any longer, she has no tools to deal with these overwhelming sensations and instead regresses into a disassociation from her own bodily reactions: “But when she put the lid on she thought she heard *something* crying.” (4; emphasis added) Both Bertha’s and Miss Brill’s suppression of unpleasant emotions is not sustainable in the long run because they are vulnerable to external factors they have no control over. This can all of a sudden leave them unarmored and unable to cope with emotionally difficult situations.

Raoul's suppression of his past is also detrimental to his overall happiness. He does not learn to process his past accordingly and it haunts him. He thinks about it but nevertheless reminds himself to forget about it: "And enough of my childhood, too. Bury it under a laundry basket instead of a shower of roses and *passons outre*." (5) Raoul does not acknowledge the horror of his sexual abuse but describes it as "more or less physical excitement". (5) However, he still senses that this is a painful memory that needs to be buried "under a laundry basket". As a result, he never processes his trauma of child abuse. This, however, leads to negative implications for his relationships in the present. His recall of his sexual abuse as a child is immediately followed by thoughts of how this incidence taught him to manipulate people: "I became very languid, very caressing, and greedy beyond measure. And so quickened, so sharpened, I seemed to understand everybody and be able to do what I liked with everybody." (5) This passage seems as if Raoul is proud of being able "to do what [he] liked with everybody". This, however, also shows that he lacks warmth and empathy towards others and takes advantage of other people. A possible result of his suppression of his childhood trauma might be that he never fully recovers trust in other people and therefore, keeps everybody at a distance as to not get vulnerable to pain and suffering again. This, in turn, prevents him to form real intimate relationships.

All in all, the above-mentioned studies on the negative impact of suppression on natural habituation provide evidence that although suppression could be a way to avoid negative thoughts and to prevent undesirable mental states, it is a very unreliable emotion regulation strategy. Suppression can lose efficacy in overwhelmingly distressing situations where tools are needed of how to cope with difficult emotions. Gross and John argue that reappraisal is a healthier and more sustainable coping mechanism than suppression. It results in better mood, better social functioning and better overall well-being while suppression seems to lead to the opposite (360). Thus, whenever life gets stressful, suppression bears the risk of being unsuccessful and, furthermore, inhibits the acquisition of more reliable coping strategies.

7. Conclusion

While suppression is a commonly used strategy to push aside negative mental content, it needs closer examination whether this defense mechanism is a good means to deal with unwanted thoughts and emotions or whether it might have harmful effects on overall well-being. This thesis, therefore, tried to answer what consequences may arise if suppression is used frequently by examining how it affects the lives of three characters in Katherine Mansfield's short stories "Bliss", "Miss Brill", and "Je ne parle pas français", who all use suppression to cope with their distressing inner lives. Furthermore, this thesis tried to uncover how suppression and repression can be represented in literature and, specifically, which literary devices Mansfield uses to portray these psychological phenomena.

Mansfield believes in showing rather than telling what the characters in her stories experience. Therefore, she never explicitly states that Bertha, Miss Brill, or Raoul use suppression as a means to cope with unpleasant thoughts and emotions. However, she uses various techniques to still show that the characters use these defense mechanisms. These include ellipses and unfinished sentences to indicate that thoughts are being suppressed and that the thought process is being inhibited; dashes to indicate reassuring thoughts that replace the suppressed content; mismatches in the story between the characters' perception and reality to indicate that what they experience objectively does not represent what they allow themselves to experience consciously; symbolism that highlights certain aspects that are not explicitly said but that hint at suppressed content; and finally, free indirect discourse and first-person narration which allow to trace the thoughts of the characters and, therefore, allow the readers to vicariously experience the characters' thought processes that suggest suppression and repression.

Furthermore, the thesis uncovered how suppression and repression impact the characters' lives. Various studies that were examined in this thesis show that the use of suppression can negatively influence the quality and formation of relationships, the degree of self-esteem, feelings of authenticity one experiences, overall well-being and life-satisfaction. Evidence of these detrimental effects can also be found in the three analyzed short stories. While Bertha and Miss Brill seem to be able to experience some degree of happiness despite their difficult life situations, dealing with unpleasant sensations only seems to work short term. In the long run, all three

characters seem to experience negative effects that arise out of suppression. Suppressing their true feelings hinders the characters to form satisfying meaningful relationships. Their self-esteem also seems to suffer due to suppression because the mismatch between their inner and outer state results in feelings of inauthenticity and ultimately to decreased self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. Finally, the ongoing use of suppression might help the characters for brief moments in time to cope with unpleasant thoughts and feelings. However, ultimately this defense mechanism prevents the characters to learn how to deal with distressing situations in the future and, therefore, to lessen their emotional impact. Suppression also deprives them of the opportunity to feel sufficient motivation to change something about their current state in order to improve their lives and consequently ensure long-term sustainable happiness.

All in all, “Bliss”, “Miss Brill”, and “Je ne parle pas français” show how short-term goals of feeling happy can have deleterious effects on long-term goals like overall well-being and life satisfaction. The stories highlight the dangers of suppression on important areas of life that are responsible for stable degrees of happiness and fulfillment like meaningful relationships, sense of self-worth and resilience through the acquisition of valuable tools learned through the help of painful experiences. Therefore, Mansfield’s work can give valuable insight on how suppression and repression can negatively impact one’s life. It shows that the expression and permission of unpleasant thoughts and feelings might be painful in the short run but beneficial in the long run.

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9. Abstract

English Version

This thesis provides an analysis of the effects of suppression and repression on happiness and overall well-being in Katherine Mansfield's short stories "Bliss", "Miss Brill" and "Je ne parle pas français". In addition, this thesis aims to uncover how Mansfield depicts repression and suppression in her short fiction. Close reading of the three short stories and an analysis of the literary devices Mansfield uses suggests that she is able to portray suppression and repression through the use of free indirect discourse, ellipses and dashes, contradictions and mismatches within the story as well as through the use of symbols. Moreover, an analysis of these symbols, plot development and the thoughts and actions of the stories' characters is conducted and its outcomes are compared with findings in the field of psychology and sociology on the consequences of repression and suppression. The results suggest that although these defense mechanisms can positively influence the protagonists' mental state in the short run, they negatively affect their well-being and degree of happiness in the long run.

Deutsche Version

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Effekte von Unterdrückung und Verdrängung auf Glück und Wohlbefinden in Katherine Mansfields Kurzgeschichten "Bliss", "Miss Brill" und "Je ne parle pas français". Darüber hinaus versucht diese Arbeit aufzudecken, wie Unterdrückung und Verdrängung in Mansfields Kurzgeschichten dargestellt werden. Die genaue Lesung der drei analysierten Kurzgeschichten sowie eine Analyse der verwendeten literarischen Mittel lässt darauf schließen, dass Mansfield Unterdrückung und Verdrängung vor allem durch die Verwendung von erlebter Rede, Auslassungen und Gedankenstrichen, Widersprüchen und Diskrepanzen in der Geschichte sowie durch Verwendung von Symbolik darstellt. Ferner zeigt eine Analyse dieser Symbole, des Handlungsverlaufs und der Gedanken und Handlungen der Protagonisten sowie ein Vergleich mit Erkenntnissen aus dem Gebiet von Psychologie und Soziologie über die Konsequenzen von Unterdrückung und Verdrängung, dass jene Abwehrmechanismen das Wohlbefinden und den Grad an Glückseligkeit der Protagonisten in kurzer Sicht zwar positiv beeinflussen können, auf Dauer allerdings beeinträchtigen.