

KATHERINE MANSFIELD:  
EXPLORATIONS INTO AWARENESS  
OF THE WELL-SPRINGS  
OF HUMAN MOTIVATIONS AND DESIRES

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## ABSTRACT

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### Katherine Mansfield: Explorations into Awareness of the Well-Springs of Human Motivations and Desires

Katherine Mansfield's stories express not only a great interest in the workings of the psyche, but an interest in the language which must be used to explore these processes. Her stories show that, mostly unaware, we labour under the "mind-forg'd manacles" which are beliefs and assumptions built into the language long ago and seldom examined by the individual. It was extremely rare in her time, her stories indicate, for an adult to be in communication with himself because of the over-emphasized demands of the community life vis a vis the individual life. If the individual is not aware of archetypal or basic longings and needs within himself and hence cannot satisfy them, then "a great prince in prison lies." Many processes of the psyche are exposed in Mansfield's stories, and in this thesis eight basic situations of interest to the analysts of Western civilization are laid out for examination, ones which I believe both are central to the Mansfield canon and show the development of that canon.

The edition used throughout and to which all page references are made is The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield, ed.

John Middleton Murry (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961).

In every cry of every man,  
In every Infant's cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every ban,  
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

from "London" by William Blake

On man heaven's influence works not so,  
But that it first imprints the air,  
So soul into the soul may flow,  
Though it to body first repair.  
As our blood labours to beget  
Spirits, as like souls as it can,  
Because such fingers need to knit  
That subtle knot which makes us man:  
So must pure lovers' souls descend  
T'affections and to faculties,  
Which sense may reach and apprehend,  
Else a great prince in prison lies.

from "The Ecstasy" by John Donne



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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Katherine Mansfield's artistic output was not very large. Her creative life was brief, barely sixteen years, and she had a very high standard for herself. Except for some very early poetry and one or two unfinished and unpublished attempts at writing novels, she wrote only short stories, of which eighty-eight have been published. Only forty-eight of these stories appeared during her life-time; twenty-five (fifteen of them unfinished) were published posthumously by her husband, John Middleton Murry.

In this small corpus of artistic creation lie buried evidences of a unique and fascinating search. It was a search for the well-spring of human needs and desires, and its uniqueness lies in the manner in which Mansfield pictures this experience in her stories. For the literary critic the searching-after clues is not a direct nor easy road to follow, and, due to her predilection for gazing on the dark side, the journey is often gloomy as well as laborious. But it is well worth while. It is no exercise in futility, as one discovers layer upon layer of meaning, arriving at last, hopefully, at Mansfield's uncrystallized and probably unconscious

aspirations.

Mansfield has drawn a world in which humans are bewildered, puzzled, frustrated at every turn. This is so partly because of lack of self-knowledge, and partly by their non-awareness of the conventions of their social milieu. These she explores relentlessly, casting doubt on the good intentions and the efficacy of almost all she sees. The "message" of her stories is, in effect, that the self-aware person is "safe." If one knows who one is, then one can see to one's own real needs and is not fooled by those external voices that say what one should need.

Katherine Mansfield's writings expose people as being quite separated from their inner selves. Somehow these people have been wrenched away, with saddening results. They are like rudderless ships--or rather, they are like ships with rudders, but with a crew so in confusion that no one has taken the wheel. It is implicit in her stories that the culture of her time was repressive and inhibitory to many areas of human fulfillment, and that consequently in her stories most people (and in particular, most women) are unaware of their own real needs.

## II

There are two interrelated areas in Katherine Mansfield's writings, each of which is inherent in this

problem of awareness. The basic theme is her interest in the actual mechanics of the psyche. The lesser theme is a problem of language: how to expose these psychological workings.

To take the lesser one first: very noticeable to the new reader of Katherine Mansfield are the ellipses and dashes which this writer uses so frequently. What might seem at first to be only a slightly irritating habit, the mannerism of a "gentlewoman" writing for the early Ladies Home Journal, in fact becomes an indispensable clue to the depths of her stories. Because she often deals in almost ineffable and inexpressible happenings far deep within the psyche, she is compelled to resort to "dots and dashes," rather than trying to conceptualize the inconceivable. Or perhaps it might be better to say that she does this rather than use the wrong word, or take up a whole paragraph to elaborate, thus causing a lapse or digression that would destroy the texture of a story. And it also is possible that she uses the ellipses and dashes in order that the reader be forced to do some of the work and thus become a participant in the story. For instance, it is not often realized that language can handle the processes of "doing" infinitely better than the processes of "being."

### III

The other and more basic area of interest in Mansfield's

work is that of the actual mechanics of the psyche. Practically every poet, philosopher, psychologist, theologian, writer of fiction, and literary critic has given his or her own set of names to the various "parts" of the human psyche. This makes it extremely difficult first of all to know what they are talking about, and second to know if you agree with them. For instance, a difficulty arises immediately with the use of the word "psyche" itself, which has been out of style until recently--at least in analyses, if not in literature itself. The word "mind" has been favoured instead.

"Psyche," however, seems a better word than "mind" in a discussion of Mansfield's stories, because "mind" implies conscious and rational processes. "Psyche" is that and more. It means not only the thinking, verbalizing, conceptualizing and categorizing faculties, but feelings, emotions, needs, wants, desires and the "will" as well.

At this point another difficulty arises. Not only is the nomenclature different in each system of analysis, but the existence of yet another part of the psyche, a part of supreme importance to some analysts, is in fact completely denied by many others. I refer, of course, to the "soul."

Some of the many, many names used in psychology, Yoga, philosophy, religion and poetry, in addition to the word "soul" (or "spirit," which is sometimes thought of as synonymous) are: Atman, Self, Ego (not lower-case "e" ego),

Essence, That, the Life Stream, Evolution, the Seed, "Alastor," the Christos, and so on. Some of Mansfield's terms for it are: "the secret self," "the inner self," "the inner voice," "the silent voice," "the Master" and "the real self."

The present analysis of Mansfield's work is taken from the point of view that Mansfield refused to accept not only clichés of thought, feeling and expression, but whole areas of generally-accepted assumptions and conventional standards for human behaviour--in particular female behaviour--of her time and place. She tried to search for, and to expose when she found them, the real well-springs of human motivation, untouched and unsullied by culture and habit, as far, that is, as this was practically possible. It is this which makes her works valuable, and it is for this reason that she has so much to say to us today. In her search for awareness she exposes the idealizations, romanticizations, sentimentality and taboos of Western civilization for the poor, parochial and stifling things they often are.

Because she was both a woman and a foreigner, she was in a very good position to observe all of these in action during her stays in Europe. She was very far from being a detached, clinical or objective observer (if there is such a thing as an "objective" observer). She was violently partisan. Her stories show that she believed that woman was very much the victim of taboos and restrictions of Western culture, far more so than was man.

Her works show violent criticisms of patriarchal monogamy, in particular, and Mansfield exposed many stereotyped roles bred by monogamy which are detrimental to well-rounded human development. Women and children, as well as occasional men, are shown as suffering from the rigid superstitions and habits that have accreted to this egregious system. But in particular she exposes it as utterly demeaning and corrupting to the spirited and creative female to be in a position of economic, moral, social, personal and professional dependency on the male. Mansfield's work is thus revolutionary in a political sense, as it is impossible to search out the well-springs of human urges, emotions and mentation without calling into question the particular social system that warps or thwarts them, and more particularly so if the focus is on women, as it is here.

Mansfield's characters are shown as buffeted by the everyday winds of life and triggered off by the commonplaces of the day. There are no stark tragedies, passionate romances nor great scenes of renunciation. Instead there are much sorrow and suffering, bewilderment, anxiety and tension. There are small internal battles and cover-up jobs of rationalization.

Running through Mansfield's work is a genus of symbols covering the theme of unawareness. Separate parts of one personality are depicted as being shut away in a little box, a cave, a tunnel, a house, a cupboard, and so on, where they

fight amongst themselves, never knowing who is boss nor what they really want to do. People in her stories always are doing things "they know not why" (a favourite Mansfield expression): spanking a child, drowning a fly, hugging a cushion, talking to a fur-piece, imagining they are a fox-terrier, or lying cruciform in the moonlight. These people are not "crazy"; they are very ordinary people.

These ordinary people are glimpsed in Mansfield's stories as reacting almost automatically to the stimuli and strictures around them without knowing who they are or what they really need. This is the theme behind most of Mansfield's stories, this lack of awareness. In a Mansfield story there usually is very little action on the external level, perhaps only a gesture, but a very great deal of action takes place on the stage of the psyche.

#### IV.

It is interesting to see how Mansfield's stories grow, apparently with her own awareness and with the growth of her own inner self. The very early stories have neither explicit nor implicit reference to the "secret" or "inner" self, that real goal and core of awareness. Gradually in her stories this inner self first is implied and then is mentioned explicitly, until finally it becomes the heart of her work.

This broadening of Mansfield's views shows up in the



chronology of her stories with a minimum of analysis. The author of the stories in her first book, In a German Pension (1908), was far more unaware of her own motivations than was the author of the stories "Prelude," "At the Bay," "Something Childish but Very Natural," "Je ne parle pas Français" and "A Married Man's Story," to name a few later ones. In fact, Mansfield's earlier stories are very much like Beryl Fairfield's letter to Nan Pym in the story "At the Bay" (1918). After writing this letter, Beryl is disgusted with herself. When she rereads it she feels that "it was her other self who had written the letter. It not only bored, it rather disgusted her real self." (p. 260) She hears something "high, gushing with something bitter in the sound." (p. 261) It was "the voice of the letter" and "She detested it today." (p. 261) Like this character from a later story, Mansfield in her earlier work seemed to sense that something was wrong, but not to know what it was or what to do about it.

Her later stories show that she had succeeded to a certain extent in enlarging her own vision, and some of these become in fact almost like religious parables, allegories or medieval psychomachias, as battles between the will, desires and the intellect are presented upon the battle-ground of the human psyche. Mansfield showed in these stories that developing an inner awareness meant listening to that still, small voice.

This still, small voice is not the voice of the Christian

conscience, nor is it Freud's super-ego. What it indeed "is" is only known by the effect it has on the listener. The main characteristic which Mansfield attributes to the still, small voice is that listening to it will cue us in to ourselves, And that this will provide a bulwark against that "old hag Life," as she sometimes called it.

Although in her earlier stories Mansfield's view was much more bitter and more narrow than it was later in her life, she nevertheless had from the very beginning of her writing career, marked out that part of the ocean beneath which she was going to dive. Her likes and her dislikes are clearly shown from the beginning, and her later stories show her exploring and analysing their psychological roots.

In her last writings, most of them unfinished, Mansfield was definitely writing quite consciously on the theme of awareness. In "A Married Man's Story," for instance, she wrote not only of a secret self, an inner voice, a silent voice, or a quiet cry, as she had done throughout her career, sometimes perhaps unconsciously; in this story she goes further, making it explicit, in the parable that the Master is not at home and the servants consequently do not know what to do, that awareness of the real self (or life-stream within) is basic to what she has been trying to do all along. She shows here explicitly what was merely implicit before: that below the battles between the parts of the human personality lies an essential part which is rarely given a chance

to be heard. And it is with this realization that her writings take on a very deep dimension indeed.

V

Mansfield's writings are not basically sociological (from the analyst's point of view) but psychological, and that is the reason that certain words which have been over-used in analysing her writings shall be sedulously eschewed here. Such terms as "alienated," "lonely" and "fragmented" have been done to death. Her stories have to do with individual responsibility, although the social aspects are certainly the other side of the coin and are not to be ignored. However, it is basically people's lack of personal awareness and responsibility that is featured in Mansfield's stories. These are what lead to the calcification of institutions. The rise of despots is an extreme example. After the 1939-1945 war, hardly a German could be found to admit that he accepted any personal responsibility for the rise, development and flowering of Nazism. To bring it closer to home: not many of us did more than murmur or mutter against Duplessis, preferring to leave it to someone else to protest against the padlock laws and other restrictions on personal liberty.

In Katherine Mansfield's writings the concern is for the person to be aware of his or her own needs. The doing something about it, and how that something might affect society,

is not even implied. It does not seem to have been an area of interest to Mansfield. It is mainly for this reason, and not only because they have become clichés, that the shop-worn terms given above are not used. Anything which will even faintly suggest that what occurs inside the human psyche is not of prior and unique importance to that human, and to that human only, was avoided if at all possible. The separation from "self" is the important thing in these writings. The separation from "society" (whatever that may be) is incalculably less important here.

This is not to imply that man is an island unto himself. On the contrary, the islands are connected; but if the connections are unconscious, they cannot be used in daily life.

## VI

More than half of Katherine Mansfield's stories written up to and including 1913 are narrated in the first person, which person is an articulate, sensitive, prejudiced, slightly unhappy, slightly snobbish and extremely bitter "superior-type-literary-female." This is Mansfield poking fun at herself while getting on with the job of annihilating the rest of the world. Basically these stories deal with woman and her place in society: marriage and motherhood are looked upon with a jaundiced eye, and it is quite obvious that the writer really sees nothing good about being married or producing

babies. The stories are interesting mainly as period pieces and for analyzing the development of the writer.

In this category are these stories, fifteen in all: "The Journey to Bruges," "A Truthful Adventure," "Germans at Meat," "The Baron," "The Sister of the Baroness," "Frau Fischer," "Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding," "The Modern Soul," "At Lehman's," "The Luft Bad," "A Birthday," "The Advanced Lady," "Pension Seguin," "Bains Turcs" and "Violet."

Up to 1913 Katherine Mansfield also wrote ten other stories without a first-person narrator. Some of these are very good indeed, and several of them have been analyzed and "interpreted." As in the first fifteen stories mentioned, here too she shows people's behaviour and so arranges the stories that this behaviour usually seems stupid, rigid and non-productive of well-being for the persons concerned, who, meanwhile, are all unaware that their actions are directly opposed to their own fulfillment as individuals. They are acting "they know not why." In eight of these ten stories she goes inside her characters and shows them rationalizing. Parts of their personalities argue, cajole, threaten and wheedle other parts. This sort of business was to become her forte, her trade mark; and indeed it is a tour de force to be able to do as she has done, which is to make a work of art out of descriptions of people making excuses for themselves and pigeon-holing mutually exclusive ideals and beliefs.

The ten stories written prior to 1913 which are not in the

first person are: "The Tiredness of Rosabel," "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped," "New Dresses," "The-Child-Who-Was-Tired," "The Swing of the Pendulum," "A Blaze," "The Woman at the Store," "Ole Underwood," "The Little Girl" and "Millie." Two of these stories differ from the other eight in that they do not go inside to show the main character rationalizing. In one, "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped," the central character is a very small girl who knows what she needs as a human being, and has not as yet been trained into the rationalizing syndrome. In the other, "Ole Underwood," it is an old man who has lost his mind and therefore cannot rationalize at all. These two stories will be the first ones dealt with here in detail and, as explained below, are the only ones of Mansfield's first twenty-five stories to be analyzed.

## VII

From Mansfield's eighty-eight published stories, I have chosen to analyze only eight as best representing Mansfield's basic area of curiosity and her consequent artistic endeavours therein; that is, each one shows in the best possible way a different type of awareness which Mansfield explored. They will be analyzed from the point of view of the central character's state of awareness of him- or herself in relation to his or her own real life. I also have restricted myself

to eight stories in order to limit the length and thematic scope of this thesis.

The thesis begins with an analysis of "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped" and "Ole Underwood" not simply because of their chronological order in Mansfield's output, but because they represent two poles of consciousness in her work: the psyche of a child as yet not warped or cluttered up by society, and that of an old man who has lost his mind and cannot rationalize at all. Somewhere between and above the two is the psyche that is in tune and at peace with itself, as in the very late and unfinished story "A Married Man's Story."

Those stories which were written after 1913 do not, of course, show a continual development in Mansfield's grasp or insight into the field of awareness (although she wrote no others like the first fifteen). This is one reason why the remaining six Mansfield stories dealt with here are not taken in precise chronological order.

In fact, "Sun and Moon," the third story to be dealt with, was not written until 1920. This story represents what could almost be a prototype of the training for the male and female roles of Mansfield's time. The story deals with the question of how it comes about that parts of one's personality become boxed up. Next, "Bliss" presents the psyche of a grown woman which is the result of this kind of training, as it shows the woman to be particularly unaware of her own sexuality. "Some-

thing Childish but Very Natural" is the epitome of Mansfield's enquiry into "Romance" versus "Love"--"Where do all these crazy 'romantic' ideas come from?" she seems to be asking. In "Je ne parle pas Français" Mansfield delves into the psyche of a writer, who is a man almost as wholly divorced from himself as is the Boss in "The Fly," but whose illusions and delusions are "artistic" rather than bourgeois. In this story Mansfield also presents the reader with one of her very few aware or self-aware characters in the person of the English-woman, "Mouse."

In "This Flower" Mansfield attempts a description of that state of awareness which few of us nowadays pause long enough to allow to happen to us. This state of consciousness (or attention or concentration or awareness) goes one step further than the awareness of self. The awareness of one's own real needs (i.e. the awareness of what one really is), as opposed to what one is told one "should" be, is the main area of interest in most of Mansfield's work, but with "This Flower" a new dimension is added and explored. This new dimension is an expanded state of consciousness, glibly described nowadays --usually by those who have had no first-hand experience of it--as "cosmic."

In the unfinished "A Married Man's Story" Mansfield starts an odyssey of self discovery on the part of the title character. Carl Jung calls this process "individuation." Only artists of the calibre of Mansfield are able to produce works



of art out of psychological delvings such as these. Included in the part of the story which is finished are descriptions of self-awareness within both a social and a cosmic context.

It must be noted, before going into the analyses any further, that Mansfield's interest in and exploration of the male and female roles of her era is productive of insights not only into the difficulties of women nowadays in being unable to visualize themselves as valuable and worthwhile persons of integrity; for the "maleness" and "femaleness" of human behaviour and the attempts to come to terms with it inside the psyche are of equal moment to both (all?) sexes.

## CHAPTER II

## "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped":

## The Archetypes of Human Desires

Katherine Mansfield rarely wrote stories about happy and fulfilled people, but in a peculiar little story with the odd title "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped," Mansfield created a character who does not dream and who does not talk to herself in order to rationalize her situation. Pearl is a very young girl living in a well-to-do, middle-class suburb. She is a curly-haired, blue-eyed blonde, and two Gypsy women admire her greatly and walk off with her. They are so sweet with her that she is pleased to go, and in fact every moment of the time that she is with the Gypsies is full of pleasant surprises. They first walk to their nearby settlement, and then all the Gypsies and Pearl go to play by the seashore, where Pearl is found by the police.

The dating of "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped" is disputed, but it would appear to have been written about 1910, quite early in Mansfield's career. Little has been written about it; at first glance it appears to be quite childish and inconsequential, but it is not. Here are presented the human desires which, in the absence of their satisfaction, play

such a very large part in the Mansfieldian canon. Warmth, love, human understanding; the absence of unnecessary restrictions; freedom to enquire, move and grow; a community of feeling of worth and inherent value; someone to guide one lovingly; new and beautiful experiences; spiritual awareness and growth; nice smells, colours, tastes and touches--all these and more come to Pearl when she is kidnapped. They are compared to their opposites in the home that she has left behind, where there are restrictions on eating, playing, questioning, dressing and so on. In fact Pearl asks the Gypsy women, "Haven't you got any Houses of Boxes?...Don't you all live in a row? Don't the men go to offices? Aren't there any nasty things?" (p. 12)

Pearl knows absolutely what she needs and what she doesn't need. She needs what the Gypsies are giving her. She doesn't need what she gets at home. In very black and white terms, Katherine Mansfield is telling the reader what is important to the human psyche and just how little of it the society of Pearl Button's and Katherine Mansfield's time is providing--particularly to the enquiring and eager female.

This kidnapping is in reality a dream of escape from the everyday to the ideal. It is archetypal. Every child dreams of this freedom. But of course Pearl is found and is taken back to her House of Boxes.

The name "Pearl Button" is significant. The word "pearl" appears fairly often in Mansfield stories, and always with the

denotation and connotation of earthly desires.\* It is usually found allied with the moon or moonlight; with whiteness and blossoming; with sexuality (never very intense) or any yearning or feeling for beauty, and with the repression of these (usually intense). In this chain of erotic symbolism of pearls, whiteness and the moon, the moon would appear to be the basic image. As the sidereal body nearest the earth, it affects life on earth more than does any other body except the sun. Its attraction for and its influence on humans are the bases for much beautiful imagery and analogy in literature, and the image "pearl" is one of the loveliest. In Mansfield's stories these images are almost always used in connection with a female character and her wants and needs. She usually is aware of what she wants and that she has been trained to believe she needs. She very seldom is aware of what she really needs as a functioning, sexual human being. Therefore the moonlighty yearning usually is unconscious.

The surname "Button" is the antithesis to "Pearl," which represents the world of earthly desires. "Button" stands for society and its rules, which are seen as almost wholly unnecessary and restricting in this story. A button is small. It is an object, not a human being. It is processed. It is amenable to service. It can be put away in a box and brought

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\*Three examples of Mansfield's use of pearl imagery are "This Flower," in which the mystic experience is described as a "pearl" (p. 405); "Poison," in which the young man's perfect woman has pearls around her neck and on her finger (p. 565); and "Bliss," in which Pearl Fulton seems to be a projection of the protagonist's desires.

out when needed. It is intended to keep things neat, in their proper place and in order. It satisfies society's ideas of decorum, the decorum of a buttoned-down society. A great many of Katherine Mansfield's characters are "pearl buttons," the one human being containing the two polarities, but with the accent on the decorous and restricting functions of the button.

There is another very interesting image in this story, that of the road, and in this regard it is worthwhile to compare the road in "Pearl Button" with the road in another story.

Approximately a year or so after finishing "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped," Mansfield wrote a story called "The-Child-Who-Was-Tired." This is the story she is supposed to have "copied" from Chekhov. There has been quite a big hoo-harrah about this, and everything that needs to be said on this subject has already been said.<sup>1</sup> It seems likely that she did write "The-Child-Who-Was-Tired" with Chekhov's "Spat Kochestia" in mind. But Mansfield wasn't Chekhov, and the insights in "The-Child-Who-Was-Tired" definitely are her own. Writers often are inspired by the ideas, themes and characters of other writers (for example, Shakespeare was influenced by the work of Thomas Lodge for As You Like It, by Barnabe Rich for Twelfth Night, by Chaucer for Troilus and Cressida, and by Bocaccio for All's Well That Ends Well); it is impossible not to be so. Only when one has nothing of one's own to add does this practise become reprehensible.

In "The-Child-Who-Was-Tired," Mansfield has presented the reader with a child in a completely hopeless situation. The story ends with the murder of an infant, which brings a sought-after release for the protagonist. It has already been observed that Chekhov's child dreamed of home and family and of the road which led there, and that Mansfield's child, on the contrary, did not dream of a road leading to home and family. Mansfield's child only has the capacity to dream of the road itself, as a symbol leading to something desirable but which is beyond her imagination and which is unattainable.<sup>2</sup>

What has not been pointed out and is interesting to note in this connection, is the road in "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped" which leads to the sea. Pearl is recovered by the police on the sand by the ocean. Therefore the road in Pearl's dream of escape has taken her as far as she can go at the time. The ocean is there and she can go no further (the meeting of water and land is an archetypal image of the meeting of the unconscious and the conscious). The child in "Tired" is not able to summon the energy to imagine that far. The dream of the road to release is itself all that she is able to conjure up. The road is white and there are dark trees on either side through which she cannot see. At the end of the story, after the murder of the baby, she is on that road in her dreams--but again, that is as far as we see, just the road itself.

In Mansfield's stories there are few clear roads of escape such as the one leading to the sea in "Pearl Button" or the one leading we know not where in "Tired." Usually the leading character doesn't see any road of escape at all. He or she is bewildered and unhappy, and knows that something is wrong, but very often doesn't even realize his need for escape. It is the young and the very young in her stories who still are able to imagine a way out.

"How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped" is almost a parable, if a parable be a story whose real meaning lies on a deeper level than the surface telling of it would imply. In fact, in studying the stories of Katherine Mansfield, one may be continually reminded in a strange, roundabout or reverse manner, of Chaucer. Many of Chaucer's stories start from Christian exempla or sententia. They are illustrations of a moral assumption, judgment or belief. The characters and events of the story are then an acting-out of these statements, and at the end the reader who believes in the original dogma will be forced to agree that, "Yes, if one does such-and-such then so-and-so will follow."

Mansfield does not start from exempla or sententia, particularly not from Christian ones. She is finding her own way. It is up to the reader to read the stories and then work out the moral, if any. Not that her stories are necessarily specifically didactic nor planned explicitly ahead of time to illustrate some particular "vice" or "virtue." On

the contrary, she seems to have started from some state of bewilderment, anxiety, tension, hatred, loneliness or just plain "non-togetherness," and has built around that mood a psychomachia or battle within the psyche, an allegory almost, in which the tension is resolved in some way. It is usually resolved by shifting it to another area of the psyche where it will lie dormant until the next flare-up. It is rarely resolved by any extensive self-awareness on the part of the protagonist.

It is up to the reader, whilst appreciating the other artistic aspects of Mansfield's art, to search out the ideas underlying most of her exercises in the exposure of our mental gymnastics. One of the main themes underlying her stories could, ironically enough, very well be a Chaucerian exemplum: Radex Malorum Cupiditas Est. Cupidity is the root of evil, cupidity or the love of possession, be it the possession of an object, a person, a feeling or a fact. It is an exclusive and corroding characteristic. It is at the base of most of Western culture, and has now become almost sanctified, being seen as an end rather than as a means to an end. In her stories, Mansfield is continually showing the toll in human suffering to which a rigid adherence and beatification of the dogma of possessiveness leads. It has led to the extreme love of power and possessions necessitating the setting-up of institutions and principles such as those of male primogeniture and patriarchal monogamy, and has led



finally to a general lowering and levelling of human desires and aims to suit the majority.

Mansfield did not write another story like "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped," which presents a human being, albeit briefly, in a completely satisfying and desirable situation. Although some of her later stories which drew their inspiration from her own childhood in New Zealand do have their idyllic moments, the emphasis is always on the effect of the restricting and constricting social conventions of her day on the people in her stories. "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped" is therefore unique in the Mansfieldian canon as showing those archetypal needs in whose absence it is impossible to grow up as a whole person. "Warmth, love, human understanding; the absence of unnecessary restrictions; freedom to enquire, move and grow; a community of feeling of worth and inherent value; someone to guide one lovingly; new and beautiful experiences; spiritual awareness and growth; nice smells, colours, tastes and touches--all these and more come to Pearl when she is kidnapped." (supra p. 18) In all the rest of her stories Mansfield examines the effect of the loss of one or more of these desirables on the psyche of her creatures. These psyches usually are bound by myths and conventions which have outworn their usefulness (if indeed they ever had any) but which are carried into the future by the rigid institutions of the past.

## CHAPTER III

"Ole Underwood":

A Contracted State of Consciousness

Another of Mansfield's stories which is rarely anthologized or analyzed is "Ole Underwood," first published in the short-lived periodical Rhythm (edited by her husband, John Middleton Murry) in January, 1913. Here again, as in "Pearl Button," there is much interesting psychological matter on the subject of awareness. In "Pearl Button" Mansfield presents a very young human who has not as yet been divorced from her own life flow. In "Ole Underwood" she creates a character who is not even aware that he is a person. Prison has done this to him.

Mansfield has achieved a tour de force in "Ole Underwood" in presenting an inner view of a psyche which does not conceptualize. It can be compared to Pearl Button's when Pearl sees the sea:

And down at the bottom of the hill was something perfectly different--a great big piece of blue water was creeping over the land. She screamed and clutched at the big woman, "What is it, what is it?"

"Why," said the woman, "it's the sea."

"Will it hurt us--is it coming?"

"Al-e, no, it doesn't come to us."

(p. 11)

Pearl has no conception of the sea, no idea of it, no word for it. She has nothing to compare it with.\* Our conceptual life is based on comparisons. Ole Underwood does not conceptualize or compare, either; he experiences only sounds, not words, as well, so he would seem not to have the capacity to draw comparisons. His experiences are not put in a place or described or docketed. This is not an easy state of consciousness or awareness to write about, as words themselves get in its way. For how can a writer, whose basic building material is words, write about the psyche of a person who doesn't even know that he is a person? If the writer were less aware of how language directs us by the basic assumptions and judgments built into it, it couldn't be done. These are some of the "mind-forg'd manacles" of which Blake speaks, and Mansfield, in writing of a psyche in an almost amnesiac state, sets up enquiries in the readers' minds about many of these very manacles.

At the present time it is just in this area that many kinds of questions are being asked, questions such as how people lose command of themselves, or rather, how is it that so many people do not have command of themselves? In "Ole Underwood" Mansfield raises the question of will, volition, and the aim and meaning of life, albeit only implicitly.

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\*Notice how cleverly Mansfield has described the sea as "something perfectly different." This kind of thing is why Mansfield has to be read so carefully and with such an open mind. It is extremely hard to grasp the virtually evanescent implications of them.

The reader of "Ole Underwood" starts to ask, What is Ole? Is he really a man? What is it to be human? What does it mean to lose one's mind? What is the relationship between language (symbol) and mind? What is the relationship of mind (or ego-consciousness) to psyche? What did the prison do to his mind? When the "old, old lust" for the sea takes him over, it is deeper in quantity than the lusts which lead most of us on, but is there also a difference in quality?

Thirty years before the story begins, Ole has killed his adulterous wife and has spent twenty years in the red prison on the hill.\* For ten years now he has been wandering around the town, being looked upon as a harmless idiot. He never talks; he does not recognize very many things, as his memory scarcely exists; and he is not even aware of his own identity. This day a series of small events snowballs, with the result that Ole has some sort of an expansion of consciousness. The ruling desire of his life before the murder had been the sea, and he now becomes aware of a desire to return to it.

"Ole Underwood" is an unusual Mansfield story because, although in her stories she examines many different kinds of minds or psyches, both male and female, child and adult, of "high degree" or low, this is the only time she does so with no interior dialogue (I see no point in calling talking to

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\*One has to read the story several times to get the sequence of events straight. This manipulation of chronology is quite usual in the more interesting of Mansfield's stories such as "This Flower," "Something Childish but Very Natural," "A Married Man's Story" and "Je ne parle pas Français."

oneself a "monologue"). Ole's mind is indeed so restricted or contracted that there isn't much room for one "I," let alone two or three, and there is just one short "monologue" toward the end as Ole seems to get more grasp of his situation. When the story begins he seems to have no will or motivation at all, and, like many of Katherine Mansfield's characters (who do not have the excuse that he has: twenty years in prison), he seems to drift like a blossom on the wind, reacting to stimuli not of his own choosing.

It is easy when reading "Ole Underwood" to understand that this man does not know who he is. His alteration of moods is rapid, although, as with most of Mansfield's characters, there is not a wide range of moods. He reacts only to the most immediate stimuli, and in the most primitive of ways: "Under one verandah yellow hens huddled out of the wind. 'Shoo!' shouted Ole Underwood, and laughed to see them fly." (p. 135) His grasp of the skein of consciousness is precarious:

When she [a little girl] saw Ole Underwood she let the clothes-prop fall and rushed screaming to the door, beating it, screaming "Mumma--Mumma!" That started the hammer in Ole Underwood's heart. Mum-ma--Mum-ma! (p. 135)

Mansfield's technique of using sounds, rather than conceptualized words, for activities both outside and inside Ole's body is excellent: "Something inside Ole Underwood's breast beat like a hammer. One, two--one, two--never stopping,

never changing. He couldn't do anything." (p. 135).

From first to last, Ole is presented as being unaware of himself as a whole person. He is "all at sea" in the sense of not being in command of his faculties, and Mansfield has depicted his surroundings as wave-like and wind-torn: "The pine-trees roared like waves in their topmost branches, their stems creaked like the timber of ships...."

(p. 135) It is a typical piece of Mansfield irony that his lust for the sea, the strongest part of him to survive, will lead him from bad to worse, for as the story ends, he plans to leave the land, which he cannot handle, for the even more fluid and violent environment of the sea.

Ole doesn't know much. He isn't aware of much. He isn't even really aware of what "wind" is. He battles directly and ineffectually with his environment, both internal and external. The wind shouts at him and batters him. He shouts and batters at it:

"Ah-k!" shouted Ole Underwood, shaking his umbrella at the wind bearing down upon him, beating him, half strangling him with his black cape. "Ah-k!" shouted the wind a hundred times as loud, and filled his mouth and nostrils with dust. (p. 135)

Ole doesn't know that the steadily-repeated noise inside him is his heart. He doesn't know what a heart is, its function, its necessity to himself ("Something inside Ole Underwood's breast beat like a hammer."--p. 135, my italics).

When he becomes aware of the sound inside him, he tries to run away from it, scare it away, spit at it, swear at it.

No use. It doesn't go away: "Do what he would, fumble at his coat, throw his arms about, spit, swear, he couldn't stop the noise. Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! Ole Underwood began to shuffle and run." (p. 135)

As Mansfield builds up various levels of tension throughout this story, it is interesting to see what she does with the heart-beats. She starts with a simple "one, two; one, two," going on to a more ominous "bang, bang, bang, bang," and from there to a "Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop!" as Ole gets more and more frustrated in his inability to stop the sounds inside himself. He tries to flee from the now-terrifying sounds.

It is at this point that we are reminded of the sea and are told about the prison in a short paragraph that carries a great deal of atmosphere:

Away below, the sea heaving against the stone walls, and the little town just out of its reach close packed together, the better to face the grey water. And up on the other side of the hill the prison with high red walls. Over all bulged the grey sky with black web-like clouds streaming."  
(p. 135)

In Charles Baudelaire's poem "Spleen," the leaden, heavy, hopeless, pessimistic and closed-in feeling of Ole Underwood, trying to get away from his madly-beating heart, is perfectly mirrored, like a companion-piece to the paragraph above.

Here are the first and third stanzas:

When the oppressive sky weighs like a cover  
On the sick spirit, in the toils of ennui,  
And embracing the horizon's curve  
Pours on us, sadder than nights, a dark day....

When the rain spreading its immense trails  
 Imitates a vast prison of bars,  
 And a mute crowd of infamous spiders  
 Comes to hang its threads at the back of  
 our brains....

This feeling of a closed-in horizon is the very opposite of an expansion of consciousness, and gives a very good picture of Ole's extremely small span of consciousness.

Next in the story, "Ole Underwood slackened his pace as he neared the town." (p. 135) and we follow Ole through a series of small adventures in which we never know what he is thinking, wanting or feeling, except for one time when it is said, "Ole Underwood wanted a drink." (p. 136) Otherwise we see him reacting to hens by shooting them, to a conversation about himself by crushing some flowers, to some "Chinamen" by running away. We see only his physical actions or reactions. And there is a gradual build-up of tension and activity.

In another sequence of tension Mansfield brings in the colour red in a significant way, from Ole's "red and white spotted handkerchief," to the red of the prison walls, to a "red soapy fist" being shaken at him, to the "red pinks" in a jar on the bar-counter (this is indeed a "jarring" description that is exactly right in the context--"red pinks" sounds absolutely "cracked"). The red flowers seem to inflame Ole as a red flag does a bull: "Red--red--red--red! beat the hammer." (p. 136) Again those four beats. When he hears himself being discussed as a non-entity, a nobody, he



crushes the flowers. Yet one wonders how much he has understood. Is it the words, the intonations, the facial expressions of the others that makes him react with violence?

A concatenation of sounds has been building up, apart from that of Ole's heart-beats, and this series now reaches a near-climax as Ole is chased from the bar-saloon. These half-human noises culminate finally in the "Ya--Ya! Ya--Ya!" of the card-playing Chinese, themselves outcasts from the general community, as Ole lets in the wind and their cards blow all over, and again Ole flees.

His heart beating wildly, Ole hides and lies panting in a lumber-yard, and here he finds a little cat. Except for the earlier sentence mentioned ("Ole Underwood wanted a drink."), this is the first time Ole Underwood truly begins to think. His heart beats even more madly as he actually recognizes what the object is: it is a cat. Years before, he had brought one to his wife from the ship. This memory floods into his mind instantaneously as he says, "Kit! Kit! Kit!" With these words of his, the rhythm of the four beats has been broken, and now his mind begins to coalesce and take over. He reacts to and recognizes stimuli: "It was warm and soft and it mewed faintly." (p. 137) Now he says what many of us say in moments of extreme stress, "Ah! my God! my Lord!" (p. 137), for the first time giving a verbal response, rather than a physical reflex, as before with the hens and the flowers.

Ole is now more aware than he ever before has been in the ten years that he has been wandering around this coastal town. The strong beating of his heart, the wind, the excitement, the necessity of hiding, all combine to expand his consciousness, and now memories begin to well up. It is his sense of smell (that primordial sense which seems to bring back our deepest memories) which now leads him on. He smells the sea, really smells it, and is aware of what he smells for the first time in ten years. "I will! I will! I will!" he mutters, as the "old, old lust" for the sea sweeps over him. He "wills" himself to go to her.

The story ends ambiguously. He has flung away the kitten, his last and virtually only link with the land. Will he kill the big, blond, bearded man on the ship's bunk? In a rising crescendo of remembering, reclaiming and repossessing his long-lost world, he first sees the sea as his, then the ship as his, and then "her" picture. The "I" of his consciousness relating to lust or possession is returning.

It is easy to imagine that he does kill. He has done so thirty years earlier and he now feels he is young again. Furthermore, we have seen a rising tide of violence which reached its crest before consciousness flooded into him. He has shoo-ed the chickens, crushed the flowers, and flung away the cat by its tail. He has done these things absolutely out of control and without knowing why he did them. Even the lust for the sea is triggered immediately by the

smell of it, and comes to him unbidden. Some "thing" triggers him and off he goes. He has been inexplicable to himself as well as to others. There is something on the bunk which might trigger him off: if not the man, then the red pillow--red, the colour of passion, violence and blood, the colour which has triggered his actions before, and Ole's hammer inside is beating, "Mine! Mine! Mine!" (p. 138) It seems extremely likely that violence will occur, but the story ends before it does. Again, as so often in her stories, Mansfield has left it up to the reader to imagine or dream the end. Perhaps Ole manages to control himself, to leave the sleeping man alone, to go to sea and die there later peacefully. Who knows?

In "Ole Underwood" Mansfield has presented us with a picture of a man out of control, but one who perhaps is regaining that control. The underlying theme, however, as with so many of her stories, is that to a certain extent we all are out of control in that we react unthinkingly to stimuli while actually believing that it is we ourselves who "will" such-and-such an action. Instead, most of Mansfield's characters look very much like a lot of machines reacting automatically to sounds (mostly verbalizations), to smells, to tastes, etc.

It is interesting to compare Mansfield's slowly-developing outlook with that of the present-day psychologist B.F. Skinner, the well-known Behaviourist. From a behavioural

point of view, the characters in most Mansfield stories are reacting to the stimuli of their environment very much like Skinner's pigeons, and it would seem that no matter what her professed beliefs were at the time, Mansfield must have felt that people were relatively quite helpless (or even completely helpless) in the grip of their environment in almost all of her early stories, the exception of course being the Gypsies and, briefly, Pearl in "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped." It is only when the whole corpus of her work is studied carefully that one sees an apparently growing conviction that there is some imponderable in the human psyche which, when tapped, can give meaning and aim to human existence. "The Master," "the secret self" and "the silent voice," as mentioned earlier, are some of the names which she has given to this mysterious and inexplicable something whose very existence is, of course, denied by the behaviourists.

In many respects "Ole Underwood" is a key to the deeper meaning of most of Mansfield's work. By implicitly raising such questions as, "What is it to be human?" and "What is the aim of human existence" as she does in this story, Mansfield almost forces the reader to re-examine certain premises. One starts to think about language and what those strange sounds and scratches really stand for. For example, from "Ole Underwood," let us take some words, the building blocks of the writer, and explore them a little. The concepts "I"

and "not-I," the symbols "Nature" and "sea," and Ole's surname, "Underwood," are useful starting places.

In this story Mansfield has personified Nature as much or as little as she has personified Ole Underwood. Nature moves and makes sounds; Ole moves and makes inarticulate sounds. There are her constant wind and his constant heart-beat. Nature seems to think and feel as much or as little as Ole does. The two are paralleled; there are rhythms, actions and movements that are similar in both; and like Nature, Ole is not aware of what is him and what is not him. He is, in effect, a natural phenomenon himself.

Ole's name, "Underwood," seems to tie in here with this feeling that he cannot distinguish himself as a distinct and autonomous being. The state that is described as being "under wood" is a sort of limbo. Ole isn't in heaven and he isn't in hell. He is pressed down firmly but not relentlessly. Wood breathes and has a certain amount of warmth and resiliency that metal does not have. Ole could be in a coffin from which, Lazarus-like, he begins to emerge. Ole is "under wood" now, instead of being imprisoned in the red brick prison up on the hill, but his psyche is still imprisoned. There is some hope in the fact that this living, breathing creature is not pictured as still imprisoned by brick, concrete or steel; if he were, then perhaps his future would be hopeless. Yet Ole is not in the position of a seed, comparable to the young Pearl Button, ready to burst

forth. He is in a position half-way, as it were, between the sterility of metal and the fecundity of earth. Therefore Ole lives as a sort of sub-natural or perhaps para-natural animal inhabitant of earth, and with that type of non-human awareness.

Pearl's awareness is that of a child: innocent (or ignorant), primeval, prototypical, fresh and unsullied. Ole, like other adults, can never again attain this particular form of awareness. What adults can do is to rediscover, by experience, what was known intuitively in innocence. An expansion of consciousness for an adult, then, is a recovery or recognition of something which has been lost or overlaid. But what is it that gets lost or overlaid? A child apparently learns because of a built-in programmer or pattern-former of some sort, but in Ole's case the connection with the pattern-former has been broken or stopped-up so completely that Ole has been receiving no instructions or directions at all. Ole's programmer is "under wood," and in this respect he is like most of Mansfield's characters, albeit an extreme example thereof.

Yet Ole's condition is one step further into limbo than the rest of Mansfield's creations. All of us have lost our innocence, but Ole has lost more than his innocence and the connections to his programmer which will help him to remember or to put himself together again by his own efforts. He also has lost his experience, his past. His is almost an automaton-

like existence; he is, in fact, literally Mansfield's "walking-dead," rather than her "half-dead."\*

In this respect Ole demonstrates to the ultimate degree the compartmentalization or boxing-in of the various parts of the personality which so frequently is a theme in Mansfield's stories. Most of her characters fall about halfway between Pearl Button and Ole Underwood. The training of the people of her era, particularly women, was designed to root out assiduously all conscious knowledge of any of the more, earthy types of desires and lusts. The built-in programmer of the human computer apparently has to rely on such inherent connections or sources of energy as our natural desires, urges and lusts, our innate drives; if these are interfered with by external forces such as social pressures or ideologies, a great deal of harm is done, and the computer malfunctions. Then, indeed, "a great prince in prison lies."

It is extremely significant that Ole Underwood's expansion of consciousness is closely connected, as was Pearl Button's experience, with that primeval mother of us all, the sea. A symbol can never be completely interpreted, of course, but in both stories it seems evident that the sea represents for both Pearl and Ole the ne plus ultra of desirability,

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\*In her scrapbooks, notebooks and diaries Mansfield referred to the greater part of humanity as "the half-dead," occasionally bursting forth also with descriptions of "the walking-dead" for those whom she considered to be even more than half-dead.

desirability on all levels: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. For Ole it is an "old, old lust" reactivated; for Pearl it is completely primeval. The reader saw Pearl searching for a symbol to express to herself and to others an experience which she was having. She saw a great big mass of "something perfectly different," and she asked what it was and was told that it was the sea. This brings us full circle back to the nature of words and language. "What is it?" "It's the sea." Actually, what it "is" we'll never know. All we shall ever know is a relationship between two unknowns: ourselves and everything else. This relationship is expressed in the form of symbols, and the particular form of symbols with which we are concerned now is the English language.

In general we have forgotten that all our knowledge of this world is in the form of symbols, and therefore we have made an artificial category which we call "symbols" and into which we put only a few of those which we happen to be aware of at some particular time and place, such as literary or religious symbols. We tend to forget a great many other types of symbols such as those of mathematics or music. We also forget that every gesture we make is a material symbol of some immaterial happening in the psyche.

In perception, therefore, we are not dealing with two things (i.e. "mind" and "matter," or "in here" and "out there"); but with three. And this is the most important part



of that which usually is forgotten and which is very basic to Katherine Mansfield's focus on awareness. The psyche of a man is one phenomenon; whatever is not the psyche of that man is a second phenomenon; the relationship between the two is the third thing and is expressed in symbols. These symbols are all that this man will ever know intellectually.

To return, then, to the two stories under discussion, Mansfield gives us in shorthand form the nature of symbols when she has the Gypsy woman explain to Pearl, "We call it the sea" (my italics). "The sea"; there it is in black ink, three little letters trying hard to compress all that experience, all that relationship with the vast unknown, into the small compass of a symbol. But the more we think inside the word, the more it bursts out and expands like those tight, dry little paper flowers when they are put in water; our psyche is the water in which the flower of the symbol expands, Mansfield seems to say, but some psyches are like dry wells, and the flower cannot open, the symbol cannot grow, there is no heightening of awareness. Pearl Button is an unplumbed well of pure, fresh water; Ole Underwood is a dry well into which some water finally has begun to seep.

This is why "Ole Underwood" and "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped" provide such a key to Mansfield's works and thoughts. In "Ole Underwood" the correlation or connection between language and humanity, between the symbol and the psyche, is made more explicit than in any other story of

Mansfield's. We are human. We have desires, lusts and needs.

Why don't more of us know about our desires, our lusts? Is language helping or hindering us in discovering our own, individual, particular wants so that we can get on with the job of recognizing, exploring, reorganizing and satisfying them?

Of what are we aware? Are we aware of what is inside us or are we more aware of what we are told is inside us and which is carried implicitly by language? This is the underlying theme, possibly unconscious, which Mansfield develops in her short stories.

## CHAPTER IV

## "Sun and Moon":

Consciousness of Culturally-  
Defined Masculinity and Femininity

In "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped" and "Ole Underwood," two poles of awareness are depicted: the child's almost pristine state of awareness, and the old man's almost-complete state of unawareness. As mentioned above, most people are in a state of consciousness somewhere between these poles, and Katherine Mansfield's characters, particularly the protagonists dealt with in this thesis, lie very close to the centre of the normal curve of distribution in the vast majority of cases.

However, in this chapter the focus of analysis will turn from the actual state of awareness itself, to the process whereby one becomes unaware, as delineated by Mansfield. How is it that people can be so unaware of what they really are and what they really need? According to Katherine Mansfield, it is cultural training, both that which is explicit and that which is implicit in the mores, beliefs, ideals and goals of a society or civilization, which is the cause of this unawareness. The story "Sun and Moon" shows a typical upper-middle-

class family and how its children are trained. Some parts of their psyches will likely forever be inaccessible to them when this training is finished. It is particularly in the area of sexual roles which the two children are required to play that Mansfield criticizes many of the hypocritical and deforming beliefs which were endemic at the time depicted in this story.

If a woman has independence of will, strong feelings about satisfying her basic sexual urges, the desire for creativity outside of the well-defined areas assigned to her, she stands a good chance of being called "masculine," even today, and much more so in Katherine Mansfield's time. Of course men, too, who went beyond their culturally-defined boundaries were--and are--stigmatized (for example, in the story "Marriage a la Mode," the husband, William, is thoughtful, imaginative, cherishing and warm towards his wife, and has been described in criticism written in the 1960's as a feminine character<sup>3</sup>). Quite naturally, Mansfield deals more frequently with the pigeon-holing of women than with men, but her concern is with the process itself as it applies to all human beings, as "Sun and Moon" makes clear.

The story is almost a prototype of the kind of training which her society imposed upon children in apprehending their sexual roles. Written in 1920 and first published that same year in the Athenaeum (October 1), "Sun and Moon" is the story of the little boy and little girl of a well-to-

do family, who are allowed to see the beautiful table decorations and the elaborate food before the guests arrive for a party. The children then are dressed up and paraded before the guests, and later, when the guests have gone, the children are found asleep halfway up the stairs. They are taken to the dining room to be given a treat. The little girl eagerly eats the good things, but the little boy is appalled at the devastation wrought on the beauty and order which he had earlier seen.

Literally, "Sun and Moon" is a dream; Mansfield has written in her journals that she dreamt the whole thing. She herself was not part of the dream, but an onlooker. In the dream Sun is the boy, and Moon the girl.

Moon displays every single one of the "correct" female characteristics our civilization requires: she is pretty, passive, amenable, toadying, non-enquiring, a follower rather than a leader. She is a "good" girl. She will never, never rock the boat, step out of line, do anything on her own initiative. There will always be some man there to tell Moon what to do next. A few quotations will help to give the picture of Moon:

Moon laughed, too; she always did the same as other people. (p. 380)

"There you are, my lamb," said Nurse. "And you look like a sweet little cherub of a picture of a powder-puff?" (p. 380)

Sun did feel silly holding Moon's hand like that but Moon seemed to like it. She swung her arm and the bell on her coral bracelet jingled. (p. 381)

She put up her arms in front of everybody and said: "My Daddy must carry me." (p. 382)

And so on.

Sun is all "masculine." Society condones all his traits, while perhaps not necessarily approving of them. He is positive and dogmatic, and he initiates ideas and actions. He has a strong sense of order and commitment, and independence of will. He knows "what he wants and what he doesn't want":

They kept out of her way--at any rate Sun did. He did so hate being sent stumping back to the nursery. (p. 378)

"Moon, are you awake?...Well, let's go and look over the stairs." (p. 382)

And so they went back to the beautiful dining-room.

But--oh! oh! what had happened?...

Moon lifted up her pyjama legs and shuffled to the table and stood on a chair, squeaking away. ...

But Sun did not move from the door. Suddenly he put up his head and gave a loud wail. (p. 383)

This is Sun's reaction to the great treat of being given some of the left-over goodies, a treat greatly appreciated by Moon.

Lucky the person whose main characteristics fit in with the prescribed ones for his sex--but unlucky the society which has such rigid definitions of what constitutes gender that it distorts the very well springs of will and motivation. Mansfield's writings bear witness to the almost untold suffering of human beings, a great deal of which

stems from society's rigid definitions of gender. Polarization where it is not necessary, confrontations where complementary action is called for, dichotomies and bifurcations which are not actual but which are built into the language: these and more are the targets of Mansfield's stories as we see humanity (mostly the female half) writhing and twisting under its own verbalized bonds.

This Sun and this Moon are merely reflections of cultural patterning. They are not archetypal. For this reason I have not placed this "moon" with the moon of earthly desires which was dealt with earlier. From a human point of view, the moon as a symbol can stand for those earthly desires possessed by both men and women, namely our emotions and our urges to satisfy material longings. Such a moon is not depicted in this story.

This moon is a toadying, socialized and very corrupted one, an ideal Western female, and this story epitomizes this corruption of the concept and the symbol "moon." It is a corruption because the material world and its desires are assigned exclusively to the female sex. No doubt there are very palpable manifestations of the moon's effect on the female sex, in the menses--but too often it is forgotten that the male sex also is affected by the moon.

The "sun" in this story is equally corrupt. Usually the sun stands for our aspirations and our initiative, rather than for our emotional life. But this young Sun is

as much bound by his emotions as is his sister. His are merely manifested in a different way. Where she is amenable and toadying and chooses the path of least resistance in order to win the kind of approval left open to her, he is ruled by his society's approval of "manliness" manifest in aggressive, competitive, individualistic behaviour. In reality, both men and women have both "sun" and "moon" characteristics. That is, both men and women have initiative and reasoning ability, together with emotions and sensitivity.

In many of her stories Mansfield explored the question of how it is that people--women in particular--can keep on doing uncomfortable and undesirable things while being completely unaware of their own real needs. As one reads her stories one is able to see that it is a series of myths, illusions and romantic delusions that does it. The myths about femininity and masculinity are very basic to a society, very strong, and in her time and ours, often mistaken.

The myths, the illusions and the romanticizing examined here in "Sun and Moon," and basic to most of her stories, have to do with patriarchal monogamy and primogeniture. A woman must be taught to believe that the institutions of society are far more important and necessary than any of her own feelings and needs; that getting married, obeying her husband, having children, being supported financially by the husband, and bringing up her children with these same beliefs is the only way to live. Anyone not agreeing must



be made to feel very, very uncomfortable at the least, stigmatized as "unfeminine" or "castrating."

Consequently women who are trained as Moon was trained do not feel themselves to be persons in their own right. They are trained to be appendages to a man, a lien on the future of the propertied male.

The most damaging part of this whole syndrome is in the area of sexual awareness...true sexuality, that is, not "femininity." Sexual awareness definitely was not part of Moon's training. Most women like the one Moon is to become could not come to terms with their own sexuality for the simple reason that everything was done to conceal the fact that they had any.

In story after story Mansfield presents human beings lying to themselves, rationalizing and in general being the usual sexually-hypocritical and romance-ridden stereotypes of the time. One's sexuality is so basic to one's whole outlook, to the picture that one has of oneself, that twisting a person's sexuality, as was done by the "Moon training," proved to be dangerous and debilitating. Sigmund Freud's patients in Vienna were mostly well-to-do women completely at sea as regards who or what they were sexually, because of a training much like Moon's.

Men were subjected to a different kind of training, equally rigorous in its way and equally debilitating, but not so hypocritical sexually. The weakness of the male.

training was in not being able to visualize themselves as being supportive or cherishing in human relations to any great extent. The husband in "Six Years After" says that he knows that he couldn't dissemble as his wife can. He won't even try. And Mr. Salesby, in "The Man with No Temperament," tries--but not very hard--and fails abysmally. Men had been presented with no roles or rules for pretending along these particular lines, whereas practically the whole of a woman's life was basically a series of pretenses. Things had gone so far wrong in the definition of sexual roles for the upper bourgeoisie in the England of that time that both men and women were very often extremely uncomfortable, but of course usually without knowing why. Each sex had to pretend to itself and to the other that it was what it was not (i.e. either pure "feminine" or pure "masculine").

In an earlier story, "The Swing of the Pendulum" (1910), Mansfield wrote of a young couple who fell in love: "They were like two patients in the same ward of a hospital, both sick and in need of comfort." (p. 112) In fact, thinking about most of Mansfield's work, one could say that her characters move about in the halls and wards of a monstrous insane asylum which is the England of her day. The rules are seen not merely as inane, but as actually insane, and the Mansfieldian irony is apparent throughout.

As "Sun and Moon" shows the training ground of the very young being drilled in their roles laid down by society,

so "Revelations" (c. 1918) shows some of this training bearing fruit. Imagine Monica Tyrell, the "heroine" of this story, is Moon as a young woman who has not been lucky enough to "land a man" suitable to her own or her family's social and financial expectations. In this story Monica is being kept by some man, and in the following sentence she speaks about what she feels are the only possible roles for her to play, and it is obvious how restricting she finds them:

Oh, to be free of 'Princes' at one-thirty, of being the tiny kitten in the swansdown basket, of being the Arabian, and the grave, delighted child and the little wild creature.... (p. 428, Mansfield's ellipses)

To amuse and entertain her meal-ticket, Monica has had to act out these four roles, with each of which almost any woman in Western society can immediately identify, with unconscious self-loathing. Moon's training has produced a kind of semi-professional geisha, but without the status and lack of hypocrisy of that institution.

Toward the end of her life Mansfield wrote a story about the male/female principle which was, unfortunately, left unfinished, like so many of her most ambitious stories of that period. In "Honesty" she has the rational, masculine principle embodied in the owner of the house, who sees no way of life, no way of thinking, feeling or doing other than his own. His paying guest embodies the female principle and is receptive, succoring, imaginative and warm. The guest (another man, incidentally) is denied the kind of food,

surroundings, friendship and life in general, that he wants and needs. All his "intake" is programmed by the rational factor alone who has appointed himself as arbiter. The paying guest is merely tolerated, while drained dry nevertheless. "Sun and Moon" has shown this passive, female element being trained in being ignored, and in being undervalued; "Honesty" shows it fully operative.

There are at least two levels in this allegory, "Honesty." The two men, the host and the guest, personify the two main parts of the human personality, that is, the initiatory and the receptive (it might cause a lot less trouble if they were thought of this way, or as positive and negative charges of electricity, rather than as "male" and "female"). The house they live in represents an individual's body. On another level the house is our society and the host is presented as personifying the male role or so-called "male characteristics" of reasoning, initiating, forcefulness, etc.; while the guest personifies the so-called "female characteristics," the desires, emotions and so on.

Reason has been so glorified and worshipped that the subservient emotions can barely be heard from. Instead of being allowed to see these as complementary, resulting in an interplay inside the psyche of great benefit to the individual, a great dichotomy and value system is set up, favouring reason over emotions. Today's great "pornographic explosion" seems to be a rather dramatic manifestation of some kind of

balancing taking place. The emotions have to be heard from; the connection between the more or less unconscious desires and needs has to remain open and listened to, or, as Donne says, "a great prince in prison lies."\*

The story "Sun and Moon," showing the training ground for the sexes in an upper-middle-class English milieu, brings out clearly one way in which the "mind-forg'd manacles" hold people in such rigid patterns of behaviour that many parts of them remain "half-dead" for the rest of their lives. Moon probably will never be able to show any initiative. It has been too well drilled into her that initiative is not right for her, not feminine, not desirable, not needed by her and not appreciated in her by others. Sun, of course, will bear the brunt of having to keep a "stiff upper lip," never able to cry or to show his emotions.

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\*It is interesting at this point to compare the writings of Katherine Mansfield and D.H. Lawrence, who were contemporaries and sometime friends. Lawrence seemed to bemoan the repression of the emotions and to imply that a man would be more whole if more emphasis were placed on the development and fulfillment of the emotional life. Mansfield never goes this far. She does call the whole area into question and examination, but never gives answers, certainly not in the dogmatic manner of Lawrence. She seems always to be seeking wider and broader alternatives. For lack of better terminology at the moment, let us say that there is a feeling of spiritual searching in Mansfield's writings that is lacking in Lawrence's; or perhaps merely the feeling that she has not made up her mind yet whether more emphasis on the emotions would produce any wholer a person. Perhaps it would produce people lopsided in that direction. She asks questions about sexuality and about emotions and about reason, but one gets the impression in reading her works that it is too soon to try to come up with any answers as yet. Mansfield and Lawrence would both agree that the situation was bad as it was then. They would disagree on the means of correcting it.

What is masculine and what is feminine have become polarized, rigid, and have been assigned almost exclusively to one sex or the other. The complementariness of certain human characteristics and the fact that a continuum of qualities is manifest in both sexes, has been ignored. Much of Mansfield's writing probes into this very important area, making enquiries as to just what maleness and femaleness are and what is the relationship between them. Unlike many other writers, both of her own time and later, Mansfield did not make an attempt to come up with any answers, of necessity facile and incomplete. Although almost every one of her stories deals in some way with sex, it is not with specific or dramatic incidents, so popular in the novel. Mansfield exposes many of the basic assumptions about sex and gender under which we labour and which to this day are rarely analyzed sensibly.

## CHAPTER V

## "Bliss":

A Bourgeois "Feminine" Consciousness;

A Dawning Awareness of Sexuality.

"Bliss" (1918) shows most clearly the impact of the type of training which Moon received in the story "Sun and Moon." This kind of training was particularly bad in that a woman was not allowed to see herself as a sexual being at all.

This produced a great and an untrue dichotomy between men and women. It was hypocritical and the cause of much unhappiness and suffering. Other Mansfield stories which deal primarily with woman in the role of wife or mother are "Prelude," "At the Bay," "New Dresses," "The Woman at the Store," "Millie," "The Escape," "The Stranger," "Life of Ma Parker," "Six Years After," "Marriage a la Mode," "Honeymoon" and "A Cup of Tea." But almost every Mansfield story deals with sexual unawareness to some degree, and how it is fostered by the hypocritical ideals of patriarchal monogamy.

Patriarchal monogamy and its various implications and ramifications are seen in most Mansfield stories as the cause of the "half-dead" condition of her characters. The focus in Mansfield stories is often on the repression of the sexuality of women, which had reached a very great degree

of intensity in her time. Many sexual habits, both hypocritical and debilitating, had gradually been foisted onto women as institutions of patriarchal monogamy and primogeniture became tied in more and more with the economic structure. It became of such paramount importance to know who sired the sons and how to handle the property that any consequent obstruction to the life-flow of any woman concerned was completely ignored.

The story "Bliss,"\* one of Mansfield's most well-known stories, written in 1917 and published the following year, is perhaps her clearest indictment. Bertha Young, the protagonist in "Bliss," is almost a classic example of the average upper-middle-class woman of her time (and even in some cases of our own) who has been brought up to serve society and not herself. Bertha is married, healthy, well-to-do, and a mother. When the story opens she is in an exalted, "blissful" state of mind without knowing quite why. She feeds her baby daughter, arranges some fruit, dresses for her dinner party, speaks to her husband on the telephone, greets and entertains her guests, all in the same state of bliss. During the party she stands with one special woman guest and looks at the beautiful pear tree in her garden.

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\*The title is a typical example of Mansfield irony. When she uses the word "bliss" it is always with the connotation of "bondage." See for example "Mr and Mrs Dove" and "Poison."



As this woman leaves, Bertha sees her and her own husband exchange a kiss and a look which leaves Bertha in no doubt as to their present relationship.

Bertha Young is in a state of bliss. What does this feel like? How is it manifested externally? What causes it? Why is Bertha Young blissful right now? One interpretation is that Bertha is consciously in this exalted state because she is unconsciously aware of the liaison between her husband and her latest female "crush."<sup>4</sup> This is very probable. But whatever the cause, Bertha is in an unusual state of consciousness when the story opens. This day is not like any other day to her, and therefore she will react to events in a different way. From the first sentence the state of mind is highlighted:

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

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?... (p. 337, Mansfield's elipses)

Bertha does not remain in this blissful, receptive, expectant state. This state leads naturally into another state of consciousness. From being expectant of one knows not what, one can go naturally to the state of knowing what

it is one is waiting for. This happens to Bertha. During the course of the story she finds out something about herself that she had never realized before. She becomes aware of her own sexual nature and its desires. The first thing to happen is a mild questioning of the restricting conventions of her time:

Oh, is there no way you can express it without being "drunk and disorderly"? How idiotic civilization is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle? (pp. 337-38)

Bertha does various things around the house. She still is very much in a state of bliss ("But in her bosom there was still that bright glowing place...." p. 338) and she still questions her situation on a very superficial level ("How absurd it was. Why have a baby if it has to be kept--not in a case like a rare, rare fiddle--but in another woman's arms?" p. 339).

Mansfield is at great pains to show that Bertha has never been aroused sexually, has never had an orgasm, although she is in full bloom like the pear tree. Sexually-immature Bertha "young" has been playing at doll's house up to now. All her sexual energy has gone into the stage effects of her domestic scene and the role she is compelled to play. She has everything she could possibly want, except herself ("...all her feeling of bliss came back again, and again she didn't know how to express it--what to do with it." p. 340). When her husband telephones, this thwarted drive is even more

evident:

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!" (p. 340)

Then come the preparations for the party and the party itself. Before the party, Bertha is at a peak of excitement ("...she surprised herself by suddenly hugging it [a pillow] to her, passionately, passionately. But it did not put out the fire in her bosom. Oh, on the contrary!" p.341). And it is at this point that Mansfield introduces the symbol of the pear tree, as a symbol of sexual desires:

At the far end, against the wall, there was a tall, slender pear tree in fullest, richest bloom; it stood perfect, as though becalmed against the jade-green sky. (p. 341)

As part of this scene there are two cats intent on sex: "A grey cat, dragging its belly, crept across the lawn, and a Black one, its shadow, trailed after. The sight of them, so intent and so quick, gave Bertha a curious shiver." (p. 341) Bertha reacts to this sight by consciously rejecting any idea of sexual desires on her own part: "'What creepy things cats are!' she stammered, and she turned away from the window and began walking up and down...." (p. 341, Mansfield's ellipses).

But something has bothered her unconsciously, and so she is consciously quick to say to herself, "I'm too happy--too happy." (p. 342) And she immediately begins to rationalize about how "happily married" she is. She has everything, and she enumerates what she has--whistling in the dark.

Because of her sexual ignorance and consequent fears, it has been Bertha Young's habit to continue the safe crushes of her school-days, namely ones over other women. This is a safe and undemanding situation. Bertha has never had to give fully of herself to anyone, nor to any situation. In an extremely penetrating crescendo of analysis, Mansfield shows the reader Bertha's expanding awareness prior to the realization of her own sexuality. Many of the effects used in "Ole Underwood" are used here, such as recurring images (images of possessions put away in boxes and not used, such as "rare, rare fiddles"; images of radiant, fertile blossoming, of moonlight, pearls, whiteness and silveriness); all weave an ever-widening web of impressions and realizations.

For example, Bertha is wearing a white dress that evening; "Her petals rustled softly into the hall...." (p. 342); when a guest remarks, "There is a moon, you know," she "wanted to cry: 'I'm sure there is--often--often!'" (p. 343); we see "Miss Fulton, all in silver, with a little silver fillet binding her pale blond hair..." (p. 344), and then "Miss Fulton" becomes "Pearl Fulton"; and with Pearl Fulton's entrance Bertha wonders,

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? (p. 344)

"Pearl is the person whom Bertha has unconsciously decided is the safest to identify with, to have as her alter ego or

bosom friend, or the person who merely personifies the projection of her own frustrated sexuality. Whatever the reason, it is to Pearl that she turns, and Pearl seems another symbol of Bertha's unconscious sexuality. The identification which Bertha feels with Pearl Fulton is quite explicit in the following passages:

But Bertha knew, suddenly, as if the longest, most intimate look had passed between them--as if they had said to each other: You, too?"--that Pearl Fulton, stirring the beautiful red soup in the grey plate, was feeling just what she was feeling.

(p. 345)

Oh, why did she feel so tender towards the whole world tonight? Everything was good--was right. All that happened seemed to fill again her brimming cup of bliss.

And still, in the back of her mind, there was the pear tree. It would be silver now, in the light of poor dear Eddie's moon, silver as Miss Fulton, who sat there turning a tangerine in her slender fingers that were so pale a light seemed to come from them.\*

(p. 346)

The connection between Pearl, the pear tree and the moon, and the connection between Bertha's mood of bliss and her feeling for Pearl, are continually being made:

What she simply couldn't make out-- what was miraculous--was how she should have guessed Miss Fulton's mood so exactly and so instantly. For she never doubted for a moment that she was right, and yet what had she to go on? Less than nothing.

(p. 346)

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\*The golden tangerine can be interpreted as a sun symbol, in which case the female moon can be seen as toying with the male, or leading him on, or as a sexual conquest already achieved by Pearl Fulton. The moon is an archetypal image of erotic desire for both male and female. However, in this story it is the experience of one particular female which is being presented, and therefore the moon and the allied symbols are used for their feminine aspects.

Bertha decides that some significant gesture will occur which will seal the pact of intuitive knowledge which she feels that she and Pearl share, and, sure enough, "At that moment Miss Fulton 'gave the sign.'" (p. 346) Since Bertha is so caught up in her erotic images of Pearl and the pear tree and her own excitement, it takes nothing more than the question by Pearl, "Have you a garden?" to confirm Bertha in her conviction that there is something beautiful and basic connecting Pearl and herself. In Bertha's imagination they share an exquisite moment:

And the two women stood side by side looking at the slender, flowering tree. Although it was so still it seemed, like the flame of a candle, to stretch up, to point, to quiver in the bright air, to grow taller and taller as they gazed--almost to touch the rim of the round, silver moon.

How long did they stand there? Both, as it were, caught in that circle of unearthly light, understanding each other perfectly, creatures of another world, and wondering what they were to do in this one with all this blissful treasure that burned in their bosoms and dropped, in silver flowers, from their hair and hands? (p. 347)

Mansfield has now connected and identified the two sexual symbols, those of Pearl and the pear tree, in the mind of her central character, and there remains now only the spark which will transmute these two into some realization in Bertha's consciousness. The reader does not have long to wait.

For some reason, Bertha imagines that her husband Harry does not like Pearl, and on a conscious level she tells herself

that, after the party, she will try to tell Harry what Pearl means to her:

Oh, Harry, don't dislike her. You are quite wrong about her. She's wonderful, wonderful. And besides, how can you feel so differently about someone who means so much to me. I shall try to tell you when we are in bed to-night what has been happening. What she and I have shared. (p. 348)

The concept of "shared" (or possibly at first even the mere word "shared") is the break-through for Bertha. The sudden juxtaposition of the thrill which she has just had with Pearl while drinking in the vision of the glorious pear tree, with the image of Harry and herself in the bed in the dark--plus possibly the unconscious picture of what Harry and Pearl may have shared--is too much for the conscious barriers which have been set up by her training and habit. A flood of desire wells up, and she consciously acknowledges it for the first time in her life:

At those last words something strange and almost terrifying darted into Bertha's mind. And this something blind and smiling whispered to her: "Soon these people will go. The house will be quiet--quiet. The lights will be out. And you and he will be alone together in the dark room--the warm bed...."

She jumped up from her chair and ran over to the piano.

"What a pity someone does not play!" she cried. "What a pity somebody does not play."

For the first time in her life Bertha Young desired her husband. (p. 348, Mansfield's ellipses)

Always before this, Bertha had managed to conceal her own desire from herself. She had become uncomfortable at

the slightest hint of sexual yearning, and she quickly stifled it. She had been taught to despise and fear these "dark" urges in herself. Obviously, then, up to now she has merely gone through the motions of sexual intercourse because it was required of her, a duty, but she has received no satisfaction whatsoever:

Oh, she'd loved him--she'd been in love with him, of course, in every other way, but just not in that way. And, equally, of course, she'd understood that he was different. They'd discussed it so often. It had worried her dreadfully at first to find that she was so cold, but after a time it had not seemed to matter. They were so frank with each other--such good pals. That was the best of being modern. (p. 348)

When this desire seizes her it is strange, overwhelming and frightening. She had always known unconsciously that it was there, of course, but consciously she had denied it and covered it up with the rationalizing which she had been taught. Now the circumstances are propitious. She is in an exalted, excited, amorous state, and the spark of suggestibility built up to incredible heights in her psyche sparks the connection, and that is all that is needed.

Mansfield does not end Bertha's story with her discovery of her sexual nature. Bertha has been asleep and dreaming on this level, and if she is to awaken and receive the full rights of her new state, then she also must bear the responsibilities. "Bertha" must now pay the price of her re-birth. She is now too aware to fool herself any longer about Harry and Pearl, if she had been doing it before. Mansfield makes



this very clear by an overt act on their part and by making Bertha an observer of it. Bertha has now grown up sexually-- but, where does she go from there?

Like so many of Mansfield's stories, this one ends ambiguously. But there are hints. We are presented with a full-blown brunette who is very sensuous, but who has mistakenly denied her own nature. She shares a bed legally with a man whom she now desires. It seems likely that the dark horse will win, as the palomino is now running on the outside track.

## CHAPTER VI

"Something Childish but Very Natural":

Myths and the State of Consciousness

of "Being in Love"

Some of Mansfield's stories such as "Poison," "The Swing of the Pendulum," "Reginald Peacock's Day," "The Tiredness of Rosabel," "Violet," "A Blaze," "Psychology," "A Dill Pickle," "Revelations" and "The Garden Party" show young men or young women (and some not so young) as being unable to differentiate between their own real emotions or feelings and what they have been taught to believe "should" be their real feelings and emotions. For instance, they cannot differentiate between the love of an ideal and the love for a person--a situation which is far from uncommon today also. Their minds are shown as filled with all sorts of mutually exclusive ideals, categories, myths, beliefs, illusions and delusions, and Mansfield presents them in the process of lying and of rationalizing to themselves inside their psyches.

The story "Something Childish but Very Natural" (1913) shows Mansfield in her ambiguous attitude toward romantic love. How much do we kid ourselves, she seems to be asking.

Young love does exist and young people do feel it, but how much is natural and how much have culture and convention interfered and muddled the waters? Of what should we be truly aware?

"Something Childish but Very Natural" explores, in the psyche of a young man, the development of romantic love in a unique manner, from the first meeting to the idyllic climax. It is spring in London and Henry nearly misses his train because he is busy memorizing a poem at a nearby bookstand.\* He introduces himself to the attractive young woman in the train compartment, and explains his dishevelment. As the result of this chance meeting they become very attached to each other, going to concerts and the park, and for walks together. One blissful day they spend entirely in each other's company in the country. While there they find a

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\*This poem is so important to a discussion of this story that it is given here in full:

Had I but two little wings,  
And were a little feathery bird,  
To you I'd fly, my dear,  
But thoughts like these are idle things,  
And I stay here.

But in my sleep to you I fly,  
I'm always with you in my sleep,  
The world is all one's own,  
But then one wakes and where am I?  
All, all alone.

Sleep stays not though a monarch bids,  
So I love to wake at break of day,  
For though my sleep be gone,  
Yet while 'tis dark one shuts one's lids,  
And so, dreams on.

little dream cottage, and there they plight their troth.

Henry is a romantic dreamer. Like many of Mansfield's young men (such as Reggie in "Mr and Mrs Dove," Ian French in "Feuille d'Album," and even George in "Honeymoon"), he carries the romantic and sentimental idealizations of medieval courtly love into the twentieth century. In fact, Henry in this regard is the Mansfield prototype. He is idealistic and romantic, and at the same time confused with ideas of male authority and other mutually exclusive dogma. He is ready to worship the Goddess Woman, but at the beginning of the story we see him so engrossed in memorizing a little poem which entrances him that he almost misses the woman.

Mansfield uses this poem to get in some digs at romantic love. She also uses part of this poem in "Poison," which satirizes the ideal of putting women on pedestals. Romantic love is inextricably tied up with mystical love, the "rose" and religious adoration. In "Poison" the heroine's name is Beatrice, and it should be remembered that Dante's Beatrice was never his physically. Romantic love thrives on idealization, expectation and the unattainable.

Significantly the tenor of the poem is that dreaming of the loved one is better than being awake and alone; nothing is said about being awake and being with the loved one. Throughout the story Henry is shown as he becomes more and more enamored of Edna, and as he sees the situation as

more and more dreamlike until Part VII, the last section, the reader is not sure whether the whole section is a dream or not.

The two young people, Henry and Edna, are both sweetly childish and innocent. There is a clever counterpoint of sexual awareness played throughout the story. The man is aroused first by the sight, smell and touch of the woman; she is not aroused, but is wary and will not be touched. For a time, then, there is a period of relative quiescence when both man and woman are content merely with the other's nearness. But this cannot last. The climax is reached after an idyllic day in the woods together. There they discover their dream cottage and in it Edna tells Henry that she now desires his kisses. "You're perfect, perfect, perfect," Henry says (p. 181).

Thus ends Part VI and possibly (probably?) the action. In Part VII we find Henry ostensibly at the cottage waiting for Edna for a weekend together. But is he really there? Some of the reasons for thinking Part VII is only a dream are as follows:

The action and description in this section are very dreamlike, for instance in Mansfield's use of white images: Henry puts white pinks on the table and takes up a white jug; later he sees a white moth which turns out to be a little girl in a pinafore, who gives him a telegram. In "Ole Underwood" the pinks are red, the colour of blood and passion; it seems significant that white, so often sensuously dreamlike for Mansfield,\* is chosen here.

Instead of dreaming of loving Edna in Part VII, Henry

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\*See for example "Bliss" (p. 346), "Poison" (p. 564), "At the Bay" (p. 263), "The Tiredness of Rosabel" (p. 8), and "Escape" (p. 435).

backtracks in this section to when she spoke of "faith":

"But, Henry," she said, coming closer,  
 "you have faith, haven't you? I mean you are  
 absolutely certain that we shall have a house  
 like that and everything we want--aren't you?"  
 (p. 177)

But this conversation took place before they went into their particular little house and before Edna had told Henry that she now wanted him to kiss her, at last. It dealt with another little house that they had seen only from the outside, and had imagined or dreamed that they were in. Thus in Part VII Henry is not shown as remembering the kiss, if there was a kiss, nor even remembering the statement about the kiss, if there was not. He is shown as returning to a much earlier time in the romance in his memory. Actual love seems to have taken second place to planning and idealizations about love, or at any rate there is no progression from the state that they were in at the end of Part VI.

Also in Part VII, Henry imagines Edna and himself sleeping in separate bedrooms in the cottage without visiting each other. This hardly seems to carry on from where Part VI leaves off. "You're perfect, perfect, perfect," Henry had told her because she now desires him. But the image in his mind in Part VII is:

...I shall dash upstairs and jump into bed and watch the tiny bar of light from her room brush my door, and the moment it disappears will shut my eyes and sleep until morning. (p. 182)

Hardly the act of a passionate lover.

Part VII is probably a dream for artistic reasons. After Henry has exulted over Edna's perfection at the end of Part VI, the author has the choice of ending the story there, of showing the love brought to fruition either happily or unhappily, or of showing some snag in the events before fruition. Mansfield chooses none of these--or does she choose them all?

Henry has thought earlier, as he lay on his back in the woods:

The time before, Edna was a dream and now he and she were dreaming together and somewhere in some dark place another dream waited for him. "No, that can't be true because I can't ever imagine the world without us. I feel that we two together mean something that's got to be there just as naturally as trees or birds or clouds." He tried to remember what it had felt like without Edna, but he could not get back to those days. They were hidden by her; Edna, with the marigold hair and strange, dreamy smile filled him up to the brim. He breathed her; he ate and drank her. He walked about with a shining ring of Edna keeping the world away or touching whatever it lighted on with its own beauty. (p. 178)

Before he had actually met Edna, she had existed for him only as a projection of his ideal woman. Now it seems to the young man "in love" that his dream has come true. Has it indeed? asks Mansfield, and leaves it at that.

In fact, it would seem as though Mansfield, in some strange and wonderful way, is leaving it up to the reader, once more, to read into it his own ending. Does Part VII show Henry actually at the cottage while Edna has cold feet, or for some other reason sends him a telegram saying

that she can't come? Or is Henry really at the cottage waiting for Edna, but he falls asleep and only dreams that he receives a telegram saying that she can't come? Or is the reader just dreaming that the telegram says that she can't come? Or is Henry not at the cottage at all, and all of Part VII is a dream? Who can say with certainty? In effect, the whole story is a young man's dream of a perfect, but sexless, relationship.

Young men, then, who read this story perhaps should dream or imagine that she arrives after all and that Henry and his Edna live happily ever after. The story started in the spring, when, Mansfield says, "even city folk walked as though they carried real live bodies under their clothes" (p. 165), so perhaps anything goes. Possibly then young men can forget some of Henry's strange remarks, such as this one which he makes just as he gets to the door of the first cottage, the one Henry and Edna never enter: "Let's go away at once. It's going to turn into a dream." (p. 177) And the young men can then remember only the sensual longing of such lines as these when Henry is lying in the woods and Edna is gathering flowers:

...and then he rolled over and pressed his face in the leaves--faint with longing. He wanted to kiss Edna and to put his arms round her and press her to him and feel her cheek hot against his kiss and kiss her until he'd no breath left and so stifle the dream. (pp. 178-79)

But older people might be more aware of those last few



words, "and so stifle the dream," and ponder over the questions raised over the relationship between anticipation and realization. And older people might pay more attention to the recurrent "charade" theme which Mansfield uses every so often when she is exploring real feelings and emotions, and contrasting them to certain set responses set up by convention:

"Long after you have stopped laughing," he told her, I can hear your laugh running up and down my veins--and yet--are we a dream?" And suddenly he saw himself and Edna as two very small children walking through the streets, looking through windows, buying things and playing with them, talking to each other, smiling--he saw even their gestures and the way they stood, so often, quite still, face to face.... (p. 178)

They way they feel about each other is real, but society says that they are too young. It therefore cannot be real. There is no money to make their dreams real. It is only childish make-believe, all of it.

In "See-Saw" Mansfield contrasts old babies and young babies playing charades. The young babies "play at house" in a hollow in the park, but the old babies also are really only "playing" at life (p. 402). They have been together so long, those old babies, that they have nothing to do with each other, really, and words and actions are as lifeless as the relationships between them.

Mansfield is taking no chances in "Something Childish but Very Natural" of anything at all tarnishing this perfect relationship, and thus she seems to leave it entirely up in

the air. All in all, this story is a lovely touching of the sea of childhood with the land of adulthood, a joining best left to the imagination. In this story the two main characters have had each other's nearness, they have looked at the sky together, at the stars and the flowers, and have shared a fire. They have pledged their troth. They have been in that state of consciousness called "being in love" ("He breathed her; he ate and drank her. He walked about with a shining ring of Edna keeping the world away...." p. 178).

Whether Edna comes to the cottage or not really is immaterial. They have had their perfect dream. The idyll is over. It has been dreamy, ambiguous, paradoxical and contradictory--in fact, very like life. This whole story is so poetic that it could well stand as one of the longest prose poems in the English language. It is in the noble dream-convention tradition of which Chaucer's "The Book of the Duchess" is such a lovely example. In many respects this story is superior as it deals more directly with the sensual element, pure and exalted though the tone is throughout.

In this story Mansfield raises questions about the stylizations and codifications of beliefs pertaining to romantic love in her society. The little poem which so affected the hero expresses the belief that this world is not the place for such love. It is the world of dreams which is its natural habitat. Yet at the same time lovers living inside

Western culture do not, of course, wish to relegate the whole affair to a dream. How to deal with it? Traditionally in Western society romantic love has often been thought of and spoken of as a disease, or as a possession by demons. Ideally it is thought of as existing only once in one's lifetime and then one lives "happily ever after." Another belief in our Western society is that one who has not had the experience of romantic love has missed the culminating experience of his life. How is the young person in love to reconcile the many romantic conventions and beliefs which have accumulated, with his own feelings and existential situation in the workaday world?

In this Mansfield story these questions and many more are implicitly asked. It is to Mansfield's credit that she has the prudence not to attempt an answer.

## CHAPTER VII

"Je ne parle pas Français":

An "Artistic" Consciousness  
and Lack of Awareness of Deeper Levels

In a very few of her stories Mansfield turns away from her bewildered bourgeoisie to analyze the specific content of other forms of delusion. In "Ma Parker" and "The Lady's Maid," for instance, she presents the reader with two very different women, each of the "lower classes," but nevertheless the main point of each story is how bourgeois ideals have infected them. For example, Ma Parker is so imbued with bourgeois ideals of good taste and good manners as regards showing one's emotions in public that she literally has no place to cry. In "The Lady's Maid" we are presented with an elderly maid whose hairdresser grandfather had valued her chiefly, when she was a child, as a head of fine hair. Her employer values her as a pair of fine helping hands. The lady's maid has learned her lesson so well that she is completely unaware of any other dimensions of her being.

However, Mansfield occasionally wrote about another non-bourgeois group: the "artistic" people of her time, writers,

painters, bohemian types. In these stories she explores the illusions of a class of people sometimes thought to be more than relatively free of bourgeois ideals. Stories in which these sorts of psyches are explored are "Daphne," "The Advanced Lady," "The Modern Soul," "Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day," "Pictures," "The Swing of the Pendulum," "Psychology," "Feuille d'Album," "Marriage a la Mode," "Bliss," "A Married Man's Story" and "Je ne parle pas Français." This last has been chosen as the most interesting example of unawareness in a writer's psyche.

The peculiar position of the artist, who is not bound by certain conventions nor unaware in quite the same way as is the bourgeoisie, is dealt with in "Je ne parle pas Français," a story written in 1918 and first published privately by Mansfield's husband, Middleton Murry, in 1920. The artist, however, can be equally bound by his own preconceptions of what creativity is and is not. It almost raises the question that if you make of your life a work of art, can you create artistic products?\*

"Je ne parle pas Français" also deals, among other things, with non-verbal communication and with the relationship between men and women, and shows us a keen and intelligent mind in the process of rationalizing itself into

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\*Arthur Rimbaud springs to mind at once. After spending his early years in a type of personal exploration, a great deal of which ended on the printed page, he gave up that particular crystallization of his efforts entirely. What in fact he did "do" with the rest of his life has been variously interpreted.

separate little boxes of dead-end decisions and assumptions.

Raoul Duquette, a writer in Paris, saw the words "Je ne parle pas Français" written on a blotter, and immediately the most significant episode in his life was brought back to him. It concerned his friendship with an Englishman, Dick Harmon, whom he had met some years earlier at a party. He was chagrined when Dick had returned to England at short notice. Then Dick wrote to Raoul that he was coming back to Paris and bringing a woman with him. It is this woman-friend, Mouse," who spoke the words, "Je ne parle pas Français," when she and Raoul were introduced. She was an attractive person, Raoul thought. Immediately upon Raoul's showing them the rooms which he had found for them, Dick went back to England to his mother. Raoul first comforted Mouse, then left her, and he never went near the place again. Why? Raoul doesn't know.

Raoul Duquette, the first-person narrator in this story, is usually merely described as corrupt and weak-willed.<sup>5</sup> Mouse, the abandoned Englishwoman who does not speak French, is seen by some critics as a surrogate Mansfield.<sup>6</sup> It is true that in her personal and non-literary writings Mansfield came down hard and heavy on the cruel world in relation to "poor, weak" her, but this does not mean that in her works of art there is going to be a one-to-one relationship between a "poor, weak" character and herself. And anyway, Mouse was not poor and weak, despite the name. No more is

Raoul Duquette a villain. The whole thing is far more subtle than that.

It is significant that the key phrase is "I do not speak French." Not only is it the title phrase, but it is the phrase which conjures up the whole meaning for Raoul, and it is a phrase whose meaning deals with the inability to communicate. But on what level and with whom? In this story Mansfield is dealing with non-verbal communication, mixed up with extremely complex artistic verbal communication. And in between the two is Life...that old Hag. "Not speaking," or not being able to communicate by the use of words, is a favourite area of interest to Mansfield. What can words do and what can they not do? How much of oneself must be given to words and how much must be held back for oneself? This is a question of particular importance for a writer. A sculptor, painter, musician, dancer or even actor does not have the same problem that the author does\*: that of the possible "cannibalization" of experience and life from the misuse or over-use of words. Words seem to have a life of their own. If one does not examine and re-examine them systematically and regularly, they are apt to fool one into believing in "word magic," that is, taking the words as meaning something in and of themselves.

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\*Jorge Luis Borges, in Labyrinth, writes that "the other one is Borges, the one things happen to--I was the one who started the games of mythologizing but Borges took them over. I must look for something new." (New York: New Directions, 1972) p. 246.

In this story, Raoul Duquette, a writer and a poet, is operating a good deal of the time at a level where there is no speech. Unfortunately his poetry is not drawn from this area at all. He reaches his "secret self" momentarily, but rejects it:

Just for one moment I was not. I was Agony, Agony, Agony.

Then it passed, and the very second after I was thinking: "Good God! Am I capable of feeling as strongly as that?" (p. 354)

He wishes to keep himself intact. So he stays on the level he is used to, and he packs away these deep feelings that he does not want to be aware of as if they were in a portmanteau. Meanwhile he works and reworks the superficialities of his life into his writings, because it is safer and easier. There is more in common, perhaps, between Mansfield and Raoul than between Mansfield and Mouse: Mansfield the writer, who strove never to remain on that level of superficiality on which she depicts Raoul as operating.

Mouse, unlike Raoul, has hazarded all on one throw of the dice. If Mouse had not done so, if she had played safe and not come to France with Dick Harmon ("harmony"), she would have remained in England in the "half-dead" state of most of Mansfield's characters. Mouse loved Dick. She needed him and she wanted him, but she knew that she might lose him. She was well aware of Dick's attachment to his mother. Such things can hardly be kept a secret. The letter



from Dick was a horrible blow to her, a terrible shock, but not a complete surprise. Mouse could tell that while Dick's body was there with her in Paris, he had left himself back in England with his mother long before he actually left her. All his actions and speech, the very atmosphere of the man, must have told her this, as she says:

"I knew all along, of course," said the cold, salty little voice. "From the very moment that we started. I felt it all through me, but I still went on hoping--" and here she took the handkerchief down and gave me a final glimmer--"as one so stupidly does, you know." (p. 375)

Raoul was absolutely immaterial to Mouse. She didn't really need his help at all. What Raoul really was attracted to in Mouse was her integrity, not her helplessness nor her sex appeal. She knew her secret self. She knew what Mouse needed. Mouse is indeed left unhappy and forlorn, but not shattered. Mouse may never love again in her life as she has loved Dick Harmon, nor place herself again in such a vulnerable position, but she has responded wholly and fully to her own situation and needs. Raoul can never do this, and it is this fact which he recognizes unconsciously, but without facing up to the implications of it. And thus he vainly rushes around trying to gather some of the manna for himself: "Mouse! Mouse! Where are you? Are you near?" .... Now the poor dog has come back into the café, his tail between his legs, quite exhausted." (p. 355) Referring to himself as an obsequious little fox-terrier hurts less than coming to terms with the agony of his rejected secret self.

He is too frightened to stay in and explore his own secret self. He backs off into words. He turns outward. He knows that something superb, something unique, has happened with Mouse, and he knows that he has missed it. But he either cannot or will not emulate Mouse in staking his all as she has done. His failure to help Mouse (and thus becoming the "villain" of the piece) isn't where he has missed out; he has missed out on being cued in to himself as she is cued in to herself. He will continue to write smart, facile and cheap verse, and to get his sexual kicks hither and yon, but he is only half-alive. Broken-hearted though Mouse may be, she is yet more fully alive and aware because the lines of communication are open to her secret self. Perhaps Katherine Mansfield meant to write a story of woman's innocence and of man's corruption, but that is not what came out.

It is interesting that Mansfield usually makes her creative people masculine--at least the successful ones. In "Daphne" the artist is a man, and in "A Married Man's Story" the title character is a writer. The only two female writers in her stories are the title character in "The Advanced Lady" and Viola in "The Swing of the Pendulum," neither of whom could one imagine as being either successful at it or sticking to it for any length of time. The three men, on the other hand, regardless of the quality of their work, are well-organized, professional, financially successful, and in the midstream of their careers with no snags in view.

It seems that Mansfield is equating artistic creativity with the male sex. This is curious indeed in an author who attacks, on a conscious level, this very assumption (or presumption). And yet it is easy to see that it is not impossible to have existing in one psyche a formidable and articulate spokeswoman for female liberation, and at the same time another facet that is unaware of her own bondage to the endemic beliefs of male superiority. Therefore it is not really surprising to find Mansfield more or less unconsciously identifying her writing activities as being masculine pursuits.

In "Je ne parle pas Français" Mansfield has thus left her bewildered and anxious bourgeoisie for the even more confused and complex area of so-called aesthetic or artistic pursuits. This area of her culture was as unaware in its own way as was the bourgeoisie, and in addition had pretensions of leadership or prophesy which were often woefully at variance with the facts. Often with nothing to say except "I am bewildered" over and over again, and little realizing that the torch of art had mainly passed into the hands of the creative scientist and technician--the airplane and bridge designer, the biochemist and physicist--the so-called artists of the time busied themselves with kindergarten expressions of their own immaturity and non-awareness. Raoul Duquette is a very good example indeed of the average "artist" of the twentieth century.

A lot of what is written and taken to be literature is

merely this sort of maundering, and perhaps so long as the novel is so much more highly regarded than the short story, this state of affairs will continue. Mansfield wrote short stories which have discipline, as well as ideas and depth, and she seems to have stopped writing when she had nothing else to say. In reading a short story by Mansfield, therefore, one is less apt to feel that it is the blind attempting to lead the blind.

## CHAPTER VIII

## "This Flower":

An Awareness of Oneness  
with the Universe

In "This Flower" (1919) the stimulus for the state of awareness of the protagonist is the knowledge that she has conceived a child, and this knowledge engenders in her psyche an expansion of consciousness in which she feels herself to be as one with the rest of the universe. This particular trigger is, of course, peculiar to the female of the species, but expansion of consciousness is not. In "A Married Man's Story" Mansfield deals at length with a similar experience which the title character has during the course of that story.

So much of everyday life is spent embroiled in superficialities, in taboos and general rites of conventionality that the real basics of life, that is birth, love and death, are often obscured. Katherine Mansfield deals with these basics in various ways in many of her stories, the best examples of which are: "A Birthday," "Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding," "The Wrong House," "A Weak Heart," "Six Years After," "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," "The

Garden Party," "Mr and Mrs Dove." But in "This Flower" she comes to grips with one of the most fascinating, obscure, barely-written-about and rarely (it could be guessed) experienced of subjects, and that is the purely female state of awareness of biological conception.

The story is preceded by an epigraph which, as she notes in her diary, comes from Shakespeare: "But I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle danger, we pluck this flower, safety." In the case of "This Flower," the nettle is pregnancy out of wedlock; the safety is more complex.

In the story a young unmarried woman has just been told by the doctor to whom her lover has taken her, that she is pregnant. They both had planned that, of course, she would have an abortion if she became pregnant. The fear of pregnancy had been a great worry to them both, particularly, as it turns out, to the man. But when she knows that she has conceived, something happens to her over which she has no control, and she decides not to abort after all.

In her later stories like this one Mansfield often sought to uncover the "life-giving stream" and separate it from the sterile and non-essential taboos of her society, and she was often successful in so doing. The experience described in "This Flower," over which the protagonist has no control and which might be briefly summarized as a feeling of "oneness" with the universe, is usually called "mystical." It is most often found in religious literature, in which

case the symbols will depend on the particular religion that the experiencer belongs to. Virgins or Houris, Sun-Gods or God the Son, Wheels or Spirals, Doves or Eagles, the symbols come after the experience, as the person has to tell it to himself. Borges quotes Coleridge as saying that when we have visions of the Sphinx and are fearful, the fear does not come from the vision of the Sphinx, but we conjured up the vision of the Sphinx to explain our fear.<sup>7</sup>

Mansfield uses the language of no religion to describe this experience of oneness with the universe. She arrives at whatever spiritual truths she comes to by direct experience, which is the only way to do it.

When the story starts, the woman has just had her moment of illumination, a perfect "pearl" of a moment, and after saying how impossible it would be to describe it, she goes on to do so:

Could she describe what happened? Impossible. It was as though, even if she had not been conscious (and she certainly had not been conscious all the time) that she was fighting against the stream of life--the stream of life indeed!--she had suddenly ceased to struggle. Oh, more than that! She had yielded, yielded absolutely, down to every minutest pulse and nerve, and she had fallen into the bright bosom of the stream and it had borne her...She was part of her room--part of the great bouquet of southern anemones, of the white net curtains that blew in stiff against the light breeze, of the mirrors, the white silky rugs; she was part of the high, shaking, quivering clamour, broken with little bells and crying voices that went streaming by outside,--part of the leaves and the light.

Over. She sat up.

(p. 406, Mansfield's ellipses)

The pregnant woman is so overwhelmed by her beautiful experience that she unconsciously decides not to abort after all,\* and she sticks to this decision even though her lover never even considers any other possibility than abortion.

She lets him believe that she is not pregnant:

"If you knew how frightened I've been," he murmured. "I thought we were in for it this time. I really did. And it would have been so--fatal --so fatal!" (p. 408)

That is how the story ends. Her lover, after protesting how much he wished that they could be married, etc., comes out flatly with his true feelings, which, of course, she had sensed all along.

Had anyone ever written like this about this particular experience before Mansfield did--in the English language, at least? It doesn't seem likely. She not only has attempted something unique, but she has succeeded in what she set out to do. She has portrayed as much as it is possible to do in words one woman's heavenly reaction to conception.

This story is twice as poignant to the reader who is aware that Mansfield herself had aborted twice, much earlier, both times probably deliberately (the second one was brought on by reaching down a heavy trunk from a high place, and

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\*Nothing is ever said to that effect anywhere in the story. In fact, nothing definite on anything is said. It is all between the lines, or inside the words, making it very difficult to quote to "prove" anything.



is usually referred to as "accidental"). Mansfield's biography shows a person tearing herself to pieces between her extreme likes and dislikes on earth, a person extremely sensitive to the beautiful and to the ugly, a person whose psyche was so unhappily poised that the body could not be happy and healthy and it succumbed at a very early age. However, she left behind her this uniquely lovely story of a birth-to-be and of a death denied.

The "safety" of the epigraph, then, is a realization or awareness within the person that a battle has been fought and that the side which has won is for and not against life in its fullest sense for this person. It is significant that this expansion of consciousness comes to this woman when she is made aware that she has conceived. The child's birthday is very important to the child; however, it is the conception which is of basic importance to the mother.

As a post scriptum it might be added, apropos the discussion on the male-female principle, that this experience of yielding absolutely is the epitome of the female aspect of everyone, not only of women, and it is as necessary for men to let it happen to them when it is appropriate as it is necessary for women to exert their initiative when the situation calls for it.

## CHAPTER IX

## "A Married Man's Story":

The Continuous Expansion of Awareness  
and the Start of Self-Integration

As has been mentioned before in this paper, Mansfield rarely wrote about happy and fulfilled people. Perhaps there were not many people like that to be seen then, or perhaps it is that Mansfield was not able to see them if they were there. It is even possible that she saw many fulfilled people, recognized them for what they were, but preferred to write about the unhappy ones, just as actors tend to prefer the type of roles they can get their teeth into. Whatever the reason, there are only a few of her stories in which any of the people seem to know themselves fairly well, or to be aware of where they are going, or why, or any process of real self-discovery or individuation.

In "A Man and His Dog" (unfinished) she presents a dear old man, Mr. Potts, who not only can put up with a querulous wife, but who is capable of dropping into, at will, a bee's world (p. 663). As was mentioned earlier, the Englishwoman, Mouse, in "Je ne parle pas Français," was well aware of her own real inner needs. And Pearl Button, of course, was pre-

sented as a person as near to the primeval state of awareness as possible. Some of the children in Mansfield stories, usually little girls, are presented as quite aware of their own inner selves: Kezia, for example, in a number of the New Zealand stories; Helen in "New Dresses"; and Susannah in the unfinished story of that name. In one story, "Sixpence," a father is shown as coming to some awareness of the real situation between himself and his son apart from the roles of "father" and "son" as defined by his culture. However, there is only one story, and that one unfinished, in which the central character is basically pictured as being in the process of getting to know himself essentially, and that one is "A Married Man's Story."

Mansfield does some extremely interesting things in this unfinished work, written in 1918, a few years before her death. It is a mere fourteen and a half pages of what appears to be the beginning of a novella. It is Joycean in its density, so thick with insights and poetic allusions to self-awareness, to relationships with others (particularly marital relationships), to the "real" meaning of things, to time and space and consciousness, that to do it justice would require more space than can be devoted to it within the confines of this thesis. Nevertheless it is too important to be left out completely, as it shows, better than any other story of hers, finished or unfinished, the culmination of her artistic endeavours in the field of awareness. It is the story of a

man who has cleared away many delusions, clichés and stereotypes from his mind, and is well on his way to self-integration.

The married man is both writing his story and living it on the rainy evening he is spending at home when the story begins. He is a writer by profession, we learn, and he and his wife have a baby son. At first he and his wife were a model couple, but something happened "last autumn" and now she is a "broken-hearted woman." At this point in the story, except for two brief returns to the present moment of writing, the writer relives the past in his mind as he tries to explain what happened "last autumn" to break his wife's heart. The story breaks off before this explanation is given so that the reader never knows what happened between this man and his wife that was so important.

Could it have anything to do with the baby or its conception? "Last autumn" could be, at the most, twelve months back. The baby is very young ("Now she turns him over on her knee, and in this light, his soft arms and legs waving, he is extraordinarily like a young crab." p. 611). However, it is impossible to locate the story in time or place because insufficient detail is given in this fragment. With the time and place left up in the air, so are all speculations about whether or not the baby is involved in any way with the broken heart, likely though this contingency may be.

However, even though the curiosity of the reader is

aroused and not satisfied on the score of what happened between this man and this woman to put them in their present position, there are many nuggets of real gold, gratuitously thrown in, as it were, during the brief narrative, that one is more than repaid for the time spent in reading it.

A beautiful section near the beginning which starts "While I am here I am there...." (p. 610) describes the narrator's simultaneous images of rainy places. He is in all of them, all at once, and simultaneously he is at home in the warm house. This reverie breaks off abruptly into analysis (it is interesting to note that for the narrator analysis means negative criticism):

But one could go on with such a catalogue for ever--on and on--until one lifted the single arum lily leaf and discovered the snails clinging, until one counted...and what then?

(p. 610, Mansfield's elipses)

This image of a single lily leaf with snails under it is used by Mansfield in her journals and scrapbooks to describe the back of something that appears lovely and perfect on the face of it. It is her way of describing the fly in the ointment. In other words, the writer in the story is pictured as musing first about lovely and satisfying experiences, and then inevitably descending to rationalization and the picking of holes in things. This thought sequence may well be true for many people.

But then comes an interesting statement:

...and what then? Aren't those just the signs,

the traces of my feeling? The bright green streaks made by someone who walks over the dewy grass? Not the feeling itself. (p. 610)

In other words, the lovely images of being happy in rain anywhere and everywhere, and the unhappy images of finding something "wrong" somewhere, are merely images, analogues or symbols to tell about his feelings. They are not his feelings or the experience itself. And it is here that one is reminded of the conventions for expressing one's feelings in words, and of how easy it is to forget that what is described is only what the feelings are like; it is impossible to describe feelings per se.\*

Immediately after making the statement that what one describes are not the feelings themselves, but the "tracks" left by the feelings, the writer is visited by a release of pent-up feelings unbound by conceptualization:

Not the feeling itself. And as I think that, a mournful glorious voice begins to sing in my bosom. Yes, perhaps that is nearer what I mean. What a voice! What power! What velvety softness! Marvellous! (p. 610)

Psychologically this seems a very valid experience.

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\*Imagine trying to describe a colour to a blind man. You could turn on the stove and have him hold his hand near a burner turned on high; this could be "red." Then you could have him put his hand in the open oven for a moment; this could be "yellow." You certainly have enlarged his experiences and ability to discriminate and compare, but he still doesn't know what the experience of "redness" or "yellowness" is. Our descriptions to each other of what we experience in our own psyches in the way of "feeling" are analogous.

During this reverie the writer's wife is aware that he is not working on his book. ("She knows--how long has she known?" p. 610). She asks him what he is thinking. His awareness of her awareness leads him into a small series of speculations as to why his wife is so thin-skinned, of what small babies might be aware, why he does not feel and his wife does not behave as they are "supposed to" as new parents. From here he goes on to thinking about his wife as a "broken-hearted" woman. He follows her in his mind as she puts the baby to bed, cleans up the kitchen, and finally stands alone there, needing something that he is unable to give her. He says to himself that she is still hopeful that somehow, somewhere, she will get it.

As he thinks about their mutual discomfort, he wonders why they stay together, and he thinks of how this kind of situation is often handled in stories. A confrontation is imagined. Events occur. Excitement exists. Drama is woven. But he knows that he will never handle the situation that way. "Why?" he asks himself, and replies, "Ah, there you have me!" (p. 612) And here follows a most unusual and perceptive passage on the inner relationship between married couples. He imagines it possible that the inner self of the man has chosen the inner self of the woman, which in turn has acquiesced in the choice. Regardless now of what the outer shells do, the union is irrevocably made. It cannot be broken, he concludes (pp. 612-13).

During this musing two very interesting points are brought up. One is about the violence inside us which we all feel when we are frustrated: "...for there is--I swear there is--in the very best of us--something that leaps up and cries "A-ahh!" for joy at the thought of destroying . . . ." (p. 612) This speaks true. And the second statement is this:

...this sensation (yes, it is even a sensation) of how extraordinarily shell-like we are as we are--little creatures, peering out of the sentry-box at the gate, ogling through our glass case at the entry, wan little servants, who never can say for certain, even, if the master is out or in.... ? (p. 613, Mansfield's ellipses)

Here Mansfield makes explicit what has been implied in so many of her stories, i.e. that we are not really whole, undivided individuals; we are really a mass of conflicting impulses. For instance, Beryl in "Prelude", speaks of her "false self" and of her image in the mirror as if they were not, either of them, the real her:

Oh God, there she was, back again, playing the same old game. False--false as ever. False as when she'd written to Nan Pym. False even when she was alone with herself, now."

What had that creature in the glass to do with her, and why was she staring? (p. 262).

And Miss Brill, when putting away her fur-piece, experiences this projection: "But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying." (p. 554) And Constantia, in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel":

But it all seemed to have happened in a kind of



tunnel. It wasn't real. It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself. What did it mean? What was it she was always wanting? What did it all lead to? Now? Now? (p. 483)

Miss Brill, Beryl and Constantia are just three of Mansfield's characters, but, like almost all the rest, they are basically being presented as concerned in some way or other with awareness, an awareness of what is essential to them. Beryl is young and is still very much aware of the coquettish role that she is being forced to adopt. Constantia is middle-aged and only has periods of questioning awareness from time to time. Miss Brill is quite old and is now completely unaware of her own real inner needs.

Most of Mansfield's earlier works depict people who are bewildered and anxious but completely unaware that it is because they have lost touch with their own real needs as human beings. Pearl Button is the unique exception. Pearl is extremely young so the channels from her everyday self to her secret self still are wide open. The master is at home; the servants know it and are obeying orders.

In using the images of master and servants and a house in "A Married Man's Story," Mansfield is creating a short parable wherein the house stands for or symbolizes the body. The servants are the unruly parts--the emotions, the urges and the intellect--and the master is the "real self" or "secret self," the essence or centre or Self, whatever terminology is preferred for that which should be master of the

parts.

The master is inextricably tied up with one's real needs, one's real essence. It has nothing to do with what society says you "are" or what it says you "want," or what it says you "should be." It has everything to do with being aware of what is actually going on inside you. It is not necessary to put names to what is going on inside, nor is it necessary to act on it immediately. But it is necessary to be aware of it. This leads from awareness of self as a microcosm to awareness of self as part of the macrocosm. This last thought is not carried as far as this at this particular point of "A Married Man's Story," but it is later in the story; however, it seemed better to include the whole process in the above explanation of it.

In "A Married Man's Story" the narrator breaks off with "wan little servants, who never can say for certain...if the master is in or out...." (p. 613) And then his wife comes in to say goodnight, and this occasions a soliloquy on how, in happier times, he had pretended to be more preoccupied with his work than he actually was because it delighted her so. He somehow feels now that it would be in extremely poor taste not to carry on with this performance.

When she leaves this time, he and the room "know" it is for good for that evening, and man and room slowly take off their masks. In endeavouring to picture the phenomenon of his room accepting him as an old friend, he uses an analogy.

He is accepted by the room, he says, as if the room were a pack of wolves one of whom had suckled him as a baby. Unfortunately, he is carried away by this image and he adds a descriptive term that, he says, strikes a false note once it is on paper. This leads into a short digression on the difficulty of writing certain nuances without exaggeration or distortion. This passage finishes with the delightful and perceptive statement that he wishes to tell "just the plain truth, as only a liar can tell it." (p. 614)

Then follows a long paragraph on his thin-skinned and unattractive wife, which, for poignancy and lack of sentimentality, would be hard to beat. The theme of physical beauty and the feelings of inadequacy in those women without it, underlies the passage. This particular theme has not come up too often in Mansfield's writings, "A Cup of Tea" being the only one in which it is the main theme, so one could very well assume that Mansfield herself was an attractive woman without the photographic evidence thereof. Thin-skinned she certainly was, but it seems highly unlikely that she was not aware of her own attractiveness.

The married man now writes down a long flash-back of his childhood, which purports to explain the circumstances leading up to what happened "last autumn." As far as it goes, this reverie into the past has two climaxes, each of which is interestingly led into. He starts in the past tense, switches to the present tense, and then moves back into the

past tense for the climax or revelation (pp. 617 and 618). The first part is a memory of his mother; his mother was an invalid, and the switch to the present tense shows mother and son in her room on no particular day, as if this were a general sort of experience, and it is thus re-lived, but not analyzed. He then switches back to the past tense and remembers his father in his chemist's shop and how several ladies of the evening used to come in for their regular pick-me-ups. The boy remembers one time when a young prostitute was so upset that she couldn't even drink the pick-me-up after she had paid for it. The description of the incident culminates in the cri de coeur: "'So that's what it is outside,' I thought. 'That's what it's like out there.'" (p. 617) It obviously was a key situation, not exactly an insight or epiphany, but a horrible revelation or judgment.

The second series is shorter but it also goes through the past-tense, present-tense, past-tense sequence. In it he speaks of the long dark stretches of his childhood of which he remembers nothing. He compares himself to a plant in a pot kept most of the time in a dark cupboard. He says that this probably was why he was so unpopular at school, and, in the present-tense sequence, he relives a miserable afternoon there. He switches back to the past tense to recount the episode of the dead bird. Here he indeed has a revelation: "But I didn't feel sorry for it--no! I wondered."

(p. 618) That phrase "I wondered" packs a lot of meaning, if it is carefully read.

If he had reacted to the experience by saying to himself, "Oh, the poor, dead bird. I feel so sorry for it," that would be it; that would finish the experience. It would be conceptualized, abstracted and put away in a box or category labelled "BIRD, DEAD: SORROW." But he didn't do that. He wondered. He felt wonder and awe, and he meditated on death and birth, and the reasons for death and birth, and so on. He allowed himself to be in a receptive state of consciousness.

So he wonders when he sees the dead bird, and then he notices or is aware, in addition to the dead bird, of a star-shaped flake of soot and a poor plant pushing its way up through concrete. It actually had a flower on it--a red flower. And then, he says,

I looked at the dead bird again....And that is the first time that I remember singing--rather...listening to a silent voice inside a little cage that was me.

(p. 618, Mansfield's ellipses)

Although the last sentence is a little bit ambiguous, it seems that he is still referring to himself as the cage and not the silent voice, but at least he has heard it. He is now made aware of what is going on inside him that might be important.

And now, after the sequence of memories culminating in this revelation or awareness, he momentarily stops his remin-

iscences to ask, "But what has all this to do with my married happiness?" (p. 618) And there follows a beautiful passage on time and memory, consciousness and awareness, that sensibly raises more questions than it tries to answer. The focal point is his mother's death and his dreams. Did he dream it all? One is reminded of "Something Childish but Very Natural," and one also is reminded of the impossibility of really defining the terms "objective" and "subjective."

At this point the writer is recalled to his real present: "Late. It grows late. I love the night" (p. 620) and from this awareness of the present he immediately plunges back into the past to relive a sequence in which he came into his own. He describes himself first as the lonely boy he was after his mother's death, a boy who had only his one particular star and some flowers to relate to. The star was neither romanticized nor sentimentalized nor personified; it was "Cruel, indifferent, splendid--it burned in the airy night. No matter--it was mine!" (p. 620) But the flowers knew him personally: "When I came to the window, it seemed to me the flowers said among themselves, 'The boy is here.'" (p. 620)

Gradually, however, as he nears puberty, he turns to the image of the female human for comfort, attracted to her both as mother and as lover. But, a little frightened by this ambivalence of attraction, he turns away from any external stimulus the next night and he then tries to centre himself. The passage in the story which describes this man's

coming to awareness of his own basic nature and place in the

universe follows:

The night after, I lighted the candle and sat down at the table instead. By and by, as the flame steadied, there was a small lake of liquid wax, surrounded by a white, smooth wall. I took a pin and made little holes in this wall and then sealed them up faster than the wax could escape. After a time I fancied the candle flame joined in the game; it leapt up, quivered, wagged; it even seemed to laugh. But while I played with the candle and smiled and broke off the tiny white peaks of wax that rose above the wall and floated them on my lake, a feeling of awful dreariness fastened on me--yes, that's the word. It crept up from my knees to my thighs, into my arms; I ached all with misery. And I felt so strangely that I couldn't move. Something bound me there by the table--I couldn't even let the pin drop that I held between my finger and thumb. For a moment I came to a stop, as it were.

Then the shrivelled case of the bud split, and fell, the plant in the cupboard came into flower. "Who am I?" I thought. "What is all this?" And I looked at my room, at the broken bust of the man called Hahnemann on top of the cupboard, at my little bed with the pillow like an envelope. I saw it all, but not as I had seen before.... Everything lived, everything. But that was not all. I was equally alive and--it's the only way I can express it--the barriers were down between us--I had come into my own world!

The barriers were down. I had been all my life a little outcast; but until that moment no one had "accepted" me; I had lain in the cupboard --or the cave forlorn. But now I was taken, I was accepted, claimed. I did not consciously turn away from the world of human beings; I had never known it; but I from that night did beyond words consciously turn towards my silent brothers.

(pp. 621-22, Mansfield's elipses)

And that is where "The Story of a Married Man" breaks off. Mansfield had "freed" him, but apparently she wasn't quite sure what to do with him next. How is it that this

man who is pictured as being well on his way to self-awareness has a "broken-hearted" wife? The fragment, thick though its images are with insight, vision and awareness, breaks off the description of the man's growth far too early in his life to begin to answer this question. One can only surmise that perhaps Mansfield began to realize, as she wrote, that understanding a relationship between two people is not just twice as difficult as understanding oneself, but infinitely more so.

In the discussion of Pearl Button her road to the sea was compared to the road in "The Child-Who-Was-Tired," which was a road to no one knew where. In "Ole Underwood" there was no road because Ole was out of his mind; he is already "there" or he is "nowhere," but there is no connection and thus no road. In "A Married Man's Story," with very little imagination it can be seen that the title character is taking the reader along his road. He is showing how he fought his way from the darkness of the cave (or cupboard) through the perilous waters of his suffering, by the light of the candle's flame, to the relatively calm air of his present state of integration. But the spiral will continue. His road is going upwards, but it is not perfectly straight. It has its snags, but he is in control. He knows now where he is going. He knows himself. All this is perfectly clear, but the story breaks off quite a few years before the rainy evening on which we find him writing.

In this story Mansfield touches on some very basic things



indeed. One of them is the mystery of the relationship between one man and one woman. The one really supreme relationship on earth is the bond between one man and one woman. This is the only bond which has inherent in it the potential to fulfill love, friendship, understanding and procreation--or, in other words, all the possible aspects of a relationship between two people.

Mansfield also touches on something very basic in our language, and that is that it is very good in dealing with actions, with "doing," but that it is very inefficient when dealing with feelings, with states of consciousness or with "being."

It is interesting to note the very different treatment which Mansfield gives to the incident of the prostitute in this story compared to that in a very early story, "Bains Turcs" (1913). In this latter, two happy and carefree prostitutes are shown as being unconsciously envied by the work-worn, convention-bound hausfrau in the red Mackintosh cap. An obvious comparison is being made between the two sister institutions, those of monogamy and prostitution, to the detriment of the former. In "A Married Man's Story," however, a closer look is taken at "the oldest profession." When the badly battered young woman is unable even to drink her pick-me-up, the whole incident becomes the key to a sort of frightful awareness for a young boy watching it all from his corner. "So that's what it is like outside," he says to himself.

"That's what it's like out there." (p. 617)

Mansfield has come a long way from the rather simplistic position of seeing the world in the black and white terms of patriarchal monogamy being all bad, and anything which has relatively little to do with it being all good. Her outlook is still far from optimistic, and it is obvious that monogamy is not yet looked upon kindly, nor are many institutions of Western society, but she has reached the position--which is a great step to attain--of laying the responsibility upon the individual's shoulders first. She is spending less time at lamenting the different forms of bondage, and more time on the positive aspects of what individuals can themselves do to negate or break their bonds.

## CHAPTER X

## Some Conclusions

...this sensation (yes, it is even a sensation) of how extraordinarily, shell-like we are as we are--little creatures, peering out of the sentry-box at the gate, ogling through our glass case at the entry, wan little servants who never can say for certain, even, if the master is out or in....

--"A Married Man's Story," p. 613

Mansfield's language in the above passage seems prosaic. One has to make an effort to grasp the larger image and the intention. Here in this description there is nothing at first to seize the imagination, such as William Blake's phrase "crystal cabinet," for example, in his beautiful poem of the same name and dealing with almost the same theme as does the Mansfield fragment. The "crystal cabinet" and the "glass case" both have to do with "mind-forg'd manacles," to use another Blakean image. Why is the master not at home? Why are the servants confused? Is it because of the "mind-forg'd manacles"? Both Blake and Mansfield seem to answer that it is, to a very great extent. Because of assumptions, rationalizations, categorizations, beliefs, illusions, delusions and downright lies of all sorts which people are taught to accept, and which are very seldom challenged by the average person, we are bound down and tied more than if we were

literally tied to one place in time or space.

Mansfield was no Blake. Blake not only could see the dark side of life, as she could, but he had very clear and tremendous visions of what life would be like without any dark side at all. Mansfield could see only hazily and "through a glass darkly." But she never ceased to seek.

When the reader is first made acquainted with the writings of Katherine Mansfield, nothing seems more prosaic, mimetic, realistic, almost journalistic, than they do. Read on this level her stories seem almost cynical, cruel or, as Virginia Woolf once said of them, "not the vision of an interesting mind."<sup>8</sup> The images, symbols and metaphors of the larger, the numinous universe, only begin to emerge after one begins to read more carefully. Then it is seen that the flames and fires of the spirit, the birds with unfolded wings longing to fly, the seas and waters of the unconscious, and the trees and plant life of the earthy urge in all of us, were there waiting for the reader all the time (even if the earthy urges are usually represented as being boxed-up in a cave, cupboard, tunnel, "House of Boxes" or even a prison).

The images usually are not expanded on in the same way as Blake does, for instance, with the phrase "crystal cabinet." That poem is "about" the recognition that one is not just one's body, mind and emotions. It is on a higher level than the kind of recognition dealt with in most of Mansfield's

stories; but it is of the same quality of experience. What a poet does with a poem, with "aesthetic" rather than everyday images, Mansfield does with a story, using everyday events and locales.

Most of her stories seem to have been built up from a mood, or a small experience in the psyche. It is said that Turgenev and his admirer, Henry James, worked "outward" from what they called a "disponible." This was a character, as complete as they could envisage him or her, who then was at their disposal to have likely incidents and actions spring naturally from his entity, and thus the story grew. Mansfield seems to have started most of her stories from one mood or state of mind, as in, for example, "The Tiredness of Rosabel," "Late at Night," "Miss Brill," "The Swing of the Pendulum," "A Dill Pickle," "The Escape," "The Wrong House," "An Ideal Family," "Taking the Veil," "The Canary" and "The Fly." All the good and well-known Mansfield stories which deal with inner dialogue grow from one colouration or feeling-experience. Then the theme or basic atmosphere of that particular story is not so much contained in any separate images or symbols that might be picked out, but rather permeates the entire story. The total story is a symbol, as it were. The feeling picked up in the story stands in for an experience in the psyche, for which the external events on the material stage are merely projections. These incidents are not so much of interest in themselves for their dramatic, idealistic or

any other inherent value. They are merely and only of interest as they expose the mood or ambience of the psyche of Miss Brill, or the Boss or Viola, or whoever is being placed there at the moment for examination by Mansfield.

Masks, roles, personae...how necessary are they and how much control must one have of them if one decides that certain masks are necessary to one? Mansfield seems to answer that one must be aware that one is acting a role. In "A Married Man's Story," for instance, the title character is quite aware that he is acting a role for his wife, and he is also aware of what he is doing in that role and why he is doing it.

This can be compared with the naive expressions of joy given by the occupants of Stanley Burnell's home in "At the Bay": "He's gone ! He's gone!" (p. 270) They all are happy that he has left for work, after upsetting the entire house with his demands, but they are only partially aware of how bound they are in their roles as economic dependents. It is only in moments of crisis like this that they even become vaguely aware of their masks and roles.

Mansfield's earlier characters had very busy psyches in which arguments and discussions were going on most of the time. They were far too busy to listen to the small "silent voice" of their "secret selves." They were either puzzled, unhappy or completely lost people. Mansfield gradually began to write about people who had somehow learned to quiet down the inner tumult to such an extent that the silent voice

could be heard. Understanding as to their own basic needs and as to their place in the universe seemed then to come to them in some degree. This sequence in her stories goes from the complete separation from self of the Boss in "The Fly," through a stage wherein people are vaguely aware that there is a cage and that one is in it, to the stage (at which very few arrive) of identifying oneself with the small silent voice inside the cage, and not with the cage.

This entire sequence is shown in only one story, "A Married Man's Story." When he was young, a "small, withered bud," he was treated like an object by his parents, who practically ignored him. He must have thought of himself as a small, relatively useless object, too (perhaps a broken button?), judging by the terms he uses later to describe his childhood:

I seem to have spent most of my time like a plant in a cupboard. Now and again, when the sun shone, a careless hand thrust me out on the window-sill, and a careless hand whipped me in again--and that was all. (pp. 617-18)

Then came the dead bird episode, "And that is the first time that I remember singing--rather...listening to a silent voice inside a little cage that was me." (p. 618, Mansfield's ellipses) From that time on he became more cued-in to himself and, probably around puberty, when he became puzzled and a little bit frightened at his ambivalent attitude toward women, he had a tremendous experience.

Flame and fire are archetypal or basic symbols of the

spirit in literature, as well as in religious and some psychological writings (in psychological writings, that is, where spirit is acknowledged to exist). In "A Married Man's Story" it is the flame of a candle ("The night after, I lighted the candle and sat down at the table instead." p. 621), which brings about the entire episode quoted on page 102 during which the protagonist becomes aware of himself in relation to the universe.

In only one other story, "This Flower," does Mansfield give a character this supreme experience, and in this case the protagonist, a newly-pregnant, unmarried woman whose lover wants her to abort and who "decides" not to, is left to get on with it outside the confines of the story. That part apparently did not interest Mansfield at that time. Later, with "A Married Man's Story," she apparently intended to explore the ramifications of the central character's awareness. However, she broke off just as she had made him aware; the reader then only half understands part of this story as the flash-backs are not completed.

Katherine Mansfield is often spoken or written of as of a "religious" temperament, and in support of this is the idea that she turned to mystical or spiritual things near the end of her life. This isn't quite accurate. She is not really more religious or spiritual than any other first-rate writer of literature. If the word "religious" is to mean anything at all, surely it means some feeling for an order in the



universe which is not capable of being trifled with by man. Judging by her stories, Mansfield had this feeling only very vaguely at first. She seemed to be more caught up with protesting against the "stupid" (her word) rules of the games being played in our various asylums. Most of her early stories continually make the point, "But the Emperor has no clothes on! None at all!" Only gradually did she seem to be able to stop worrying about the Emperor's nakedness and our inability to see it, and to start to think about more interesting and worthwhile, more positive, things.

Unfortunately as this strain in her writings began to develop, her already-delicate physical health began to decline, and she succumbed to pressures and forces which she herself had focussed on and thus had virtually encouraged for too long. One must regret that she had focussed so long on people's psychological difficulties in her writings and almost ignored until very late in her brief life the larger spiritual meanings of human existence.

Mansfield had a truly feminine mind in that she was enraptured with the necessity of successful human relationships, of warmth, security and helpfulness. She literally died for lack of these in our cold, demanding and competitive society. The amount of loving nourishment that she simply had to have, it was absolutely impossible to conceive of in our sort of atmosphere. Some people choose not to continue to exist on what for them are starvation rations. This choice, of course,

very often is unconscious.

All her life Mansfield both demanded and gave a lot of love and friendship, and she never stopped fighting the status quo. When she was thirteen, at a time when most girls give up being people and settle for their "roles," she has been described as rude, insulting and generally insufferable. As she learned to enquire and protest in more peaceful and acceptable ways, her writing became her main focus of enquiry. Although she thus had learned not to be insufferable, she never gave up. She went down early, but still fighting.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Anthony Alpers, Katherine Mansfield (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), pp. 130-32; Saralyn Daly, Katherine Mansfield (New York: Twayne, 1965), pp. 26-27; Ronald Sutherland, "Katherine Mansfield: Plagiarist, Disciple, or Ardent Admirer?" Crit. V, ii, p. 61; Elisabeth Schneider, "Katherine Mansfield and Chekhov," Modern Language Notes, L (1935), p. 396; Sylvia Berkman, Katherine Mansfield (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Alpers, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>3</sup>Berkman, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>4</sup>Daly, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 64-65; Alpers, op. cit., p. 243; Berkman, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>6</sup>Alpers, op. cit., p. 243; Berkman, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>7</sup>Jorge Luis Borges, Labyrinths (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 240.

<sup>8</sup>Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 2.

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