KATHERINE MANSFIELD'S DEBT TO CHEKHOV

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

Graduate Studies and Research,

McGill University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree,

Master of Arts.

By

Ronald Sutherland

April, 1955.

INDEX

CHAPTER 1

If one examines the various critical studies of the work of the short story writer, Katherine Mansfield, one discovers the name of Anton Chekhov frequently mentioned. Some of her critics simply announce without being more specific that Katherine Mansfield probably was influenced by the work of that great Russian author;[1] others go so far as to accuse her of plagiarism in connection with him.[2] On the other hand, Katherine's husband, John Middleton Murry, who was probably her most intimate companion and thoroughly familiar with her work, fervently claims that his wife owed nothing to Chekhov:

> There is a certain resemblance between Katherine Mansfield's stories and those of Anton Chekhov. But this resemblance is often exaggerated by the critics, who seem to believe that Katherine Mansfield learned her art from Tchehov. That is a singularly superficial view of the relation, which was one of kindred temperaments. In fact, Katherine Mansfield's technique is very different from Tchehov's. She admired and understood Tchehov's work as few English writers have done; she had a deep affection for the man, whom of course, she never knew. But her method was wholly her own, and her development would have been precisely the same had Tchehov never existed.[3]

The very fact that Murry writes so resolutely in connection with this issue, proves that there must be something in it.

---

1 B.J. Whiting, and others, eds.; The College Survey of English Literature (New York, 1951), 11, p. 1108.

2 Antony Alpers, Katherine Mansfield, A Biography (New York, 1953), p. 130.

3 John M. Murry, ed., Journal of Katherine Mansfield (New York, 1946), p. XlV.

Nonetheless, it seems that no one has conducted a detailed investigation in order clearly to establish the nature and extent of Katherine Mansfield's debt to Chekhov. It is reasonable to assume that since so many critics have claimed, suggested, or hinted in some way or other that Katherine Mansfield was influenced by Chekhov, there must be something responsible for the idea. Too often these critics are not specific ... they leave unanswered certain vital questions. Is there merely a coincidental similiarity between the works of these two authors? Did Katherine Mansfield deliberately use Chekhov as a model or copy his work? Or was she unconsciously influenced by his ideas?

It is my purpose here to throw some light on the exact nature of Katherine Mansfield's debt to Chekhov. I shall consider the letters, journal and scrapbook of Katherine Mansfield, pointing out any allusions to Anton Chekhov and his writings. By means of these documents and the information supplied by her biographers, I shall then attempt to indicate the occasions when Katherine Mansfield could have had access to any of Chekhov's works and the probability or certainty of her having done so. Subsequently, I shall examine the stories which have been cited by the critics as evidence of the connection between the New Zealander and the Russian. Next I

shall proceed to compare in detail certain of the short stories written by Katherine Mansfield and those written by Anton Chekhov which exist in English translation. When all this is done, I then hope to be able to make some comment on the true nature of Katherine Mansfield's debt to Chekhov.

THE LIFE OF CHEKHOV

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (alternately spelled Tchehov and Tchekoff) was born on January 17, 1860 at Taganrog, a seaport in the south of Russia on a gulf of the Black Sea. His father was a serf, who, by good business sense, was able to buy his freedom at an early age. Anton studied in the Greek school in his native city, then entered the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Moscow. He took a degree there but never entered upon a regular practice. William Lyon Phelps has said that, "his professional experiences were of immense service to him in analyzing the characters of various patients whom he treated."[4] He went on to say that Chekhov "always believed that his scientific training helped him greatly in the writing of his stories and plays, which are all psychological studies."[4] Before Chekhov began his literary career, signs of tuberculosis had already become manifest. He travelled much and wrote a great variety of short stories and plays. These he sold to different

---

4 William Lyon Phelps, Essays of Russian Novelists (New York, 1911), p.235.

reviews and magazines, and he published collections beginning with a humourous book in 1887.

Anton Chekhov was a congenial, generous man who was a great favourite at dinner-parties and social gatherings. His friends were numerous and when he died in Germany on July 2, 1904, his funeral at Moscow was a national event.

Anton Chekhov was a profuse writer. Although his life was short, he produced hundreds of plays and short stories. His collected works were published in St. Petersburg in 16 volumes in 1903.

THE LIFE OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

On October 14, 1888, Katherine Mansfield was born in Wellington, New Zealand and subsequently given the name of Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp. Her father, Harold Beauchamp, belonged to a family which had lived in Australia and New Zealand for three generations. He was a vigorous, alert man with a deceptive look of helplessness and a flair for finance. Later in life, he was knighted for "distinguished public service, particularly in connection with financial matters".[5] The mother of Katherine Mansfield was Annie Burnell Dyer, daughter of Joseph Dyer and his wife, Margaret Mansfield Dyer. It is thus from her grandmother that Katherine Mansfield received the

---

5. Ruth Elvish Mantz and J.M. Murry, The Life of Katherine Mansfield, (London, 1933), p. 55.

name of Mansfield. Both Mrs. Margaret Dyer and her youngest daughter, Bell Dyer, went to live with the Beauchamps after Harold had married Annie. A biography of Katherine Mansfield contains this passage in description of her mother and the Dyers:

> The Dyers were all beautiful women. Annie Burnell, finely made, seemed almost too slight and small to contain so much delight in sheer living. The thrill, the novelty of simply finding herself alive never had worn off her. An opalescent morning, a cluster of rata blossom, the mock-orange tree at the gate - almost any slight or lovely thing could fill her with the exhiliaration that another would find in glorious adventure. Yet her hold upon life was curiously slight - just this thin chain of casual delight. [6]

Katherine Mansfield was the third daughter of a family of five. The greater part of her early childhood was spent in a small township known as Karori, a few miles from Wellington. Many of the things she saw and absorbed in this place found expression in her later works, but she was to become dissatisfied with New Zealand before many years had passed. A biographer has stated it in this manner:

> Here, obviously, was neither time nor chance to cultivate the arts. Isolated at the bottom of the world, the New Zealand of Kathleen Beauchamp's childhood had no 'leisure' - no 'cultivated class'.

---

6 Ruth Elvish Mantz and J.M. Murry, p. 57.

> When talent did appear, the artist was sent to study at 'home' where - for one reason or another- he usually remained. Yet New Zealanders were proud, justly and sensitively proud, of what they had built up; so a situation arose which was to make it difficult for Katherine Mansfield, as she grew older - and difficult, indeed, for New Zealand to comprehend her, afterward.[7]

It has been commonly thought that there was a storm raging on the day that Katherine Mansfield was born. It is interesting to note that some of her biographers and critics have made much of this storm: "She might have been born of the wind and the sea on that wild morning. 'The voice of her lawless mother the sea' called to her all of her life".[8] Katherine Mansfield herself, seemed to believe in the significance of some sort of meteorogical turbulence at the time of her birth. As the biographer quoted above continues:

> In The Birthday, as it was first published with a New Zealand setting, she developed that storm into part of her story; but when she rewrote it for The German Pension, she transferred the setting to Germany. It was not what she meant. It was not 'that island'. It merely reflected her ironic state. In The Aloe she tried once more to describe it; but when she revised the tale as Prelude, she omitted the description. She felt, it seemed, that the storm at her birth had a meaning which lay beyond words.[8]

It is interesting to notice the comments and ideas raised by consideration of that birthday storm, but it is even more interesting to discover that according to the local New Zealand newspapers for October 14, 1888, there was bright

---

7 Ruth Elvish Mantz and Murry, p. 60.

8 Mantz and Murry, p. 63.

sunshine and perfectly calm weather on that day.[9]

As a child, Katherine Mansfield revealed hypersensitivity and a healthy imagination. She made companions of "the shadow children, thin and small"; and old cabbage tree, and other inanimate objects. She experienced many fears in her childhood; fear of the wind, of the dark, of certain dogs. She was closely attached to her father.

Katherine Mansfield attended the local school at the age of eight, and she won the school composition prize for a composition on A Sea Voyage. It was also at the Karori School that Katherine met her first sweetheart, Tim Logan, with whom she used to go walking after school.

When Katherine Mansfield was nine years and seven months old, she registered in the Wellington Girl's College. Two years later, she entered the school in Fitzherbert Terrace, in June, 1900. She was a bit of a rebel at this school which was operated in the prim and proper traditions of the girls' schools in England. However, Katherine Mansfield edited the first school magazine at Fitzherbert Terrace and made friends there who were to appear in her later works.

At the age of thirteen, Miss Mansfield had a childhood romance with a certain Arnold Trowell, a cello player. He remained on her mind for a long time, for many years, in fact. Being interested in music, Katherine Mansfield decided to attempt

---

9. Antony Alpers, p. 33.

to learn how to play a cello a short time after she had met Trowell.

The Beauchamps decided to send their girls to college in England and in 1903, Katherine Mansfield and her sisters arrived at Queen's College in London. Katherine was thrilled by the big city and the college. The years spent there were always vivid in her memory. She was introduced to the German language while at Queen's College and underwent many experiences which were to form a fund of ideas for later stories. A few sketches and a novel called Juliet were attempted by Katherine Mansfield while at the college, but she did not imagine writing as a career just then. She was more interested in music. By reading the sketches and uncompleted novel, Juliet, written by Miss Mansfield during her stay in London, one can discover that she was passionate and mentally mature by the age of eighteen, when her father brought her back to New Zealand.

After her stay in London, Katherine Mansfield found that she was in misery at home in New Zealand. She remained there for two years and was never at peace with herself. It was during this period, early in 1907, that Katherine Mansfield decided that she would like to become a writer and abandoned music for literature. She began to write sketches and, after several attempts to have them published, had three accepted by the Native Companion of Melbourne. Later, her work was published in The New Age, a London

magazine, and she continued to contribute to that paper for about three years.

In 1910, Katherine Mansfield repaired to Bavaria to deliver an illegitimate and stillborn child. Earlier, on July 9th, 1908, her father had finally succumbed to her wishes and sent her to England with an allowance. During the time she was there, she had had several fleeting experiences with men. She had actually been married to a Mr. George Bowden but had left him on the day after the ceremony. While in Bavaria, Katherine Mansfield wrote stories which appeared in various issues of The New Age and collectively later in the book called In a German Pension. This book was published in 1911, when Katherine Mansfield had returned to England once again. It was then (In 1911) that she met John Middleton Murry, whom she eventually married on May 3, 1918. In England, Katherine Mansfield continued to write stories and to sell them to various periodicals. In a German Pension was well received by the public and quickly passed into three editions. The next major work by Katherine Mansfield to appear in print as a separate book was Prelude, which was published by the Hogarth Press in 1917. Shortly after this, Katherine Mansfield suffered an attack of pleurisy and moved to Bandol in the South of France. She was never in robust health again and travelled continuously in search of relief. In 1920, a collection of her stories called Bliss was published. She learned of the success of this book while living in Montana,

Switzerland. The Garden Party and Other Stories appeared in 1921 while Katherine Mansfield was in Paris. This work established her as a leading short story writer and was the last of her writings to be submitted to the public while she was alive.

Eventually, as Katherine Mansfield became more seriously ill, she entered the Gurdjieff Institute at Fontainebleau. She had been informed that she was fighting tuberculosis, the curse of so many writers, and imagined that mental concentration in seclusion would be the best weapon. Towards the end, she did no more writing, for she was in great pain; and it was not long after she was forced to abandon her work that she abandoned the world. On the night of January 9, 1923, Katherine Mansfield died at the Gurdjieff Institute and was buried in the communal cemetary of Avon. She was then thirty-four years of age, ten years younger than Chekhov at the time of his death.

CHAPTER TWO

Since the majority of references to Anton Chekhov in the letters, journal and scrapbook of Katherine Mansfield appear in the years after 1915, I have decided to consider them in yearly divisions beginning at that year and continuing until 1923 and her death. A preceding division, however, will deal with all pertinent material prior to 1915.

(A) PRIOR TO 1915

After Katherine Mansfield had returned to New Zealand, she found time to indulge in extensive reading. This was the period between 1906 and 1908 when she was miserable and longed to return to England. It does not seem likely that Chekhov was among the authors who captured the young lady's attention. She was familiar with the German language and could have read him in a German translation. Moreover, there existed at that time an edition of Chekhov in English called The Black Monk and Other Stories, translated by R.E.C. Long. However, I do not think that Katherine Mansfield became acquainted with Anton Chekhov at any time in New Zealand. We have a list of books which she borrowed from the General Assembly Library of Parliament about the year 1907, the year in which she first resolved

to be a writer. These include the works of Henry James, Shaw, Maeterlinck, Ibsen, Heine, and Nietzche in addition to selections of English poetry and several biographies. [1] There is no work of Chekhov among these books.

In one of the subjective stories written by Katherine Mansfield about that time, there is also a list of authors:

> Life to a girl who had read Nietzche, Eugene Sue, Baudelaire, D'Annunzio, Barrès, Catulle Mendès, Sudermann, Ibsen Tolstoi; was in her opinion, no longer complex, but a trifle obvious. [2]

Of course we cannot conclude definitely that Katherine Mansfield had not read Chekhov because his name is not included in either of these lists. Yet if she had read some of his work, and if it had created any impression capable of influencing her work, it seems likely that Katherine Mansfield would have mentioned Chekhov's name in the latter list.

In June, 1909, Katherine Mansfield went to the Bavarian spa to deliver the child I have mentioned earlier. While she was there, she encountered two "literary Poles". [3] One of these men was actually a literary critic. There had been a lull in her writing in the period between her return

---

1 Antony Alpers, p. 80.

2 Quoted by Mantz and Murry, p. 268.

3 Mantz and Murry, p. 322.

to England in 1908 and the trip to Bavaria. While at the spa, Katherine Mansfield experienced a new urge to write and began work on the stories later collected in In a German Pension and published in 1911. One of the stories in this collection, The Child-Who-Was-Tired, is unmistakably an imitation of Chekhov, but we shall consider it later.

At the time that Katherine Mansfield was in the company of the two Poles, there existed a number of Anton Chekhov's stories in German translation. The Germans were extremely fond of Chekhov. Katherine Mansfield was well able to read German, as I have already pointed out. Her biographer, Antony Alpers, in connection with the stay in Bavaria says this:

> The literary Poles welcomed the young Antipodean writer as a blood-brother and talked of translating her future works for journals they talked of founding. And this was her first encounter with a genuine literary brotherhood. But it seems probably that they performed for her a service that was even more far-reaching. There is reason to believe that they introduced her, through either German or Polish translations, to the stories of Anton Chekhov, who as yet was hardly known in England. [4]

There is, then, a reasonable possibility that Katherine Mansfield was introduced to Chekhov in 1909. We shall bear this supposition in mind as it will recur later in this paper.

---

4 Antony Alpers, p. 124.

The first mention that Katherine Mansfield makes of Chekhov in her private writings is the quotation from Calderon ~~it~~ found in the Scrapbook and dated January, 1914.

> '"In Russia," Tchehov said to Gorky, "an honest man is a sort of bogey that nurses frighten children with". It is wonderful how like Gorky Tchehov talked when he talked to Gorky' (George Calderon) [5]

One could hardly try to analyze the pyschological reasons which caused Katherine Mansfield to include this quotation in her scrapbook. Perhaps it amused her. Perhaps the fact that it concerned Chekhov sufficed for its inclusion.

(B) THE YEAR 1915

In March of 1915. Katherine Mansfield wrote the following quotations and remarks in her Scrapbook:

> 'Perhaps it is only upon the approach of an outside soul that another's soul becomes invisible, and if she be caught unawares she will not have time to disappear.' (Leon Shestov)

That is what Tchehov aimed at. [Remark~~ed~~ added by Katherine Mansfield]

> 'Sooner or later in all probability this habit will be abandoned. In the future, probably, writers will convince themselves and the public that any kind of artificial completion is absolutely superfluous.' (Leon Shestov)

---

5 Quoted by Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, J.M. Murry, ed., The Scrapbook of Katherine Mansfield (New York, 1940), p. 16. All subsequent references will be to this edition.

Tchehov said so.[6] [Remark added by Katherine Mansfield].

On reading this, we must conclude that by 1915, Katherine Mansfield was in all probability familiar with some of Chekhov's work. There were at least four translations of that author in English at the time. These four were: The Black Monk and Other Stories, translated by R.E.C. Long and published in 1903; The Kiss and Other Stories, translated by R.E.C. Long and published in 1908; Stories of Russian Life, translated by Marion Fell and published in 1915; and The Steppe and Other Stories, translated by Adeline Lister Kaye and published in 1915. There is, however no proof or definite indication that Katherine Mansfield had read any of these.

(C) THE YEAR 1916

Late in the year 1916, Katherine Mansfield included the following quotation in her Scrapbook where it was her custom to record the passages and sentences which struck her fancy.

> 'When he had finished with the album, Von Koren took a pistol from the whatnot, and screwing in his left eye, took deliberate aim at the portrait of Prince Uoronsotv, or stood still at the looking glass and gazed a long time at his swarthy face, his big forehead and his black hair, which curled like a negro's' [7]

---

6 Quoted by Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 26.

7 Quoted by Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 70.

With this quotation we have the first definite evidence of what specific books of Chekhov's short stories Katherine Mansfield had read. The collection, The Duel and Other Stories, was published in 1916 and is an English version of Chekhov's stories translated by Constance Garnett. It can be shown that the section which Katherine Mansfield quoted from The Duel was taken from Garnett's translation.[8] The Duel and Other Stories was the second volume of Chekhov's stories to be translated by Garnett (there were eventually 13 volumes in all), and it appears that Katherine Mansfield must have acquired a copy of it not long after it came from the press.

(D) THE YEAR 1917

In 1917, we again find Katherine Mansfield quoting a section from Chekhov in her Scrapbook:

> 'An author's vanity is vindictive, implacable, incapable of forgiveness: and his sister was the first and only person who had laid bare and disturbed that uneasy feeling, which is like a big box of crockery, easy to unpack but impossible to pack up again as it was before.'[9]

It can also be shown in this case that Katherine Mansfield quoted directly from Constance Garnett's translation of the story, Excellent People, in The Duel and Other Stories.[10]

---

8 Anton Chekhov, The Duel and Other Stories, translated by Constance Garnett (London, 1916), p. 23.

9 Quoted by Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 108.

10 Anton Chekhov, The Duel etc., p.174.

There is (~~hardly any~~ no) doubt, then, that she read at least two stories in that book.

During the year 1917, we find that Katherine Mansfield also referred to Anton Chekhov in her Journal.

> Tchekov makes me feel that this longing to write stories of such uneven length is quite justified. Geneva is a long story, and Hamilton is very short...
>
> Tchekov is quite right about women; yes, he is quite right. These fairies in black and silver ... [11]

From these comments we can see that not only had Katherine Mansfield read some of Chekhov's stories, but that she had definite opinions concerning these and, apparently, respect for his judgment.

(E) THE YEAR 1918

On January 16, 1918, Katherine Mansfield wrote a letter to John Middleton Murry, whom she later married in May of the same year. This letter included the following allusion to Anton Chekhov: (She was referring to the talk of certain ship's officers):

> "Their talk and grouping, etc., is pure Maupassant -not Tchekov at all, not deep enough or good enough. No, Maupassant is for France." [12]

---

11 Quoted by Katherine Mansfield in her Journal, pp. 67-68.

12 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, J.M. Murry, ed., Letters of Katherine Mansfield to J.M. Murry, (London, 1951), p. 121. All subsequent references will be to this edition.

Here we seem to have an expression of feeling in regard to Chekhov which is perhaps more intense than the respect she accorded him in the last reference.

In May of this same year, Katherine Mansfield made a passing reference to Chekhov in another of her letters to her husband: "Such a queer place, so absolutely 'Russian' - I mean as Tchekov has described." [13]

Then in June of 1918, we find still another allusion to Chekhov which is of an interesting nature. Again it is found in a letter to John Middleton Murry. Katherine Mansfield was at Looe in Cornwall when she wrote the following:

> But really I have suffered such agonies from loneliness and illness combined that I'll never be quite whole again. I don't think I'll ever believe that they won't recur - that some grinning Fate won't suggest that I go away by myself to get well of something! Of course, externally and during the day one smiles and says one has had a pretty rotten time, perhaps, but God! God! Tchehov would understand: Dostoievsky wouldn't. Because he's never been in the same situation. He's been poor and ill and worried but, enfin, the wife has been there to sell her petticoat, or there has been a neighbour. He wouldn't be alone. But Tchekov has known just exactly this that I know. I discover it in his work often. [14]

With this we see that Katherine Mansfield must have been becoming more and more familiar with the work of the Russian author.

---

13 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 260.

14 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 293.

Moreover, we see her comparing herself and her situations to him and the situations he encountered in life. This is the first instance when Katherine Mansfield compares herself to Chekhov, the man.

In July of 1918, Katherine Mansfield was again living with her husband after a separation. She was doing considerable reading about that time, but her creative writing had lapsed. She did make entries in her Journal, one of which, for July 5, reads as follows:

> I must start writing again. They decide me. Something must be put up against this. Ach, Tchekov! why are you dead? Why can't I talk to you, in a big darkish room, at late evening - where the light is green from the waving trees outside. I'd like to write a series of Heavens: that would be one.[15]

Here we see Katherine Mansfield making almost a plea to Chekhov. At this point, it is difficult to underrate the intense feelings she seems to have had for the man because of his work. In the Autumn, shortly after this entry in her Journal, Katherine Mansfield began work on a translation of the letters of Anton Chekhov.[16] As I will show later, she did not know Russian at that time, but was working in collaboration with a certain S.S. Koteliansky, a man whom she had met through D.H. Lawrence and who could speak Russian. It is most probable that Katherine Mansfield's part was to polish the rough English

---

15 Katherine Mansfield in her Journal, p. 93.

16 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 309.

into which the Russian was converted by Koteliansky.

(F) THE YEAR 1919

In the autumn of this year, Katherine Mansfield quoted this section from one of Anton Chekhov's letters:

> 'My cough is considerably better, I am sunburnt, they tell me I am fatter, but the other day, I almost fell down and I fancied for a minute that I was dying. I was walking along the avenue with the prince, our neighbour, and was talking, when all at once something seemed to break in my chest, I had a feeling of warmth and suffocation, there was a singing in my ears, I remembered that I had been having palpitations for a long time and thought - 'They must have meant something, then.' I went rapidly towards the verandah, on which visitors were sitting, and had one thought - that it would be awkward to fall down and die before strangers; but I went into my bedroom, drank some water and recovered.' (Tchehov's letters: April 21, 1894.) 17.

The editor adds after this quotation that the words underlined were italicized by Katherine Mansfield and mean that she had experienced the same sensations. Here again we see Katherine Mansfield asscciating herself with Chekhov and equating his personal experiences to her own. In a letter written to Murry about the same time she repeats the sentiment in these words:

> But on these rare occasions when you and I talk, I do - I do feel the heavens opening and our thoughts like angels ascending and descending.... Think of the agony we've suffered. Who cares? Who dreams? If we were not 'set apart' for ever before, this has not been enough to do it.

---

17 Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 144.

> We could not, Knowing what we know, belong to others who we know not. If I can only convey this difference, this vision of the world as we see it! Tchekhov saw it, too, and so I think did Keats. 18

Towards the end of the year 1919, on December 13, Katherine Mansfield again referred to Chekhov in a letter to her husband. The passage also contains some interesting comments about other authors and enables us to know the mind of its author more intimately.

> G. B. S. on Butler is very fine indeed. (A review of Mr. Festing Jones's Life of Samuel Butler, by Bernard Shaw, in The Manchester Guardian) He has such a grip of his subject. I admire his tenacity as a reviewer and the way in which his mind follows Butler with a steady light - does not waver over him, find him, lose him, travel over him. At the same time it's queer he should be (G.B.S.) so uninspired. There is not the faintest hint of inspiration in that man. This chills me. You know the feeling that a great writer gives you: 'My spirit has been fed and refreshed: it has partaken of something new.' One could not possibly feel that about Shaw. It's the clang of the gate that remains with you when all's over. What it amounts to is that Shaw is anything you like, but he's not an artist. Don't you get when you read his plays a sense of extraordinary flatness? They may be extremely amusing at moments but you are always laughing at and never with. Just the same in his prose: You may agree as much as you like, but he is writing at not with. There's no getting over it: he's a kind of concierge in the house of literature - sits in a glass case, sees everything, knows everything, examines the letters, cleans the stairs, but has not part, no part in the life that is going on. But as I wrote that, I thought: Yes, but who is living there, living there as we mean life? Dostoevsky, Tchehov and Tolstoy. I can't think of anybody else. 19

---

18 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 352.

19 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 447.

This passage needs no explanation. It shows Katherine Mansfield revealing her preference for the great Russian writers with no particular focus on Chekhov.

(G) THE YEAR 1920

In a letter of January 26, 1920, Katherine Mansfield speaks of returning a volume of Chekhov's stories to John Middleton Murry. [20] It seems likely, then, that Murry must have sent her a recent edition of that author in English translation. The seventh and eighth volumes of Chekhov's stories, as translated by Constance Garnett, were published about that time and, of course, the previous six volumes had appeared earlier. If the book in question was not volume seven or eight, it might have been one of the earlier volumes, one to six.

In March of 1920, Katherine Mansfield wrote a letter to her husband in which she said that no one knew Chekhov the way she and Murry did. [21] Then, later, in October, she included these words in a letter: "Tomlinson's story was very good. It just missed it, though, at the end. I mean judging from the Tchehov stand point." [22] If by 'standpoint' she means 'artistic standard', not particular technique or style, Katherine Mansfield is declaring Chekhov's work to be the

---

20 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 447.

21 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 462.

22 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 491.

standard by which she distinguishes between very good and great, that is, if we are to assume that better than 'very good' is great. In any event, it seems clear that Katherine Mansfield's standards and methods of judging literature have fallen under the influence of Anton Chekhov.

In the summer of 1920, Katherine Mansfield quoted the following lines from Chekhov's The School Mistress in her Scrapbook. They are preceded by thirty-three separate passages and sentences from Chekhov's letters also recorded in the Scrapbook but too voluminous to include here.

> 'Beside old Semyon he looked graceful and vigorous, but yet in his walk there was something just perceptible which betrayed in him a being already touched with decay, weak, and on the road to ruin! 23

These exact lines are to be found in The School Mistress and Other Stories, published in 1920 in a translation by Constance Garnett. 24 This book was the ninth volume of Chekhov's stories to be translated by Constance Garnett, and it appears that Katherine Mansfield was interested in her translations. We can at least be reasonably certain that this volume nine in addition to volume two, The Duel etc., and two other volumes which I will deal with later, were read by Katherine Mansfield.

There is no doubt of where the work of the Russian writer stood in relation to that of de Maupassant or Tumpany

---

23 Quoted by Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, pp.161-162.

24 Anton Chekhov, "The School Mistress", The School Mistress and Other Stories, translated by C. Garnett (London, 1920), p. 8.

in that part of Mansfield's mind which evaluated literature. On December 1, 1920, she wrote to Murry: "... I would give every single word de Maupassant and Tumpany ever wrote for one short story by Anton Chekhov." [25] Katherine Mansfield appears to be highly enthusiastic in these lines. We can only conclude that she held the stories of Chekhov in the loftiest esteem. It is perhaps significant that she rated de Maupassant so disparagingly, for it appears to me that the sketches Katherine Mansfield wrote in her earlier years were not unlike the work of the French writer. And we know that she was ashamed of her earlier work. She did not wish to have In a German Pension republished, because she felt that it was too immature. It could be that this expression of strong distaste for de Maupassant was connected with the distaste Katherine Mansfield had for her own earlier work.

On the twelfth of December in the year 1920, we find the following lines recorded in Katherine Mansfield's Scrapbook.

> By all the laws of M and P.
> This book is bound to belong to me.
> Because I'm sure that you agree
> I am the English Anton T.
> (Written in 1917 on the fly-leaf of a volume of Tchehov's stories belonging to J.M.M.) [Editor's comment]
>
> God forgive me, Tchehov, for my impertinence. [26]

---

25 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 608.

26 Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 189.

It appears that Katherine Mansfield had written the little poem in 1917, then on rediscovering it in 1920, has copied it into her Scrapbook and attached the remark. We can thus see that as early as 1917, Katherine Mansfield did feel that she was doing the same thing in English as Chekhov had done in Russian. We can readily conclude from these lines that Chekhov did make a powerful impression on the mind of Katherine Mansfield. In 1920, she asks his forgiveness for having been impertinent. We can take this to mean that in 1917, she felt that she was emulating Chekhov, whereas in 1920, on mature reflection, she decided that her work had not reached his level of excellence and acknowledged his superiority as a short story writer. It seems reasonable to assume that the book of Chekhov's stories in which the verse in question was written was The Duel and Other Stories, published in 1916. I have shown in section (C) for 1916 that Katherine Mansfield almost undoubtedly read that book about that time. We will see later that Katherine Mansfield received most of her books from Murry, so it follows that she probably received The Duel and Other Stories from him also. She was travelling in Europe around that time, while he was in London where the book was published, and he could conveniently have procured it. Moreover, four days after the above-mentioned item appeared in Katherine Mansfield's Scrapbook, the following quotation from Chekhov's The Duel was inserted:

> 'As soon as you speak of male or female - for instance, of the fact that the female spider, after fertilization, devours the male - his eyes glow with curiosity, his face brightens, and the man revives in fact. All his thoughts, however noble, lofty or neutral they may be, they all have one point of resemblance. You walk along the street with him and meet a donkey, for instance ... 'Tell me, please,' he asks, 'what would happen if you mated a donkey with a camel?' And his dreams! Has he told you of his dreams? It is magnificent! First, he dreams that he is married to the moon then that he is summoned before the police and ordered to live with a guitar.'..
>
> (Laevsky, in Tchehov's The Duel)

[Katherine Mansfield added this comment] Oh darling Tchehov! I was in misery tonight - ill, unhappy, despondent, and you made me laugh ... and forget, my precious friend. [27]

These lines quoted from The Duel are from Constance Garnett's translation, The Duel and Other Stories, published in 1916. [28] They are Von Koren's description of Laevsky in that story. Thus we see that four days after expressing her regret for having written in the flyleaf of a volume of Chekhov in 1917, Katherine Mansfield is obviously rereading a collection of Chekhov's stories which I have shown that she was reading late in 1916. It seems certain then that the book in which she put the annotation was Garnett's translation of The Duel and Other Stories.

When Katherine Mansfield was feeling ill on the nineteenth of the same month in which she wrote the phrases

---

27 Quoted by Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 190.

28 Anton Chekhov, "The Duel," The Duel Etc., p. 32.

just considered, she again spoke of Chekhov; this time in her Journal:

> My simple kindly doctor was pure of heart as Tchehov was pure of heart. But for these ills one is one's own doctor. If suffering is not a repairing process, I will make it so. I will learn the lesson it teaches. These are not idle words. These are not the consolations of the sick.
> Life is a mystery. The fearful pain will fade. I must turn to work. I must put my agony into something, change it. 'Sorrow shall be changed into joy.'
> It is to lose oneself more utterly, to love more deeply to feel oneself part of life, - not separate.
> Oh Life! accept me - make me worthy - teach me. I write that. I look up. The leaves move in the garden, the sky is pale, and I catch myself weeping. It is hard - it is hard to make a good death.... To live - to live that is all. And to leave life on this earth as Tchehov left it and Tolstoi... ... Queer! The two people left are Tchehov - dead - and unheeding, indifferent Doctor Sorapure. They are the two good men I have known.[29]

Here again we see evidence of how deep an impression Chekhov must have made in Katherine Mansfield's soul. But she seems to be more interested in Chekhov, the man, than his work at this point. As Katherine Mansfield entered into the last two years of her life, she began to feel more and more akin to the Russian as a fellow sufferer.

(H) THE YEAR 1921

On the 21st of May in 1921, Katherine Mansfield wrote a letter to John Middleton Murry, thanking him for a volume of

---

29 Katherine Mansfield in her Journal, p. 168.

Chekhov's stories which she presumably had received earlier.[30] In that year, the tenth volume of Constance Garnett's translations was published. It was called The Horse Stealers and Other Stories. Again it seems that Murry must have sent Garnett's translation to Katherine Mansfield soon after it was printed. A statement made in a letter written to Murry on the 25th of May establishes this as a practical certainty. In that letter, Katherine Mansfield said:

> But I have been finding out more and more how true it is that it's only the difficult thing that is worth doing; it's the difficult thing that one deliberately chooses to do. I don't think Tchehov was aware of that as he should have been. Some of the stories in The Horse Stealers are - rather a shock.[31]

This statement allows us to realize that Katherine Mansfield did appraise Chekhov with a critical eye. This is one of the very few places where she indicates any degree of displeasure with his work. It should be noted that The Horse Stealers and Other Stories contains many of the earlier humourous sketches written by Chekhov, probably because Garnett had chosen most of the better stories for the first nine volumes.

In August of this same year, Katherine Mansfield included the following quotation in her Scrapbook:

> 'I was in the first stage of consumption, and was suffering from something else, possibly even

---

30 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 636.

31 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 640.

> more serious than consumption ... I was day by day more possessed by a passionate, irritating longing for ordinary everyday life. I yearned for mental tranquillity, health, fresh air, good food. I was becoming a dreamer. I did not know exactly what I wanted? [32]

This is taken from An Anonymous Story,[33] a tale in the third volume of stoires translated by Constance Garnett, The Lady With the Dog and Other Stories, which had been published in 1917. Consequently, we can further assume, without much doubt, that Katherine Mansfield had read volume three as well as two, nine and ten of Garnett's translations and perhaps all the others in between.

In October of 1921, Katherine Mansfield quoted from Chekhov's story, Misery in her Scrapbook.

> " 'That's how it is, old girl .... Kuzma Ionitch is gone .... He said good-bye to me ... He went and died for no reason... Now, suppose you had a little colt, and you were own mother to that little colt... And all at once that same little colt went and died... You'd be sorry, wouldn't you?' "
> "The little mare munches, listens, and breathes on her master's hands. Iona is carried away and tells her all about it."

[Katherine Mansfield added this comment] I would see every single French short story up the chimney for this. It's one of the masterpieces of the world. [34]

---

32 Quoted by Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 221.

33 Anton Chekhov, "An Anonymous Story", The Lady With the Dog and Other Stories, trans. by C. Garnett (London, 1917), p. 178.

34 Quoted by Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 223.

This quotation is taken directly from Constance Garnett's translation of the story, Misery in The School Mistress and Other Stories, published in 1920.[35] We have already seen that Katherine Mansfield most probably read that volume soon after it was published. This second quotation from volume nine makes it appear even more probable that she read The School Mistress and Other Stories. From the comment which Mansfield added to the above quotation, it is clear that she was enthusiastic about that section of Chekhov's work. As her life was drawing to a close, and she suffered more and more pain, both mental and physical, Katherine Mansfield increasingly appreciated those sections of Chekhov's writings which deal so effectively with suffering. Perhaps she felt that the French writers did not really understand suffering and pain. In any event, she found in Chekhov's work a satisfactory expression of her own particular feelings.

(I) THE YEAR 1922

It is during this year that Katherine Mansfield refers most often to Chekhov. As she felt death coming upon her and was increasingly crushed by disease, she associated herself more and more with the Russian writer and used his words to describe her own feelings.

Early in 1922, on the twelfth of January, Katherine

---

35 Anton Chekhov, "Misery," The School Mistress etc, p. 65.

Mansfield made the following entry in her Journal:

> All the whole time at the back of my mind slumbers not nor sleeps the idea of Paris, and I begin to plan what I will do when - Can it be true? What shall I do to express my thanks? I want to adopt a Russian baby, call him Anton, and bring him up as mine, with K. for a godfather and Mme. Tchehov for a godmother. Such is my dream. [36]

This passage is difficult to interpret. The mention of Paris is explained by the fact that she was planning to go there for a special treatment at the hands of Dr. Manouklin. She had suffered for about six weeks prior to this from severe congestion, and tuberculosis was tightening its grip upon her body. She evidently expected a cure and is probably expressing her gratitude to Chekhov for the spiritual encouragement she has found in his work, the work of a man who she knew had also struggled against tuberculosis for years. On January 17, five days later, Katherine Mansfield wrote this in her Journal:

> Tchehov made a mistake in thinking that if he had had more time he would have written more fully, described the rain, and the midwife and the doctor having tea. The truth is one can get only so much into a story; there is always a sacrifice. [37]

We see here another moment of coolness in Katherine Mansfield's regard for Chekhov. It seems likely that she has been reading his letters. Three days later, she mentions in the Journal that Chekhov together with a few other writers

---

36 Katherine Mansfield in her Journal, p. 218.

37 Katherine Mansfield in her Journal, p. 221.

are always in her thoughts. [38]

John Middleton Murry joined Katherine Mansfield in Paris on February 11. She had arrived there late in January for the Manouklin treatment. On the following day, this remark was entered in her Journal: "J. read Tchehov aloud. I had read one of the stoires myself and it had seemed to me nothing. But read aloud, it was a masterpiece. How was that?" [39]

I might conjecture, in answer to Katherine Mansfield's question, that because of the increasing effect of her parasitic illness, she did not have the patience or physical vitality to enjoy stories which she was struggling to read. Yet when she could relax and listen, a process involving no physical effort, she could enjoy the same stories.

In June, Katherine Mansfield was once again in Switzerland. Disease was weakening her at that time, and she felt no urge to write. In her Scrapbook are found the following lines recorded in June:

> I seem to have lost all power of writing ... ... Tchehov, by the way, felt this disenchantment, exactly. And who would not feel it who lives with a pessimist?.. [40]

Here again, Katherine Mansfield is associating herself

---

38 Katherine Mansfield in her Journal, P. 223.

39 Katherine Mansfield in her Journal, p. 334.

40 Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 277.

with Chekhov, the man. Undoubtedly the pessimist she refers to is J.M. Murry. She was continually dreaming of miracles and flash cures for her disease, and he was careful to caution her against illusions. He disapproved of both the treatment for which she went to Paris and the institution to which she later retired for spiritual encouragement.

We are made keenly aware of this association which Katherine Mansfield makes between herself and Chekhov as a person by the concluding and concurrent entries in her Scrapbook. The quotations are from Chekhov's last letters:

> 'I am torn up by the roots, I am not living a full life, I don't drink, though I am fond of drinking; I love music and don't hear it - in fact, I am in the condition of a transplanted tree which is hesitating whether to take root or to begin to wither!
>
> [From Chekhov's Letters]
>
> So am I exactly. [Katherine Mansfield]
>
> 'My health has improved. I don't notice now as I go about that I am ill; my asthma is better, nothing is aching!' [Chekhov]
>
> 'I confess I dread the railway journey. It's stifling in the train now, particularly with my asthma, which is made worse by the slightest thing!' [Chekhov]
>
> 'I like the food here very much, but it does not seem to suit me; my stomach is constantly being upset. Evidently my digestion is hopelessly ruined. It is scarcely possible to cure it by anything except fasting - that is, eating nothing, and that's the end of it. And the only remedy for the asthma is not moving.'
>
> [Chekhov]
>
> Who reads between the lines here? I at least.[41]
>
> [Katherine Mansfield]

---

41 Katherine Mansfield in her Scrapbook, p. 217.

The last entry in Katherine Mansfield's Journal is also an association of herself and her condition with Chekhov and his condition.

> Therefore if the Grand Lama of Thibet promised to help you- how can you hesitate? Risk! Risk anything! Care no more for the opinions of others, for these voices. Do the hardest thing on earth for you. Act for yourself. Face the truth.
> True, Tchehov didn't. Yes, but Tchehov died. And let us be honest. How much do we know of Tchehov from his letters? Was that all? Of course not. Don't you suppose he had a whole longing life of which there is hardly a word? Then read the final letters. He has given up hope. If you de-sentimentalize those final letters they are terrible. There is no more Tchehov. Illness has swallowed him.
> But perhaps to people who are not ill, all this is nonsense. They have never travelled this road. 42

When Katherine Mansfield wrote the above passage she was so burdened by sickness that she had lost all urge to write. We see that she does not mention the work of Chekhov but refers to his letters. These letters in which Chekhov tells of his suffering and how he too lost the urge to write were very important to Katherine Mansfield during the final period of her life.

In a letter to John Middleton Murry, dated October 15, 1922, five days after the last item I have quoted, Katherine Mansfield makes her final allusion to the Russian writer. It appears that she is answering some comment previously made

---

42 Katherine Mansfield in her Journal, pp. 253-254.

by her husband in regard to her and Chekhov.

> About being like Tchekhov and his letters. Don't forget he died at 43. That he spent - how much? of his life chasing about in a desperate search after health. And if one reads 'intuitively' the last letters, they are terrible. What is left of him? ' The braid on German women's dresses ... bad taste'- and all the rest is misery. Read the last! All hope is over for him. Letters are deceptive, at any rate. It's true he had occasional happy moments. But for the last 8 years he knew no security at all. We know he felt his stories were not half what they might be. It doesn't take much imagination to picture him on his death bed thinking 'I have never had a real chance. Something has been all wrong.' 43

Here again we see how familiar Katherine Mansfield was with Chekhov's letters. She seems to have been more concerned about them than about his work. In her own letters written shortly after this one, Katherine Mansfield states that she is attempting to learn the Russian language. 44 We thus have proof that she could never, in previous years, have read Chekhov in his own language. There is hardly any doubt that it was in order to do this that she undertook to learn Russian. Her love for Chekhov remained with her to the end.

These, then, are all the references and comments in connection with Anton Chekhov that Katherine Mansfield made in her private papers, that is, her published journal, scrapbook and letters. It is interesting to note the change in Katherine Mansfield's attitude towards Chekhov as she grew older. In the

---

43 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, p. 674.

44 Katherine Mansfield in her Letters, pp. 685-686, 689.

beginning, when she first speaks of the Russian writer in the documents we have examined, she compares her work and ideas with his work and ideas. She says over and over again that "he understood", that "he knew", and that his work was accurate and true. Towards the end, she focuses her attention on Chekhov himself, and on his life. She quotes sections from his letters in which he had expressed his misery and his loss of the urge to write, and she adds "So am I exactly."

There can be no doubt in our minds in regard to the importance of Chekhov to Katherine Mansfield. She admired him and did not hesitate to praise him lavishly. But it is impossible to conclude that because of the strong sentiment she had for Chekhov, Katherine Mansfield's writing was influenced by him. Only an examination of the stories of each author can provide us with the accurate answer to that question. We can postulate, however, that the information acquired by examination of the above documents by no means discourages the possibility of Katherine Mansfield's being indebted to Chekhov. Moreover, it can be said that if Katherine Mansfield was indebted to any one writer, Chekhov was more than likely that person. It is hard to imagine the work of Chekhov being appreciated by anyone more completely and enthusiastically than it was by Katherine Mansfield.

CHAPTER 111

As I have mentioned earlier, Katherine Mansfield wrote for the New Age Magazine of London, England between 1909 and 1911. On February 24, 1910, a story by her called, The Child-Who-Was-Tired appeared in that magazine. 1 This story was probably written while she was staying in Bavaria. As previously stated, she went there in June of 1909, and there seems to be a good possibility that she read some of Chekhov's tales in German translation while she was there. I have mentioned the two literary Poles who were in company with her at Bavaria, and Antony Alper's suggestion that these men might have introduced her to Chekhov's work. In any event, The Child-Who-Was-Tired has become the object of much critical attention. It reappeared in the collection of Katherine Mansfield's tales called In a German Pension published in 1911.

The Child-Who-Was-Tired is about a young, illegitimate girl who is working in almost slavelike conditions for a family of six. During the time of the story, her major duty is to care for the baby, but she is ordered to do many other little tasks around the house and not permitted to rest for a moment. She is exhausted from over-work and repeatedly slips off into a semi-sleeping condition. In these trances,

---

1 Antony Alpers, p. 129.

she always sees "a little white road with tall black trees on either side." The girl is treated with extreme cruelty by her master and mistress who refer to her as a "good-for-nothing-brat." Finally, after a long, hard day of work, the Child-Who-Was-Tired thinks that she will at last be able to sleep. But visitors arrive, and she is kept busy far into the night. While the visitors are drinking, she is ordered to rock the baby to sleep. But the baby is continually crying. It is also mentioned in the story that the woman of the house is expecting another baby, and this makes the reader realize that the future does not appear to be very encouraging for the Child-Who-Was-Tired. The story ends with the scene of the servant child rocking the baby. She is suddenly possessed with a notion to suffocate the baby, and so she does. The final paragraph describes her after the murder has been committed.

> She heaved a long sigh, then fell back onto the floor, and was walking along a little white road with tall black trees on either side, a little road that led to nowhere, and where nobody walked at all-nobody at all. 2

In the biography of Mansfield prepared by Ruth Elvish Mantz and John Middleton Murry, the following statements are made concerning the story which I have just outlined:

---

2 Katherine Mansfield, "The Child-Who-Was-Tired," Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield. (London, 1945), p. 766, All subsequent references will be to this edition.

> She had begun to write the sketches which ultimately became her first book, In a German Pension. The first she wrote was The Child-Who-Was-Tired. It is remote from the quality of her later work; but it is deeply interesting. Superficially, it is realistic story of peasant life, but in essence it is nothing of the kind. The Child-Who-Was-Tired was indubitably herself in the summer of 1909 - the Katherine wearied with pain and crying in vain for rest - "the frightened child lost in a funeral procession." The peasant household is not any peasant household that Katherine experienced - actually the Bavarian peasants were kind to her and she liked them - but merely a symbol of her experience of life, which she wrote years afterwards, "is that it is pretty terrible." The Child-Who-Was-Tired is her first effort to translate that experience into the forms of art to utter "her cry against corruption."
>
> It was not to be wondered at that even those who saw the promise of the story should have mistaken its intention and missed its deeper meaning. 3

These remarks became extremely interesting when we put them alongside those of a later biographer, Antony Alpers:

> Virtually a free adaption of Anton Chekhov's miniature tragedy of a maltreated child, Spat Khochetsia, and on the face of it a straight-out plagiarism, The Child-Who-Was-Tired provides, at one and the same time, the first intimation that Katherine Mansfield had discovered the Russian writer, and the most convincing proof, or rather confirmation, that she had no need to become his imitator. The charge that she copied her method from Chekhov has been made more than once, and the case of The Child-Who-Was-Tired has been cited to support it. But there are other considerations, which strongly suggest what is more interesting - an instance of the completely different backgrounds and personal circumstances of the two writers causing them to arrive independly at deceptively similar methods.
>
> The plagiarism itself - to admit the term for the moment - is indisputable. 4

Alpers goes on to point out similarities between the

---

3 Mantz and Murry, p. 326.

4 Antony Alpers, p. 129.

two stories then continues:

> No one can doubt, after putting the two stories side by side, that Katherine Mansfield knew Spat Khochetsia when she wrote her own. Nevertheless, the starting point for any consideration of her indebtedness to Chekhov is not The Child-Who-Was-Tired at all, but the earlier and completely original story, The Tiredness of Rosabel. [5]

Before we consider what Alpers has to say about The Tiredness of Rosabel, we shall minutely examine these two stories, The Child-Who-Was-Tired and Spat Khochetsia, in an effort to discover fully the extent and nature of their similarity. It seems likely that Katherine Mansfield discovered the Russian story in a German translation, and I will elaborate more on that later. Nonetheless, the story does appear in English translation at a much later date under the title of Sleepy in Select Tales of Chekhov, a translation by Constance Garnett which was published in London by Chatto and Windus in 1949. There is another English translation by R.E.C. Long which appeared in 1903, but I shall present a quotation from Antony Alpers which deals fully with that work,

Chekhov's story, as it appears in Garnett's Collection, can be summarized as follows: Varka is a girl of thirteen who has lost her mother and father. She is working as a servant for a family of three, and her major job is to look after the baby. The baby is continually crying, and Varka is sleepy - exhausted from over-work. She slips into states of semi-consciousness

---

5 Antony Alpers, p. 130

and sees "a broad high-road covered with liquid mud." She also sees her mother and father and hears the latter moaning on his death-bed. Varka works a long, hard day and at the end, when she hopes to find rest, visitors arrive. She is called upon to do many little tasks and finally to rock the baby to sleep. While she is doing this, she, like The Child-Who-Was-Tired becomes obsessed with the desire to kill the baby. Like Katherine Mansfield's Child, she also succeeds in committing the murder.

It can easily be seen by comparing the outlines of these two stories that a most striking resemblance of details exists; so striking a resemblance that one feels little doubt that Katherine Mansfield had read Sleepy. It is difficult to imagine these two stories to be independently contrived. However, there are certain fundamental differences between these two stories which indicate that Katherine Mansfield used merely the bare outline of Chekhov's story, reconditioning it completely to suit her own end; that she developed the story afresh from her own mind and experience. It is as if two independent reporters were writing a report about the same event. I see in these two stories a basic difference in technique between Mansfield and Chekhov which can be traced through the complete works of each writer.

In both stories we see a young servant girl slipping into a semi-conscious condition; and in each case, the girl has a vision of a road. In the Mansfield story, it is "a little

white road with tall black trees on either side"; in the Chekhov story, it is "a broad high road covered with liquid mud." Now in Katherine Mansfield's story this road is symbolic of the release and protection which The Child-Who-Was-Tired desires. It is a subjective thing. It seems that the Child has conjured up the vision of this little white road from her mind because of her intense subconscious yearnings, and that these yearnings are personal to Katherine Mansfield. In the story by Chekhov, the road is also symbolic, but in a more objective sense. It is emblematic of the life which the little servant girl has had and her peasant associations. Chekhov writes this about the road: "and Varka sees a broad high road covered with liquid mud; along the high road stretched files of wagons, while people with wallets on their backs are trudging along and shadows flit backwards and forwards;" 6 Later he writes: "Again she sees the high road covered with liquid mud. The people with wallets on their backs and the shadows have lain down and are fast asleep. Looking at them, Varka has a passionate longing for sleep; she would lie down with enjoyment, but her mother Pelageya is walking beside her, hurrying her on." 7 It can thus

---

6 Anton Chekhov, "Sleepy," Select Tales of Chekhov, translated by Constance Garnett, (London, 1949), p. 98.

7 Anton Chekhov, "Sleepy," p. 100.

be seen that the road in Chekhov's story represents an association with the past rather than a symbol of what the young girl desires. The validity of this observation is made evident by consideration of the closing portions of each story. Mansfield's story ends:

> And she suddenly had a beautiful, marvellous idea. She laughed for the first time that day, and clapped her hands.
>
> "Ts-Ts-Ts!" she said "lie there, silly one; you will go to sleep. You'll not cry any more or wake up in the night. Funny, little, ugly baby."
>
> He opened his eyes, and shrieked loudly at the sight of the Child-Who-Was-Tired. From the next room she heard the Frau call out to her.
>
> "One moment- he is almost asleep," she cried. And then gently, smiling, on tiptoe, she brought the pink bolster from the Frau's bed and covered the baby's head with it, pressed with all her might as he struggled, "like a duck with its head off, wriggling," she thought.
>
> She heaved a long sigh, then fell back on the floor, and was walking along a little white road with tall black trees on either side, a little road which led to nowhere, and where nobody walked at all—nobody at all.[8]

Thus we see the Child suddenly decide that by destroying the baby she can reach the little white road. Mansfield shows us that she does achieve this goal. The little white road, then, is the goal or object of the Child's desires. These desires are primarily for freedom and for protection. The road itself is symbolic of freedom and the tall trees of protection. The fact that no one is on the road supports the theory that the road is a subjective vision created by the troubled mind of the Child-Who- Was- Tired. Now let us consider the closing passages of Chekhov's Sleepy:

---

8 Katherine Mansfield, "The Child-Who-Was-Tired," pp. 765-766.

> Again Varka sees the muddy high road, the people with wallets, her mother Pelageya, her father Yefim. She understands everything, she recognizes everyone, but through her half sleep she cannot understand the force which binds her, hand and foot, weighs upon her, and prevents her from living. She looks round, searches for that force that she may escape from it, but she cannot find it. At last, tired to death, she does her very utmost, strains her eyes, looks up at the flickering green patch, and, listening to the screaming finds the foe who will not let her live.
>
> That foe is the baby.
>
> She laughs. It seems strange to her that she has failed to grasp such a simple thing before. The green patch, the shadows, and the crickets seem to laugh and wonder too.
>
> The hallucination takes possession of Varka. She gets up from her stool, and with a broad smile on her face and wide unblinking eyes, she walks up and down the room. She feels pleased and tickled at the thought that she will be rid directly of the baby that binds her hand and foot.... Kill the baby and then sleep, sleep, sleep....
>
> Laughing and winking and shaking her fingers at the green patch, Varka steals up to the cradle and bends over the baby. When she has strangled him, she quickly lies down on the floor, laughs with delight that she can sleep, and in a minute is sleeping as sound as the dead. 9

We see here that the road is not mentioned by Chekhov in the closing portions of his story. The desires of Varka are immediate. She wishes to sleep and to live. She conceives of the baby as the thing which is prohibiting her from the realization of these conscious desires. When she has killed the baby, she at last is able to sleep soundly. There is pregnant irony in the last sentence, for the consequences of

---

9 Anton Chekhov, "Sleepy", pp. 102-103.

her action will undoubtedly mean that the hope of evermore being permitted to live and to sleep are, for Varka, as dead as the baby. Both The Child-Who-Was-Tired and Varka murder their charges; both achieve immediate realization of their wishes; but both have by their acts, murdered the possibility of permanent future happiness. This is the full extent of the similarity. Varka's desires are conscious, she wants to live and to sleep. The Child-Who-Was-Tired has subconscious desires for freedom and protection, symbolized by the little white road. To Varka, the baby is the foe who enslaves her. To the Child, the baby is a wall which is keeping her from the little white road. Chekhov has analyzed the young girl, objectively presented her case and explained her emotions. Sleepy is another of his impersonal, pyschological studies. Katherine Mansfield has projected herself into the body of her character. I have pointed out earlier that the biographers Mantz and Murry have said,"The Child-Who-Was-Tired was undoubtedly herself in the summer of 1909 - the Katherine Mansfield wearied with pain and crying in vain for rest," in connection with this story. Considering these indices, we can thus conclude that although Mansfield may have borrowed the idea of her story from Chekhov, she re-created it, made it an expression of her own inner emotions. Her treatment of the material is entirely divergent from that of Chekhov. He is the story teller analyzing his subject,

sitting at a distance, relating what his keen, knowing eye and sympathetic heart have enabled him to understand about this little girl. Katherine Mansfield is the little girl herself, and in telling what the girl feels, she is describing her own emotions. In this convenient instance, we can see clearly the fundamental difference between Chekhov and Mansfield. The first is an impersonal and analytical writer; the latter is a subjective and imaginative writer. Chekhov explains the servant girl's emotions, bluntly tells us that she considers the baby her foe. Mansfield provides us with interesting details of the girl's thoughts and conveys her theme through symbols. Of course, Chekhov also makes use of symbolism. The little patch of green mentioned repeatedly in Sleepy might well be symbolic of Varka's wish for a healthy life and the minuteness of the happiness she finally achieves.

There are other characteristics of these two stories which provide us with indications of the distinguishing marks between Chekhov and Mansfield. In The-Child-Who-Was-Tired, Katherine Mansfield introduces three extra characters. These are two little boys and a very young girl. By the introduction of these other characters, Katherine Mansfield provides us with additional reasons for the misery of The Child-Who-Was-Tired. The reader is led to believe that it is what is happening to the Child and not what has happened which makes her life unbearable.

No mention is made of the Child's past life, except that she was illegitimate, and the reader finds no evidence to indicate that the Child remembers the past. Chekhov uses the analytical method in contrast to Mansfield. He explains Varka's thoughts and reveals that the death of her father and the consequent misery of her mother have made a deep impression on the young girl's mind. Here again is an illustration of another general distinction between Mansfield and Chekhov. In a large number of her stories, Mansfield focuses the attention on one particular time. Chekhov had a broader insight; in this and most of his other stories, he analyzes all the forces which have created the major situation of his story. In Sleepy, he tells of the father's moaning in such a way that the reader feels the baby's wailing must remind Varka of her father's death. He describes scenes from Varka's past life, scenes which have been selected because of their pyschological pertinence. There is none of this in Mansfield's story.

It is of interest to note that if Katherine Mansfield did read Chekhov's Sleepy, which very probably she did, the story it caused her to produce is almost a perfect example of how differently from Chekhov she treated the material at her disposal. The very similarity of these stories provides a magnifying glass with which we are able to discern the delicate

diversity of approach between the two authors. In this connection, we can see that Katherine Mansfield's experiences of life and personal feelings were a much greater influence on her than was the work of Anton Chekhov. The Child-Who-Was-Tired is evidence, however, of a different selection of materials by Katherine Mansfield. It is a contrast to most of her earlier, light descriptive sketches, but I will consider this matter later.

There is another observation which can be made concerning the two stories discussed above. The tragedy in Chekhov's story can be felt with more intensity than in Mansfield's story. It would seem that Chekhov, through this technique of impersonal treatment, might be at a disadvantage in the matter of emotional intensity. But on the contrary, he is able to communicate a strong sensation. Perhaps this is achieved by means of the atmosphere and tone of the story. In his analysis, there is always an effective atmosphere which captivates the reader. Moreover, Chekhov skillfully uses the scenes from her earlier life that Varka remembers to make the reader increasingly aware of the tragedy of her situation. His impersonal technique, while it erases all traces of sentimentality, seems to be conducive to a powerful tonal effectiveness.

The story Sleepy seems to owe much of its intensity to its simplicity. While Katherine Mansfield's Child enjoys a visionary sojourn, Varka remembers the terrible scenes of her

past, scenes which are uncomplicated and evaluated by her with child-like simplicity. But the reader makes his own evaluations and is guided by the tone. In regard to moods, Chekhov is more consistent than Katherine Mansfield. Varka is deeply depressed throughout the story until she has finally fallen asleep. The Child-Who-Was-Tired has moments of sublimation provided by her visions of the little white road. Her mood shifts from one of depression to one of hopeful dreaming when she has these illusions. This shifting of the Child's mood seems to make her situation less tragic than that of Varka who does not enjoy even such fleeting moments of illusionary hope and escape.

At this point, we must consider the remainder of Antony Alpers' opinion concerning these two stories and the comments he adds to it about The Tiredness of Rosabel which I shall consider subsequently. These are as follows:

> The Tiredness of Rosabel exhibits, in however immature a form, every essential feature by which a characteristic Katherine Mansfield story can be recognized: the focus on a single moment, isolating one cry from the heart to make it represent the whole of a human problem; the use of the faculty of impersonation, making everything the characters say or think reveal some further aspect of their natures; the using of a day-dream to assist this process; the dextrous control of three time-levels simultaneously; and the inimitable sense of concreteness; and of course the central theme- a fastidious feminine recoil from the arrogant male, conflicting with a romantic idealism and resulting in disillusionment.
> In 1908, Katherine Mansfield had not discovered

Chekhov. One selection from his stories did exist in English then: The Black Monk AND Other Stories, translated by R.E.C. Long and published by Duckworth in 1903, when she was at Queen's College. But apart from the fact that nothing in it would have taught her how to write The Tiredness of Rosabel, there is reason for believing that she did not know this book: it contained Spat Kochetsia (under the title Sleepy Head). Since the New Age itself was taking an interest in the newly discovered Russian writers, Katherine would hardly have offered Orage a completely undisguised version of the story in 1910 if she had known a translation existed. Besides, all her literary discoveries from her school years onward tend to be immediately recorded, either in her notebooks or by being communicated enthusiastically to friends, and there is no trace of her having heard of Chekhov until The Child-Who-Was-Tired makes its sudden appearance immediately after her return from Bavaria.

Everything, therefore, points to her having encountered Spat Khochetsia perhaps in a German translation, like Wyspianskis plays, and at the hands of the same enthusiast - in Worishofen; to her having tried her hand at adapting it, and then having offered it, rather naughtily, to Orage on her return, in the belief that its original was not known in England. Artistically, her action was perfectly justified. The Child-Who-Was-Tired shows every sign of having been imagined afresh, with no lack of the only kind of invention that mattered to Katherine. Mansfield, and not one sign that she was dominated as she wrote either by Chekhov's images or by anxiety to avoid them.

The Tiredness of Rosabel, a fluke that foreshadowed her later work with remarkable completeness and indisputable originality, remains the starting - point for the whole question. Coming after it, The Child-Who-Was-Tired is in the nature of an exercise, a la maniere de Chekhov, by an artist who had already hit upon her métier unaided. 10

---

10 Antony Alpers, pp. 131-132.

I feel that Alpers is correct in suggesting that The Child-Who-Was-Tired was "imagined afresh," and I believe that the points I have made concerning this story corroborate that view. When one considers the story in the light of these points, it seems unfair to regard the composition of it as plagiarism. I do not believe that Katherine Mansfield in any way felt that she was plagiarising, but rather that she was presenting her interpretation of an incident which had caught her attention. I have mentioned that Katherine Mansfield introduced extra children into her story, and perhaps I should point out that one of the little boys is called Anton! Now we cannot affix too much significance to this fact, yet it allows us to speculate that perhaps Katherine Mansfield has curiously acknowledged the man from whom she received the germ of her story by the use of his given name.

Elisabeth Schneider has examined the case of The Child-Who-Was-Tired and Sleepy. She presents this interesting commentary which provides a fitting termination for my inquiry:

> . . . . Yet the similarity between the two stories is too great for us to suppose them entirely independent. The central idea of Chekhov's tale would be unlikely to occur of itself to another writer . . .

Schneider goes on to point out the similarities of plot that I have mentioned. She also comments on the "increasing tendency of the more modern writer toward concentration of time, scene and interest," then continues:

> ... The explanation that I suggest for the similarity, which amounts almost to a reproduction of the same story, is offered only tentatively. In spite of the very close parallel there was probably no deliberate plagiarism on the part of Katherine Mansfield. It seems unlikely, too, that, if she were experimenting to see what she could do with the same plot, she would have published it without acknowledgment. Only a less exigent egoism than hers would be likely to seek, or find, satisfaction by an accomplishment not really her own. It seems more probably a case of unconscious memory, a phenomenon common enough in matters of detail, though not common in such complete instances. This is, of course, only surmise. But the interpretation is somewhat strengthened by another resemblance which I think is not fanciful, though it is scarcely susceptible of definite proof, of one of Katherine Mansfield's later stories to a novel of Henry James. The fragment called The Dove's Nest, which is about a girl named Milly, suggests, in something more subtle than its title and heroine's name, certain parts in the latter half of James's The Wings of the Dove. Something of the spirit - the color of the air, one might call it, in the two houses (one in the south of France, the other in Italy), the two women living in each of them - much in the heroine herself, and in the author's unspoken attitude toward her, a delicate, romanticized, veiled portrayal, though it is quite indefinable, seems distinctly similar. In this case a writer who was deliberately borrowing an atmosphere would hardly have taken care to point the indebtedness

> by the use of the reminiscent title and a heroine with the same name. There is no similarity here of action or of situation, and the whole is typical of those vague, unconscious reminiscences of which literary history affords any number of examples. If I am right in drawing this parallel, the probability that the earlier story was an unconscious imitation of Chekhov is somewhat strengthened. One feature of a certain type of imaginative mind is the power of taking in that which appeals to it with so much activity of its own, so little of mere passive appreciation, that the memory afterward will seem to bear the stamp of its own imagination. 11

It is impossible to pass final judgement on the case since the actual circumstances in connection with this story will always remain a mystery. Miss Schneider seems, however, to have grounds for her opinion, and it appears to me that Katherine Mansfield's use of the name Anton might be used to support her suggestion.

In the case of The Tiredness of Rosabel, Alpers seems to be justified in his opinions, but he could have spoken more fully. This story tells of a young girl who serves in a hat store. During the course of her working day, a man has happened to pay her a compliment, and she, when at home in her room, day-dreams of a romance and marriage with the man as a partner. This story has many of the characteristics of a Mansfield story as Alpers has pointed out. Moreover, like The Child-Who-Was-Tired, it is highly subjective. The girl in the story is obviously the nineteen-year-old Katherine Mansfield who was living in a room in London during the latter part of 1908.

---

11 Elisabeth Schneider, "Katherine Mansfield and Chekhov," Modern Language Notes, L (June, 1935), pp. 394-396.

The Tiredness of Rosabel, however, does not succeed in causing the reader to feel any emotion. It is well written and entertaining, but one is inclined to think after reading it, "Here is a lonely girl dreaming of romance. So what?" This story undoubtedly foreshadows many of the techniques which Mansfield was to employ later. As a matter of fact, these very techniques mentioned by Alpers: impersonation, focus on a single moment, idealistic day-dreaming, are in part the things which distinguish The Child-Who-Was-Tired and Chekhov's Sleepy. There is no question, then, of Mansfield's indebtedness to Chekhov for these aspects of her style; for not only are they not characteristic of Chekhov, therefore not what he could teach a disciple, but she had developed them before there is any likelihood of her having read Chekhov.

The Tiredness of Rosabel does not fully establish Katherine Mansfield's freedom from debt to Chekhov, as Alpers seems to imply. It helps to define what was individually her own. But that can be as well established by comparison of her later work with the work of Chekhov. Consequently, if Katherine Mansfield is indebted to Chekhov, it must be for something else.

There is a much more intense sense of tragedy communicated to the reader in The Child-Who-Was-Tired than in The Tiredness of Rosabel. It can be suggested that if Mansfield did learn anything from Chekhov between the composition of these

two stories, it was the sense of a situation's potentiality for tragedy and emotional intensity. Even then, I have already shown how, in the two stories compared earlier, Mansfield falls short of Chekhov in the matter of tragic intensity. We will see later, when Marriage à La Mode and Not Wanted are compared, how she eventually produces stronger emotional intensity than Chekhov.

The Tiredness of Rosabel, then, simply proves what comparison of all Katherine Mansfield's work with that of Chekhov proves, which is that she was an idealistic, romantic and subjective writer, while he was analytical and objective. The difference between it and her later stories is one of degree of emotional communication and development of skill in choosing and handling material. One feels that this story could have been handled with greater effectiveness by an older Mansfield. Miss Brill is a example of how the older Katherine Mansfield could more effectively select and handle the same general sort of raw material.

Antony Alpers has mentioned two other stories, one by Chekhov and one by Mansfield which we must consider. I shall allow his words to introduce them:

> "In nature everything has a meaning," Anton Chekhov once wrote, "and everything is forgiven, and it would be strange not to forgive." The

attitude is that of Prelude's author at Bandol. Yet Prelude's method owed nothing to Chekhov. There was a deceptively close resemblance between the two writer's views of life, and hence between the forms they evolved to express them, but at the point of actual creation there was a fundamental difference of attack. This difference becomes apparent at once if the opening paragraphs of Prelude, are compared with those of Chekhov's story, The Steppe which also describes a child's journey to a new home. Chekhov begins his story with a statement. He, the author, admitting his presence from the outset, is giving an exterior description, providing the reader with certain facts that will be needed if only for convenience, in the narrative that follows:

'Early one morning in July a shabby covered chaise, one of those antediluvian chaises without springs in which no one travels in Russia nowadays, except merchant's clerks, dealers and the less well-to-do among priests, drove out of N., the principal town of the province of Z., and rumbled noisily along the posting track. It rattled and creaked at every moment; the pail, hanging on behind, chimed in gruffly, and from these sounds alone and from the wretched rags of leather hanging loose about its peeling body one could judge of its decrepit age and readiness to drop to pieces. Two of the inhabitants of N. were sitting in the chaise; they were a merchant of N. called Ivan Ivanitch Kuzmitchov, a man with a shaven face, wearing glasses and a straw hat, more like a government clerk than a merchant, and Father Christopher Sireysky, the priest of the church of St. Nikolay at N., a little old man with long hair, in a grey canvas cassock, a wide brimmed top hat and a coloured embroidered girdle. The former was absorbed in thought,and kept tossing his head to shake off drowsiness; in his countenance an habitual business-like reserve was struggling with the genial expression of a man who has just said good-bye to his relatives and has had a good drink at parting. The latter gazed with moist eyes wonderingly at God's word ...'

Katherine Mansfield drops the reader suddenly and surprisingly into the middle of a scene and situation which he must interpret for himself as if he had happened on it by accident in real life:

'There was not an inch of room for Lottie and Kezia

in the buggy. When Pat swung them on top of the luggage they wobbled; the grandmother's lap was full and Linda Burnell could not possibly have held a lump of a child on hers for any distance. Isabel, very superior, was perched beside the new handy-man on the driver's seat. Holdalls, bags and boxes were piled upon the floor. "These are absolute necessities that I will not let out of my sight for one instant," said Linda Burnell, her voice trembling with fatigue and excitment.

Lottie and Kezia stood on the patch of lawn just inside the gate all ready for the fray in their coats with brass anchor buttons and little round caps with battleship ribbons. Hand in hand, they stared with round solemn eyes, first at the absolute necessities and then at their mother.

"We shall simply have to leave them. That is all. We shall simply have to cast them off," said Linda Burnell. A strange little laugh flew from her lips: she leaned back against the buttoned leather cushions and shut her eyes, her lips trembling with laughter. Happily at that moment Mrs. Samuel Josephs, who had been watching the scene from behind her drawing room blind, waddled down the garden path.

"Why nod leave the chudren with be for the after doon, Bis Burnell? They could go on the dray with the storeban when he comes in the eveding...." '

This is the method of The Tiredness of Rosabel, the method of oblique impersonation, extended from a single character to a group. Unpredictable, the author moves from one character's mind to another's, now to Linda's, now to Kezia's, now to her own, detached, observing. And the reader, treated from the beginning as one who already knows the scene and the people well, is tricked into familiarity with them before he has time to feel lost.

Chekhov, having introduced(in translation) 'a merchant of N. called Ivan Ivanitch Kazmitchov,' proceeds to a full exterior description of him.

Katherine Mansfield, introducing Pat as if by accident in the headlong course of two sentences about the children, contrives to intimate that there is a man on the scene; that he is probably Irish; that he is 'the new handy-man' who will drive the buggy; and that he is good with children. But all this is merely counterpoint to an exposition of the mother's attitude to her children, and of their bewilderment in the great upheaval.

Chekhov, of course, did not always write as leisurely as in The Steppe. But he did consistently use the external method of description, relying to a great extent on reference to known types, and Katherine Mansfield, the New

Zealander, could not refer to types.

She could never have described her buggy as " one of those buggies with buttoned-leather cushions in which no one travelled in New Zealand in those days except certain merchant's families." It would have had no meaning; for New Zealanders or anyone else. She could not have described Stanley Burnell, on his subsequent appearance in the story, by saying whether or not he looked like a typical New Zealand merchant. There is no such thing.

In other words, she could not assume her reader's familiarity with any containing society or class. Chekhov not only could but had to do this, since it is in the nature of his medium that the short-story writer must assume the reader's familiarity with SOMETHING, and Chekhov wrote for the readers of Russian magazines; he had his serfs and his merchants, schoolteachers, priests, and monks, his Mother Russia, "and all the rest of it." Katherine Mansfield had nothing of the sort (in dealing with a London shopgirl it was herself who was in vacuo). She must need assume her reader's familiarity with 'her people' and her 'undiscovered country'- and having done so, hasten to establish it.....

.... Prelude drew together everything that Katherine Mansfield had learned about her craft, from The Tiredness of Rosabel onwards, and was the first complete expression of the attitude of life that had been her goal, in spite of all her wanderings from the path, these last seven years. In Saint Beuve's phrase, it was her first significant work. It marks the region where her genius first took up its abode and thrived.

It owed its origin and its character, not to any Russian writer, but to the fact that a spiritual and emotional crisis occurred at a critical moment in its author's life which made her aware of her vocation, achieved her reconciliation with her country, gave her emotional stability through her love for her husband, took her southwards to the sun, and restored the power of detailed vision, in short, which provided all the conditions necessary for the fusion of her genius and her talents. [12]

---

12 Antony Alpers, pp. 214-219.

Again it seems to me that Alpers is justified in his views, but could have been more explicit. For one thing, I cannot understand why he chose to compare The Steppe and Prelude. These stories are entirely different when regarded as complete compositions. The only faint hint of similarity between them is the fact that in each story, someone is moving to a new home. But in each story, this plot detail is made insignificant by the subsequent characterizations which owe nothing to it and could have been developed in a multitude of other circumstances. Katherine Mansfield, in the Prelude, is primarily interested in the inner lives and emotions of her four main characters, Kezia, Linda Burnell, Stanley Burnell and Beryl Fairfield. She chose to develop these characters while she has them move to a new home. In The Steppe, Chekhov is giving his readers a panoramic vision of the whole of Russia, the peasants, the countryside, the innkeepers and the higher classes. The device of a child travelling across this Russia is an admirably convenient manner in which to do this. In The Steppe, Chekhov is interested in much greater forces than the particular idiosyncrasies and emotions of particular people. Like Shakespeare, he uses particular people simply to reveal general truths about human nature. This is not to say that his characters cannot be individuals. They are. Solomon in The Steppe is completely an individual. But he is

also a means to provide a clearer realization of the general disease in Russian society. It seems strange to me that Alpers did not choose to compare The Prelude to one of Chekhov's many stories and character studies about women, since Prelude is essentially the portrait of two women and a little girl with the character of a man developed in relation to these. Thus it can be seen that the authors of Prelude and The Steppe set out to do entirely different things.

However, the relationship of these two stories, one to the other, does serve further to illustrate the distinguishing marks between Mansfield and Chekhov. In the first place, I believe that Alpers is absolutely correct in stating that the method of Mansfield in Prelude owed nothing to Chekhov. It is of interest to consider the circumstances connected with this story as cited by John Middleton Murry:

> She stayed there (In France), some five weeks during which the novel, after a number of false starts, took a more definite shape. Its name was settled: it was to be 'The Aloe', for I have lately discovered a letter of mine to her of May 11 which refers to it under that name, as a matter of familiar knowledge between us. Hitherto I had been under the impression that 'The Aloe' was not conceived until after the death of her brother October 1915. Whether she actually wrote any considerable portion of it in Paris between May 5 and May 19 is doubtful, but I think that there can be no doubt that it is to 'The Aloe' she refers when she says 'Ca marche, ça va, ça se dessire.' (May 8, 1915) But the emotional turmoil did not subside easily,

> and so long as it existed Katherine was unable to realize 'The Aloe'. For that she depended upon inward peace - on 'being in some perfectly blissful way at peace.' (letter of February 3, 1918). She used that phrase to describe her condition while she was actually writing 'The Aloe' in the early spring of 1916 at the Villa Pauline, Bandol. Nor was it till that her emotional turmoil was fully resolved. 'Prelude' - which was the final form of 'The Aloe' is now an accepted classic. Its revolutionary novelty, thirty years ago, is easily forgotten. Therefore it has seemed to be worth emphasizing that it was the final outcome of a prolonged period of gestation which probably lasted a full year. 13

We have thus an idea of the conditions in which Prelude was written and the time taken to write it.

As I have pointed out earlier, there was a volume of Chekhov's works called The Steppe and Other Stories translated by Adeline Lister Kaye and published in 1915. But there is no evidence that Katherine Mansfield read this book. Moreover, as I have intimated, there is only the slightest suggestion of similarity between the two stories in question. It is hard to understand why Alpers has chosen these two stories to point out the fundamental difference of attack used by each author. It seems to intimate that they were using different approaches to the same subject, whereas the purpose of each involved two entirely different themes.

---

13 J.M. Murry in comments contained in Katherine Mansfield's Letters, p. 14-15.

In any event, it is a fact that Katherine Mansfield in the greater part of her stories does employ the method of "dropping in on the scene." Many stories can be cited in evidence of this. For instance, in the Man Without a Temperament, she begins:

> He stood at the hall door turning the ring, turning the heavy signet ring upon his little finger while his glance travelled coolly, deliberately over the round tables 14

or in The Garden Party :

> And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, ... 15

Chekhov has a tendency in many of his stories to adopt the simplest and most traditional narrative method of introducing a story. Consider the tale, Excellent People, which begins, "Once upon a time there lived in Moscow a man called Vladimir Semyovitch Liadovsky,"..., 16 or The Lady With The Dog which commences, "It was said that a new person had appeared on the sea-front: a lady with a dog..." One can continue endlessly producing evidence that Chekhov, in the greater portion of his stories, begins with a simple description of the characters or character. In

---

14 Katherine Mansfield, "Man Without a Temperament," Collected Stories, p. 129.

15 Katherine Mansfield, "The Garden Party," Collected Stories, p. 245.

16 Anton Chekhov, "EXcellent People", The Duel etc., p. 165.

An Anonymous Story, he actually spends three separate and consecutive paragraphs to describe the three friends of the protagonist. It is thus obvious, as Alpers has pointed out, comparison of Prelude and The Steppe illustrates, and general examination of each author will corroborate, that Katherine Mansfield owed nothing to Chekhov in regard to methods of approaching a story.

Alpers is also correct in his statement about Chekhov referring to types. I feel that he could have pointed out more convincingly that this was a perfectly natural thing for Chekhov to do and Katherine Mansfield not to do. Each writer had to communicate with the public by means of the symbols that public could understand, for each depended upon selling stories to magazines and periodicals. In Russia, the population was divided quite neatly into certain classes. Certain rôles were demanded by society from certain people. Even the thoughts of persons in a certain group were conditioned by that group. All through his stories, Chekhov makes us aware of the power of society to induce conformity and smother individualism. This was part of the sociological disease in Russia. In The Steppe, Chekhov tells us of Solomon who did not wish to

play his ordained rôle of a commercial Jew. He contrasts Solomon to his brother who was happy to do, say, and think the right things, despising his brother for doing otherwise. Chekhov displays to us the censure and pressures directed at this man because of his will to be different. It was Chekhov's purpose to make the reader aware of the types in Russian society. His stories are an outcry against the molding and conditioning of a man's life by external forces. The story, Peasants, is a perfect example of this. Katherine Mansfield had no such purpose. Consequently she did not find herself in the same position as Chekhov. Moreover, the society she was dealing with had a different makeup, lending to greater individualism. It does not seem that Katherine Mansfield was concerned with any general sociological problems. In Prelude, she writes of particular people, and in her other works, she does likewise. As I have already intimated, Chekhov was interested in particular people chiefly because of the light they threw on general truths about life - particularly Russian Life.

One is able to equate each major character in Prelude to real people in the life of Katherine Mansfield. Stanley Burnell is her father and Linda Burnell, her mother. Beryl Fairfield is her aunt. Kezia, of course, is Katherine Mansfield herself. The incident itself is drawn from a real

life adventure. When Katherine Mansfield was a child, her family did move in much the way described in Prelude. Mantz and Murry, in their biography of Katherine Mansfield, describe$ the relation of real facts to those spoken of in Prelude in The Life of Katherine Mansfield. 17

It is obvious, therefore, that the authoress of Prelude is drawing from her own personal experience. She is not trying to establish any general truths but is dealing with the private emotions she has felt and feels that those who have lived close to her have known. Again we see that the story, Prelude, like The Child-Who-Was-Tired and The Tiredness of Rosabel, is highly subjective and describes sensuous experience. This is in marked contrast to The Steppe by Anton Chekhov. In this story, as in all his stories, Chekhov is the physician diagnosing a disease. He succeeds in making the reader keenly aware of the sick Russia:

> 'What am I doing?' Solomon repeated, and he shrugged his shoulders. 'The same as everyone else ... You see, I am a menial, I am my brother's servant, my brother's the servant of the visitors; the visitors are Varlamov's servants; and if I had ten millions, Varlamov would by my servant.' 18

Everyone is hammered into servility by the forces of Russian life. The power of money and the worship of false

---

17 Mantz and Murry, Chapter Four.

18 Anton Chekhov, "The Steppe", The Bishop and Other Stories, translated by C. Garnett (London 1919), p. 209.

values are brilliantly illustrated in The Steppe. All through the story, one feels the presence and force of the countryside and realizes that the people of Russia are less fortunate than the animals on the steppe; yet they have the power to kill these animals as the forces of society have the power to crush them.

The solitary elm stands alone, towering over the surrounding steppe, as he who advances higher than his fellow men stands alone. The Steppe reveals to us how Chekhov could see the things which the ordinary man had not the power to see. He is like the man called Vassya:

> Everyone began staring into the distance, looking for the fox, but no one could see it, only Vassya with his grey muddy - looking eyes, and he was enchanted by it. His sight was extraordinarily keen... He was so long-sighted that the brown steppe was for him always full of life and interest ... 19

Chekhov was also enchanted by the world he saw, and for him it was always full of life and interest. Essentially the difference between Mansfield and Chekhov as particularly illustrated in the Prelude and The Steppe is that Katherine Mansfield depended on her extraordinary sensitivity, and Chekhov depended on his extraordinary vision. Chekhov felt because he saw; Mansfield saw because she felt

---

19 Anton Chekhov, "The Steppe", p. 235.

- with all the limitations that implies. Chekhov's work can be properly termed intellectual evaluation, while that of Mansfield can justly be considered emotional representation.

Further study of these two stories, the Prelude and The Steppe, provides us with an excellent opportunity to compare certain aspects of their author's styles. Here is Katherine Mansfield describing dawn:

> Dawn came sharp and chill with red clouds on a faint green sky and drops of water on every leaf and blade. A breeze blew over the garden, dropping dew and dropping petals, shivered over the drenched paddocks, and was lost in the sombre bush. In the sky some tiny stars floated for a moment and then they were gone - they were dissolved like bubbles. And plain to be heard in the early quiet was the sound of the creek in the paddock running over the brown stones, running in and out of the sandy hollows, hiding under clumps of dark berry bushes, spilling into a swamp of yellow water flowers and cresses.
> And then at the first beam of sun the birds began. [20]

Chekhov also described the rising of the sun:

> ... The sun had already peeped out from beyond the town behind them, and quietly, without fuss, set to its accustomed task. At first in the distance before them a broad, bright, yellow streak of light crept over the ground where the earth met the sky, near the little barrows and the windmills, which in the distance looked like tiny men waving their arms. A minute later a similar streak gleamed a little nearer, crept to the right and embraced the hills. Something

---

20 Katherine Mansfield, "Prelude," Collected Stories, p. 24.

> warm touched Yekirushka's spine; the streak of light, stealing up from behind, darted between the chaise and the horses, moved to meet the other streak and soon the whole wide steppe flung off the twilight of early morning, and was smiling and sparkling with dew. 21

With these two descriptions of dawn we have a unique opportunity to realize the wonderful skill which both Mansfield and Chekhov possessed, and yet how differently they painted their pictures. Chekhov's sunrise is much more general than Katherine Mansfield's. He delights the reader with skillful metaphors as he personifies both the sun and the steppe. When one has read his words, one realizes that they are also accurate; that is, naturalistic. The first rays of the sun do creep and dart. His sunrise is everyone's sunrise; it is universal. Just as he provides us with the broadest insight into human nature, he also provides us with a picture of the sun rising as it does in every one's back yard. One is reminded of Shakespeare.

Katherine Mansfield's sunrise is a particular one in a particular place, although described with universal symbols. There is a breeze blowing, a creek flowing into a swamp, and clumps of "dark berry bushes" nearby. Just as her stories concern particular moments for particular people, this description seems to embrace the same principles. Perhaps it

---

21 Anton Chekhov, "The Steppe," p. 172.

is not as powerful as Chekhov's description, but it has more colour. There are "red clouds" and a "faint green sky"; "brown stones" and "yellow water flowers." Katherine Mansfield uses metaphorical language (The breeze and brook are personified) but not as consistently as Chekhov does. One is much more arrested by the rays embracing the hills, "stealing up from behind," than by the breeze shivering. Yet her picture is pretty and more sensuous. There is a certain delicacy of detail which causes one to feel Mansfield's description to be peculiarly feminine, as one also feels Chekhov's to be peculiarly masculine. The French say, "Vive la Différence." It is a good thing to have both.

Chekhov has painted a much broader picture than Katherine Mansfield. She has selected certain minute details with which to fashion her description. There is a greater abundance of colourful adjectives in Katherine Mansfield's description; she employs three more than the thirteen in Chekhov's slightly longer passage. Moreover, there are four significant and independent actions taking place in Katherine Mansfield's illustration. The sun is rising, the breeze is shivering, the stars are floating, and the creek is flowing. The activity of the sun is the only significant action in Anton Chekhov's work. Consequently, the Russian is enabled to focus the reader's mind with more concentration.

It seems to me that it is possible to trace this aspect of the difference between the methods of Chekhov and Mansfield throughout all their works. We have seen in Sleepy and The Child-Who-Was-Tired that Chekhov concentrates on Varka and the forces which have affected her, while Katherine Mansfield introduces three extra characters with the corresponding descriptions of these characters. But we have also seen that Mansfield does not do this irrelevantly and makes excellent use of her extra material. Similarly she makes excellent use of the extra material in the passage I have quoted above. We can see clearly that Katherine Mansfield had different methods from those of Chekhov, and that she was as skilled in the employment of her devices as Chekhov was in the use of his own.

In conclusion, I might add that Alpers is correct in his statement that Katherine Mansfield, through her method of oblique impersonation, was able to extend her awareness from a single character to a group. Throughout the Prelude, she shifts skillfully from one character's mind to that of another. At one moment the reader is sharing the inner emotions of Linda Burnell, at the next moment, those of Kezia or Beryl. In Chekhov's story, there is no shifting into the minds of different characters in the

way employed by Katherine Mansfield. We are able to tell the points of view of different characters by their conversation and the author's external descriptions, but we are not carried suddenly from one character's mind to that of another. The story flows from event to event and character to character by the simple narrative means of the boy's movements and consciousness. We are also aware of the author's presence at all times; as he repeatedly, interjects philosophical statements and observations which are independent of the boy's awareness. But these are parallel to the boy's awareness and are presented at the times when Yegorushka is observing the subject in question. Consider this passage from The Steppe:

> ... Yegorushka saw the sky by degrees grow dark and the mist fall over the earth - saw the stars light up, one after another ...
> When you gaze a long while fixedly at the deep sky, thoughts and feelings for some reason merge in a sense of loneliness. One begins to feel hopelessly solitary, and everything one used to look upon as near and akin becomes infinitely remote and valueless ... 22

While this type of authorial comment is to be found obtrusively sprinkled through the works of Chekhov, it is relatively inconspicuous in Mansfield's

---

22 Anton Chekhov, "The Steppe", p. 251,

works. She does interject various comments from time to time, but the reader is hardly aware of the author's presence. She also describes her characters often with the external method but never interjects the Henry Fielding or William Thackeray type of isolated comment. In this sense Mansfield was more modern than Chekhov.

At this point, having compared a small portion of each author's work, it seems that we must conclude that Chekhov had little or no appreciable influence on the form of Katherine Mansfield's work. The Child-Who-Was-Tired, as we will see, stands as an unique case which needs no more explanation.

In comparing the stories of Chekhov and Mansfield, I have discovered what appears to be a striking resemblance between another of the latter's compositions, Marriage à la Mode, and Not Wanted by Anton Chekhov. Not Wanted exists in two different English translations. It is contained in Stories of Russian Life, translated by Marian Fell and published in 1915;[1] and appears again in The Party and Other Stories, volume four in the series of compositions translated by Constance Garnett. The Party and Other Stories, was first published in 1917 and reprinted in 1919. Katherine Mansfield completed the story, Marriage à la Mode between July, 1921 and January, 1922. There is thus no reason why she could not have read Chekhov's Not Wanted before she wrote her Marriage à la Mode. However, according to her private papers, there is no positive evidence that she did in fact read that story. We do know that she was fond of Garnett's translations and had read volumes one and two, appearing immediately before The Party and Other Stories.

Not Wanted begins with the description of a man, Pavel Zaikin, travelling to his summer home for a week-end visit. His wife and family are living in this summer home, while he lives in the city and commutes on week-ends. The

---

1 Anton Tchekoff, Stories of Russian Life, trans. Marian Fell (New York, 1915), p. 167.

man is a member of the Circuit Court. While one the train, Pavel Zaikin meets another man who is on a similar trip to the suburbs. They talk and commiserate with each other. When Zaikin eventually arrives at his home, he finds only his six-year-old son is there. His wife is out with some friends, rehearsing a play. The man talks with his son, somewhat unjustly chides the boy, then finally feels a little ashamed and treats him with more warmth. The wife then returns with three friends, two men and a woman. These people are shown to be Bohemian types who are obviously friendly with the wife for their own advantage. Although there is no supper ready for Zaikin, his wife, Nadyezhda, quickly asks him for money to buy food for her friends. She has no time for conversation with him as her friends occupy every minute. When night comes, Nadyezhda asks these three people to stay over-night at her home, and Zaikin is told to sleep in the study so that his bed can be used by one of them. The story ends with the husband going out for a walk and meeting his acquaintance from the train, who has also encountered a "not wanted" situation.

Marriage à la Mode begins with a lawyer, William, also paying a visit to his family which is living in the country for the summer. While on the train, William thinks about his wife and is agitated by the change that has taken

place in her. When he arrives at the country home, his wife is with two men and two women. These people are of the same type as the wife's friends in Chekhov's story. They are obviously sponging on William's wife, Isabel, and have little or no regard for him. They eat the fruit which William has brought for his children. After the company has had tea, everyone except William goes bathing. He stays at home. When the bathers have returned, there is a lot of small talk, and we discover that one of the party is an alleged artist; another, a poet. Eventually, William departs again for the city and while on the train, he writes a letter telling Isabel of his dissatisfaction with the situation he had encountered at their country home. He does not do this with words of criticism but very warmly indicates that he is unhappy. The message could be considered a love letter. Isabel reads this letter to the people at her home, and everyone takes great delight in it. For a moment, she feels remorseful and ashamed, but eventually she puts away the letter and joins her friends.

We may readily see that the plot in each of these two stories, Not Wanted and Marriage à la Mode, is fundamentally the same except for an additional twist at the end of the latter. Both stories begin with a husband returning to his family for a week-end visit. The initial paragraph in Not Wanted is this:

> Between six and seven o'clock on a July evening, a crowd of summer visitors - mostly fathers of families - burdened with parcels, port-folios, and ladies' hat boxes, was trailing along from the little station of Helkovo, in the direction of the summer villas. They all looked exhausted, hungry, and ill-humoured, as though the sun were not shining and the grass were not green for them. Trudging along among the others was Pavel Matveyitch Zaikin, a member of the Circuit Court, a tall, stooping man, in a cheap cotton dust coat and with a cockade on his faded cap.[2]

Marriage à la Mode begins:

> On his way to the station William remembered with a fresh pang of disappointment that he was taking nothing down to the kiddies. Poor little chaps! It was hard lines on them. Their first words always were as they ran to greet him. 'What have you got for me, daddy?' and he had nothing. He would have to buy them some sweets at the station. But that was what he had done for the past four Saturdays; their faces had fallen last time when they saw the same old boxes produced again.
> And Paddy had said, 'I had red ribbing on mine bee-fore! '
> And Johnny had said, 'It's always pink on mine. I hate pink!' [3]

We see that the dismal tone created in each of these passages is almost identical. Even the factual details are similar. Each man is a member of the legal profession and in a gloomy mood.

---

2 Anton Chekhov, The Party and Other Stories, trans. Constance Garret (London, 1919), p. 247.

3 Katherine Mansfield, "Marriage à la Mode," Collected Stories, p. 309.

In these two passages, we again see the habitual tendency of Katherine Mansfield to present the particular... the sweets for the kiddies, "red ribbing"; while Chekhov deals with the more general ... a crowd of summer visitors burdened with parcels. As the two stories unfold, we see that both Chekhov and Mansfield are relating the emotional exhaustion of their husband characters to the general physical exhaustion occasioned by the intense summer heat. Katherine Mansfield uses her familiar device of a shift in time while Chekhov introduces a new passenger on the train to talk to Zaikin. William thinks of the days when his wife was wholly his own, and this increases the tragedy of the situation. In Chekhov's story, the tragic intensity is mitigated by the fact that the other passenger is also suffering and that they can compare complaints and find solace in each other. When Zaikin and his travelling acquaintance meet again at the end of the story, the reader is somewhat amused and sympathizes without being outraged. I have pointed out earlier that in The Child-Who-Was-Tired, Mansfield created less emotional intensity than Chekhov in Sleepy . The situation is now reversed. It can easily be seen that in the later story, Marriage à la Mode, the reader is almost outraged by the conscious and unconscious suffering of William. The situation becomes particularly intense when Isabel reads his letter, and

her parasitic friends make fun of the man whose money is feeding them. We will see, when more of her work is considered, that Katherine Mansfield produced stories which were increasingly intense as she grew older. It might be that she was influenced in this connection by the work of Chekhov.

One is inclined to think that Chekhov's story, Not Wanted, is more plausible than Marriage à la Mode. The husband, Zaikin, endures a lot, yet he has companion sufferers in his son and also the man on the train. Moreover, there is an incident where his son brings in a number of insects in a box. All these insects are pinned to the box, yet are still living and scratching with their legs desperately. It could be that Chekhov meant to tell us symbolically that there are actually numerous people who are "not wanted", but trapped. In any event, we realize that he is again attempting to convey, not a particular situation of unique suffering, but an example of something which is common in Russia and probably in all the world. "People are like the insects, pinned in a box so that their futile struggling might serve to amuse," is what Chekhov seems to be saying. There is an undertone of humour throughout the story. The passenger on the train is referred to simply as "the man with red trousers" which seems to help produce this light undertone.

Chekhov also makes the reader aware of the infinite chain of relationships as he has the suffering husband become angered with the boy, who in turn has pinned the insects.

In contrast to the general implications of Chekhov's story, Mansfield in Marriage à la Mode seems largely to particularize. Her fundamental idea of a husband visiting his almost-estranged wife and family is identical to Chekhov's idea. Yet she introduces the letter which the husband sends at the end, the group laughing at the letter, and the wife's final brutality in abandoning the letter and going off with her friends. These extra incidents cause the story to become more intensely pathetic but also detract from the plausibility, for it is difficult to believe that people are capable of such actions; and even if we grant that they are, Katherine Mansfield somehow does not cause us to want to believe. William is portrayed to be the most tender and well meaning of men. He grieves because he has to take his children the same presents again. His letter at the end contains not even harshness. It is difficult to believe that Isabel could be so cruel to such a good man. The reader is dissatisfied when Isabel finally joins her friends, and the story terminates.

We have seen, then, that the frameworks of Marriage à la Mode and Not Wanted are very much the same. Also, the artist types in both tales are largely alike. Chekhov

describes the wife's friends as follows:

> . . . Nadyezhda Stepanovna and her visitors, with much noise and laughter set to work to rehearse their parts. For a long time Pavel Matveyitth heard Koromyslov's nasal reciting and Smerkalov's theatrical exclamations.
>
> The rehearsal was followed by a long conversation, interrupted by the shrill laughter of Olga Kirillovna. Smerkalov, as a real actor, explained the parts with aplomb and heat. [4]

Katherine Mansfield provides us with this description:

> There in the glare waited the taxi, with Bill Hunt and Dennis Green sprawling on one side, their hats tilted over their faces, while on the other, Moira Morrison, in a bonnet like a huge strawberry, jumped up and down.
> "No ice! No ice! No ice!" she shouted gaily. And Dennis chimed in from under his hat. "Only to be had from the fish monger's." And Bill Hunt, emerging, added, "With whole fish in it." [5]

We can see that both Mansfield and Chekhov are satirizing the friends of the wife in each story. A more complete examination of all the material in each story will reveal how closely parallel are the complete pictures of these people in Not Wanted and Marriage à la Mode.

While considering the two passages above, we may also notice how much more detached and generalized Chekhov is in his descriptions and representations. He provides us with

---

4 Anton Chekhov, "Not Wanted", The Party, etc., p. 254.

5 Katherine Mansfield, "Marriage à la Mode," Collected Stories..., p. 314.

external description in the case above and also throughout all his work. Mansfield's method seems to be more personal and vivid. Instead of summing up in expressions like "shrill laughter," "theatrical exclamations," she provides us with their conversation and allows us to make our own decisions.

There is a possibility that Katherine Mansfield, as suggested by the similarities I have pointed out and the identical frameworks of each story, did owe the idea of Marriage à la Mode to Chekhov's Not Wanted. This is, however, of less significance than the fact that here again we have Mansfield and Chekhov each giving independent and personal treatment to similar ideas. On examination, we discover that these separate treatments are also characteristic of each author.

There is another parallel involving a story by Chekhov and one by Mansfield which I have found to be particularly interesting. The two stories concerned are Chekhov's The Looking Glass and Mansfield's Taking the Veil. The Looking Glass is contained in The Horse Stealers and Other Stories which was translated by Constance Garrett and published in 1921. As I have mentioned in section (H) for 1921, in Chapter Two of this thesis, we are sure that Katherine Mansfield read The Horse Stealers and Other Stories. Concerning the date of Taking the Veil's composition, J.M. Murry writes this:

> Between October 1921, when the original plan of this volume (The Garden Party) was sketched, and the end of January 1922, she finished other stories which she had not foreseen. These were, A cup of Tea, Honeymoon, Taking the veil... [6]

There is consequently a sound possibility that Katherine Mansfield wrote Taking the Veil shortly after reading The Looking Glass.

Both of these stories are very short. In regard to detail, they are very different, but the idea which is basic in both is precisely the same. In each story we have a young girl dissatisfied with her present condition and musing or day dreaming about the future. Each girl visualizes the outcome of a step which might be taken and discovers it to be so disheartening that she finally becomes completely satisfied with her present condition.

In Taking the Veil, the girl, Edna, is engaged to be married to a young man called Jimmy. They go to a theatre together, and she imagines that she has fallen in love with an actor. She decides that she cannot really be in love with Jimmy and that she should terminate her romance with him. However, Edna realizes that she cannot marry the actor, and thus she concludes that she must marry no-one and become a nun. She muses about the life of "cloister'd virtue"

---

6 J.M. Murry in the Introduction to "Garden Party," Collected Stories, p. 385.

and finally imagines her own death and her parents, with a white-haired Jimmy, visiting her grave. At that point, a frightened Edna returns to the present and realizes that she is really in love with Jimmy and that she will find a satisfactory life with him. The tone of the story is light, yet there is an undertone of seriousness.

In The Looking Glass, Chekhov presents us with a young and pretty girl, Nellie. This girl is constantly dreaming of marriage and is anxious to find a suitable husband. She is sitting before a looking-glass and falls into a day dream. She envisions a wonderful husband; then in her dream he falls ill. Nellie rushes frantically in search of a doctor. She encounters many difficulties in her quest and

> Then she saw against the grey background how her husband was in straits every spring for money to pay the interest for the mortgage to the bank. He could not sleep, she could not sleep, and both racked their brains until their heads ached, thinking of how to avoid being visited by the clerk of the Court. She saw her children: the everlasting apprehension of colds, scarlet fever, diphtheria bad marks at school, separation. Out of a brood of five or six one was sure to die[... ...] Something fell from Nellie's hand and knocked on the floor. She started, jumped up, and opened her eyes wide. One looking-glass she saw was lying at her feet. The other was standing as before on the table.
> She looked into the looking-glass and saw a pale, tear-stained face. There was no grey background now.
> 'I must have fallen asleep," she thought with a sigh of relief. 7

---

7 Anton Chekhov, "The Looking Glass", The Horse Stealers, etc., pp. 156-7.

The tone of Chekhov's story is as light as Mansfield's, but there seems also to be an undertone of seriousness. There is mention of death in both Chekhov's and Mansfield's story. When Edna in Taking the Veil envisions a white-haired Jimmy visiting her grave, this is what ensues:

> Edna's black book fell with a thud to the garden path. She jumped up, her heart beating. My darling! No, it's not too late. It's all been a mistake, a terrible dream. Oh, that white hair! How could she have done it? She has not done it. Oh, heavens! Oh, what happiness! She is free, young, and nobody knows her secret. Everything is still possible for her and Jimmy. The house they have planned may still be built, the little solemn boy with his hands behind his back watching them plant the standard roses may still be born. His baby sister... But when Edna got as far as his baby sister, she stretched out her arms as though the little love came flying through the air to her .... [8]

We can see how different these two stories are in much of their detail, how one deals with a girl and her visions of marriage and its troubles; and how the other deals with a girl and her visions of a solitary life and death. Yet there are some details which correspond. Consider "Something fell from Nellie's hand and knocked on the floor. She started, jumped up, and opened her eyes wide." and "Edna's black book fell with a thud to the garden

---

8 Katherine Mansfield, "Taking the Veil", Collected Stories, pp. 421-422.

path. She jumped up, her heart beating." Both girls are revived by something falling. They react in almost identical ways. The object which falls in each case is symbolic of the dark vision that the girl has just experienced, i.e., "the black book" and "the looking-glass".

Here again, we may say that there is a possibility that Katherine Mansfield either consciously or unconsciously received the idea for her story from Chekhov. The great difference of detail in general frees her from any hint of plagiarism. Yet here again we have an excellent example of how differently Mansfield and Chekhov chose to approach and handle the same idea. In the passage I have quoted, we see Katherine Mansfield employing her typical touches of detail. While Chekhov concludes with a simple, "she thought with a sigh of relief", Mansfield introduces a whole new vision of standard roses, houses, babies, pigeons, etc. This is entirely in keeping with the characteristics we have already discovered to be associated with each author. Moreover, the actual details of the dream are just what we would expect from earlier examination of their individual techniques. Chekhov provides us with a realistic, generalized picture of marriage troubles. He has an eye for the practical detail, i.e., "scarlet fever," "bad marks at school", financial difficulties. This picture is universal. It could apply to any Canadian

family as well as to a Russian one. Little girls dreaming of marriage are as natural and universal as little girls. Like each previous Mansfield story examined, Taking the Veil describes a particular person in a particular situation. Edna's vision does not introduce bare, practical facts about every day life. It is more romantic. It concerns idealistic preservation of purity and abounds with minute, particular descriptions.

In regard to style, we can see in the two passages immediately above that just as in the two previous descriptions of sunrise, Mansfield has added more pictorial detail and colour to the picture, while Chekhov has painted with broad, smooth strokes. The results are the same.

There are two more stories which are of pertinent interest when considered side by side. One of them is Katherine Mansfield's The Fly which was written in February of 1922.[9] The other is Chekhov's Small Fry which appeared in The School Mistress and Other Stories published in 1920. This book was volume nine in the series of Constance Garnett's translations and, as I have shown in Chapter Two of this thesis, we can be almost certain that Katherine Mansfield read the book. Sylvia Berkman has written:

---

9 J.M. Murry in the Introduction to "Garden Party," Collected Stories.., p. 385.

> Perhaps the image was refreshed in her mind during her reading of Shakespeare at the end of 1921, shortly before she wrote The Fly by the lines of Lear:
>
> 'As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods.
> They kill us for their sport.'
>
> Or she may have come upon Chekhov's Small Fry with which her story has several close similarities. 10

Unfortunately, Sylvia Berkman does not elaborate on these similarities. However, it seems more than likely that Katherine Mansfield did derive the idea of The Fly from Chekhov. We can be almost certain that she read Small Fry, and the situation could well be as Berkman suggests. But there is another passage in the work of Anton Chekhov which might easily have inspired the author of The Fly. I have indicated in chapter two that Katherine Mansfield had read The Duel and Other Stories by Chekhov, and in section (G) for 1920, I pointed out that the same book probably received by her in 1916 was almost certainly still in her possession in 1920. Katherine Mansfield quotes from the story, The Duel, in 1916 and in 1920. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that Katherine Mansfield was fond of that book and particularly of the story called The Duel. Now in The Duel we find the following passage:

---

10 Sylvia Berkman, p. 194.

> There were pale streaks of light here and there on the pavement, from the lighted windows, and it seemed to her that like a fly, she kept falling into the ink and crawling out into the light again. [11]

The latter half of Katherine Mansfield's story, The Fly, deals with a fly falling into ink, and it seems possible that the passage I have quoted from The Duel might have given her that idea. Yet there is an equally good possibility that she was inspired by Shakespeare or Small Fry, as Berkman has pointed out. There certainly are significant similarities between The Fly and Small Fry.

Katherine Mansfield's story begins with the description of Old Woodifield, an elderly man who is in retirement and dominated by his well-meaning family. This old man pays a visit to the office of one of his friends, another old man, who is a "boss." The two talk for a while, and we discover that the boss has lost an only son in the war. Old Woodifield has also lost a son, and describes how his family, while visiting the Woodfield grave in France, has happened to come upon the grave of the boss' son, Reggie. Eventually Old Woodifield leaves the boss' office. We are shown that the boss has been deeply affected by the reminder of his dead son. The boss actually cries, and we discover that Reggie was greatly loved and the subject of all the boss'

---

11 Anton Chekhov, "The Duel," The Duel etc., p. 108.

hopes and plans for the future. The old man goes through some agonizing moments; then he is distracted by a fly which has fallen into his inkpot. He watches the fly struggle until he decides to lift it out onto a blotter. He watches the insect laboriously clean its wings; then just as the fly is ready to take off, he drops another blot of ink over it. The process is repeated three times until the fly is dead. This diversion has caused the old boss to forget what he was thinking about, and when he tries to recall it, he is unable to do so.

Small Fry is a simple, yet impressive story. It tells of a minor clerk who is working on a holiday for extra money to alleviate his poverty. At the beginning of the composition, we are told of a cockroach which is running about the table where the clerk is working. Chekhov does this very artfully and in such a matter-of-fact fashion that we give the cockroach no more thought as the clerk begins to talk to another man. He complains of the misery of his existence and muses on different schemes which might brighten his position. Chekhov handles the clerk's thoughts and words so that we also feel the misery and futility of the life he is leading. The final passage, as the clerk notices the cockroach again, is this:

> 'Ah, I'll teach you to run here, you devil!' he viciously slapped the palm of his hand on the cockroach, who had the misfortune to catch his eye. 'Nasty thing!'
> The cockroach fell on its back and wiggled it's legs in despair. Nevyrazimov took it by one leg and threw it into the lamp. The lamp flared up and spluttered.
> And Nevyrazimov felt better. [12]

The final passage in Katherine Mansfield's story, after the boss has killed the fly, is as follows:

> The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paperknife and flung it into the waste paper basket. But such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey.
> 'Bring me some fresh blotting-paper,' he said sternly, 'and look sharp about it.' And while the old dog paddled away he fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was... He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember. [13]

A comparison of these two endings brings to mind the earlier comparison of the endings of The Looking Glass and Taking the Veil. There we saw how Chekhov concluded with the simple, "she thought with a sigh of relief," while Mansfield expanded the same general idea into a substantial passage. In comparing the two endings quoted immediately above, we see the same methods repeated. Chekhov

---

12 Anton Chekhov, "Small Fry", The School Mistress, etc., pp. 221-222.

13 Katherine Mansfield, "The Fly", Collected Stories, P. 428.

writes, "And Nevyrazimov felt better," while Mansfield writes all that is contained from "But such a grinding feeling," to the end of her story. Here again the conclusions arrived at from previous investigations hold true. Mansfield brings in much more detail than Chekhov. She does not allow her character simply to "feel better," but introduces the "grinding feeling of wretchedness" and other details. We are not told that the boss feels any relief, but the light, happier tone produced by "while the old dog padded away he fell to wondering" allows us to speculate that he is soon feeling better after the fly incident than he felt immediately before it.

Considering The Fly and Small Fry in general, it is readily seen that they are completely different in detail. In both stories the protagonist is the counterpart to the insect and initially seems to feel sorry for it; but from that point on, the stories are wholly dissimilar. Katherine Mansfield's story introduces many extra characters. Reggie, although dead, plays an important part. The Woodifield family, as well as Old Woodifield, has a prominent function in the tale. Chekhov concentrates on the clerk and the man to whom the clerk talks. Once again it can be seen that Mansfield and Chekhov are holding true to their distinctive techniques. In The Fly, there are more

characters than in Chekhov's story, just as there were more characters in each of Mansfield's stories which we compared with one of Chekhov's.

When applying the formula developed from preceding examinations, we also see that Chekhov in Small Fry is universal while Mansfield is painting unique scenes in The Fly. The clerk in Chekhov's story is typical of clerks in general and also typical of all "small fry" in general. Any person held down to a tedious job must naturally wish for better things. Katherine Mansfield, on the other hand, shows us two old men with their idiosyncrasies. They are different from each other and not typical of all old men. The situation of having sons killed and buried in the same graveyard in France is certainly not a common situation.

Comparison of The Fly and Small Fry leads us to another distinction between the art of Mansfield and that of Chekhov which seems to exist in varying degrees throughout all the works of each author. It is true that fate has played tricks on the old men in The Fly, yet we are not caused to feel that either the boss or Woodifield has been molded by an irresistable external force. On the contrary, we feel that they are self-made men who have fashioned their own lives and given fate a good fight. We are definitely not made to feel that situations and circumstances have

~~have~~ smothered either the life of the boss or that of Woodifield. However, in Small Fry, the reader is aware at all times of a mysterious, compelling force which is prohibiting the clerk from ever being anything else but a clerk. Chekhov writes: "It's a hopeless position, in fact. One may go on as one is, or one may hang oneself..." 14 Mansfield does not have this maddening sense of the futility of human endeavour in her work. One seems to be more aware of Katherine Mansfield's people shaping the situations.

It can be observed in all of Chekhov's work that the situations he describes condition and shape his characters. This is a reverse of the process in Mansfield's compositions. In Chekhov's The Steppe or The Peasants, we have many striking examples of people who have been molded and shaped by their environment and social situation. Through all his stories runs the theme of a man with great potentialities who is stunted and smothered by the circumstances of life. Consider the case of Kovrin in The Black Monk. He is a man whose whole life is ruined due to various events which seem unavoidably to occur. In the story Easter Eve, we are presented with a monk known as Nikolay. This monk, we discover, is a poet and has had a deep influence on some of those around him. The reader is made to feel that Nikolay

---

14 Anton Chekhov, "Small Fry," in The School Mistress etc., p. 219.

had genuine talent, but has been somehow smothered by an overwhelming external force of some sort. This theme recurs again and again among Chekhov's stories. I believe that it was his purpose to show how much human ability and endeavour were conditioned by external circumstances and social pressures. We have a man called Ogneff in the story Verotchka. This man has been shaped by life in such a way that he does not know even how to accept the natural, simple love of a sincere girl. As Chekhov writes in connection with Ogneff: [it was] "simply impotence of soul, dull insensibility to all that is beautiful, old age before its day - the fruit, perhaps, of his training, his grim struggle for bread, his friendless, bachelor life."

There are more results of private human endeavour in Katherine Mansfield's work. Her characters, through their own actions and thoughts, condition the situations. Bertha Young in Bliss, for example, seems wholly responsible for the events which take place in that story. Stanley Burnell in Prelude and At the Bay does not seem to give one the impression that he has been involuntairly and hopelessly molded by circumstances. In Psychology we are shown a woman who was actually yearning for physical embrace yet denied it to herself. All through the work of Katherine Mansfield there are people who cling to false values and

shape their existences by their own mistakes and faults. Consider one of her early stories, The Swing of the Pendulum. This story revolves around the poor decisions and foolish illusions of its heroine. Here, as elsewhere, the characters make the situations, whereas in the work of Anton Chekhov, the situations make the characters. This is a significant distinction which seems to me to be consistent throughout their work and another index of Katherine Mansfield's independent creativeness.

Keeping in mind the purpose of this thesis, there are certain general remarks which can be made concerning the stories of Chekhov and Katherine Mansfield. Both of these writers were primarily interested in the inner lives of their characters. Neither was concerned with physical action to any extent. Chekhov focused his attention on the mental inner lives of his characters, while Mansfield explored the emotional. Beryl Fairfield in Prelude and At the Bay provides us with an excellent example of Mansfield's interest in emotional inner lives. Kovrin in The Black Monk, Gurov in The Lady with The Dog and countless other of his characters illustrate Chekhov's desire to analyze the functions of the mind.

In regard to the purpose and subject matter of Chekhov's work, William Lyon Phelps has written this:

> For Chekhov's stories are exclusively intellectual and subtle. They appeal only to the mind, not the passions nor to any love of sensation. In many of them he deliberately avoids climaxes and artificial effect. [15]

This appears to be an accurate commentary on the work of the Russian writer. Yet it would be ridiculous to apply these words to Katherine Mansfield's short stories. It is true that she did try to avoid artificial effects in all but her earliest work, but we cannot say that her stories appeal only to the mind. I have mentioned that she was interested in the emotional inner lives of her characters. Correspondingly her stories appeal to the emotions more than to the mind. Consider Ma Parker, The Doll's House, or The Garden Party. These stories depend upon their emotional effect. Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day and The Wind Blows are two examples of impressionistic stories written in the stream of consciousness manner.

In further consideration of the subject matter and purpose of each of these writers, we must examine the development of Mansfield from the time of her earlier attempts at creative writing. There are four Mansfield stories which we can be reasonably sure were written before she read Chekhov. [16]

---

15 William Lyon Phelps, p. 240.

16 J.M. Murry in the Introduction to "Something Childish and Other Stories", The Collected Stories, ... p. 523.

These are contained in Something Childish and Other Stories which was posthumously published in 1924 for the first time. The titles are The Tiredness of Rosabel, How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped, The Journey to Bouges, and A Truthful Adventure. Of these four, the last two are merely sketches with no attempt at plot or characterization. Katherine Mansfield apparently destroyed most of the previous sketches she had written. The first is an imaginative, subjective story which I have already discussed. The second story, How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped is another imaginative and also semi-fantastical story. It describes the kidnapping of a girl by some gypsies and her final recapture by policemen. When we compare these four stories with those written after the time when Katherine Mansfield could have read Chekhov, that is, with the bulk of her stories, the first obvious difference is the fact that Katherine Mansfield began to choose more serious problems of human life to write about. In In a German Pension she is still writing light sketches, but the stories are generally concerned with more serious, down-to-earth human problems. Frau Brechnmacher Attends a Wedding is a story about a woman who is dissatisfied and bored with life. This story might be said to hint at Chekhov's influence in so far as he wrote many stories about people dissatisfied with inadequate lives. The Modern Soul is also along these lines. At Lehmann's is

an interesting story about a girl who is completely ignorant of the facts of life. With a great deal of delicacy, Katherine Mansfield describes this girl's reaction to various events. The Swing of the Pendulum and The Child-Who-Was-Tired also appear in the first book published by Katherine Mansfield. I have already commented on them.

It is, of course, impossible to attribute Katherine Mansfield's shift to more serious and realistic human problems solely to the influence of Anton Chekhov. It could be that it was the natural development of a person growing older. However, we can see that after she had read Chekhov's work in 1910, if she did first read it then, there is generally a trend towards the selection of less frivolous themes in her subject matter.

When I speak of subject matter, I mean the immediate and primary materials from which the theme for a story can be chosen. (This is known as the secondary artistic medium of Literature, [16a] the primary artistic medium being the words chosen by an author in a particular story.) In regard to choosing from materials or the general matter from which the secondary artistic medium or subject matter is selected, which in the case of literature includes all aspects of human existence and imagination and more, Katherine Mansfield was limited. Her subject matter was selected from secondary raw material for the

---

16a These definitions are given by T.M. Greene, The Arts and the Art of Criticism (Princeton, 1952), pp. 37-40.

most part concerned with girls and women, many of these very much like herself. Her own family served as a forest of raw materials for at least ten of her stories and probably many more. As I have pointed out earlier, one can trace the similarity of characters in a number of her stories to those of her actual family. Beryl Fairfield, for example, who in Prelude and At the Bay is a single woman living with a married sister, is drawn from Katherine Mansfield's Aunt Bell. Many critics have pointed out these associations, so there is no need here to say more than that they do exist. Chekhov had a ~~clew~~ much broader field of raw materials. He wrote about every possible representative of Russian life that could be imagined, from peasant boys to old noblemen and princesses, from the lowest parish priests to bishops and archbishops. His art was impersonal and broad in striking contrast to the subjectivity and narrowness of Katherine Mansfield's art.

In respect to the general principles governing the methods of each of these authors, this can be said. Katherine Mansfield's work does not at all resemble the work of Anton Chekhov in regard to plot structure. Her two longest published stories are Prelude and At the Bay. These do not contain a unifying plot but consist of a series of character sketches

knitted together by family interaction. It is quite possible to extract any one of the sections from Prelude or At the Bay and have a perfectly intelligible and almost as significant character sketch. To a certain extent, it is also possible to rearrange the sections in the first of these stories without seriously damaging the significance of the whole.

It is more difficult to attempt this in the case of At the Bay which represents the progression of a day. One could perhaps change the positions of the two, afternoon sketches without altering the movement of the story. It would be ridiculous to attempt any such rearrangement of Chekhov's work. He wrote numerous lengthly novellas: The Duel, Ward No.6 An Anonymous Story, In a Ravine and The Steppe are only a few of them. Each of these long stories has a skillfully developed plot. Chekhov, as a dramatist as well as a short story writer, was extremely talented in the evolution of impersonal plots, In this respect, Mansfield and Chekhov are at the opposite ends of the shelf. It is undoubtedly true that the influence of Chekhov on Katherine Mansfield did not cause her to attempt anything which faintly resembles the numerous, intricately developed plots so characteristic of the Russian writer. Both Chekhov and Mansfield were skilled in the treatment of material and the adding of delicate touches of detail to produce stories and passages which are realistic and impressively human.

Perhaps Katherine Mansfield, through more numerous and minute touches of detail, was more successful than Chekhov in this respect. Both writers were able to delight and amuse by the skill and accuracy with which they represented human nature. We can best appreciate this by looking at two similar passages from the actual works of Chekhov and Mansfield. In At the Bay, Katherine Mansfield has a small girl holding a conversation with her grandmother. The grandmother is attempting to explain something which the child does not understand.

> Kezia lay still thinking this over. She didn't want to die. It meant she would have to leave here, leave everywhere, for ever, leave-leave her grandma. She rolled over quickly.
> "Grandma," she said in a startled voice.
> "What, my pet!"
> "You're not to die." Kezia was very decided.
> "Oh, Kezia" - her grandma looked up and smiled and shook her head - "don't let's talk about it."
> "But you're not to. You couldn't leave me. You couldn't not be there." This was awful.
> "Promise me you won't ever do it, grandma," pleaded Kezia. The old woman went on knitting.
> "Promise me! Say never!"
> But still her grandma was silent. [17]

Now let us look at a lawyer in Chekhov's story At Home who is trying to explain something to his little son which the son, like Kezia, does not understand.

---

17 Katherine Mansfield, "At the Bay," Collected Stories, p. 227.

> Bikapki sat down at the table and drew toward him one of Seriozha's drawings. The picture represented a crooked-roofed little house with smoke coming in zigzags, like lightning, out of the chimneys and rising to the edge of the paper. Near the house stood a soldier with dots for eyes and a bayonet that resembled the figure 4.
> "A man cannot possibly be higher than a house," said the lawyer. "See here, your roof only reaches up to the soldier's shoulders."
> Seriozha climbed onto his father's lap and wiggled there a long time trying to get himself comfortably settled.
> "No, papa," he said, contemplating his drawing. "If you made the soldier little, his eyes wouldn't show." [18]

We can see how each passage succeeds in charming the reader. Both Chekhov and Mansfield use the same general method, painting a realistic and human picture by delicate accuracy in representation and capitalizing on the child's natural ignorance. However, these passages are distinctive and independent. The first is subjective, while the second is analytical. The distinguishing characteristics between Chekhov and Mansfield still hold true, although there is some similarity in general treatment.

Katherine Mansfield's technique appears to be more modern than Chekhov's in that she made her presence as the author less felt than was Chekhov's presence. Chekhov often said things which Mansfield would leave unsaid. Consider the passage at the end of Psychology by Mansfield. The woman in

---

18 Anton Chekhov, "At Home," Stories of Russian Life, pp. 35-36.

the story has just waved good-bye to a male friend who comes over regularly to talk with her. They have a platonic friendship and each tells the other that it is a beautiful and satisfying relationship. But the woman would like nothing better than to smash the platonic relationship and be physically embraced. Mansfield does not tell the reader this, but she writes:

> "You've hurt me - hurt me," said her heart. "Why don't you go? No, don't go. Stay. No-go!" And she looked out upon the night. She saw the beautiful fall of the steps, the dark garden ringed with glittering ivy, on the other side of the road with the huge bare willows and above them the sky big and bright with stars. But of course he would see nothing of all this. He was superior to it all. He - with his wonderful 'spiritual' vision! 19

These lines along with other phrases and bits of dialogue convey to us what the author does not openly announce.

There are many passages in Chekhov's work which may be cited to show how the author causes one to feel his presence and also says what Mansfield would probably leave unsaid. For example, consider this section from the story, In Trouble:

---

19 Katherine Mansfield, "Psychology", Collected Stories, p. 117.

> Only six months later, when his wife and his son, Vassily came to say good-bye to him, and when in the wasted, wretchedly dressed old woman he scarcely recognized his once fat and dignified Elizaveta Trofimovna, and when he saw his son wearing a short, shabby reefer jacket and cotton trousers instead of the high-school uniform, he realized that his fate was decided, and that whatever new "decision" there might be, his past would never come back to him. And for the first time since the trial and his imprisonment the angry expression left his face, and he wept bitterly. 20

I doubt if Katherine Mansfield would have explained the above so simply and undramatically. She would probably have had the scene acted out by her characters and let the reader decide whether the man concerned "realized" or not. Chekhov generally was quite direct and uncomplex in his descriptions of people or events. Katherine Mansfield often used direct methods and implications, and she liked to write dramatically.

There is one more aspect of Mansfield's technique which distinguishes her from Chekhov. She often experimented with different levels of time, darting into the past to convey her theme. In The Daughters of the Late Colonel, three levels of time are deftly handled. The scene shifts from

---

20 Anton Chekhov, "In Trouble", The Horse Stealers etc., P. 206.

past to present to distant past, in delicately manoeuvred fashion. Chekhov's stories move steadily from one point in time to a future point. Shifts are sometimes made, as in the case of Varka in Sleepy, when the protagonist remembers something in the past, but Chekhov certainly did not write any story which could have taught Katherine Mansfield how to shift through different levels of time so dexterously.

I have already considered the different styles of Chekhov and Mansfield in examinations of various parallel passages. However, there is one more point which might be added. It is of interest to note the number of times Katherine Mansfield repeats the same words and phrases in immediate succession for emotional effect. In The Man Without a Temperament, for example, she employs this repetitive device fourteen different times. She writes: "But she... sipped, sipped, drank...drank"; "then came up laughing, laughing"; "Back, back", etc. She could not have learned this device from Chekhov, for he hardly ever repeated the same word twice in juxtaposition, and certainly not in an obtrusive way. In regard to this aspect of Katherine Mansfield's style and also her technique of shifting in time, there may be some connection between Mansfield and D.H. Lawrence. 21

---

21 We know that D.H. Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield were close friends and spent much time together. He often used repetitions such as we have seen in Katherine Mansfield's work. He also used shifts in time. Consider The Rainbow, p. 192.

We have already considered the features of Chekhov's and Mansfield's initial approach to their subject matter in connection with Sleepy and The Child-Who-Was-Tired. We have also examined this matter of story openings in general in chapter three. To repeat what was there ascertained, Mansfield almost always drops in upon a scene that has already commenced, while Chekhov uses the traditional narrative approach to his material, usually beginning with a description of the scene and characters to be contained in his story.

It is difficult to differentiate between Chekhov and Mansfield in regard to tone. Each writer was as capable as the other in expressing his or her opinion through tone, and each handles the material skillfully as the other in order to produce the desired effect. In La Cigale, Chekhov clearly indicates by the tone of the story that his sympathies are with Dymov and that he is critical of the artists and Olga. In The Man Without a Temperament, Mansfield conveys her disapproval of the protagonist's attitude by means of tone. We have already seen how in Not Wanted and Marriage à la Mode, both writers express a satiric attitude towards the friends of each wife through tone. Perhaps Mansfield depended more on tone to convey her theme than did Chekhov. I have shown how she leaves more unsaid than Chekhov. In any event, we can safely assume that Katherine Mansfield was a capable artist and produced the varying tones of her stories with no serious influence from Chekhov.

In regard to atmosphere, it also seems likely that Mansfield was a wholly independent artist. Antony Alpers has written this commentary which seems to fit in here.

> V.S. Pritchett has complained that 'an indispensable element' of short stories, which he defines as 'the sense of a country, a place; the sense of the unseen characters, the anonymous people, what we may call "the others",' is as weak in Katherine Mansfield's writing as it is strong in Chekhov's. 'At the Bay', he says, 'is one of the minor masterpieces of our language, but who are these people who are our neighbours, what is the world they belong to? We can scarcely guess. Too self-sufficiently, they drop out of the sky and fill the little canvas. There is no silent character in the background.' He concedes that At the Bay has its background of the mystery of life and death - 'But in a story like Chekhov's The Steppe there is something else besides the mystery of life and death. Russia, the condition of Russia is the silent character, always haunting us.'
>
> A perceptive critic puts his finger on the very spot and misses the point. Of course there are no 'others' in Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand stories. The 'silent character' she is called on to present, whether in At the Bay or its predecessor Prelude was not a human society but the lack of one. The silent character was the stillness of the bush, the disdain of the lofty islands for their huddled little pockets of colonial intruders, the silence of the vast sea - desert that encircled them. 22

It seems that Pritchett has spoken accurately about the sense of "the others" in Chekhov's work. One cannot read Chekhov's stories without becoming aware of the condition of Russia in the background. One is also aware of a mysterious force which seems to shape the lives of the characters, as I have mentioned earlier. Many people have complained of a certain

---

22 Antony Alpers, p. 321.

gloomy atmosphere in Chekhov's compositions. This atmosphere is produced by the sense of Russia's condition and the cruel, irresistable, intangible force which smothers human endeavour lurking in the background of Chekhov's stories. Katherine Mansfield's stories are free from this. As Alpers points out, one is aware of the lack of outside society in the New Zealand stories. But this awareness is not in anyway as powerful as the awareness of the above-mentioned atmosphere in Chekhov's work. Katherine Mansfield was certainly capable of producing the particular atmosphere she desired for a particular story. The Garden Party with its atmosphere of impending tradgedy; The Woman at the Store with its atmosphere of unnaturalness and mystery - both are examples of this. But aside from these and other examples, the fact remains that there is no discernible indication in the work of Mansfield that Chekhov influenced her in the creation of atmosphere.

It can also be mentioned that both Chekhov and Mansfield often made use of the weather to help produce the atmospheres in their stories. But this is such a common device among writers that we can hardly consider it in connection with the relation between these two particular authors.

I believe that in the light of evidence examined up to this point, we may now form reasonable and valid conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

We have seen that Katherine Mansfield undoubtedly admired and respected the work of Anton Chekhov. We know that she felt a kin to him as a person and fellow sufferer. Yet we have also seen that except for the conscious or unconscious borrowing of three or four ideas for stories from Chekhov, with The Child-Who-Was-Tired standing as a unique case, the work of Katherine Mansfield was not appreciably affected by the stories of the Russian writer. By minute comparison of Chekhov's Not Wanted, The Looking Glass, and Small Fry with Mansfield's Marriage à la Mode, Taking the Veil and The Fly respectively, I have illustrated that despite similarities between the tales, Katherine Mansfield has an approach, a narrative method and detailed style which were all her own. There is the possibility that by reading Chekhov, Katherine Mansfield learned to select more weighty problems to write about. Perhaps she became more analytical by studying his pyschological analyses. But as I have already mentioned, she might well have developed along those lines with no external influence. It seems obvious from the subjective nature of Katherine Mansfield's work that her greatest influences were the experiences of her own life. By reading Chekhov she may have learned to respond more fully to these influences. Taking all these things into consideration, we must conclude that aside from the few ideas which she may have borrowed but certainly re-created, Katherine Mansfield was not indebted to Chekhov

for her creative method. However, there is hardly any doubt that Miss Mansfield was indebted to the Russian writer for inspiration and guidance and knowledge of the purpose of the short story.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

KATHERINE MANSFIELD:

Mansfield, Katherine, Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield, edited by J.M. Murry. London, 1945.

Mansfield, Katherine, Novels and Novelists. London, 1930.

Alpers, Antony, Katherine Mansfield, A Biography. New York, 1953.

Berkman, Sylvia, Katherine Mansfield, A Critical Study. New Haven, 1951.

Mantz, Ruth Elvish and Murry, John Middleton, editors, The Life of Katherine Mansfield. London, 1933.

Murry, John Middleton, editor, The Scrapbook of Katherine Mansfield. New York, 1940.

Murry, John Middleton, editor, The Journal of Katherine Mansfield. New York, 1946.

Murry, John Middleton, editor, Letters of Katherine Mansfield to John Middleton Murry. London, 1951.

For an extensive bibliography on Mansfield, consult Berkman in the work listed above.

ANTON CHEKHOV:

Tchehov, Anton, The Steppe and Other Stories, translated by Adeline Lister Kaye. London, 1915.

Tchekoff, Anton, Stories from Russian Life, translated by Marian Fell. New York, 1915.

Chekhov, Anton, The Kiss and Other Stories, translated by R. E. C. Long. London, 1908.

Chekhov, Anton, The Duel and Other Stories, volume 11, translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1916.

Chekhov, Anton, The Lady with the Dog and Other Stories, volume 111, translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1917.

Chekhov, Anton, The Party and Other Stories, volume 1V, translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1917.

Chekhov, Anton, The Wife and Other Stories, volume V, translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1918.

Chekhov, Anton, The Witch and Other Stories, volume Vl, translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1918.

Chekhov, Anton, The Bishop and Other Stories, volume Vll, translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1919.

Chekhov, Anton, The Chorus Girl and Other Stories, volume Vlll, translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1920.

Chekhov, Anton, The School-Mistress and Other Stories, volume lX, translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1920.

Chekhov, Anton, The Horse-Stealers and Other Stories, volume X; translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1921.

Chekhov, Anton, Select Tales of Chekhov, translated by Constance Garnett. London, 1949.

Phelps, William L., Essays on Russian Novelists. New York, 1911.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Greene, Theodore Meyer, The Arts and the Art of Criticism. Princeton, 1952.

Schneider, Elisabeth, "Katherine Mansfield and Chekhov," Modern Language Notes, L(June, 1935), 394-395.

West, Ray B. and Robert Wooster Stallman, editors, The Art of Modern Fiction. New York, 1949.

Whiting, B.J. and others, editors, The College Survey of English Literature. New York, 1948.