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ALIENATION IN THE LIFE AND WORKS OF
KATHERINE MANSFIELD

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Abstract

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Katherine Mansfield, a British short story writer of the first part of the twentieth century, lived in the chaotic social and cultural atmosphere that marks this age, a time when old traditions were crumbling, belief in the established faiths suffered attacks of doubt, and the rise of the industrialized economy created an atmosphere of widespread alienation. Mansfield was not exempt from the influence of this instability in social conditions nor from the anxieties of estrangement and alienation from life around her. In Chapter One, this thesis attempts to establish the general tone and atmosphere of alienation suffered by the age and to examine some of the causes for this estrangement. Under the influence of this atmosphere, Mansfield experienced a personal sense of alienation, experiences which affected her vision of life and reflected in her literary creations.

Alienation, on the personal level from which Mansfield developed her message, is a process which can
have several levels or degrees of intensity. Some levels of alienation may be of equivalent intensity, while other degrees are obviously more intense and agonizing. Mansfield's works have been divided, in Chapter Two, into various types or degrees of alienation which she attempted to portray. One type is the alienation between friends and lovers, which does not seem to be as intense a stage of alienation on the whole as in the involvement of closer ties of affection, such as parent-child alienation or husband-wife alienation. Then there is the alienation from a larger group of people, social estrangement which includes the anxiety of nonbelonging and nonacceptance. Fifthly, the agony of total individual alienation from all human contact, from all identification with life in nature and from all objects of affection comprises one of the more intense forms of alienation. Lastly, the irrevocable alienation of death is the one form of alienation in which all hope is gone of overcoming the absolute separation that is established.

Chapter Three is an attempt to discover some pattern to the conclusions Mansfield developed through her experiences with alienation and to define the faith which she accepted shortly before her death, a faith in love which could dispel the disunity of self-alienation, allowing her to achieve unity and oneness of being.
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CHAPTER ONE

ALIENATION IN MANSFIELD'S LIFE

Definition of Alienation

Alienation, according to the dictionary, is the act of making unfriendly, adverse, antagonistic or indifferent where devotion or attachment formerly existed. This definition only begins to suggest the varied connotative meanings and shadings which writers of the present century have given the word alienation. A fuller definition has been given by John Clark, who wrote:

Of the numerous definitions given to alienation—feeling of meaninglessness, powerlessness, belonginglessness, being-manipulated, social and self-isolation—an isolable feature in all of them is man's feeling of lack of means (power) to eliminate the discrepancy between his definition of the role he is playing and the one he feels he should be playing in a situation. Alienation is the degree to which man feels powerless to achieve the role he has determined to be rightfully his in specific situations. Those who feel their actions meaningless would make them meaningful if they could, those who feel they do not belong would cause themselves to belong if they could, those who feel manipulated would cease to do so, those socially or self-isolated would not be so if they were in a position to change circumstances—provided that they have decided that their roles rightfully should be different.
Even this definition is not enough to encompass all the implications, causes and results of the atmosphere of alienation that have been written down in this century. Any attempt by writers of the contemporary culture to describe or examine the social climate in which twentieth century man exists must include in its analysis the reasons for and problems of a widespread atmosphere of alienation. It is impossible to do justice to all the thoughts and ideas that have been expressed on the problems of modern man and his alienation from himself, his fellow human beings and his God. However, a selection of writers on the subject might help to establish the tone of the troubled cultural and social atmosphere in which Katherine Mansfield, a British short story writer of the first part of the twentieth century, uttered her cry of loneliness and alienation.

The roots of attempts to understand the alienation of modern man can be found in Karl Marx, who considered alienated man as one of his primary concerns. Max Braunschweig, in explaining Marx's philosophy concerning man, states:

It is man, then, who is at the foundation of Marx's considerations; and to be more precise: man "alienated from himself." This "alienation"... is, according to Marx, one of the pillars of the actual bourgeois society, the center, consequently, from which all his reflections will radiate...

The relationship between man and his labors was, for Marx, an important factor in determining the alienation
of man. Braunschweig explains Marx's thought:

For work, that is to say, the productive transformation of the world, is part of the very essence of man. If man is prevented from working in a natural way, that is, from living naturally, he "alienates himself from himself" which means he is no longer a man in the full sense of the word. His existence becomes to a certain extent animal, for he works only in obedience to constraint, to misery.³

Work, "free labor," was seen by Marx as the answer to the alienation of man from his true nature. Of this Marxian principle Braunschweig says:

Work is for Marx "vital activity, productive life itself." This is true, of course, only of free and conscious labor, not of the forced and alienated labor of capitalist society. This free labor is for Marx the true form of human existence. The human factor of work consists in the fact that through work man transforms nature, transforms it for himself, that is, makes the world into his own world. In the beginning, the world is composed only of dead and indifferent things: man makes of it, through his labors, his world, his reality. Thus nature is found to be integrated in human life. Being the object upon which man accomplishes his work, it becomes part of his being.⁴

Marx thus expressed his views on the alienation of man as a separation of man from the vital essence of his life. He saw man as divorced from a unity with nature and from a unity within himself, alienated by enforced and ignoble work. For him the productive labor of man must be meaningful and creative in order to avoid alienation within the self, in order to achieve a totally integrated life. Melvin Seeman defined self-alienation similarly:
To be self-alienated, in the final analysis means to be something less than one might ideally be if the circumstances in society were otherwise. . . . I refer to that aspect of self-alienation which is generally characterized as the loss which Marx and others have held to be an essential feature of modern alienation. 5

This concept of economic alienation has been often the topic of concern among the intellectuals of today. In the society of the Western world, the worker indeed appears to be separated from meaningful productive activity. Industrial growth has increased the alienation of the worker from the end product in which he has no pride or concern. In addition, the average individual functions in an environment surrounded by things and objects of which he has taken no part in the making. He buys and possesses material objects that are not a "part of his being." Erich Fromm said of the modern Western society, "We consume, as we produce, without any concrete relatedness to the objects with which we deal; we live in a world of things, and our only connection with them is that we know how to manipulate or to consume them." 6 This unrelatedness and lack of meaningful connection is true, as Fromm points out, not only of the working classes but also of the executives, the property owners, professionals, artists, writers—almost all of modern society.

Not only is man separated from the products which he uses and produces; he is also alienated from within because he has made of himself a commodity which he sells
to the highest bidder. Erich Kahler described the situation of the contemporary man in *The Tower and The Abyss*:

The estrangement between human beings in daily life, the lack of immediacy in human contacts and the resulting loneliness we frequently witness today, have their roots in man's alienation from his own personal human center. Since his "commodity" or functional self has taken on such importance, his individually human self is left to wane.7

It is industrialization, technology, specialization and competition which have caused man to turn from the more profound problems of existence. Frank Lloyd Wright has pointed out that "our confused art and sterilized education 'culture'" have been destroyed by science and made mainly "tools for money-making."8 Mechanization has infiltrated every phase of the individual's life, possessing him and alienating him still further from a meaningful existence. Erich Fromm's description of the take-over of mechanization reveals the seriousness of this man-made alienation:

Alienation as we find it in modern society is almost total; it pervades the relationship of man to his work, to the things he consumes, to the state, to his fellow man, and to himself. Man has created a world of man-made things as it never existed before. He has constructed a complicated social machine to administer the technical machine he built. Yet this whole creation of his stands over and above him. He does not feel himself as a creator and center, but as the servant of a Golem, which his hands have built. The more powerful and gigantic the forces are which he unleashes, the more powerless he feels himself as a
human being. He confronts himself with his own forces embodied in things he has created, alienated from himself. He is owned by his own creation and has lost ownership of himself. He has built a golden calf, and says "these are your gods who have brought you out of Egypt."  

Modern man has little control over much of his life, so gigantic has his mechanized society become. Florence Leaver defines the feelings of the individual man, alienated by the mechanized state described by Fromm above:

He has become the victim, aware or unaware, of the power of circumstance, the indifference of nature, the fading of tradition, and the weakening, if not loss, of faith. He feels terribly alone, with nowhere to go for absolutes. He is too often unsatisfied with the answers his church gives to his questions. ... For him, increasing knowledge of the physical universe solves some problems, but creates others infinitely more frightening. The new knowledge has expanded his universe until only giants feel at home in it, and he feels like a pygmy.  

Modern man is without traditions to guide him, without faith to support him, and without answers to the problems knowledge has brought him. His actions are not only controlled and conditioned by things outside his power; he is also a victim of specialization that narrows his view of life, forcing him to focus on detail to such an extent as to blind him to more important problems of existence. William Barrett states, "Specialization is the price we pay for the advancement of knowledge. A price, because the path of specialization leads away from the ordinary and
concrete acts of understanding in terms of which man actually lives his day-to-day life. The awesome reality is that man has no choice but to pay the price. In agreement with Barrett, Fromm says:

But man can fulfill himself only if he remains in touch with the fundamental facts of his existence, if he can experience the exaltation of love and solidarity, as well as the tragic fact of his aloneness and of the fragmentary character of his existence. If he is completely enmeshed in the routine and in the artifacts of life, if he cannot see anything but the man-made, commonsense appearance of the world, he loses his touch with and the grasp of himself and the world.

Thus the term "alienation" when used in relation to modern man must include in its definition not only the idea of separation from a state of former devotion but also include an explanation of isolation of man from the very essence of his existence caused by the nature of the scientific, technological, industrialized society in which he lives.

One further aspect should be added to the definition of alienation. It is not a static, solid state which modern man is either in or not in. Alienation should be viewed as a process which begins slowly and develops degree by degree. In American Sociological Review, several scholars explained alienation as a process:

Alienation progresses in degrees, beginning with the individual's powerlessness to control or change his situation, which leads to a meaninglessness in the
situation in which he finds himself, which leads to rejection of the norms and values of a society which forces and holds him in this situation, which causes social disaffection with the people who make up this society, which finally leads to social isolation.\footnote{13}

Alienation does not stop with social alienation but can progress further. This paper attempts to show Mansfield's treatment of the various degrees of alienation: the separation of affections between friends; the lack or loss of affection between parent and child; the dissolving of love in a marriage relationship; the nonexistence of social acceptance; the state of total alienation; and finally the ultimate alienation created by death.

Katherine Mansfield focused her message on the individual man, seeking to depict accurately the alienation of this individual, not in relation to society or economic conditions nor in relation to a god but in relation to other alienated individuals. She was undoubtedly affected by the cultural climate in which she lived, for her life exhibits a struggle to establish a meaningful and productive existence in spite of alienation. Her reaction to her cultural atmosphere was not, as some other writers of this period, to describe the evils of the society which had caused her feelings of estrangement and nonbelonging. She was not a social crusader attempting to correct any wrongs in the economic area, such as Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*, who attempted to call attention to the graft and
inhuman treatment of migrating farmers by a competitive and unconcerned big business world. She had no message focused on the corruptions inherent in the growth of big cities, as Drieser revealed in *An American Tragedy* and *Sister Carrie*, where he pictured the fall and destruction of innocent people caused by an indifferent or unfriendly environment. Even D. H. Lawrence, of whom Mansfield said, "I am more like L. than anybody. We are unthinkably alike, in fact." used the mining industry as an example of an economic force creating alienation and near poverty conditions in *Sons and Lovers*. Mansfield did not ignore the social and economic causes of modern man's condition as though they were of no importance. She accepted them as a condition of present life, looked squarely at the alienation which existed, and set about presenting a clear, truthful picture of this state of alienation on the personal, individual level. Nor was Mansfield the only writer more concerned with the personal rather than the social message. Sherwood Anderson in *Winesburg, Ohio* offered a panorama of sketches of a town in which each person, in his individual way, was misunderstood and alienated by his or her society. *Henry James in "The Beast of the Jungle" wrote a moving short story of a man who, while attempting to be prepared for the "beast" he felt ready to spring into his life, unwittingly alienated himself from the only person who offered him a meaningful
life. The beast was the alienation, the having missed a fulfilling companionship of love and understanding. Mansfield in a similar manner focused on the different aspects of personal alienation, the lack of understanding, the cracks in friendships and love which cause anxiety of the soul. Although she did not deal so much with industrial, social, economic alienation caused by the growth of big cities and big business, she was influenced by the atmosphere, profoundly aware of the forces of alienation that existed in her society. She faced alienation, however, on an individual level, seeking to understand the inward agony of personal alienation that yearns for identification with another human being in order to alleviate the agony.

**Katherine Mansfield's Life**

Katherine Mansfield was born Kathleen Beauchamp on October 14, 1888, in New Zealand, a land in which she never felt at home and which she fought to escape. Only years after she had been separated from New Zealand did she look back toward it and discover her self-inflicted exile and her longing to return. She never went back to her native land, never saw New Zealand again except in her reminiscences and in some of her more successful short stories. Her early literary years in London were filled with such bitter memories that she rarely spoke of them. She was alone, thousands of miles from home, struggling for recognition as an
artist. In anxiety and loneliness, she rushed, within eight months of leaving New Zealand, into an unfortunate marriage, deserted her husband, became pregnant by another man, and had a miscarriage in Bavaria with no friend close by to help her. Most of the stories appearing in *In a German Pension*, published in 1911, were written during this period of convalescence, a period in which she was disillusioned with life, disgusted by what she felt to be coarse, unfeeling Germans who surrounded her, cynical about having expected things to be so different, repelled by people in general, and seeking solitude in fear of experiencing any more disillusioning facts about life.

In 1911 she met John Middleton Murry, with whom she was to spend the rest of her life and who through love lifted her out of her loneliness and alienation of this period. Unlike the fairy tale couple, however, they did not "live happily ever after." The first years of their life together were plagued with threats of bankruptcy and spent in near poverty. The tension of these hardships affected their relationship at times, but it was not until 1915 that they underwent a truly alienating experience. Katherine's brother Leslie, visiting them in England briefly before going off to was, was killed only two weeks after his departure. Katherine fled to the south of France, overcome by grief. Murry felt her brother had come between them and that
Katherine had no room for him in her heart. He sank deep into his own isolation and despair, not realizing that Katherine had fallen into the same pit of alienation without Murry. Their means of communication had broken down for the first time. In desperation came a cry from Mansfield, out of the anxiety of her loneliness, which brought Murry to her side in Bandol. Here there lived together for a few months in blissful happiness which was rarely to be theirs again.

In 1917 Katherine fell ill of pleurisy, which developed into tuberculosis; and from that time on she found herself in search of health, more and more alienated, at first only physically but finally mentally and spiritually separated from the only person, Murry, who could reach through to her and relieve her loneliness. The pattern of her life became one of increasing ill health intensified by her loneliness away from Murry. The progressive intensity of her anxiety can be seen with each trip away from England in search of health. She returned alone to Bandol in 1917, only to find the war had completely changed the town of her former happiness into a dirty, disgusting, indifferent place of disappointment. Unusually bad weather caused her health to decline instead of improve, and the war created such an obstacle to travel that while trying to get back to Murry and England in March, 1918, she found
herself stranded in Paris during a bombing. During this imprisonment, she spoke of the

... silence into which I am fallen as though I had fallen into a lake--something without source or outlet--the waste of life, of our love and energy--the cruel 'trick' that life has played on us again--just when we timidly stretched out our longing hands to each other.15

In despair of loneliness in Paris, she felt completely alienated from all life and especially Murry, trapped in a silence unbroken by any communication from outside her prison.

She and Murry were married on her return, supposedly never to be separated again. Only a month after their marriage, however, health had forced her to the English countryside while work kept Murry in London. A year of struggling against tuberculosis in England sent her to Italy, loneliness, and separation from Murry again. At Ospedaletti she came to realize the separation of Murry and herself from mankind and the indifference of the world. She wrote to Murry in October, 1919:

Isn't it queer, my little brother, what a cold indifferent world this is really? Think of the agony we've suffered. Who cares? Who dreams? If we were not 'set apart' for ever before, this has been enough to do it. We could not, knowing what we know, belong to others who know not. If I can convey this difference, this vision of the world as we see it!16

This vision of the indifference of other people to those suffering alienation and loneliness in the world
became one of the dominant themes in her works. The loneliness of Ospedaletti, the cold sea and howling wind, ate into her soul; and she became convinced that she was "not made to live alone," and that companionship and communion with someone she loved could make her well. Murry's situation under this conviction was expressed by him in his autobiography:

"This love, which devoured her so, demanded for its fulfilment that she should never leave me, nor I her. It meant, in the world of cold reality, that I should stand by and simply watch her die. She could persuade herself, and truly believe, that she was 'only well when we are together: all else is a mockery of health'; but I knew it was only illusion. The ecstasy of love, which she required, was not health, but only a hectic hastening to death. Yet if I stood my ground against her fatal desire, she tore me to pieces by her suffering and her despair."17

Katherine was unaware that Murry now felt completely isolated from her, that he was living a lie, pretending to have hope and faith in her recovery, watching her slowly slip out of his grasp and knowing his love could not help her. He was aware of a "subtle and impassable barrier" between them which prevented him from talking honestly and truthfully of his alienation from her. This alienation of spirit was more serious than the physical separation in distance they had experienced up to this time; but Katherine, who suffered bitterly from physical separation, was not aware of it and was not to experience the agonizing alienation of spirit from Murry until the year before her death. So intense, however, was her
anxiety over alienation and loneliness caused by physical separation that she refused to accept the common sense that told her that health could not be gained by staying in England with Murry; she had to travel to warmer, dryer climates even when it meant being away from him. There can be no doubt, however, that separation was harmful to her spirit. Murry understood the harmfulness but was forced by the war to remain in England and was helpless to come to her aid. He describes the condition of her cold despair and profound sense of hopelessness while she was at Ospedaletti:

Then the last thread of connection between herself and the world frayed and snapped. She felt 'utterly homeless, just uprooted,' an atom of flotsam 'tossed about on any old strange tide.' She woke in the dark she dreaded and heard the wail of the sea, and 'her little watch raced round and round, and the watch was like a symbol of imbecile existence.' This was the bottomless pit, into which she fell, apart and alone.

By a great effort, she escaped from Ospedaletti and the "hell of isolation" shortly before the town was cut off by a political and military upheaval. She gained some semblance of health in Mentone, enough to spend the summer in England with Murry. By September, however, she was forced to return to Mentone. Her letters during this time reveal a loss of the tone of desperate anguish over her suffering. Still believing that it would be so much easier to get well is she were not alone, she now was able to convince herself that
isolation was necessary and something to be endured. "But the awful sense of insecurity... One puts out one's hand and there's nothing there" (September, 1920).

During her stay in Mentone in 1920, she came to accept her suffering and even consider it as part of the plan of life to teach her the meaning of reality. In October she wrote:

> And then suffering, bodily suffering such as I've known for three years. It has changed for ever everything— even the appearance of the world is not the same— there is something added. Everything has its shadow. Is it right to resist such suffering? Do you know I feel it has been an immense privilege. Yes, in spite of all...  

Even after accepting the lesson of her suffering, however, she still could not reconcile herself to her alienation. In November she cried to Murry, "Talk to ME. I'm lonely. I haven't ONE single soul."  

In spite of her loneliness, or perhaps because of it and a growing desire to write down her vision of life full of alienation and suffering, Mansfield began one of the most active periods of her career. Besides writing weekly reviews for *The Athenaeum*, she wrote 'The Stranger,' 'Daughters of the Late Colonel,' 'The Lady's Maid,' 'Miss Brill,' 'The Young Girl,' 'Poison,' and 'The Singing Lesson.' In February, 1921, Murry gave up the editorship of *The Athenaeum* and joined her. From Mentone, they went to Montana, Switzerland, to investigate the Spahlinger treatment for tuberculosis.
Although Mansfield never received these treatments, the climate of Switzerland plus the absence of the strain of separation had a positive effect on her health. In peaceful happiness, she continued to write some of her best short stories, among them 'At the Bay,' 'The Voyage,' 'The Garden Party,' 'The Doll's House,' and 'The Life of Ma Parker.' She became dissatisfied with her health, however, and first sought a physical and medical technique in Manoukhin's X-ray treatments to cure her disease. After that failed, she turned to the opposite approach, the spiritual occultism of unity that the Gurdjieff Institute professed. Katherine's desire for a miracle caused her to jump at the Manoukhin idea in which Murry had little faith. He had even less faith in the powers of the cult of Gurdjieff. Mansfield needed someone to give her confidence and hope; and Murry, because of his unbelief, could not supply her with this confidence. He wrote:

Thus it was for the first time since we first loved each other, we knew ourselves to be travelling different paths. The ways, at last, really had parted. Hitherto, in spite of separations and misunderstandings, or indeed because of them, we had always grown closer together.  

They agreed that they both needed a faith to live by, which neither one of them had; and since life together was painful now, they decided to live apart until one of them had discovered a faith. For the first time in their lives, they voluntarily separated from one another,
acknowledging a spiritual alienation, the most profound alienation two people in love can experience. Now Mansfield experienced what it was like to be utterly alienated from all the world. Not out of desperation or suffering but out of the agony of absolute alienation she wrote in profound simplicity to Murry: "It is so terrible to be alone." In October, 1922, she entered the Gurdjieff Institute in order to live a full and meaningful life, to establish a unified self, and to discover a faith to live by. On January 9, 1923, she died.

The following sections are detailed studies of the short stories of Katherine Mansfield. This study is aimed at revealing the effects the alienation Mansfield experienced in the events of her life and in the cultural atmosphere of her age on her works. Perhaps it should be pointed out in the beginning that alienation was not the only theme on which Mansfield wrote. Jack Garlington, in a detailed study of Mansfield's literary practices, divided her work according to theme. He classified stories written on the hatred of bourgeois family life, on the distasteful aspects of marriage and fear of childbirth, and on the world of children of which he said "she portrayed not only for its nostalgic value, but also for its reflection of the impact of a paradoxical universe on an untried consciousness."23 Other themes which Garlington listed were
Mansfield's "cry against corruption," a revelation of evil imbedded in good, the "snail under the leaf" and the theme of emotion aroused by the juxtaposition of life with death or by the hint of death that lingers over the most carefree moment. Of this theme of death Anthony Alpers wrote:

Death seen beneath transparent life,
death seen "in a flower that is fresh unfolded," as she expressed it herself--this is the theme that consistently drew forth Katherine Mansfield's finest work in her last years.

In addition to those themes already mentioned, there is another theme, what Garlington called "the flight of time and the combined beauty and pathos involved in change;" and what Sylvia Berkman was referring to when she wrote:

Another theme implicit in her works is that in the shift and flux of time, through the invasion of other values, other demands, other interests, no human relationship remains unchanged

Mansfield reveals there are moments of significant importance in which the person is given the opportunity and time to direct his life or right an incorrect situation by merely doing or saying one simple thing; and the person fails to respond, thus losing the opportunity forever.

Most of Mansfield's works can be studied from the viewpoint of these various themes, but there is always the thread of alienation, the atmosphere which
is a reflection of the age in which she lived and the life which she led. Garlington defined this theme as a stress on an individual caught in a plurality in which Mansfield "tended to emphasize the character's awareness of his own isolation and the inability to merge consciousness with another." Alford Ward was also impressed by the prevalence of alienation in Mansfield's work, especially the stories of her last years. He wrote:

For Katherine Mansfield, in the last years, one mainspring of human tragedy lay in this inability to establish contact between individual and individual, between class and class.

The rest of this paper is devoted to analyzing Katherine Mansfield's revelation of the aspects of alienation that existed between and among human beings.
CHAPTER TWO

ALIENATION IN MANSFIELD'S WORKS

Alienation between Friends and Lovers

A characteristic of Mansfield's earlier stories, written at a time of mental depression and cynicism caused by an unfortunate marriage and a miscarriage, was an attitude of actually desiring for solitude rather than association with society. In her first book of short stories, *In a German Pension*, she established a reputation as a clever, cynical writer with a strong dislike for the German people and a longing to be left alone. Two stories in particular are devoted to the desire for solitude. "A Truthful Adventure" is a story of a woman trying to see Bruges by herself and in her own way discover its beauties and atmosphere without the tourist approach of guides and guide books. Though she wants to be alone and independent, she finds herself being forced into the tourist formulas. At last, finding it impossible to be alone to enjoy the city, she surrenders and leaves Bruges. In the other story, "The Luft Bad," an Englishwoman finds herself in a health spa. Her social contact with the people
at the spa leads her to the conclusion that people are repulsive, and she withdraws to a corner under her umbrella which not only protects her from the sun but from other people as well.

Even if the story is not on the theme of a longing for solitude, the idea sometimes appears, as in "The Advanced Lady." During an outing of a number of Germans and an Englishwoman, a German expounds on the necessity of sharing joys and feeling friendships. The Englishwoman, apparently representing Mansfield's point-of-view, cynically refutes him by telling him the "dead weight of a friend" would kill her soul immediately. Although many of the stories in In a German Pension, published in 1911, express a similar attitude of withdrawal, they represent only a brief period in Mansfield's life at a time when she was understandably in depression. Withdrawal from people and a longing for solitude, estrangement from society, colored her works of this period.

There is one notable exception to this trend toward withdrawal, and that is the story "A Journey to Bruges" written in 1910. This story presents the impressions of fellow travelers experienced by a woman journeying to Bruges. She is a bitter, cynical young woman, as are so many of Mansfield's main characters of this period. She is alienated from life but, nevertheless, is impressed by unexpected kindnesses from men.
either in assisting her or some other woman, as she observes. Though she is alone and alienated, she yearns, without overtly saying so, to have some man to love who will show kindness to her and break through her alienation. The story ends with a disillusioning observation of the ugly side of "love" when what the young woman considers a charming old lady is picked up by a young lover. This disillusionment throws her even deeper into her cynicism, an alienating wall she has built around herself to protect her against such disillusionments. This wall, however, also acts as a solid imprisonment keeping her locked in her isolation. In the closing lines of the story, Mansfield describes the scene from the woman's point-of-view:

The train swung out of the station; the air, blowing through the window, smelled of fresh leaves. There were sudden pools of light in the darkness; when I arrived at Bruges the bells were ringing, and white and mysterious shone the moon over the Grand 'Place. The young woman is obviously withdrawn and in darkness. There are occasionally sudden flashes of light from street lamps but they are just as quickly snuffed out. Only the light of the moon steadily shines, and it is remote and mysterious, doing little to brighten the darkness of her alienation from the life around her.

After this early period of isolation and withdrawal in Mansfield's life, she began exhibiting in her works a trait more typical of her actual nature and view
of life. She began to write more often on the fear of loneliness and alienation rather than the desire for it, even though she did occasionally express the value of solitude and privacy, away from the corruptions of society, where she could quietly contemplate beauty and question the meaning of life. Nevertheless, at this time she devoted more of her writings to the existence and causes of alienation between two people until the theme of alienation became one of her most important messages.

By 1913 Mansfield had modified her attitude toward isolation slightly but significantly. "Violet" is a story about the same Englishwoman staying at a pension in Germany. Although she thinks the world a wonderful place, she still wants to be alone and away from disgusting and vulgar humanity. She runs into an old school acquaintance, Violet Burton, who insists on telling her her life's tragedy in spite of the Englishwoman's attempts to discourage Violet. At first, Violet's story seems like an emotional outpouring of tragic symbolic expressions which mean nothing to the Englishwoman because they are too vague. But once Violet is persuaded to talk of concrete incidents with real people, the Englishwoman actually becomes interested in what has happened to Violet. Mansfield reveals at this point that the Englishwoman is aware of her alienation, at least subconsciously, and really does want to
communicate with someone. She has said that people disgust her; but it is closer to the truth that she would like to establish a means of communication with other people. She is afraid, however, of being repelled by their actions or vulgarity, or of being rejected because of something within herself that would repel them. Fearing thus to approach people, she cynically claims she could get along better without them. Something in Violet, perhaps her sharing of a tragedy in her life, encourages the woman to think that there is ground for communication. Violet's tragedy, however, turning out to be an overexaggerated account of a trifling experience, rebuffs the woman again in her attempt to establish a meaningful relationship with another person. The laughing fountain behind them, at first appearing to the Englishwoman to be laughing at Violet, laughs now at her for having even presumed people were worth having as friends. Mansfield openly admits that her main character is lonely and interested in breaking her isolation through a communication with someone who is not disgusting and artificial.

From this point on, most of Mansfield's stories contain some reflections of various types of alienation that can be divided and categorized into recognizable units. Beginning with the most elemental relationship, there is the alienation between two people who have no claim to identification with each other except that they
are both alienated human beings. The reader may expect some communication to exist already between one member of a family unit and another, such as between parent and child or brother and sister. Two separate human beings alone, however, must start a relationship with no pre-existing right to demand communication from each other. Such a relationship, by its very nature, plagued by uncertainty since it depends for its existence on the free response of each individual toward the other. In "Something Childish but Very Natural," Mansfield writes a story of the special type of youthful loneliness which is convinced that adults lack all understanding, thus alienating the youth from the adult world, and which is marked by uncertainty and youthful inexperience. This type of loneliness can only be alleviated when the youth finds someone his own age experiencing the same alienation whom he can love and be loved by in return. In the story eighteen-year-old Henry meets sixteen-year-old Edna accidentally on a train. There is an immediate attraction, and a friendship slowly develops. At first she is shy and frightened, feeling any physical contact, even touching hands, would spoil the childish, natural relationship between them. Because of her reservations, Henry is haunted by doubts as to whether he will lose her. They instinctively, however, sense an identification with one another since
both of them suffer from a feeling of alienation, a feeling that no one understands them or thinks as they do except themselves.

The friendship slowly gives way to the beginnings of love, as Edna gradually overcomes her shyness. Just as slowly Henry overcomes his feeling of alienation and uncertainty. In the final scene he is free at last of his fear of losing Edna. He is waiting in front of the cottage they have picked out, passing time before he goes for her at the station by dreaming of their future life together in the cottage. As he sits on the step, a little girl brings him a telegram, apparently from Edna, who is not coming. The final picture of Henry is one of a lonely young man slowly being surrounded by a painfully dark web of alienation.

In "Spring Pictures" Mansfield concentrates on the reaction to rejection rather than on the development of a friendship into love. "Spring Pictures" is a group of three impressionistic scenes of a Paris spring: one of a street scene in the rain, one of a lonely woman waiting for a letter, and one of a woman crying by the river in the evening. Taken together they reveal the tragic disappointment of this woman whose lover has failed to come or write.

The setting of the street is not a romantic picture of spring "bursting out all over." There is a warm rain as an old hag tries to sell faded flowers; shops wait
for someone to buy their goods; and music and a man try to entice people in to see a girlie show. Lethargy dominates the scene: no one moves or wants to buy anything. In an apartment on this street, a lonely woman fights against hope, telling herself it is useless to expect a letter; and in view of such uselessness, hope can only cause her agonizing suffering and longing. She is so lonely in her empty room that she suffers from anguish, created by hope that some note of communication will break through her alienation. A bell rings and hope flames higher; but it is only the milkman. She learns, however, that the postman has already past and there is no letter for her. Hope is gone; it dies with the realization that no one cares enough about her and her loneliness to attempt to speak to her and communicate across the separating alienation in which she finds herself. Try as she may, she cannot revive the hope that maybe tomorrow some note will come.

In despair she walks in the evening by the river, a lonely, alienated woman without hope that the one she longs for will try to contact her. She cries in the shadow of the trees but she cannot cry forever. After one false attempt to leave the shelter of the tree, she returns to cry again. There is a description of the woman as she blurs against the tree, melting and losing her identity in the shadows and stones. She is gone;
she exists no more. Apparently she has committed suicide, being absorbed back into Nature and the Life principle, because the agony of alienation without hope of alleviation was too much to endure.

"Late at Night" is another story of rejection, but the rejection comes at the first attempts of a woman named Virginia to establish a friendship with a man. Virginia describes herself as being a very lonely person, longing for someone to love:

If only I felt that somebody wanted me, that I was of use to somebody, I should become a different person. Yes, that is the secret of life for me--to feel loved, to feel wanted, to know that somebody leaned on me for everything absolutely--for ever.  

She is so eager to find someone to ease her loneliness that she does not understand that she aggressively forces her attentions on people before a friendship has time to develop. She ruins what might have been a friendship with the young man by writing him first and sending him a gift. Her dilemma is that she is so lonely that by her overeagerness to overcome this loneliness, she repels people with her insistence on being friends and smothering them with love. Her alienation itself makes it difficult, if not impossible, for her to relieve it through friendship.

Once a friendship is established, however, it may easily break down. Since a friendship is based on the voluntary interest of each individual in the other, it
may disintegrate at any moment when only one partner in
the friendship fails to respond. In "Psychology"
Mansfield shows, through a brilliant use of pauses,
how even silences can seriously crack and almost shatter
a friendship. She describes at the beginning of the
story one of the most satisfying unions that can exist
between two friends:

Like two open cities in the midst of some
vast plain their two minds lay open to
each other. And it wasn't as if he rode
into hers like a conqueror, armed to the
eyebrows and seeing nothing but a gay
silken flutter--nor did she enter his
like a queen walking soft on petals.
No, they were eager, serious travellers,
absorbed in understanding what was to
be seen and discovering what was hidden--
making the most of this extraordinary
absolute chance which made it possible
for him to be utterly truthful to her
and for her to be utterly sincere with
him.32

This attitude on both their parts of sincerity and
refusal to take advantage of the other is more than
a curious interest to know the inner workings of the
other person. Any attempt to have made the other
individual an object of knowledge rather than a subject
of understanding would have only helped force him to
retreat further into his own isolation.

A relationship such as this is what both of them
think exists between them. Actually an uneasiness is
apparent in both their actions at the beginning of the
story when the young man unexpectedly calls for a visit,
a shyness such as exists between a young man and woman
who are growing to love one another but have not yet
committed themselves openly for fear of being rejected.
They have both had their fill of "stupid emotional
complications" and agree that passion would ruin every¬
thing. But passion and emotional complications are not
identical with love, and both subconsciously long for a
warm and true relationship in love. An uneasiness
exists because of their previous experiences; both are
afraid that the next step they take will lead to these
"emotional complications" and destroy their friendship.
It is this fear, rather than the emotional complications
themselves, that causes the unfamiliar pool of silence
between them. They become estranged from one another,
enveloped separately in a dark silence which keeps them
apart. The visit painfully drags on as each talks on
impersonal topics trying to ward off the silences and
boredom. There is a brief moment when, after the anguish
of silence has overcome them, the young man almost
openly acknowledges the silence and tries to communicate
with her an understanding of it. Instead of taking
advantage of this moment, however, to break through
their alienation, he suddenly blurts out untruthfully
that he has an appointment and must leave.

After he has gone and their friendship seemingly
is destroyed, the young woman is left in a "black gulf"
of isolation and rage because her friend had failed her.
An elderly woman who idolizes the young woman rings the
bell; and because of her mood, the younger woman declines to invite her in. The older woman, as is her habit, offers her some soiled violets before she goes. In an instant, the same feeling that she felt when the man left comes over the young woman again; she becomes acutely aware of "the beautiful fall of the steps, the dark garden ringed with glittering ivy, the willows, the bright sky," which seem to symbolize the promise and hope of a true friendship of depth, and is also aware of "the silence that was like a question," the gulf of alienation existing between two separate individuals which must be crossed before this friendship can be established. The young woman suddenly understands that it is within her power to cross the pool of silence just as it had been within her power earlier in the afternoon with the young man. This time she does not hesitate to reach out to another alienated person; she embraces the old woman. Before this moment, the young woman had merely graciously allowed the old woman to admire her; now she establishes a reciprocal friendship which melts a little of her own alienation as well as that of the old woman. After the older woman leaves, the young woman turns to rebuilding the fragile friendship with her young man, this time building on a reciprocal relationship rather than on one dependent on the man's actions alone.
A number of other stories by Mansfield deal with the theme of attempts by lonely, or isolated, men and women to develop relationships between them. In "Feuille D'Album" a lonely young painter attempts to overcome his loneliness by charmingly arranging to meet a young girl. In "A Dill Pickle" a man and woman accidentally meet six years after the woman has broken an affair between them; and, in a moment of complete honesty, they almost succeed in re-establishing communication before the moment slips past, leaving them once again alienated from one another. "The Lady's Maid" is a story of the selfishness of one individual interfering with the happiness of two other people. In a dramatic monologue, the maid in the story reveals herself to be a simple-hearted, devoted girl working for a selfish, self-righteous lady whom the maid believes to be the finest person living, not realizing it was the lady who purposely ruined a more meaningful life the maid could have had with a man who loved her.

"Je ne Parle pas Français" is also on the theme of alienation between a man and woman with the added complication of the failure of a friendship between two men. The story is of a lonely Frenchman, hungrily searching for love and desperately grasping for friendship. The Frenchman, Raoul Duquette, is a disgustingly vain, boastful, pompous gigolo who contradictorily declares he believes in one set of principles while
actually living by another. He lives a morally corrupt life which, although satisfying to his vain ego, is far from fulfilling his needs for true friendship and love. He feels a strong longing for communion with someone who will listen to him as an individual and allow him to satisfy the need to explain his life. His description of his friendship with Dick Harmon, an Englishman, reveals how hungrily he grasped after an opportunity to communicate with someone and relieve his feeling of alienation. He tells of his first meeting, at a party, with Dick, a writer withdrawn from everyone, leaning against a wall with his hands in his pockets. Dick's indolence, dreaminess, nonchalance, and calm acceptance of Raoul for what he was win Raoul's confidence, and he becomes devoted to Dick.

Raoul often refers to himself as a fox terrier, and it is this image he falls back on when he learns that Dick has suddenly decided to return to England, with no apparent concern over Raoul's dismay that the latter is losing a friend on whom he has come to depend. As Dick "weighs anchor," Raoul stands "on the shore alone, more like a fox terrier than ever. . . . But after all it was you who whistled to me, you who asked me to come! What a spectacle I've cut wagging my tail and leaping round you, only to be left like this while the boat sails off in its slow, dreamy way. . . ." Raoul finds himself more estranged than ever, now that
he has tasted the state of friendship and lost it; he is alienated from all meaningful relationships, "sick" inside.

Dick seems to use Raoul for his own amusement and convenience. He does not really seem to be interested in Raoul, although Raoul does not fully realize this disparity in their communion until Dick decides to return to England without any consideration for their friendship. Even after Raoul realizes he has been used, and is insulted by this knowledge, he still hastens, when months later Dick writes he is returning to Paris, to do all he can to renew the old relationship—so strong is his need for friendship. Dick returns this time with a girl named Mouse; and the minute they greet Raoul, Raoul senses something is wrong. He speculates that it is only due to their excitement and embarrassment over beginning life together as lovers in Paris. Before he knows it, Dick is using him again to keep from being alone with Mouse; and later, at the hotel, Dick deserts her, leaving Raoul again without his hoped-for friendship, and with the added responsibility of soothing a distraught Mouse. A note written by Dick explains that because of the strong attachment he has for his mother which drags him back, he is unable to establish any lasting friendship or build a fulfilling relationship with any woman.

When Dick does at last sneak away from the hotel, Raoul finds himself not so lost as he had been at their
first parting. For Raoul now discovers his hunger for companionship channeled in a new direction; he has fallen in love with Mouse. Mouse, of course, suffers bitterly from having been deserted, left estranged in a foreign land, and is unaware of Raoul's feelings. She explains she cannot return to England because all her friends think she is married. Raoul persuades her to rely on him for the moment for aid, that he will come to her hotel again the next day. He never sees her again after that evening, although he does not fully understand why he fails her when she needs him. Perhaps he is subconsciously aware that she would see through his shallow and vain graciousness and reject his love.

Raoul insists that he follows a philosophy of never looking back to the past. He insists that when something is gone, it is lost forever or, if found, it is so changed as to be something entirely different from what it was to begin with. And yet he cannot forget Mouse; he dreams of what happiness he could have had sharing his life with her, giving unselfishly to her the best of what he has. These dreams, however, are only dreams. In reality he is alienated and lonely, longing for the one person for whom he has ever cared enough to want to give something of his inner self and so break down his alienating barrier of artificiality. He describes his real self while sitting in a café as
... chasing up and down out in the dark there. It left me just when I began to analyse my grand moment, dashed off distracted, like a lost dog who thinks at last, at last, he hears the familiar step again.

"Mouse! Mouse! Where are you? Is that you leaning from the high window and stretching out your arms for the wings of the shutters? Are you this soft bundle moving towards me through the feathery snow? ... Where are you? Where are you? Which way must I turn? Which way shall I run? And every moment you are farther away again. Mouse! Mouse!"

Now the poor dog has come back into the café, his tail between his legs, quite exhausted.34

The tragedy of the story is that all three—Dick, Mouse and Raoul—are alienated from each other and each is hopelessly lost in his own well of alienation and meaninglessness, unable to toss a message of communication to the surface.

One of Mansfield's best descriptions of the human desire for communication is found in her depiction of a cribbage game in "Prelude." Beryl Fairfield, who lives with her sister and brother-in-law, Linda and Stanley Burnell, is at the entrance of womanhood, young and energetic, adolescentsly dramatic and tragic, playing the role of a charming young princess waiting for her charming young prince to rescue her from her loneliness. She is aware that she foolishly plays a part; but she also sincerely experiences an emptiness in her life, a longing that can only be filled by a young man who will love her. In many ways she is an average young
lady longing for romantic love and marriage, and the cribbage game suggests her feeling that love is always just beyond her grasp.

The cribbage pegs were like two little people going up the road together, turning round the sharp corner, and coming down the road again. They were pursuing each other. They did not so much want to get ahead as to keep near enough to talk—to keep near, perhaps that was all.

But no, there was always one who was impatient and hopped away as the other came up, and would not listen. Perhaps the white peg was frightened of the red one, or perhaps he was cruel and would not give the red one a chance to speak.

Beryl complains as the red peg leaves the white one behind that they almost had a chance to fly into one another's arms. Communication is all two people need to break the barrier of alienation and loneliness, and establish a lasting relationship of friendship or love; but so many things, such as impatience, refusal to listen, fear or cruelty, can interfere with communication. People have a chance for communication only briefly before one of them dashes off, and the opportunity is lost.

Beryl often examines her appearance, admiring this or that about her features, always concerned about how she appears to other people, especially men. She scolds herself for acting and posing but she quickly lapses back into the accustomed habits of admiration. Her actions stem from the basic problem of isolation.
All her acting ends in dreams of meeting a love who will dispel her alienation, and her poses and concern for appearances are for his benefit. In "At the Bay" one night she awakes to the sadness of her loneliness:

It is lonely by oneself. Of course, there are relations, friends, heaps of them; but that's not what she means. She wants someone who will find the Beryl they none of them know, who will expect her to be that Beryl always. She wants a lover.

Beryl longs to find someone who will understand her beneath all her false poses and appearances and who will love her true self so that she will no longer feel lonely and estranged. It is the longing to be carried out of her isolation by a handsome young man that urges Beryl to follow Harry Kember to the gate that night. Fortunately the "bright, blind, terrifying smile" of Harry Kember shakes her back to reality and to the realization that this is not her dream coming true. For Beryl a cloud had temporarily covered the light of the moon and the sea momentarily had sounded troubled. "Then the cloud sailed away, and the sound of the sea was a vague murmur, as though it waked out of a dark dream." Beryl awakes from her danger; and although she returns to her alienation, she has learned that romantic, unrealistic dreaming is not the way to solve her problem of loneliness.

A broken engagement is the theme of "The Singing Lesson." Miss Meadows, a voice teacher, suffers through
a singing class after she has received news of her broken engagement, oblivious of the girls in her class, some of whom are in tears over her indifferent, harsh manners. The wind, leaves, rain, song and voices create a mournful background atmosphere to Miss Meadows' thoughts of Basil, his letter, memories of him, and thoughts of her future without him. Her love has been rejected and she is alone. She suffers the anguish of imminent, life-long alienation; and everyone around her is affected by this suffering. When she is called from her class to receive a message from Basil saying that the letter was a mistake, when she discovers that Basil and she are not alienated, she unquestioningly accepts his flimsy explanation ("must have been mad") for having broken the engagement. All that concerns her is that they are no longer separated. She returns to her class a completely changed person, responsive to the happier, livelier song her class now sings.

Another story on the theme of an engagement, but one which does not end so happily, is "Mr. and Mrs. Dove." Reggie is faced with the prospect of leaving England to begin a hard life alone in the strange land of Rhodesia. He leaves behind only his mother, a domineering and demanding woman from whom he can expect little love to ease his anticipated loneliness. He asks Anne to marry him and go to Rhodesia to share his life, thinking of her as adorable and perfect, too blind to see she is
coy, spoiled, and playful with other people's affections. Anne refuses to marry him but expects him to be like Mr. Dove, her pet bird, bowing and accepting everything her way, revealing that she does not comprehend the suffering and alienation her refusal implies. Reggie, however, accepts her friendship on her terms rather than leave completely alienated from her.

One other story of Mansfield's can be classified as a story dealing with the relationship between two individuals who have no binding claim on each other to identification and communion. The man in the story titled "Poison" wants to marry the woman because he suffers from the uncertainty and fear that she has too much freedom and will fly away from him. As the story progresses it becomes clear that the woman fully expects a letter calling her away. During a discussion of poison, initiated by a newspaper article, she reveals that she is obsessed with the idea that all lovers and mates poison each other. Her conviction plants a seed of distrust in his mind that she might be poisoning him, and their relationship is shattered instantly by this revelation of distrust and fear that men and women have for each other.

Until the very last, Mansfield was still writing on this theme of the relationship between two individuals who have no claim on each other that would require them to establish communication or identification. The
fragment "Daphne" briefly sketches the situation of an artist who meets, falls in love with, and is rejected by a girl named Daphne. In "Weak Heart" there is also the brief mention of the alienation of a young boy, Roddie, whose sweetheart, named Edie Bengel, dies. Although Mansfield did not have time to complete these fragments, she was still absorbed by the theme of the loneliness and alienation that can exist when one individual reaches a hand through the bars of his personal prison, only to discover there is no one outside to grasp his hand.

Parent-Child Alienation

The type of alienation which appears more often than any other in Mansfield's short stories is the alienation within the family unit, an area where one should normally expect to find isolation reduced and where, when it is not reduced, it is magnified all the more because it falls short of expectations. Within this form of alienation, Mansfield rarely works with the entire family unit at one time; more often she focuses only on one family relationship. In "Prelude," for instance, she begins her story with the alienation between the mother and her young daughters, Lottie and Kezia. "There was not an inch of room for Lottie and Kezia in the buggy" as the Burnell family prepares to depart for their new home in the country. There was not an inch of room because the space was taken up by
"absolute necessities," all objects of furnishings, that Linda Burnell would not let out of her sight. No wonder the children feel and act deserted, placed second in importance to the household furnishings, when the carriage leaves them behind in charge of one of the neighbors, and they have just heard their mother declare that she will "simply have to cast them off." The thread of this mother-daughters separation weaves through the story, underlying the action and coming to the surface only briefly and subtly. After the first day in the new house, Linda is resting beside the fire with her eyes closed when the children finally arrive after dark. Mansfield writes, "'Are those the children?' But Linda did not really care; she did not even open her eyes to see."38 There is also an obvious absence of mother-daughter activity together; Linda never does anything with her children, never shares any experiences with them, never worries or looks after them to keep them out of harm. All these functions are left to the grandmother. A sharp contrast to this relationship between Linda and her children appears in the sudden and brief study of the mother-daughter relationship between the grandmother and her daughter Linda.

Linda leaned her cheek on her fingers and watched her mother. She thought her mother looked wonderfully beautiful with her back to the leafy window. There was something comforting in the sight of her that Linda felt she could never do without.39
Although Linda feels the strong desire to remain closely attached to her mother, she apparently fails to understand the sense of alienation her children must feel from her, for she deliberately sets herself apart from them.

In developing the character of Linda Burnell, Mansfield devotes considerable space explaining why Linda has separated herself and how this separation has affected her. She has isolated herself in her own private world with all its imaginary fears and swelling nightmares. Although she moves and acts in the normal world of her family, she is removed, apart from them in a self-perpetuated alienation, and sees the real world only from her own grotesquely imaginative point-of-view. She is not so much egotistic or self-centered as she is afraid, and her fears all find their source in the pains of childbirth. She can find no love in herself for her children because of this horror she has of bearing. Each birth has taken something from her—a piece of her vitality and strength or a part of her spirit; and although she is not bitter toward her children for having done this to her, she cannot find any warmth with which to love them. She is indifferent toward them, only wishing to be "driving away from them all in a little buggy, driving away from everybody and not even waving." She loves her husband Stanley, especially the sensitive side of him that gets hurt
and comes to her for mending. But she hates his other side, his affectionate side that rushes at her like a frightening dog; and she is afraid of him because he is the source of her childbearing. So Linda backs into her own corner into what she believes a protective isolation.

Isolation, however, fails to protect her from her own imagination, an imagination which becomes overactivated by her fears. When she is alone she senses every inanimate object coming to life: the flowers on the wallpaper, the curtain, the cushions, quilt, fringe, medicine bottles, the washstand jug that "had a way of sitting in the basin like a fat bird in a round nest." She is convinced that they have a life of their own and continue to swell and move even when she is not there. She even fancies that she can hear the silence "spinning its soft endless web" to ensnare her. Her imaginings all suggest the swelling of pregnancy and birth of children, especially in her nightmare of a small bird:

She made a cup of her hands and caught the tiny bird and stroked its head with her finger. It was quite tame. But a funny thing happened. As she stroked, it began to swell, it ruffled and pouches, it grew bigger and bigger and its round eyes seemed to smile knowingly at her. Now her arms were hardly wide enough to hold it and she dropped it into her apron. It had become a baby with a big naked head and a gaping bird-mouth, opening and shutting.
Linda realizes that merely isolating herself will not protect her from her fears, and she subconsciously searches for security. Celeste Wright points out that she envies the aloe its strength and its ability to protect itself against bearing more than once every hundred years.

Linda looked up at the fat swelling plant with its cruel leaves and fleshy stem. High above them, as though becalmed in the air and yet holding so fast to the earth it grew from, it might have had claws instead of roots. The curving leaves seemed to be hiding something; the blind stem cut into the air as if no wind could ever shake it.

Miss Wright states that "all descriptions of the aloe are nightmarish; the average reader hates this plant that Linda cherishes, this symbol of a mother's detachment and secret hostility." Later that evening Linda stands watching the aloe again, and the grassy bank appears to lift in a wave carrying off the ship-like aloe with its oars lifted. Linda dreams of being lifted out of the cold water of her fear and sailing faster and faster away over the trees. No wonder she likes the aloe better than anything about the house; it signifies an escape from her life of estrangement and fear. She particularly likes the long sharp thorns that keep everyone away from her ship. So strong is her desire for escape that she cannot see the flaw in the aloe that Kezia sees: the withered leaves that curl up no longer, but lie split and broken on the ground. Even
her symbol of a life free from childbirth has its flaw; strength and alienation are not the answer to her dilemma.

These grotesque nightmares of swelling, and visions of escapes are, no doubt, influenced by the fact that Linda is pregnant at the time they occur. In "At the Bay" she has already had her son; but she still lives in a special world of her own, seeing things no one else sees, preoccupied with introspective questioning of the ways of life, isolated, enjoying solitude but searching for an escape from it. She holds a grudge against Life for slowly destroying the spirit and warmth in her. While withdrawn in her thoughts, minding her son, he catches her attention, waves, smiles at her, and is so confident that she loves him that suddenly Linda discovers she really does love her child; and she emerges from her fear and her alienation to the realization that love and not escape or indifference is the answer to her dilemma. The moment is sudden and brief; the baby's attention is quickly diverted, but the moment of realization changes Linda. She never appears again in the story isolated or searching for an escape. She is pictured once with Jonathan listening to his complaints against his situation in life, trying to help him find a way out of his dilemma. Again we see her greeting Stanley, unafraid of his rushing embrace, soothing his hurt feelings, smiling for him. There is
a sense of joy and peace in all her actions symbolized by her vision of a sunset normally impressing her with awe and fear of the end of time but now striking her as joyful and loving. The sea which once symbolized a means of escape in the aloe ship now fills her with a sense of tender, joyful beauty. Through love she has escaped from her alienation into a real world without fear.

One of Mansfield's earliest stories, "New Dresses," written in 1910, also deals with the theme of the alienation between daughter and parents. Helen, a normal, inquisitive but slightly tomboyish little girl, can do no right in her parents' eyes; her sister Rose, a prim tattle-tale, can do no wrong. Both children are made new Sunday dresses at a financial sacrifice and a considerable amount of sewing effort on the part of their mother and grandmother. Helen tears her dress accidentally and hides it until she can sneak it out of the house in order to give it away. The loss of the dress only proves to the parents that she is hopelessly uncontrollable and cannot possibly amount to anything. The dress incident reveals clearly how much alienation and lack of understanding exist between Helen and her parents. The grandmother understands Helen and attempts to persuade the mother not to reprimand Helen for events that are unavoidable. The grandmother tries to say something in defense of the child, but she is old,
easily sidetracked by small distractions, and never remembers what she had started to say. Though she is sympathetic toward Helen rather than Rose, she is more concerned with expressing her affections toward Helen rather than correcting the alienation between the child and her parents. She is the only one who can help Helen; but, unfortunately for Helen, she cannot understand that compensating for parental love will not correct Helen's problem of alienation.

Two years later Mansfield wrote a warm story of a little girl who discovers her love for her father. At the beginning of "The Little Girl" Kezia is afraid of her father; and this fear alieantes her, causing her to be awkward in front of him and to stammer when she tries to talk to him. She decides to do something nice for him for his birthday to express her affection for him since her fear and estrangement prevent her from expressing herself in words. She industriously sews a pin cushion for him, unfortunately shredding up one of his important speeches to use as stuffing. She is punished for this innocent mistake; and she bitterly turns against her father, now alienated from him through hate as well as fear. She soon discovers, however, that when she needs him, he is there to protect her. One night when her mother and grandmother are gone, she is frightened by a nightmare and cries out in her sleep. Her father comes in her room, lifts her out of bed and
tucks her in bed with him. She realizes he is not, after all, the frightening giant she thought him to be but instead a huge, protective shield. Her hatred, bitterness, and fear dissolve; and she overcomes her alienating separation from him.

Alienation exists between mother and daughter in "The Wind Blows." It is mostly the weather and the strong wind which cause Matilda's foul mood that convinces her life is hideous and revolting, but she strikes out at her mother as though her mother were the cause. Matilda refuses to do what her mother asks her to do, telling her to "Go to hell" when she is out of hearing range of the house. She is also angry when she sees her mother has left her some darning to do. Even though her contrariness results from a bad mood, there is an implication that a lack of understanding, of antagonism and alienation, exists between Matilda and her mother. Her brother, however, understandingly establishes the rapport she needs, a close communion in which no words are necessary. They walk together against the wind, and she is no longer bitter now that she has a companion to share and understand the hardships of life, which the strong wind represents.

Three stories of Mansfield's concentrate specifically on the alienation of a son: "A Suburban Fairy Tale," "Sixpence," and "Six Years After." "A Suburban Fairy Tale" is a fantasy about a little boy whose
parents are more interested in discussing practical matters of food rather than paying attention to his comments and his wishes to feed the sparrows. The story, although on the theme of separation of one member in the family from the rest, is not typical of Mansfield's writing. She has the boy see the sparrows turn into little boys; and when Little B still cannot get his parents' attention, she has him join the boys, all of whom turn to sparrows and fly away. Because the parents ignored Little B after he repeatedly tried to communicate with them, they lost him. He left to join some friends who were more willing to listen to him and establish a friendly communion.

Fortunately, since "A Suburban Fairy Tale" strikes the reader as unrealistic and unconvincing, Mansfield did not write more fantasy stories but stayed with stories more true to life, as in "Sixpence." The situation in this story is one of a slightly mischievous and playful little boy with a mother who has been convinced by an outsider that he should be spanked, although the child has never been spanked before. The father, hot, tired, dusty from a hard day at the office, is met by a nagging mother talking rapidly about how horrible his son has been and insisting he be punished. In anger, fatigue, and emotion, the father spanks the child without even knowing what the child has done. The child does not cry; and the father
repents his actions, knowing his motives for the spanking of his son were wrong even if the child deserved disciplining. He tries to give his son a sixpence in reconciliation but that does not blot out what has happened. The father feels he has lost something in his relationship with his son; he has set up a barrier that hampers his communication with the boy, and nothing can undo the damage to their relationship or restore their former comradeship.

The barrier between the son and his mother in "Six Years After" is even more alienating. The son is dead and is, therefore, infinitely alienated from his mother. This story is discussed later in this thesis under the category of "absolute alienation."

Mansfield has written only one story of the loneliness of a child who has lost one of her parents in death. Fenella, in "The Voyage," is taken by her grandmother on an overnight boat trip to Grandma's house to live with her. Her mother has recently died, and apparently her father cannot rear her by himself. Although she knows everything is sad, she is not old enough to understand that her mother is dead. There is no indication that Fenella is aware of a loss or is lonely, but she does need and want warmth, affection and playfulness. Her grandmother is too concerned with praying (understood by the little girl only as a habit and not as a means of consolation or communication with
a Higher Being), arranging luggage and her umbrella, and worrying about costs of travelling, to have time to talk to the child directly and so understand her needs. Her grandmother is full of practical concerns, prayers and moral sayings; but the child needs personal attention from a friend and not a teacher. When they arrive at their destination, her Grandpa offers this friendship by winking merrily at her; she has a friend in her new home and she understands she will not be alone.

In one of her later stories, Mansfield focuses on alienation from an unusual point-of-view for her, that of the alienation of the father from the rest of his family. Until late in her career, Mansfield typically created the father as domineering and aggressive, rarely taking his side in a story, rarely developing him beyond her stereotyped picture of the overbearing male. In "An Ideal Family," ironically titled as the reader realizes when she reveals the shallowness of the family, Mansfield creates a father who has had a sudden revelation about his life and his family. The story opens with his realization that he is old, and he is all the more aware of his age because he sees his family in a new light. He has believed until now they were an ideal family, socially and financially successful; but he now recognizes that his son is spoiled, that his daughters are bright, brittle socialites and not warm, feminine girls, and his wife is not a wife to
him. They seem all "too rich" for him; he wants warm, human relationships, not charming, clever social creatures. The story contains an excellent image which describes old Mr. Neave's feelings. He keeps seeing a withered, ancient old man climbing up endless flights of stairs; he joins the old man at one point of the climb; and later he watches him walk down the stairs out of his life, leaving old Mr. Neave with nothing but an empty shell of an existence. Old Mr. Neave feels old because he realizes his life has been empty, lonely, meaningless and without love. At the end of the story we see him estranged from his "ideal family," an old despairing man.

**Husband-Wife Alienation**

Another family relationship Mansfield focuses on as much as the parent-child relationship is the alienation existing between a husband and wife. In this relationship Mansfield spends more time developing the varying degrees of alienation. Communication usually has been established in her stories between the husband and wife, although the more elusive quality of identification with one another flutters beyond their reach. At one polarity of isolation is the husband in 'Marriage à la Mode' who sees his wife only on week-ends and then has to share her with a shallow bohemian set. Isabel and William at one time had found happiness in their marriage and children, but happiness is not a permanent
condition. Once two individuals have achieved identification with one another, they must both work to keep the union together. In "Marriage à la Mode" separation has set in, physical separation because the husband spends the week in London and travels to the country only on week-ends, and separation caused by outsiders who intrude on the husband-wife relationship. The story, spanning one brief week-end, reveals that the separation is becoming wider and wider. William is now viewed as the intruder by Isabel and her bohemian friends, someone to put up with for two days before he will be gone again. Mansfield never pictures William with his children in this atmosphere although she has him remembering the former happiness when he used to play with them. This omission of developing the present relationship between the father and children only emphasizes the emptiness spreading throughout the whole family relationship. William turns in this story to face his alienation and tries desperately, by writing a letter to Isabel on his way back to London, to stamp out the slow growth of alienation that is taking over their marriage. Through this letter Isabel becomes aware of the shallowness of her "new life" and the vulgarity of her new friends. She understands for the first time the separation that is threatening her marriage and knows she must respond to William's effort to reach out to her before it is too late. She fails to respond, and alienation triumphs.
At the other polarity of alienation stand the husband and wife in "The Man Without a Temperament." The man and woman spend every minute of their lives together, not separated physically as William and Isabel are; yet they are no closer to breaking the prison of isolation in which each exists. Salesby, the husband, has been forced into exile from his homeland because his wife's illness requires a tropical climate. The story covers only one day of Mr. and Mrs. Salesby's life, but according to the competent Mansfield critic, Donald Kleine, "The representatively barren day gives us the history of the Salesby's tropical sojourn; we feel the pressure of all the prior empty days impinging on the time of Miss Mansfield's telling." The type of alienation Salesby suffers from more immediately is the separation from his home and friends; he suffers from homesickness in a resort full of strangers whom he has forced to dislike him by exorcizing his unhappiness on them. Mansfield once expressed her thoughts in her Journal about the destructive nature of enforced exile:

In the night I thought for hours of the evils of uprooting. Every time one leaves anywhere something precious, which ought not to be killed, is left to die.

In his daydreams of England, Salesby's actions with friends and strangers there reveal that he has an agreeable nature. He is so preoccupied with his own alienation and exile, however, that he does nothing
to form new friendships nor attempt to assuage the alienation his wife experiences. Paradoxically, she is the only one at the resort he can possibly turn to to alleviate his own feeling of estrangement; but since she is the cause of his exile, he is unable to reach out to her.

Mansfield effectively depicts Salesby's position when she describes him watching the sky, seeing lightning far away which "flutters--flutters like a wing--flutters like a broken bird that tries to fly and sinks again and again struggles." This imagery of a wounded bird struggling to fly is in sharp contrast to the happy, free-flying bird imagery earlier in the story associated with the Honeymoon Couple, who experience a companionship lacking in Salesby's marriage. Kleine recognizes the wounded bird image as representing Salesby's entire position of being hopelessly imprisoned. He is incapable of communicating with the strangers around him or with his wife, and he is unable to fly out of his exile and alienation.

Two other symbols used to support the portrayal of Salesby's alienation are the ship imagery and the signet ring Salesby wears. The ring, which he turns round and round as though trying to find a way to get it off, symbolizes his enclosure, his endless imprisonment and exile. When we first see him, he is unconsciously turning the ring, surveying the prison-hotel in which
he finds himself. The ring reappears at significant moments throughout the story when Salesby is reminded of his separation from home or at moments of greatest frustration and unhappiness caused by his exile. He vacantly twists the ring when letters arrive from home; he turns it again after an unenjoyable dinner in the hotel dining room obviously lacking in a congenial atmosphere. As a final stroke of irony, Mansfield has the wife turn the ring as she asks her husband if he really minds being forced to remain with her. He neither denies her question nor confirms it; he merely uses an ambiguous word as though he were afraid his real feelings of being exiled and isolated would be revealed if he attempted to utter a longer answer.

The ship imagery supports Salesby's daydreams of a return to England. Once as the couple sits in the bedroom in the late afternoon, the beds appear to Salesby like two white ships. Later he sees the room covered in moonlight and the beds seem to float. He gets into the bed-ship and returns to England, if only in his thoughts, to the day ironically that determined his fate of alienation, to the day he learned of the seriousness of his wife's illness. Even the ship has brought him round in a circle; he is hopelessly exiled with no means of escape.

Mrs. Salesby also suffers from a desperate loneliness, for not only has she been exiled from her
home and friends because of her illness but she is also aware that her husband, whom she loves, is unhappy and suffers from alienation, restiveness, and boredom. Mansfield further complicates the anxiety of the situation, as noted by Mr. Kleine, in the garden scene:

The sweet bow, the rigid gallantry of Mr. Salesby: it is stilted as a daguerreotype, and the yawn comically betrays its falsity. Theatrically magnified, grotesque, this scene condenses all the past and future of the story. Both parties are pitifully playing roles. In Salesby's case, he cannot afford to let himself know how his wife senses his restiveness, see how perfunctory his tenderness really is.47

Nothing intensifies the isolation between two people more than falsity. The barrier between Salesby and his wife cannot be broken down unless they are honest with one another, but honesty would have involved a terrifying risk. Had they openly told one another their true feelings, they would have destroyed the play in which each was an actor. The destruction of the play is necessary before they can build a positive bridge to overcome the alienation. Neither is capable, however, of openly facing the alienation each suffers, not knowing for certain the bridge could be built, once they had lost their dramatic delusion. Rather than jeopardize everything in order to obtain an uncertain, although more fulfilling, relationship, the Salesbys hold on to their dramatic falsehood because in this way each of them is at least able to convince himself or herself
at times the other is not actually suffering from alienation.

In "Bliss" Mansfield views the alienation of husband and wife from still another angle. Separation already exists in the marriage, but only the husband is aware of it. "Bliss" is a study of the revelation of this alienation to the wife, Bertha Young. Bertha throughout the story and until the last moment floats through preparations for a dinner party and the actual dinner itself in a state of exceptional happiness which Mansfield terms "bliss." This bliss is destroyed when Bertha discovers her husband is having an affair with her latest friend, thus revealing to Bertha that a schism exists in her union with her husband. Mansfield, as R. B. Heilman points out, "is not merely basing her effect upon the familiar irony of a husband's infidelity, or even on the less familiar irony that he is carrying on an affair with his wife's latest friend." She is more concerned with Bertha's feeling and her reaction to the discovery that she has lost her husband. The focus of the story is, therefore, on the discovery of the alienation rather than on the moral implications of the affair. T. S. Eliot also recognized that "the story is limited to this sudden change of feeling, and the moral and social ramifications are outside of the terms of reference." The reader is aware early in the story that Bertha's bliss is not so perfect as she believes,
that it is accidental and precarious. In the first view of the pear tree before the dinner party, Bertha sees a slender tree in full bloom against a jade-green sky; and at this point the tree reflects only the arrival of spring. Bertha also sees in the same glance some red and yellow heavy tulips, a symbol of the languorous joy of the senses, according to Miss Freeman, which indicates an awakening in Bertha of sexual desires for her husband, from whom she has been spiritually alienated, without her knowing it, from the time of their marriage. The tree with its supporting color scheme of green and white, the tulips, and the black and grey cats suggest the emotional experience and revelation Bertha is to undergo that evening. Already Bertha has intuitively felt something vaguely uneasy in her bliss by her reaction to the cats. This uneasiness is quickly forgotten until it appears again after her sudden revelation. In the meantime, Bertha intentionally dresses in white and jade-green, consciously thinking of the pear tree as a reflection of her bliss, a sense of joy in rejuvenation that comes with spring. Chester Eisinger, in a brief explication of the story, points out that her comparison of herself to the tree is not an accurate one. She enumerates all the things that make her life a perfection but everything she lists indicates something superficial, such as a new cook who "made the most superb omelettes," or shows a lack of
good judgment, such as her "thrilling, modern" friends who are really arty and trite. Even with her own child she lacks a fulfilling relationship, as the reader realizes as she stands in the nursery watching the nurse feed her baby, "her hands by her side, like a poor little girl in front of the rich little girl with the doll." Eisinger says, "None of her advantages, then, is a basis for her comparison of herself to the tree, which has the perfection of inner, organic vitality; her advantages are, even by accepting her view of them, superficial, having no reference to the core of her being." Bertha has idealized and sentimentalized her life, not integrated with it. Though unaware of the fact, she is a completely alienated person.

Miss Fulton is also compared to the tree by Bertha. While eating dinner, Bertha visualizes the pear tree as having turned silver in the moonlight, the same color Miss Fulton, who is dressed all in silver, is wearing. Bertha sees both herself and Miss Fulton in the same relationship to the tree. In the scene where both women stand in front of the window viewing the pear tree, a silver candle flame growing taller and taller, it takes on different and yet ironically similar meanings for them both. Eisinger sees the tree as a phallic symbol representing for both women the awakening sexual desire for Bertha's husband. However,
Bertha thinks she experiences an amazing revelation that Pearl is in a state of bliss like herself, and this discovery that two people can experience such a soul-moving depth of feeling at the same time causes Bertha to jump to the conclusion that she and Pearl have established a rare and close communion with one another. Not until later does Bertha understand that no communion existed between them; Bertha is still alienated. The bliss which both experienced does not flow from one woman to the other but rather emanates from the same source—love for the same man. The tree symbolizes the love or passionate desire each woman has for Harry and not, as Bertha thought, the complete understanding existing between herself and Pearl Fulton.

After the sudden revelation that Pearl and Harry are having an affair, Bertha manages to see both Pearl and Eddie, the artificial young poet, to the door. Pearl, all in silver, now is compared to the silver grey cat at the first of the story, which brings back the picture of the cat dragging its belly, creeping sinisterly across the lawn under the pear tree. She is followed out the door by Eddie, the black cat, a symbol not only of the superficial friends Bertha had once thought herself fortunate to have but also symbol of all that is artificial and now realized to be meaningless in her life. Mansfield uses the two cats to symbolize the destruction of both the personal and
social communion in Bertha's life. She has failed to establish communion on a personal level with her husband and with a treasured friend, and she has failed to establish a meaningful communion in society. Her reaction is to turn to nature, to the pear tree for a response of understanding of her alienation and anxiety. She finds the pear tree unchanged, just as lovely as ever. Eisinger feels this indifference to her catastrophe is an expression of the indifference of nature to the plights of man, while Freeman points out that although unchanged objectively, the tree has greatly changed subjectively. It no longer symbolizes an emotional state of communion or nonalienation for Bertha.

In the three stories mentioned, "Marriage à la Mode," "The Man Without a Temperament" and "Bliss," Katherine Mansfield pictures alienation between husband and wife in three different manners. In the first, alienation threatens and during the story triumphs over the marriage. In the second, the alienation already fully exists and both parties are aware of it but refuse to acknowledge its presence. In the third, Mansfield devotes the entire story to the revelation to the wife of an established alienation.

Two stories, both of which were published in 1911, focus on the self-centered, aggressive husband so often a character in Mansfield's earlier works. One story
"Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding" presents the marriage from the woman's point-of-view and "A Birthday" is from the man's point-of-view. In "Frau Brechenmacher" the man is pictured as demanding and getting what he wants. He makes his wife dress in the dark hallway so he will have enough space in their lighted room to dress himself, and as a result she embarrassingly misses some snaps. He walks ahead of her to the wedding, not helping her in the snow, so that he will not get his feet wet. He normally does not excuse himself when he jostles her, and he drinks too much at the wedding. Frau Brechenmacher watches the unhappy bride who has a free-born child with her and is being forced to marry a vulgar man whom she does not love. A joke is played on the bride, crudely focused on bearing children, at which the entire party laughs. Frau Brechenmacher leaves the wedding feeling they were laughing at her rather than the bride because she, like the bride, is married to an aggressive male who forces her to have children. She has become aware she is living an unfulfilled, alienated life without love. This story is especially important in Mansfield's writing career because here, in one of her earliest stories, she was able to create effectively that intangible feeling of the awareness of alienation and meaninglessness in life which she was able to capture so well in her later stories.
"A Birthday" is a characterization of a man who thinks only of himself and his comforts. His first thoughts on awakening are looking for his watch, taking a shower before breakfast, having someone fix the blind, and writing a letter about getting some tin cans removed from the gully on the other side of his fence. He watches the servant girl spit-polish his boots and decides she must go even if his wife has to do without a maid. The reader knows Andreas Binzer has spent the night in the guest room and that his wife is not feeling well, but Andreas is so concerned over his "sensitiveness" that not until his mother comes in are we aware that the wife needs a doctor and has been in pain all night.

He is not aware and cannot comprehend the suffering his wife is going through. He hears her cry but the shock of pain does not stay with him long. He is easily distracted by thoughts of getting rid of the servant and the sights on the street as he goes after the doctor. He feels put upon for not being able to have his family about him on Sunday as "is his right" and for having to go out for the doctor without breakfast. It never occurs to him to worry about his wife. When he returns with the doctor, Andreas worries over his breakfast instead of his wife. A four-year old picture of her reminds him of how gay his wife use to be; and he feels sorry for himself that she has changed, not even considering that he has been responsible for
this change. He somehow intuitively senses this responsibility, grows to dislike the smiling picture, for the first time admits he is helpless, even begins to fear that his wife will die and leave him alone. He almost becomes a thoughtful human being concerned with the suffering of others until he discovers the danger is past, and he brags about knowing now himself what suffering really is. His self-centeredness and egotism have set him apart, separated him from an understanding of his wife and the pain of childbearing. This lack of understanding is slowly destroying her, draining her of the gaiety and vitality of her life which she possessed before their marriage.

In "The Black Cap" Mansfield writes of the eternal triangle but with a fresh approach. The wife has decided her husband does not love her since he pays her no attention and expects her to exist merely to take care of him. She accuses him in her mind:

What you have been trying to do, ever since you married me, is to make me submit, to turn me into your shadow, to rely on me so utterly that you'd only to glance up to find the right time printed on me somehow, as if I were a clock. You have never been curious about me; you never wanted to explore my soul.55

She feels alienated and unimportant; so she decides to run away with her lover. She wants to stay at home, as indicated by the first scene in which she tries to force her husband into paying more attention to her
going. He is indifferent, honestly believing she is going to the dentist's office in the city.

She thinks her lover will treat her like a queen, arranging the trip for her, taking care of details, giving her flowers, and discretely reserving two separate rooms at the hotel. He not only fails to handle these details, he is late and arrives wearing a terribly unromantic black cap. Obviously, her attraction to him has been purely surface because she is appalled at the change in his physical appearance. At the first opportunity, she escapes and rushes back home, anxious to get back to familiar surroundings and her husband. Her situation at home has not changed; her husband will still be the same person when he arrives home from work. But she has changed; she now sees the worth of her home and her surroundings and recognizes that her illusions of alienation were purely imaginary.

Mansfield was interested in studying the personality and character of the people she created, in revealing that alienation can be caused by the very character of the individual and not necessarily by a word or action on his part. There are moments in life when just the correct word or gesture would break down the barrier of alienation between two people, but that word or gesture may be just the one impossible thing to say or do because the person is what he is. In "Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day" Mansfield creates a vain, pompous,
peacock-like voice teacher who receives special considera-
tion and attention from everyone but his wife. She has
lived with him closely enough to see through his gracious,
artificial manners. Besides, she has practical, house-
hold matters to attend that grate on his artistic
temperament. After an evening singing engagement, he
comes home triumphant and slightly drunk. Now more than
ever he misses her companionship, for he has no one to
tell of his successful evening.

It was incredible, he thought, that
she cared so little for him--incredible
that she wasn't interested in the slightest
in his triumphs and his artistic career.
When so many women in her place would
have given their eyes... Yes, he knew
it... Why not acknowledge it... And there she lay, an enemy, even in her
sleep...56

He accidentally wakes her and decides suddenly to try
again to make friends with her, to confide in her. But
when he tries to talk to her, he comes out with some-
thing charming and hopelessly artificial. He is
alienated from his wife because he is basically an
artificial, etiquette-conscious person, and he cannot
establish an honest and sincere relationship with anyone.

In "The Stranger" there are another husband and
wife who are temperamentally not suited for each other.
There has always been something between Mr. Hammond and
his wife that left him with the impression she was not
completely his and they were not completely united as
husband and wife should be. He is never so much aware
of this separation until he sees his wife again after a long absence. Insignificant actions on her part hint that she is drawing away from him. She does not share his enthusiasm over meeting again, she is not overly anxious to be alone with him, she withdraws her hand from his as they ride to the hotel, she obviously wants to go on home to the children rather than staying at the hotel as he planned. When at last he thinks they are alone, Mr. Hammond discovers his wife is miles away thinking of the stranger who died in her arms on board the ship. He realizes that the stranger will always be with her, and he will never be alone with her again. They had never been entirely united because his possessive, eager, overbearing personality did not fit her gentle, free-loving nature that had to have freedom and not force to express its affections. Their alienation, which already existed in part, is culminated when Hammond learns of his wife's tender affections toward the stranger.

On the same topic of the suitability of mates, Mansfield reveals in "Honeymoon" how two people who think they are perfectly suited to each other are actually far apart in their mutual understanding. The most important question asked in the story is, "Do two people ever get to really know each other and understand each other in the depths of their being?"

Fanny and George, newly weds and abroad for the first
time, try to act as though they are experienced travellers and instead appear amateurish and flowery. They think that they are perfectly matched, each strongly attracted to the other and for that reason they "know each other." They ride in a cab down to the sea front for tea. The first indication that there is a difference in their temperament is revealed when George declares he is going swimming the next day in the sea, which Fanny considers very dangerous, but only gets scoffed at for her concern. At the tea shop, Fanny is surprised by an intuitive glimpse into a slightly discomforted George as he attempts to hide his frightened reaction to the manager of the shop. She idolizes George and thinks he can do no wrong, that he is the master of any situation. These minor differences in the man she thought she knew in depth lead up to the revelation of a major difference in understanding.

An old man who has long since lost his voice begins to sing in the tea shop and each partner in the marriage has a different reaction. Fanny suddenly realizes that everything is not perfect in her world. She understands the suffering represented by the old man and wonders if she and George have a right to be happy when other people are so unhappy. George thinks the old man funny because he cannot sing, and he is extremely thankful he is not in the old man's shoes, that they are young and just beginning life. George and Fanny do not react in the same or even similar ways
on the important issue of age and suffering; and George, who has insisted that he knows Fanny in depth, interprets her reaction to be the same as his. They are not even close to an understanding communion in their marriage and, at this point in their life, still separated by their individuality.

Again, in "The Escape," Mansfield depicts the unsuitability of a husband and wife, but in the story she allows the husband to escape from his alienation. The first portion of the story is almost entirely an interior monologue of the wife as she sees her husband from whom she is obviously alienated. She considers him a bungling, inefficient, deliberately spiteful person who does his best to anger her and make her irritable. Slipping through this monologue is the feeling that the husband is actually trying his best to please his wife but is plague by misfortunes and unforeseeable events. Although the husband says little, Mansfield is able subtly to suggest his unhappiness and frustrations, and his own sense of alienation, especially at moments of embarrassment when the reader realizes that his wife is taking no pains to hide her opinion from strangers around them. Each is hopelessly alienated from the other, for the most part because the wife is so self-centered in believing that everything should be arranged to make her life pleasant and comfortable, and that any other arrangement indicates a deliberate effort
of her husband to be spiteful and to reject her. The husband reaches the peak of frustration and inner disunity mingled with a growing feeling of hatred for his wife, which he refuses to recognize, when he finds himself alone, watching a huge, copper tree.

It was then that he saw the tree, that he was conscious of its presence just inside a garden gate. It was an immense tree with a round, thick silver stem and a great arc of copper leaves that gave back the light and yet were sombre. There was something beyond the tree—a whiteness, a softness, an opaque mass, half-hidden—with delicate pillars. As he looked at the tree he felt his breathing die away and he became part of the silence. It seemed to grow, it seemed to expand in the quivering heat until the great carved leaves hid the sky, and yet it was motionless. Then from within its depths or from beyond there came the sound of a woman's voice. A woman was singing. The warm untroubled voice floated upon the air, and it was all part of the silence as he was part of it. Suddenly, as the voice rose, soft, dreaming, gentle, he knew that it would come floating to him from the hidden leaves and his peace was shattered. What was happening to him? Something stirred in his breast. Something dark, something unbearable and dreadful pushed in his bosom, and like a great weed it floated, rocked... it was warm, stifling. He tried to struggle to tear at it, and at the same moment—all was over. Deep, deep, he sank into the silence, staring at the tree and waiting for the voice that came floating, falling, until he felt himself enfolded.

Mansfield is quoted here at length because one critic has taken exception to this passage, claiming Mansfield was guilty of a serious fault in style. Kathleen Freeman writes:
So the symbol grows on and on, changing and shifting; in what follows, neither the observer nor we are clear as to which is fantasy and which is intrusion of reality; the growth is shaped by his mood, and it can no more be completely understood than the vision of a dream which we cannot interpret because we have not all the associations. This is the only kind of obscurity to be found in her works—the symbol so replete with meaning that we who do not know the character as she knew it cannot follow the mood completely.®

Miss Freeman fails to interpret the scene in the proper reference. If analyzed as a mystical experience, one involving the progression of the husband from inward disunity through purification to a final peace and unity with nature, the scene becomes more coherent.

Transformed by the beauty of the tree, the man experiences a temporary relief from his sense of alienation in a feeling of union with the tree as a part of the life force. Out of this silent union but also a part of it, another human element drifts—the singing of a woman. When the voice reaches him, it shatters his temporary union of silence because he still possesses an impurity of hatred for his wife in his inner self. It is this dark, unbearable impurity against which he struggles and which he must purify himself of by refusing to accept it. In the very act of denying the feeling of hatred in existence he overcomes it, and then only is he able to experience mystical union in which the life force within him escapes confinement behind a barrier of hatred, and communes with the
growing life in the tree and the softly beautiful life in the voice. This escape from alienation leaves the husband in a state of peaceful happiness and an acute awareness of the preciousness of life.

There is an ineffable quality about mystical experiences which makes any attempt at describing one appear vague or confused. A mystical experience, however, is a personal, highly emotional experience; and Mansfield, in portraying the husband's emotional mood in this significant moment, creates a difficult, intangible experience that may appear confusing visually but contains a valid expression of truth. Mansfield is particularly adept at discovering truth in the instant, in brief moments of inactivity.

Brewster and Burrell wrote about her work:

> Whether or not the 'truth' is in these instants of realization rather than of action, the sense of being alive is in them. That sense breaks in upon our course of habit and routine in the brief pauses of sensitive awareness. We have a heightened consciousness of physical well-being, of love or hate, of intimate understanding, of esthetic delight, of ironical insight or comprehension; or we glimpse some intellectual or spiritual horizon.\(^59\)

Such an awareness of being alive is what Mansfield portrays in "The Escape." The husband escapes from his alienation from his wife and disunity of self into a conscious awareness of the silent, unfolding unity in life.
Three of Mansfield's unfinished stories focus on the relationship between husband and wife. "All Serene" presents a happily married couple at breakfast looking over their mail. The husband has received a letter from "a mining engineer" who wishes to see him at his office after work. The wife remarks that the handwriting looks feminine, but she is not particularly suspicious. However, this letter is possibly a complication in the serenity of their marriage. In "A Bad Idea" we see a husband on the seashore confused and not wanting to go home, but knowing he must. Something has happened between him and his wife that has alienated them. He remembers thinking that morning when she failed to get up for breakfast that their marriage was all over. The wife is miserably unhappy over what has happened; but the husband, although he is concerned and confused over what to do about his wife's unhappiness, is extraordinarily cheerful and gay once he is out of her sight. Mansfield never had time to tell us what had happened to separate and alienate the husband and wife from each other and destroy their means of communication.

One of her finest unfinished pieces, and what promised to be among her best short stories, is "A Married Man's Story." The story is that of a married man writing what is happening to him on a typical evening, explaining the circumstances of the alienation between his wife and himself. He describes the room, his wife
with their child, and the rain outside. He does not seem unhappy that things are as they are and that he and his wife have lost their identification and communion with each other. He not only accepts the situation but he is also aware of a glorious, mournful voice singing in his bosom everytime he thinks of it. His wife is different, however. He imagines her as she stands in the kitchen:

Her head bent, with one finger she is tracing something--nothing--on the table. It is cold in the kitchen; the gas jumps; the tap drips; it's a forlorn picture. And nobody is going to come behind her, to take her in his arms, to kiss her soft hair, to lead her to the fire and to rub her hands warm again. Nobody is going to call her or to wonder what she is doing out there. And she knows it. And yet, being a woman, deep down, deep down, she really does expect the miracle to happen; she really could embrace that dark, dark deceit, rather than live--like this.°0

For once Mansfield creates a husband who fully understands his wife and yet reveals that understanding is not all that is necessary to bring two people together. The husband knows his wife well enough to anticipate and understand her movements and thoughts. But he does not care; and if there are no thoughts of concern and love, there can be no overcoming the alienation that exists between them. They are like "little creatures, peering out of the sentry-box at the gate, ogling through [their] glass case at the entry, wan little servants, who never can say for certain, even, if the
master is out or in. ... "61 They are imprisoned in isolation, and he has accepted his alienation, impatient at her for still clinging to a hope that their former happiness will return.

While he is explaining what has happened to destroy the happiness of their marriage, he returns to thoughts of his childhood. He reveals a life of alienation and loneliness. His mother's health failed the day he was born, and she was listless and silent, confined to her bed the rest of her life. His father, a chemist-dope peddler, poisoned his mother, so he believes, when he was thirteen; and from that time on he always saw his father as a bottle of Deadly Poison. Not only was he deprived of love and affection at home, he was also not well liked at school. He describes why:

I seem to have spent most of my time like a plant in a cupboard. Now and again, when the sun shone, a careless hand thrust me out on the window-sill, and a careless hand whipped me in again—and that was all. But what happened in the darkness—I wonder? Did one grow? pale stem. . . timid leaves. . . white reluctant bud. No wonder I was hated at school.62

Neil Kessel makes an interesting observation about persons who are subjected to a life of loneliness beginning in early childhood, as the married man was:

Most solitary people have loneliness thrust upon them but there are some who achieve it. Being on their own is for them a shield, guarding against the intrusion of others into their lives and their thoughts.63
The married man had loneliness both thrust upon him and later achieved.

As the husband talks, he reveals very strange traits about his character. He remembers a singing inside him as he once looked at a dead bird; he is strangely in love with night and darkness; the star he picks out for his own is "cruel, indifferent, splendid." Strangest of all, one night, when overcome with the misery of his loneliness and alienation, he becomes aware of a change in himself and his room. Everything lived, and he too became alive:

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

On that night he accepted total alienation from the human world, forever rejecting any attempt to communicate with other human beings. By this identification with inanimate and growing nonhuman life, he finds communion within his cupboard-prison of alienation which will allow no human element to trespass. Although Mansfield wrote no further, this barrier is presumably the barrier that separates him from his wife. Kessel concludes that "people of this sort do not have the equipment to share their experiences, to form friendships, to socialize themselves, to respond to another's interest."
Social Alienation

The human consciousness has a social foundation and naturally longs for human fraternity. Social contact is one of the ways the individual can overcome alienation temporarily. Although social contact is rarely as satisfying as communion of one human being with another, it can be a form of alleviating man's loneliness. Since Mansfield herself was not temperamentally or physically inclined to an active social life, she was not much interested in picturing the effects of a lack of socialization on the individual—even though awareness of such a lack tends to leave the individual with a sense of estrangement from the human race, a feeling of being "out of the party" and not belonging. In one of her earlier stories, "Germans at Meat," Mansfield briefly touched on social alienation existing between nations. The story is an exaggerated account of the atrocious table manners of Germans, such as their distasteful mannerisms, their unpleasant choice of subject, their rudeness to the English in front of an English woman. The English are viewed by the Germans indiscriminately as a people who eat too much, and who lack sensitiveness and affection. The Germans' rudeness and inconsideration toward the English, and specifically to the Englishwoman present, underscores the alienation and antagonism existing between the two countries.
In another early story titled "The Baron," Mansfield depicts a situation of social class barriers which often separate one individual from another. The Baron is aloof, set apart from everyone else at the hotel because of his title. He eats, walks, and lives alone; and everyone at the hotel dreams of being introduced to or noticed by him. The Englishwoman, being caught in the rain, finds herself being escorted back to the hotel by the Baron under his umbrella. The encounter, however, establishes no foundation for communication, as the Baron remains socially separated from the others and the Englishwoman takes more pleasure in telling the others of her triumphant meeting rather than her failure to break through another person's separation.

Class barriers appear again as an important co-theme in "The Garden Party." One theme of the story is the revelation and acceptance by a young girl named Laura that life and death, gaiety and sadness, exist simultaneously. This theme is discussed later under the topic of the ultimate alienation of death. The co-theme of social attitudes is intertwined with the theme of life and death and establishes a situation of alienation between Laura and her mother. Although not openly estranged from one another, Laura and her mother, Mrs. Sheridan, are certainly in conflict with each other over the proper social attitude toward the death of a
person in a social class beneath theirs. Laura is
instinctively outgoing to all persons in the story,
regardless of their class distinctions. She longs to
be considered an adult and accepted by her mother's
world as adult. For this reason, she rushes out,
imitating her mother's manners, to supervise the workmen
in setting up the marquee; but before the scene is over,
she has decided the workmen are really nice people with
whom she wishes to share the morning, not at all as her
mother would have done.

When news of the accidental death of a young man
arrives, Laura's immediate reaction is to stop the
party. She is amazed when her sister Jose not only
does not agree with her but considers her absurd for
even suggesting such a thing. Laura is even more
astonished when her mother agrees with Jose and amusingly
refuses to take Laura seriously about stopping the party.
Laura's morality that death cannot be ignored is
juxtaposed against Mrs. Sheridan's immorality that the
death of anyone outside one's social class is insignifi-
cant. Donald Taylor has described the world of Mrs.
Sheridan as a dream world "whose underlying principle
is the editing and rearranging of reality for the
comfort and pleasure of its inhabitants." This world,
which represents maturity to the young Laura, is an
unrealistic world that denies the existence of death.
After the party, when Mrs. Sheridan suggests taking
party leftovers to the family of the dead man, Laura is struck again by the clash between her mother's and her own idea of what is proper. "Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that?" A basic difference in social attitudes between Laura and her mother causes a conflict which, although it does not result in open alienation between the two, separates them and implies that when Laura reaches maturity and self-assurance, this basic difference in social attitudes possibly will cause a clash and permanent estrangement.

In three stories devoted entirely to the theme of the relationship of the individual and society, Mansfield reveals, first, in "Miss Brill," the attempts and failure of an old lady to establish a socially fulfilled life; second, in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," the longing and inability of two sisters to break through their alienation out into the world; and third, in "The Doll's House," the alienation imposed even on children by social class barriers.

"Miss Brill" is the story of a lonely spinster who visits the park every Sunday not merely to listen to the concert but to watch and listen to the people in the audience. This excursion is the one opportunity in her week to share in someone else's life. She is always disappointed when the people next to her do not
carry on a conversation. "She had become really quite expert, she thought, at listening as though she didn't listen, at sitting in on other people's lives just for a minute while they talked around her."68 This opinion is Miss Brill's, for the reader discovers, as Peter Thorpe observed in College English, that Miss Brill is viewed by those around her as a snooping, eavesdropping spinster.69 The poignancy of the story lies in the attempt of a lonely individual to overcome her loneliness by establishing an imaginative communion with strangers rather than a real relationship. "She had allowed herself," writes Eudora Welty, "occasional glimpses of lives not too happy, here in the park, which had moved her to little flutters of sadness. But that. . . had been coziness--coziness, a remedy visitors seek to take the chill off a strange place with. She hadn't known it wasn't good enough."70 The tragedy of her alienation is that she seeks unreal social contacts, not actual communications in society, but "stolen" communications between other individuals. She observes encounters by other people, rather than meeting people herself, and believes that the coloring or interpretations she gives these meetings are true. For this reason, Miss Brill is sympathetic with the prostitute, a person of whom she would certainly not approve if they met, when she sees the prostitute rebuffed by the gentleman, simply because she, Miss Brill, cannot see the prostitute for what she really is.
Not only does she pretend or imagine social contact with other people, she also personifies her fur piece, making it an object of affection, something with a definite personality of its own, rather than an inanimate object. Peter Thorpe sees the fur piece as a substitute for the society, the love, sympathy, and understanding which are absent from Miss Brill's life. The fur actually parallels her experience; it comes out of a dark little box just as she comes out of a dark little 'cupboard' of a room. Miss Brill's personification of the fur piece as a "little rogue" helps make the fur piece for Miss Brill an object by which she alleviates her alienation, even if only in her imagination.

She experiences a fulfilling identification with society, so she thinks, when she "discovers" that she has a part in the drama she imagines is taking place in the park and is actually participating in what is happening rather than merely observing:

They were all on the stage. They weren't only the audience, not only looking on; they were acting. Even she had a part and came every Sunday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there; she was part of the performance after all.

The play is the highest point in Miss Brill's, to use Peter Thorpe's term, "hierarchy of unrealities," for a play is by definition an imitation of life and not a substitute for it. Inevitably Miss Brill must be brought back to reality, sharply revealing the emptiness
of her attempt to overcome her alienation. At the moment of her cruel awakening to the fact that all her participation on the stage of society is nothing but fantasy, her beloved fur piece is also an object of ridicule by the unthinking cruelty of the young couple. Miss Brill and the fur piece return to their boxes; and far from having learned anything from this experience about the fallibility of an unrealistic communication with society, she retreats deeper into her world of alienation. Her personification of the fur piece acquires a life-like ability to respond to her anguish. She hears "something crying," a phrase which can be applied to the fur piece as well as to Miss Brill herself. Mansfield here does not appear to suggest seriously that the fur actually cried, as Thorpe seems to imply; it is Miss Brill who thinks that the fur is responding to her emotions. She needs a substitute for society now more than ever and withdraws hopelessly into her fantasy world of alienation.

In "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," Mansfield presents two spinsters who have been denied social contact by a domineering father for so long that they are incapable of reaching beyond their limited world. She has written a finely perceptive story which takes place a week after the Colonel has died, revealing with each episode how dependent these two women were on their father and how timidly helpless they are now that they
must rely on each other to make decisions. It is this timidity and not grief over the loss of their father that burdens the two daughters, as Havighurst points out. They have been confined to taking care of their father, keeping out of his way, and seeing to it nothing disturbed him. Neither daughter has had any freedom, and without freedom the state of alienation cannot be circumvented. Even the death of their father has done little to free them, so warped has he forced their lives to become. Although they have been obedient daughters, they still have remaining, half-hidden within their deepest selves, a desire to get free from their confinement. They take imaginary flights of escape in time; but, as West and Stallman remark, these flights are always to the past. "The only possible value that anything can have for them now is that it may put them in mind of something that happened when the Colonel was alive." The full extent of their alienation from society is firmly established in the final scene. The music of the barrel organ is the first invitation to the daughters from life outside their house. It is an intrusion; and the daughters' immediate reaction is to silence it. The sound does not belong in their isolated world. Josephine and Constance then remember that their father was the one who had always prohibited the sound of music from the outside world; and since he was no longer there,
they could allow the grinder to play its "round, bright, bubbling notes." Tuneful words suggest themselves to the girls expressing their subconscious realization that they have been freed from their father's dictatorship, and the music gaily accompanies their realization that their father is dead.

The sunlight makes its appearance for the first time in the story. Arthur Nelson has noted that the sunlight is "an extremely effective symbol of their first uncertain glimmer of hope; the way it has to press, thieve its way in makes the darkness, of which we had been only half aware, seem suddenly tangible, oppressive." The light is also an intruder, drifting over Josephine's memories of the past and how things might have been different. She sees and hears some sparrows on the window ledge and feels something inside her that longs to fly out of a prison into the living world from which she has been alienated so long; but that something is too weak. Constance dreams in front of the Buddha of things past and how they could be different in the future. The Buddha represents for Constance a symbol of exotic freedom, and she longs for a release from her tunnel of unreality, of estrangement from life. Both the Buddha and the sunlight arouse hope in the two daughters of an escape from their solitary confinement from society. But Constance turns from the Buddha and Josephine watches a cloud hide her sunlight, and the hope of escape fades. Their very natures have
been so shaped and warped that they no longer have the ability, although tragically they still have the desire, to break through their alienation out into the social world of free individuals.

"The Doll's House" is a story of the social alienation existing among children and of the manner in which social barriers are arbitrarily set by adults. The Burnell children are given an elaborate doll house with separated rooms, windows, beds and bedcovers, and a little lamp that, for Kezia at least, seems more real than any of the other furnishings and just the right size for the house. Nothing else fits the house quite like the lamp. The girls boastfully spread the news at school and gradually invite all the girls to come home to see it—-all the girls except the Kelveys, who have been socially ostracized because of their background and social status. They are the children of a washerwoman and a "gaolbird," and the other children have been taught by their parents to stay away from them. For the most part, Lil and Our Else Kelvey are ignored; when they are not ignored, they are the subject of cruel teasing from the other girls. They are pitifully alienated through no other reason than their social status.

The afternoon of the day they are severely ridiculed, Kezia invites them into her yard to see the doll house. They barely get a glimpse of the inside before Kezia's Aunt Beryl rushes out and shoos them off,
to their chagrin. But not before Our Else sees the lamp. The little lamp seems to represent the more important values in life: it signifies what is real and perfect, just right in its place. The fact that both Kezia, the rich little girl, and Our Else, the poverty-stricken little girl, pick the lamp out as the most important item in the doll house represents a commentary on the false social barriers that have separated the girls. Materially they are not equals, but perceptively they are both capable of distinguishing the perfect and the real from that which is out of proportion. On the plateau of spiritual perception they have a common ground of kinship that transcends the social barriers. The two girls are still, of course, socially separated; but they have, nevertheless, a common sensitive insight which identifies each with the other.

**Individual Alienation**

One group of Mansfield's stories deals not with the alienation from anything or anybody but rather with the estrangement itself, the state of loneliness in which the individual finds himself facing an unfriendly world alone. One of Mansfield's earliest stories, "The Child-Who-Was-Tired," creates such an isolated individual. The story concerns a child without love, completely separated from a normal, carefree childhood because, through no fault of her own, she was free-born and saved from death at her mother's hands only to end up as a
servant to cruel masters. She is expected to do all the housework, get three uncontrollable children off to school, and keep a crying baby quiet. The responsibility is too much for one so young, and she dreams of walking down a white road with tall black trees that leads to nowhere with nobody else on it, in short, a quiet, peaceful road without any responsibilities, with no one to please. She momentarily trades this dream for a vision of playing all day in the meadow and eating a meal of real meat and beer. But such a playful life is too much to dream for; simply a road devoid of hard work and noise would be enough for the child. It is inevitable with the happenings of the day, the news that another baby is on its way, and the arrival of company that night, that the child should be driven to silence the baby forever. Alienation, the absence of someone sympathetic to her problems, and the hardships imposed by an unfriendly world force her to the desperate act of smothering the baby. She feels no regret or guilt, only relief, and falls asleep dreaming of the white road again.

Perhaps it should be pointed out here that Mansfield's "The Child-Who-Was-Tired" is unmistakably similar to Chekhov's "Sleepyhead," as are "Marriage à la Mode" similar to "Not Wanted," "Taking the Veil" similar to "The Looking Glass," and "The Fly" similar to "Small Fry." Mansfield has been accused often of
having plagiarized Chekhov's stories, and just as often she has been defended. The best defense in Mansfield's interest was written by Ronald Sutherland, who said that Mansfield borrowed thematic idea and plot but "so far as style is concerned, there can be no question of influence. We might add that in his or her own way, each author achieved stylistic excellence on occasion. . . ." There can be no denying that Mansfield was not only acquainted with Chekhov's works; she held them in high esteem and considered Chekhov her master. Although she apparently borrowed themes and plots from Chekhov, a practice not uncommon in literature, Mansfield's treatment of these plots was different from Chekhov's. Alfred Ward described the difference in the relation of the author to the story:

All that Katherine Mansfield seems to do is to make her plummet out of some human situation and then allow it to drop. Chekhov, on the contrary, is always obviously working at the lantern, for it would cease to project its picture if he were separated from it.

Other stylistic differences involve descriptions of natural scenery, Mansfield's shift of point-of-view from character to character compared to Chekhov's one-character focus, and responsibility of character for his situation. Most scholars now agree that the charge of plagiarism cannot be applied to Mansfield. Both she and Chekhov seemed to have been attracted by similar themes, especially to the theme of alienation.
If she patterned some plots after Chekhov's works, she altered them significantly so as to claim, in honesty, originality in her stories.

Ada Moss, in "Pictures," is a lonely individual without friends. She is a one-time singer and actress who is jobless, penniless, and about to be evicted from her apartment. She has no one to turn to and no one to help her; she suffers from alienation in a world that refuses to help her. Because she must spend all her time with material and financial concerns hunting for a job and a place to spend the night, she is forced into an artificial relationship with a man (she becomes a prostitute) rather than being able to establish a real communion in friendship with someone who could help her.

"The Little Governess" is another story of a woman alone facing an unsympathetic world. The governess is a young woman travelling for the first time in order to reach Germany and a new position she has recently accepted. She is unusually sensitive to her surroundings since this is her first travelling experience and since, being alone, she has more time to notice things and sounds around her. Mansfield creates the governess' impressions of the night sounds on the train which support her feeling of estrangement from the world about her, and the reader senses that her nerves are on edge:
Little sounds made themselves heard; steps in the corridor, doors opening and shutting--a murmur of voices--whistling . . . . Then the window was pricked with long needles of rain.

In the daylight the estrangement is not so pronounced. She sees the houses of a town "fast asleep behind their green eyelids, and guarded by the poplar trees that quivered in the blue air as if on tiptoe, listening."

It is interesting to note that this scene appears secure from danger, guarded by alert sentinels, as though the governess longs for such security and protection from loneliness.

An old gentleman is put in her compartment and he slowly wins her trust. Eventually she finds herself telling him all about herself and spending the day with him in Munich. She thinks of him affectionately as a grandfather, but this relationship is shattered when he forces his attentions on her. She escapes from him but misses her appointment with her employer, who apparently leaves her there in Munich after receiving an unfavorable impression of her from the waiter and manager that she has been picked up by a stranger. She is alone in a strange country without friends or even assistance, completely isolated and estranged. She is actually left in an atmosphere of hostility, with the waiter triumphing over the fact that he has been the one to inform her that she is alone and has probably lost her position. Mansfield does not dwell on the
escapes possible to the governess out of her dilemma nor does the question of what will happen to the governess now enter into the story. "The Little Governess" is concerned only with the establishment of the woman's complete alienation.

Early in her career, Mansfield wrote three "murder" stories. The first of these, "The Woman at the Store," was written at the instigation of J. Middleton Murry, who was editor of Rhythm before he had formally met Mansfield. Although the revelation of the murder of her husband by the woman at the store is the main stream of the story, the alienation and loneliness of the woman plays a definitely important part in driving her to her desperate act. Three travellers, two men and a woman, are forced to stop overnight at a lonely store out in the New Zealand brush country. They are met by an ugly, stringy woman with front teeth knocked out and red pulpy hands. Slowly her life at the store is revealed to the three travellers. Only six years earlier she had been gay and pretty; but after her marriage, she had been taken to the store to live. Four miscarriages and one unhealthy child had ruined her beauty, and loneliness had broken her spirit. At first the store had been on a coach trail and visitors came often. When the coach service stopped, the isolation of the country wrapped around the store and was broken only by an occasional visit of a Maori or sundowner.
To escape the loneliness, the husband went away for weeks and months at a time, leaving his wife behind. The woman at the store says to her three visitors, "The trouble with me is he left me too much alone." Driven to desperation by the anguish of her loneliness and by her anger at her husband for leaving her, the woman killed and buried him. The act of murder, added to the now permanent state of loneliness, causes the woman to become insane, pitifully and desperately reaching out for sympathy and one night of loving in order to ease the anguish of her alienation and her guilt.

"Ole Underwood" is another story of madness caused by a murder. The story is little more than a character sketch of a man who has served a prison term for killing his unfaithful wife thirty years before. The people around him notice him as he walks down the street, a man talks about him as he sits in a bar, the Chinamen run him away from their shop; but no one approaches him or talks to him directly. He is a quiet, lonely figure, separated from the world by his madness, boiling under the surface with a fierce violence that others fail to see. Overhearing a conversation about his wife's unfaithfulness and rejection of his love, Ole Underwood is driven to re-enact his crime of murder, convinced in his madness that he is thirty years younger and just discovering that his wife has betrayed and rejected his love. Ole Undrewood is alienated from the normal human
world, outside society, imprisoned in his inner cell of isolating insanity.

The third murder story by Mansfield, "Millie," tells of a woman left alone by the men on the farm while they search the countryside for a young boy who is thought to have killed one of their neighbors. In the heat of the day and in a lonely depression, Millie hears a noise and discovers the wounded boy behind a woodpile in her yard. She feeds him and tells him how to escape on one of her horses that night after the men have gone to sleep. When he tries to leave, the men are awakened by their dog. Millie at first tries to stop her husband; but in the excitement of the pursuit, she forgets her sympathetic reactions of the afternoon and shouts excitedly for them to shoot him. The story is a cynical commentary on the shallowness of kindness in human beings. The boy is alienated and needs help, which he finds for a moment in Millie. Although Millie does not actually do anything to aid in his capture, she turns upon him cruelly by encouraging the men to kill him. Face to face with the boy, she instinctively reacts in kindness to his helplessness and estrangement; in the mob excitement, he becomes an object of pursuit to be captured or shot down. He is no longer to Millie a lonely individual in need, struggling against an antagonistic and unfriendly world.
Later in her career, about 1919, Mansfield wrote another story about the alienation of an individual but in such a manner as to reveal the shallowness of the loneliness and purposely alienate the sympathy of the reader. The woman named Monica in "Revelations" is a self-centered, overly sensitive woman who thinks that everyone around her should do his best not to discomfort her or make noises in the morning that will upset her "delicate" nerves. She furiously breaks a dinner engagement with Ralph because he telephoned before eleven o'clock, and woke her up. To settle her nerves, she dashes off to her hairdresser, expecting gaiety and delight in seeing the man. She is coolly greeted by the receptionist and kept waiting by "the gay young George," who turns out to be morbidly quiet. The noise of the morning, the lack of understanding on Ralph's part, and the disappointment of her experience with the hairdresser play on Monica's self pity; and in despair she cries to herself:

Oh, how terrifying Life was, thought Monica. How dreadful. It is the loneliness which is so appalling. We whirl along like leaves, and nobody knows—nobody cares where we fall, in what black river we float away. The tugging feeling seemed to rise into her throat. It ached, ached; she longed to cry.\(^\text{81}\)

In a moment of revelation, when Monica discovers the mournful expression of her hairdresser is a result of the death of his little girl, Monica rushes out of the
shop and heads for her dinner engagement. To make up for her shallow self-concern in the face of another's real grief, she momentarily decides to send some flowers to the funeral. The revelation of her self-centeredness does not change her character immediately or permanently, however, for her brief intentions of kindness quickly disappear. Mansfield has created in the character of Monica a person in self-imposed alienation and loneliness, implying that alienation is overcome and loneliness conquered only by an active, outgoing concern for other individual's problems and not by an engrossing self-centeredness. Monica's desperate expression of loneliness is a result of her own actions forcing people around her away from her, alienating them. The lonely individual must first take steps to break through his own alienation by reaching someone else. He cannot overcome alienation by wallowing in self-pity over his own loneliness.

Total alienation from the world, isolation from the brotherhood of men and from a communication with nature, and awareness of this totality can be an agonizing experience for the individual. Such an experience is the theme of the "Life of Ma Parker," the story of a charwoman who has recently buried her grandson. Her life has been a series of tragedies and misfortunes: cruel masters, deaths of her children, the death of her husband, mixed with disappointments.
over her surviving children. The only misfortune that is real in the story, however, is the death of the grandson, since he is the only one the reader sees talking to and loving Ma Parker. When the story opens, Ma Parker has experienced the loss of the last person with whom she could communicate in love; and she is totally isolated from the world, perhaps permanently, since no indication of hope is given that it will be otherwise. Although she has an encounter with another individual, the literary gentleman whose apartment she cleans once a week, and although he naturally sympathizes with her because he has been conditioned to do so by the modes of society, he hopelessly fails to comprehend the nature of her tragedy and, therefore, is incapable of reaching her in order to alleviate the anguish of her alienation. Merfyn Turner described Ma Parker's state of alienation when he said, "But for those who are denied the solace of a friendly word or smile, loneliness becomes something akin to death, which is the greatest loneliness of all."83 Even nature offers no consolation; the wind is icy cold and it begins to rain. In the final scene on the street, Ma Parker in confusion wants desperately for someone to know and care about her sorrow. Yet she also, and just as desperately, wants to escape to a place where no one will bother or notice her so that she can be alone to cry. The solitude she wishes to escape to is not,
however, anything like the alienation that has taken over her soul. There is nowhere to go and no one to help; the story of Ma Parker ends with this establishment of her total alienation.

How fitting it is that Mansfield's last completed story should be devoted entirely to the theme of the lonely alienation of an individual. The exquisite short story titled "The Canary" is a dramatic monologue of a lonely old woman who has searched for companionship in flowers, in the evening star, and found it in a canary that she loved and felt responded to her loneliness. The story begins with the disclosure that the canary is no longer with the old lady; all that remains is a nail beside the door on which the cage hung and the memories of the old lady. She describes affectionately the canary's singing, the completeness and perfection of each song of which she felt she understood every note. Expressing Mansfield's only solution to alienation, the old lady says, "I loved him. How I loved him! Perhaps it does not matter so much what it is one loves in this world. But love something one must." She then recounts what her life had been before she found the canary. She had a garden with flowers that responded wonderfully but did not sympathize. In her loneliness she felt the evening star shone for her alone, but none of these things fulfilled the longing in her life for something to love and respond.
to her loving. When she bought the canary from the Chinaman, she explains, the bird was not simply a pet. They "shared each other's lives." Her description of taking care of the bird, cleaning his cage and watching him take a bath, tenderly reveals her fondness for the canary, treating him as though he were a child, almost human, with a personality of his own. The canary afforded her not only pleasure from his singing and morning cleaning; he also provided the woman with companionship: "Company, you see—that was what he was. Perfect company. If you have lived alone you will realize how precious that is." The only human beings she has any contact with are three young men who apparently room and board at her house, but they are young and unable to understand the loneliness of an old lady.

She defends the canary against remarks by others who say birds are cold and unaffectionate. She honestly and sincerely believes not only that the canary was aware of her loneliness and alienation, but also that on a night when she was overcome by the anxiety of solitude the canary responded to her. One winter night, she explains, she woke up from a "dreadfully cruel" dream and went to the kitchen for a glass of water. The darkness seemed to stare in spyingly at her through the window, and she was overcome by the unbearable loneliness of having no one to tell about the dreadful dream or
protect her from the dark. Out of the pit of her alienation, she heard the soft chirping noise of her canary, comforting her.

Her canary is now dead, but she still clings to her memories of him. In moving simplicity, the old lady ends her story by revealing her understanding of the fundamental loneliness and alienation in all creatures of life:

All the same, without being morbid, and giving way to--to memories and so on, I must confess that there does seem to me something sad in life. It is hard to say what it is. I don't mean the sorrow that we all know, like illness and poverty and death. No, it is something different. It is there, deep down, deep down, part of one, like one's breathing. However hard I work and tire myself I have only to stop to know it is there, waiting. I often wonder if everybody feels the same. One can never know. But isn't it extraordinary that under his sweet, joyful little singing it was just this sadness--ah, what is it?--that I heard?86

This sadness in her life, this ever-present, undying loneliness, which she could not be certain was experienced by other human beings, she was convinced was experienced and understood by her canary. Perhaps the old lady read into the singing of the canary a sad understanding of loneliness and alienation. It is not important whether or not the understanding was actually there. The important thing is that the old lady experienced the depths of unbearable loneliness and believed she had discovered something she loved communicating to her across the void of her alienation.
Absolute Alienation

Absolute alienation is death. It is the ultimate condition in which the individual is completely and finally separated from any contact, communication or communion with any other human being. A Russian philosopher, Nikolai Berdiaev, has written:

To die is to experience absolute solitude, to sever all connections with the world. Death implies the disruption of a whole sphere of Being, the termination of all relationships and contacts— in a word, complete isolation. If the ultimate mystery of death could be shared, if it could still comprehend a relationship with the Other Self and with others, we would not call that state death; for death is the severance of all relationship, the end of all communion, the attainment of absolute solitude. Death does effectively put an end to man's intercourse with the objective world.

With man's natural desire to overcome alienation and with his natural instinct toward communion, it is understandable that one of man's greatest fears is death since it means the ultimate establishment of all that is against his nature. The problem of death is a problem of the living, however, not the dead. The living individual must face the meaning of absolute alienation as applied to his own self and come to some reconciliation, some acceptance of this meaning. For the agnostic Mansfield, who could not believe in the Christian concept of life after death, the reconciliation with ultimate alienation involved the fulfillment of the self in this life. For this reason, death in her stories is always
a portrayal of its effect on those who are still living; none of her main characters suffer the immediacy of death nor experience the final and complete alienation.

Four completed stories in particular face the problem of death; they are "This Flower," "The Wrong House," "The Fly," and "The Garden Party." There are also two story fragments, "Such a Sweet Old Lady" and "Six Years After," which Mansfield intended apparently to develop into full length expressions of the emotions caused by thoughts of ultimate alienation. All these stories were written in 1919 or later, in the mature and active phase of her literary career and at a time when her disease had taken a firm enough hold to threaten the possibility of her own death.

The title of "This Flower" is taken from a Shakespearean quotation which was to appear on her grave two years after the story was written: "But I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle danger, we pluck this flower, safety." The woman in the story has been told, immediately before the story begins, by a seedy, disgusting, strange doctor that she is facing death. The story begins with her immediate emotions at the thought of death:

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

Figuratively she experiences what it is like to die, to
lose one's identity and return to nonentity as part of
the life principle. A scene follows in which the
doctor, after privately being requested to remain silent
about the danger, tells her lover she merely needs a
rest. After the doctor has left, her lover is over¬
whelmingly relieved that nothing more serious has been
discovered. The flower of their love remains untouched
by the danger of death.

Shortly after finishing "This Flower," Mansfield
wrote a story of an unexpected visit of Death and called
it "The Wrong House." An old woman, alone in a quiet
house, is knitting a vest, not for someone dear to her,
but for some "repulsive little black objects with bellies
shaped like lemons" for a ladies' church group. The
loneliness of the house is echoed by the emptiness of
the street as she looks out:

It was a bitter autumn day; the wind ran
in the street like a thin dog; the houses
opposite looked as though they had been
cut out with a pair of ugly steel scissors
and pasted on to the grey paper sky.
There was not a soul to be seen.®®
The desolate, grey unreality plus the settling of the "heavy, powdery dusk" establishes an eerie, unrealistic, ghost-like mood. Moving through this atmosphere, the old lady suddenly sees a funeral procession heading down her street. Anxiously she looks at the other houses to discover which house has the blinds drawn, indicating a death in the household. To her shock and amazement, the funeral carriage stops in front of her house. Although she is aware immediately they have made a mistake, she cannot still the movement of her heart nor ward off the blows of fear as she tries to reach the door to tell the coachman of his mistake. All she can stammer out is "The wrong house." They leave but the fear of death remains. "It was as if she had fallen into a cave whose walls were darkness," the dark prison of the understanding of ultimate alienation. Through this brief incident, the old woman is brought face to face with the awareness of the dark, cave-like alienation of death. Her maid returns from shopping, and the old lady manages to pull herself far enough out of her deep, inward shock to attempt to appear as though nothing had happened. Her first order is to have the lamp brought in, a light to dispel the darkness of the revelation of ultimate alienation. The maid brings in the lamp, picks up the knitting which has fallen unnoticed to the floor, and, ironically, pulls down the blinds before going back to her kitchen.
Although "The Fly" is not limited to the theme of death, death is one of the essential elements in the story. Mansfield creates a businessman who has experienced the death of an only son, but who has not faced the meaning of this death nor come to any meaningful terms with it and, therefore, has not adjusted his life to include the fact that his son is no longer alive. Clinton Oleson writes that the story "should be read as the depiction of the Boss's escape from facing the reality of death and the sterility of his own existence." The Boss is a successful businessman living in surface security, appearing to the world and to Woodifield to lead a meaningful, fulfilled life. Even though the Boss says that his efforts to build up a successful business had been solely for the purpose of handing it over to his son, the reader (as Oleson observes) has already seen that the business did not fall apart when the son died. The life of the Boss has not been significantly altered, judging from the newly decorated office. "Refusing to think of his son as dead, he had not been forced either to give up the rat race or invent a new justification for it." Mansfield gives other signs that the Boss has never faced the meaning of death—such as his never thinking "of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep for ever;" the failure to visit the grave in order to keep this image intact; the nursing
of grief more to show he could cry harder and longer than anyone else than to express a genuine understanding of the loss; and the contrast with Woodifield. Woodifield, who had suffered a stroke and been forced into retirement, has also lost a son and should have been the one less capable of accepting death. However, he not only has come to terms with his own son's death, he apparently is better equipped to face his own impending death.

The boy died and was buried in a foreign country; and although the Boss will never see him again, he did not have to experience the death at close range. The episode with the fly is different. The fly struggles to escape death; and each time he succeeds, the Boss is genuinely relieved, thus supporting his delusion that death is not inevitable in all instances. The fly dies, however; and, as both Oleson and Pauline Bell agree, the "grinding feeling of wretchedness" is a result of the Boss's having to face the truth of the existence and inevitability of death. The point of the story is not so much the death of the fly but, as Thomas Assad believes, "the meaning of the fright caused by the thought suggested by the struggle and final surrender of the fly." The idea Mansfield seems to be emphasizing is the meaninglessness of the struggle for life when death is inevitable; or more probably the idea should be modified to include the belief in the meaninglessness of death when the individual has led an empty,
unsatisfying life such as the Boss has lived. The experience with death does little to correct the shallowness of his life, however, since he retreats from the fact of death. In fear he removes all evidence of the struggle in order to escape from the recognition of death. He returns instead to the meaningless existence of his business life. In this way, he is able to escape from an awareness of the eternal alienation that now exists between himself and his son and from an acknowledgment that he must inevitably face this absolute alienation himself.

A more meaningful reaction to death, and one that Mansfield exemplified in her own life in the face of death, is presented in "The Garden Party." This story is that of a young girl's encounter with death and the discovery she makes from this maturing experience. Mansfield explains in one of her letters what she tried to accomplish:

And yes, that is what I tried to convey in "The Garden Party." The diversity of life and how we try to fit in everything, Death included. That is bewildering for a person of Laura's age. She feels things ought to happen differently. First one and then another. But life isn't like that. We haven't the ordering of it. Laura says, "But all these things must not happen at once." And Life answers, "Why not? How are they divided from each other?" And they do all happen, it is inevitable, and it seems to me there is beauty in that inevitability.94

Laura's first reaction to the news of death is that all the party preparations must be stopped and the party
ill canceled. To stop the activities of life simply because there is death is not a mature reaction, the story seems to say. Stopping normal activity is impractical in a wider sense than merely the expense of one gay party. The fact of death should not decrease the efforts in life; in view of the inevitability of death, the individual should be more aware of the preciousness and importance of life, and realize that life must go on. Life should be more meaningful in the face of death. Laura, because of her age and because she still exists in her mother's world which denies death, and, as Kleine believes, "substitutes for life a smoothly-tailored Good Life," is not aware of the mature reaction the individual should make to death. Not until she is cajoled into going on with the party, not until she realizes she can enjoy herself in spite of what has happened, not until she is forced to visit the house of the dead does she experience a fuller, more mature comprehension of death. The vision of the dead man is not so terrifying as she had expected death to be but beautiful and peaceful instead. Kleine writes, "the childlike freshness and spontaneity of Laura's responses, despite their limitations, have enabled her to sense, albeit vaguely, the manifold opportunities of existence." In the face of death and in the view of the inevitable alienation death signifies, Laura understands that life and death are inseparable partners.
Two fragments related to the fear of ultimate alienation in death bear mentioning. "Such a Sweet Old Lady" is a picture of an old woman waking early in the morning, thinking about the watch which belonged to her husband, now twenty years dead, and also thinking about her foreign hotel room in which she finds herself. Apparently she is bedridden and nearing death since she wakes with a start, trying to remember if she is in the same place she was when she went to sleep, happy momentarily that she is safe and "still there." The fragment is too brief to furnish much information about the old woman except that she is unhappy at being in a foreign land and afraid of dying in her sleep.

A longer fragment titled "Six Years After" develops more fully the loneliness of death. A man and his wife start out on a sea voyage. Because he wants to sit out in the fresh air, although it is cold, she sacrifices the warmth and comfort of the cabin to sit on the deck. In the damp chill and the gentle pitching motion of the ship, she watches some listless gulls:

They looked cold and lonely. How lonely it will be when we have passed by, she thought. There will be nothing but the waves and those birds and rain falling.97

The loneliness of the vision wraps around her and the next time she looks, the scene has changed; a part of her and her memories have become a part of the lonely gulls and rain:
Lonely birds, water lifting, white pale sky--how were they changed?

And it seemed to her there was a presence far out there, between the sky and the water; someone very desolate and longing watched them pass and cried as if to stop them--but cried to her alone.98

She thinks her son calls out to her not to forget him, as though the memory of him in the mind and heart of someone living is all that is left alive of him now. She remembers other times when he had called out in his sleep and she had come to his side to comfort him. But she cannot comfort the dream in death:

But the dark stairs have no ending, and the worst dream of all--the one that is always the same--goes for ever and ever uncomforted.

This anguish! How is it to be borne? Still, it is not the idea of her suffering which is unbearable--it is his. Can one do nothing for the dead? And for a long time the answer had been--Nothing!99

She is totally and absolutely alienated from her son by his death. But his memories come back to haunt her, memories of his calling her to his side to dispel his fears and anguish. She is obviously considering coming to his side now as she convinces herself that he is suffering more than ever from loneliness and alienation. "There is nothing to be gained by waiting," she thinks to herself. Although Mansfield did not finish the story, she apparently intended to imply that the mother is contemplating suicide, so strong is her awareness of her son's alienation.
The major categories of alienation which Mansfield has written about in her short stories include the problem of alienation between friends; between members in the family unit; between the individual and society; the total alienation of the individual separated and estranged within an unfriendly world; and the ultimate alienation of death. Her earlier works exhibit a longing for privacy and solitude, a desire to be separated from the society of people because of a disillusioning revelation of the corruption in human society. Her later stories, however, reveal more and more the reality of the suffering of alienation, and the need of man to belong to something or someone, to communicate to his fellow beings, and to establish a communion in love with someone close to him so as to diminish the agony of his estrangement and alienation.
CHAPTER THREE

WISDOM OF ALIENATION

Out of the suffering and the agony of alienation of her life, Mansfield developed her vision of life. Life was to her one full of separation and loneliness, and the different aspects of alienation in a world indifferent to suffering became one of the most important messages in her works. She developed three important theories about the meaning of life, all three influenced by her alienation; they are: the defeat of the personal, the oneness of all life, and the doctrine of what Murry termed "the Kingdom of Love."

Her unhappiness in life due to her illness and her enforced alienation led her to become convinced that the impurities of her life were preventing her from expressing the fullest truth. By impurities, Mansfield appears to refer, not to the impurities of the soul often labeled in a Christian context as sin, but to the disunity caused by self-alienation. This expression of truth to her vision of life became all engrossing in later life, and she exacted of herself a unified self, completely pure, completely sincere and
honest through which the truth could shine "crystal clear." In despair she would degrade and scold herself for being so impure and disunified. Her disease, as she came to believe, was only a symptom of a greater disease within her very soul, the disunity of her whole self. She called her philosophy, or rather her strict disciplining drive to purify herself, the "defeat of the personal." In February, 1922, in her Journal she wrote of the disunity that still plagued her life and her work:

To do anything, to be anything, one must gather oneself together and 'one's faith make stronger.' Nothing of any worth can come from a disunited being. It's only by accident that I write anything worth a rush, and then it's only skimming the top--no more.100

The defeat of the personal, selfish and impure elements in her life became her one important goal in life.

Connected with this exorcism of the impurities in her life was the growing recognition of the oneness of all life, and she apparently believed that the eradication of these impurities was the first step toward this oneness, a condition of inward unity not disrupted by alienation within the self and also of outward unity not disrupted by a break or alienation outside the self. Her growing sensitiveness to this awareness of unity is revealed in a letter she wrote to Murry in 1920, saying that tuberculosis gave one the "air of being a touch more vividly alive than other
people—the gleam—the faint glitter on the plant that the frost has laid a finger on." Mansfield became more conscious, as her disease progressed, of life in all objects around her; and she developed an extra sensitive love of life. Her awareness of life grew to the point of recognition of the oneness of the living force within her with life apart from her physical being. She wrote on October 17, 1920:

I was looking at some leaves only yester-day—idly looking—and suddenly I became conscious of them—of the amazing 'freedom' in each curve—but not as something outside oneself, but as part of one—as though like a magician I could put forth my hand and shake a green branch into my fingers from . . .? And I felt as though one received—accepted—absorbed the beauty of the leaves even into one's physical being.¹⁰¹

The next day again she felt the brotherhood of life that was calling to her as though she were soon to give up her personal, individual life and merge with the more comprehensive Life Force:

I have felt very often lately as though the silence had some meaning beyond these signs, these imitations. Isn't it possible that if one yielded there is a whole world into which one is received? It is so near and yet I am conscious that I hold back from giving myself up to it. What is this something mysterious that waits—that beckons?¹⁰²

Expressions of this giving way to the mysterious call into a new world or rather into the depths of Life can be found in her stories as early as 1915 in "Spring Pictures" where she wrote about a woman who had been rejected by her lover and commits suicide:
Again her arms fly up—she runs back—again she is blotted against the tall tree. Squares of gold light show in the houses; the street lamps gleam through the new leaves; yellow fans of light follow the dancing boots. For a moment she is a blur against the tree, white, grey and black, melting into the stones and the shadows. And then she is gone.103

This melting back into Life, this return to the Oneness of the universe is again mentioned in "This Flower," which reveals the awareness of the main character of the unity of all life and what it would be like to die and become a part of this unity. Mansfield could not believe in a benevolent God, Christian salvation, and personal immortality. She was aware, however, of the spirit within her, the essence of her self that longed for Beauty; and it is this spirit to which she cried for purification. Only with an integrated, unified, nonalienated and purified spirit could she achieve oneness and salvation. Oneness seemed to be for her the opposite condition of self-alienation, while salvation meant the purification of the soul through which Truth and Beauty could shine, and death meant the final merging with the One Life of the universe.

The fullest expression of this giving way to the mysterious call into a new world is found in her unfinished story, "A Married Man's Story," which describes an experience in which the person actually accepts, while still alive, the brotherhood of the life in the world around him (already quoted above, p. 79). Although the
married man rejects the brotherhood of man and thus the total unity of the life force in the universe, the story does reveal the evolution of Mansfield's thought to the acceptance of the idea that death was not a necessary demand in order to enter into the Unity of Life. She appears to have come to believe that this unity with life in all creatures and all living things could be obtained in this life. She was aware, however, of the nearness of her own death and of the closeness of the final merging with the brotherhood of all life when she wrote to Murry in November, 1920:

Kissing is a queer thing. I was standing under a tree just now—a tree that is shedding exquisite golden yellow leaves all over my garden path. And suddenly one leaf made the most ethereal advances to me and in another moment we were kissing each other.

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

If I live much longer, I shall become a bush of daphne, or you'll find no one to welcome you but a jasmine.

Now believing that oneness could be obtained in life, and also believing the defeat of the personal as the medium through which oneness and unity could be obtained, Mansfield accepted Love as the means of expression of this purification and unity. She was convinced that love could overcome alienation and the imprisonment of loneliness, and that it was the only state in which the soul could express in purity and simplicity the Truth in life. Her exaltation of the power of Love as an impersonal as well as a personal
force came slowly and not until late in life after she had written much of her works on the failure of love between human beings. Hesitantly she expressed in November, 1919, only three years before her death, her belief that Love had usurped her belief in a personal God:

No, there's no God. . . . This morning I wanted to say 'God keep you!' or 'Heaven guard us!' Then I thought of The Gods, but they are marble statues with broken noses. Perhaps Love can do everything. 'Lo! I have made of love all my religion!' 105

"Perhaps" she says Love has the power to do everything, to make things right in the world, to break down the barriers of alienation. She came to believe that the lack of love was the cause of much unhappiness in the world. Up until now the message in her works seemed to express the idea that love between human beings was bound to be converted into alienation. She now believed that love between and among human beings was possible; but it was not a reality. The failure of love was not the cause of unhappiness and alienation in the world, but rather the failure of human beings, who had the capability of loving, to achieve love not only for friends and those close to them but also for everyone and everything that breathed and lived. In March, 1920, she wrote:

I do feel so deeply the need for dignity in this present life. It's the only protest one can make--to be dignified
and sincere and to—somehow keep love of human beings in one's heart. Really, it's no wonder people are so unhappy. 106

Finally in October of 1920, she faced fully the power of Love to dispel fear, suffering, and loneliness:

We resist, we are terribly frightened. The little boat enters the dark fearful gulf and our only cry is to escape—'put me on land again.' But it's useless. Nobody listens. The shadowy figure rows on. One ought to sit still and uncover one's eyes.

I believe the greatest failing of all is to be frightened. Perfect Love casteth out Fear. When I look back on my life all my mistakes have been because I was afraid. . . . Was that why I had to look on death? Would nothing less cure me? You know, one can't help wondering sometimes. . . . No, not a personal God or any such nonsense. Much more likely—the soul's desperate choice. . . . 107

In fear and suffering she had been afraid; and this fear had kept her from being true to her vision of life, had caused her to make mistakes and fail to get rid of the impurities in her self. She did not believe that any God gave her her disease and forced her to face death. Rather the spirit or the essence of life within her, her soul, in desperation because she would not listen to it, forced her to look on death and its meaning so that she could understand the meaning and power of Love to dispel her fears.

Realizing the power of Love, she longed to enter into the "Kingdom of Love," to pass beyond a personal love into a greater one, "to lose oneself more utterly,
to love more deeply, to feel oneself part of life,—not separate." In order to dispel the alienation and disunity of her life, to expel the impurities of her soul and to enter into a perfect love that could only be experienced by a purified self united with the Oneness of Life, Katherine Mansfield entered the Gurdjieff Institute. She explained to Murry on January 9, 1923, when he came to visit her that she had worked herself free of the disentanglement of the alienation in their love and of her fear of death. She was convinced that she was a free, purified being, and could now love in truth and sincerity the whole world. She no longer felt a disunity of spirit or a loss of identity in fear and suffering; she had overcome her fears and was radiantly secure in love. Hours later, she was dead. Murry said of Katherine's stay at the Gurdjieff Institute:

But I am persuaded of this: Katherine made of it [The Institute] an instrument of that process of self-annihilation which is necessary to the spiritual rebirth, whereby we enter the Kingdom of Love. I am certain that she achieved her purpose. . . .108

The self-alienation within her spirit and the conviction that she had lost the dimension of depth in her existence, that she required a faith in something in order to gain unity, forced Mansfield into the Institute. According to her statements to Murry, she had achieved this faith and unity and had developed an all-encompassing love
for every living thing. Unfortunately, she died only hours after she related her triumph over self-alienation to Murry and, therefore, left nothing written exemplifying her new vision of life. For this reason, it is difficult to analyze her new and final faith, her belief in the power of love, and the form of expression it would have taken in her works and life. Her life had been a progression of struggle from disunity and alienation toward self-unification and oneness with all life. In self-unification, she began to make plans to write again, this time not on the alienation in which man found himself but on the potentialities of man to achieve oneness and unification, to dispel his loneliness, and enter the Kingdom of Love, a condition in which he would experience love for all creatures of life, a condition overcoming completely the anxieties of alienation.
NOTES


3Braunschweig, p. 504.

4Braunschweig, p. 504.


9Fromm, p. 70.


12Fromm, pp. 82-83.


18 Murry, p. 486.


20 Mansfield's Letters to Murry, 1913-1922, p. 566.

21 Mansfield's Letters to Murry, 1913-1922, p. 597.


24 Garlington, pp. 609-10.


26 Garlington, p. 610.


28 Garlington, p. 609.


Short Stories, p. 300.

Short Stories, p. 316.

Short Stories, p. 362.

Short Stories, p. 355.

Short Stories, pp. 255-6.

Short Stories, p. 297.

Short Stories, p. 299.

Short Stories, p. 226.

Short Stories, p. 238.

Short Stories, p. 232.

Short Stories, p. 231.

Short Stories, p. 240.


Kleine, p. 30.

Kleine, p. 25.


51 Chester Eisinger, "Mansfield's 'Bliss',
Explicator, VII (1949), Item 48.

52 Eisinger, Item 48.
53 Eisinger, Item 48.
54 Freeman, p. 306.
55 Short Stories, pp. 306-7.
56 Short Stories, p. 392.
57 Short Stories, pp. 435-6.
58 Freeman, p. 306.
60 Short Stories, p. 611.
61 Short Stories, p. 613.
62 Short Stories, pp. 617-8.
64 Short Stories, p. 662.
65 Kessel, p. 140.
67 Short Stories, p. 545.
68 Short Stories, p. 550.
69 Peter Thorpe, "Teaching 'Miss Brill'," College English, XXIII (1962), 661.
71 Thorpe, p. 662.
72 Short Stories, p. 552.
73. Thorpe, p. 661.


78. Sutherland, p. 73.


80. Short Stories, p. 207.

81. Short Stories, p. 430.

82. For convenience in this thesis, the term "total alienation" is used when referring to separation in life of the main character from all communication with other human beings and from any consolation from a communication with life in nature or with a higher being. While there is still life in the main character, however, there is still the possibility of alleviating or overcoming any form of "total alienation," no matter how hopeless the present situation appears to be.

The term "absolute alienation" (which is used in the Section titled "Absolute Alienation") refers to an infinite, irreversible separation of two people by death. Since Mansfield did not believe in personal immortality nor in a rejoining of two loved ones after death, the implication in this type of alienation is that it can never be broken in terms of the individual.


84. Short Stories, p. 603.

85. Short Stories, p. 604.

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