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HABILITATION THESIS

The Secret Friend: Katherine Mansfield Reads Jane Austen

Brno 2018 Janka Kaščáková, PhD.

I declare that I have worked on this habilitation thesis independently and used only the sources listed in the bibliography.

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While the New Zealand born modernist Katherine Mansfield has been likened to a whole range of writers, both English and foreign, both her contemporaries and predecessors, and while she herself has become a point of reference in her turn, the connection between her and Jane Austen has so far been very rarely made. It might even seem that this is for a good reason as there are many things that set them apart. On the one hand, there are their two very different personalities, lifestyles and backgrounds; one is often viewed as a prim English lady that led a respectable and uneventful life and entertained herself and her social circle telling stories; the other is seen as a colonial with a decidedly adventurous and itinerant existence, and a pronounced disregard for the social conventions of the time. On the other hand, even their works do not seem to have much in common; one wrote traditional novels that posthumously earned her global acclaim, the other focused solely on the short story genre and while her stories are relatively well-known and loved, their author is far from being a household name. What is more, Katherine Mansfield as a true modernist could be expected to have at least an ambivalent if not entirely negative viewpoint on Austen as many of her fellow contemporaries did, since by many of them her works and style were viewed as out-dated and not fit for the new reality of modern times.

However, a closer look uncovers that it is not as simple as it may seem and that many of the differences are actually based on mistaken assumptions caused by, among other things, the heavy mythologizing that both authors have been subject to for so long. Moreover, examining their works together demonstrates that there is, indeed, grounds for comparison and that Mansfield's one-time claim about Austen inciting in her readers the feeling of becoming her secret friends not only applied to other readers, but included her as well.

This work examines how Mansfield approached, read and responded to Austen's writing, but more importantly, how the secret friendship with her is reflected in what mattered to her the most, her stories. It argues that Mansfield's attitude to Austen underwent a gradual change from relative indifference to intense interest and creative appreciation in the form of her rewritings of Austen's *Emma* in the stories: "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" and "A Cup of Tea."

Abstrakt: Kaščáková, Janka. *Tajná priateľka: Katherine Mansfieldová číta Jane Austenovú.* Habilitačná práca. Filozofická fakulta Masarykovej univerzity v Brne. 2018.

Novozélandská modernistka Katherine Mansfieldová bola a je prirovnávaná k rôznym autorom píšucim po anglicky alebo v inom jazyku, k súčasníkom aj predchodcom, a sama sa vďaka novátorskému štýlu stala tou, s ktorou pre zmenu porovnávajú ostatných.

Na existujúcu súvislosť medzi tvorbou Katherine Mansfieldovej a Jane Austenovou však upozornil iba málokto. Je to prirodzené, pretože už na prvý pohľad je medzi nimi mnoho odlišného; boli to rozdielne osobnosti vyznávajúce iný životný štýl. Austenová je prezentovaná ako dôstojná anglická dáma, ktorá viedla počestný a harmonický život, pričom zabávala seba a svoje okolie rozprávaním príbehov. Mansfieldová pochádzala z Nového Zélandu, teda z anglickej kolónie, no dobové spoločenské konvencie ju príliš nezaujímali a jej život v Európe možno bez zveličenia označiť za dobrodružný.

Ani ich diela nevyzerajú, že by mohli mať veľa spoločného. Austenová písala tradičné romány, ktoré jej posmrtne priniesli globálny úspech. Mansfieldová sa orientovala na poviedkový žáner, ktorému dala novátorskú formu i obsah, a aj keď sú jej poviedky mnohým známe, meno ich autorky pozná len málokto. Navyše – od modernistky Katherine Mansfieldovej možno očakávať, že bude mať, podobne ako mnoho jej súčasníkov, ambivalentý, ak nie úplne odmietavý postoj k Austenovej; keď už pre nič iné, tak určite pre zastaraný štýl nereflektujúci dynamiku modernej doby. Bližší pohľad však odhalí, že realita nebola až taká jednoznačná. Mnohé rozdiely medzi autorkami sú založené skôr na mylných predpokladoch spôsobených, okrem iného, aj mýtizovaním a skresľovaním, ktorého obeťou sa obe spisovateľky stali. Podrobnejšie skúmanie ich diel odkryje nejeden dôvod na komparáciu, takže Mansfieldovej tvrdenie, že Austenová vzbudzuje vo svojich čitateľoch pocit, akoby sa stávali jej tajnými priateľmi, sa nevzťahuje len na tých druhých percipientov, ale týka sa aj jej samotnej.

Táto práca rozoberá spôsob, akým Mansfieldová pristupovala k Austenovej dielu, ako ho čítala a reagovala naň, no predovšetkým ako sa táto tajná spriaznenosť odzrkadlila v Mansfieldovej poviedkach, teda v tom, na čom jej autorsky záležalo najviac. Práca ozrejmuje vývoj, ktorým Mansfieldovej postoj k tvorbe Jane Austenovej prekonal postupnú zmenu od relatívnej ľahostajnosti až k intenzívnemu záujmu a kreatívnemu zhodnoteniu vo forme reakcie na Austenovej román *Emma* v poviedkach *Dcéry nebohého plukovníka* alebo *Šálka čaju.*

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in the text and notes.

Aspects	Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh. *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen*. London: John Murray, 1920.
CW 1 and 2	*The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield:* Vols 1 and 2 – *The Collected Fiction,* ed. Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
CW 3	*The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield:* Vol 3 – *The Poetry and Critical Writings,* ed. Gerri Kimber and Angela Smith. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.
DG	Daniel P. Gunn. "Free Indirect Discourse and Narrative Authority in *Emma*." *Narrative*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (January 2004): 35-54.
E	Jane Austen. *Emma.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
FS I	Frank Swinnerton. "Jane Austen I." *The Athenaeum* (5 September 1919): 838-840.
FS II	Frank Swinnerton. "Jane Austen II." *The Athenaeum* (19 September 1919): 906-908.
JACC	Claudia L. Johnson. *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures.* Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2012.
KMN	*The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, 2 vols, edited by Margaret Scott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
Letters 1-5	*The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield,* eds. Vincent O'Sullivan, Margaret Scott, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984-1996.
MP	Jane Austen. *Mansfield Park.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

ND	Virginia Woolf. *Night and Day*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
PP	Jane Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*, Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992.

All works by Virginia Woolf, apart from *Night and Day*, are from *The Complete Collection,* Heron Books, 2016. Kindle edition, without page numbers. Following abbreviations were used for longer titles.

DVW	*Diary of Virginia Woolf*
LVW	*Letters of Virginia Woolf*
JAG	"Jane Austen and the Geese"

Introduction

For more than a century since she started her literary career, Katherine Mansfield has been associated with many writers, whether it was for the real or imagined qualities of her writing, or, more often than not due to the agenda of her literary editor husband, for the story of her life and the legend that surrounded it.[1] The list is long and varied, spanning historical periods and geographic distances, ranging from Theocritus to her contemporaries, but the most frequent names mentioned are usually the great Russians, especially Chekhov, whose work she was at one point even accused of plagiarising; from her British literary predecessors it is Shakespeare, overflowing from her diaries as far as her tombstone;[2] the idol of her young years, Oscar Wilde, or her fellow modernists Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence, to name but a few. Although an uneven attention has been given to these and other particular connections, the most explored being definitely that with Virginia Woolf,[3] they have been acknowledged and at least to a certain degree examined.

This book, in contrast, is concerned with a relationship hinted at so very little that it remains largely unrecognized. The association between Katherine Mansfield and Jane Austen is not one that would immediately strike one as obvious; as a matter of fact, many would probably deem it contrived. Indeed, what could these so diametrically different women and writers have in common other than the fact that they were both women and, well, writers? One, an

[1] The literary critic, writer, and editor, John Middleton Murry (1889-1957) was Katherine Mansfield's second husband. Her first marriage to a singing teacher George Bowden in 1909

[2] Mansfield's grave at Fontainebleau-Avon near Paris carries the quote from *Henri IV* (III. iii): "But I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety."

[3] There is a fair number of articles and some full-length monographs on the topic. See, for example: Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); Nóra Séllei, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Personal and Professional Bond* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996); Patricia Moran, *Word of Mouth: Body Language in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1996); Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 145-168.

Englishwoman, a respectable person and globally recognized author of traditional novels; the other, an often marginalized "intruder" into English literature from New Zealand, author of highly innovative short stories, and, when the rosy hued image her husband created is removed, quite a scandalous figure. The periods, the societies they depict in their works, although only some hundred years apart, could not have been more different. What is more, Jane Austen's reputation among modernists was very ambivalent: at its best, approximating admiration for her past greatness, yet accompanied by the assertion that her works and style are outmoded, not fit for the new reality of modern times, an opinion Katherine Mansfield herself apparently held as well.

In spite of the tumultuous era of the Napoleonic Wars and social unrest and her own share of hardships and tragedies, in some circles, Jane Austen is persistently presented as having lived the traditional pre-industrial English rural life of the landed gentry, engaged in the quiet pursuits of her countrywomen, not differing from them in anything with the exception of her writing.[4] Katherine Mansfield, on the other hand, was a genuine modernist, and that as much in her life as in her work; caught in the whirlwind of modern urban existence with its technological advancements, keen to experiment, to "try all sorts of lives"[5] to be able to use her experience in her fiction in order to find the fresh forms of expression she believed necessary for the new literature.

But once these blatant contrasts are set aside, and one takes a closer look, it becomes more and more apparent that Jane Austen and Katherine Mansfield have much more in common than first impressions would allow and that what they share goes well beyond their respective untimely deaths which cut short both their lives before they could reach their full potential, but which, nevertheless, did not prevent them from leaving a body of texts that influenced and inspired the generations after them.

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[4] This was especially insisted upon by Austen's family. Henry Austen in the "Biographical Notice" for the posthumous publication of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* in 1818 claimed: "A life of usefulness, literature and religion was not by any means a life of event." J.E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 137.

[5] *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, 5 vols, eds.Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) Vol. 1, 19. Hereafter referred to as *Letters* followed by volume and page number.

They share a remarkably similar sense of humour: dry, cutting, at times delightfully vicious, and in their juvenilia they both indulged in a rather savage satire that at some points reminds one strongly of what D.W. Harding referred to as "school magazine humour".[6] However, they soon perfected their ability to write with subtle irony and as a character in one of Mansfield's stories put it: with "[n]o fine effects – no bravuras. But just the plain truth, as only a liar can tell it."[7]

Both were exceptional observers able to recreate their observations in their works with striking vividness and accuracy; they understood and used the power of detail to the highest advantage, although their methods of using it materially differ, as Austen's style is not visual like Mansfield's.[8] They even share the discursive strategy of their mature works, the free indirect speech, which Austen was the first to fully develop in the English novel[9] and which, according to Hanson and Gurr, was one of the main contributions of Mansfield to the art of the short story.[10]

Another major issue, one that they have been both belittled and berated for by critics ad nauseam and oftentimes so very similarly that the comments could be used interchangeably, is their alleged failure to acknowledge the great events of their eras, insisting rather on "chronicl[ing] small beer," as an early

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[6] D. W. Harding, *Regulated Hatred and Other Essays on Jane Austen* (London: Athlone Press, 1998), 129. Harding was referring to *Northanger Abbey*.

[7] "A Married Man's Story," *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield:* Vols 1 and 2 – *The Collected Fiction,* ed. Gerri Kimber and Vincent O'Sullivan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 384. All further references to Mansfield's stories are to this edition, hereafter referred to as *CW* 1 or *CW* 2 followed by page number and cited in the text, directly after the quotation.

[8] As Susanna Clarke pointed out: "Austen was not a visual writer. Her landscapes are emotional and moral – what we could call psychological, they are not physical." "Why We Read Jane Austen: Young Persons in Interesting Situations," in *A Truth Universally Acknowledged: 33 Great Writers on Why We Read Jane Austen,* ed. Susannah Carson (New York: Random House, 2009), 6. John Wiltshire also talks about "the restriction of the visual" in her works, but further adds: "objects, like backgrounds, or settings, are rare in Austen's novels. When they are brought to our attention it is because they contribute to the dramatic interaction of characters." This is, in fact, not unlike Mansfield's own usage of objects. John Wiltshire, "Why Do We *Read* Jane Austen," in *A Truth Universally Acknowledged,"* 164.

[9] See, for example, Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 108; David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 126; Casey Finch and Peter Bowen, "The Tittle-Tattle of Highbury: Gossip and the Free Indirect Style in Emma," *Representations* 31, (1990): 4.

[10] Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, *Katherine Mansfield* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 131.

20th century critic of Austen bluntly put it.[11] Yet even from such seemingly little material they were able to extract the maximum, both displaying what Richard Jenkyns, referring to Austen, characterized as the "power to imbue the full flow of everyday, foolish, or uneducated speech with an odd poetry."[12]

Even the responses of their admirers and detractors sound with an uncanny echo. On the one hand, both authors engender great reverence in their fans, who refer to them by their first names and whose reactions "often convey a sense of personal intimacy."[13] Some groups of fans were sometimes of an unexpected kind, at least for a contemporary reader: they consisted entirely of male members who would, as Rudyard Kipling illustrated in the famous story that gave name to the admirers of Austen, turn to their favourite author for guidance in difficult life situations.[14] Mansfield too had her own version of, what could be called, the "what would Jane do" club.[15] As Jay Dickson demonstrates, after the publication of Murry's edition of the *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, "Edward Upward and Christopher Isherwood during their Cambridge days were so fond of [it] that they imagined 'Kathy' [...] as a personal friend and wondered" what she would have said or done in certain circumstances. Isherwood influenced another famous person, W.H. Auden, to

[11] R. Brimley Johnson, "'Jane' – Snob!" *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art,* (May 10, 1913): 582. This argument is quite common in Austen criticism; in the case of Katherine Mansfield the most notorious assessment of this kind came from T.S. Eliot: "She has handled perfectly the minimum material – it is what I believe would be called feminine." T.S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934), 38. Pamela Dunbar describes the common attitude to Mansfield as a belief that to many "her works exist only on the margins of history, unaffected by contemporary literary trends and divorced from the great social, political and cultural events of her time." Pamela Dunbar, *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) x. This claim was reiterated and contested by Lee Garver, "Political Katherine Mansfield," *Modernism/modernity* 8, no 2 (2001): 225-243.

[12] Richard Jenkyns, *A Fine Brush on Ivory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 59.

[13] Angela Smith about Mansfield. "GUTS – Katherine Mansfield as a Reviewer," *Katherine Mansfield Studies* 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 4.

[14] Rudyard Kipling, "The Janeites," first published in *Debits and Credits,* New York: Doubleday Page, 1926; Project Guttenberg Australia, last modified July 2006, http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0603771h.html.

[15] For an interesting discussion of this phenomenon in the contemporary times, see Shelley Cobb, "What Would Jane Do? PostFeminist Media Uses of Austen and the Austen Reader," in *Uses of Austen: Jane's Afterlives*, eds. Gillian Dow and Clare Hanson (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2012): 208-227.

become enamoured with Mansfield through her *Journal*.[16] On the other hand, however, they both have a strong "antagonizing effect [...] on some people who happen not to like" them.[17] The sense of echo is sometimes reinforced by the use of matching vocabulary, and that both in positive or negative evaluations. An example of this is Arnold Bennett's assessment of Austen which reads very much like Lawrence's rebuke of Murry concerning Mansfield. Bennett wrote:

> [Austen] was a great little novelist. [...] But her world is a tiny world. [...] She did not know enough of the world to be a great novelist. She had not the ambition to be a great novelist. She knew her place.[18]

Lawrence, in his turn, claimed:

> [Mansfield] was not a great genius. She had a charming gift, and a finely cultivated one. But not more. And to try, as you [Murry] do, to make it more is to do her no true service. ... She is delicate and touching – but not great! Why say great.[19]

There are also these very interesting matching contemporary evaluations of both authors' alleged practice of "simply" writing down or "photographing" what they observed around them. As a reviewer in the *British Critic* had it:

> [i]n imagination, of all kinds, [Austen] appears to have been extremely deficient; not only her stories are utterly and entirely devoid of invention, but her characters, her incidents, her sentiments, are obviously all drawn exclusively from experience. [...] [S]he seems to have

[16] Jay Dickson, "The Last of Katherine Mansfield: The Affective Life in the *Journal* and the *Letters,*" in *Modernism and Autobiography,* eds. Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 146.
[17] T.O. Beachcroft about Mansfield. "Katherine Mansfield – Then and Now," *Modern Fiction Studies* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1978): 352.
[18] Arnold Bennett, "Books and Persons," *Evening Standard,* 21 July 1927, in *Jane Austen. Critical Assessments. Volume 2,* ed. Ian Littlewood (London: Routledge, 1998): 449.
[19] D.H. Lawrence after Mansfield's death, quoted by Gillian Body, *Katherine Mansfield, The Woman and the Writer* (Victoria, Australia: Penguin, 1988), 180.

no other object in view, than simply to paint some of those scenes which she has herself seen, and which every one, indeed, may witness daily.[20]

In Mansfield's case, her first biographer, Ruth Mantz, on arriving to New Zealand to interview people about her, found them "astonished that anyone would come so far to talk of Kass Beauchamp, whom some saw simply as a photographer of people and places." George Nathan, one of the originals for the savage "Samuel Josephs" from *Prelude* and "At the Bay," even questioned her status as a writer claiming "she simply described the things she knew here."[21]

The praises as well as the attacks are frequently personal rather than focusing solely on their work, as if their respective characters were a key or rather a short cut to the understanding of their writing. Here, Mansfield, being twice married, has the dubious advantage of not being able to be called an old maid or a spinster, as Austen often was, but it does not mean she got off lightly being dubbed a "female of the underworld, with the language of a fishwife in Wapping" [22] and a "foul-mouthed, virulent, brazen-faced broomstick of a creature".[23]

Although their lives were figuratively and also literally worlds apart, their posthumous reputations display many common elements in the way their families manipulated and shaped the public perception of them as people and writers. Both Austen's brother Henry and Mansfield's husband Murry, from the very start of their quest for immortalization of their recently dead relatives, established a firm course that was characterized by the mix of misplaced devotion and self-promotion. Austen and Mansfield alike underwent what Claudia L. Johnson beautifully called "etherialization via a process of secular

[20] March 1818 qtd. in Deirdre Le Fay, *Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels* (London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 2002), 221.
[21] Ruth E. Mantz, "Katherine Mansfield Tormentor and Tormented," in *The Critical Response to Katherine Mansfield,* ed. Jan Pilditch (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 128. George's father Walter Nathan was Mansfield's father Harold Beauchamp's business partner.
[22] Dora Carrington to Gerald Brennan. Gretchen Gerzina, *Carrington: A Life of Dora Carrington 1893-1932* (London: Pimlico, 1995), 196.
[23] Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), vol. 2, 358.

canonization" which required the disappearance of their physical, disease-overcome bodies and an emphasis put on their spiritual qualities. [24]

But Henry Austen, unlike Murry, whose voice and influence greatly prevailed over those of Mansfield's father and sisters, was not alone in his agenda. With the rising popularity of the novels and subsequent growing curiosity about their author, Austen's extended family felt the need to justify her character against increasing attacks from critics arbitrarily drawing conclusions about her from her works and snippets of random pieces of information and memories, not only to keep her image clean but also to save the reputation of the whole family. The potential financial gain from sharing the recollections of their famous relative's existence or a chance at a moment in the spotlight were possibly only an added bonus to the primary aim of exercising control over the image they felt the need to create and maintain.

John Middleton Murry was, compared to them, both at an advantage and at a major disadvantage. The drawback was Mansfield's incomparably more controversial personality and the large number of her former acquaintances who remembered her well and responded negatively to Murry's more and more desperate attempts to misrepresent her as a person as well as a writer. The advantage lay in the fact that Mansfield bequeathed all her documents to him and he had thus a much firmer control over what was presented to the public and what could be conveniently left out. Leaving out, however, did not mean destroying, as Murry preserved everything down to trivial scraps of loose paper with shopping lists, for which he was, ironically, repeatedly reviled. The reason was that Mansfield left altogether ambiguous instructions as to what was to happen to her papers, and some felt he betrayed her wish for him to "have a clean sweep" and "leave all fair".[25] As C.K. Stead astutely pointed out, "the same

[24] Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2012), 17. Hereafter abbreviated as *JACC*.

[25] Mansfield's private letter to Murry to be opened after her death was as follows: "All my manuscripts I leave entirely to you to do what you like with. Go through them one day, dear love, and destroy all you do not use. Please destroy all letters you do not use. Please destroy all letters you do not wish to keep & all papers. You know my love of tidiness. Have a clean sweep Bogey, and leave all fair – will you?" 7 August 1922, *Letters* 5, 234-235. Her official testament stated: "I should like him to publish as little as possible and to tear up and burn as much as possible. He will understand that I desire to leave as few traces of my camping grounds as

people who criticized him for preserving and publishing would have been merciless if he had destroyed so much as a single page",[26] and they would certainly receive no sympathy from any scholar or fan of Jane Austen who undoubtedly wishes a comparable lack of refinement and tact had befallen Cassandra Austen, so that the burnt letters and the mysterious passages cut out of the extant ones would now be available to scholars and the public.

Although promoting her uniqueness and innovative contribution to literature, Murry was at the same time doing his best to subtly steer Mansfield away from her own era and modernist identity,[27] arguably to appeal to the traditionalist intellectuals more likely to accept the persona he was creating. He was particularly successful in France, especially with Catholic writers, and unsurprisingly, considering the heavily religious tone he adopted.[28] He was pushing Mansfield to a practically Austenian space of pre-industrial and pre-feminist "bliss",[29] offering her as an antidote against women like Colette or Rachilde,[30] the same as Austen was presented to Victorians with respect to the "offensive … *viraginous* …'New Woman'".[31] This faux-Austenesque Mansfield appeared in French journals in many forms, from relatively mild and moderate cases to decidedly outrageous ones, aptly exemplified by the following extract from an article by the literary critic Louis Gillet:

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possible." Katherine Mansfield's will, 14 August 1922, Public Record Office, London; *Letters* 5, 235 n1.

[26] C.K. Stead, "Meetings with the Great Ghost," in *Celebrating Katherine Mansfield: A Centenary Volume of Essays*, eds. Gerri Kimber and Janet Wilson (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011), 221.

[27] In the introduction to his compilation of her diary entries entitled rather misleadingly *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield,* he, for example, rather ambiguously claims that "she turned away from modern literature" which can be interpreted both as a rejection of fashionable contemporary production and of the avant-garde methods. John Middleton Murry, "Introduction," in *Journal of Katherine Mansfield,* ed. John Middleton Murry (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), xi.

[28] On this and other aspects of Katherine Mansfield's reputation in France see Gerri Kimber, *Katherine Mansfield: The View from France* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008).

[29] Austenian, of course, in the way it was presented by Austen's family and some admirers, rather than truly corresponding with the reality of her era.

[30] Kimber, *View from France*, 181, 189.

[31] George Saintsbury, "Preface" to *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Macmillan & Co., London: George Allen,1894) qtd. in *JACC,* 80.

> She was nothing like a suffragette. She seemed to have been born on a heavenly body removed from the social questions, on a planet of innocence before the state of sin and the monstrous iron age of the modern industry. She seemed to have come from a more beautiful star and from it she preserved the radiant atmosphere surrounding her person and the golden powder of her hair. [32]

Although this quotation is one of the most extreme samples and utterly absurd in its exaggeration and untruths – its author did not even get the colour of her hair right – it is, in fact, not dissimilar in spirit to some of the effusions of Austen's apologists. Thus in the case of both Austen and Mansfield, while the motives and the extent of dedication of the family crusaders might have been slightly different, the resulting images were comparable: two more or less artificial angelic beings, the very epitomes of femininity, the traces of anything deemed detrimental to their respective reputations carefully hidden or toned down and explained away. These two posthumous creations aptly exemplify the character of the sort of biographical narrative that is based on the duality of the enthusiasm of "How much I shall have to tell!" and the subdued but inevitable "And how much I shall have to conceal" of Maria Lucas' and Elizabeth Bennet's anticipated account of their experience at Rosings.[33] Although the amount of concealing done in the case of these two is as incomparable as their respective circumstances, the method and the idea behind were analogous.

Finally, there is the impact they had on the writers coming after them. They have both become, in their own ways and domains, the "great ghosts";[34] on the one hand role models and points of reference for future generations, on

[32] Elle n'avait rien de la suffragette. Elle paraissait née dans un astre étranger à la question sociale, sur une planète innocente, avant l'état de péché et le monstrueux âge de fer de l'industrie moderne. Elle semblait venir d'une étoile plus belle, elle en conservait une atmosphère radieuse flottante autour de sa personne et dans la poudre d'or de ses cheveux. Louis Gillet, "Katherine Mansfield," *Revue des deux mondes* 24 (15 December 1924): 932, qtd. in Kimber, *View From France*, 190 (my translation).

[33] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992), 147; chapter 38; Hereafter abbreviated as *PP*.

[34] Damien Wilkins' label for Katherine Mansfield that characterizes what she represents for the New Zealanders. Damien Wilkins, "Katherine Mansfield: Short Story Moderniser" 11 April 2001. http://www.nzedge.com/legends/katherine-mansfield/

the other uncomfortable burdens, "a decidedly mixed blessing and a problem requiring a strategy".[35] Austen was the first woman to really make it big in the male-dominated canons of English literature and became an acclaimed and translated author all over the world; Mansfield did the same within the genre of the experimental short story, but more importantly, for her fellow New Zealanders she was not only the first woman, but the first person ever from the small colony to succeed overseas. Thus whether the following generations wanted it or not, and whether they liked or disliked them, they could not be indifferent and simply dismiss them, they naturally felt the necessity to somehow find their place with respect to their works. Thus this "great ghostliness" often includes an ingredient that hovers over many of the assessments of their works, and it is the pervading sense of vexation or disbelief that they both made it so far in spite of their respective backgrounds, the relatively inadequate education,[36] and the purported inconsequentiality of their themes and scope.

In spite of all these parallels, this connection between them, as it happens, was made by a negligible number of critics. The first instance, for all its brevity, is also the most detailed of them all. It appears in January 1923 among the flurry of elegiac articles announcing Katherine Mansfield's untimely death from tuberculosis in France just a few days before.[37] An anonymous author acknowledges the usual affinity with the Russians and Chekhov, but adds rather unexpectedly that: "she might equally well be described as a pupil of Jane Austen."[38] While he admits that "her artistic conceptions owed much less to either than to her own direct individuality," he elaborates on what, as he

[35] C.K.Stead about Allen Curnow and Frank Sargesson's approach to Mansfield. "Meetings with the Great Ghost," 226.
[36] Austen did have a better education than most women of her time thanks to her father, but it was nothing compared to the university degrees of many male classicists she was put side by side with or those that admired and promoted her work. Mansfield was a daughter of a self-made man in a country where schools were few and far between and were attended by all children from the neighbourhood irrespective of class, gender or wealth. Interestingly, both were supported in their writing endeavours mainly by their fathers who even acted as first mediators with potential publishers. Claire Harman, *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2009), 14-15. On Mansfield's education see, for example, Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), 20.
[37] Anon. *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* (12 January 1923): 6.
[38] *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 6.

sees it, Mansfield has in common with both her alleged literary predecessors. It is first "her mastery of the technique of form and style" and then further the fact that

> [h]er every story was a transcript from life, direct, unhesitating, clear cut in outline, alive with a keenly perceived realism, vivid with deft touches of irony, illumined with little flashing revelations of unsuspected beauty. [...] But at her best she could invest the obvious personal relations of ordinary people with infinite significance; she could ascribe to the trivial its truly universal meaning. Her art was by comparison with that of her contemporaries peculiarly her own; it was also in its way peculiarly perfect.

Another mention followed shortly after when Thomas Moult, an old acquaintance of Mansfield and Murry, rather hesitatingly reiterated the claim that he appears to have remembered from the very article quoted above stating that he had lately "read somewhere a disclaimer that Katherine Mansfield had been influenced by the Russian masters, an attempt being made at the same time to show that Jane Austen was her ancestress",[39] but he does not seem to be impressed and rather explores the safe avenue of the Russian connection. Several years later, however, reviewing Murry's edition of Mansfield's letters, he had apparently reconsidered his view, as he concludes his article by characterizing Mansfield's work as "a finite, perfect art, which reminds us in some ways of Jane Austen".[40]

Two decades later, Frank Sargesson made an indirect connection between the two authors when he characterized Mansfield as a writer in the "feminine tradition" which he understood as a minor one, one that is concerned "with the part rather than the whole – in other words a tendency to make your

[39] Thomas Moult, "The Bookman Gallery. Katherine Mansfield," *The Bookman* (February 1923): 228.
[40] T.M. "Katherine Mansfield's Letters," *The Bookman* (December 1928): 184.

story depend for its effectiveness on isolated details and moments of life".[41] According to him, apart from Mansfield, other writers belonging to this type were Samuel Richardson, Jane Austen and E.M. Forster. While, as he asserted, for a writer of Austen's calibre the method worked out well, it did not always for Mansfield, as this sort of writing courts great failure "because everything is so tenuous – everything is, as it were, hanging by the finest of threads".[42] Interestingly, his words practically mirror those of Virginia Woolf, who also believed that Austen "in her modest, everyday prose, chose the dangerous art where one slip means death."[43]

This meagre record indicates how unexpected the association would probably appear to most critics but it nevertheless manifests that once made, the analogy is not unfounded and warrants a deeper look. What is more, there are plausible reasons that would account for the relative lack of attention their affinities generated. Apart from the obvious first plane dissimilarities, the explanation could be that it simply did not occur to Murry, the engineer of Mansfield's posthumous persona, or if it did, it did not suit his agenda and the image of Mansfield he was shaping. On the one hand, it seems Austen would have been perfectly fitting as the inspiration for the hagiographic account of his wife as a person, but in presenting her as a writer, he was aiming higher, as ridiculous as the notion may appear in a world where Austen is a global celebrity. He preferred to promote her with his own set of comparisons, and his insistent interpretations were no doubt steering the critics in some directions at the expense of others. Judging from his few references to Austen in his published works, Murry was no particular fan of Austen, but more importantly, he was on a quest to validate Mansfield as a genius and a major writer in which, as he seemed to have believed, male artists such as Blake or Keats would serve him better than Austen.

It is also true, however, that Mansfield's relative silence about Austen in her private correspondence and personal documents, which for a long time

[41] Interview quoted by Stead, "Meetings with the Great Ghost," 215-16.
[42] Interview quoted by Stead, "Meetings with the Great Ghost," 216.
[43] Virginia Woolf, "On Not Knowing Greek," in *The Common Reader: First Series,* 1925. *The Complete Collection* (Heron Books).

topped her stories in popularity, does not invite the idea or the necessity to examine this relationship. Mansfield's erratic diaries are full of quotations from and references to her favourite writers or the books she was reading at that time and in that flood of names Austen, appearing only sporadically, as shown in detail in chapter one of this book, easily drowns.

Yet, in spite of this rather tenuous link, Mansfield's and Austen's names, aside from the singular coincidence of Austen having written *Mansfield Park,*[44] appear together in almost every academic or non-academic discussion of Austen, albeit in a completely different context. Mansfield is, after all, the author of one of the most famous quotations about Austen which comes from an otherwise little known review of an even more obscure book, Mary Austen-Leigh's *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen*.[45] Mansfield, concluding her rather satirical evaluation of this fervent vindication of Austen's character and work states that: "the truth is that every true admirer of the novels cherishes the happy thought that he alone – reading between the lines – has become the secret friend of their author" (*CW* 3, 700).

For authors dealing with Austen, the quotation entered the requisite repertoire of unavoidable items together with some others from Austen's novels or letters: the "truths universally acknowledged," "pictures of perfection" or ""little bits (two Inches wide) of Ivory," but very few went further than the simple acknowledgement of the singular astuteness of Mansfield's comment. They apparently registered that Mansfield was neither an Austen scholar nor a self-professed Janeite and that she in fact had not seemed to say anything further of any worth on the subject; consequently, they usually used the quotation to illustrate a point and moved on to the discussion of their topics.

[44] And it *is* a pure coincidence, as Mansfield took her penname from her beloved maternal grandmother Margaret Mansfield Dyer with no reference whatsoever to Austen's novel; the fact, however, does not make the life of a scholar any easier as researching Austen and Mansfield together yields mostly references to *Mansfield Park*.

[45] "Friends and Foes" was first published on December 3, 1920 in *The Athenaeum*, later reprinted in Katherine Mansfield, *Novels and Novelists*, ed. John Middleton Murry (New York: Knopf, 1930), 302-304. Its third and most recent re-publication is in the *Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield,* Volume 3, eds. Gerri Kimber and Angela Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 698-700. Hereafter referred to as *CW* 3 followed by page number and cited in the text, directly after the quotation.

This would imply the general consensus that Mansfield's words, unlike those of the acknowledged admirers that sprang from their deep and intimate knowledge of their favourite writer, were simply a matter of an individual stroke of genius, a special single moment of insight from an author otherwise all but indifferent to Austen.

This book is not trying to prove the absolute opposite and make claims of Mansfield's heretofore unknown fervent devotion to Austen. This would be neither justifiable nor true. It does argue, however, that in spite of appearances, rather than a matter of lucky accident, the legendary line is in fact the tip of an iceberg, a proof of Mansfield's understanding of Austen's work, and an indication that she did not consider herself outside of the group of admirers but that for her too, Austen was, indeed, on more than one level, a friend albeit a secret one.

This "secret friendship" or connection between them is far from being based only on Austen's ability to write in a way that makes the readers feel a special affinity to her, including each and every one of them in an illusory yet very satisfying community of two against the others. It is materially strengthened by the fact that the way she does it is in many respects very similar to Mansfield's own approach to writing. So although it is possible that at some stage Austen was a guilty pleasure for an aspiring young modernist such as Mansfield, which would explain the comparatively small number of references and present another facet to the meaning of the "secrecy" of the friendship, she could not help coming back for more until she finally recognized and acknowledged the fact to herself and, to a certain extent, to the outside world.

The secret or rather suppressed nature of Mansfield's admiration for Austen is possibly also intensified by them both being women writers. As Ruth Parkin-Gounelas argued, Mansfield had an uneasy relationship with "the female solidarity" and "the tradition of women's writing", feeling "the unhappy fellowship of femaleness and artistic endeavour" and "channelling her energies toward her acceptance as an artist first and foremost, without taking on the

whole question of the eligibility of women in the pantheon of Art."[46] But although some of her outward reactions to women writers were indeed "characteristic of the insecurity of marginalization seeking applause for disloyalty",[47] she nevertheless read them as carefully as the male writers and responded to them in her reviews, in the privacy of her letters and diary entries, or, indirectly but more importantly, in her short stories which often enter into a dialogue with the works of authors she read at the time, and not only the usually acknowledged ones, but also some lesser known, as has just now started to be recognized.[48]

However, determining connections, let alone influences, is a very tricky venture, especially when the evidence is not abundant. One must inevitably wonder to what extent the similarities between the two authors stem from their artistic kinship or were directly fuelled by admiration and which are simply a matter of pure coincidence or the natural result of them sharing the fate with other women writers struggling for recognition in a male dominated literary world, an effort that engenders similar responses to comparable stimuli. There is also the added danger for every scholar of finding things simply because one is so intent on looking for them. In spite of all the possible pitfalls and the real risk of slipping at least on occasion, the existing records of Mansfield's encounters with Austen and her work are too tempting to be left unexplored and they more than compensate for any real or imaginary difficulties. This book's primary aim, then, is to examine how Mansfield approached, read and responded to Austen's writing, on the one hand, but more importantly, how the secret friendship with her is reflected in what mattered to her the most, her stories.

The first part of this book, "Chastening Influence? Mansfield Meeting Austen," examines Mansfield's encounters with Austen's novels, dividing them

[46] Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, "Katherine Mansfield Reading Other Women: The Personality of the Text," in *Katherine Mansfield: In from the Margin*, ed. Roger Robinson (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 36-37.
[47] Parkin-Gounelas, 37.
[48] See for example Kimber's recent research on Mansfield and Colette. Gerri Kimber, "Deux Femmes 'Vagabondes': Katherine Mansfield and Colette," in *Katherine Mansfield's French Lives*, eds. Claire Davison and Gerri Kimber (Leiden, Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2016).

into three periods according to the stages of Mansfield's life and the intensity and focus of her attention to Austen. Placing her within the context of both the Great War Janeites' fervent and her fellow modernists' mainly lukewarm approaches to Austen, it argues that Mansfield's own outlook on her underwent a gradual change from relative indifference to intense interest and creative appreciation in the form of her own rewritings of Austen's *Emma*, further analysed in the third part.

The second section, entitled "Bouquets, Boards and Nails: Mansfield Reviewing (Through) Austen," reads in detail two of Mansfield's reviews in order to take a closer look at the turning point of her opinion on Austen. Both reviews, on Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* and the already mentioned *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen* by Mary Austen-Leigh respectively, prominently feature discussions of her person and art. Introducing Mansfield's reviewing history and methods, the chapter proceeds to an analysis of the two texts that, in spite of their general visibility either feature sections hitherto ignored or commonly misinterpreted due to the fact that they have not yet been considered in the light of Mansfield's experience with and knowledge of Austen. Furthermore, it suggests that it is not only the first, but also the second of the reviews, which, although indirectly, enters into the dialogue with Virginia Woolf, and that this dialogue intensified Woolf's lifelong preoccupation with Austen.

The last and main section, "The Daughters of *Emma*: Mansfield Rewriting Austen," first contemplates affinities between Mansfield's and Austen's texts, and then offers comparative analyses of Mansfield stories "The Daughters of the Late Colonel,", and" A Cup of Tea" and Austen's *Emma*. In the first case it shows how Mansfield's half-jokingly professed devotion to *Emma*'s Mr. Knightley is reflected in her treatment of the theme of spinsterhood and in her implicit position on the moral responsibility of a writer depicting vulnerable characters. The other story, the unassuming and mostly overlooked "A Cup of Tea," is presented as a modernist rewriting, or rather variation, of *Emma* with key similarities in terms of structure, content and form. It concludes that Mansfield's Austen-related covert argument with Virginia Woolf concerning the kind of fiction fit for the new era, which started in her review of

Night and Day, came full circle in this short story by which Mansfield proved to Woolf that even while emulating or rewriting Austen, a writer can still reflect and address the realities of a completely different time. In "A Cup of Tea" she accomplished what she believed was imperative for the new, post-war literature and what, according to the review, Woolf could not pull off in her *Night and Day*: to stay connected to the tradition, yet express the new reality in an innovative way, giving the writing the necessary "new mould"; to show that it, just as the metaphoric ship in her review, "made the perilous voyage" (*CW* 3, 532)[49] through time and its challenges and came into harbour marked and scarred, yet victorious.

[49] "A Ship Comes into Harbour," 21 November 1919.

1. Chastening Influence? Mansfield Meeting Austen

In her recent study of the development of Jane Austen's fame and reputation, Claudia L. Johnson argues that, unlike Victorians, who turned to Austen for re-enchantment,[1] seeing her as a means of escape from the ugliness of their reality, not all her early 20th century readers retained this attitude. Of those who did the most influential was her first editor, R.W. Chapman for whom Austen remained "a gentle figure who signifies an equally therapeutic ideal of the graciousness of the English and England during the late Georgian period in periods of comparable loss and desolation."[2] Others, however, exemplified by Rudyard Kipling or Reginald Farrer, the author of an influential article on the occasion of the centenary of her death,[3] rejected this "Victorian" Austen and took a much more modern attitude. Kipling[4] does not present her as a means of escape, but quite the contrary, as "a way to be in an absurd and doomed world beyond [one's] control".[5] Similarly, Farrer viewed her "as the supreme figure of disenchantment, a strong-minded artist whose allegiance is solely to the truth of her art".[6] Johnson's book, however, discusses predominantly the male readership that associated Jane Austen with the trenches and outposts of the Great War where she acted either as an ally, an antidote or a means of escape, calling the relevant chapter significantly "Jane Austen's World War I". But what of those influential intellectuals, the emerging generation of modernists who, for all kinds of reasons, did not serve, like D.H. Lawrence or Mansfield's own husband Murry, and more importantly, what of the women writers, like Katherine Mansfield, whose experience, although also cruelly affected by war,

[1] *JACC,* 105.
[2] *JACC,* 127.
[3] Reginald Farrer, "Jane Austen, *ob.* July 18, 1817," *Quarterly Review* 452 (July 1917): 1-30.
[4] Rudyard Kipling, "The Janeites," n.p.
[5] *JACC,* 104.
[6] *JACC,* 105.

was nevertheless not comparable to either Farrer's, Chapman's or even Kipling's.

This question is not something that usually comes to the forefront of either Austen or Modernism studies. Just as in the case of Mansfield's popular quotation mentioned in the introduction, famous bits and snippets from the early 20th century literary figures were repeated over and over, and sometimes selected aspects were brought into focus and examined, but the whole matter has not really been given any systematic attention. It is well known that E.M. Forster was a fervent Janeite while D.H Lawrence was the exact opposite. Virginia Woolf's persistent remarks about her evoke more than anything a tongue that cannot help poking at a sore tooth.[7] With many others, it is not so much what they said about her as how they were almost completely silent, which is telling. In general, it would seem, that in spite of her increasing prominence as an English literary classic, for most modernists Austen was at best of a secondary concern; unavoidable due to her overwhelming presence in newspapers, magazines and intellectual debates, yet forgettable or preferably forgotten since she would appear to them as hopelessly old-fashioned and antithetical to their hunger for innovation. Appearances, however, can be misleading, especially when the topic is yet to be properly examined, the case in point being Mansfield herself. Her position on this issue is by no means simple and straightforward, not only because it changes throughout her career, but also because it has to be either extracted painstakingly from the relatively small number of critical works she left behind or deduced from indirect evidence.

Mansfield's involvement with Austen is coincidentally framed by two important milestones in Austen's ever growing fame: the 1913 publication of *Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters, A Family Record* by William and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh and Chapman's 1923 landmark edition of Austen's works,

[7] Emily Auerbach, paraphrasing the title of Edward Albee's famous play, suggests a similar thing when she proposes her own question saying there should be: "Who is Afraid of, Annoyed with, Intimidated by, in Awe of, and in Dialogue with Jane Austen?" to which the correct answer is Virginia Woolf. Emily Auerbach, "The Geese vs. the 'Niminy Piminy Spinster': Virginia Woolf Defends Jane Austen," *Persuasions Online* 29, no. 1 (2008), n.p.

the appearance of which she narrowly missed having died in January of the same year. Mansfield's short life, precocious experimental drive and demise literally at the very summit of modernism thus make her not only an early modernist but, incidentally, also an early modernist reader of Austen. Most of her contemporaries had much more time; time to grow from rebellious innovators to established literary figures or at least to further develop their ideas and solidify their positions on many issues. A good example, apart from Virginia Woolf's famous dispute with Arnold Bennett and the traditionalists, is T.S. Eliot's and Murry's critical clash spanned most of the 1920s.[8] Correspondingly, their readings of and approach to Austen could develop over a much longer interval and absorb more and different stimuli, Chapman's edition being one of them. It is, thus, no accident that even if they said very little about Austen that is still quoted, what they said was usually expressed post-1923. Time was something Mansfield had in a very limited supply, but in this respect, just like with others, she made up for this drawback by doing everything with a greater intensity and application, often preceding or anticipating the issues, concerns or approaches of her fellow modernists.

There are three stages of Mansfield's contact with Austen. The first is comprised by the early years of her professional career, the period up to 1919, where Austen appears sporadically as a name in the list of books read or through a brief quotation scribbled in one of the notebooks. The second stage of this relationship are the years 1919-1920 when Mansfield acted as a reviewer for the *Athenaeum* and, apart from referring to Austen several times in passing, wrote two reviews in which Austen plays the central role and is discussed in greater length. The final stage, coinciding with the last two years of Mansfield's life, includes an intense period of several months spent in the mountains of Switzerland during which, according to her letters, she and Murry dedicated much of their leisure time in the evenings to reading Austen's novels.

[8] See David Goldie, A Critical Difference: T. S. Eliot and John Middleton Murry in English Literary Criticism, 1919-1928 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

The Early Period

In the early period, there are only two very small direct proofs of Mansfield's acquaintance with Austen's work. The first extant reference[9] is a notebook entry that dates back to February 1914. "My God! say I," she exclaimed in her notebook after reading Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and jotting down one solitary sentence out of it referring to the characters of Elinor and Edward: "They were neither of them quite enough in love to imagine that £350 a year would supply them with all the comforts of life."[10] By that time, Mansfield was already in a relationship with Murry and they were both poor as church mice. Neither had much to begin with, although Mansfield would have been a little bit better off with the allowance her father was sending her to support her writing career,[11] had it not been for the debts they were left with due to the culturally highly influential but financially disastrous avant-garde journal *Rhythm*.[12] The venture left them practically broke, forcing them to move from one place to another in search of a cheaper situation. Yet it is clear that in spite of all these hardships, at that point in her life, Mansfield would never have been

[9] We can only rely on what is left of Mansfield's personal papers and correspondence, many early diaries and notebooks having been destroyed by her and some letters she wrote still unavailable to scholars.

[10] *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks*, 2 vols, ed. Margaret Scott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) Vol. 1, 275. Hereafter referred to as *KMN* followed by volume and page number.

[11] When Mansfield decided to return from New Zealand to England and become a writer, her father, although reluctantly, allowed her to go and supported her annually with a decent sum of money until her death. Although scholars still argue on the extent to which Harold Beauchamp did help or could have helped his daughter (see for example Antony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (New York: Viking Press,1980), 296-297 ; Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life*, 44; Andrew Bennett, *Katherine Mansfield* (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers, 2004), 3; Jeffrey Meyers, *Katherine Mansfield: A Darker View* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002), 22 ; Kathleen Jones, *Katherine Mansfield: The Story-Teller* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 265, 388), Mansfield had a start to her career most writers could only dream of. When she died, many chose to paint her father, rather unfairly, as a penny-pincher who watched his daughter struggle with her increasing medical bills, but all things considered, her financial difficulties were more often than not caused by her expensive tastes and bad decisions.

[12] Although very popular in its time and printing the works of both established writers or artists and new names that would later become legends, *Rhythm* soon got into financial trouble. First it was due to Murry's business inexperience, but the final blow came when the publisher, Stephen Swift, was revealed to be a fraud who ran away with the money and left Murry and Mansfield deep in debt and struggling to survive in very basic conditions. Jones, *The Storyteller*, 200, 206, 210. The journal was revived as the *Blue Review* for a while, but folded after only three numbers.

able to contemplate their relationship like Elinor and Edward did, and was thus equally puzzled and amused by what she must have viewed as the lack of passion and too much sense over sensibility. In this case, Mansfield's silence is again rather telling, as she did not find anything else in the novel worth recording but this shockingly cold statement, arguably at least for a young woman in love.

The other reference is an inclusion of Austen's name in one of several lists of famous English authors recorded in Mansfield's notebooks in 1915 which, as the editorial note states, were written opposite her speculation about how much she knows of the history of English literature.[13] Mansfield is worried about her lack of any systematic grasp of the topic and her inability to always correctly place the writers in the right context, which continues with a rather extended self-recrimination about the time she lost at school contemplating other things instead of listening to her teachers.

At this point she was not over-enthusiastic about Austen, or much immersed in her work. There are no further direct proofs of her contact with Austen, although she would have been exposed to articles or discussions circulating in the newspapers and magazines. One such article was Murry's "Mr. Bennett, Stendhal and the Modern Novel" that featured in 1913 in the *Blue Review*, the short-lived successor to the *Rhythm*.[14] In it Murry reacts to Arnold Bennett's article "Writing Novels" and contemplates the formal aspects of great works of fiction. For that end he uses Austen as an example and makes comparisons between her and the novels of famous foreigners, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky or Stendhal. He admits that in *Emma* there is a "compact perfection of form" against which the works of the other novelists "seem loose-ended, if not actually clumsy" (172). He, however, does not think the other mentioned authors were worse writers or less concerned with form; in fact, he claims that formal perfection and the neat rounding off of every end are more of a disadvantage than an advantage, since "the inevitable result seems to be a microcosm, such as Jane Austen's" (173). He believes that the

[13] *KMN* 2, 31-32, n34.
[14] *Blue Review* 1, no. 3 (July 1913): 164-174.

> great novels are loose-ended because absolute truth is incompatible with the smaller perfection. We enjoy the microcosm that Jane Austen gives us, though we realize to the full that she is ultimately to be regarded as second-rate. (174)

There is no way of knowing whether Mansfield would have agreed or disagreed with all this; she was by no means uncritical towards Murry's opinions even in the early stages of their relationship. However, her own silence seems to suggest that she, together with many of the rest of the emerging young generation of English writers Murry presumes to speak for in the article, would have held a similar general opinion even if not exactly agreeing in particulars.

Speaking of the attention Austen was being given in the contemporary press, one cannot help but notice a significant difference between the more established, mainstream periodicals and the little avant-garde magazines and journals that shaped the face of modernism and were a crucial part of its development. While the former reflect Austen's major presence as a classic, the latter, in their comparative silence, reveal much about the scope of her fame and the attention the modernists paid to her. To give a few examples, there is no reference to her whatsoever in the entire fourteen numbers of Murry's and Mansfield's *Rhythm* and only two in its successor the *Blue Review.* One of them is the already mentioned article by Murry, the other just a random reference, an alleged slight resemblance of "Mrs. Meynell's" work to that of Austen which remains unexplained. [15] The radical socialist *New Age*, "a key birthplace of British modernism",[16] where Mansfield started out when she first came to London and whose editors A.R. Orage and Beatrice Hastings, had an important impact on her career, is different. The references are few and far between and significantly, there are none whatsoever in 1913 or 1917, the years of the publication of *Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters, A Family Record,* reviewed for

[15] Hugh Walpole, "Fiction," *The Blue Review* 1, no. 1 (May 1913): 47.
[16] Garver, "The Political Katherine Mansfield," 227.

TLS by Virginia Woolf,[17] and the centenary of Austen's death respectively. Furthermore, there is no full article dedicated to Austen from 1909 to 1923, the longest discussions of her running to no more than a single paragraph, and that often in a review of a book where she is discussed. The vast majority of references are nothing but name-drops which serve to illustrate a kind of fiction or topic the author felt she was representative of. In general, the appearances are at best mildly positive, at worst, in line with the editorial policy, harsh and cutting. Such is Beatrice Hastings' sarcastic insight into the reasons why Austen is so admired by men, as she is a:

> woman writer, unpresumptuous, almost rationally self-limiting, competent and complacent before Fact, sensitive and sensible [...] such a writer will always fill true men with delighted respect.[18]

While this extract can still be indicative of Hastings' disdain for some of Austen's readers rather than Austen herself, the following bleak description of contemporary London by Judah P. Benjamin is straightforward in its opinion of her work:

> London is characteristic of all that is drab in nature. Drab is the colour of its atmosphere, drab the tone of its sky, drab the tint of its garments, and drab politics rival drab religion. The dun colour of decay seems to have penetrated to the heart of the people. And it is curious, as a psychological study, to remark the revival of interest in *the old drab novels of Jane Austen*. In no other age would such a revival be possible.[19]

Austen does not fare much better in the *English Review* and Dora Marsden's *Freewoman, The New Freewoman*, and the *Egoist*, where she either does not appear at all, as in the case of the first and the third, or barely a

[17] Virginia Woolf, "Jane Austen", *TLS,* 13 May 1913, reprinted in *The Common Reader: First Series.* London: Hogarth Press, 1925. *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Collection.*
[18] Beatrice Hastings, "Tesserae," *The New Age* 14, no. 11 (1914): 340.
[19] Judah P. Benjamin, "London," *The New Age* 6, no. 2 (1909): 36; emphasis added.

handful of times, and none of these references are significant. The only slightly interesting passage concerning Austen, especially with respect to the reading of novels through their author's life touched upon in the introduction and the topic of spinsterhood examined in the third part of this book, is young Rebecca West's uncompromising belief that unmarried or romantically uninvolved women cannot be good writers:

> For want of emotional experience Jane Austen's imagination never developed virility. And though of course her comic characters had human failings, her heroes (that is the men she regarded from a sexual point of view) were "strong gods".[20]

As sporadic as they are, there is one thing all these references in small magazines have in common with the mainstream ones, which is the unmistakable air of familiarity; Jane Austen is already a household name, her novels and characters do not require introduction to anybody, and, whether admitted willingly or grudgingly, there is no doubt of her continuing presence.

All this implies that, in the pre-war and war years, although unable to avoid Austen entirely, the young Mansfield and her radical friends with their sights set on innovation and change, did not feel like looking back too much in certain directions, and had little interest in an author persistently presented as embodying traditional values, domestic settings and leading an uneventful life. In short, they had no use for the "Victorian" Austen and did not (yet) see or were not ready for the disillusioned "Modernist" one that Farrer astutely glimpsed behind the mild façade of her novels.

The Athenaeum *Phase*

The turning point in Mansfield's perception of Austen is the year 1919 when she started her almost two-year reviewing job for the *Athenaeum*, whose then

[20] Rebecca West, "Spinsters and Art," *The Freewoman* 2, no. 37 (1912): 213.

editor-in-chief was Murry. The references which become more frequent, not only demonstrate Mansfield's growing awareness of and interest in Austen, but also contain echoes of the kinds of intellectual debates Austen's reputation would spark among the English intellectuals of the time.

In Mansfield's reviews, there are two short references to Austen and two texts in which she plays the major or a very significant role. The first pair, relatively brief though the mentions are, nevertheless offer a glimpse into the way Austen's iconic status made her a subject of comparison with all kinds of writers, English or foreign, contemporary or not, often rather random and inexplicable, and of how Mansfield viewed this practice. She mocks it in the review of Constance Garnett's translation of Dostoevsky's *An Honest Thief: and Other Stories,*[21] where she imagines English intellectuals as characters in a typical Dostoevsky novel, where Dostoevsky himself would be a character too, his arrival "the agitating occurrence"(535) which provokes discussions about his work, "the expenditure of enthusiasm and vituperation, the mental running to and fro, the parties that have been given in his honour", and finally "the fascinating arguments as to whether or no he is greater than Jane Austen (what would Jane Austen have said to the bugs and the onions and the living in corners!)" (535). While reading this derision of English intellectuals as a reaction to Murry's article in the *Blue Review* six years before would be far-fetched, the kinship between the two assessments and, for example, Virginia Woolf's frequent pairing of Austen and the Russians, which most likely echoes the live debates in Bloomsbury or at Garsington, indicates that this sort of conversation was not unusual and that she did not find it constructive. Although Mansfield, with her colonial background, and Murry, with his lower middle-class one, were pushed to the margins of the literary coteries of the time, Mansfield felt distanced even from what she saw as Murry's intellectualism,[22] a trait she thought he shared with the rest of them and which she disliked and frequently mocked. The review, in a typical way of her,

[21] "Some Aspects of Dostoevsky," *Athenaeum,* 28 November 1919; *CW* 3, 535-537.
[22] See Smith, *A Public of Two*, 55.

responds by exposing the absurdity of such sweeping statements about authors by pointing out the incompatible aspect of the their respective worlds.

Interestingly though, Mansfield herself seems to be guilty of doing a very similar thing in the review directly preceding this one, comparing her rival-friend Virginia Woolf to Austen. She, however, is doing it in a completely different way. Rather than indulging in dubious attempts to establish the general supremacy of one author over another based on obscure criteria, and that sometimes in the case of culturally or otherwise incompatible authors, – hence the bugs and the onions – she sees value in drawing analogies between particular works that display actual affinities, suggesting that their more than passing investigation can be beneficial to their further understanding.

This would, indeed, be the case of the other short reference to Austen appearing in the review of Rhoda Broughton's *A Fool in Her Folly*,[23] had Mansfield not considered the analogy preposterous. She calls into question the anonymous "acute modern critic writing for Americans", styled thus by the author of the preface, Marie Belloc Lowndes, for believing Broughton to be "the nearest thing [*sic*] in spirit to Jane Austen that we have had in recent times" (652; emphasis in original). She denies the validity of this claim, and although she does not mention Austen again until the end of the text, the attributes of the discussed text, which, as her categorical dismissal of the analogy implies, are the very opposition to those of Austen's works, indirectly reveal much about her view of Austen. According to her, Broughton did not "put all of herself into anything that she did," and the novel's "deliberate sustained pose" seems to suggest it is meant not to be taken too seriously (652). Mansfield maintains that this novel is worth spending one's time on only in case one is able to live "to be as old as Abraham", since it is a book for "[g]irls of all ages, from thirteen to eighty-five" and "will not bear looking into; it will not tolerate any questions or interruptions. It must be taken whole, just as it is or not at all" (652) as many of its claims or the reactions of characters do not make sense under closer scrutiny. Mansfield is thus suggesting that Austen is a writer who, on the

[23] "Victorian Elegance," 20 August 1920; *CW* 3, 651-653.

contrary, should be taken seriously and it is well worth spending the short time of one's life with, and that, unlike in the novel in question, the occasional frivolity of her characters does not extend to encompass the whole work. Mansfield challenges the critic who, based on the slight likeness of tone and subject matter, puts this slight product on the same level with Austen, whose works not only bear a closer scrutiny, but welcome it, offering much more than superficial enjoyment free of serious questions and concerns.

The two reviews that engage with Austen in a more significant way, discussed in detail in chapter two, represent respectively the two assymetrical and mutually opposing groups all the reviews can be divided into: one belonging among the small number of texts dealing with an important writer, the other to the large majority of obscure names and dubious literary achievements. The first one, entitled "A Ship Comes Into Harbour," is the review of Virginia Woolf's second novel *Night and Day*;[24] the other, "Friends and Foes," discusses Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh's *Aspects of Jane Austen*, [25] a book the genre of which is very difficult to nail down. In spite of their incompatible subjects and quality, coincidentally, some parts of these two reviews are by far the most quoted and influential from all her critical writings. What is more, they remain Mansfield's longest discussions of Jane Austen and her works and thus provide a unique insight into her opinion of this author.

The work on the Woolf review especially appears to have further boosted Mansfield's curiosity about Austen as the month after it was published an entry in her diary indicates that around the time of its composition she had read "One or Two Jane Austen".[26] What is interesting about this entry is that it is a part of a longer list of works she had apparently perused besides those she had to review and which are, in stark contrast to the reviewed ones, all major works.[27] As a matter of fact, it can only be assumed that they are books she had

[24] 21 November 1919; *CW* 3, 532-535.
[25] 3 December 1920; *CW* 3, 698-700.
[26] *KMN* 2, 185.
[27] The list reads as follows: "Robinson Crusoe, Pilgrim's Progress, Coleridge's Biographia Literaria and Lectures on Shakespeare, Shakespeare and the Oxford Book of English Verse, Tomlinson's The Sea and the Jungle, Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, and Spenser's Faerie Queen;" *KMN* 2, 185.

recently read as there is no accompanying commentary, and it could equally be the enumeration of her favourite works or an inventory of her bookshelf. However, some of the other items mentioned could help elucidate the meaning of Austen's inclusion among them. Shakespeare was by far her favourite writer; Chaucer, although still largely unrecognized as an influence, would, if nothing else, appeal to her due to his sense of humour and realistic portrayal of characters. The two authors' importance to her can be glimpsed through random remarks like this one, written later on from the solitude of yet another hotel room: "On my bed at night there is a copy of Shakespeare, a copy of Chaucer, an automatic pistol and a black muslin fan. This is my whole little world."[28] The *Oxford Book of English Verse*, as brilliantly argued by Gardner McFall, had a major impact on the shaping of one of her most iconic short stories, "Bliss".[29] But even more importantly, she read both Shakespeare and Chaucer extensively well before December 1919, and the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, which she got from Frederick Goodyear in 1914,[30] was her constant companion during her 1918 stay in Bandol in the south of France. It seems, thus, that at least some items on the list were works she had had in her possession for a longer time and liked to re-read, or that were not entirely new to her. Although claiming that at this point Austen was to Mansfield somewhere on the level of Shakespeare or Chaucer would scarcely be justifiable, her presence among them does indicate the great deal of esteem and appreciation that would manifest themselves in the last stage of her life.

[28] To Ottoline Morrell, May 1921; *Letters* 4, 235.
[29] Gardner McFall, "Poetry and Performance in Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss'," in *Critical Essays on Katherine Mansfield,* edited by Rhoda B. Nathan (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1993), 140-150.
[30] Frederick Goodyear (1887-1917), a friend introduced to Mansfield by Murry, was one of the large number of promising young writers who perished in the trenches of the WWI. On 6 February 1918, shortly before Mansfield started "Bliss," she wrote to Murry: "Four years ago today Goodyear gave me the Oxford Book of English Verse. I discovered that by chance this morning." *Letters* 2, 78.

The Swiss Interlude

Mansfield abandoned her work for the *Athenaeum* before Christmas 1920, and, in one of her last attempts to find some sort of traditional remedy to her steadily progressing tuberculosis, she spent the period from May 1921 until February 1922 high in the mountains of Switzerland, in Sierre, just over the valley from the house of her cousin Mary, Countess Russell, widely known as the author of *Elizabeth of the German Garden*.[31] This became the last and definitely the most intense period of her reading of Austen. The reasons for this spark of focused interest remain unknown. The most plausible assumption seems to be that it had something to do with Elizabeth, who was a great fan of Austen, and might have sent the books or brought them to the Chalet des Sapins on one of her visits or John Middleton Murry borrowed them when he went over.[32]As one of her biographers, Jennifer Walker, points out, von Arnim "had an enormous library of books at her Chalet Soleil, selections from which John Middleton Murry [...] was for ever taking up the mountain to read and share with KM."[33] Whatever the initial cause, Mansfield's letters indicate that during much of the time she did not dedicate to her own writing or resting, she and Murry entertained themselves by reading Jane Austen. Here is the first reference to this activity described to the same cousin dated 15 December 1921:

> In fact, all is very devilish and if it weren't for Jane Austen in the evenings we should be in despair... We are reading her through. She is one of those writers who seem to not only improve by keeping but to develop entirely new adorable qualities. 'Emma' was our first. John sighed over Jane Fairfax – I felt that Mr. Knightley in the shrubbery would be

[31] Katherine Mansfield's cousin, née Mary Annette Beauchamp (1866-1941), is often referred to by a combination of the name of her famous fictional character *Elizabeth* from *Elizabeth and her German Garden* (1898) followed by one of her married names, that is either as Elizabeth von Arnim or Elizabeth, Countess Russell. For a comprehensive discussion of different uses of her name, see: Jennifer Walker, *Elizabeth of the German Garden: A Literary Journey* (Sussex, England: Book Guild Publishing, 2017), xv-xvi.
[32] See Isobel Maddison, *Elizabeth von Arnim: Beyond the German Garden* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 106-107.
[33] Jennifer Walker, e-mail message to author, 1 July 2017.

> happiness. But her management of her plot – the way, just for the exquisite fun of the thing, she adds a new complication – <u>that</u> one can't admire too greatly. She makes modern episodic people like me – as far as I go – look very incompetent ninnies. In fact she is altogether a chastening influence – But, ah, what a rare creature![34]

Determining how well acquainted with Austen Mansfield was at this point is very difficult. On the one hand, the extract from the letter might imply it was the first time Mansfield read some of the novels, possibly even *Emma*. On the other, the reference to Austen's improvement by "keeping" indicates the opposite. All in all, it is hard to believe that by this time Mansfield would not be acquainted with a novel that had been constantly commented upon and often praised for its innovative method which was so similar to her own.

The letter seems to suggest that she and Murry were in fact reading these books in exactly the way that Austen herself used to do with her relatives, that is to say – aloud; it suited both Mansfield's and Austen's dramatic inclinations as well as the dramatic nature of Austen's prose. But a more interesting aspect is Mansfield's idea that Austen is one of those authors that have to be read several times to be fully appreciated, echoing Elizabeth Bennet's assessment of Mr. Darcy, who also "improves on acquaintance,"[35] not because his character really changes but because then his disposition is better understood. Yet while Mr Darcy's flaw is his somewhat difficult exterior that hides a good and honourable, even if still complex, man, Austen's novels may give a first impression of a light and inconsequential reading that conceals works of an intricate nature and technical perfection that Mansfield possibly had no life experience or patience to appreciate when younger. She not only indirectly confirms her own previously lukewarm approach to Austen but also implies that it was caused by an insufficient understanding or appreciation on *her* part, not by any flaw of Austen's. The subtle mockery of Murry's enjoyment of the romantic aspects of the novels, intensified in later letters, suggests that

[34] To Elizabeth, Countess Russell, 15 Dec. 1921; *Letters* 4, 339.
[35] *PP*, 158.

Mansfield believes Austen to be one of those authors one has to be mature enough to fully comprehend and to be able to see past the deceptively straightforward marriage plot. Although enjoying the story, she immediately turns to what is more interesting and natural to her: technical questions of art, learning from others and her own anxiety about not always being able to live up to her own standard.

The ambiguous comment about Austen making "modern episodic people" like Mansfield look like "incompetent ninnies" could on the one hand be understood as relating to the way Austen portrays her characters, but is more likely an observation about how Mansfield and similar writers are compared to Austen and her style of writing. While it is difficult to discern what character in an Austen novel Mansfield would be comparing herself to, it is easier to see why she would talk about herself as episodic with respect to her art. Although hailed for her major contribution to the art of the short story and her distinctly modernist style, Mansfield felt the handicap of never having written a novel. For a long time, she kept setting out to write one, so it is no wonder she was amazed by the structure and management of a plot she thought she would not have been able to master. Her writing, which is so light and ingenious in her best stories, becomes heavy and strangely clumsy in those attempts at novels which survive.[36] Whether deliberately or out of necessity, Mansfield eventually abandoned the idea of the novel and developed her talent in a different genre, yet there were moments, like this one, when she betrayed her yearning for more time and leisure to write something bigger than a short story. Although, for a fleeting moment, she might have wished for a world and time when fiction could still be written in Austen's style with all the loose ends neatly tied up, what she really means is that she would like to find a distinct style of her own suitable for her own era and, through this, emulate Austen's accomplishment and success.

Part of Mansfield's ill-disguised professional envy stems also from the unavoidable doubts of a living writer facing one that is already established and

[36] Her first novel *Juliet* was begun in 1907, the later *Maata* in 1913. It is true they were written very early, but at the same time Mansfield was already writing brilliant short stories.

famous. Although, as evidenced in Mansfield's review of *Aspects of Jane Austen*, to be discussed later, she did not buy the extended Austen family's "picture of perfection" that was their version of "Aunt Jane", in a weak moment, she forgot that the woman constructed from memories, the diligent writer who, apart from a single rewritten chapter of *Persuasion*, left only fair copies and no evidence of creative struggle, must have had her own share of doubts and issues with self-esteem just like any other writer. In this light, it is understandable that Mansfield felt her influence was "chastening", both for the perfection of Austen's writing skill, what she defines as the "management of her plot", and arguably for the superiority of her work ethic, as advertised by her family. Austen's self-control and ability to write in less than perfect conditions would at times be as humbling to Mansfield as the structure of her novels. She was a hard worker, but not always very disciplined. Her notebooks are full of sentences expressing her desire to write, countermanded by an inability to start, because of her pen, her table, her room, the noise.[37] Of course, when she does start, she is persistent and productive; but imagining somebody tirelessly working in every spare minute, keeping her full concentration while knowing she could be disturbed at any moment, must have discountenanced her. She was considering this aspect in one of her reviews, maintaining that a novel is not like a short story where

> it is possible to give orders that, unless the house is on fire – and even then, not until the front staircase is well alight – one must not be disturbed; but a novel is an affair of weeks, of months. [...] How can one

[37] See for example this entry in her diary: "I have written practically nothing yet and now again the time is getting short. There is nothing done. I am no nearer my achievement than I was 2 months ago and I keep half doubting my will to perform anything. Each time I make a vow my demon says at almost the very same moment: 'Oh yes, we've heard that before!' And then I hear R.B. in the Café Royale 'Do you still write?' (...) Why do I hesitate so long? Is it just idleness? Lack of will power? Yes, I feel that's what it is and that's why it's so immensely important that I should assert myself. I have put a table today in my room, facing a corner, but from where I sit I can see some top shoots of the almond tree and the sea sounds loud. There is a vase of beautiful geraniums on the table. Nothing could be nicer than this spot and its so quiet and so high, like sitting up in a tree. I feel I shall be able to write here, especially towards twilight." *KMN* 2, 57. February 13th [1916].

> measure the influence of the interruptions and distractions that come between?[38]

Mansfield was also constantly haunted by the discrepancy between what she wanted to express and the assumed imperfection of the actual result.[39] The feeling is well-known to any writer striving for perfection and Austen surely was not an exception. Yet Mansfield, again seeing only the end product and not the original idea Austen had, gives way to self-doubt. She admits this in a diary entry while still in Switzerland, shortly after the letters concerning Austen were written:

> What I chiefly admire in Jane Austen is that what she promises she performs i.e. if sir T. is to arrive we have his arrival at length and it's excellent and excels our expectations. This is rare, it is also my very weakest point. Easy to see why …[40]

While it must have been easy for Mansfield to see why, it is the very opposite for the reader. One can only conjecture what she had in mind from the sentences directly preceding this quotation, which offer a certain clue. While the entry for that day begins with a paragraph giving a very artistic picture of her surroundings and the weather outside, the one right after, whose second part was quoted above, begins in the following way:

> I have not done the work I should have done. I shirk the lunch party. This is very bad. In fact I am disgusted with myself. There must be a change from now on.[41]

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[38] "First Novels," review of Margaret Symonds' *A Child of the Alps* and Jane Mander's *The Story of a New Zealand River,* 9 July 1920; *CW* 3, 217.
[39] In her letter to Murry about the review she wrote: "Oh, I am so *dissatisfied* with myself. You say lovely things to me and I feel I'll be better next time and then again I seem to *miss* it. […] My review of Virginia haunts me. I *must* improve." 17 November 1919; *Letters* 3, 100; emphasis in original.
[40] 2 January, 1922; *KMN* 2, 312.
[41] 2 January, 1922; *KMN* 2, 312.

The subsequent switch to discussing Austen seems to be rather sudden, but considering Mansfield's expression of disgust with herself, it would appear that the meaning of her weakest point is her procrastination put implicitly in contrast with Austen's alleged proactivity and ability to work in very unfavourable circumstances.

The collection of four letters discussing Austen continues less than a week after the first one, when Mansfield sent a very similar, although shorter, account to Lady Ottoline Morrell:

> M. and I are reading Jane Austen in the evenings. With delight! 'Emma' is really a perfect book – don't you feel? I enjoy every page. I cant have enough of Miss Bates or Mr Woodhouse's gruel or that charming Mr. Knightley. Its such an exquisite comfort to escape from the modern novels I have been forcibly reading. Wretched affairs! I do ask for something that I can't hand on to my dog to be read by him with relish and much tail thumping. This fascinated pursuit of the sex adventure is beyond words boring![42]

It is no wonder Mansfield admired Miss Bates or Mr Woodhouse, as both are characters to her own tastes, with their peculiarities and strangeness inviting both ridicule and compassion. Moreover, the famous gruel Mr Woodhouse keeps forcing on his reluctant house guests comes as close as it gets to Mansfield's symbolical use of objects as shortcuts to people's characteristics or being indicative of their lives, as well as her frequent association of food with sexuality. She would most likely read the "nice smooth gruel, thin, but not too thin"[43] not only as a metaphor for Mr. Woodhouse's vapid, uneventful and risk-averse life – it is thin, but not too thin, he is a rich and relatively happy man after all – but also as a comment on his practically non-existent virility that seems to be a personality trait rather than a natural consequence of his age.

[42] To Ottoline Morrell, 20 December 1921; *Letters* 4, 344.
[43] Jane Austen, *Emma* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 84. Hereafter abbreviated as *E* and cited in the text.

The sentences that follow, however, appear to problematize this reading. Mansfield complains about too much sexuality in literature and uses Austen, as many have done before, as a means of escape. The reference to modern novels she rather theatrically claims she had been "forcibly" reading is of course a comment on her reviewing work for the *Athenaeum*. Although the expression might be interpreted as a simple complaint about the necessity to take on less appealing jobs for the sake of financial security, it is also a covert criticism of the kind of production Murry chose to send her to work on. Reading through the reviews and accompanying comments in her diaries or letters does indeed reveal how much Mansfield disliked and objected to the way many of her contemporaries were obsessed with the depiction of sexuality in their works, or even how sex became the pet topic in the intellectual circles. Towards the end of her reviewing job she protests, feeling sure she has

> read 20 novels this autumn by LADY writers that might all be called How I lost my Virginity! If that wasn't bad enough – they never tell the truth – they always tell How I WISHED to lose my Virginity, and in fact I don't believe they ever did lose it.[44]

However, in spite of impressions that the above outburst might give, she was no prude. There are the incontrovertible facts of her well documented sexually adventurous life, and a whole collection of her own very explicit sexual comments in the letters and diaries. Many of them were edited out of the French translation of *Journal*[45] to reinforce her saintly image and spare the sensibilities of a nation whose alleged legendary moral laxity she, in one of her letters, blamed on their uncomfortable chairs which, as she believed, "simply forced [one] into bed – no matter with whom".[46] But most importantly, her short stories are far from being oblivious to the sexuality of her characters; "Je ne parle pas français," to choose the most obvious example, is, after all, a story

[44] To Sydney and Violet Schiff, 4 November 1920; *Letters* 4, 45.
[45] Kimber, *The View from France*, 140-141. *Journal,* trans. Marthe Duproix, intro. J. M. Murry (Paris: Stock, 1932).
[46] To Frederick Goodyear, 4 March 1916; *Letters* 1, 249.

of a gigolo/pimp who claims to have been sexually abused in his childhood by their family's African laundress. It is thus not the topic itself but its treatment that Mansfield minded and deplored. She also felt it was given a disproportionately important place in her contemporaries' literary production, not only in the case of the popular authors but also of her fellow modernists. She considered Joyce's work "unhealthy in a peculiar way",[47] felt ashamed of Virginia Woolf's "tittering over some little mechanical contrivance to 'relieve virgins'"[48] and commented upon what she saw as Lawrence's obsession with sex and propensity to see phallic symbols everywhere.[49] She did not assign sex such a key place and, more importantly, its graphic renditions went entirely against the very method of her writing. She was a symbolist[50] and as such objected to analytical descriptions, championing instead allusions, symbols, images that, according to her, were more objective, firmly persuaded that an author should "keep faith with Truth rather than with Truth's ugly and stupid half-sister, Frankness".[51]

In this, Austen's way of writing was closer to hers than Lawrence's who, viewing the lack of open sexuality as a crucial flaw, summarily dismissed Austen as the "old maid" of English literature.[52] She, in contrast, does not read her as asexual or, as Charlotte Brontë did, dispassionate, but as somebody who presents sexuality in a fashion very similar to hers. So, although Mansfield used the same word as many other readers of Austen when she called her an "escape", her meaning was rather different. For her, she was not a means of escape in the sense of avoiding life and slipping into an illusory safe world, but rather in the sense of being a comfort, a friend with a similar outlook one turns to when tired of others, to be in a company of one who understands and is

[47] To Anne Drey, 19 May 1921; *Letters* 4, 232.
[48] To Dorothy Brett, 29 August 1921; *Letters* 4, 270.
[49] Mansfield famously declared that Lawrence saw "sex in trees, sex in the running brooks, sex in stones and sex in everything. The number of things that are really phallic from fountain pen fillers onwards!" To Beatrice Campbell, 4 May 1916; *Letters* 1, 261.
[50] Hanson and Gurr, *Katherine Mansfield*, 21-3.
[51] *CW3*, 694.
[52] D. H. Lawrence, *Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover* (London: Mandrake Press, 1930), 58. Virginia Woolf also identifies the lack of sex as the reason why Austen's work is not so great. She vaguely surmises that Austen's failure to be better than she had been had: "[s]omething to do with sex." To Ethel Smyth, 20th November 1932, *LVW*.

understood without many words, the friend with whom one shares a secret language.[53]

Another letter to Countess Russell and a subsequent one to Ottoline Morrell give further insight into Mansfield's and Murry's enjoyment of Austen. They show that this period of reading Austen's fiction was indeed intense; that in all probability Mansfield and Murry really (re-)read all of Austen.[54]

> We are still reading Jane. Let us talk about her when you come. I believe John enjoys her more than I do. The engagements put him in a positive flutter. Innocent male! They come as a surprise to him.[55]

> We are still reading Jane Austen. M falls in love with all the heroines, even with Fanny Price but I should be content to walk in the shrubbery with Mr. Knightley. I remain faithful to him. Its greater fun for M. than for me, for all the engagements come as a complete surprise to him. He almost swoons with anxiety when Mr. D. follows Eliza's father into the library and demands her hand, and once it is all happily settled and a fortune of ten thousand a year bestowed upon them his relief is extreme. [56]

With Mansfield one cannot be entirely certain that what she wrote in her letters she actually meant (or meant that way), so it is impossible to judge to what extent this enthusiasm corresponds with reality. She was a proficient at pleasing and entertaining her recipients by anticipating their reactions and indulging their interests and tastes, sometimes even at the expense of a little lie or the bending of the truth. In the case of these four letters one cannot help but notice the subtle imitation of Austen's style that only a fan could appreciate

[53] For an extended discussion of Mansfield's approach to the topic of sexuality in literature see Janka Kascakova, "'For all Parisians are more than half-' Stereotypes and Physical Love in Katherine Mansfield's Writing," in *Katherine Mansfield's French Lives,* eds. Claire Davison and Gerri Kimber (Leiden, Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2016), 81-91.
[54] She makes direct references to three novels: *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*; with her earlier mentions of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion* remains the only one out of Austen's novels she never alluded to.
[55] To Elizabeth, Countess Russell, 24 December 1921; *Letters* 4, 350.
[56] To Ottoline Morrell, 27 December 1921; *Letters* 4, 357.

and the playful irony at Murry's expense, especially the highly amusing and exaggerated reversal of traditional gender stereotypes. There is the image of the male literary critic swooning with anxiety, fluttering with pleasure, and rejoicing over every engagement in a novel, while his wife soberly contemplates the novel's technique; a contrast made even more pronounced when the said male critic is known to take himself rather too seriously. One also has to wonder at the repeated assertions about Murry's ignorance of the individual love stories' outcomes. Since he demonstrably read Austen before, as exemplified, among other things, by his self-assured article in the *Blue Review*, it seems bizarre to suggest he did not remember something so basic as the endings of the novels. Rather than making things up, however, Mansfield was probably subtly mocking the notoriously bad memory Murry used to boast of, the ultimate evidence of which presented itself after her death when he forgot to pay for her grave that, ironically, proudly pronounced her to be "the wife of John Middleton Murry".[57] She is probably implying that the deficient memory, unimaginable as it is in somebody whose very job depended on it, was faulty only selectively and that Murry simply did not remember things that were of secondary importance to him. In this respect, the letters say as much about his character and their relationship as about Austen and her work.

Another manifestation of Mansfield's letter-writing method is the different focus of the two first missives. While basically almost identical, they also reflect the differences between the two recipients. While the one to Countess Russell, a writer herself, centres more on the formal aspects of Austen's writing, the one to Ottoline Morrell, the legendary hostess, addresses mostly the characters and topics, especially the topic of sex, which Morrell would have understood for what it was: a jab at their common friends and frequent discussions they both would have experienced with them.

[57] Murry's forgetfulness on that occasion had serious consequences. As he never remembered to pay the bill, after a while, Mansfield's body was moved to a temporary ground from which she was rescued several years later by her father who, alerted by an admirer, had things set to right. Jones, *The Story-Teller,* 46-47, 184-5. However, as Jones shows, Murry was a child prodigy who could read at the age of three and earned a scholarship to Oxford. He also had a long and successful career as a literary critic and writer. Accomplishing something like this with a truly deficient memory is simply unthinkable.

However, even though there is exaggeration and performance involved, these letters ring true in their essentials and thus offer a valuable insight into Mansfield's appreciation of Austen. It is but of minor interest to note that Mansfield, just like the majority of the readers of Austen, was no particular fan of *Mansfield's Park*'s bland heroine Fanny Price, as she is puzzled at Murry's falling in love "even with" her, but the repeated insistence on her partiality to Mr. Knightley, on the contrary, is crucial for the purposes of our further argument. On the one hand, it is a way of saying that *Emma* was by far Mansfield's favourite Austen novel, on the other, a clue to understanding one of the main reasons why it was so. As further examined in the third chapter, it had nothing to do with any romantic notions about Mr Knightley, but with the way his Box Hill intervention fundamentally altered not only Emma's and the reader's perception of Miss Bates, but also Mansfield's appreciation of Austen's writing.

Not only the letters themselves but also their recipients could theoretically shed further light on what Mansfield's position on Austen was. At first sight, the fact that only two out of her many correspondents received the account of her sudden passion for Austen, and neither of them was a major modernist figure, might seem to indicate she would not be comfortable to express her delight quite so openly with someone else. True, Countess Russell was a Janeite and if she were indeed responsible for the arrival of Austen's novels in Sierre, it makes sense that Mansfield would acknowledge the usefulness of the gift and its entertainment value in this way. As to Lady Ottoline, although she does not feature on the usual list of Austen enthusiasts, with her Mansfield did not have to worry about being mocked for her admiration of Austen. Although in many respects very different, they also had much in common: their unconventionality, their unquenchable desire to be loved and appreciated stemming from their differently difficult childhoods, and their non-academic and non-intellectual backgrounds that made both of them sometimes the fodder of ridicule from their more learned friends. Morrell, just like Mansfield, was a highly intelligent woman and made up for a lack of formal

education by being a voracious reader.[58] For all these reasons, Mansfield possibly felt freer in expressing opinions to her that she would be wary of saying to somebody else.

Yet, a closer look at the collection of Mansfield's letters written from Switzerland tells a slightly different story. The wide range of correspondents from previous years had dwindled significantly. She was no longer in contact with Virginia Woolf; her formerly warm relationship with D.H. Lawrence was in ruins after his hateful break-up with Murry over an unpublished article in the *Athenaeum*, and even her great friend Koteliansky[59] does not feature in this period's batch of letters. By this time, apart from her agent and some other random one-off correspondents, there were only two other people she regularly wrote to, the painter Dorothy Brett and Murry's younger brother Richard. So, although Countess Russell and Ottoline Morrell would have been the ideal recipients of such letters in any case, instead of being the only two from a long list of others, they constituted the majority of all those Mansfield had left. We can only speculate whether and in what way Mansfield would have acknowledged her enthusiasm to others, especially to Woolf, whom, not long ago she had chastised for being "Jane Austen up-to-date."[60]

This last period is the highest point of Mansfield's admiration for Austen; whatever opinions she had previously held were modified after the weeks, possibly months, of intense reading. The review of *Night and Day* the year before shows a rather reserved admiration and respect, but in the seclusion of her mountain chalet Mansfield, turning her focus fully on Austen's novels,

[58] Miranda Seymour, *Ottoline Morrell: Life on a Grand Scale* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), 83. Seymour also states that Morrell's "intelligence was instinctive rather than academic, but she had a passion for knowledge and a retentive memory which stood her in excellent stead when she encountered the quick and effortlessly allusive minds of Bloomsbury a few years later." 62.

[59] Samuel Solomonovich Koteliansky (1880-1955) was a Ukrainian Jew who fled his country from pogroms and settled in London. He became a friend and collaborator of many modernists. He was one of Mansfield's dearest friends and her death was a serious blow to him. For a fascinating account of his life and connections with English intellectual circles see Galya Diment, *A Russian Jew of Bloomsbury. The Life and Times of Samuel Koteliansky* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2011). For a discussion of his joint translations of Russian authors (with both Woolfs, D.H. Lawrence and Mansfield herself) see Claire Davison, *Translation as Collaboration: Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and S. S. Koteliansky* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

[60] "A Ship Comes Into Harbour;" *CW* 3, 532.

admits there are “new adorable qualities” and an *improvement* “by keeping.” Most importantly, however, Mansfield talks about Austen as being an influence on her own writing. Rather than seeing this as a meaningless and random remark, the third chapter of this book theorizes about the possible instances of this professed influence and the manner in which it manifested itself.

2. Bouquets, Boards and Nails: Mansfield Reviewing (Through) Austen

Admirers of Jane Austen would understand only too well the futile yet inescapable temptation to indulge in contemplating the "what-ifs" of their favourite writer's life or posthumous destiny; to speculate or at least sigh over some of those milestones that mark the moment when, if only a different choice had been made or a different path struck, the outcome would have made all the difference. Or so some would like to believe. Apart from the most obvious one Jane Austen and Katherine Mansfield share, that of what if they both did not contract their respective illnesses and did not die well before their time, there are some others that reappear with great frequency and do not fail to elicit strong reactions.

In Katherine Mansfield's case one such milestone is her decision to accept an offer from her husband to act as a weekly reviewer of books for the *Athenaeum*. Such a decision in itself would not be in any way controversial; reviewing constitutes, after all, an integral part of the whole publication industry and it is only natural that a writer, especially an experimental one, uses it to formulate, voice and disseminate his/her own ideas and to enter into a discussion with his/her contemporaries. This is held even truer in modernism when the critical review essay became a major instrument of modernist self-fashioning, and was used by Mansfield's modernist peers to present more or less covert manifestos for their own writing in order to, as Hanson has it, "prepare and create the audience for their work."[1]

Besides, Mansfield was no novice to reviewing; she had a solid critical training from early on in her career when she co-edited *Rhythm* with Murry. As a matter of fact, the scrutiny of the most recent 2014 edition of her critical

[1] Hanson, Clare, " Introduction," in *The Critical Writings of Katherine Mansfield* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987): 9.

works (*CW* 3) reveals that her whole literary critical endeavour consists of only these two distinct stages of approximately three years each: it is what could be called the *Rhythm* period of 1911-1913 and the *Athenaeum* period of 1918-1920,[2] with roughly a five year gap between them.[3]

However, these two phases, to a large extent due to the circumstances of Mansfield's life, significantly differ; while the first one is acclaimed as her involvement in shaping the early manifestations of modernism, the other is often deplored not only as a bad decision but also as one which determined the future of all her critical works for many years to come. For it is no accident that, in stark contrast with similar undertakings of her contemporaries, Mansfield's critical essays have not been subject to much attention from scholars and were, for a long time, largely forgotten.[4]

The first reason for this disparity is, significantly, connected to what to some appears to be the main reason why she accepted the offer. She needed the money to finance the very expensive, oftentimes experimental, and generally ineffective treatments to recover from tuberculosis and be able to spend her time on writing the things she really wanted to write. However, she had no way of knowing she would not succeed and that at that point she only had four more years to live. With hindsight, it is understandable why spending almost half of those years reviewing other people's work when she could have written her own seems like a waste of time, something she ended up realizing herself at

[2] Although the *Athenaeum* period proper is only less than two years, there are some reviews for other periodicals such as, for example, the *Nation* written before, and together they fall roughly within the time-span of three years.

[3] These two collections of reviews are uneven in character as well as quantity. The first one is relatively meagre in size yet often seen as more significant than the considerably larger later lot, consisting for the most part of the *Athenaeum* reviews.

[4] It was through no omission on Murry's part though, as he did everything in his power to publish and promote Mansfield's work. He collected most of the reviews in 1930 under the title *Novels and Novelists*. Another attempt to revive them was Clare Hanson's 1987 selection *Critical Writings of Katherine Mansfield*, which came out just several years shy of the beginning of the revival of Mansfield studies in the 1990s. But it was not until 2014 that the full extent of her critical endeavours was revealed in the third volume of *The Edinburgh Edition of the Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield* (*CW* 3), that, alongside her poetry and translations, for the first time ever collected her critical essays and reviews in their entirety, including the ones that were attributed to her.

the end, writing to Murry: "isn't it grim to be reviewing Benson when one might be writing ones own stories which one will never have time to write".[5]

What is more, the very illness that necessitated the need for such professional compromises and financial solutions took her very young, and consequently Mansfield's critical achievements, such as they were, were much smaller in size compared to the ones of her contemporaries. While all her critical work was over by 1920, those of her fellow modernists were gaining momentum by the mid-twenties.

However, while this put her at a major disadvantage, it was not the only drawback. The more serious issue is connected to the works she was given to review. Only one look at the subjects of, say, Virginia Woolf's literary essays compared to Mansfield's shows the significant difference. While the first usually exercised her pen on the well-known writers that had stood the test of time, Mansfield's assignments often leave one puzzled and in need of a good encyclopaedia. It is, indeed, a mystifying question why Mansfield's own husband would tax his bright and creative wife's mind with a mediocre kind of literature most of the time, the few positive exceptions including the works of Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster or Joseph Conrad. His attitude is bewildering especially considering his repeated protestations of her intelligence and genius, both before and after her death, and the fact that he dedicated, after all, a significant part of his life to promoting her work. Even in a letter to her about these reviews he professes his high opinion of her reviewing skills and claims: "It's quite unlike – in a different class to – anything that's being done in the way of reviewing anywhere today" and adds that "as long as [her] novel page is there, there can't be a really bad number of the *Athenaeum.*"[6]

It is difficult to find an explanation that would justify this treatment or at least present it in a positive light. The best one can envisage is that Murry, seeing how she needed a steady income while mostly living abroad in search of milder climate, opted for quantity over quality and hoped she would find this

[5] 6 December 1920; *Letters* 4, 136.
[6] *The Letters of John Middleton Murry to Katherine Mansfield,* ed. Cherry Hankin, (London: Constable, 1983), 210.

kind of work relatively easy as well as profitable. Also, he needed the work done and done well and it was probably less complicated to ask his own wife rather than somebody else who could refuse the heavy workload or become finicky; that would necessitate the same amount of books be given to two or more people and the whole managing would become much more complex. And he could definitely rely on Mansfield to do it well in spite of all the challenges and that is what mattered to him when he decided to have the best literary periodical on the market.[7] This is, however, quite a feeble defence in light of many more or less obvious expressions of frustration that pepper her letters to him and to which he, apparently, turned a deaf ear, not heeding her appeals or veiled hints to give her more substantial work.

The other possible interpretation is that for all his professed admiration, he, a former Oxford undergraduate,[8] had reservations concerning her lack of sufficient intellectual sophistication and did not trust her further than reviewing the contemporary production where her fresh and unorthodox approach would not be that risky and could even be perceived as an asset rather than a disadvantage. Similar assertions have been made repeatedly, most recently by Kimber and Smith who indeed imply that Murry's reluctance to trust her with canonical authors was due to her having no academic qualification (*CW* 3, 425).[9] Thus the works on writers she cared about and could contribute greatly on remained unwritten or at best, sketched, in her letters to Murry, while she had no other choice but to practice her wit and intelligence mostly on authors and works that did not smooth the way towards recognition and inclusion of her critical works among the awareness of scholars in modernism.

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[7] T.S. Eliot himself expressed his very high opinion on Murry's approach to leading the *Athenaeum*: according to him Murry "had much higher standards and greater ambitions for literary journalism than any other editor in London". Qtd in Smith, "GUTS," 5.

[8] Murry, however, never graduated. He left Oxford before he could take his final exams. The education and scholarships that first meant a ticket out of his lower-middle class existence soon became a burden and an obstacle to his desired career as a writer. His parents blamed this decision (and at least partially correctly) on Mansfield, who did encourage him not to stay where he did not want to be. Jones, *The Story-Teller,* 150-151, 204.

[9] "Reviews: Introduction."

However, it does not follow that when the subject is dull or uninspiring, Mansfield's review of it is likewise. Quite the contrary, in spite of this major handicap, these reviews are well worth reading. For one, apart from her private correspondence and diaries, they remain the only insight into her theoretical opinions of literature. And as Jenny McDonnell has recently argued, the picture that is sometimes presented, of an ill woman plodding over piles of bad books to pay her bills, is misleading and Mansfield's work as a reviewer underestimated. According to her Mansfield "enthusiastically exploited the environs of the *Athenaeum* and its literary network as a forum in which to hone her craft".[10] McDonnell argues for Mansfield as a modernist short-story writer who used her reviewing work to find her place in a busy publishing world without compromising her quality; one that, in the second half of her career, aimed to fuse two impulses: finding a new form and being commercially successful. She thus "attempted to clarify an aesthetic approach that was simultaneously 'modernist' *and* commercially viable; and came to recognize the need to expand and reinvent an audience for this new fiction."[11]

And it is, indeed, true that, disregarding the level of quality of the book reviewed, she keeps asking and endeavours to answer the very valid and topical questions of the role of art, literature and the development and future of the novel and short story as genres, among others. She discusses forms as well as topics, particularly keen on showing that the post-war literature has a different role than the one written before, repeatedly chastising the authors for falling back on their previous patterns, writing what she will later sum up as "these little predigested books written by authors who have nothing to say".[12] But it is not the only saving grace of these reviews, if they ever needed one. They are above all wonderful texts; intelligent, witty, full of her signature humour and even, at times, displaying her talent for mimicry. As Smith has pointed out,

[10] Jenny McDonnell, "'Wanted, a New Word': Katherine Mansfield and the *Athenaeum,*" in *Modernism/modernity* 16, no. 4 (2009): 728.
[11] McDonnell, "Wanted, a New Word," 735.
[12] To S.S. Koteliansky, 17 July 1922; *Letters* 5, 225.

> "as with all Mansfield's writing, the reviews are full of imaginative insight and pleasure for the reader. Mansfield's ironic wit transforms novels that would be a trial to read into a source of entertainment."[13]

True, they do sometimes betray her patience wearing thin; the reader cannot fail to register frustration, fatigue, a sense of dreariness or "bubbling irritation"[14] quite unlike the enthusiasm and energy of the *Rhythm* texts. But it is hardly any wonder that the articles written in the first years of a career of a young woman poised to change the world with her writing and meant for a ground-breaking periodical contributed to by a group of young and radically innovative artists should read differently than the later ones, marked by loss, illness, and a near-apocalyptic experience of a war. It should also be noted that the production speed and frequency of publication of the *Athenaeum* texts could only be called gruelling.[15] In this light Mansfield's persistent fight for quality and strength to keep going at the best of her abilities is remarkable and really shows that she did it for much more than just financial security.

Apart from pondering over the formal aspects of fiction, she also stops to contemplate the very form of review, which, in spite of all innovation in other fields of literature and even in avant-garde journals, still pretty much retained its antiquated form. To make them more compatible with other contributions and to improve the *Athenaeum*, she suggested to Murry that

> all reviews [be] signed and all [be] put into the first person. I think that would give the whole paper an amazing liftup. A paper that length must be definite, personal, or die. It can't afford the 'we' – 'in our opinion'. To sign reviews, to put them in the 1st person stimulates curiosity, makes for correspondence , gives it GUTS. You see it's a case of leaning out of

[13] Smith, "GUTS", 16.
[14] Gerri Kimber and Angela Smith, "Reviews: Introduction," *CW* 3, 427.
[15] To exemplify this claim, it is enough to look at reviews published in November 1920, the last full month of her work for the *Athenaeum*. In the period from 5th till 26th November, reviews of altogether 13 books appeared and Mansfield's quickly expiring patience with the quality and amount, as well as mutual incompatibility of received works shines through the titles of two of the four texts which are, rather derisively, called "A Batch of Five" (5 November 1920) and "A Set of Four" (26 November 1920); *CW* 3, 683-687, 694-698.

> the window with a board and a nail, or a case bouquet, or a flag administering whichever it is and retiring sharp. This seems to me essential. Signed reviews are tonic: the time has gone by for any others.[16]

She advocated a less autocratic and detached, less seemingly objective approach, in favour of a very modern, subjective, direct attitude which, on the one hand, would mean open acknowledgement of the relativity of a critic's opinion, and on the other, would enhance discussion and be more lively. As Smith argues, she was in fact urging Murry to "return to the dynamism of *Rhythm*",[17] yet another proof that she was not just ticking off items on her list and waiting for her paycheck, but that even at this stage, literature and writing prevailed over everything, even health and financial concerns. Although from the fact that she did not cease using the "'we' – 'in our opinion'", Murry was not entirely in agreement with her or not willing to risk his reputation by being too radical; in all other respects, however, she was true to her persuasion, signed most of her reviews and, more importantly, had the guts to keep administering the boards with nails or bouquets, depending on the work under scrutiny, with her sharp wit, economic means of expression, creative use of extended metaphors, and excellent structure.

Her commitment to this very modern approach to reviewing is admirable not only because of the advantages it brings to the readers and the overall quality of the paper, but even more importantly because of all the drawbacks it means for her and other reviewers themselves. It is no wonder she talked about the necessity of having "guts" and that all capitalized; a reviewer bereft of the shield of anonymity and an illusion of objectivity is necessarily left vulnerable and open to personal attacks and accusations of bias from disgruntled authors and especially in a relatively small world of English avant-garde writers in which everybody knew everybody and unwelcome opinions could and often did have personal consequences. But if there is anything that resonates through all Mansfield's critical works, it is the utmost importance she

[16] 5 December 1920; *Letters* 4, 135.
[17] Smith, "GUTS", 6.

assigned to honesty and truth in art. She was more likely to be forbearing towards an inferior writer who showed genuine effort or enthusiasm, even if misplaced, than a major one whom she thought was pretentious or merely riding the fashion wave. In all her assessments of the works of her fellow writers, as the following examination of two reviews illustrates, she was doing her best to offer the kind of criticism that best captured the essence of the work under scrutiny for her readers while at the same time present its author with an evaluation that the achievement deserved.

Jane Austen Manqué: Review of Night and Day

Some parts of this review and the circumstances behind it have been examined many times; they are routinely used as an example illustrating the uneasy and complex relationship between Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf. Furthermore, combined with an equally famous accompanying letter to Murry, they serve as a sort of Mansfield-manifesto of post-war literature. She, rather disappointed by Woolf's regress to traditional writing, allegedly vented her frustration in a way that many, including Woolf herself, considered too harsh.[18] Subtly exploiting the novel's recurring naval metaphor associated both with the protagonist Katharine Hilbery and her mother,[19] she likens it to a ship which is "sailing into port serene and resolute on a deliberate wind" (*CW* 3, 532).[20] Mansfield finds "her aloofness, her air of quiet perfection, her lack of any sign

[18] For example, Anna Snaith calls it a "rather scathing review," Steven Monte "Mansfield's onslaught".
Anna Snaith, "Night and Day," in *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 9 March 2001. http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=3287.
Steven Monte, "Ancients and Moderns in *Mrs. Dalloway*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (2000): 604.

[19] First, Denham, observing Katharine's arrival at the Kew Gardens for their meeting, makes this comment to himself: "Here she comes, like a ship in full sail" (*ND*, 346); later again comes Denham's perception of Mrs Hilbery: "From the distance of her age and sex she seemed to be waving to him, hailing him as a ship sinking beneath the horizon might wave its flag of greeting to another setting out upon the same voyage" (*ND*, 448); finally, towards the end of the book, Katharine and Mrs Hilbery have a discussion about the past and love life which is heavily relying on the ship imagery ending with Katharine's realization that her mother cannot really relate to her own situation: "the ship which Katharine had been considering seemed to put into harbour and have done with its seafaring." (*ND*, 508-9)

[20] "A Ship Comes into the Harbour", *Athenaeum*, 21 November 1919.

that she has made a perilous voyage – the absence of any scars" (*CW* 3, 532) unnatural for the post-war period and although she acknowledges the technical perfection, calling it "fresh, new, and exquisite, a novel in the tradition of the English novel," she immediately makes clear it should not be taken as a compliment: "In the midst of our admiration it makes us feel old and chill" (*CW* 3, 534).

The letter to Murry further clarifies, even more openly, her reasons for dismissing the novel. She calls it "a lie in the soul" and famously associates its failure, and consequently the failure of many other post-war novels, with lack of memory, since they, according to her, pretended "[t]he war has never been".[21] She does not suggest that the topic should be the only one possible, admitting her own inability to talk about the events of war directly;[22] she, however, is firmly persuaded that the new era requires the search for new forms of expression since the old ones are no longer usable and concludes her reasoning stating: "What *has* been stands, but Jane Austen could not write *Northanger Abbey* [now] – or if she did, I'd have none of her".[23]

While rather provoking and extravagant, this analogy between Woolf and Austen in the letter is indirect, made in the form of juxtaposition and left tantalizingly without any further comment; it is, however, made explicit and given a fair deal of attention in the review. Yet although the comparison itself never fails to find its way into any discussion about the review, the novel it critiques, or the relationship between Mansfield and Woolf, it has not yet been properly analysed and the significance of the Austen connection and the large part of Mansfield's review which is dedicated to examining it is summarily overlooked, and that despite the many fascinating questions it raises.

The following analysis of this heretofore rather neglected aspect of the review is made taking into account two other texts, to a higher or lesser degree

[21] To J. M. Murry, 10 November 1919; *Letters* 3, 82.
[22] As she claims, she is not able to talk about such things as war and death directly: "I couldn't tell anybody *bang out* about those desserts. They are my secret. I might write about a boy eating strawberries or a woman combing her hair on a windy morning and that is the only way I can ever mention them. But they *must* be there." To J.M. Murry, 16 November 1919; *Letters 3,* 98; emphasis in original.
[23] *Letters* 3, 82; emphasis in original.

connected to it: notably Frank Swinnerton's extensive, two part article published in the *Athenaeum* in September 1919[24] shortly before Mansfield was given Woolf to review; and less importantly and with a bit of speculation, an unsigned review of *Night and Day* entitled "A Tragic Comedienne" published in *Nation* which Woolf attributed to Robert Lynd,[25] but Kimber and Smith include among Mansfield's critical texts.[26] It is of particular interest not only for its similarities to the *Athenaeum* signed review, but also because it too makes the connection between Woolf and Austen, albeit a much briefer one.

The section of "A Ship Comes Into the Harbour" that deals extensively with Austen begins with Mansfield's claim that it "is impossible to refrain from comparing 'Night and Day' with the novels of Miss Austen." According to her there are moments when "one is almost tempted to cry it Miss Austen up-to-date" (*CW* 3, 532). Oddly enough she does not follow by mentioning at least a single particular one of those moments, even though there would be many to choose from. *Night and Day,* after all, bears more than a passing resemblance to Austen's novels, a point made many times since by various other critics as well.[27]

First of all, Woolf's humour, dry wit, the charming absurdity of some of her characters, especially the minor ones, is the most obvious example. Some of her sentences could very well have been written by Austen, as, for example, her deadpan characterization of Mrs Hilbery:

> Mrs Hilbery would have been perfectly well able to sustain herself if the world had been what the world is not. She was beautifully adapted for life in another planet. (*ND*, 40)

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[24] Frank Swinnerton, "Jane Austen I," *The Athenaeum* (5 September 1919): 838-840; "Jane Austen II," (19 September 1919): 906-908; hereafter abbreviated as FS I and FS II.
[25] Robert Wilson Lynd (1879-1949) was an Irish writer and essayist.
[26] Anon. "A Tragic Comedienne," *Nation* (15 May 1920); *CW* 3, 599-602.
[27] See, for example, Jane de Gay, *Virginia Woolf's Novels and the Literary Past* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 48-53; Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land,* III. (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 19; Jane Marcus, "Enchanted Organs, Magic Bells: *Night and Day* as Comic Opera," in *Virginia Woolf, Reevaluation and Continuity*, ed. Ralph Freedman (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980), 97-122.

Similarly, the overall plot structure, and some incidents in the story are reminiscent of *Pride and Prejudice* in particular, especially the moment when Ralph Denham reveals his love to Katharine. It evokes Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth in the fact that until then neither heroine is aware of the man's true feelings and instead believes his attention is only an expression of disdain. The following conversation from *Night and Day* between Denham and Katharine could very well happen with the other couple too:

> "I thought that you criticized me – perhaps disliked me. I thought of you as the person who judges –"
> "No, I'm a person who feels." (*ND*, 314)

This parallel is reinforced by an identical action that both heroes perform after this conversation, which is that they both write a letter to their beloved.

Mrs Hilbery, although learned and more intelligent, is in many ways analogous to Mrs Bennet; her general absurdity and at times annoying habits require fortitude not only from her daughter and the reader, but apparently her husband too, as he is, similar to Mr Bennet, mostly stationed in his library. For his part, Mr Hilbery is also more interested in his books than in sorting out a family crisis, which, just as in *Pride and Prejudice,* involves a family member's scandalous out-of-wedlock co-habitation.

There are also moments in Woolf's novel, especially those connected to Mary Datchet and her unrequited love of Denham, that echo Austen's emotional sobriety and detachment clashing with the extravagant orgasmic metaphors used in the Gothic novels of her contemporaries or by her Victorian critic Charlotte Brontë:

> If love is a devastating fire which melts the whole being into one mountain torrent, Mary was no more in love with Denham than she was in love with her poker and her tongs. (*ND*, 136)

And finally, there is Woolf's unmistakable nod to Jane Austen's legendary practice of hiding her writing with blotting paper whenever somebody entered the room. Katharine Hilbery, not wanting her humanities-oriented family to know of her occupation with mathematics and astronomy, is described as slipping "her paper between the leaves of a great Greek dictionary which she had purloined from her father's room for this purpose" every time she hears steps on the staircase (*ND*, 42). What is more, as the narrator reveals that Katharine does not understand Greek, this moment appears to be the germ of Woolf's most famous works touching upon the issues women artists face in a patriarchal society: "On not knowing Greek" and *A Room of One's Own*, which, incidentally, also include Jane Austen as an important element of their discussion.

Mansfield, however, pays attention neither to the humour nor to the resemblances in plot or structure, but focuses solely on Woolf's style of writing. In this respect, Swinnerton's largely appreciative discussion of Austen[28] in general and all six of her novels in particular, although probably not entirely responsible for her idea to compare Woolf and Austen, seems to go a long way in helping to elucidate the direction of Mansfield's thoughts and possibly explains the otherwise rather disconnected remark about *Northanger Abbey* in the letter.

Mansfield sees *Night and Day as*

> extremely cultivated, distinguished and brilliant, but above all – deliberate. There is not a chapter where one is unconscious of the writer, of her personality, her point of view, and her control of the situation. We feel that nothing has been imposed on her: she has chosen her world,

[28] Swinnerton begins his article by claiming that Austen's novels are not necessarily greater than any others but wiser and definitely unlike any others. They portray intensively very simple forms of domestic life, but in spite of that "permit of a highly complicated series of emotional relationships." Although they seem to drift and be about small things, he maintains it is not true and their simplicity is only deceptive. They are the product of a nature gifted with imagination, rich in judgement, "nature strong in its power of general conception, or sense of form, than [...] that of any previous English novelist." He considers the novels to be the embodiment of Henry James' definition of art as "dignity and memory and measure ... conscience and proportion and taste, not to mention strong sense too." (FS I, 838).

> selected her principal characters with the nicest care, and having traced a circle round them so that they exist and are free within its confines, she has proceeded, with rare appreciativeness, to register her observations.

"A Tragic Comedienne", which is equally focused on the writing style and choices of the author, makes a very similar point when it claims that "we rejoice more in the accessibility of Mrs Woolf's mind than in her story" (*CW* 3, 602).

This emphasis on the presence of the author echoes Swinnerton's main argument in the first part of the article where he divides Austen's novels into two groups,[29] not solely based on their order of composition, and the significant time gap that separates them, but also on the gradually decreasing presence of Austen's self-portraiture in them, what he calls "the need for personal exemplification which young novelists feel" (FS I, 839), suggesting that in *Pride and Prejudice* Austen is present in Elizabeth Bennet, and in *Sense and Sensibility,* keen to avoid repetition, fell upon the secondary characteristics of her own character in the "shrewd seriousness" of Elinor. *Northanger Abbey*, however, seems to him to be "somewhat bereft of her own support", only partially manifesting herself in the "nonsense of Mr. Tilney" (FS I, 839). Here Austen is "much further back from her sympathetic character, objective almost to the point of criticism" than in the previous two novels. As he sees it, in her other three novels, she is no longer portraying herself and it makes them in consequence "much more mature, less lively and effervescently satirical, and very much more analytic" (FS I, 839-840).

At this point, it could be argued that Mansfield's observations are inconsistent as *Northanger* Abbey, which she mentioned in the letter, is, according to Swinnerton, the least affected by this presence of author from the first group of novels. It is, however, necessary to remember that Mansfield did not use the comparison with this particular novel in her review, and that *Pride and Prejudice*, which *Night and Day* resembles the most, is, according to

[29] He orders them according to the sequence of their first being written, not revised or published; thus *Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility*, and *Northanger Abbey* form the first group; *Mansfield Park, Emma,* and *Persuasion* the other.

Swinnerton, the most personal. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, the reasons for including *Northanger Abbey* in the letter are based on a different part of Swinnerton's argument.

Returning to the quote above, there are other interesting issues concerning Woolf's alleged similarity with Austen and what Mansfield thought about both their styles. The reference to Woolf carefully choosing her world and tracing circles around her characters indicates that Mansfield is alluding to Austen's reputation for restricting herself into a limited and closed world of her own knowledge. This is upheld further in the review where she implies Austen and Woolf do not correspond only in this aspect, but also in their restrained and sober approach to writing:

> As in the case of Miss Austen's novels, we fall under a little spell; it is as though, realizing our safety, we surrender ourselves to the author, confident that whatever she has to show us, and however strange it may appear, we shall not be frightened or shocked. Her creatures are, one might say, privileged; we can rely upon her fine mind to deliver them from danger, to temper the blow (if a blow must fall), and to see their way clear for them at the very last. (*CW* 3, 533)

In linking this aspect of Woolf and Austen, but also in the way she verbalized it, mimicking the slow, deliberate style of Woolf's text, Mansfield revealed not only her famed shrewd observation talent, but equally and more importantly, the instinctive understanding of the way the novel was written even though she had no inkling why. It seems difficult to imagine that Mansfield's displeasure over the book would be so great or her expression of it so cutting, had she known that Woolf wrote it as therapy after a serious mental breakdown.[30]

[30] She described it in a letter to Ethel Smyth, Thursday, 16 October 1930: "I was so tremblingly afraid of my own insanity that I wrote Night and Day mainly to prove to my own satisfaction that I could keep entirely off that dangerous ground. I wrote it, lying in bed, allowed to write only for one half hour a day. And I made myself copy from plaster casts, partly to tranquillise, partly to learn anatomy. Bad as the book is, it composed my mind, and I think taught me certain elements of composition which I should not have had the patience to learn had I been in full flush of health always." *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Collection.*

Mansfield never got to learn this fact, just as Woolf, for a long time, did not entirely grasp the seriousness of Mansfield's condition and as a result of this they, further wounded by gossip within their respective circles of friends, grew apart.

Mansfield's intuition, however, was unerring and she astutely interpreted what the novel was doing: clinging to structure, borders, causality, and common sense in resistance to disorder, chaos, uncertainty and the illogical nature of both the war and mental illness. In linking *Night and Day* with Austen's novels, she also touched upon their respective therapeutic potential; Austen's works were, after all, "prescribed" as reading for seriously shell-shocked soldiers, because it was believed that for those "whose minds were shattered by dynastic history, the famously limited dimensions of Austen's fictional world could feel rehabilitative; her parlours could feel manageable; her very triviality could feel redemptive".[31]

So far in the review, Mansfield shows where she thinks Woolf and Austen are alike. There is one slightly enigmatic statement apparently in favour of Woolf over Austen before Mansfield goes on to elaborate on what she sees as Woolf's deficiencies face to face with her more famous literary predecessor. The statement reads as follows: "It is the measure of Mrs. Woolf's power that *her* 'happy ending' could never be understood as a triumph of the heart over the mind" (*CW* 3, 533; emphasis added). This seems to indicate that for Mansfield, Austen, in spite of her neoclassical sobriety and emphasis on the healthy balance of reason and emotions, did not manage this in all her novels, and that in at least one of her endings the heart won over the mind. She could have meant what she as well as Swinnerton thought to be "the least perfect" of the six, *Northanger Abbey,* or, as part three of this book contemplates, possibly even *Emma.*

This perceived small shortcoming, however, does not appear as serious as the ones she sees Woolf displaying when compared to Austen:

[31] Claudia L. Johnson, "The Divine Miss Jane: Jane Austen, Janeites, and the Discipline of Novel Studies," *Boundary 2*, 23, no. 3 (1996): 154.

> But whereas Miss Austen's spell is as strong upon us as ever when the novel is finished and laid by, Mrs. Woolf's loses something of its potency. What is it that carries us away? With Miss Austen, it is first her feeling for life, and then her feeling for writing; but with Mrs. Woolf these feelings are continually giving way the one to the other, so that the urgency of either is impaired. While we read we scarcely are aware which is uppermost; it is only afterwards, and especially, when recalling the minor characters, that we begin to doubt. (*CW* 3, 533)

The repeated references to Austen's "spell" match almost perfectly the late 19th century attitudes or rather, as Claudia Johnson has it, "platitudes [...] which make up a large part of Victorian commentary on Austen"[32] and in some form survive even to this day.[33] Mansfield seems to suggest that for her, as indeed for many others, after analysing all the rational reasons why Austen was a great author, there remained an element of the unknown, some sort of unexplainable magic, an "intangible something" and "undefinable charm"[34] that caused her to be so successful, even over equally technically accomplished writers. Alternatively, however, Mansfield did not necessarily have to subscribe to this belief herself, she might have been just strengthening the whole point of her review: her persuasion about the obsolescence of Woolf's method, by reverting to the matching kind of anachronistic criticism and terminology. In both cases, she would be paying Woolf a small compliment, as according to her, she possessed the same quality as Austen, albeit not yet fully realized.

Mansfield surmises that a large part of Austen's appeal lies in the fact that her striving for technical perfection never overshadows her ability to tell a story, that her writing is seamless, appears effortless and natural while Woolf does not entirely accomplish this. Her sentences are beautiful, brilliant but the text does not always flow naturally, and the formal aspects of writing get in the

[32] *JACC,* 69-70.
[33] For an extended discussion of the "Victorian" Austen see chapter "Jane Austen's Magic" in *JACC*.
[34] Constance Hill, "Introduction," in *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends* (London and New York: John Lane,1902), qtd. in *JACC,* 69.

way of storytelling. What is more, the novel's universe is far from being as well functioning as Austen's:

> We have the queer sensation that once the author's pen is removed from them [the minor characters] they have neither speech nor motion, and are not to be revived again until she adds another stroke or two or writes another sentence underneath. Were they shadowy or vague this would be less apparent, but they are held within the circle of steady light in which the author bathes her world, and in their case the light seems to shine at them, but not through them. (*CW* 3, 533)

Here again, Mansfield's assessment corresponds with Swinnerton's ideas, more particularly the analysis of *Emma* which, according to him is "by far the most brilliant, the finest exhibition of its author's restrained wit, and the novel containing the most varied portraits" (FS II, 907). He sees it as a display of "group community" and a propos of the minor characters he shrewdly observes:

> They interest us, certainly, and divert us; but the stuff of the book, its texture, and the feeling it gives us of absolute first-hand reality, is due to something besides the finished exemplification of character. It is remarkable how closely all these diverse persons are bound together, how they affect one another, and how the intricate relationships, recoils, and attractions, are all made a part of the web that holds our attention, of the picture that deepens with each page in our consciousness and our memory. (FS II, 907)

Swinnerton's assessment paints the novel as a well-oiled, well-working machine in which all the parts are interdependent, working and moving even if the attention is not on them. To the contrary, according to Mansfield, *Night and Day* fails to achieve this level of technical excellence, as the minor characters do not fit naturally into the narrative and feel forced. Making further use of Swinnerton's remarks, not all Woolf's characters are connected by "the

fine threads" (FS II, 907) that would create the sense of community and reality, and, unlike Austen, her knowledge of character is not sufficient enough to enable her to "present it as idiosyncrasy" without caricature (FS II, 907).

The other part of this critique of minor characters is no less intriguing. The naval metaphor framing the whole review is not the only device Mansfield borrows from Woolf only to turn it against her. The image of the "circle of steady light" is as much an allusion to the attention Woolf gives her characters as it is to the constant emphasis on lights in the novel itself and, yet again, to her attempts at "tempering the blow", that is at deliberately restricting the darkness of her fictional world. Interestingly, this is another element that links this review with the unsigned one which goes as far as suggesting that Woolf "could more fitly have called her book 'Nighlight & Day,' for the intensity and the fears of night have been shut out" (*CW* 3, 600).

The claim that the minor characters are neither shadowy nor vague is yet another comeback from Mansfield, this time challenging Mary Datchet's observation that her colleagues Mr. Clacton and Mrs. Seal are "in the guise of shadow people, flitting in and out of the ranks of the living – eccentrics, undeveloped human beings, from whose substance some essential part had been cut away" (*ND*, 276). Mansfield is as good as saying that Woolf is contradicting herself and, although asserting they are like that, did not manage to present them accordingly.

Finally, in declaring that the light "shine[s] at them, but not through them", Mansfield further accentuates that she believes them to be caricatures rather than real people. While she herself started off writing characters like these, especially in her *In a German Pension* stories,[35] very soon she replaced the flat figures designed to stand in the spotlight only to be mocked by rounded individuals that, even in the worst cases, reflect the complexity of humanity and elicit respect or at least compassion. She holds that characters, even the minor ones, should not serve only as a means of entertainment, but be the

[35] It was Mansfield's first collection of short stories, first published in 1911 by Stephen Swift, London. Although it had very good reviews and sold well, Mansfield never allowed its reprint during her lifetime.

bridge to some higher knowledge, the lens through which the light shines and illuminates the truth about human behaviour and personality.

At this point the part of the review directly comparing Woolf and Austen ends, and follows the retelling of the story and the damning concluding statement implicitly delegating the novel to the depths of history and out-dated literary production. The last paragraph of the review registers Mansfield's surprise at the very existence of this kind of novel in this time and age and returns to the image of the novel as a ship:

> We had though that this world was vanished for ever, that it was impossible to find on the great ocean of literature a ship that was unaware of what has been happening. (*CW* 3, 534)

At first sight, the sentence might appear rather confusing to a reader knowledgeable of Mansfield's work and early 20th century literary scene. Firstly, the reference to the vanished world immediately conjures up Mansfield's most acclaimed works, the so-called New Zealand stories returning to her Antipodean and decidedly Victorian childhood, which are exactly that, the records of a time and world vanished. Mansfield, however, does not speak about the temporal or spacial setting of Woolf's novel, but the form it took. The epitome of the story about the vanished world, and one of Mansfield's masterpieces, *Prelude*, typeset by Woolf herself and published by the Hogarth Press in 1917, is her proof that one can in fact return to the past but present it in a thoroughly innovative manner, way different to that of the pre-war aesthetics. All evidence suggests that Woolf indeed heeded Mansfield's rebuke and it was *Prelude* she took as an inspiration for her further work as one of her following novels, *To the Lighthouse*, is on many levels similar to Mansfield's modernist reimagining of her early years.[36]

Secondly, the quotation appears to belie its core assertion; having reviewed a large number of books that stayed happily stuck in the pre-war

[36] For a thorough discussion of these two works see Smith, *A Public of Two*, 91-110.

patterns, as she herself complains in the letter to Murry after all, Mansfield knew very well that the "great ocean of literature" was in fact teeming with the traditional sort of production and she had surely no illusions about it stopping anytime soon. Unless, by the great ocean, she did not mean the vast expanse of the publication industry that included all sorts and standards of writing, but an ocean of *great* literature, in which case she was paying Woolf a backhanded compliment, telling her she considered her great at the same time as announcing she did not expect her to betray her potential by putting forward a novel like that.

Mansfield's review thus suggests that there were two disappointments for her in reading *Night and Day:* the first was the betrayal of the new approach that she must have felt as acute after such a promising beginning; the second that, even if she took and read it as a traditional novel, Austen-like, it did not even attain the charm and standard of Austen's fiction. Consequently, for Mansfield *Night and Day* was a double failure: first as a modern novel, second as a traditional one.

Most of the above, however, does not really elucidate the letter remark about *Northanger Abbey*. Although there seems to be a general agreement that *Night and Day* is the least attractive of all Woolf's novels,[37] for the same reason Mansfield dismissed it, that is, for its traditional character, putting the much longer, technically more elaborate, and for all its humour and whimsical irony a much more serious book alongside *Northanger Abbey* seems to be wide of the mark. As indicated earlier, there are more resemblances to *Pride and Prejudice* than any other Austen's novel, and its slow, detailed, deliberate and plodding progression is rather like that of *Mansfield Park*.[38]

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[37] As Robin Truth Goodman rather boldly states, "[i]f scholars studying Virginia Woolf agree on one thing, it is that *Night and Day* is a bad book." She then proceeds to illustrating the critics' different interpretations of this "badness", including Mansfield's assessment, and suggests that the best the novel can hope for is being presented as a training ground. Robin Truth Goodman, "Woolf and Women's Work: Literary Invention in an Obscure Hat Facto," in *Literature and the Development of Feminist Theory,* ed. Robin Truth Goodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 69.

[38] It is rather ironic as Woolf considered Mansfield Park difficult to read and digest, claiming she read it "two words at a time". Letter to Marjorie Joad, *LVW,* 2 February 1925. De Gay, however, makes quite an extensive argument about *Night and Day* being "a cross-cast version of *Mansfield Park*." *Virginia Woolf's Novels and the Literary Past*, 48-53.

However, Mansfield did not say anything about *Night and Day* being *like Northanger Abbey*. She just put them side by side mostly to create a dramatic effect and emphasize, as strongly as possible, her displeasure and persuasion that *Night and Day* is a relic of the past that a writer of Woolf's calibre should be ashamed to bring out, just as Austen would be, knowing that an unrevised work of her early years made it to publication. The difference between the two, though, is that while Austen had no say in what happened to her text after her death, for all that Mansfield knew, Woolf went this path willingly, something that she, unaware of her colleague's struggle, could not understand.

Mansfield, in her letter communication with Murry, relies on the fact that he would connect her remarks with Swinnerton's article elaborating upon the perceived deficiencies of, what he emphatically claimed to be "the least perfect in construction as in matter", "the least profound" and "the weakest as it is the slightest of all" Austen's novels.[39] Her statement would never be dramatic enough if she used any other of her works, as to her, Murry, and at that time possibly most readers, *Northanger Abbey* was tolerated only as a "literary toddler,"[40] a juvenile whim of an author who proved in her other works she could really write.

There are, however, some other interesting assertions in Swinnerton's discussion that might have made Mansfield think about the parallel between Woolf and this particular novel. Towards the end of the first part, he maintains that *Northanger Abbey*, coming as it does at the moment when her two distinct writing periods break, "marks a turning-point in her method" (FS I, 839-840).

[39] He implies that this was partly due to it not being revised by the author prior to the publication. Frank Swinnerton I, 839. *Northanger Abbey* was first sold for publication to Crosby under its original title *Susan* in 1803, yet never published. Austen recovered the manuscript in 1816 and was making revisions while at the same time working on *Persuasion*. On 13 March 1917 she wrote to her niece Fanny: "Miss Catherine is put upon the Shelve for the present, and I do not know that she will ever come out." *Letters of Jane Austen*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 333. For a long time the opinion of the novel very much coincided with that of Frank Swinnerton, with an example of D.W. Harding much later claim that "the burlesque of the Gothic is too heavy handed" and that some parts of the novel are "very much school magazine humour." *Regulated Hatred*, 129.

[40] Susannah Carson, "Reading *Northanger Abbey,*" in *A Truth Universally Acknowledged: 33 Great Writers on Why We Read Jane Austen,* ed. Susannah Carson (New York: Random House, 2009), 37.

But while Austen turned to writing technically better and more elaborate works, even though less effervescent, Mansfield was possibly afraid Woolf was, after a very promising beginning, turning back towards the safer, less experimental prose. Mansfield read and liked Woolf's *The Voyage Out*[41] and some of her short stories; one of which, the thoroughly experimental "Kew Gardens", she reviewed positively for the *Athenaeum* in 1919.[42] While Mansfield was still residing in London, they met and discussed art and literature, and these encounters made both of them intrigued and feeling, as Mansfield expressed it, that they were "very nearly after the same thing."[43] Mansfield felt Woolf was at the crossroads wielding a great potential, but fearing that with *Night and Day* she was turning away from the right direction.

There is one more remark in Swinnerton's article that could have possibly tempted Mansfield to put the two works in question side by side, and that is when he states that the weaknesses of *Northanger Abbey* are due to "its partly satiric conception" (FS I, 840), a claim that resonates also in "A Tragic Comedienne", which perceives the main problem of *Night and Day* to be its two incongruous and constantly warring sides, the tragic and the comic. If it is, indeed, Mansfield who wrote the review, she regards the novel as "a witty comedy wrongly cast", where, yet again, Austen enters the picture when Katharine Hilbery is characterized as moving "through the sheltered places of the book with an air of tragedy", just like Balzac would "among Jane Austens" (*CW* 3, 599).

The following statement towards the end of the whole review could thus easily describe the authors of *Night and Day* and *Northanger Abbey* respectively, viewed through Swinnerton's and arguably also Mansfield's eyes:

> She has, we think, in writing pure comedy deliberately sacrificed part of her genius. She has entered into the artist's struggle with her material with one hand tied behind her. Luckily, in writing this handicap matters

[41] *The Voyage Out* was lent to her by Lady Ottoline Morell in the summer of 1916 in Garsington Manor. Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 383.
[42] "A Short Story," 13 June 1919; *CW* 3, 473-475.
[43] To Virginia Woolf, c. 23 August 1917; *Letters* 1, 327.

> less than in some other occupations. Mrs Woolf's talent is so splendid in its richness and fine in its quality that half of it will go as far as the talents of ten less gifted writers. (*CW* 3, 602)

These reservations about satire and comedy echo the *Athenaeum* review's similar concerns about the dangers of presenting characters for the sole purpose of mockery, of letting the light "shine at them, but not through them," having no deeper purpose than the entertainment value.

In the *Athenaeum* review, however, Mansfield chose to take a different path and instead of focusing on an imperfect and rather controversial analogy with *Northanger Abbey,* she decided to make a broader examination of the overall likenesses of Austen's and Woolf's styles and the ramifications her choice of method meant for the latter. This approach was less radical, comparably more constructively critical and had much lower potential of being insulting; for in spite of all her uncompromising directness, Mansfield did have a point and was not trying to be mean. That was not what Woolf thought though, at least not at first. What is more, for her, the overall negativity of the review was further aggravated by two circumstances: the writer she was compared to and the person of the reviewer. Mansfield was not somebody Woolf could easily dismiss as inconsequential; and she cared about her opinion and valued her art more than she was ever able to express while Mansfield was alive.[44] With Austen, Woolf had a similarly ambivalent relationship; she embraced her as much as she wanted to reject her, and as Mark A. Wollaeger argues, in order to distance herself from her Edwardian contemporaries, she felt the need to first "disentangle herself from Jane Austen."[45] It is no wonder that out of all the remarks Mansfield made, Woolf clearly resented the analogy with Austen the most, which is noticeable in her two recorded reactions. First she interpreted Mansfield's assessment as being described as "[a] decorous

[44] When Mansfield died Woolf acknowledged to her diary that she "was jealous of her writing – the only writing I have ever been jealous of. This made it harder to write to her; and I saw in it, perhaps from jealousy, all the qualities I disliked in her." *DVW,* 16 January 1923.
[45] Mark A. Wollaeger, "The Woolfs in the Jungle: Intertextuality, Sexuality, and the Emergence of Female Modernism in *The Voyage Out, The Village in the Jungle,* and *Heart of Darkness,*" *Modern Language Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (March 2003): 34.

elderly dullard [...]; Jane Austen up-to-date" and later returned to the topic somewhat sullenly maintaining she would "rather write in [her] own way of *Four Passionate Snails* than be, as K.M. maintains, Jane Austen over again." It is an indication of her distress for being thus criticized by a younger colleague whom she secretly admired, that she did not realize that it was not that much "Jane Austen over again", but rather "Jane Austen-manqué" that Mansfield had in mind. Mansfield's frustrated exclamation to Murry: "What *has* been stands," implies, after all, that Austen did well for her era, and that there is no fault with her method but with Woolf's misguided aspiration to apply it out of context and not mastering it so well at that.

It would seem that, in this case, Mansfield's desire to be "personal" in her reviews backfired. Or at least, she did not realize that her meaning of the word might be different to Woolf's. Mansfield was striving for reviewers to own their opinions just as the writers did their novels, and advocated a heated, involved exchange of ideas that would push both the writer and the reviewer to constantly reevaluate their stance and thus move towards better writing. Woolf, understandably, was unable to keep the debate and her reaction on the academic level, but took it literally personally, which, arguably, would not happen or not to such an extent, if she was unaware of the review's author.

As it was, Woolf as well as several of the following generations of literary critics influenced by her, believed Mansfield was motivated by spite or jealousy. Woolf, however, had probably more reasons than them to think so, having been supported by the opinions and consolations of her devoted husband, hearing the gossips of her friends, and having to battle her own insecurity about her work.

> K.M. wrote a review which irritated me – I thought I saw spite in it. [...] Leonard supposes that she let her wish for my failure have its way with her pen. He could see her looking about for a loophole of escape. "I'm not

> going to call this a success – or if I must, I'll call it the wrong kind of success".[46]

On the contrary, a literary critic devoid of personal and emotional investment, and not looking at the situation from the perspective of the decades of Woolf's acclaimed greatness and Mansfield's comparable obscurity, would discern that at that point in their lives, Mansfield did not have that much to be jealous of. True, she did envy Woolf what, from her vantage point, she perceived as her personal fortunes, especially the stability of her home and relationship with Leonard Woolf which were in stark contrast with her own itinerant lifestyle and Murry's immature and needy personality.[47] But in terms of their work, Mansfield was the one with the upper hand. She had already found her style, and all that being six years younger than Woolf. If anybody, it was Woolf who felt the need to be jealous, especially because she was far less sure of her direction and method than Mansfield and the traces of this appear well before she admitted it to herself and the world.

> So what does it matter if Katherine Mansfield soars in the newspapers, runs up sales skyhigh? Ah, I have found a fine way of putting her in her place. The more she is praised, the more I am convinced she is bad. After all, there is some truth in this. She touches the spot too universally for that spot to be of the bluest blood.[48]

She is rather anxiously trying to persuade herself about Mansfield's lack of quality based on the criterion of saleability as opposed to her self-righteous implication that *hers* is a more superior art, but naturally, as it is often the case with truly ground-breaking writers, misunderstood by the literary market. Woolf was great enough, once Mansfield was dead, to acknowledge the true nature of her reactions and the fact that *Night and Day* was, indeed, very much

[46] *DVW,* 28 November 1919.
[47] On the mutual envy between Woolf and Mansfield see Smith, *A Public of Two,* 36-37.
[48] *DVW,* 12 March 1922.

what Mansfield had said it was. Mansfield's review was thus vindicated and its detailed perusal shows that her assessment was meant as a constructive criticism, as fair and balanced as possible, even if perhaps a little bit too hard.

It has been stated repeatedly, that Mansfield's interactions with Woolf, their talks, letters and Hogarth Press' publication of *Prelude* had a profound impact on Woolf, and possibly nudged her in the direction of her distinctly experimental style.[49] Woolf admitted that with the loss of Mansfield, something would be forever missing from her life and that she would think about her till the end of hers. This turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy as the references to Mansfield keep reappearing in Woolf's letters and diaries, the last one recorded only a few weeks before her death. It seems, however, that there is another, so far unacknowledged, consequence of their relationship connected to the discussed review. It could be argued that Mansfield's bold analogy further fuelled Woolf's desire to distance herself from Austen and contributed to her later almost obsessive and constant reappraisal of Austen in the years following Mansfield's death. As if every time she mentioned or discussed Austen, she not only re-evaluated what made her a great author, what her flaws were, and what Woolf's position was with respect to both, but it was another way of answering to and remembering her one time rival Mansfield. Austen and Mansfield became Woolf's personal great ghosts, two women she could not help communicating with in her personal writings as well as her fiction.[50]

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[49] Sydney Janet Kaplan, for example, claims, "although she was six years younger than Woolf, Mansfield was, if anything, the more innovative writer at the beginning of their friendship." *Origins of Modernist Fiction*, 11. Smith argues that Woolf's earliest use of the stream of consciousness technique was in her short stories "Monday and Tuesday" published between 1917-1920, while Mansfield's first use of it is in "Feuille d'Album" published in 1917; "so if Virginia was imitating anyone it was Katherine." *A Public of Two*, 5. Robert Caserio claims that "Woolf owes much of the form and tone of her fiction about family life to Mansfield's stories about Mansfield's family – especially to *Prelude*; but the Woolf revival of the last thirty years [of the 20th century] has eclipsed the influence." R.L. Caserio, "The Mansfield Moment," *Western Humanities Review* 50, no. 4 (winter-spring 1997): n.p. Alpers suggests it is not only Woolf's fiction but also her famous diary that is due to Mansfield's appearance in her life: "The evidence is very strong that Katherine Mansfield in some way helped Virginia Woolf to break out of the mold in which she had been working hitherto. It happens that the week in which Katherine dined at Hogarth House and saw her page proof [of *Prelude*] was also the week in which Virginia began a new volume of her diary – or rather, in its proper sense began the regular keeping of her diary as we know it. *The Life of Katherine Mansfield,* 251-252.

[50] This claim builds on Smith's assertion that "Mansfield remained for Woolf a presence in absence, a faint ghost, throughout the years she survived her." *A Public of Two*, 29.

"True lovers": Review of Personal Aspects of Jane Austen

"Friends and Foes,"[51] the review of Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh's *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen,* begins the last month of Mansfield's writing for the *Athenaeum*. Unlike most of the works she was sent, this one is not a piece of literary fiction, yet it nevertheless fits with the significant amount of them with respect to its small consequence and dubious quality. Calling it a critical work would be a stretch; it is in fact a rather eccentric combination of dogmatic apologia of chosen aspects of Austen's character, scraps of memories of her relatives, drawings that reinforce the work's central effort to heavily romanticize its subject, and, of all things, a collection of charades written by various members of the Austen family, Jane Austen included. It in fact presents a rather uncanny similarity, if not entirely in form then definitely in spirit, with some of Murry's publishing ventures concerning Mansfield's papers after her death, which elicited rather disgusted responses claiming he "boiled Katherine's bones to make soup" and published her "wastepaper basket." [52]

The book is dedicated to "all true lovers of Jane Austen and her work" which, in the light of her argument, implies: to all those who see her through the eyes of her family, that is, as a perfect saint. Austen-Leigh categorically dismisses any negative assessment of her famous relative in an almost inquisitional way. There are for example passages in which she evaluates a contemporary PhD. thesis on Austen in France written by "Mlle. Villard"[53] which, according to her, is a good work and would serve as a standard on Jane Austen in France for many years although it contains misapprehensions of Austen's character. Austen-Leigh writes that it "must be desirable that correct

[51] *Athenaeum,* 3 December 1920, 758-9; republished in *NN*, 302-4 and *CW* 3, 698-700.
[52] Tomalin, *A Secret Life*, 241, 239-40.
[53] Léonie Villard. *Jane Austen, sa vie et son oeuvre, 1775-1817.* Annales de l'Université de Lyon. II. Droit, Lettres. Fascicule 31. 1915.

ideas of the writer of any English classic should be offered to the French nation"[54] and that those who are to say what is correct are

> those who are the most nearly concerned in seeing that justice is done to the personal character of Jane Austen, and who are best able to speak of it from authentic and unimpeachable testimony, [and] could hardly be excused if they failed to offer a protest[55]

against these misinterpretations. This part of the work further contains a note disclosing that

> the present writer is happy to state that she has received an assurance from Mlle. Villard that the misapprehensions relating to Jane Austen's character objected to in this chapter shall be revised and amended in any future edition of [her work].[56]

In the spirit of Austen-Leigh's frequent analogies between her great aunt's life and novels, one cannot refrain from comparing her style of dealing with presumed troublemakers with that of Lady Catherine de Bourgh who, when the situation required it, "sallied forth into the village to settle their differences, silence their complaints, and scold them into harmony and plenty" (*PP*, 115). And, indeed, this is what Mansfield implied when she declared that "[i]t seems almost unkind to criticize a little book which has thrown on bonnet and shawl and tripped across the fields of criticism at so round a pace to defend its dear Jane Austen" (*CW* 3, 698).

The overall tone of this review is completely different from the one on Woolf's *Night and Day*. While "A Ship Comes into Harbour" is an earnest discussion of literature, where irony can at best be suspected, "Friends and Foes" is playful, witty, and charmingly irreverent. Mansfield does not seem to

[54] Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh, *Personal Aspects of Jane Austen* (London: John Murray, 1920), 96.
[55] *Aspects*, 97.
[56] *Aspects*, 97 n.

take Austen-Leigh too seriously, but she displays traces of sympathy for such a fervent, even if ill-judged, profession of devotion. Yet in spite of all this, the review is well deserving of the attention it never received, not only because of the intellectual pleasure one can get from Mansfield's way of writing and the glimpse into her opinions on the place an author's life should have in literary criticism, but also because it, very interestingly, makes another connection, albeit an indirect one, between Mansfield, Austen and Woolf. As a matter of fact, although not acknowledged, Woolf, or rather her own review of *Aspects*, "Jane Austen and the Geese,"[57] looms as a major shadow behind it.

The similarities between the two reviews are so many that they could not possibly be explained as simple coincidences resulting from them critiquing the same book. There are parallels in tone, structure, choice of examples, and conclusions as well as omissions: neither comments on the appendices or charades. Mansfield's review can in fact be read not solely as a reaction to *Aspects*, but also as a revision of Woolf's review or a knowing wink in her direction, depending on how one gauges the level of seriousness of Woof's own assessment. Mansfield is modifying, clarifying, reacting to, or implicitly disagreeing with Woolf, strengthening some points and weakening others; the question just remains whether it is in a serious way to show how it could have been done better, or simply as a playful sharing of a secret joke.[58]

They both comment on their previous belief that Jane Austen was somehow exempt from the usual attacks of nasty critics. Woolf begins the review saying that "[o]f all writers Jane Austen is the one, so we should have thought, who has had the least cause to complain of her critics" (*JAG*) having admirers among novelists who highly praised her, yet this book showed her that "we were far too sanguine". (*JAG*) Mansfield, in her turn, claimed that for her "Austen exists in the imagination as a writer who has remained wonderfully remote and apart and free from the flying burrs of this work-a-day world" and

[57] "Jane Austen and the Geese", *TLS*, 28 October 1920. Hereafter cited in the text as *JAG*.
[58] David Dowling goes as far as claiming that Mansfield "borrowed – plagiarized" some of Woolf's expressions from her earlier reviews which he believes to have been "the result of her being a 'colonial' uncertain of the tenor and imagery in which to frame her reactions." David Dowling, "'Katherine Mansfield's Criticism: 'There Must be the Question Put'." *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, no. 6 (1988): 159.

that it "does come as a surprise to learn that so-called friends of hers have said these dreadful things" (698). But where Woolf's text might be interpreted as taking Austen-Leigh seriously, Mansfield's is blunt and obvious. Woolf acknowledges the "natural piety" of Austen's relative, just remarks that her concern about "the incorrigible stupidity of reviewers" she "cannot help thinking excessive", (*JAG*) thus legitimizing the endeavour although not the form it takes. Mansfield, on the contrary, altogether doubts "a need for such a journey" and, reacting to the "stupidity, nay, the downright wickedness of certain reviewers," asks: "begging Miss Austen-Leigh's pardon – who cares?" (698)

They both proceed to listing all the accusations that were laid at Austen's door and that Austen-Leigh sets out to "correct"; such as her not liking dogs, children and the poor, her alleged indifference to England, religion, her coarseness and coldness and pessimistic view of the family, to name but a few. Woolf simply names them as inanities that the critics, at this point compared to geese, were "hissing [...] in chorus" and then comments on Austen-Leigh's determination to "tak[e] each of the geese separately and wring[...] his neck" which is sometimes mistaken for Woolf's own position.[59] It is, however, not Woolf doing the wringing; she is rather suggesting Austen-Leigh's pedestrian treatment of the topic is as subtle as an outraged countrywoman's way with wayward geese, conspicuously reminiscent of Mansfield's image of a bonneted avenger strutting across the fields.

Mansfield's rhetorical question suggesting there is no point worrying about obviously irrelevant criticism is taken further; it is not only the admirers but authors themselves who should not care: "Can we picture Jane Austen caring – except in a delightfully wicked way which we are sure the author of this book would not allow", that people said all those things about her? Mansfield's imagined reply from Austen is: "Ah, but what about my novels?" (699), in fact suggesting the same thing Woolf's review culminates with: "We remember that Jane Austen wrote novels. It might be worth while for her critics

[59] As, for example, in Auerbach, "The Geese vs. the "Niminy Piminy Spinster," n.p.

to read them" (*JAG*). Both reviewers are persuaded that it is not the life but the work of art which should be discussed and evaluated by critics.

Both texts then discuss some of Austen-Leigh's arguments in particular, arguing that not all the claims are actually refuted, or at least not sufficiently. While they name mostly the same examples, they are not always in accord and emphasize different aspects. Woolf just glosses over the counter-arguments against some of the allegations, seeming to accept them, for example the one that disproves "she turned away from whatever was sad, unpleasant, or painful" (*JAG*). Mansfield, not necessarily attempting to blacken Austen's character, but at the same time unwilling to buy weak and unconvincing proofs, plays the devil's advocate and offers another possible interpretation of what Austen-Leigh perceives as an undeniable example of Austen's tenderness: her, Cassandra's and Martha Lloyd's joint care for a relative with measles:

> Well, that may go to prove that Jane was willing to face an unpleasant ordeal and to play her part, but we should not like our belief in her tenderness to depend on it. Does it not sound just a little grim? Might not a timid mind picture patient and pillows being shaken together; and as to escaping one's medicine, Cassandra and Martha hold one down, and Jane to administer something awfully black in a spoon…? (699)

Woolf as well as Mansfield finds another argument in favour of Austen equally weak, namely the one attempting to disprove the claims of her dubious morality. Both are positive that quoting Austen's statement "I am very fond of Sherlock's sermons" proves nothing. However, Mansfield does not leave it at that and is yet again more detailed and creative:

> stare at the sentence as we may, we cannot see an enthusiasm for sermons shining through it. It sounds indeed as though Sherlock's Sermons were a special kind of biscuit – clerical Bath Olivers – oval and crisp and dry. (699)

A brilliant example of her keen eye for symbolic representations, Bath Olivers summarizes in a nutshell how Mansfield deduces Austen's attitude to sermons from her rather uninspired statement. They are a kind of biscuit, hard, crisp and dry, just like the sermons and, although this is only implied, there is no sugar in them, nothing to make them sweet or their consumer really passionate or enthusiastic about them.

Another argument, which both reviewers dismiss as insufficient, is also connected to the question of morality, and it is the way Austen-Leigh reads Austen's novels. According to her, they are all connected by "one line of thought, one grace, or quality, or necessity [...]. Its name is – Repentance.[60] Further on, after analysing particular examples, she reiterates:

> Every one of them gives a description, closely interwoven with the story and concerned with its principal characters, of error committed, conviction following, and improvement effected, all of which may be summed up in the word "Repentance."[61]

Here Mansfield is equally reticent as Woolf and states: "What could be simpler? Yet we had never thought of it before" (699). Woolf more explicitly yet in a similar vein, denies the validity of such sweeping statements: "[t]he truth appears to us to be much more complicated than that" (*JAG*).

The last but one issue is very interesting, because it is given a completely different place in two similarly structured reviews. It is the question of Austen being or not being qualified to write about English gentry. Woolf mentions this particular point as the first in her discussion of examples, and quotes Austen-Leigh's enumeration of Jane Austen's illustrious relatives and "entirely concur[s]" with the conclusion that "Jane Austen was in every way well fitted to write of the lives and feelings of English gentle people" (*JAG*). Mansfield, on the contrary, places this discussion almost at the end of her list and while basically saying the same as Woolf, there is no doubt about the heavy irony in her words:

[60] *Aspects*, 68.
[61] *Aspects*, 78-9.

> No one, after reading of her paternal descent from the county family of Kentish Austens or of her maternal descent from the Leighs – a notable ancestor being Thomas Leigh, who in 1558 had the honour of receiving and preceding Queen Elizabeth, "carrying the sceptre before her Grace when she first entered the City to take up her residence in the Tower" – no one could dare say again that she was not qualified to write of the English gentry. (699-700)

It would indeed be very tempting to read this significant difference between the two reviews through arguably the most obvious bone of contention between Woolf and Mansfield that is often commented upon, namely their different social backgrounds, fostering Woolf's alleged (in)famous snobbery and the "little-colonial"[62] Mansfield's self-awareness facing the old history and rigid social stratification of the home country as opposed to the looser norms of the remotest colony. There can hardly be any doubt that Woolf, brought up in England with firmly established social layers, would have more understanding of Austen-Leigh's obvious anxiety to validate her great aunt and her family's claims of good breeding which a daughter of a self-made man[63] from a society in making must have found pretentious and ridiculous. Yet understanding does not necessarily mean endorsement, and it would be unfair to claim Woolf agreed where Mansfield laughed. It is true that Mansfield's ridicule is purposefully obvious, yet Woolf's ambiguous corroboration with Austen-Leigh invites an ironical reading as well. The fact that she makes no comment about the family pedigree but agrees only with the statement that Austen was able to write about her subjects, which, with respect to the bottom line of her review, returns back to the evidence in the novels itself, is telling. Furthermore, the

[62] Mansfield's famous assessment of herself when contemplating the cold shoulder she was often given by her Bloomsbury acquaintances. She sees herself as "the little colonial walking in the London garden patch – allowed to look, perhaps, but not to linger." *KMN* 2, 166.

[63] Although he left school at 14 and had no expected credentials apart from his skills, Mansfield's father Harold Beauchamp became one of the most important people in New Zealand; he was the president of the Bank of New Zealand, a friend of the prime minister, and was knighted in 1923. Jones, *The Story-Teller,* 14-15.

first place this argument is given does not necessarily indicate the order of importance for Woolf. She simply starts with what constitutes a large part of Austen-Leigh's introductory chapter, thus structuring her review accordingly. It is Mansfield who changes the order; what must have seemed to Woolf as just one of several shaky or absurd claims, was to Mansfield the ultimate nonsense. The long enumeration of venerable relatives and their various achievements, and the fact that Austen-Leigh believed such a venture to be necessary, warranted it to be highlighted and, although placed at the beginning in the original, got a climactic position in her text.

The last point of both reviews before the concluding statement concerns what one and the other equally considered to be the most valuable part of the book: quotations from twelve year old Austen's notes in her copy of Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England,* made public for the very first time.[64] Woolf, although once again asserting that these words are "useless [...] to confute the critics who hold that she was unemotional, unsentimental and passionless," nevertheless calls their inclusion "one thing for which we are grateful to her" (*JAG*). She is glad to have a glimpse of Austen's "natural voice" and that reminds her of the absurdity of critics' debating her life when they have her books, which she consequently prompts them to go and read.

Mansfield goes about it in a different way, yet with a similar result. With a heavy dose of irony, she agrees that "he would be an obstinate fellow who would persist in describing Jane Austen's disposition as calm, unemotional, passionless, after having read" the notes, but continues seriously, admitting that

> [t]hese fiery outpourings are the pleasantest reading of all, and we are exceedingly grateful to Miss Austen-Leigh for printing them for us. They do, indeed revive Jane Austen's own voice; we can separate them from the comment. For the truth is that every true admirer of the novels

[64] Peter Sabor, "Refashioning *The History of England:* Jane Austen and *1066 and All That,*" in *The Afterlives of Eighteen-Century Fiction*, eds. Daniel Cook and Nicholas Seager (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 276.

> cherishes the happy thought that he alone – reading between the lines – has become the secret friend of their author. (700)

Mansfield's famous concluding statement, returning once again from Austen's life to her work, does more than urge the readers to forget the former and concentrate on the latter. The crowding of the words "truth" and "true" echoes Austen-Leigh's frequent use of them, and suggests that Mansfield's statement is the final response to Austen-Leigh's arguments in general and to the dedication of the book in particular. Mansfield implies that the true admirers are not, as Austen-Leigh would have it, those who read an author's work according to the wishes of the family, or those who need to rely on biography to create their opinions on the novels, but those who establish a different kind of bond with the author, one based on the writing itself. For Mansfield the only "truth" about Austen and writers in general is that each admirer is entitled to their own interpretation and their own particular relationship which is not only secret but also personal and not subject to categorical scolding from an external source. The unintended major irony of this review is that, for all the work Murry spent on editing and publishing her words, he never truly read nor heeded them, at least not to such an extent as to realize he was doing exactly what she was telling everybody should not be done.

There is one more notable difference between the two reviews. Mansfield, unlike Woolf, refrains from passing any judgements on Austen as a writer and sticks strictly to the book she is reviewing. Woolf, in contrast, had not seemed to be able to refrain from making her opinion on Austen known, probably to make sure nobody would mistake her defence of Austen against the critics or, more accurately, her case against the necessity of defence against this sort of accusations, as her own unquestioning admiration. Remarking on Austen-Leigh's assertion concerning Austen's knowledge of the wider world, she suggests her works would have been better if she used that knowledge in her novels:

> Yet it is difficult to deny that had she been not only Jane Austen but

> Lord Byron and Captain Marryat into the bargain her works might have possessed merits which, as it is, we cannot truthfully say that we find in them. (*JAG*)

Mansfield's opinion of Austen is not expressed directly in this review, which, if nothing else, can be construed as the indication she did not feel the same amount of insecurity vis-à-vis the tradition Austen represented as Woolf and did not need to validate herself by disparaging Austen. But the overall treatment of the topic and the remarkably accurate concluding words indicate even more: they show that she was not an outside observer of the phenomenon Austen already represented, but spoke from her own experience. In Austen, she recognized a secret friend, a kindred spirit whose writings, just like hers, seemingly simple and easily accessible on the outside, offered layers of meanings and interpretations, basically enabling very different people to read and enjoy them.

Both of these reviews demonstrate that at this point Mansfield's view of Austen was still in some ways what could be called "Victorian" or traditional, what with the allusions to her "spell" and restricted scope, but they also show her genuine interest and investment in the topic which, arguably, whetted her appetite for further exploration of Austen's work and set the stage for a more modern perspective, and a time in which Austen is no longer just a point of reference, but someone Mansfield turns to as to a source of inspiration worthy of an experimental writer.

3. The Daughters of *Emma*: Mansfield Rewriting Austen

If one excludes the extremes, the opposite poles of unalloyed admiration and utter dislike, many of the early twentieth century reactions to Jane Austen's work share a common thread in making a clear distinction between the form and the content of her novels. While even the most ambivalent ones grudgingly acknowledge her formal artistry, it is the content that usually elicits negative or at least conflicting responses. This tension between the two aspects can be aptly illustrated by the example of Ezra Pound, who, on the one hand, claimed authoritatively in 1914 that

> [n]o one expects Jane Austen to be as interesting as Stendhal. A book about a dull, stupid, hemmed-in sort of life, by a person who has never lived it, will never be as interesting as the work of some author who has comprehended many men's manners and seen many grades and conditions of existence.[1]

On the other, however, he suggested to Laurence Binyon to "kick out every sentence [of his translation of Dante] that isn't as Jane Austen would have written it in prose".[2] On some level, the gap between the praise and dismissal of the same author could be at least partially construed as having been caused by the influence of the twenty-four years that separate the two quotes, and the arrogance and self-assuredness of the earlier one on the relative youth of its author; the tone, the radicalism, and the self-importance of the assessment match, after all, some others articulated on the topic by the modernists in the 1910s, including Murry's 1913 *Blue Review* article which, as mentioned earlier,

[1] Ezra Pound, "Modern Georgics," review of *North of Boston* by Robert Frost, *Poetry* 5, no. 3 (Dec. 1914): 129.
[2] 22 April 1938; *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound: 1907-1941*,ed. D.D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1971), 308.

compares Austen unfavourably with Stendhal in a very similar vein. However, Austen's reception in history throughout the twentieth century shows that this dichotomy between her writing style and the subject-matter of her novels is quite common. Austen is often perceived not only as somebody who wrote about what many, especially male intellectuals, saw as lesser lives, that is the lives of women, but that her already limited achievement in this respect was further impaired due to her unmarried state and alleged consequent lack of "relevant" experience. According to this position, for all her technical skill, due to this notable double handicap, she could never aspire to greatness.

Even though assessments of this kind sometimes tend to temper the blow of negative criticism by referring to elements of Austen's work using the words "perfect" and "perfection," they are not meant unequivocally positively and are often just a backhanded compliment. They denote the perfection of allegedly the less-important, feminine kind, perfection achieved at the expense of daring or risking doing something bigger and better. In this case some of Austen's own often quoted declarations, even if very likely not meant seriously, do not help her cause. It is especially the rather unfortunate, self-deprecating appraisal of her work to her young nephew, the famous "little bit [two Inches wide] of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour"[3] which was exploited by some to demonstrate that her art is that of a miniature, a drawing room pastime honed to perfection by constant practicing, but certainly nothing of major value. That is being put implicitly or explicitly in contrast with what is seen as the "real" art of a true "painter," whose grand tableaux of life, as both Murry and Pound suggest, are worth more and the occasional imperfections, rather than diminishing the final result, are taken as the marks of character adding to the greatness of the endeavour.

This belief in lesser and bigger topics in direct correlation with female and male interests and art, in spite of all the effort of feminist critics over the last half century, is still in no way a question of the past. Just like Austen and most other women writers, Mansfield herself was not spared criticism through

[3] To James Edward Austen, 16-17 December 1816; *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Fay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 323.

the prism of gender, and filed her own list of ambiguous claims on the perfection of her art. However, Rebecca West's dismissal of Austen as a writer due to the circumstances of her life, mentioned in the introduction, or Virginia Woolf's comment lamenting her not being more like Byron and Marryat, quoted in the previous chapter, seem to indicate that the perspective that Austen's limitations of scope are the main shortcoming of her art cannot be solely blamed on gender bias and patriarchal stereotypes in literature. It would appear that Austen's boundaries were too narrow even for some women or feminist writers.

At this point the question is whether Mansfield would understand and approach Austen's themes and scope in a similar way, and whether she, taking into consideration her familiarity with limitations of both the self-imposed and the involuntary kind, would be quite so critical in this respect as many of her contemporaries. Although, unlike Austen, Mansfield could hypothetically pass Pound's litmus test of having seen "many grades and conditions of existence" with distinction, what with her adventurous and peripatetic life, her experience was nevertheless limited or rather affected by her colonial origins, gender and illness.[4] So her experiences, even though plentiful, would not and, as some of her reception shows, did not pass for the right kind. What is more, her genre of choice, the short story, pivoted on the ability to work within a set of limits and a very restricted space considerably reminiscent of Austen's two inches of ivory that, instead of big bold brushstrokes, require fastidiousness, patience and careful handling. Furthermore, analogically with Austen's novels, short stories tend to give the false impression of lesser effort, as the writer often "produces little [obvious] effect after much labour" and therefore many consider them to be of smaller consequence. But most importantly, even more than that of any of her fellow modernists, Mansfield's works show that rather than shying away from marginal topics and characters, she was fascinated by them and thrived in the very thing Pound spurned in Austen.

[4] For the discussion of these topics, see, for example, Mary Burgan, *Illness, Gender and Writing: The Case of Katherine Mansfield* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) and Smith, *Literary Life*.

As a matter of fact, a modernist author's praise of novels full of action, that Henry James so fittingly called the "large, loose, baggy monsters,"[5] as opposed to Austen's comparably unadventurous stories that replace action with psychological insight, is either slightly schizophrenic or, in the pre-war period, rather shortsighted. Rather than an impediment, Austen's character's limitations could be viewed as anticipating the modernist interest in exploring the concepts of ordinariness, boredom and empty existence, even pre-dating Gustave Flaubert's influential 1856 novel *Madame Bovary* and being one of the reasons why Austen was justly claimed to be the first truly modern novelist in England.[6] In this respect, Mansfield was similar to her contemporaries, yet in some ways she went further than others, approaching these topics in her own distinct way and with unparalleled determination and insight. Despite having possessed the worldly experience that Pound considered the prerequisite for great literature, or maybe because of it, for Mansfield the "hemmed-in sort of life" of her characters was not a drawback but a welcome challenge, and she strove to present their stories and find beauty in their lives in spite of their perceived complete lack of sophistication, attraction or entertainment value. There are very few protagonists in modernist literature of such inconsequence, unimportance and utter loneliness as Mansfield's Miss Brill from the eponymous story, sisters Constantia and Josephine from "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," or the unnamed lonely narrator of her last finished work "The Canary," to name but a few of the most extreme examples. In this light, it might be claimed that, when, in her review of Woolf's *Night and Day*, Mansfield made negative hints about both Woolf's and Austen's carefully selected worlds with lines drawn around them, she did not so much disapprove of their depictions of characters limited by their circumstances, as of both authors' presumed reluctance to explore those limitations in a more daring or profound way.

In spite of all the three examples given above and Mansfield's predominant focus on women in her stories, it is not only they who are shown

[5] Henry James, "Preface" to the *Tragic Muse*, last updated 27 March 2016, https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/j/james/henry/j2tr/preface.html
[6] Lionel Trilling, "From *Emma* and the Legend of Jane Austen," 199.

as being oppressed by the limitations imposed on them by the world they live in. What is more, she does not give women any undue advantage over men to even out the injustice and inequality they experience in real life. Women are not portrayed invariably as victims and men as perpetrators; she perceives and depicts the variety of challenges that society presents for different kinds and types of people, often showing men as equally bound and imprisoned by the constraints, in a different way than women but in an equal measure. According to her, women are not only prey to the external pressures of the patriarchal society, but often also to their own unwillingness to break free even in cases when they can, what she once referred to aptly as the "self-fashioned chains of slavery".[7] Her men are also far from the victorious beneficiaries of the system created by and for them. They struggle with responsibility for their women and families, with expectations that society's image of masculinity imposes on them, and sometimes they, rather than hurting women on purpose or out of arrogance, cause them pain or suffering inadvertently, on occasion hurting themselves in the process. The symbolical representation of this, in many ways, dissimilar yet comparably painful situation of men and women appears in "At The Bay," during the conversation of two prime representatives of the female and male characters who do not fit into the mould their society presents as ideal: Linda Burnell, the distant wife and reluctant mother of children whose unwelcome conception she has no way of preventing listens to the complaints of her brother-in-law Jonathan Trout, who is suffocating in both his roles as a father and an office clerk:

> Tell me, what is the difference between my life and that of an ordinary prisoner? The only difference I can see is that I put myself in jail and nobody's ever going to let me out. That's a more intolerable situation than the other. For if I'd been – pushed in, against my will – kicking, even – once the door was locked, or at any rate in five years or so, I might have accepted the fact and begun to take an interest in the flight

[7] *KMN* 1, 110.

> of flies or counting the warder's steps along the passage with particular attention to variations of tread and so on. But as it is, I'm like an insect that's flown into a room of its own accord. I dash against the walls, dash against the windows, flop against the ceiling, do everything on God's earth, in fact, except fly out again. [...]
>
> I'm exactly like that insect again. For some reason [...] it's not allowed, it's forbidden, it's against the insect law, to stop banging and flopping and crawling up the pane even for an instant. (*CW* 2, 365)

Women like Linda who, in spite of the widespread Victorian belief to the contrary, do not thrive on motherhood and do not feel comfortable being confined in the domestic space, are, in this imagery, little less than ordinary prisoners, their options besides being wives and mothers are only hypothetical, therefore they have no choice but to get used to their prison and find some source of occupation; the repetitive nature of domestic work is aptly represented as "counting of the warder's steps [...] with a particular attention to variations of tread." Compared to them, men who do not feel their calling in fulfilling the expected male roles are like insects: in theory they are free to fly in and fly out, enjoying greater freedom than women, but in reality, they are often caught in the vicious circle, similarly unable to escape and do what they truly desire.

With respect to this vision of familial entrapment and Mansfield's general preference for the depictions of characters moving within the very restricted spaces of their involuntary or self-imposed "prisons," it is not surprising that out of all Austen's novels it was *Emma* that most resonated in her mind, although it was only one of the reasons. The almost claustrophobic atmosphere of Highbury, further intensified when put in contrast with its closeness to London, and the confined existence of practically all of its characters, is, compared to the other five novels, the most pronounced and taken much further. It is the only novel in which hardly anybody travels, and when they do, they are not shown to do so, their journeys are mostly just talked about. Most importantly, out of all Austen's main heroines, Emma is the only

one who, apart from the pivotal trip to Box Hill, never sets foot outside of her neighbourhood, and that, ironically, in spite of the fact that she is the richest of them all and could well afford it financially. The few characters that do venture outside keep bouncing back to Highbury as if bound by invisible rubber bands or, to use Mansfield's imagery, as if Highbury was the proverbial flame that mesmerizes moths and prevents them from going elsewhere. The attractions, or rather reasons, of those returning or staying are diverse. Frank Churchill, the only outsider and the one who travels most, would, in other circumstances, prefer a more exciting environment; he is not tempted to visit by anything, not even the respect for his father, until his secret fiancée comes back home. It is only then that he cannot stay away. In contrast, Mr. Knightley, a man of means and without immediate family who could, at least from the point of view of men like Frank, spend more time in London enjoying himself, prefers staying in his home and that of Emma's father. His motivating force is not only his love for Emma (in its broad sense) but also his love for his land and responsibility for its running. Although, on the one hand, Mansfield would possibly prefer the ramifications of these restrictions be explored more profoundly, on the other, she did appreciate the many-sidedness of their value and character: nothing is always good or bad; the relative freedom of choice, as in the case of Frank Churchill, can yield bad results, while people with limited options, like Mrs. Weston, can still be happy, and for some, like Mr. Knightley, their maturity demonstrates itself by his voluntary decision to take care of his property and the well-being of his tenants which to others, like Frank, would possibly seem dull and restrictive.

Mansfield's approach is similar. While she manages to elicit the reader's sympathy towards Jonathan Trout's plight, she does not hide the fact that his complaints could be interpreted as whining, and a sign of immaturity; on the contrary, Trout's brother-in-law, Linda's husband Stanley Burnell, who is presented as a slightly clueless husband and a ridiculous overachiever, is nevertheless an honest and hard-working man who loves his wife and family and also assumes responsibility for two additional people, Linda's widowed mother and unmarried sister.

Another reason why Mansfield was attracted to *Emma* was its cast of characters and the way they were presented, and that by no means only the repeatedly mentioned Mr. Knightley, as illustrated by her articulated enthusiasm for Miss Bates and Mr. Woodhouse. Yet, their entertaining idiosyncrasies alone would not explain her preference for *Emma*, as she could have just as easily found them in any other Austen novel. One would expect her to be equally charmed by the assorted eccentricities of *Pride and Prejudice*'s Mr. Collins and Lady de Bourgh, *Sense and Sensibility*'s Fanny Dashwood, the Steele sisters or Lady Jenkins, *Northanger Abbey*'s John Thorpe, *Mansfield Park*'s Aunt Norris and Mrs. Bertram, or *Persuasion*'s Sir Walter Elliot and Mary Musgrove. Yet, significantly, she never mentions any of them, and that is, arguably, as discussed in the second part of this chapter, because *Emma* offers an added value of combining comedy with what is characteristic for Mansfield's mature writing: the underlying compassion, the "searching, analysing sympathy"[8] for some characters that until then usually served only as a means of entertainment.

Yet *Emma*'s charming characters and interesting themes would hardly be enough to draw Mansfield to this novel, had it been written in a more traditional way. Just like her contemporaries, she admired and appreciated Austen's formal accomplishments, especially her complex interplay of different kinds of irony that she too used masterfully in her work, but the kernel of this particular work's appeal lies mostly in an extensive use of the discursive strategy that distinguishes it from *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey*, or even *Pride and Prejudice*, that is, the free indirect discourse. As Narelle Shaw has illustrated:

> Austen's novels, viewed according to chronology of publication, display an escalating use of free indirect speech – sporadic experimentation in the

[8] Martin Armstrong, "Katherine Mansfield," *Bookman* (October 1924): 32.

> early work leading to a habitual reliance upon the versatile narrative device after 1814.[9]

As stated in the introduction, both Mansfield and Austen are generally valued for the remarkable ability to shrewdly observe their surroundings and recreate them in their works, an ability which is sharpened by an understanding of the power of detail, and a particular eye for everything weird and ridiculous. However, as Mansfield once pointed out

> delicate perception is not enough; one must find the exact way in which to convey [it]. One must inhabit the other mind and know more of the other mind and [the] secret knowledge is the light in which all is steeped.[10]

While Austen's earlier works would not fulfil this stipulation since most of their narration is more traditional, in *Emma* Mansfield found exactly what she was looking for and that presented in a very similar way to hers. This, paired with the other attractions of the novel which the two remaining ones using FID, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, do not possess, explains her repeated expressions of enthusiasm for it.

A very helpful tool for understanding how Austen's and Mansfield's approaches to FID resemble, or, at least, why Mansfield would feel an affinity for Austen's way of presentation of characters' thoughts and speeches using this method, is Daniel P. Gunn's innovative interpretation of Austen's usage of this technique. [11] Gunn challenges the commonly held theoretical tendencies concerning FID, claiming that they contributed to "obscuring the way the technique functions in [Austen's] novels." According to him, they often make "too rigid a theoretical opposition" (DG, 38) between the FID presentations of speech and thought and the authoritative narrative commentary, and

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[9] Narelle Shaw, "Free Indirect Speech and Jane Austen's 1816 Revision of *Northanger Abbey*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 30, No. 4 (1990): 592.
[10] To Sydney and Violet Schiff, 2 May 1920; *Letters* 4, 4.
[11] Daniel P. Gunn, "Free Indirect Discourse and Narrative Authority in *Emma*," *Narrative* 12, no. 1 (Jan., 2004): 35-54. Hereafter cited as DG.

characterize FID as the "preeminent technique of 'objective' narration, in which the narrator supposedly withdraws or disappears in favor of impersonal figural representation" (DG, 35).[12] Although he admits these characterizations might be relevant to other works, according to him, "they are inadequate and misleading when applied to Austen's novels" (DG, 35). Gunn illustrates how the most influential theorists of FID present it as either entirely impersonal, as in Fludernik and Banfield (DG, 36) or, while allowing for narratorial presence, they reduce it to "a merely functional" one, as in Cohn (DG, 36). In order to preserve this clear polarity, they struggle to define the cases when the situation is not so clear cut and both the narratorial and the figural presences appear within one sentence, setting them outside of FID proper as special cases, referring to them as stylistic contagion. Gunn, on the contrary, does not see a reason for making a distinction between stylistic contagion and FID, arguing for a less exacting approach that would allow for the blending of "figural subjectivity and narrative commentary" (DG, 35), in other words, for FID being understood as "embedded in a new utterance spoken by the narrator, where it takes on new accretions of meaning and implication" (DG, 37). Furthermore, rather than figural subjectivity independent of the narrator, he specifies it as an "*imitation of figural subjectivity* within a context of narrative report" (DG, 37; emphasis in original) which offers

> a broad spectrum of largely continuous effects with protean narrative voice able to modulate into the voice of figural thought or speech for shorter or longer periods of time, and in overt or covert ways. (DG, 37-38)

Gunn thus argues for a strong narrator and a wide variety of levels, degrees and variations of the form of FID.

[12] This is argued, for example, by Ann Banfield, Dorrit Cohn, Monika Fludernik, or Casey Finch and Peter Bowen. Ann Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (Boston: Routledge, 1982); Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds*; Monika Fludernik, *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Finch and Bowen, "The Tittle-Tattle of Highbury."

Mansfield's use of FID has not been under so much theoretical scrutiny as Austen's. However, such as it is, its rhetoric follows the lines of the general FID theory and the same arguments Gunn uses can be applied to her. Interestingly, as if anticipating Gunn's reasoning, T.O. Beachcroft in Mansfield's case preferred the term "interior *mime*" to the traditional "interior monologue" applied to her up to then.[13] The view that FID makes the narration "impersonal" and by implication more objective was also suggested repeatedly, for example, by her most influential 20th century biographer, Antony Alpers, who called her method "oblique impersonation," individual or extended to a group.[14] However, with respect to Gunn's argument, Alpers used a more fitting term elsewhere, when he identified Mansfield's narrator as "floating"[15] to Gunn's "protean," which implies that not all the subjectivities in the picture are figural, but that one of them is also the narrator's. This term also more accurately characterizes what Mansfield, in a similar way to Austen, does in her stories. Her use of FID covers the breadth and width of Gunn's definition of FID: firstly, it ranges from a single to multiple consciousnesses of characters overlapping; the consciousnesses presented can be distinct but also hardly recognizable when the narrative is permeated with the opinions of nobody in particular, that is to say, of a community or group of people, in which it is difficult to discern the source of information or particular voices, imitating the force and influence of gossip.[16] Such *Emma*-like occasions in Mansfield are rarer as the notion of community, central to Austen, is diminished or broken in the world Mansfield's characters inhabit. Most of them face an existence devoid of many of the traditional values and they are usually presented in more private circumstances. Very often they are on the margins of society or utterly alone, without the imperfect yet still existing safety net of Austen's community. Yet there is the exception of the New Zealand stories, where the characters still

[13] T.O. Beachcroft, "Katherine Mansfield's Encounter with Theocritus," in *The Critical Response to Katherine Mansfield,* ed. Jan Pilditch (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 127; emphasis added.
[14] Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield,* 191.
[15] Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield,* 4.
[16] For a detailed analysis of the role of gossip and its connection with free indirect discourse see: Finch and Bowen, "The Tittle-Tattle of Highbury."

form part of their society and Mansfield uses free indirect speech to create this sense of community. In these stories it is possible to find instances of the "voice of the public" very similar to those in *Emma*. This is an example from "At the Bay:"

> The women at the Bay thought she [Mrs. Kember, a newcomer and an outsider] was very, very fast. Her lack of vanity, her slang, the way she treated men as though she was one of them, and the fact that she didn't care twopence about her house and called the servant Gladys "Glad-eyes" was disgraceful. [...] It was an absolute scandal! True, she had no children, and her husband. ... Here the voices were always raised; they became fervent. How can he have married her? How can he, how can he? It must have been money, of course, but even then! (*CW* 2, 352)

Furthermore, just like in Austen, the shifts between subjectivities can be unclear, appear unexpectedly and are often framed by traditional narration. In "At the Bay", Beryl thinks thus about the possibility of not finding a suitable husband:

> If I go on living here, thought Beryl, anything may happen to me. "But how do you know he is coming at all?" mocked a small voice within her.
> But Beryl dismissed it. She couldn't be left. Other people, perhaps, but not she. It wasn't possible to think that Beryl Fairfield never married, that lovely, fascinating girl. (*CW* 2, 369)

This is a very complex example, there is not only a shift from the narrator to the character, but from an existing character to an imaginary one, since the person(s) whose speech is "represented" (that lovely fascinating girl) exist(s) only in Beryl's dreams. Using Gunn's terminology, the narrator is mimicking the character's mimicking of a different character.

Secondly, like in Austen, Mansfield's use of FID goes from predominantly narratorial passages with traces of imitations to whole passages of pure FID;

what is more, the forays into a character's mind or style can be very subtle, almost imperceptible, and can thus be mistaken for traditional narration but, in other cases, they are obvious and unmistakable. The subtle kind appears, for example, in the first sentence of Mansfield's "The Life of Ma Parker" (1921):

> When the literary gentleman, whose flat old Ma Parker cleaned every Tuesday, opened the door to her that morning, he asked after her grandson. (*CW* 2, 292)

Although unusual, the expression "literary gentleman" can easily be overlooked at first and taken for a narratorial comment. It is only after the reading of the whole story that one correctly attributes the label as being used by the humble, uneducated and hardworking Ma Parker, who thus shows her respect towards educated people and awareness of her lower social status. Ma Parker's address is sincere, she sees no fault in her employer, she esteems and even pities him, yet Mansfield uses the appellation to add her own ironical meaning by demonstrating that the "literary gentleman" is no real gentleman at all, but an untidy and bad-mannered penny-pincher, who is not ashamed to spend a week literally up to his ankles in his own trash, calls the old lady an old "hag" (*CW* 2, 293) to his "literary" friends, makes ridiculous assumptions about the working class, and insensitively asks her whether the funeral of her grandson "was a success" (*CW* 2, 292).

On the contrary, the most transparent examples of Mansfield's narrator's "mimicking" the characters are those when she adopts their speech patterns outside of the reported speech, whether it is a genuine dialect, the uneducated speech of a servant, or the corrupted pronunciations of children. These, as opposed to Austen's, are more visible since Mansfield's spectrum of characters' is much wider. Such is, for example, a little boy's musing about a piece of green glass he and his play-companions found while playing in the sand and believe to be an emerald:

> The lovely green thing seemed to dance in Pip's fingers. Aunt Beryl had a

> nemeral [sic] in a ring, but it was a very small one. This one was as big as a star and far more beautiful. (*CW* 2, 350)

Seeing this complexity and versatility of Mansfield's use of FID, in many ways analogous to Austen, one can easily apply Virginia Woolf's comment on Austen to her and claim that she "went in and out of her people's minds like the blood in their veins"[17] or, use Gunn's assessment of Austen and conclude that Mansfield too displays

> tremendous flexibility of [...] narrative language, which moves in and out of the figural languages effortlessly, evoking them by the sheer exactness of her ear, her sensitivity to diction and the rhythms of speech, and the human presence, the orchestrating voice behind it all. (DG, 48)

If Gunn's insistence on the non-absentee narrator, "the orchestrating voice behind it all" as opposed to the traditional FID theory's claim about the (almost) disappearance of the narrator, might be controversial for Austen scholars, it could be even more so in the case of Mansfield. The greater "objectivity" of her narration or her becoming "more duck, more apple, more Natasha than any of these objects could ever possibly be"[18] and thus, by implication, disappearing in the characters are the standard approaches to her work. Yet, with closer scrutiny, one can see the appeal and validity of Gunn's view. Mansfield does indeed do her best to make the reader forget about the narrator, or rather the unnatural or intrusive narrator that even Austen does not use, but she, even if possibly more discreet and easier to forget, is there nevertheless, present in the background. This is, after all, also implied in the quotation about her narratorial philosophy where she talks about the necessity of narration being "*steeped* in" not "*dissolved* in or *disintegrated* by" the characters' consciousnesses. The narrator is not completely obliterated; she remains at the core of the story, subtly orchestrating the speeches and

[17] "Phases of Fiction" 1929, *The Complete Collection.*
[18] To Dorothy Brett, 11 October 1917, *Letters* 1, 330.

movements of the characters. Out of all the versions or varieties of modernism, Mansfield belonged with those who, while firmly on the track of experimentation, nevertheless insisted on a very fastidious and rule-bound approach to literature, making her repeatedly express dislike over the work of some of her contemporaries which she perceived as arbitrary. As she maintained in one of her reviews:

> The Ark and the Flood belong to the old order, they are gone. [...] But if the Flood, the sky, the rainbow, or what Blake beautifully calls the bounding outline, be removed and if, further, no one thing is to be related to another thing, we do not see what is to prevent the whole of mankind turning author. (*CW* 3, 478)

So while in post-war literature, as she firmly believed, there was no coming back to the sense of wholeness and order permeating the 18th and 19th century fiction, she still believed in some anchoring points, the "bounding outline," which can be applied in a broader sense as a presence of rules, or in a narrower one, as the preservation of the narratorial framework.

Furthermore, an analogy with Gunn's argument offers another interpretation. He perceives Austen's FID in the first place as a comic technique, but also as a subtle but nevertheless important tool of moral instruction. Its comic effect is undeniable; *Emma* is for many primarily an entertaining book. However, for Mansfield, this alone would never be enough. As her negative comments about the caricaturing of characters in *Night and Day* indicate, if Austen was solely using her characters to entertain the readers, as Mansfield believed she had done in *Northanger Abbey,* she would, in her own words, "have none of her." As explored in the second part of this chapter on the example of her story "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," she needed a deeper meaning, the light not only shining *on* but also *through* her characters, and while her modernist sensibility would hardly allow her to presume to *teach* or *preach* morality, she, nevertheless, needed the moral issues to be present and displayed for examination.

As a matter of fact, Austen's narratorial method and especially FID are the key elements in the understanding of Mansfield's comment about Austen being the secret friend. The usage of FID is the best method to satisfy the two authors' affinity for the dramatic rather than narrative writing that Mansfield further intensified in her works. Mansfield was an admirer of Robert Browning's dramatic monologues and wrote some of her own in prose, such as "Je ne parle pas français," her masterpiece of the first person narration. FID, however, was much more versatile and offered more possibilities. She still had the ability to retain the dramatic character of her text, but could add on more voices and still use the narrator to subtly steer the reader and provide a frame. While reading the first person monologue one can enjoy the dramatic ironies springing from the discrepancies the character's speeches betray, a reader is essentially smiling or, rather, smirking alone. In the text in the third person using FID, the narrator creates a distance, ironical or not, between himself or herself and the characters and the reader is invited to stand next to him or her, share in the joke and believe that his or her interpretation of the ambiguity caused by this distancing and the mix of multiple voices is the right one.

The two following parts each examine how Mansfield's appreciation of both the form and the content of Austen's writing, most particularly that of *Emma,* manifested themselves in the two stories that can, among other things, be read as the modernist variations or reimaginings of Austen's most modern novel.

Compassion and Moral Responsibility: Emma *and "The Daughters of the Late Colonel"*

Although there is no traceable direct connection between Austen's *Emma* and Mansfield's "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," putting them side-by-side is not as far-fetched as it may appear on first impression. With regard to time, the creation and publication of Mansfield's short story falls within the years 1920-1921, after the period when Mansfield was contemplating analogies between Virginia Woolf and Jane Austen while composing the review of *Night and Day*, and mentioned "One or Two Austen" in her notebook alongside Shakespeare,

Chaucer and the *Oxford Book of English Verse.*[19] Even more importantly, however, as argued in this chapter, the two texts display numerous thematic as well as formal affinities which invite further investigation, particularly with respect to Mansfield's often noted anxious desire for "The Daughters" not to be read as a mockery, but a celebration of the beauty of the two main characters' lives.[20] Moreover, establishing and examining this link can also further contribute to understanding Mansfield's shift from a casual reader of Austen to a fully invested and interested one.

Although a cursory glance does seem to discourage a comparison of the two works, what with their different genres, settings, time periods, main characters' age, social class and underlying stories, a more detailed perusal uncovers how essentially connected they are, and how "The Daughters" can, in many ways, be read as a modernist "what-if" variation of *Emma.* Thematically, in these two respective texts, both Austen and Mansfield explored the motifs of spinsterhood, restricted existence, boredom, and loneliness in the midst of people. In formal terms, they did it using the same discursive method which drove their points home more efficiently than any traditional strategy could ever possibly manage, and which enabled them to tighten the relationship between the form of the text and its content to the point where one influences and becomes the other and vice versa.

The most easily noticeable link between the two works is the one connecting the two unmarried middle-aged protagonists of Mansfield's story and Austen's iconic spinster Miss Bates. They are at the same stage of life, in the same position and even of the same class: Constantia and Josephine are the daughters of an army officer while Miss Bates' father was a clergyman, both professions traditionally reserved for gentlemen with no land of their own. Their life is or has recently been fully dedicated to taking care of others with no real private or truly personal dimension, and they live in an entirely female household, although the two Pinner sisters only recently, since the death of

[19] As Kimber and O'Sullivan state in their editorial note to the story, Mansfield first mentioned working on it on 27 November 1920, it was finished on 13 December 1920 and first published in *London Mercury* on 19 May 1921. *CW* 2, 1n, 282-283.
[20] To William Gerhardi, 20 June 1921; *Letters* 4, 248-249.

their father. But of the greatest significance is their matching behaviour: their harmless but potentially slightly annoying ways, their inconsequential chattering and their meek submissiveness that seem to validate Emma's wholesale characterization of poor spinsters as ridiculous (*E,* 69), as well as encourage or justify some stronger personalities' attempts to mock, manipulate or abuse them.

However, a closer look at Constantia and Josephine's life stories, and even more importantly, their musings in free indirect discourse reveal a much less obvious but a deeper connection; they are also related to Emma, just as Emma and Miss Bates linked within the novel itself. Although Emma is mostly acting alone and the two Pinner sisters are always together, their internal reflections are handled in a very similar way. This is also made possible by the fact that Constantia and Josephine's closeness results in a blurring of their consciousness' boundaries to the point where they are presented as thinking and acting almost like one. Just like Emma, they hesitate, ask themselves questions, and correct themselves; their syntax becomes less and less fluent as their insecurity, fear, agitation or emotion grows. This is how Emma contemplates her attitude towards Jane Fairfax; her uneasiness, attempts to justify her behaviour, and implied feeling of guilt show in the broken and hasty sentences:

> But she could never get acquainted with her: she did not know how it was, but there was such coldness and reserve – such apparent indifference whether she pleased or not – and then, her aunt was such an eternal talker! – and she was made such a fuss by every body! – and it had been always imagined that they were to be so intimate – because their ages were the same, every body had supposed they must be so fond of each other. (*E,* 130-1)

For their part, this is how the two sisters react to their priest's innocuous offer of a "little communion" to console them after the death of their father:

> What! In the drawing-room by themselves – with no – no altar or anything! The piano would be much too high, thought Constantia, and Mr Farolles [the priest] could not possibly lean over it with the chalice. And Kate would be sure to come bursting in and interrupt them, thought Josephine. And supposing the bell rang in the middle? It might be somebody important – about their mourning. Would they get up reverently and go out, or would they have to wait … in torture? (*CW* 2, 270)

Emma's musings are slightly less broken and unsure, an indication that even in her moments of self-doubt she is still essentially a very confident person, while Constantia and Josephine are extremely insecure and react self-consciously to the least controversial situations, as exemplified by their inability to decide whether to dare ask for another jar of jam from their forceful servant Kate. Emma's stance about the ridiculousness of poor spinsters is partially substantiated, since depending on the charity of others for survival requires a measure of submission and humility which has the potential to trigger other people's disdain. However, it is also a moment of wonderful irony, since Emma implies by her statement that the same would not be her case as she is rich and would therefore be respected. She does not realize that with her matchmaking and slightly eccentric ways she *is* already ridiculous and the reason nobody would dare to mock her does not lie in her innate grace or decorum, but in the deference people would show to her due to her wealth and rank.

The connection becomes even more pronounced when one remembers that, just like the two sisters from Mansfield's story, from her tender years Emma has also been a motherless half-orphan and that she too has a sister, one that, had the circumstances been different, would, together with Emma, make more than a fitting match to Constantia and Josephine Pinner. Circumstances, in this discussion, are the keyword. Although our contemporary literary theory and criticism look down on speculations that venture beyond what the text says, in this respect it is necessary to break with this rule as "what-ifs" are the fundamental elements of every variation. In case that Mansfield, indeed, wrote

"The Daughters" as a variation of *Emma,* her whole text would be based on contemplating these different outcomes of modified circumstances in the life of a set of sisters with a widowed father. Austen's heroines are often teetering on the brink of spinsterhood, and Mansfield's version shows what it means to fall over it. Thus rather than a story with some overlaps and vaguely touching upon similar issues as Austen's novel, the "Daughters" might be read as an experiment in reimagining *Emma* as an account of the life of the two sisters if neither of them married and they reached their middle age together, and that all set in the post-war era. It is the story of Emma becoming Miss Bates and Miss Bates shifting from the traditional marginal position allotted to such characters in a literary work into the role of a protagonist.

As a matter of fact, it would not be the first time Mansfield experimented in a comparable way but within her own oeuvre, making a new, modified version of an earlier story that, significantly, also deals with lonely women in dire circumstances. Her 1911 "Swing of the Pendulum" has practically an identical subject matter to that of the 1919 story entitled "Pictures" with the only major difference being the age of the protagonists which, however, has a significant impact on the final outcome. Both young Viola from the earlier and a middle-aged Ada Moss from the later story are penniless women about to be homeless if they do not pay their respective landladies their due by the end of the day. Viola briefly flirts with the idea of becoming a "great courtesan" (*CW* 1, 246) to get rid of her financial troubles and live in luxury, wildly romanticizing the concept of prostitution, but facing the reality of a strange man touching her quickly disabuses her of the notion and she finds her hope and solace in the arms of her boyfriend. Ada Moss does some daydreaming too, but it is much less unrealistic; all she hopes for is finding a job she is qualified for, or at least a temporary position as a movie extra that would help her resolve the immediate crisis. Unlike Viola, whose whole story takes place in her room and the adjacent corridor, Ada's story takes a much more modernist shape. She is roaming the city and actively searching for a solution in order to avoid the unspoken yet ever-present prospect of eventually having to sell her body. In spite of all her endeavours and modest aspirations that contrast with her younger

counterpart's rather preposterous musings, having no boyfriend or even a friend, what Viola only dreamt of becomes Ada's reality: she ends up accepting an offer from a man, following him to his house.

The few and seemingly inconsequential modifications have, however, a major impact, they mark the transition from an interesting yet basically conventional story into a true modernist work of art dealing with alienation, loneliness and the cruelty of the world, in which the traditional ties of family and society, no matter how faulty or imperfect, are no longer functioning and characters like Ada Moss have no protection and no hope. This is not to say that Mansfield would have perceived *Emma* as a minor work that needed modifications to become great. She was rather, within her own belief that after the Great War the world was broken beyond repair and the arts had to take this fact into account, as she expressed in the letter to Murry discussed in the second part of the previous chapter, making a serious effort at putting her theory into practice. Her "Daughters" are thus not only a modernist rewriting but at the same time a modernist appreciation of Austen's work, in the way that suggests that under the layers of Austen's polished and polite writing she sensed and recognized a kindred writer, one in whose work she discerned more sinister undercurrents and a potential for modernist optics and was compelled to explore the possible avenues.

With this in mind, one can realize that even the most divergent aspects of the two works, moments when they do not resemble at all, do not contest or weaken the affinities, but quite the contrary, support them even further and contribute to the overall idea of "The Daughters" taking its inspiration from Austen.

The prime example of this is the comparison of the titles of the two respective works. *Emma* is the only Austen's novel whose title is eponymous with its heroine. While it is a fact that not all of Austen's works were named by her, and some had, at some point or other, carried a name or surname in their working title,[21] it is just as well that *Emma* remains special in this respect. Not

[21] On Austen's publication history, see, for example, Deirdre Le Fay, *Jane Austen: The World of her Novels,* 34-39.

only is Emma the protagonist and the one through whose eyes much of the action is filtered, but her character, her strong will, stubbornness, and struggle for independence even in the very restricted limits of her life set her apart from other characters both within the book and in the entirety of Austen's set of characters, and that is fittingly expressed by her name standing alone, without any attributes or decorations. Not even her surname is allowed to interfere. By leaving it out, the connection to her father, a weak and indecisive man, seems to be diminished and Emma's personality and independence are put at the forefront.

The title of "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" is, arguably, intentionally the exact opposite. Although it also denotes what are, in this case, two heroines, the way they are referred to is nothing like in Emma's case. Even their number and closeness does not let them stand a chance against their dominant and bullying father's supremacy, which transcends even his death. The title indicates their double loss of identity; not only are they not referred to by their own names but by their association with their father their individual identities are lost too. To the outside world they become a group entity, not worth the effort of distinguishing between. Mansfield's narrative method, the free indirect discourse, further serves to strengthen this idea as the narration floats through their speeches and consciousnesses often with no clear boundaries and the reader has a hard time keeping track and remembering which one said or thought what.

Another pronounced difference between the two works are the opposite personalities of the two respective fathers and the fact that one is alive and the other dead. The little that is revealed through the memories and actions of the two sisters about Colonel Pinner actually makes him look like a mirror image of Mr. Woodhouse. He is domineering, unpleasant, abusive and always in control at home, just as he used to be, by implication, at work. On the contrary, the lovable Mr. Woodhouse never manages to assert his will in his household or outside of it. Although his life effort, apart from observing his own illnesses, is to prevent single women from getting married and everybody from eating what he deems to be unhealthy food, he is singularly ineffective on both accounts.

People, while outwardly agreeing with him, keep eating whatever they want, and even his allegedly unassertive daughter Isabella manages to get married. Even dead, Colonel Pinner continues to have far more influence over his daughters than Mr. Woodhouse could ever dream of exercising while alive. Whereas Emma and Isabella are used to pleasing their father while at the same time doing what they want, Constantia and Josephine's restrictions are heavy and the implication is that no matter how hard they try, pleasing their father is impossible. The magnitude of this lasting influence is aptly expressed in the tragicomic scene of the burial of Colonel Pinner which, instead of offering closure, possibly accompanied by a sense of relief, evokes nothing but pure fright in the minds of the two downtrodden women:

> Josephine had had a moment of absolute terror at the cemetery, while the coffin was lowered, to think that she and Constantia had done this thing without asking his permission. What would father say when he found out? For he was bound to find out sooner or later. He always did. "Buried. You two girls had me *buried*!" She heard his stick thumping. Oh, what would they say? What possible excuse could they make? It sounded such an appallingly heartless thing to do. Such a wicked advantage to take of a person because he happened to be helpless at the moment. [...] No, the entire blame for it all would fall on her and Constantia. And the expense, she thought, stepping into the tight-buttoned cab. When she had to show him the bills. What would he say then?
>
> She heard him absolutely roaring, "And do you expect me to pay for this gimcrack excursion of yours?" (*CW* 2, 270-271; emphasis in original)

Reading these two works together thus suggests that in spite of the respective titles, and, in the case of *Emma*, the relative independence of the protagonist, the real pivots of both are the father characters. Apart from the inborn personality, the strength or the weakness of the female protagonist

living in the patriarchal society is greatly dependent on the power or measure of open-mindedness of the male figure. Thus Mr. Woodhouse's weakness gives Emma more breathing space, or at least enables a less painful struggle for self-expression and freedom of choice. She is the way she is not only due to her innate nature, but also because her personality was not being constantly crushed and suffocated by the presence of a dominant and unyielding parent. Thus, the absence of the Woodhouse surname in the title does not indicate Emma's total freedom from her father, which would not be true anyway, but rather an illusion of independence under which Emma labours, which is only possible due to his relative benevolence and her skill in manipulating him for her purposes.

But in spite of Mr. Woodhouse and Colonel Pinner being in many ways so different, there are aspects that bring them very close together. Even if calling Mr. Woodhouse a monster, as Richard Jenkyns did,[22] would probably be taking it too far, this unorthodox outlook does encourage examining his brand of fatherhood from a slightly different angle, devoid of the usual positive bias caused by his perception through Emma's loving eyes. Although due to his personality traits he is unsuccessful and his methods different from those of Colonel Pinner, their endgame is essentially identical: they expect their daughters' subordination and wish to keep them at home indefinitely as their unpaid caretakers. While the Colonel's method is that of direct ordering, bullying and controlling, Mr. Woodhouse employs a more roundabout approach of emotional blackmail, usually using his frail health as leverage. They both, however, limit their daughters' access to suitable males as the surest way of preventing them from finding a partner. Emma is kept from travelling or joining society by her father's real or professed fears for her health; it seems she did not even visit her sister in London. Constantia and Josephine are even more confined:

[22] Jenkyns claims that "Mr. Woodhouse is one of Jane Austen's finest achievements." He believes him to be both "a lovable old silly" and "a monster, the villain of the piece." *A Fine Brush*, 157.

> If mother had lived, might they have married? But there had been nobody for them to marry. There had been father's Anglo-Indian friends before he quarrelled with them. But after that she and Constantia never met a single man except clergymen. How did one meet men? Or even if they'd met them, how could they have got to know men well enough to be more than strangers? (*CW* 2, 281)

Both fathers are intrinsically very selfish men, only Mr. Woodhouse's selfishness is veiled by his constant professions of care and concern for others. Neither one nor the other, however, could be proven to be doing it consciously with an intentional desire to hurt or crush; quite the contrary, their respective behaviour can be construed as a sign of love and care for their daughters distorted by their traditional male-centred upbringing, rather extreme personalities, and, in their later years, the added aggravation of a failing body. Their juxtaposition reveals that in reality there is a much thinner line between an adorable eccentric and an unpleasant despot than would be immediately apparent, especially when their actual power is intensified by the almost limitless control their society grants them over their female children.

Even the disparity between the genres of the two compared works further reinforces their affinity. While Katherine Mansfield's unique focus on the genre of the short story is sometimes understood as a necessity brought about by her life circumstances, her best works show that this was not really the case. Contemplating the reception of "The Daughters" in a letter to Dorothy Brett, Mansfield complained about being misunderstood: "I put my all into that story and hardly anyone saw what I was getting at. Even dear old [Thomas] Hardy told me to write more about those sisters. *As if there was any more to say*!"[23] In her emphatic insistence on having said everything there was to be said, she suggests that her method and genre are the best fitting for this sort of story and that they are her own answer to the quest of finding a form suitable for the changed circumstances of the post-war era. While Austen's times and

[23] 11 November 1921, *Letters* 4, 316; emphasis added.

their understanding of the world allowed for a novelistic approach to a story of boredom, spinsterhood, and heavy restriction in which nothing that much happens, Mansfield's changed post-war vision is best expressed in an experimental short story where the symbolism replaces much of the explanations and the utter loneliness of her characters, matching the universe of broken tradition, is communicated by meaningful silences, and graphically by sections of text that are interconnected only rather loosely, giving the impression of being scattered around analogously to the erratic thoughts of the main characters. Mansfield suggests that although the fate of unmarried women in Austen's times was far from enviable, often depending on the sense of duty of reluctant male relatives or the charity of the neighbours, their existence within a community and in a society with rules was nevertheless easier than that of Constantia and Josephine, who are totally isolated and left adrift in a changed world and the circumstances of a modern urban existence. Ironically, since living in a big city they are, technically, surrounded by many more people than Emma, but they are lonelier and have no circle of family or friends, even false or reluctant ones, to fall back on. Although, unlike Emma, they have a brother, he lives in Ceylon and it appears they have not seen him for decades, probably since he was a young man as the text reveals that they have never met his wife. The only relative living nearby, their nephew Cyril, is significantly not mentioned as fulfilling any supportive role: helping them organize the funeral, sort out the documents or offering to act for them with authorities. He is only remembered by the two sisters as having come to visit while their father was still alive. During his brief social call, he spent much of the time rather obviously inventing excuses in order to leave as fast as possible and having an absurd and highly entertaining conversation about meringues with his aunts and grandfather.

But family and community are not the only traditional values that are challenged by Mansfield. Even though Austen does not always paint a very flattering picture of clergymen in her novels, and in spite of many Victorian attacks claiming she was not religious enough, religion, even if implied, remains a fundamental element of the structure of her world. As opposed to

that, as symbolically represented in the abovementioned scene with the priest and his "little communion," "The Daughters" depict a world in which neither the priest, nor the religion he represents have any potential for meaningful consolation whatsoever; they are just an empty ceremony and as such another source of distress for the sisters already sufficiently agitated by the sudden "freedom" they are absolutely unprepared to deal with.

There is one more element in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" that indirectly speaks to, or possibly takes some of its inspiration from Austen's work. This one, however, is not in *Emma,* but in *Mansfield Park*, and it is the highly topical concept of the relativity of time, especially its different understanding by men and women. As a true modernist work of art, "The Daughters" both formally and in terms of content reflect the innovative approach to time typical of this period. The story is not written chronologically but radiates from one focal point, which is the death of the father. Even more importantly, it repeatedly shows how male and female, public and private, concepts of time clash, and cause distress to women made vulnerable by their lifelong forced dependence on their father, the keeper of their time. In Mansfield's understanding, men are often experiencing time as "apocalyptic and linear, moving towards deadlines" while women "measure [it] in seasons and cycles."[24] The tension this causes often impacts women negatively and Constantia and Josephine even more so, as they are, in some ways, outside of time.[25] On the one hand, their lives are dominated by the male understanding of time, on the other, however, they are set apart from it and thus are helpless when facing it. Their unconscious desire to free themselves from this yoke is expressed symbolically by their considering whether to send the father's golden watch to their distant brother or to Cyril. When discussing the possible pitfalls of sending such a valuable item to the colonies, they contemplate disguising it in a box that used to hold a corset. Them imagining their brother opening a box with an inscription *"Medium Women's 28. Extra Firm Busks"* (*CW* 2, 274) is both

[24] Smith, *Public of Two,* 173.
[25] Don W. Kleine referred to them as "the orphans of time." Don W. Kleine, "Mansfield and the Orphans of Time," *Modern Fiction Studies* 24, no. 3, (autumn 1978): 423-438.

a very comical situation and a sad indication that just as the corset was binding their bodies preventing them from being natural, the father's watch was binding their minds and souls. The text does not state who was the final recipient of the watch, but the whole episode indicates that no matter who will eventually receive it, the sisters will never be free from the male manipulation of time. This is further emphasized by the way Cyril acts when visiting with them. All his attempts at extracting himself from the situation somehow involve the time and the train stations, the two things intrinsically connected to both modernity and modernism and to the male world of business, commerce and important meetings which the two women have no part of. His effort culminates with the suggestion to his aunts that their clock is "a bit slow" (*CW* 2, 276). The ambiguity of this statement and its many possible interpretations are further enhanced by Constantia's confused reaction: "She couldn't make up her mind if it was fast or slow. It was one or the other, she felt almost certain of that. At any rate, it had been" (*CW* 2, 276).

Comparably, in chapter 9 of *Mansfield Park* there occurs an interesting banter between Edmund Bertram and Mary Crawford concerning the distances and time they took in their walk up to that point. While Mary's estimations are vague and careless, Edmund takes pride in his practical approach and accuracy. Of particular interest are two moments: the narratorial comment "he was not yet so much in love as to measure distance, or reckon time, with feminine lawlessness" and, even more importantly, Mary's reaction to his attempt to calculate their distance by using his watch: "Oh, do not attack me with your watch. A watch is always too fast or too slow. I cannot be dictated to by a watch" (*MP,* 75).

Although such a discussion or the discrepancy between the objective measuring of time with a watch and its subjective perception by individual people are nothing new or special, the startlingly similar nature of Constantia's and Mary Crawford's respective reactions to male attempts at dominating time seem to suggest Mansfield might have had this particular discussion in mind when working on her own story. Naturally, Mary Crawford's and Constantia's different personalities and life situations influence the way they handle their

reactions. Mary, a pretty young woman who is aware of her appeal to her companion, wields a power Constantia never had. For the time being, she can reject the male authority and get away with it. But even though Constantia does not possess the power and the man in question is her relative, she, in her roundabout way, does not uncritically accept Cyril's suggestion but at least ponders over it. The enigmatic "[a]t any rate, it had been" seems to be not only a reference to the time when she and her sister perceived time as fast or slow, that is when they had any excitement that would effect their perception of it, but might also be an allusion to Mary Crawford's fervent defence of her own and her fellow female's right to understand the time their way and reject the male version of it. Mansfield's depiction of the interaction between the two sisters and their nephew would thus add to our previous argument about the shift not only between Austen's and Mansfield's respective worlds, but also between the possibilities in the life of a young physically attractive woman and those of middle-aged unmarried women without friends.

But contemplating the fate of spinsters, the restrictions that the patriarchal society places upon its female members or the what-ifs of their existence would probably not be enough to tempt Mansfield to take her inspiration from Austen, had *Emma* not been in some respects so distinct from Austen's other works. To Mansfield, the rest of her novels, especially the earlier ones, must have lacked what arguably underpins all of her own mature texts: understanding and compassion for her characters, even the less interesting or the unsavoury ones.

Making such a claim and reading Mansfield this way is, however, far from being uncontroversial. As Heather Murray argued in the 1980s, up to that point, there had been "a considerable group of English critics and writers who offer[ed] the 'negative' aspects they [saw] in Mansfield's writing as proof of her heartlessness and lack of traditional moral centre."[26] Frank O'Connor, for example, was adamant that "there is one quality that is missing in almost

[26] Heather Murray, "Katherine Mansfield and her British Critics: Is There a 'Heart' in Mansfield's Fiction?" *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, no. 6 (1988): 103.

everything Katherine Mansfield wrote [...] and that is heart."[27] Brigid Brophy claimed Mansfield's work displays a "furious impulse to aggression" and her, what she believes to be "so dispassionate an eye" reflecting upon personal matters "was itself an uncharity."[28] Murray makes a valid point interpreting this tendency as a basically English misunderstanding of a New Zealander's different mindset. But there is more to it than that. Much of the rather excessive antagonism against Mansfield could also be construed as an attempt to (over)compensate for the one-sided approach of her husband John Middleton Murry to her person, and by extension, to her work. Although from the turn of the millennia onwards, the boom in Mansfield's studies offered a much more balanced view of her writing, scholars still seem to be reluctant to get involved in anything even remotely reminiscent of Murry's syrupy sentimentality, and references to compassion would probably come too close for comfort. Thus, comparable to Austen, whose growing universal fame and the family's mythologizing elicited the counterattacks presenting her as a cold and dispassionate spinster whose limited knowledge of "real" life, that is of politics, war or romantic and physical relationships, disqualified her from writing truly good literature; Katherine Mansfield, in opposition to Murry's vision of a pure angel, was often characterized as heartless, mean or calculating which, subsequently, supposedly reflected in her works.

Setting aside the features of her character, which was by no means easy to grasp and whose relevance for the study of her work is debatable, Mansfield's mature stories speak for themselves and, when read attentively, do indeed reveal her tendency to underline the sharp precision of characterization and unerring insight with understanding, or at least open-mindedness and compassion. It would come as a surprise to many that this feature of her writing was most astutely articulated by her friend and companion in illness Ida Baker, whose memories and opinions, in spite of her closeness to Mansfield, were, significantly, not really taken too seriously. Baker, who already in Mansfield's lifetime was looked down on for her alleged average intelligence

[27] Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 131.
[28] Brigid Brophy, "Katherine Mansfield." *The London Magazine,* IX (December 1962): 41, 43.

and excessive devotion, is quoted rather sparsely and agreed with even less. However, even though found intellectually lacking by some, which is not surprising seeing that she had kept company with the very smart Mansfield and her equally impressive acquaintances, Baker was well capable of clever insights as exemplified by her spot-on characterization of her friend as "a lantern with many windows – not octagonal, but centagonal". [29] This quotation has sometimes been interpreted rather sinisterly as a sign of Mansfield's falsity and multifacedness, but Baker most likely meant it as a compliment and a warning against taking one of those windows as the dominant characteristics of Mansfield's personality. Equally perceptive is her heretofore overlooked assessment of Mansfield as a person and a writer who, according to her, "seemed to cut through any falseness or furry edges sharply, yet *always with an underlying tenderness*."[30] Furthermore, to her, she

> was no nurse or doctor, rather a surgeon, cutting through the outer surface, under which most of us hide, to find and expose the truth of each personality. From this she derived an insight that could lead her to *compassionate understanding*.[31]

Here she not only accurately identifies Mansfield's way of portraying her characters multidimensionally and without prejudice, but touches upon the very core of her writing, her own persuasion that a work of art is not supposed to answer but to ask questions,[32] hence her not being the one who heals, that is a nurse or a doctor, but the one who exposes the problem for all to see and deal with as they see fit. Looking at an open wound, however, is not for the faint of heart and possibly from that stem the accusations of heartlessness and cruelty against Mansfield. The case in point is Margaret Drabble who, interpreting

[29] Ida Baker, *Katherine Mansfield*: *The Memories of LM* (London: Virago, 1985), 233.
[30] Baker, *Memories of LM,* 157. Emphasis added.
[31] Baker, *Memories of LM,* 204. Emphasis added.
[32] After reading Chekhov's letter published in the *Athenaeum* on 18 April 1919, she wrote to Virginia Woolf: "Tchehov has a very interesting letter published in next week's A... What the writer does is not so much to *solve* the question but to *put* the question. There must be the question put. That seems to me a very nice dividing line between the true & the false writer." May 1919; *Letters* 2, 320; emphasis in original.

Mansfield's method analogously to Baker, nevertheless rejects her story of yet another lonely spinster "Miss Brill" because it "exposes [her] so dreadfully that one would not have liked to have written it oneself, however fine the achievement."[33]

Ida Baker is, in several different ways, a key element in the discussion of compassion and Mansfield's work, particularly with respect to the general inconsequentiality and invisibility of unmarried middle-aged women in society as poignantly illustrated in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel." For one, she is the very epitome of such a woman; she comes out of Mansfield's letters and diaries as a close relative to Miss Bates: a selfless spinster of a rather average intelligence taking care of others, carrying the brunt of their displeasure and illnesses with patience, fortitude and humility, often vexing or infuriating them. Her words are usually glossed over and overlooked, but she can be very astute, and express the obvious with sharp insight, just like Miss Bates whose many perceptive observations are lost in the sea of her general babble. It is no coincidence, then, that she was also an inspiration for the character of Constantia in "The Daughters."[34]

Ironically, the reason why many would disregard Baker's claims of Mansfield's tenderness or compassion in her approach to fictional characters is because of the way she treated her when they lived together. Mansfield's letters and diaries show frustration, disgust, even cruelty and hatred often followed by regret and contrite apologies. But those who tend to lean too heavily on these writings in this and other cases forget that personal writings, especially those of a sensitive and very ill person, are often more a one-sided reflection of a mood or a state of mind than a reliable picture of their complex opinions. To the contrary, her works are what she contemplated for a long time, striving for a desired effect, attempting to be as objective as possible in order to "embrace the many-sidedness of life and character, express their ambiguities and

[33] Margaret Drabble, "The New Woman of the Twenties: Fifty Years On," In *Harpers and Queen* (June 1973): 106-7.
[34] *CW* 2, 283, n1.

fleetingness, in short, to come as close to the truth as possible, no matter how difficult such a thing is to reach in this world".[35]

"The Daughters of the Late Colonel" constitutes a perfect example of this struggle; Mansfield wanted to portray the two sisters truthfully; on the one hand she "bow[ing] down to the beauty that was hidden in their lives,"[36] or in other words justifying their existence as being the worth of a work of art, on the other not denying their absurdity and cluelessness. But the key element is that she did not expose them to mock them, and she was, therefore, naturally rather dismayed when she found herself accused of heartlessness and ridicule. She came a long way since her rather crudely sarcastic *In a German Pension* stories and it is thus understandable why she was so upset when accused of merely having fun at the expense of the most vulnerable members of society. No matter how sharp and vicious her tongue could be, and how unfair some of her spur of the moment declarations, there is much evidence to suggest she preferred sparring with her equals and that being unkind to the weaker ones did not sit well with her. As mentioned previously, many of her reviews are surprisingly mild and supportive, considering her reputation and, significantly, even the very introduction of "Friends and Foes," the review of a very substandard book, claims, after all, that it "seems almost *unkind* to criticize" this sort of work.[37] While much of the sentence is ironical and, as shown, mimicking of both Austen and Austen-Leigh's respective styles, the concern about unkindness seems to ring true.

But while some critics did not see through the humorous layer of the story into its greater depths, there were still some people who did. The most interesting of the endorsements can be found among the reactions to her work immediately after her death. It is probably no accident that it comes from the most appropriate source for the topic and the discussion, from a reader who is most qualified to judge Mansfield's success in what she set out to do. Protesting against a contributor who claimed she "caricature[d] old maids," an anonymous

[35] Kascakova, "For All Parisians are more than half-," 91.
[36] To William Gerhardi, 20 June 1921; *Letters* 4, 248-249.
[37] *CW* 3, 698.

self-professed old maid indignantly points out the cases of two stories, "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" and "Miss Brill" claiming that

> [t]he latter is an exquisitely tender study of what to most people would be an ignored, uninteresting personality. As for the former, anyone who lived among women knows them well, and the tears and smiles they bring us are unknown in the world of caricature.
> What seems to have escaped most of the eulogists of Miss Mansfield's work is her astonishing love and understanding, her sure touch for trash in all things, her grip of life as it is to the unconsidered. I pretend to no power of criticism, but I justify my opinion by being myself
> AN OLD MAID."[38]

Although only a letter to the editor and as such generally of small consequence to literary criticism, it is nevertheless a fascinating piece of literary history, showing at the same time an uncanny similarity to Baker's assessment of Mansfield's work, the validation of her efforts by those about and for whom she wrote and, consequently, it is an apt demonstration of the reasons why Mansfield had for long been rather the writer of her readers than the critics; her work was marginalized by critics for the large part of the twentieth century, but never went out of print.

Mansfield's commitment to attempt understanding people's motifs and present the human character in its complexity was the main reason why she would reject Woolf's, Austen's and, for that matter, her own erstwhile tendency to create one-dimensional characters for the sole purpose of having a good laugh at their expense or to use them only as foils for other characters. While she could hardly help being entertained by characters like Mr. Collins, they are, after all, painted masterfully and with a brush not unlike her own, she would not be inspired to emulate them in her mature years.

[38] Anon. "Katharine Mansfield," Worthing, (January 1923), n.p.

With respect to this, it is tempting to consider reading Mansfield's repeated fascination with *Emma,* expressed, not accidentally, through her admiration of Mr. Knightley, through the prism of this tendency towards understanding and compassion. Looking at other Austen's novels from this point of view, there does seem to be a difference between them and *Emma.* The first three novels in particular display at times an almost merciless disregard for the potential redeeming qualities or at least motivations of certain characters. There is not a grain of compassion in *Pride and Prejudice* towards Mrs. Bennet whether from the narrator or the characters, although she is constantly being ridiculed and dismissed by her husband, daughters, acquaintances and even by the narrator in the famous look into the future of Mr. and Mrs. Darcy's married life. That she is ridiculous is hardly open to debate, but, unlike her husband of superior knowledge and understanding, she sees the real threat of the future and does everything in her severely limited power and with her deluded ways to save her daughters from near destitution in case their father dies. Quite the contrary, the reader, seeing the world mostly from the perspective of his favourite daughter Elizabeth, is sometimes indirectly invited to commiserate with Mr. Bennet, even though the choice of the wife he made was entirely his own and his general behaviour towards his daughters cannot be qualified as anything other than unfair and irresponsible. The same is true about a whole host of other minor characters in this and other Austen's novels. It is true that in the *Pride and Prejudice,* much of the hostility or disregard towards Mrs. Bennett or Mr. Collins is purposeful in order to demonstrate that Elizabeth's ability to astutely take a measure of one's character is in fact an illusion and that she is biased and, as a very young person, also rather radical in her likes and dislikes. However, when she is proven wrong, neither her nor the narrator extend her newly acquired insight beyond Mr. Darcy and George Wickham towards other characters who might have been misjudged or treated rather harshly by her.

Emma begins in a very similar vein. Although spoilt, deluded and often pretentious, she is charming and so the reader, often seeing the world through her eyes, is led astray and can indulge in a little bit of harmless judging and

ridicule of literary characters, who are, after all, not real and cannot really be harmed. Emma is recurrently shallow in her assessment of others and so, naturally, they are presented in a superficial one-dimensional way. In this case, however, there is a breakthrough in the form of Mr. Knightley's intervention. The Box Hill episode and Emma's chastisement is written in such a way as to represent a wake-up call not only for Emma, but for the reader too. When mocking or criticizing a person, it is not only Emma who is invited to try to consider the other side and judge fairly. For Mansfield, in the moment when Mr. Knightley gives Emma a dressing down and points out her great rudeness, the narrator or the implied author offers a key to reading the before then one-dimensional characters like Miss Bates, showing that sufficiently critical readers would not rely on Emma's vision to make up their minds about somebody. Mr. Knightley represents the voice of compassion and responsibility, and that is when Austen's writing aligns with Mansfield's in its fundamental persuasion that no matter how absurd the characters are, even if fictional, they should be treated with consideration and at least an attempt should be made at trying to understand their background and motivations.

> Were she your equal in situation – but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed! You, whom she had known from an infant, whom she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour, to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her – and before her niece, too – and before others, many of whom (certainly some,) would be entirely guided by your treatment of her. – This is not pleasant to you, Emma--and it is very far from pleasant to me; but I must, I will, – I will tell you truths while I can; satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel, and trusting that you will some time or other do me greater justice than you can do now. (*E,* 295)

When Mr. Knightley points out to Emma that the real meaning of being in a superior position, both in terms of her wealth and her social standing, means taking responsibility for the less fortunate and realizing that her behaviour has the potential to influence others, he also presents an opposing approach to being a landlord to that of Mr. Bennet who, shying from responsibility and difficult situations, rather caustically believes to be alive to making "sport for [one's] neighbours and laugh at them in [his] turn" (*PP,* 245).

From Mansfield's point of view, this situation has a symbolical connotation too. A landowner's responsibilities are analogous to those of a writer; Mr. Knightley's insistence on Emma's power to influence others highlights the same influence of a writer over readers. Although both being a landowner and a writer involves hard work, much of it is also a matter of being born with a talent or into the right family. For that reason, both groups are expected to make use of the gift, the social or intellectual standing, in a responsible way, helping to better other people's lives not exploiting them for their purposes and pleasure. Mansfield, being well aware of the responsibility this sort of power brings, is therefore anxious to make sure "The Daughters" are understood as a complex and compassionate picture; taking the position of Mr. Knightley, her smile is gentle, understanding and she points out the tragedy of her characters' existence, not hiding or denying their cluelessness and idiosyncrasies. Furthermore, Mr. Knightley's point that it is especially Miss Bates' inferior position that should grant her Emma's compassion corresponds with Mansfield's inclination, argued for above, to spar with the ones that have some power of their own to strike back, not with those who can barely defend themselves.

Reading "The Daughters of the Later Colonel" alongside or through Austen's *Emma* further substantiates the claims that contest Brophy's, O'Connor's, or other similar bleak readings of Mansfield. Her stories lack neither heart nor a moral centre; as a matter of fact, they demonstrate that, paradoxically, she was in many ways rather old-fashioned, and believed in rules and responsibilities. The reason that some critics do not see this is the

distortion caused by the attention to her life and a failure to read attentively for clues she is offering. Even though her exposition of the darkest and most vulnerable parts of her characters may be at times painful and uncomfortable, she deems it necessary and also cathartic.

"A Cup of Tea": Mansfield's Modernist Take on Emma

Shortly after the intense reading of Jane Austen in Switzerland, on 11 January 1922, Mansfield recorded this entry into her notebook: "Wrote and finished A Cup of Tea. It took about 4-5 hours."[39] It was not an uncommon thing for her to write a story in an outburst of creative energy in such a minimal time and often with very few rewritings and corrections. Sometimes she "dreamt" the story and just put whatever she "saw" on the paper, but often the relatively short moments of intense writing were preceded by weeks of pondering over an idea that arose from a direct outside inspiration or memories of her past. "A Cup of Tea" seems to be a case of inspiration; as if all that time dedicated to the reading of Austen crystalized into a story that owes a lot to the repeatedly mentioned *Emma*.

Just like "The Daughters", "A Cup of Tea" can in fact be read as a modernist short story retelling of *Emma*; on the one hand a lasting tribute to the qualities and timelessness of Austen's writing, on the other a commentary on how the new "mould" fits better with the requirements of the world that had changed drastically over the hundred years since *Emma* was written. However, both short stories, each in its own way, suggest that the significant changes are at the same time paralleled with things that never changed at all, and probably never will, as they are firmly imbedded in human nature.

Once again, there are many conspicuous elements which at first prevent the reader from seeing the connection between the two works; notably their respective genres, temporal and spacial settings, and characters, to name some

[39] *KMN* 2, 315.

of them. One is a full-length novel with many characters and a relatively long time span, taking place in a country setting of the early 19th century gentry, the other a short story with only four urban characters, focusing on one trivial meeting that does not cover more than one late winter afternoon in the middle of London. Although still young, Rosemary Fell, the protagonist of the short story, is older than Emma and, more importantly, already married. Emma's life is spent in the country and her social interaction is restricted to a small number of acquaintances. What is more, the sixteen miles from Highbury to London might as well be sixty for all the desire her father has to travel or let her travel there. Rosemary lives in London, her life is that of a modern well-to-do woman, surrounded by a large number of friends and acquaintances.

However, even more than in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," the affinities soon begin to manifest themselves and the differences, rather than setting the two stories apart, bring them closer. Already the seemingly contrasting situations of the two respective heroines' social circles actually reflect the same process but in its different stages. Rosemary's acquaintances are both from her own social sphere and, by implication, from among the artists and intellectuals that do not belong to it, as they are characterized as "quaint creatures, discoveries of hers, some of them too terrifying for words, but others quite presentable and amusing" (*CW* 2, 461). The choice of words suggests a hint of defiance against rules and tradition, and blurring of the boundaries between classes that, however, as Frances Koziar demonstrated, began already in Austen's time and is reflected in Emma's concern about the suitability of including upwardly mobile families, like the Coles, among her acquaintances.[40]

The opening lines of both works constitute another major connection, as they both begin with the comparably rendered introduction of the protagonist. This is the beginning of *Emma*:

[40] Frances Koziar, "Manners, Mobility, Class, and Connection in Austen's *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*," *Criterion: A Journal of Literary Criticism* 8, no. 1 (2015): 39, 44.

> Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. […]
>
> The real evils indeed of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her. (*E,* 5)

Here the reader is presented with the basic information crucial for understanding the rest of the novel. One learns about Emma's appearance (handsome), intelligence (clever), wealth and social position (rich and comfortable home), her age (nearly twenty-one) and her disposition (happy), and even her bad feature: that she is a bit too egotistical and stubborn. However, as Finch and Bowen astutely remarked, rather than with a factual assertion, *Emma* begins "with a hermeneutic problem: to whom did Emma 'seem' to unite these qualities?"– effectively introducing the tension between the narrator and "the collectivity of gossiping characters" that presumably created the list of said qualities.[41]

A "Cup of Tea" has a noticeably similar beginning, and implies the same question; however, the realities of the early twentieth century "modern" life of the rich, as well as the author's distinctly modernist aesthetic, affect the text down to its grammatical structure:

> Rosemary Fell was not exactly beautiful. No, you couldn't have called her beautiful. Pretty? Well, if you took her to pieces. … But why be so cruel as to take anyone to pieces? She was young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well-dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books, and her parties were the most delicious mixture of the really

[41] Finch and Bowen, "The Tittle-Tattle of Highbury," 6.

> important people and … artists – quaint creatures, discoveries of hers, some of them too terrifying for words, but others quite presentable and amusing.
>
> Rosemary had been married two years. She had a duck of a boy. No, not Peter – Michael. And her husband absolutely adored her. They were rich, really rich, not just comfortably well off, which is odious and stuffy and sounds like one's grandparents. (*CW* 2, 461)

While both are introducing the protagonist in free indirect discourse, Emma's assessment is more rounded, comprehensive and stylistically fluent, while Rosemary's is inconclusive and hesitant; the broken sentences and rhetorical questions point towards an opinion still in the process of being formed. This disparity might be understood as an indirect comment on the difference between the two periods and the two writers' aesthetics; while Austen still believes in the possibility of painting a character by including a list of both internal and external characteristics, including age and financial situation, Mansfield aligns herself with the modernist persuasion that such a thing is impossible and any character painting will always be incomplete, arbitrary and above all subjective.

However, even Austen's writing in general and *Emma* in particular shows her to not be entirely in agreement with her own era's general beliefs. For one, she hardly ever describes her characters in detail and, even more importantly, she prefers letting them speak for themselves to actual narratorial characterization. But the most important argument in support of this claim is the fact that although the assessment of Emma "seems" objective, it is not. The free indirect discourse puts distance between the narrator and the opinion expressed and problematizes the whole endeavour of describing a person in a no matter how large number of sentences.

The introduction of Emma is more fluent and decisive not because it is meant to be objective, but because the community that created the opinion is, at least publically, in agreement. However, the subtle clues, words like "seemed", "indeed", "a little too much", nevertheless indicate it is, in fact, an

opinion of insiders rather than the outside, "impartial" characteristics of an omniscient narrator. In both cases the originators are multiple, and, as is the case with gossip, untraceable; one can only guess at hearing echoes of particular voices, maybe even of the heroines themselves. Yet, although they are a group entity, they are nevertheless recognizable as belonging to a certain time and environment, and this is reflected in the vocabulary and grammar of both assessments.

Emma's evaluation is relatively well proportioned, because it is based on an opinion created over a longer period of time and by people who are not in the habit of openly expressing too strong opinions or criticizing somebody in public. However, even though there does not seem to be any disagreement about these statements in the community, the different interactions of the novel's characters show that the gap between what is professed and what is believed can be wide. This "almost objective" introduction reveals an important fact about Emma's society and circle of friends; the opinions professed publicly may be very different from those believed privately, yet the rules of behaviour dictate the outward displays be regulated and fall within strict boundaries of taste and decorum, as it is constantly being manifested in the novel itself.

In Rosemary's case, Mansfield eschews even the semblance of decisiveness and fluency of Austen's introduction. What is more, her opening lines are theatrical, almost hysterical in their nature. Even the short extract shows an unusual number of exaggerated expressions: "beautiful", "brilliant", "extremely modern", "exquisitely", "amazingly", "delicious", "too terrifying for words", which stand in direct opposition to the highly esteemed value of moderation that permeates Austen's work and brings her closer to the 18th century than the aesthetics and sensibilities of the early 19th century upcoming romanticism.

On the one hand, Mansfield is arguably reflecting the somehow changed behavioural patterns of society, the relatively looser norms of "modern" conduct as opposed to the rigid Regency rules affecting especially strongly the women. It would seem that Rosemary and her friends can be more open in expressing their views, they can defy certain rules without the fear of repercussions, but, ironically, the fragmented speech, the half-sentences

bursting out intermittently, rather imply repression and unconscious revolt against it, which is, indeed, the original understanding of hysteria.

On the other, the text also communicates her altered artistic beliefs, namely the already mentioned impossibility of painting the character. Rosemary's "portrait" is sketchy and fragmentary, not because it is unfinished but because it cannot ever be finished; the collection of characteristics included will always depend on the preferences or point of view of the one who describes her and can never be objective and comprehensive.

Both extracts thus seem to imply, and the rest of the respective texts confirm it, that an important factor in these two assessments, and by extension in the lives of both heroines, is gossip. In *Emma* it further intensifies in the novel until gossip becomes not only one of the themes but also a building strategy of the text. In "A Cup of Tea", due to the different requirements of the short story genre and Mansfield's symbolist technique, it is dealt with in one well chosen image, that of taking somebody to pieces which is emphasized by repetition and, for the purposes of strengthening the ironical potential, included in an interrogative sentence: "Pretty? Well, if you took her to pieces. … But why be so cruel as to take anyone to pieces?" (*CW* 2, 461)

This is very likely a reference to gossiping and options for the understanding of irony are multiple and depend also on whose mind or words the free indirect discourse potentially represents. It could be Rosemary's verbal irony betraying her dissatisfaction with her looks, made evident toward the ending of the story, and hinting at her being aware that her social circle gossip about her. If it is the unidentifiable voice of "every body," Rosemary's acquaintances, then it is them ironically commenting on their own reprehensible behaviour. Or in both cases the irony may be dramatic, presenting the readers with the kind of people who are surrounded by gossips and gossiping themselves, yet either unaware of being targets themselves or criticizing in others what they do as well.

However, the choice of words and Mansfield's[42] as well as Rosemary's association with artists invite another possible interpretation. The reference to "taking to pieces" and the structuring of the opening text translated into visual arts evoke the cubist painting which actually *did* take people and things to pieces, breaking them, analyzing them from different points of view and reassembling them into abstract forms. This adds further layers of ironical meanings to the already heavily loaded text. There is the paradox between the assessment of more traditional audiences that viewed modern painting of the early 20th century as ugly and the suggestion from the text that Rosemary, in direct opposition to any of Picasso's portraits of women, is indeed pretty only when taken to pieces. One also wonders whether the allusion to the cruelty of the practice of taking people to pieces indicates Mansfield's dislike of that particular artistic movement or, what is more likely, her mockery of the narrow-mindedness of those who cannot see past the obvious and schematic artistic representations. She seems to raise the question of whether the immediately perceived outside "prettiness" is more valuable than the less easily reached and more complicated view of a person's inner qualities sometimes accessible to oneself as well as others only after a "cruel" or painful process of breaking inside. This reading, actually, brings the argument back to Baker's assertion, mentioned above, that Mansfield was "a surgeon, cutting through the outer surface [...] to find and expose the truth of each personality."[43]

Another significant parallel between the two works lies in the incident that is central to both of them: the respective heroines help a girl from a different social class. Emma, looking for a diversion in her dull life, befriends

[42] Mansfield's multiple friendships with painters and sculptors, her love of fine arts and the influence of artistic techniques on her writing are well documented. See, for example: Julia van Gunsteren, *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990); Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield: A Literary Life* (New York: Palgrave, 2000); Angela Smith's "'As fastidious as though I wrote with acid': Katherine Mansfield, J.D. Fergusson and the *Rhythm* Group in Paris"; Melissa C. Reimer's "A Literary Impressionist?: Mansfield's Painterly Vignettes"; Young Sun Choi's "'All glittering with broken light': Katherine Mansfield and Impressionism" or Rebecca Bowler's "'The beauty of your line – the *life* behind it': Katherine Mansfield and the Double Impression" – articles in the special issue of *Katherine Mansfield Studies – Katherine Mansfield and the Arts*, eds. Delia da Sousa Correa, Gerri Kimber an Susan Reid (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001).

[43] Baker, *Memories of LM,* 204.

Harriet Smith, whose inferior situation is made even more precarious by her illegitimate status. Analogously, Rosemary, in spite of her much broader social circle, seems to need more excitement and decides to change the life of a beggar, a Miss Smith, whom she accidentally meets in the street. In spite of the fact that Harriet is given a lot of space in the novel and the beggar does not speak much and quickly disappears from the picture, they have a lot in common. For all the discussions and information provided about Harriet Smith in *Emma,* her true origin and history remain mysterious until the end at which point they are clarified only very vaguely. Harriet and the beggar share the same surname, but in both cases it is highly debatable whether it is their real one. Rosemary's husband does not think so about the mysterious guest and uses the name with obvious sarcasm; as to Harriet, nobody expresses any doubts openly, yet since she is "the natural daughter of somebody" (*E,* 19), her surname can very well be an indication of the fact and a means of hiding her connection to her parents.[44]

For the best part of the novel for Harriet, and completely for the beggar, there is the question of what social class they actually belong to. Harriet's illegitimacy positions her in a precarious state of "in-between" classes, the important question, however, especially for Emma, is, in between which classes. Uncovering her own snobbery and the hypocrisy of her society, she attempts to justify her very controversial involvement with somebody of Harriet's origin as well as the matchmaking schemes of attaching her to Mr. Elton and later Frank Churchill, by persuading herself that even if illegitimate, she is the daughter of a nobleman.

The status of Miss Smith in "A Cup of Tea" seems to be determined by that one act of begging for money for a cup of tea and a slight grammatical irregularity of the double negative she uses several times: "No, I don't want no brandy." (*CW* 2, 465) However, with a bit of exaggeration, she may be anybody

[44] See also Colleen A. Sheehan, "Jane Austen's 'Tribute' to the Prince Regent: A Gentleman Riddled with Difficulty," *Persuasions On-line* 27, no. 1 (winter 2006). http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no1/sheehan.htm. Sheehan too suggests that Harriet Smith's name might not be the real one and that some names and incidents in *Emma* are allusions to the life and behaviour of the Prince Regent.

from a servant girl to the stray daughter of a duke. As a matter of fact, her delicate features, her almost fairy-like appearance[45] and the very fact that Rosemary takes her home indicate some level of refinement or interest since one can hardly imagine a coarse and obviously working class girl inspiring in a snob of Rosemary's kind the generous feelings of female sisterhood. One way or the other, both girls' situations, whether long-term or temporary, necessitate their dependence on charity and kindness for survival, either of the material or emotional kind.

However, even the relatively small amount of information the reader is provided about these two young women does not seem to matter that much, definitely not for Emma and Rosemary, since they do not "befriend" them because of the qualities they have or lack, but quite for egotistical reasons. Emma and Rosemary both need a medium to channel their desires, project their thoughts on and compensate for the things they believe their respective lives lack. It is their own selves they want to satisfy; although taking the welfare of the girls (whether real or imaginary) into account, it is not the main, or not even an important part of the picture. Both protagonists usually think first and foremost about themselves as is evidenced in their respective contemplations presented in free indirect discourse. Emma Woodhouse's thoughts cannot be more telling:

> *She* would notice her; *she* would improve her; *she* would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; *she* would form her opinions and her manners. It would be interesting, and certainly a very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, and powers. (*E,* 19-20; first emphasis in original, the rest added)

[45] It is not only her appearance in the sense of her looks but also the way she appears, as if out of nowhere. It reminds one of the fairy-tales in which an angelic or supernatural character decides to disguise itself as a shabby mortal and visit the earth to put mortals to the test which they usually fail. After all, she appears suddenly and right after Rosemary leaves the shop where she admired: "An exquisite little enamel box with a glaze so fine it looked as though it had been baked in cream. On the lid a minute creature stood under a flowery tree, and a more minute creature still had her arms round his neck. Her hat, really no bigger than a geranium petal, hung from a branch; it had green ribbons. And there was a pink cloud like a watchful cherub floating above their heads." (*CW* 2, 462)

The italicized first pronoun enables the readers to grasp the narrator's position, and her distance from Emma's thoughts hints at an ironical meaningful wink in the reader's direction; the narrator is present in the background, but instead of telling, she is showing. The repetition of the personal pronoun as well as Emma's snobbish assumptions illustrate that the opinion presented in the introduction was accurate even if slightly more favourable than what the reality proven by Emma's ideas shows. Rosemary's very similar musings, in free indirect speech as the result of the mediation of the narrator, likewise full of the personal pronoun "she", reveal more; the fact that she is consciously acting on the basis of her fashionable reading (Dostoyevsky) and the political issues of the era (women *were* sisters) and is aware of this being an experiment, or rather an attempt to render fiction into real life. And as it is in the case of Emma's thoughts, here too Rosemary and her ideas are predominant and the needs or feelings of the object of her attention do not even come into the picture.

> And suddenly it seemed to Rosemary such an adventure. It was like something out of a novel by Dostoevsky, this meeting in the dusk. Supposing she took the girl home? Supposing she did do one of those things she was always reading about or seeing on the stage, what would happen? It would be thrilling. And she heard herself saying afterwards to the amazement of her friends: "I simply took her home with me," as she stepped forward and said to that dim person beside her: "Come home to tea with me."... She was going to prove to this girl that – wonderful things did happen in life, that – fairy godmothers were real, that – rich people had hearts, and that women *were* sisters. She turned impulsively, saying: "Don't be frightened. After all, why shouldn't you come back with me? We're both women. If I'm the fortunate, you ought to expect. ..." (463; emphasis in original)

The (in)significance of the beggar's personality or views for Rosemary is subtly but masterfully expressed by the reference to her as "that dim person," (*CW* 2,

463) which she will remain throughout the story. In her eagerness to go on with her adventure and miraculously change the beggar's life, Rosemary does not stop to ask whether she wants that life changed, or what that life is. Importantly, she equally fails to inquire about the girl's name until she is talking about her in front of her husband. Thus the girl never progresses from a trendy charity project to a particular human being in her eyes.

Harriet is, in a way, "that dim person" too, not only because she is of average intelligence, but mostly because Emma stubbornly keeps projecting her own ideas on her and misreading what Harriet really wants and thinks. She never really takes any effort to know Harriet at all; in spite of the longer time span of the novel, neither one of them knows the other's true character and feelings.

Rosemary's inspiration by Dostoevsky's writing or by political debates about women's emancipation does not have an explicit equivalent in *Emma*, but even if Emma is more sheltered and removed from the world of contemporary politics and does not acknowledge to herself the reason why such an idea came to her head, as Mary Lascelles aptly pointed out:

> the bookish origin of such follies does not need to be stated explicitly. Such a young woman as Emma, so constituted and circumstanced, could have become acquainted with illegitimacy as an interesting situation, infidelity as a comic incident, only in her reading.[46]

Lionel Trilling made a very similar observation when he maintained that, just like Don Quixote and Emma Bovary, Emma's mind too "is shaped and deceived by fiction."[47]

Thus both Emma and Rosemary make an attempt to bring fiction into reality and fail, which is, in itself a great irony, as they are both fictional characters. Interestingly however, their failure is not caused by the "unreality"

[46] Mary Lascelles, *Jane Austen and Her Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 69.
[47] Lionel Trilling, "From '*Emma* and the Legend of Jane Austen'," in *A Truth Universally Acknowledged,* 198.

of fiction, that is the potential impossibility to transpose the elements of fiction into a real life situation. Rather, the disparity between fiction and real life only marginally enters the picture and in a way different from what would be expected. Neither Emma nor Rosemary encounters any real opposition to their plans, which would be quite plausible to predict. Although Mr. Knightley does object to Emma's friendship with Harriet, he does not really act on it; he rather behaves his polite self and even helps Harriet in a humiliating situation so much so that she mistakes his gallant behaviour for attachment. Even if Mr. Knightley is set aside as a paragon of politeness and too good to be true, most of the inhabitants of Highbury, apart from the Eltons, who, however, have different reasons, behave in the same way. Harriet is not shunned by anybody, Emma's father does not forbid the acquaintance, which is rather exceptional; he does not even think of attempting to shelter his innocent daughter from the harsher realities of life in the way he is sheltering her from any, even imaginary, wisps of cold air.

Rosemary's husband does object to the potential "adoption" of the beggar but not in any decisive way. As he seems to be indulging his wife in almost anything, he would do it in this case too. There is no categorical refusal or demand to get rid of the girl, just a half-hearted protest, some disparaging remarks about the plan, and a comment on her exceptional beauty. It is Rosemary, after all, who decides to end the adventure and that not because her husband objects but because he admires the girl.

The failure of both protagonists' adventures does not stem from the impossibility of realizing similar fictional endeavours; technically there were no major obstacles on the way. Their plans backfire because their motivation was wrong; they misunderstood the essence of such an act of kindness. Neither of them comprehends that helping another person should not be predominantly for the gratification of one's own desires and that when one decides to use one's fortune in life to help others, one should not do so presuming one know best what is good for them. Therefore the difference between life and fiction that is insurmountable for the two of them is that while reading meant mostly

indulging their own imagination and desires, they were unable to discard this notion in real life and focus on the needs and wishes of the other person.

Not charity, but their own pleasure and the potential reaction of their surrounding, are the key factors in their decision to introduce the girls into their respective lives. At the beginning, everything seems to go according to plan, not least because both Harriet and Miss Smith are relatively easy to manipulate. Mansfield's narratorial comment: "[h]ungry people are easily led" (*CW* 2, 463) applies to both of them; the latter is literally so hungry she nearly faints, yet the former is surely craving attention and friendship, having been sent away from her family as a dirty secret. They are a welcome distraction because they both are a fresh set of eyes that can admire and praise what others are already used to, or, more importantly, what others possess and are not surprised by any more. In Emma's case it is even sadder. Since she has her reasons for shunning Jane Fairfax, her best friend/governess got married and her immediate surroundings do not provide another suitable friend, Harriet is basically the only person left to admire Emma and her wealth. Rosemary's pleasure is presented by analogy with the childish joy of being able to show off in front of one's less fortunate friends. Mansfield's parallel is not only a very fitting image that spares time and space for explanations; it is also a hint that in spite of Rosemary being a married woman with a certain position and education, she is nonetheless as immature as a child: "She was like the rich little girl in her nursery with all the cupboards to open, all the boxes to unpack" (*CW* 2, 464).

The very same words could easily be applied to Emma. She too is flattered by Harriet's admiration and by what she subsequently interprets as proper behaviour.

> Emma was not struck by any thing remarkably clever in Miss Smith's conversation, but she found her altogether very engaging - not inconveniently shy, not unwilling to talk - and yet so far from pushing, shewing so proper and becoming a deference, and so artlessly impressed by the appearance of every thing in so superior a style to what she had

> been used to, that she must have good sense and deserve encouragement. Encouragement should be given. Those soft blue eyes . . . should not be wasted on the inferior society of Highbury. (*E,* 19)

This is a masterful example of Austen's use of FID and dramatic irony; Emma's snobbish and pretentious claims are further emphasized by the silent presence of the narrator standing at a distance, letting Emma condemn herself by her own words. Emma reveals her own childishness and immaturity; the tendency to measure the world around her with respect to her own preferences and wishes, often disregarding the wishes of others, a trait which, in spite of all their apparent polar differences, she shares with her father; just as he is trying to prevent people from enjoying the food he cannot digest, she prevents Harriet from marrying farmer Martin because he is not the man she herself would consider a proper suitor. That she thinks about herself and her own taste in men becomes clear from her choice of both Mr. Elton and Frank Churchill. While in Mr. Elton's case, she could still have some consideration of Harriet in her mind, after all she aims higher than Harriet's social position but not impossibly high; Frank Churchill is Emma's choice for herself, if she wanted to get married, he is "the very person to suit her in age, character and condition" (*E,* 94) and she "kindly" "passes him on" to Harriet, as if the two of them were in some way interchangeable. It is the ultimate irony of the novel that Harriet, believing to be following her encouragement, does not fall in love with the man Emma *thinks* would suit herself, but with the one that actually really does and that Emma realizes only later she would want for herself, Mr. Knightley.

For both Emma and Rosemary, the meeting of their respective "Miss Smiths" is a welcome adventure in a life which is objectively or only apparently unsatisfactory. It could be argued that Emma has more reasons to be bored than Rosemary, who is, after all, close to any entertainment she could wish for and under no obvious restriction of either place or from any of her relatives. As a matter of fact, the total freedom that Rosemary appears to enjoy from her husband put in contrast with Emma's almost absolute immobility seems deliberate on Mansfield's part and invites contemplation on whether their lives

are so different after all. It is true that Emma's life compared to Rosemary's looks very dull, yet Rosemary's kind of entertainment has the same value as Emma's; it is not occasional or complementing some other, more useful activity. Neither of them has anything else *but* free time and so any form of entertainment gets old sooner or later, as it has to fill their days almost entirely. Mansfield's presentation of Rosemary and other "modern" women in her stories implies that, for all their professed modernity and association with the most fashionable of friends, many women of the higher classes do not differ from Austen's contemporaries in one important aspect. They still do not have any meaningful occupation beyond social calls and house duties, and even though much less restricted, they are nevertheless still only wasting their time and chasing excitement, since they are not allowed to participate in the serious life of their society in any purposeful manner.

In due time Emma and Rosemary realize that the "script" of their intended play is not going according to their wishes and that things have moved out of their hands. Emma is seriously threatened by the idea that she was the means of the possible union of Harriet and Mr. Knightley; jealousy opens her eyes and she understands her love for him. When the crisis is over and she, after a series of disasters, realizes that she was "doomed to blindness" (334), she still has to dispose of her toy, which stands in the way of her happiness: first only by a shift of sixteen miles which is ridiculous in reasoning, as she is herself well aware, later by seeing Harriet happily where she wanted to be at the beginning and would have been had Emma not interfered: the wife of farmer Martin.

Rosemary, too, has a fit of jealousy, when her husband remarks on the astonishing beauty of their guest; yet hers is not the relief of "perfect understanding between the parties" (*PP,* 153), no matter how ambiguous, which eventually concludes all the protagonists' misconceptions in Austen's novels. Although she, too, quickly disposes of Miss Smith and gives her what she originally wanted (money), her departure does not contribute to even an illusion of a happy ending, and it does not bring relief; quite the contrary. Rosemary wheedles an alternative toy out of her husband, an expensive box,

but even this does not make her live "happily ever after." The box is only an unsatisfactory substitution of what, as her final question to her husband about her looks implies, she really craves: the assurance that he likes and loves her. The circumstances presented in the story and the fact that it ends before his answers seem to indicate she would never be entirely sure, no matter what he eventually replies.

Here, it seems, would lie the crucial difference between Austen's and Mansfield's vision of the function of literature. While Austen offers conclusions and ties up the loose ends, Mansfield cannot do that; the consolation of security and the feeling of completeness had been lost to the modern world. Mansfield prefers the aesthetic of absences and more importantly, does not strive for answers but for questions, which realization, to her, "opens – it discovers rather, a new world".[48] So at the end of her stories, she leaves the reader to answer or ponder the questions and this one is no exception. Although Rosemary is in the arms of her husband, more precisely, perched on his lap and being kissed by him, the embrace does not offer her any feeling of security and her frustration caused by this inconclusiveness equals that of the reader. The question explicitly expressed is "Am I *pretty*?" (*CW* 2, 467; emphasis in original) but the ones unvoiced either by the heroine or the narrator are the ones that matter much more. Is her sudden fear and jealousy just the result of her own insecurities caused by the fact that she is not pretty, or has she any reason to suspect him of being unfaithful? Why, indeed, was Miss Smith so fearful in her presence, yet "strangely still and unafraid" (*CW* 2, 465) as soon as the husband entered the room? Is Rosemary, as a typical spoilt child, trying to get the one thing, she knows is not hers, good looks? Would she rather her husband indulged her as he usually does, knowing full well he would be lying, or not? But most importantly, is any woman's value dependent on the way she looks? And if she lives in a society and with a man for whom it matters, what does it say about them?

[48] To S.S. Koteliansky, 6 June 1919; *Letters* 2, 324.

One could generate a very long list of these and even get very different answers according to different interpretations of the story. Here the gap between Austen and Mansfield seems to be the widest; while Rosemary is left to her insecurities in a marriage with a man whose affection and admiration she is not sure of, Emma's future husband stayed unmarried (although without being aware of the reason) until she grew up and in spite of all her mistakes he claims: "for dearest you will always be, whatever the event of this hour's conversation" (*E,* 337). However, the keyword here, as in the whole of *Emma,* is the originally inconspicuous verb "seem." The gap only "seems" wide; on the one hand, Rosemary's marriage can very well be happy, based on the genuine love of her husband; on the other, *Emma*'s ending is probably only "seemingly" perfect and conclusive, yet in reality very far from that. This ambiguity so inherent in Mansfield's art and of all of Austen's novels strongest in *Emma* is arguably one of the things that drew Mansfield to this particular work so very much.

To explain the first offered interpretation, Rosemary's insecurity may be founded on her character or childhood education and have no connection with the sincerity of her husband's affection. The whole story is, after all, seen through her eyes and she can interpret the facts mistakenly, maybe being, on top of other things, excessively jealous. What she sees as the strange stillness and unafraid behaviour of her guest, maybe suggesting to her Miss Smith's designs on her husband or their possible acquaintance, might just as well mean she is so frozen by fear she appears calm. The condescending Phillip, a significant trait he shares with Mr. Knightley, may already be despairing over his wife's lack of confidence in the matter of her appearance but there is nothing in his words or behaviour that suggests his lack of love or marital fidelity. In fact, according to the text, Rosemary's "sweet, husky" tone when she asks him whether he likes her "troubled him" (*CW* 2, 467), as if it was not the first time this conversation happened and he knew what was coming.

This interpretation might be undermined by the resemblance of "A Cup of Tea" and one of the most famous of Mansfield's stories "Bliss", both featuring a self-deceiving young socialite with an enigmatic husband and a group of

"fashionable" friends. However, as tempting as the similarities are, one has to be particularly careful with Mansfield to go the way of interpreting one story using another, no matter how useful this may sometimes prove. Phillip's slight resemblance with Harry is no proof their habits or sense of honour (or lack thereof) are necessarily the same.

As to the ambiguity of the ending of *Emma*, the things that "seem" to be something but in reality are not do not remain only on the level of the happenings in its fictional world, but can be extended to its outside interpretation, that is to say that at the first sight, it may appear that Austen was sending a certain message while it may have been a completely different one. As a matter of fact, out of all Austen's novels, with the possible exception of *Northanger Abbey,* the ending of *Emma* raises the most questions. For all the usual wrap up, it is far from satisfactory and sufficiently conclusive.

There are two main issues in this respect, the first one being the alleged "perfection" of the marriage of Emma and Knightley, suspiciously echoing the perfection of the understanding between the parties in *Pride and Prejudice*; the other, the reference to "true friends" in the very last sentence of the novel. As to the plausibility of such categorical assessments, perfection as such is unattainable; what is more, the facts that Austen is meaningfully silent about the marriages of her protagonists and many of the marriages of minor characters presented in her novels are unhappy, suggest that the statement is not supposed to be taken literally, or, at least, not uncritically.

The second, and probably more important issue connected to this is the question of friends. The novel ends with Mrs. Elton's typical rant disregarded by "the small band of true friends" whose predictions "were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union" (*E,* 381). This does indeed seem a perfect case of happily ever after if there ever was one. But a closer look complicates such a straightforward simplicity. For one, the question is who the true friends actually are. Apart from the obnoxious Augusta Elton, and by implication her husband, who are discounted as friends, there is no new addition to Hartfield, quite the contrary; Harriet is already married to Robert Martin and the friendship is tacitly fading away, Frank and Jane will soon be getting married

and will move to Yorkshire. Then there are Mr. and Mrs. Weston, and possibly even Miss and Mrs. Bates. The band is very small indeed, but the number of its members is not the only issue. The second one is the qualifier "true". One wonders why Austen would use such an epithet for a group including for example Frank Churchill, who is no doubt an amiable and well-meaning man, but he is also spoilt, sneaky, immature and selfish, able to inflict serious pain on the ones he professes to love. These are serious character flaws undoubtedly courtesy of the circumstances of his upbringing and as such can be moderated but hardly completely discarded. But Frank Churchill is just one example from those who all, at one point or another in the novel, inflict pain on those whom they consider their friends, whether it is by what they say or do or by what they fail to say or do.

One almost feels the inverted commas floating above the words in the last sentence of the novel but there is a reason why they are not there. Rather than mocking the institution of marriage or friendship, Austen subtly questions the absolute characteristics people are prone to employ when talking about them. The whole novel constantly proves how colourful and varied the relationships are and how much they depend on perception, whether it is correct or not. It would thus make no sense for her to conclude it with a seemingly highly satisfactory, yet totally incompatible sentence that is both categorical and unbelievable. [49]

However, the ending of Emma is not the omniscient narrator's comment it might be taken for. Although hardly recognizable, it is a free indirect discourse, and using the words "true" and "perfection," Austen's narrator is again mimicking the assessments of her characters who would use exaggerated words, just like Mansfield's characters at the beginning of "A Cup of Tea," to talk about a normally happy marriage, in the case of "a perfect union," and a group of typical friends, in the case of "true", who are, as most friends normally

[49] This reading can be further supported by comparing the ending of *Emma* with Austen's letter to her sister Cassandra: "I shall be glad when it is over, & hope to have no necessity for having so many dear friends at once again". 21-23 April 1805; *Jane Austen's Letters*, 106.

are: gossipy, tiresome and deluded more often than not, but nevertheless "true" in the sense of being there for the better or worse.

This reading also sheds more light on the enigmatic statement in Mansfield's story about Rosemary being pretty only when taken to pieces, that is, when being gossiped about. Just like Emma's marriage and friends, who are perfect and true only when presented in other people's utterances, her appearance too is dependent on perception and interpretation of the surroundings and is thus relative. Comparably, Frank's character in Mr. Knightley's eyes changes within the space of a few moments from hopeless to almost acceptable because the impact of his deception proves to be much smaller than he originally feared and what is more, Emma's affection does not belong to Frank but to Knightley himself. Frank's real character, of course, remains unchanged, but that is not the point. What both *Emma* and "A Cup of Tea" share in suggesting is that the existence of universal truths is dubious, or at best, that one's life is a constant search for the partial truths about one's self and the others, that human beings are only capable of reaching anyway. In this respect, as shown on the example of the discussed works, the FID as both Austen and Mansfield used it, was the perfect technique to express and construct this instability and ambiguity of human existence, as well as, at the same time, allowing them, or rather their narrators, a certain measure of control over their message.

Conclusion

When in Virginia Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out,* Clarissa Dalloway expresses her admiration for Jane Austen, claiming she would rather live without the Brontës than her, the young main heroine Rachel Vinrace rather emphatically disapproves. She summarizes her objections in a nutshell believing Austen to be "so like a tight plait." To that Clarissa replies: "Ah—I see what you mean. But I don't agree. And you won't when you're older. At your age I only liked Shelley. I can remember sobbing over him in the garden."[1] This view might appear rather unusual to a contemporary observer of Jane Austen's reputation and fame, as, influenced by the numerous film and television adaptations, many would hardly consider her not attractive enough to a young woman craving romance. Yet, the quotation does not only reveal the general shift in attitudes towards Austen during the course of the twentieth century, but also offers a convenient metaphor helping to illustrate the development of Mansfield's approach to and understanding of Austen.

As demonstrated by examining her reactions to Austen's work, with a bit of exaggeration it could be said that, while Virginia Woolf kept oscillating between the merits and drawbacks of the tight plait for most of her life, Mansfield underwent a gradual process from being a casual and somehow lukewarm reader: a young woman oppressed by the tightness of the plait, to a one that stopped to contemplate her writing, kept returning to it, and eventually found it a good source of inspiration. With time and increasing experience, the "tightness" of Austen's emotional restraint and artistic control, that might have seemed to her at first as a major flaw, morphed into an admirable accomplishment and, ironically, a liberating experience. Engaging more fully with her writing, she was able to appreciate the fine points of Austen's work and understand that their approach to art was in many ways very

[1] Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, *The Complete Collection*.

similar; that, just like in her own writing, under the surface of seeming inconsequentiality and deliberate constraint, lay the rich world of human psyche offering endless opportunities for exploring and interpretation. This recognition led her to experimentation, and a desire to try her hand in communicating with her in some of her stories.

From the point of view of Austen's evolving reputation in the first decades of the twentieth century, the early years of Mansfield's literary career were marked by Austen's heavy presence in the contemporary literary environment to which she, however, mostly turned a blind eye. Her, at first, almost complete silence indicates that the lingering aura of Victorian myth-mongering and the continuous misrepresentation of Austen as a person and an artist had, at best, an alienating, if not an antagonizing effect. At that stage in life, she, like many other modernists, would probably find "everybody's dear Jane"[2] suffocating, uninspiring and the constant looking back to her time detrimental to her quest for innovation and a desire to carve a new place for herself in the literary world.

Mansfield was, however, an attentive and perceptive reader; as her diaries make abundantly clear, she, analogously to Austen, "read like a potential author," looking for "what she could use – not by quietly absorbing and reflecting it, but by actively engaging, rewriting, often mocking it,"[3] so once exposed to Austen's writing itself, she could not help getting intrigued; gradually extricating from the quagmire of sentimental and fanciful accounts the essence of the writer, she eventually realized that the emerging picture was becoming more and more appealing. This transitional period of drawing nearer to Austen was simultaneously also the period of Mansfield's tenacious pursuit of fine-tuning her art; communicating the main principles of good writing in her numerous reviews of other people's works, she, at the same time, articulated and thus clarified them for herself, and then turned to apply them in her own oeuvre. In the larger picture of the entirety of Mansfield's critical

[2] Henry James, "Extract from 'The Lesson of Balzac,'" originally published in *Athlantic Monthly,* 96 (1905): 166-180; in *Jane Austen: Critical Assessments,* Vol. 1, ed. Ian Littlewood (Mountfield: Helm Information, 1998), 437.
[3] Isobel Grundy, "Jane Austen and Literary Traditions" qtd. in Harman, *Jane's Fame,* 12.

work and within the sizeable group of her favourite writers, Austen plays a relatively small part, but it does not follow that it is insignificant and should be disregarded. The two reviews that engage with Austen in a more extensive way belong, after all, among the most famous of her critical essays and, as the evidence suggests, they acted as a springboard that prepared her for and launched her towards the last stage of her reading and consequent rewriting of Austen. Besides that, they also contributed to the fashioning of the complex relationship between Mansfield and Virginia Woolf, setting the stage for Woolf's later contemplation of the two authors.

The detailed scrutiny of the affinities between *Emma,* Mansfield's most favourite novel by Austen, and her stories, "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" and "A Cup of Tea," shows on how many different levels Austen's writing communicates with that of Mansfield. On the one hand, there are the characters, concerns and themes; both authors investigate the concepts of restriction, tedium, monotonous existence, and limited choices, creating memorable characters notwithstanding the circumstances of their lives. Formally, they make up for the outward lack of excitement and variety by the complex interplay of different kinds of irony with the technique of the free indirect speech, which multiply ambiguities and thus enable the two authors to squeeze into the relatively small world of their respective works an almost endless supply of readings.

When Mansfield was finally ready to spend more time on reading Austen, she must have been surprised by the extent to which she spoke to her attitudes and style. Yet, the ultimate affinity between them, one whose ramifications neither of them would be able to fully understand about their own respective arts, but which keeps endearing them to their readers, was the ability only great artists possess: to be simultaneously inhabiting their own time and creating universal worlds that transcend it, enabling people with distinctly different experience to identify with and enjoy their works.

Returning to the opening dilemma of this chapter, our work hopefully demonstrated that juxtaposing Austen and Mansfield was not such a controversial idea as it might have initially seemed, and that if Mansfield, just

like Clarissa Dalloway, really had to choose, she would have plenty of reasons to pick Austen over either Brontë or Shelley.

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