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# Katherine Mansfield: A Modernist's Perception of Childhood

bakalářská práce

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Podpis.....

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Annotation

*Katherine Mansfield: A Modernist's Perception of Childhood*  
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Anotace

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to showcase the remarkable quality of Katherine Mansfield's portrayal of children in her selected stories of *Prelude*, *At the Bay*, *The Doll's House* and *The Garden Party*. Considered are not only Katherine Mansfield's own views, but also the stances the society assumed in relation to children in general as discussed across time up until the nineteenth century.

### **Key words**

Katherine Mansfield, childhood, children, Futurism, Dadaism, developmental psychology, Kezia

## Abstrakt

Záměrem této práce je poukázat na osobitý způsob vyobrazení dětských postav Katherine Mansfieldové ve vybraných povídkách: *Prelude*, *At the Bay*, *The Doll's House* a *The Garden Party*. V potaz jsou přitom brány nejen postoje zaujaté vůči dětem a jejich vyobrazení Mansfieldové samotné, nýbrž i ty, jež v tomto ohledu zaujala společnost v průběhu času až do období devatenáctého století.

### Klíčová slova

Katherine Mansfield, dětství, děti, futurismus, dadaismus, vývojová psychologie, Kezia

# Contents

Introduction .....	8
1 The Conceptualization of Childhood in Selected Fields of Study .....	10
1.1 Art .....	10
1.1.1 Notion of Childhood Before the Emergence of Developmental Psychology ...	19
1.1.1 Notion of Childhood After the Emergence of Developmental Psychology.....	21
1.2 Literature .....	25
2 The Girlhood of Katherine Mansfield.....	27
3 The Conceptualization of Childhood in Selected Works of Katherine Mansfield..	33
3.1 Prelude .....	33
3.2 At the Bay .....	37
3.3 The Doll's House .....	40
3.4 The Garden Party .....	42
Conclusion .....	44
Resumé.....	46
Bibliography.....	48
Primary sources .....	48
Secondary sources.....	48

## **Introduction**

This thesis attempts to investigate the depth, value and most notably, the distinctiveness of the children's characters of Katherine Mansfield. As I focus on Mansfield not only as a writer, but as a woman of her time as well, I have decided to also dedicate a section of my thesis to an overview of the approaches taken towards children across time, as Mansfield was, inevitably, influenced by these societal views.

When I was first introduced to the subject of development of the notion of childhood, many of my attempts at educating myself further have failed on the basis of feeling overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information. There is a wide range of works dedicated to the examination of the subject – the focus being pedagogical, instructional, philosophical, and artistic, including literary.

I decided to focus my thesis on the latter, that is the notion of childhood in art and literature, choosing Katherine Mansfield and her selected short stories involving children as a guide. I also deemed it important to mention the dynamic changes the conceptualization of childhood went through before and after the emergence of developmental psychology, since it was the findings of the experts in the field of developmental psychology in particular that were of the greatest impact on the general public.

I also acknowledge the impact of the artistic scene, devoting the very first chapter of this thesis to Italian Futurism, Russian Futurism, and the Dadaists as they operated in various parts of the world, namely Switzerland and Germany. It is these artistic movements especially that are associated with children, as the Futurists viewed the children as the means of changing the future, while the Dadaists attempted to understand the Child itself, by the means of exploring the inner workings of children's mind.

I chose include Katherine Mansfield and her work because she became famous for her depictions of children especially, as she appears to have a genuine understanding of both the adult world and that of the Child. Her children characters seem to stand in contrast to those depicted by the Romantic and late-Victorian authors, as they are portrayed in a way that is more realistic. The children of Katherine Mansfield, so to speak, do not share a way of possible exit out of the adult world, like



James Matthew Barrie's Wendy or Lewis Carroll's Alice did. The children's characters in Mansfield's stories share their space with the adults, and are operating within it, instead of escaping it. In my thesis, I attempt to examine and explain the specific way in which Mansfield's child characters appear so realistic, which, paradoxically, makes them so special among the children characters of different literary authors. For the analysis, I selected the following short stories: *Prelude*, *At the Bay*, *The Doll's House*, and *The Garden Party*. I chose to include these stories because of their characters' proximity to Mansfield herself, and because they come from her most productive period as a writer and are regarded as the ones of the highest quality, since she has, by that time, matured both as a person and a writer.

# 1 The Conceptualization of Childhood in Selected Fields of Study

## 1.1 Art

In the first subchapter of Modernist views on Children and Childhood I will focus on the artistic movements initiated by the avant-garde. I will begin with an introduction to Italian Futurism, since it is the direct predecessor to Russian Futurism, which is in turn among the most closely intertwined movements with Dadaism – the culmination of this subchapter.

Disheartened by the shortcomings of Risorgimento and deeming Italy as being in a cultural and political crisis, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wrote *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism (1909)*. “In his manifesto, Marinetti introduces many of the central themes and characteristics of what would become the Futurist aesthetic and political program.”<sup>1</sup> He had his work published in the large-circulation Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* in hopes of reaching the urban masses. Marinetti wanted to reinforce in general public the already felt “need for a strong, national leader who would lead Italy to world power.”<sup>2</sup>

The tone of the manifesto is fairly militaristic, Marinetti being an avid supporter of Italy joining the World War, as well as an admirer of technological development both in general terms as well as in its inevitable connection to the conflict. He urges for a break-away from the past that Italy treasured in the form of the so-called “passatismo” (a derogatory neologism created by the Italian Futurists for the model of antiquity), feeling as though the nation’s potential has been buried under the sentimental notion of Italy’s past which essentially declares its days of glory being long gone and over. In the manifesto, he calls Italy “littered with the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards,” going on to call said museums “absurd abattoirs of painters and sculptors ferociously macerating each other.”<sup>3</sup> Marinetti viewed the war as “the world's only hygiene,” a way of cleansing the land from its “anachronistic, moribund past,”<sup>4</sup> putting in the place of the cult of the past one

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Bowler, “Politics as Art: Futurism and Fascism,” *Theory and Society* 20, no. 6 (December 1991): 767. JSTOR.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 768.

<sup>3</sup> Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” 39, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Anne Bowler, “Politics as Art: Futurism and Fascism,” *Theory and Society* 20, no. 6 (December 1991): 767. JSTOR.

of violence and masculinity. With it, he sought to conquer and dominate the land that he was generally referring to in terms of gendered metaphors (as is shown by the use of the feminine pronoun “her” in the quote above) by which he aimed to emphasize Italy’s passivity, sentimentality, and moral contamination. His attitude is, in this aspect illustrated in a quote from *Let’s Murder the Moonshine* (1991):

Watch me! I seize the stick and glide smoothly down, magnificently stable, and touch ground where the fight rages hottest! (...) See the furious coitus of war, gigantic vulva stirred by the friction of courage, shapeless vulva that spreads to offer itself to the terrific spasm of final victory! It's ours, the victory.<sup>5</sup>

By dominating the land, Marinetti meant a total destruction of its past, a violent break off from it. Such disengagement would, according to him, give way for the nation to raise to prominence, and for Italy to achieve the status of a great power on completely new terms.

In their effort to eradicate the past, the Italian Futurists also attempted to deconstruct the concept of beauty as shaped by Romanticism (in other words, as seen through the lens of the past), viewing it as too closely aligned with femininity as it was characterized above. The new ideals were strength, destruction, acceleration, and mechanization. The idea of Mechanical Beauty was to overrule and replace the image of beauty as it was recognized before. To reject and reshape the romanticist notion of beauty then also meant the rejection of romantic conventions as such. It was by this abrupt change in national values most evident in culture Marinetti strived for Italy to change as a whole. Such a change was thus to be accomplished by merging art with politics and everyday life.

One of the ways of utilizing Futurist values in the context of alliance between life and art was through music. Luigi Russolo introduced in his own Futurist manifesto *The Art of Noises* (1913) the concept of “bruitism” or noise-music. Russolo claimed that by the virtue of industrial development, people have become accustomed to a new range of sounds, such as the noise of engines, cars in the streets, planes or even explosions. He claimed that traditional music has lost its ability to excite and entertain

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<sup>5</sup> Anne Bowler, “Politics as Art: Futurism and Fascism,” *Theory and Society* 20, no. 6 (December 1991): 773. JSTOR.

the listener, because its composition follows similar, outdated principles resulting in melodies too familiar to truly stimulate the mind. Bruitism<sup>6</sup> suggests the incorporation of these elements of the new urban soundscape into music and art by means that are essentially up to the choice of the artist himself. Russolo has done so by inventing his own range of hand-made musical instruments he named “intonarumori” made from wooden boxes with a metal string in contact with a wheel inside. The mechanism produced sound upon the artist using a crank that would make the wheel turn.

Marinetti, in turn, presented in his 1914 manifesto *Geometric and Mechanical Splendour and the Numerical Sensibility* a new literary form that would completely disregard rules of traditional grammar involving word and sentence structure, word order, punctuation and at times even semantics. He too envisioned the audible aspects of the modern industrial world to be integrated into art. With his innovation he named “words-in-freedom” he focused on creation of new poetry.

Nothing is more beautiful than a great humming central electric station that holds the hydraulic pressure of a mountain chain and the electric power of a vast horizon, synthesized in marble distribution panels bristling with dials, keyboards, and shining commutators. These panels are our only models for the ... geometric splendour that we want to achieve in poetry with words-in-freedom.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the art of Italian Futurists was devoted to the concept of simultaneity. In music, it was the polyphony created by a variety of new instruments – predecessors to today’s sound synthesizers, in writing, it was the violation of grammatical structure and narrative norm and in painting, it was the use of a line specifically that helped illustrate the Futurist values of dynamism, mechanization, motion, speed and vigor.

Having introduced the central themes and attitudes that constitute Italian Futurism, I will now move on to the Futurist movement as it emerged and sprouted in Russia after Italy had prepared the ground.

Despite the Russian Futurists being inspired by their Italian counterparts in the beginning, they soon grew to have a notably different ideology as well as goals. In his

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<sup>6</sup> Anne Bowler, “Politics as Art: Futurism and Fascism,” *Theory and Society* 20, no. 6 (December 1991): 779. JSTOR.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 781, 782.

article on Russian Futurism Renato Poggioli notes that when Marinetti travelled to Russia in 1914 to present a series of lectures on Futurism, the audience was “disappointed with the political overtones of his speeches.”<sup>8</sup> Russian Futurism had no interest in the cult of violence or the Mechanical Beauty. “In the Russian case, the glorification of the values of our modern mechanical civilization came only later, with Mayakovsky and his group, and in connection with the Communist idolatry of technology and industrialization.”<sup>9</sup> Russian Futurists have been much more keen about linguistic expression and style, turning to the Child not as it was understood from a Freudian point of view – that is as primal, treacherous and cruel, but to the image of spontaneity, curiosity and authenticity, observing and at some instances collecting children’s art, seeking inspiration (the below mentioned Natalia Goncharova being one such case).

Another remarkable difference between the Italian and Russian Futurists is that the latter were always more inclined to act as a group, whereas Italian Futurists were more individualistic. Originally, there was a single group, based in Saint Petersburg, but soon, the group split into two, the newer one installing itself in Moscow under the name Cubo-Futurists in allusion to the Cubism of Braque, Picasso, and Apollinaire.<sup>10</sup>

Among the most renown members are the Burljuk brothers – David and Vladimir, Natalia Goncharova, Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Aleksei Kruchyonykh. The Burljuk brothers, Khlebnikov, Mayakovsky and Kruchyonykh being present at the very dawn of the movement.

While both groups were interested in language and writing before painting and other mediums, the separation was inevitable due to their differences in perspective. Whereas the Saint Peterburg group was more interested in the revival of folk art, the Cubo-Futurists attempted an artistic revolution in a direct link to language as it was used in poetry. In other words, the Cubo-Futurists wanted to construct a completely new language solely for the purpose of poetry that would be more close to music than spoken word, to the point of the language used having no translatable meaning. “Their intent was to transcend the traditional and conventional meaning of each word; nay, to

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<sup>8</sup> Renato Poggioli, “Russian Futurism, Xlebnikov, Esenin,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 3. JSTOR.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 4.

devise words morphologically new, and therefore devoid of any pre-established connotation.”<sup>11</sup>

The language was given the name of “zaumnyj jazyk” or “zaum” meaning trans-mental or trans-rational language. Such a language, constituting from non-referential sounds, was to be able to directly activate the subconscious – a term appearing very frequently in the debates on children’s nature at the time.

Aleksei Kruchyonykh and Velimir Khlebnikov “studied children’s babbling repetitions and pleasurable play with sound variations, which they linked to their own experimental concept of ‘zaum,’”<sup>12</sup> being therefore credited as the creators of the language. Both Kruchyonykh and Khlebnikov, however, chose different approaches when putting their invention to use. Khlebnikov, in the spirit of the Saint Petersburg Futurists, was indifferent towards the modern, instead “going backward into the past, and trying to find the regained paradise of primitive innocence in the darkness of prehistory.”<sup>13</sup> He thought the approach of the average Futurist, who would choose as his starting point the conventional expressions and rules of language and try to defy them to be vapid and pointless.<sup>14</sup>

He chose to put his effort into the study of Slavic mythology and language, trying to find its roots and rather than converting the language, he aimed at rebuilding it “on the ideal chain of pure forms and perfect words.”<sup>15</sup> In this way, Khlebnikov imagined reaching a point of singular, universal language.

For Kruchyonykh, on the other hand, zaum was “demanded by the confused character of contemporary life and served as an antidote to the paralysis of common language.”<sup>16</sup> By the paralysis, he meant the conservative literary traditions. Traditional

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<sup>11</sup> Renato Poggioli, “Russian Futurism, Xlebnikov, Esenin,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 7. JSTOR.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret R. Higonnet, “Modernism and Childhood: Violence and Renovation,” *The Comparatist* 33, (May 2009): 89. JSTOR.

<sup>13</sup> Renato Poggioli, “Russian Futurism, Xlebnikov, Esenin,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 10. JSTOR.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 10, 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 12, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Vahan D. Barooshian, *Russian Cubo-Futurism 1910-1930: A Study in Avant-Gardism* (Paris: Mouton, 1976), 85, <https://eibn.pub/russian-cubo-futurism-1910-1930-a-study-in-avant-gardism-9783110872194.html>.

poetry especially dwelled on meaning, which he thought put the poet under constraint, limiting him in expression, invention, and imagination and thus resulting in poetry drained of its true essence. He wanted the poet to rule poetry, not the other way around, stating the following:

Before us no art of the word ever existed. Up to now it has been maintained that it is poetry that rules the word, rather than contrariwise. We have bared this mistake.... A word is wider than its meaning.... Each letter, each sound, has its relevance.... Why not renounce ideas, why not write with idea-words, with words freely made?... There is no need for such intermediaries as symbol and thought, and we prefer uttering our truth anew....<sup>17</sup>

The very first example of poetry composed using zaum was by Kruchyonykh. It was a short poem called *Dyr bul shchyl* published in his book *Pomada* in 1913. The poem consists of pure neologisms and is just five lines long, ending in singular letters standing on their own.

Another notable example of a subjective approach to zaum is Vasily Kamensky, who deemed language itself almost a form of music, since both are in their essence composed of sounds. He was therefore, similarly to Kruchyonykh, advocating for the creative freedom of the artist, the poet treating the sounds of languages as notes, paying close attention to their sound and compose poetry as one would compose a melody. Kamensky's himself engaged a great deal in verbal play, his poetry said to be "conversationally oriented and meant to be declaimed, or sung, or both; and many of his poems are written although they were musical compositions."<sup>18</sup>

I chose to introduce more names in the context of Russian Futurism to provide a more direct insight into the movement and its participants since it is, in its principles much more closely aligned with Dadaism, the artistic movement most widely associated with the idea of child art and children. This being said, I will now proceed

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<sup>17</sup> Renato Poggioli, "Russian Futurism, Xlebnikov, Esenin," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 7. JSTOR.

<sup>18</sup> Vahan D. Barooshian, *Russian Cubo-Futurism 1910-1930: A Study in Avant-Gardism* (Paris: Mouton, 1976), 102, <https://ebin.pub/russian-cubo-futurism-1910-1930-a-study-in-avant-gardism-9783110872194.html>.

to an introduction to Dadaism carried out in a similar manner. The Dada movement arose from the disorder and confusion so prominent in society in the post-war period. In the light of war, all that was thought to be standard and valued became relative. The Dadaists wanted to make “a clean sweep of everything,”<sup>19</sup> and start anew. With the recognition of the theme of the subconscious on the rise in the 1900’s (especially by means of Sigmund Freud’s theories on the subject), many artists chose to trace the path to that of their own, looking to the Child for clues. Starting with Tristan Tzara, who gave the movement its name, being quoted saying “Le langage est un jeu d’enfants” famously translated as “language is a child’s game.”

Dada has its roots in Zurich, Switzerland, more specifically in the literary nightclub Cabaret Voltaire, founded in 1916 by Hugo Ball.<sup>20</sup> In the cabaret, there were, apart from those provided by the members of the movement, exhibited the works of Marinetti or Picasso, who was a passionate admirer of child art himself. The first Dada publication, printed by the Heuberger press was given the name *Cabaret Voltaire*.<sup>21</sup>

While seeking to deconstruct the artistic conventions at first, Dada soon turned its attention to those held up by society as well, and it was in the cabaret where the early Dadaists shared their views with the public. There were performances held using marionettes and other unconventional props, such as pieces of furniture or painted pieces of cardboard, and poems recited – this too, often times done in a manner that would come as surprising to the audience. One such example would be the screamed verses of Richard Huelsenbeck.<sup>22</sup> Tzara presented his “static poems” the words of which were painted on individual posters attached to chairs that were then being rearranged.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the Zurich Dadaist group’s gradual disperse, “when the most important members left Zürich, everywhere movements rise, that did take over the magical word 'dada', but that are totally different in character.”<sup>24</sup> Such was the case in New York, Berlin, Cologne, Paris or Hanover. The most outstanding names on the New York

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<sup>19</sup> Georges Hugnet, “Dada,” *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 4, no. 2/3 (1936): 3. JSTOR.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> H. Henkels and F. C. Nagels, “The beginning of dadaism: Arp and van Rees in Zürich 1915,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek (NKJ) / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 23 (1972): 373. JSTOR.



scene were Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. Duchamp is to this day famous for his anti-art stance, among the most compelling evidence of it being his *Fountain* piece, a porcelain urinal he submitted to the First Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917, under a fake name. The piece was a sculpture in a style Duchamp called “ready-made.” Many of the movement’s participants created in this style, using ordinary objects ranging from those found on the ground to those of everyday use in their homes. Duchamp is said to have paved the way for the concept of “handmade poetry,” at the core of which lays the “poetic experience where casual, concrete things are the poetry you take in your hand.”<sup>25</sup> Man Ray was, along with Duchamp one of the pioneers of “handmade poetry,” experimenting with painting as well as photography, placing pins, buttons, pieces of paper, screws or his own hands onto a photosensitive paper that he then exposed to light, thus creating his “rayographs.”<sup>26</sup>

In Berlin, a manifesto was signed by both the Berlin Dadaists as well as those from Zurich, including Tzara. In 1920, one of the greatest exhibitions, First International Dada Fair was held in here, the Berlin Dadaists inviting “almost all those who, to their knowledge, participated in Dada both in Germany and abroad.”<sup>27</sup> Apart from subscribing to the idea of “handmade poetry,” the Dadaists of Berlin attempted to dismantle the notion of individuality – collaborating with each other, or signing each other’s paintings.<sup>28</sup>

In the same year, another memorable exhibition was held in Cologne, at Brauhaus Winter. In his article on Dada, Georges Hugnet marks the year as “the heroic period of the movement,” and refers to said exhibition in similar fashion.<sup>29</sup> The exhibition was accessible to the wider public, both because of the place chosen (a café), and because of its location that was in the center of the city. It was meant, as all Dadaist exhibitions at the time, to shock from the very beginning. The Cologne exhibition achieved this by the way of access, which was through the café’s lavatory. Among the most notable works presented was Johannes Theodor Baargeld’s *Fluidoskepatrik*, a glass tank filled with water that was tinted red. On the bottom of the tank there sat an alarm clock and above the it floated a lock of hair. Another noteworthy piece was that

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<sup>25</sup> Georges Hugnet, „Dada,“ *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 4, no. 2/3 (1936): 8. JSTOR.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 12, 13.

by Max Ernst – a piece of wood with a hatchet chained to it, which the visitors were invited to use. “Naturally, as the beer drinking customers of the café came drifting in, the exhibition received some severe treatment – the objects were broken, the aquarium destroyed, and the red fluid spilt – and all to the complete triumph of Dada.”<sup>30</sup>

One final example I would like to include before closing this subchapter is Kurt Schwitters. As both a poet and a painter, his work epitomizes that of a Dadaist. For his sculptures, he used sticks, pieces of glass, paper, or clothing he would find on the street, similarly to the remarkable collages he would construct of “scraps of paper picked out of the mud, of trolley car tickets, of stamps and of paper money withdrawn from circulation.”<sup>31</sup> Schwitters was among the first to begin to see a new value to everyday objects, recognizing the potential even in deterioration and waste, which was an example many Dadaists followed. He was a revolutionary in poetry as well, composing poems in a completely abstract language, making them striking graphically as well as acoustically, since they were not meant to be recited in the traditional sense. Instead, the performance consisted of a series of varying sounds, whistles, with some parts of the poem being sung. The most widely recognized example of Schwitters’s sound poetry is his *Ursonate*, on which he worked for nearly ten years.

In the next subchapter, I will proceed to discuss Modernist views on Children and Childhood in the social realm. It is from this point on I will be speaking in terms more directly related to actual children – to be able to do so, however, and because the fields addressed (art, psychology, sociology, and literature) are so tightly woven together, the observations made in one affecting those made in the other, I deemed it important to provide a context enough so that both the observations mentioned and their effect may be better understood by a reader unacquainted with the subject of this chapter.

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<sup>30</sup> Georges Hugnet, „Dada,“ *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 4, no. 2/3 (1936): 12, 13. JSTOR.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

### 1.1.1 Notion of Childhood Before the Emergence of Developmental Psychology

In the words of Bette P. Goldstone: “The concept of childhood is dynamic, changing to fit the needs of the community.”<sup>32</sup> In the society of the Middle Ages up to the beginning of the Renaissance, children did not have any place of their own. They were recognized simply as “miniature adults,” dressed in miniature versions of adult clothing and given tasks their miniature minds and bodies were thought to be able to handle. The duration of childhood was then about seven years, age seven being determined to be a point at which one was able to tell right from wrong – “the age of reason.”<sup>33</sup>

The lack of attention given to the Child is evident, apart from that of child-oriented literature or other forms of education for children, lack of nurseries and toys – in medieval portrayals of children. Medieval paintings depicting children are notorious for their seemingly distorted perception, featuring babies with bald spots, wrinkles, and muscular limbs too long for their body.

One of the first to recognize childhood as a distinct period in life were the Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. According to their view, all children were born out sin and therefore inherently evil, needing to be guided to the right path and taught how to be respectable, productive members of the community. Despite said guidance following the doctrine “spare the rod and spoil the child,” the Puritans did not only openly acknowledge but also love their children.<sup>34</sup>

John Locke too played an important part in the conceptualization of childhood at the time. In his writing, he established the Child born as a blank slate, “cleaner than Adam was before he tasted the apple.”<sup>35</sup> Locke was an advocate of patient and gentle treatment as well as letting children learn through play, making learning an enjoyable experience instead of a painful one. It is at this time the market for children’s literature has first opened up.<sup>36</sup>

Mid-nineteenth century saw another turn in the perception of childhood, largely due to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a name frequently associated with that of John Locke

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<sup>32</sup> Bette P. Goldstone, “Views of Childhood in Children's Literature Over Time,” *Language Arts* 63, no. 8 (December 1986): 792. JSTOR.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 793.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 794.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

in the context of the nature versus nurture debate. Rousseau was convinced children came into the world pure, but not empty, or blank. He thought children to be endowed with a special kind of innocence, their perception being devoid of any sort of prejudice or bias.<sup>37</sup>

The notion of children having their own special world, one to which adults have no way of entry was beginning to emerge in the nineteenth century. Childhood became to be seen as a period when one was free to explore and enjoy life unburdened by any responsibility or worry. Children were now provided with toys, their own clothing, meals and the privacy and comfort of nurseries.<sup>38</sup> From the adults' perspective, this was a period of protected childhood.

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<sup>37</sup> Bette P. Goldstone, "Views of Childhood in Children's Literature Over Time," *Language Arts* 63, no. 8 (December 1986): 795. JSTOR.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

### 1.1.1 Notion of Childhood After the Emergence of Developmental Psychology

Given the fact that the conceptualization of childhood was still only in its beginnings, this naturally wasn't a shared, solitary point of view. In the Victorian era, much of the debates on children revolved around questions about the primitive and the insane. This may sound startling from today's standpoint, however in the nineteenth century, people were still new to the idea of the inner workings of the child's mind, and there were many possible interpretations of the phenomenon. The 1843 case of Daniel M'Naghten served as the basis for the argument of the mind of a child having much in common with that of a madman. M'Naghten was guilty of shooting a man dead mistaking him for Robert Peel, the UK Prime Minister at the time he was planning on assassinating. This case led to the formulation and legal implementation of the M'Naghten Rules that take into consideration the mental state of the person facing trial, making it possible to judge the defendant more accordingly in a case of proven insanity at the time of the crime having taken place. The M'Naghten Rules, of course, did not outline the circumstances under which children might be characterized as delusional,<sup>39</sup> they were, however, one of the chief causes for the widespread anxiety among the Victorian parents that were not sure what to make of their children's nature and how to approach it. "The question of how to characterize fantasy, imagination, and dreaming in children was central to mid-century discussions of child psychology."<sup>40</sup>

Henry Holland, a Physician to the Queen, and thus one of the most respected and widely read educated men at the time, discusses in his *Chapters on Mental Physiology* (1852) the term "reverie," characterizing it as "a state indeterminate between sleep and waking."<sup>41</sup> Reverie would in this sense of the word become a subject of debate on children's mental health in the upcoming years.

Holland states that "dream-states often extend into a child's waking consciousness, producing a kind of 'delirium,'" linking the "unformed intellect and character" of a child to adult delusion and insanity, basing his opinion on the grounds of children being less capable of distinguishing lie from truth, saying that "the corrections from reason and experience are less complete [in children] than in

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<sup>39</sup> Stephanie L. Schatz, "Lewis Carroll's Dream-child and Victorian Child Psychopathology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 76, no. 1 (January 2015): 98. JSTOR.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 99.

adults."<sup>42</sup> At the same time, Holland does make a note of “voluntary abstraction,” which could be labelled as the use of imagination.

In 1860, Sir James Crichton-Browne published an essay titled *Psychical Diseases in Early Life*, in which he warns parents who let their children engage in so-called daydreaming that: “Impressions, created by the ever-fertile imagination of a child are soon believed as realities, and become a part of the child’s psychical existence. They become, in fact, actual delusions.”<sup>43</sup>

The same year, L. Forbes Winslow published his seminal study *On Obscure Diseases of the Brain and Disorders of the Mind* (1860), in which he asserts that there is no difference between reverie and “castle-building” or daydreaming, adding that “indulgence in a state of morbid reverie, or disposition to ‘build castles in the air,’ is fraught with serious mischief to the mind.”<sup>44</sup> He also adds that “Young persons are disposed to reverie,”<sup>45</sup> while rejecting the possibility of Holland’s “voluntary abstraction,” assigning such a capability – that is the one of using one’s imagination without their sense of reality becoming distorted to adults only.<sup>46</sup>

Henry Maudsley, also an expert in the field of psychology, published in 1867 the book titled *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*. He too claims that children are incapable of distinguishing fantasy from reality, saying that young children “cannot correct sense [with] reflection” and therefore “must believe” what their imagination presents to them.<sup>47</sup> He also states that what would be labelled as insanity in an adult, would in fact be “a normal mental state in children younger than about eight or nine.”<sup>48</sup> Maudsley asserts a stance similar to that of Holland in saying that children may actively participate in daydreaming however it is of most importance that they are taught to differentiate between what is reality and what is a fantasy.

Dreams themselves became a highly analyzed subject at the time due to the rising interest in the unconscious processes of the mind. One of the most notable people that

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<sup>42</sup> Stephanie L. Schatz, “Lewis Carroll’s Dream-child and Victorian Child Psychopathology,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 76, no. 1 (January 2015): 102. JSTOR.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid* 100, 101.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid* 101.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 102.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*.

concerned themselves with such analyses was Frances Power Cobbe. At the time of Cobbe's writing, psychological experts, as well as ordinary people, were eager to learn about the nature of the human psyche, to find the reasoning behind our thought processes and behavior – something Sigmund Freud would come to be most recognized for. Even before Freud, however, much of the psychological research was focused on the origins of humanity and thought. The interpretation of dreams played a significant part in the research, dreams being something that all people, regardless of the time period they found themselves in, their age, gender or social class, experienced.

In Cobbe's theory, the mind is able to operate without an animating spirit.<sup>49</sup> That is, she did not recognize a direct link between one's dreams and desires. She used as her argument the cases of people with violent dreams, especially towards children. Sally Shuttleworth notes an example of a woman who worked with pauper children and had dreamed that she grabbed one of the little boys, "doubled him up into the smallest compass, and poked him through the bars of a lion's cage."<sup>50</sup> Cobbe states that while one is aware of violent dreams being disturbing, upon waking, they feel no remorse, which suggests there is indeed no real connection between intent and dream. "We commit in dreams acts for which we should weep tears of blood were they real."<sup>51</sup>

James Sully, who was among the leading theorists in the field of child developmental psychology in the nineteenth century England argued that in dreams, "we return to the 'undeveloped mental condition of infancy,'"<sup>52</sup> meaning that when dreaming, we leave behind all that we have learned in our life, thus revealing our alternative or past selves, concluding that "these 'undeveloped, rudimentary selves belong to the hidden substrata of our mental being.'"<sup>53</sup>

The Child would, in the context of nineteenth century psychology, be understood as a possible witness to both a lost personal and historical past.<sup>54</sup>

It was at this time the anthropological theory of animism rose to prominence. It was one of the first to address the primitive cultures and their understanding of the

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<sup>49</sup> Sally Shuttleworth, "Childhood, Severed Heads, and the Uncanny: Freudian Precursors," *Victorian Studies* 58, no. 1 (Autumn 2015): 92. JSTOR.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 100.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 104.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

world, and it was through the inner workings of the Child's mind psychology drew a link between humanity's past and its present. In an attempt to explain the nature of this link in clear terms, Sigmund Freud and Ernst Jentsch turned to the phenomenon of the uncanny. In his essay *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* (1906), Jentsch defines the uncanny as "caused by the psychical uncertainty aroused when the homely or familiar is unsettled."<sup>55</sup> Among the chief examples of Jentsch's uncanny is the uncertainty about a perceived object being animate or inanimate.<sup>56</sup> A child might experience the uncanny when someone moves a toy for him, making it seem as if the inanimate object became animate. Such a feeling may also be evoked by seeing something thought to be alive dead.

Freud, in his essay on *The Uncanny* (1909), defines it as an experience that "occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed," adding also that the "primitive beliefs are most intimately connected with infantile complexes, and are, in fact, based on them,"<sup>57</sup> illustrating the link between the primitive and the Child. Freud does not only consider the aspect of unfamiliarity but also "that which is hidden."<sup>58</sup> For him, "childhood itself becomes the repressed that returns, with uncanny effect, in adulthood."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Sally Shuttleworth, "Childhood, Severed Heads, and the Uncanny: Freudian Precursors," *Victorian Studies* 58, no. 1 (Autumn 2015): 85. JSTOR.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.



## 1.2 Literature

As much as there is to talk about in relation to children's developmental psychology, considering the theoretical breakthroughs made in the nineteenth century especially, I will now move on to theme of children in literature at the time.

Despite all the advancements made in the conceptualization of childhood, in the nineteenth century, there was still a great deal of confusion and uncertainty regarding the topic of children among the general public. Childhood as a time period in one's life still didn't have clearly set boundaries, and the boundaries that were proposed were of a wide range. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for one, suggested the acquirement of language as a starting point of childhood<sup>60</sup>, implying that it is from this point onward one starts to recognize and discover themselves as a person thanks to the ability to convey their thoughts. Among the more practical and universally recognized ways of defining the time frame of childhood were the age of marriageability or the one of employment. These too, however, were subjected to change, as discussions about children and childhood reached the legal sphere as well.

The contemporary society's views on childhood reflected themselves the most palpably in the literary field. In narrative literature, personal trauma was often what drew the line between childhood and young adulthood. In most cases, it was trauma caused by dislocation from the family – the child leaving home to attend boarding school for example, or a sudden change within the family structure. That could be onset by the child's siblings leaving the home, or the passing of a family member.<sup>61</sup>

In poetry, there was the protruding romantic myth of childhood as a period of spiritual bliss, boundless joy, potential, freedom, and possession of other-worldly wisdom. The child figures in these narratives were not a reflection of real-life children, but instead a sentimental portrayal driven by the adult longing for childhood as the lost period of extraordinariness.<sup>62</sup> Notably, not much attention was paid to the actual children's experience of childhood. Even fairy tales, a genre associated with children so closely today, considered adults as their target audience solely at first. The genre of the fairy tale started out with stories intended to construct and preserve a national

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<sup>60</sup> Linda M. Austin, "Children of Childhood: Nostalgia and the Romantic Legacy," *Studies in Romanticism* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 78. JSTOR

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

mythology.<sup>63</sup> The oldest children's fairy tales, then, are mere adaptations of such stories.

It should be noted that the early tales, though advertised to children, were not supposed to be read for entertainment only, but instead followed the formula of folk literature, the primary aim being to share knowledge with the young. The spread of fairy tales as geared towards children has caused a large-scale political debate in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century over the question of "possible negative effect the stories might have on the untutored mind."<sup>64</sup> There was an ideological clash between moralism and romanticism, with the educationalists and so-called moralists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Sarah Trimmer, or Anna Barbauld advocating for "educational literature that would help children become rational individuals,"<sup>65</sup> and Romantics like William Wordsworth or Samuel Taylor Coleridge calling for "liberation of children's literature."<sup>66</sup> By "liberating" children's literature from all logical constraints, the Romantics hoped to uphold their idea of the Child as "the Father of the Man," and reinforce in children their ideals of purity of mind and the child's life experience.<sup>67</sup>

As one may have come to expect, the voice of reason was generally overruled by sentiment. Such an approach gave way to new heroes – child heroes, such as Joseph Rudyard Kipling's Mowgli or James Matthew Barrie's Peter Pan went on to be, most famously.

It is worth noting, however, that characters like these, despite appearing childlike, are again, not a realistic portrayal of children, but instead convey the adult's nostalgic longing for childhood as a magical time of pure joy and freedom of both body and mind.

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<sup>63</sup> Jeanette Sky, "Myths of Innocence and Imagination: The Case of the Fairy Tale," *Literature and Theology* 16, no. 4 (December 2002): 365. JSTOR

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 365.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 366.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 366.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 372.

## 2 The Girlhood of Katherine Mansfield

Katherine Mansfield was born into a prosperous family. Her father, Harold Beauchamp managed a successful business, and together with Annie, his wife, they had already welcomed two children in their Wellington home, Katherine's sisters Vera and Charlotte. Later on, the three sisters would be joined by Leslie, a little brother.

The family shared their Wellington home with Annie's mother and two sisters, and it was the grandmother who played the major role in raising the Beauchamp children. Katherine was particularly close with "granny Dyer," reminiscing about her continually in the form of the character of the grandmother in her work, namely the short stories to be discussed later in this thesis.

The house on Tinakori Road was where Katherine spent her early years. At home, the sisters learned German, French, and how to play various musical instruments. A traditional education for wealthy young women. While still in primary school, Katherine developed a passion for both reading and writing. She has also found what Claire Tomalin has called in her *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life (1988)* biography "her people" there, something that became very much important for Katherine, as she has experienced the feeling of being "the odd one out" from quite early on in her life. This feeling was reinforced the most by her mother, who did not take well to young Katherine's lively nature. Even as a child, Katherine was extraordinary in her ability to observe and eagerness to impress. She has always been "a performer,"<sup>68</sup> making up stories both amusing and shocking, impersonating other people and reading aloud poetry in a way so moving she would attempt to make a living out of performance later on in her life. She performed often for her high school classmates as a way of getting out of manual work.

In Wellington Girl's high school that Katherine attended in 1898, the pupils had once been given the task of working on traditional Maori chemises for a mission. It was one of the ways Katherine grew enchanted by the culture, and at the time, she imagined herself joining the missionaries.<sup>69</sup>

Another high school activity that sparked interest in Katherine and that she would later return to was writing involving children's characters. She was a contributor

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<sup>68</sup> Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 14.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

to the school's magazine and provided it with anecdotes and short narratives about how children spend their holidays.<sup>70</sup>

In 1900, Katherine joined Miss Swainson's girl's school. She was not popular there, neither by the measure of her teachers, or by her fellow classmates. She was once more found to be too free-spirited, too talkative and "imaginative to the point of untruth."<sup>71</sup> It is possible this was because of the school's close attachment to the church, both literal, as The Saint Paul's Cathedral was within walking distance, and ideological. It was here, at Miss Swainson's girl's school young Katherine has come close to acquainting herself with aspects of the Maori culture once more. She became friends with Martha Grace, or Maata, a Maori girl. Maata has left a deep impression on Katherine. It was with her Katherine first became intimate with the same sex, in this case, still a girl, and she went on to attempt to write a novel based around Maata that was supposed to be thirty-five chapters long. Out of those only two ever got finished, however.

When she was thirteen, Katherine took up cello lessons by Mr. Trowell, an acquaintance of the Beauchamps The Trowell family grew to play a prominent role in her life. Mr. Trowell was the first person Katherine ever talked to about the so-called "free love," which suggests she put more trust in him than in her own parents. She went on to develop a life-long relationship with Garnet and Arnold, the sons of the Trowell family, and referred to Mrs. Trowell as "little mother" and Dolly, the youngest daughter, she called her "little sis."<sup>72</sup> Katherine admired the family for their devotion to music, among other things. She deemed it so they did not measure their value in terms of money, but in the terms of talent. This reflected itself in the relationship dynamic of the family which was what drew young Katherine to the Trowells the most, as openly shown emotion and passion were things hardly observed in a home where appearance and to "show people you are expensive"<sup>73</sup> was of the utmost importance.

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<sup>70</sup> Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 13.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

Between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, Katherine attended the Queen's College in London. Leaving New Zealand has brought about great excitement in Katherine, as she finally felt freed from the constrictions of family and home.<sup>74</sup>

Due to the school's liberal approach, its students were able to choose and dedicate their time exclusively to the classes they found useful and worthwhile. For Katherine, this was French, German and English. She also practiced singing and continued to learn to play the cello. In college, Katherine has once again found "her people," among those Ida Baker, her life companion to-be. She has also found her first lover, Vere Bartrick-Baker, a vibrant young woman. Vere indirectly aided Katherine in her journey of self-discovery. Katherine admired the confidence of Vere, and the two young women discussed openly the issue of relationships, both interpersonal and the one a person has with their own self.

In all the freedom she was given, however, Katherine later looked back on her college years as a time of "wasted girlhood."<sup>75</sup> She felt she wasted her potential in the academic field, as she "lived too much in the moment,"<sup>76</sup> analyzing her teachers' body language and facial expressions, as well as her physical surroundings in the classroom instead of paying attention to the lecture. She considered herself an "academic failure," because she did not follow in any specific direction, nor had she a set goal to achieve.

After she arrived back home in the beginning of the year 1906, Katherine intended on becoming a professional musician – a career her father did not approve of. Katherine was not at all disheartened, however. She found peace and quiet back in New Zealand and rediscovering a slow pace of life encouraged her to write. She could only uphold such an attitude for so long, however, considering all she has learned there is to life while in college. In London, Katherine had become interested in women's suffrage and the bohemian lifestyle. She felt motivation and pride upon learning about the new women writers entering the literary scene. About Elizabeth Robins, for instance, she wrote to her sister Vera:

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<sup>74</sup> Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

I like to think she is only the first of a great never ending procession of splendid, strong woman writers – all this suffragist movement is *excellent* for our sex – kicked policemen or not kicked policemen.<sup>77</sup>

On one hand, Katherine felt a sense of relief coming back home, relief from the fast-paced life of London, where all was new. At home, she knew no rush, as the family lead a comfortable life. She has also, as Claire Tomalin has put it, “rediscovered” her little brother Leslie, as he came home from boarding school around the same time Katherine did from college, and it was from then on there started to form a bond between the two siblings.

On the other hand, the family was struck by tragedy in the form of the children’s grandmother’s passing. Katherine was one of the most affected. She wrote to her cousin Sylvia:

Death never seemed revolting before – This place – steals your Youth... I feel year and years older and sadder.<sup>78</sup>

It is apparent Katherine felt deeply conflicted about life in New Zealand. While it meant a certain level of comfort in the sense of all her material needs being met, which allowed her in turn, to focus on herself, it was also a life awfully dull considering Katherine’s aspirations.

The year granny Dyer has passed, Harold Beauchamp sold the house on Tinakori Road and the family moved to the so-called Karori house, on Fitzherbert Terrace. The house had a library attached to it, where Katherine has spent a great deal of her time reading authors such as Honoré de Balzac, Guy de Maupassant, Christina Rossetti, the Brontë sisters, as well as Walter Whitman or George Bernard Shaw to name a few. She also wrote, quite famously, letters, together with short sketches and stories.<sup>79</sup>

At this time, Katherine also reignited her interest in the culture of the Maori. She was invited to a camping trip by her friend, Millie Parker and her cousin that could speak Maori as a guide and translator. On the month-long trip Katherine encountered

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<sup>77</sup> Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 35.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

some of the Maori people and was captivated mostly by the sight of the young women and their babies.<sup>80</sup>

This fascination has reflected itself in some of her writing. As mentioned earlier, Katherine attempted multiple times to write a novel with a Maori protagonist. In 1912, she produced a short story titled *How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped (1912)*, in which a little girl is taken by two Maori women. The act does not involve any violence towards the child, and she only senses something is not right after the policemen catch up with the group.

Through her father, Katherine was introduced to Tom Mills, a journalist who helped publish some of Katherine short stories in the literary magazine *Native Companion* from 1907 to 1908, when the magazine ceased to operate. Katherine received both monetary reward as well as verbal praise, but she felt it forced, and despite Mills offering to further work with Katherine, she refused on the basis of him acting unprofessional. She, however, confided in Mills about wanting to leave for London again.<sup>81</sup>

Katherine continued to spend her time writing. At one point, she intended on publishing a book, an illustrated collection of poems. The illustrator she had in mind was Edith Bendall, a daughter to one of the Beauchamps' acquaintances, well-known for her drawings of children. Edith was a kind, genuine and caring person, almost "motherly" to Katherine, who fell deeply in love with her. The pair did become very close, spending time together by reading and taking walks, but it is to this day unclear whether the attraction was one sided or not, as Edith herself chose to not confirm nor deny when the question was raised. Nothing ever came of the collection of poems either.<sup>82</sup>

In the summer of 1908, Katherine's parents finally gave in to her pleas to leave for London once more. Once there, Katherine was stationed at the Beauchamp Lodge, a hostel for music students.<sup>83</sup> As the name of the Beauchamp Lodge shared only a coincidental similarity with that of the Beauchamp surname, it was hardly a living

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<sup>80</sup> Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 41.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 35-37.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

Katherine would truly enjoy. Yet she never complained, one of the reasons being the close proximity of the Trowells' residence, where she spent most of her days.

Here then is a little summary of what I need – power, wealth, and freedom. It is the hopelessly insipid doctrine that love is the only thing in the world, taught, hammered into women, from generation to generation, which hampers us so cruelly. We must get rid of that bogey – and then, then comes the opportunity of happiness and freedom.<sup>84</sup>

It is with this vigor Katherine continued to write about her women characters, those that are “hampered” by social conventions in particular. Such characters show up in Mansfield’s work time and time again and are one of the most remarkable features of her writing. I will inevitably discuss these characters as the ones of ever-caring grandmothers, distant, self-sacrificing mothers, let down, loving wives and daughters, as they are often the closest to the “children of Katherine Mansfield,” that are the cornerstone of this thesis.

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<sup>84</sup> Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 44.



## 3 The Conceptualization of Childhood in Selected Works of Katherine Mansfield

### 3.1 Prelude

Moving on to the selected stories of Katherine Mansfield, I shall begin with *Prelude* (1917). The short story begins in medias res, a signature stylistic choice of Mansfield. A family is in the midst of the process of moving to a new house. On the carriage, there sits a woman with her elderly mother. As Mansfield is particularly skilled in depicting the characters' nature through how they behave in specific situations, the reader begins to get an idea of the relationship dynamics of the family early on.

The carriage is fully loaded, yet there seems to only be enough space for one of the three children, as "...the grandmother's lap was full and Linda Burnell could not possibly have held a lump of a child on hers for any distance."<sup>85</sup> Linda Burnell, the mother, appears to be concerned solely with the luggage as "absolute necessities"<sup>86</sup> she will not let out of her sight for one instant.<sup>87</sup> Among the confused children, the agitated mother and the silent grandmother there appears another figure, Mrs. Samuel Josephs, who offers to take care of the two stranded little girls until another carriage comes. She also asks about the remaining furniture left on the pathway: "Those thigs on the path have to go, dod't they?"<sup>88</sup>

After joking, half-aloud, about casting the children off, Linda Burnell only reacts to the latter, while it is the grandmother who inquires about the children, thanking Mrs. Samuel Josephs for her hospitality and instructing the little girls to do the same. As the carriage is leaving, Kezia, one of the little girls, cries out that she did not get to kiss her grandmother goodbye.

The allusion to Mansfield's personal life is indisputable. Kezia, who is the middle child, is based around Katherine's own self, with her unconventional viewing of the world, her open mind, distinctively child-like curiosity, and purity of character.

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<sup>85</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1917. "Prelude." Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 1. December, 10. 2022. <https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/PRELUDE1917.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

The eldest child's character, that of Isabel, is not so complex. As the closest one to the adults, she is committed to seeking their approval, which shows itself in her attempts to behave and talk like the adults do, applying this approach in interactions with her sisters. She often monitors their behavior like an adult caregiver would, frequently taking the place of the one to tell the younger ones what they are to do and what they are not, giving out instructions and orders. One example of such behavior from *Prelude* is Isabel assigning the roles while the children play pretend. What is important to note is she again uses a pattern observed in the adult world. When suggesting she will be a nurse, her cousin Pip a doctor and the two youngest sisters the sick patients, Isabel is attempting to recreate the hierarchical interrelationships she has learned to recognize.

As the eldest among her sisters, she feels superior. When faced with an adult, however, Isabel turns insecure, asking, either verbally or more indirectly, for reassurance and approval. When the children are invited by Pat, the handy man to watch him butcher a duck, Isabel is the only one to question their decision to follow by saying: "Do you think we ought to go? ...We haven't asked or anything. Have we?"<sup>89</sup>

Charlotte or Lottie as she is more commonly referred to is the youngest of the three sisters. She is the most timid, indecisive, and overall emotional. She often relies on the guidance of others. Kezia is usually the one to provide said guidance.

The most tangible motives in *Prelude* are Kezia, her relationship to her grandmother, and the perpetual despair felt by Linda Burnell, the mother, and her sister, aunt Beryl.

Kezia shares with Mansfield the feeling of being "the odd one out," distrusted by most of the people around her, except her grandmother. In *Prelude*, upon arriving to the new house, the grandmother, having her hands full suddenly, gives Kezia the lamp she was carrying. When they come inside, however, Kezia is scolded by her aunt:

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<sup>89</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1917. "Prelude." Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 25. December, 10. 2022. <https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/PRELUDE1917.pdf>

“Put down the lamp, Kezia, ...or we shall have the house on fire before we are out of packing cases.”<sup>90</sup>

Even the grandmother, however, acknowledges Kezia is a “wild child.” She is separated from the others, often times physically, simply wandering around. Such an instance is described in *Prelude* when Kezia goes back into their abandoned house. She visits the rooms one by one, reminiscing and exploring. She marvels at the sight of her fingertips turning white when she pushes them against the window and entertains herself by watching the garden change colors when looking through the yellow and blue colored window glass.

When the children watch the handy man chop a duck’s head off, Kezia is the only one to react in a different way from that of her peers. While the other children are shocked at first, then start to run around in excitement, observing the duck’s body, poking it – Kezia remains quiet before eventually clasping her hands around the legs of the handy man, demanding that he “Put head back!”<sup>91</sup>

Another feeling Kezia and her creator share is that of an absent mother. The only child that is shown making an effort to communicate with Linda Burnell is Isabel. Apart from the various attempts at getting her approval, there is a scene in *Prelude*, just after Kezia and Lottie arrive to the new house, that paints a picture of Isabel, leaning over the back of the chair Linda is resting in, combing her mother’s hair gently. It is a sorrowful picture, as the mother does not care for the gesture at all. She does, in fact, not care for her children.

What Mansfield provides, however, is an insight into the mind of Linda Burnell, changing the narrative of a cold, passive woman. Linda holds a grudge against life, as she has found love, however, she never intended to have children. Yet such was her destiny as a married woman. Above the emotional toll, the young woman also had to deal with the one that childbearing had on her body, all the while her husband did not listen to her pleas. In *Prelude*, Linda Burnell likens her husband to a dog she is “fond of in the daytime”<sup>92</sup>:

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<sup>90</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1917. “Prelude.” Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 7. December, 10. 2022. <https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/PRELUDE1917.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 32.

If only he wouldn't jump at her so, and bark so loudly, and watch her with such eager, loving eyes. (...) There were times when he was frightening – really frightening. When she just had not screamed at the top of her voice: “You are killing me.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1917. “Prelude.” Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 32. December, 10. 2022. <https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/PRELUDE1917.pdf>

### 3.2 At the Bay

The story of *At the Bay* (1921) is again one of the Burnell family. The setting has a more peaceful feel to it, as Mansfield takes the time to begin with a depiction of the landscape surrounding the Burnell residence. There are numerous indicators in the pieces of work selected for this thesis of the story being set in New Zealand, the homeland of Katherine Mansfield. In *Prelude*, for instance, it was the Quarantine Island being mentioned, the pawa shells, called Pāua in Maori, that hold symbolic significance for the Maori people, the mynah bird, the fan-tail or the tūi bird – all associated with New Zealand, the tūi bird being considered a National Heritage Animal of New Zealand, and by the Maori, a medium between the gods and the people, as the bird is known to imitate sounds.

In *At the Bay*, it is the toitoi grass, a type of grass growing in tussocks, with large, plumed stems protruding. Its leaves were used by the Maori to make baskets and the stems would be used to line the outside of their homes, for instance. Other examples of a New Zealand setting indicator are the mentions of the eucalyptus tree or the manuka tree.

It is under a manuka tree Linda Burnell is depicted laying with her infant son in one of the most striking segments of *At the Bay*. From within the branches of the tree, its flowers fall down occasionally in loose petals. As they land on the woman, she thinks to herself:

Why, then, flower at all? Who takes the trouble – or the joy – to make all these things that are wasted, wasted. . . . It was uncanny.<sup>94</sup>

Linda Burnell is, in this way, questioning her own will to live. In *Prelude*, she has called it the mania to keep alive – asking herself why is she trying at all, to “keep alive”, when all there is to her life is misery. She feels stripped of her physical strength and personal freedom through childbearing.

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<sup>94</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1921. “At the Bay.” Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 12. December, 11. 2022. <https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/AT-THE-BAY1921.pdf>

She was broken, made weak, her courage was gone, through child bearing. And what made it doubly hard to bear was, she did not love her children. (...) she had no warmth left to give them.<sup>95</sup>

It is possible to assume Mansfield was, through the character of Linda Burnell, trying to come to terms with the emotional distance she experienced from her own mother as well as trying to showcase the dangerous effects of pressuring women into becoming mothers.

In *At the Bay*, it is once more Kezia who makes up for the lack of emotional support from a parent, especially in relation to her little sister Charlotte. When faced with the issue of making her way across a stile, Charlotte hesitates and calls anxiously after her sisters to wait for her. While Isabel follows her mother's example of "tough love," not pausing herself and, in addition, attempting to stop Kezia from doing so, Kezia decides to go back and guide her little sister patiently through the process of crossing the stairs. When playing a card game with their cousins in which one has to call out when they have a card in their hand matching the one pulled from the deck, thus claiming the card, the goal being to become the player with the biggest amount of cards in the end, Kezia waits for Charlotte to realize when she does have a matching card in hand and lets her claim the card on the table before calling out herself.<sup>96</sup>

One of Mansfield's talents as writer lays in her ability to portray children's interactions in a way that feels genuinely child-like. This can be observed namely in the section depicting the children playing cards in the washhouse. They add their own rules to the game, each of them choosing an animal whose sound they will use to call out when an opportunity comes to claim the card. Each of the children's choice is indicative of their character in a way – Isabel choosing a rooster, the elder cousin, Pip, choosing a bull and his little brother a sheep. Lottie has others choose for her, and Kezia, the odd one out of the bunch, chooses a bee. She is, of course, challenged in her decision: "You can't be a bee, Kezia. A bee's not an animal. It's a ninseck."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1921. "At the Bay." Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 13. December, 11. 2022. <https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/AT-THE-BAY1921.pdf>

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 19.

There are instances of Mansfield using misspellings to depict the lingo of children. In *Prelude*, it was the “nenamuel teapot”<sup>98</sup> from which the cousins were said to feed the little ram they were fostering. In *At the Bay*, it is the cousins calling the shiny green stone they have found at the beach a “nemeral”<sup>99</sup> or the already mentioned “ninseck.” The misspellings never seem forced, and they are always in a place of a word reasonably difficult to pronounce considering a child’s perspective. Mansfield does not downplay the intelligence of her child characters. They lead full conversations, give reasoning for their actions and are generally observant. They do not wander in a world of their own, as the romantic children do. They share their world with the adults and respond to their behavior as children in real life do. Yet, Mansfield preserves in her characters the essence of childhood. They ask bold questions, like when Kezia asks her grandmother whether she feels sad about the passing of her son, uncle William. Additionally, they try to operate using the logic learned from the adult world. To use the example of the conversation between Kezia and her grandmother once more, Kezia further asks: “Why did Uncle William have to die? He wasn't old.”<sup>100</sup>

It is through examples like these it becomes clear Mansfield understood both the adult world and that of the children, as she is able to give a realistic account of the characters from both.

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<sup>98</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1917. “Prelude.” Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 5. December, 11. 2022. <https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/PRELUDE1917.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1921. “At the Bay.” Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 9. December, 11. 2022. <https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/AT-THE-BAY1921.pdf>

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 15.

### 3.3 The Doll's House

In *The Doll's House* (1922), Mansfield offers a chance to look further than the residence of the Burnells. The story begins by the Burnell girls receiving a gift – a painted wooden doll's house equipped with furniture, carpets, dishes, and little framed paintings on the walls as decoration.

While the adults are concerned with the overwhelming smell of paint, deciding to keep the doll's house outside for the time being, the girls are in awe, inspecting every aspect of the wooden structure. What Kezia favored about the house in particular was the little lamp sat on the dining room table, taking in its color and shape and taking notice of the liquid inside.<sup>101</sup>

Isabel takes it upon herself to be the one to announce the news about the doll's house to the children at school, since she is the eldest of the sisters. There is a single school for the children of the community to attend, resulting in a mix of pupils that come from families of various social status. In *The Doll's House*, Mansfield introduces a new “odd man out” in place of Kezia. Among the children attending the school, there are the Kelvey sisters, daughters to a washerwoman and a man unknown. The little girls that come to school dressed in scraps of donated clothing sewn together are ostracized by both the children and their teacher, who is said to have a “special voice” for them and a “special smile” for the rest of the children.<sup>102</sup>

The Kelvey girls are taught to be ashamed, and the Burnell girls, together with other children, are taught to shun them. Lily, the older one of the Kelvey sisters, holds up a “shamefaced smile” as a reaction to even the most uncomfortable and hurtful interaction. Else, the little sister, is depicted as determinedly quiet.

The Burnell sisters have been taught not to engage with the Kelveys, and they have, furthermore, been banned from inviting them to come and see the doll's house. It is Kezia who, once again, challenges the adult world order. It is important to note, however, Mansfield keeps this act of defiance in realistic terms. It is not until all of the other children have seen the house, and before Kezia hesitating running away to hide

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<sup>101</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1921. “The Doll's House.” Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 2. December, 11. 2022.

<https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/THE-DOLLS-HOUSE.pdf>

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 3.



upon seeing the Kelvey sisters coming down the road she invites them onto the Burnell property. The girls are discovered quickly and turned away by Beryl the aunt, who “shooed them out as if they were chickens,”<sup>103</sup> yet the happiness lasts in Else, who says to her sister: “I seen the little lamp.”<sup>104</sup>

This final segment of the story points out the unreasonability of the adult’s teaching to separate oneself from the other on the basis of social class, the concept of which is foreign to children. Kezia’s excitement about the lamp was not shared until Else Kelvey had seen it, showing the misfortune of the children being taught to engage with only “the proper.”

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<sup>103</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1921. “The Doll’s House.” Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 6. December, 11. 2022.

<https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/THE-DOLLS-HOUSE.pdf>

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

### 3.4 The Garden Party

The issue of division between social classes is addressed by Mansfield in the final story selected for the purposes of this thesis, *The Garden Party* (1921).

The story begins by a family arranging a garden party. While it is not the Burnell family, this one too, seems modelled after Mansfield's own, there being three sisters, a brother and both the mother and the father present. In this story, the mother is fully engaging with her children, asking their opinions, and instructing them considerately. The only sensible tension comes from the drama of preparation of the party, with even the personnel behaving towards the house residents on familiar terms, the cook sneaking some of the pastry to the children as an example.

There are two significant encounters with "the other" Laura the protagonist experiences. The first one comes when she is sent out to instruct the workers about the placement of the marquee. She runs out with a large piece of buttered bread in one hand, and she quickly becomes ashamed of doing so, losing her sense of security when coming to face the men. She is unsure of what to say, and how to act towards the men, since she was only taught how to interact with men from her class. She begins by imitating her mother's voice, this seeming like the most logical solution, since she is speaking to the workers as the homeowner. Despite her voice breaking because it felt so unnatural, the men assume a friendly approach. This, together with observing the way the workers treat each other, calling their co-workers "matey,"<sup>105</sup> delights Laura. She even begins to compare the men she knows to the workers, wishing they were more alike.

The second encounter comes just before the start of the party. The family receives the news of a man from the suburb suffering a fatal accident. Laura deems it appropriate to seize the preparations in respect to the man's family, as he has left a wife and five little children. Out of everyone present in the house, however, she appears to be the only one considering such an option. Upon being accused of being dramatic by her sister, the appalled young woman seeks out her mother. She is shocked once again by her reaction, when the mother lets out a sigh of relief after being assured

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<sup>105</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1921. "The Garden Party." Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 2. December, 11. 2022.  
<https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/THE-GARDEN-PARTY1921.pdf>

the fatal accident did not take place in the garden. Furthermore, she tries to comfort her daughter by giving her a hat, trying to focus her attention to how charming she will look for the guests that are to come.

Laura does wear the hat, and after receiving numerous compliments on it, she eventually gives in, convincing herself she will “remember it again after the party's over.”<sup>106</sup> Even after all the guests leave, however, Laura does not expect her family to talk about the misfortune of the man and his family. In spite of her expectation, Laura's father, who only joined the party later, does show compassion. This prompts the mother to order for the remaining food from the party to be packed and she sends Laura off with the basket to the suburb. The young woman is hesitant to engage with the people of lower class this time. She, as well as her family consider the suburb “an eyesore” and judge severely the way of living of the people.

When Laura enters the house of the deceased man and meets his wife and relatives, she becomes, in sharp contrast to how she was made to feel at home, ashamed of her clothes. She becomes the eyesore, and she runs from the house after saying “Forgive my hat.”<sup>107</sup>

In *The Garden Party*, it is Laura who showcases emotional intelligence that ends up being disregarded by her elders simply because of her age. It is in this story Mansfield tries, once again, to put reasonable value in children's opinions.

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<sup>106</sup> Mansfield, Katherine. 1921. “The Garden Party.” Katherine Mansfield Society. p. 8. December, 11. 2022.

<https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/archive/www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/KM-Stories/THE-GARDEN-PARTY1921.pdf>

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 12.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine and explain the way in which the children's characters of Katherine Mansfield differ from those of different literary authors of her time. In the attempt to do so, I began to first examine Katherine Mansfield's view of children as a modernist, which in turn meant analyzing the developments in the conceptualization of childhood up to the nineteenth century.

I put my focus on the conceptualization of childhood in art, developmental psychology, and literature. In relation to art, I have discussed Italian Futurism which considers children in relation to war and recreation, Russian Futurism, which begins to focus more on the actual children instead of the idea of them as well as their potential as seen by the eyes of the adult, examining the ways in which children approach language, music, and visual art, and finally, Dadaism, a movement regarded as the one associated with children the most closely, as the Dadaists attempt to not only examine the inner workings of the child's mind, but to embody the essence of it.

While discussing the developments in psychology, I refer to general approaches taken up by society in relation to children, mentioning briefly the Middle Ages and the age of puritanism as well as the effects of it in the chapter dedicated to the notion of childhood before the emergence of developmental psychology, following up with the notion of childhood after the emergence of developmental psychology, referring to the leading experts in the field such as Sir James Crichton-Browne, Frances Power Cobbe, James Sully or the notoriously acknowledged Sigmund Freud.

Additionally, I mention the developments in child's literature, considering the experts' views as well as those of the general public regarding children's education and means of entertainment. That is not to say Katherine Mansfield wrote for children specifically, she was, however, inevitably under the influence of the views shared by people in her time.

Considering this fact, it seems the more striking how Mansfield was able to have such a unique take on the character of the Child, producing stories involving believable, non-idealized children. The portrayal of Mansfield's children characters in the short stories discussed in this thesis is unclouded by romanticism, in the lens of which children are considered magical creatures, or at least able to access magic. They are able to escape the adult world to wander one of their own. Children of Katherine

Mansfield are, for one, portrayed realistically in their inability to exit the adult world, however cruel, challenging or dull it may seem. Furthermore, they share a sense of self-sufficiency, as they are forced to learn to cope with the world around them and the rules of life set by the adults.

Katherine Mansfield also does not downplay the intelligence of her children characters in their ability to understand or to at least reason with the challenges of the adult world. This includes emotional intelligence as well, which is best observed in the characters Mansfield bases on that of her own. In the stories selected, it is the character of Kezia in *Prelude*, *At the Bay* and *The Doll's house*, and the one of Laura in *The Garden Party*. It is the emotional intelligence as well as the one in general sense that makes the children characters of Katherine Mansfield stand out among the others. They are child-like, but they are not one-dimensional in the sense of being oblivious, insecure, or not being able to do any wrong. It is this very human-like way of portrayal that makes these characters so distinctive.

## Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce je soustředěna na vybrané povídky Katherine Mansfieldové se záměrem poukázat na výjimečnost vyobrazení dětských postav v kontextu doby působení Mansfieldové jakožto literární autorky. Právě tato doba se totiž vyznačuje romantizovaným pohledem na děti a koncept dětství. Mansfieldová se tomuto pohledu vymyká, jelikož zaujímá osobitý postoj v podobě velmi polidštěného vyobrazení dětí. Svým dětským postavám nepřipisuje napřirozenou vnímavost ani nevinnost, jako autoři před ní, nýbrž jim dává prostor k pochybení a špatným vlastnostem obecně. Navzdory tomuto faktu tyto postavy neztrácí na děteské oduševnělosti.

Krom zmiňovaného kontextu doby literárního působení Katherine Mansfieldové se práce věnuje také dobovému kontextu jako takovému v souvislosti s vnímáním konceptu dětství. Konceptualizace dětství je tak rozebírána z pohledu společnosti v průběhu věků. Zmíněn je pohled na dítě z hlediska středověké společnosti, novoanglické puritánské společnosti, a viktoriánské společnosti. Ve viktoriánském období pak nastává zlom ve společenském vnímání následkem rozvoje oboru vývojové psychologie. V práci je tak věnována podkapitola i této disciplíně.

Jako úvod k postojům zaujímaným vůči konceptu dětství moderní společností slouží kapitoly Umění a Literatura. V kapitole věnované umění se práce zaobírá uměleckými hnutími v podobě itaského a ruského futurismu a dadaismu. Tato hnutí stála za dynamickými změnami ve společenském vnímání dětí a dětství, obzvlášť pak dadaismus, jehož zástupci se zajímali nejen o do té doby často opomíjenou dětskou perspektivu, ale snažili se ji zároveň pochopit natolik dobře, aby ji sami mohli adoptovat. V kapitole zaměřené na literaturu se práce věnuje myšlenkovým proudům předcházejícím novodobý rozvoj v oblasti literatury adresované dětem. Rovněž se pak zaobírá myšlenkovými proudy doprovázející tento rozvoj, jelikož vyvstala otázka, co je pro dítě důležitější a užitečnější, zdali literatura, jež vzdělává nebo literatura jež baví.

V neposlední řadě práce věnuje pozornost i dětství Katherine Mansfieldové samotné, a to v kapitole Dívčí léta Katherine Mansfieldové. V této kapitole jsou uvedeny podklady pro budoucí postavy Mansfieldové v povídkách vybraných pro účely této bakalářské práce. Jedná se o postavy při nichž se Mansfieldová inspirovala

vlastními blízkými, především matkou, babičkou a sourozenci. Je to právě vztahová dynamika v rámci nejbližší rodiny jež dává prostor k analýze dětských postav Katherine Mansfieldové.

Závěrem práce je poukázat jak na změny ve společenském vnímání dětí, tak na specifický pohled Mansfieldové.

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