

STORIES

BY

KATHERINE

MANSFIELD



SELECTED, AND WITH
AN INTRODUCTION, BY
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INTRODUCTION

B Y

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I

IF KATHERINE MANSFIELD were living, she would this year be sixty-eight. Is this fact out of accord with our idea of her? Sometimes it may be that an early death so fixes our image of a person that we cannot envisage him as older. Youth comes to seem an attribute of the personality—in the case of a beautiful woman or romantic artist, both of which Katherine Mansfield was, this happens particularly often. Yet in the case of Katherine Mansfield it becomes particularly wrong. For one thing, we lose much and deny her something if we altogether banish her in imagination from the place she could have had in our own time. For another, she had no desire whatever to be “spared” life or anything further it could bring. Useless as it is to lament her going, let us not forget she would have stayed if she could, and fought to do so with savage courage.

True, she could not have lived as she was; she was far too ill. To restore health, at the stage her illness had reached, would have taken a miracle—she sought one. Could that have been granted, a fresh start, one can think of few people more fitted than Katherine Mansfield to have aged without decline, ignominy, or fear. One can picture her at sunset, but not in twilight. Born with good nerve, she had learned comprehensive courage, and in a hard school. In spite of setback after setback, she was already on her own way towards equilibrium. Her spirit was of the kind which does not die down. Her beauty, even, was of the enduring kind, hardy and resolute in cast as it was mysterious in atmosphere—nor need one imagine her with-

out the peculiar personal magic she emanated: a magic still so much part of her legend. Already she was "old" in imagination—up to any age, would she not have been young in temperament?

She was drawn to old people, seeing them as victors. They stood to her for vision, and for the patience she so impatiently longed to have. (She was aware, of course, also of ancient monsters.) Is it too much to say that she envied old age, and the more so as her own hopes of attaining it grew slender? But one does not waste desire on the unlikely: her real need was pressing, and grew obsessive—she needed time, time in which to achieve "a body of work." By now, she would have had thirty-four years more. Enough? I suspect that in the extreme of her desperation she would have been content to compound for ten. There is never enough of the time a writer wants—but hers was cut so short, one is aghast. The more one salutes the fulfilment in her work, the more one is awed by its stretching promise. The perfectedness of the major pieces sets up anguish that there could not be more of them. Equally, I may say that a fellow writer cannot but look on Katherine Mansfield's work as interrupted, hardly more than suspended, momentarily waiting to be gone on with. Page after page gives off the feeling of being still warm from the touch, fresh from the pen. Where is she—our missing contemporary?

As it was, she died in January 1923, late one evening, in her bare room in the community at Fontainebleau. One's impression, from her husband's account, is that the end when it did come took her by surprise: she had been beginning again to expect life. And from then on everything, purged of dross of falseness, was to have been different. She was thirty-four, young as a woman, as an artist at the beginning of her maturity—that is, she had entered into her full powers without being yet certain how to command them.

It is with maturity that the really searching ordeal of the writer begins. Maturity, remember, must last a long time. And it must not be confused with single perfections, such as she had accomplished without yet having solved her abiding problems. She had had throughout no guide

but her own light, nothing outside to check by, no predecessor. Chekhov was her ally, but not authority. In her field, Katherine Mansfield worked by herself.

She had, when she went to Fontainebleau, reached a crisis both in regard to life and in regard to art. She had undergone an intense revulsion against her existence as it had come to be, and against her writing as she now saw it. Conflicts and the sickness they had set up, mistrusts the sickness in turn engendered, made it all but impossible for her to go forward. Essential as it was for her to have faith, she repudiated faith based on self-deception. She had come to look on herself, and with that her work, as in danger of being rotted by unreality. She sought nothing less than rebirth.

In her journal, at the close of her final August, she puts on record her part in a conversation:—

I began by telling him how dissatisfied I was with the idea that Life must be a lesser thing than we were capable of imagining it to be. I had the feeling that the same thing happened to nearly everybody I knew and whom I did not know. No sooner was their youth, with the little force and impetus characteristic of youth, done, than they stopped growing. At the very moment that one felt that now was the time to gather oneself together, to use one's whole strength, to take control, to be an adult, in fact, they seemed content to swap the darling wish of their hearts for innumerable little wishes. Or the image that suggested itself to me was that of a river flowing away in countless little trickles over a dark swamp.

. . . Sooner or later, in literature at any rate, there sounded an undertone of deep regret. There was an uneasiness, a sense of frustration. One heard, one thought one heard, a cry that began to echo in one's own being: "I have missed it. I have given up. This is not what I want. If this is all, then Life is not worth living."

But I *know* it is not all. How does one know that? Let me take the case of K. M. She has led, ever since she can remember, a very typically false life. Yet,

through it all, there have been moments, instants, gleams, when she has felt the possibility of something quite other.

By October of 1922, Katherine Mansfield became convinced that there must be a miracle or nothing. She made up her mind to enter the community, to subject herself to its physical rigours for the sake of inner regeneration. The step was taken against the advice and wishes of her friends. On the eve, she wrote in her journal:—

How can you hesitate? Risk! Risk anything! Care no more for the opinion of others, for those voices. Do the hardest thing on earth for you. Act for yourself. Face the truth.

True, Chekhov didn't. Yes, but Chekhov died. And let us be honest. How much do we know of Chekhov from his letters? Was that all? Of course not. Don't you suppose he had a whole long life of which there is hardly a word? Then read the final letters. He has given up hope. If you desentimentalise those final letters they are terrible. There is no more Chekhov. Illness has swallowed him.

. . . Now, Katherine, what do you mean by health? And what do you want it for?

Answer: 'By health I mean the power to live a full, adult, living, breathing life in close contact with what I love—the earth and the wonders thereof—the sea—the sun. All that we mean when we speak of the external world. I want to enter into it, to be part of it, to live in it, to learn from it, to lose all that is superficial, and acquired in me and to become a conscious direct human being. I want, by understanding myself, to understand others. I want to be all that I am capable of becoming . . .

Then I want to *work*. At what? I want so to live that I may work with my hands and my feeling and my brain. I want a garden, a small house, grass, animals, books, pictures, music. And out of this, the expression of this, I want to be writing. (Though I may write about cabmen. That's no matter.)

But warm, eager, living life—to be rooted in life—to learn, to desire to know, to feel, to think, to act. That is what I want. And nothing else. That is what I must try for.

II

“Katherine Mansfield’s death, by coming so early, left her work still at the experimental stage.” This could be said—but would it be true? To me, such a verdict would be misleading. First, her writing already *had* touched perfection a recognizable number of times; second, she would have been bound to go on experimenting up to the end, however late that had come. One cannot imagine her settling down to any one fixed concept of the short story—her art was, by its very nature, tentative, responsive, exploratory. There are no signs that she was casting about to find a formula: a formula would, in fact, have been what she fled from. Her sense of the possibilities of the story was bounded by no hard-and-fast horizons: she grasped that it is imperative for the writer to expand his range, never contract his method. Perception and language could not be kept too fresh, too alert, too fluid. Each story entailed a beginning right from the start, unknown demands, new risks, unforeseeable developments. Often, she worked by trial-and-error.

So, ever on the move, she has left with us no “typical” Katherine Mansfield story to anatomize. Concentrated afresh, each time, upon expression, she did not envisage “technique” in the abstract. As it reached her, each idea for a story had inherent within it its own shape: there could be for it no other. That shape, it was for her to perceive, then outline—she thought (we learn from her letters and journal) far more of perception than of construction. The story *is* there, but she has yet to come at it. One has the impression of a water-diviner, pacing, halting, awaiting the twitch of the hazel twig. Also, to judge from her writings about her writing, there were times when Katherine Mansfield believed a story to have a volition of its own—she seems to stand back, watching it take form. Yet this

could happen apart from her; the story drew her steadily into itself.

Yet all of her pieces, it seems clear, did not originate in the same order. Not in all cases was there that premonitory stirring of an idea; sometimes the external picture came to her first. She found herself seized upon by a scene, an isolated incident or a face which, something told her, must *have* meaning, though she had yet to divine what the meaning was. Appearances could in themselves touch alight her creative power. It is then that we see her moving into the story, from its visual periphery to its heart, recognizing the "why" as she penetrates. (It could seem that her great scenic New Zealand stories came into being by this process.) Her failures, as she uncompromisingly saw them, together with her host of abandoned fragments, give evidence of the state of mind she voices in anguished letters or journal entries—the sensation of having lost her way. She could finish a story by sheer craftsmanship; but only, later, to turn against the results.)

Able and fine as was her intelligence, it was not upon that that she depended: intuitive knowing, vision, had to be the thing. She was a writer with whom there could be no secondary substitute for genius: genius was vision. One might speak of her as having a burning gaze. But she faced this trouble—vision at full intensity is not by nature able to be sustained; it is all but bound to be intermittent. And for Katherine Mansfield those intermittences set up an aesthetic disability, a bad, an antipathetic working condition. Under such a condition, her work abounded, and well she knew it, in perils peculiar to itself. She dreaded sagging of tension, slackening of grip, flaws in interior continuity, numbness, and, most of all, a sort of synthetic quality which could creep in. She speaks of one bad day's work as "scrappy and dreamy." Dreaminess meant for her, dilution.

Subjects, to be ideal for Katherine Mansfield, had to attract, then hold, her power called vision. There occurred a false dawn, or false start, when a subject deceived her as to its possibilities—there were those which failed her, I feel, rather than she them. We must consider later which kind or what range of subject stood by her best, and why

this may have been so. There was not a subject which did not tax her—raising, apart from anything else, exacting problems of treatment, focus, and angle. Her work was a succession of attempts to do what was only just not impossible. There is danger that in speaking of “attempts” one should call to mind those which have not succeeded: one forgets the no less attempt which is merged in victory. Katherine Mansfield’s masterpiece stories cover their tracks; they have an air of serene inevitability, almost a touch of the miraculous. (But for the artist, remember, there are no miracles.) Her consummate achievements soar, like so many peaks, out of the foothills of her working life—spaced out, some nearer together in time than others. One asks oneself why the artist, requited thus, could not have been lastingly reassured, and how it could have happened that, after each, troughs of frustration, anxiety, dereliction should have awaited her once again?

The truth was, she implacably cut the cord between herself and any completed story. (She admits, in the journal: “It took me nearly a month to ‘recover’ from ‘At the Bay.’ I made at least three false starts. But I could not get away from the sound of the sea, and Beryl fanning her hair at the window. These things would not *die down*.”) She must not look back; she must press forward. She had not time to form a consistent attitude to any one finished story: each stood to her as a milestone, passed, not as a destination arrived at. Let us say, she reacted to success (if in Katherine Mansfield’s eyes there was such a thing) as others react to failure: there seemed to be nothing left but to try again.

To be compelled to experiment is one thing, to be in love with experiment quite another. Of love for experiment for its own sake, Katherine Mansfield shows not a sign. Conscious artist, she carries none of the marks of the self-consciously “experimental” writer. Nothing in her approach to people or nature is revolutionary; her story-telling is, on its own plane, not much less straightforward than Jane Austen’s. She uses no literary shock tactics. The singular beauty of her language consists, partly, in its hardly seeming to be language at all, so glass-transparent is it to her meaning. Words had but one appeal for her, that of speakingness. (In her journal we find noted: “The *panting* of a

saw.") She was to evolve from noun, verb, adjective, a marvelous sensory notation hitherto undreamed of outside poetry; nonetheless, she stayed subject to prose discipline. And her style, when the story-context requires, can be curt, decisive, factual. It is a style generated by subject and tuned to mood—so flexible as to be hardly a style at all. One would recognize a passage from Katherine Mansfield not by the manner but by the content. There are no eccentricities.

Katherine Mansfield was not a rebel, she was an innovator. Born into the English traditions of prose narrative, she neither revolted against these nor broke with them—simply, she passed beyond them. And now tradition, extending, has followed her. Had she not written, written as she did, one form of art might be still in infancy. One cannot attribute to Katherine Mansfield the entire growth, in our century, of the short story. Its developments have been speedy, inspired, various; it continues branching in a hundred directions, many of which show her influence not at all. What she did supply was an immense impetus—also, did she not first see in the story the ideal reflector of the day? We owe to her the prosperity of the "free" story: she untrammelled it from conventions and, still more, gained for it a prestige till then unthought of. How much ground Katherine Mansfield broke for her successors may not be realized. Her imagination kindled unlikely matter; she was to alter for good and all our idea of what goes to make a story.)

III

To make a selection has not been easy. In *The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1937) we have her output: eighty-eight stories, of which twenty-six are unfinished. The first of the pieces in this collection, "The Tiredness of Rosabel," was written when she was twenty; the last completed one, "The Canary," dates from the summer before her death. The time span is, thus, fourteen years.

The dimension of this present Vintage edition limits me to twenty-six Katherine Mansfield stories—obviously there could have been more had I chosen shorter ones. I de-

cided that to sacrifice longer stories would have been an injustice to the author, all of whose masterpieces required space.

To have left out masterpieces would, I thought, also have been unjust to the Vintage reader. Well known as may be these major stories, they cannot be read too often or known too well. Here, accordingly, are "The Little Governess," "Prelude," "At the Bay," "Bliss," "Je ne parle pas français," "The Man Without a Temperament," "The Stranger," "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," "The Voyage," "The Garden-Party," and, for all it is unfinished, "Six Years After."

Next I looked for stories to be examples of Katherine Mansfield's ways of seeing or feeling; of her satire, sympathy, or favouritisms; or of her supremacy as a story-teller. "The Modern Soul," "Psychology," "Sun and Moon," "This Flower," "Revelations," "The Young Girl," "Life of Ma Parker," "Miss Brill," "Marriage à la Mode," "The Doll's House," and, again unfinished, "The Doves' Nest" make a bid for inclusion under those headings. They may be found unequally good; one or two are not even her second-best work. But each of them, I would contend, exhibits some characteristic of hers and of hers only.

Room was left (at the cost of exclusions I regretted) for the early work, with its harshnesses, its first glints of authority, and, most interesting of all, its alternatives—what kind of writer was she to be? This, as with other highly gifted young persons, did not immediately decide itself. Writers today at their own beginning must want to see how Katherine Mansfield began, and how the themes of her future work were already like reefs under the surface. "The Tiredness of Rosabel" was the first of what were to be a succession of daydream stories: apart from its interest as that, one would hardly claim for "Rosabel" that it is better than any average story turned out today by a twenty-year-old member of a writing group. Twenty-year-old Katherine Mansfield worked unaided by friendly criticism, and without the incitement of group discussion. And recall that in 1908 the idea of writing a story *about* a daydream was in itself novel—a daring break with accepted pattern. And how many "Rosabel" tales today would have

been written at all but for Katherine Mansfield? Today her influence operates at more than one remove—that is to say, students who have not read her and may know hardly more of her than her name show in their own writing an unconscious debt.

Some of my choices bring me dead up against the author's stated feeling. "I couldn't have 'The Woman at the Store' reprinted, *par exemple*," she protested to her husband in 1920, when she was deciding upon the list of her stories first to appear in book form. Yet "The Woman at the Store" (date, 1912) is here. I have put it in because I like it: it shows the touch of one of the earlier, possible Katherine Mansfields who, as time went on, was to be crowded out. In this it differs from "Ole Underwood," which far more foreshadows the Katherine Mansfield the world was to come to know—"Ole Underwood" is an early "injustice" story. Both are set in New Zealand, and their flavour and vigour raise a question—could she have made a regional writer? Did she, by leaving her own country, deprive herself of a range of associations, of inborn knowledge, of vocabulary? She never did, as we know, return to New Zealand as a mature woman: it took its toll of her in dreams, broodings, and often a torturous homesickness. New Zealand was to return to Katherine Mansfield, but not before she had travelled a long way.

"Sun and Moon" she regarded, apparently, as a lapse. This story had origin in a night's dream, transcribed while the vividness lasted. I overrule her objections to "Sun and Moon" because it epitomizes one theme of hers, almost one obsession: wrecking of illusion. The flawless, famous "Bliss" has that theme on an adult plane—yet "Bliss," for all its accomplishment, is to me one of her few disagreeable stories. In the more roughly written "The Doll's House," illusion triumphs—"I seen the little lamp." . . . Disagreeableness, a compulsive brooding upon the ugly, appears in the collection of German stories, the 1912 *In a German Pension*. Two out of that volume, "The Baron" and "The Modern Soul," are here. I do not care for them, but to have left them out would have given an incomplete picture of Katherine Mansfield. She had, though she tried more and more to curb it, a terrifying faculty for contempt.

One cannot, I think, discuss this artist's work in terms of ordinary progress. One is, rather, aware of greatened deepening and heightening. She taxed herself more rather than less as she went on—she herself remarked the loss of her first facility. The rate at which she abandoned stories shows (apart from the dislocations of sickness) how ever more demanding her art became: at the start she had asked less of it, or it less of her. That burning gaze of hers, her vision, gained in intensity: by the end almost nothing it turned on remained opaque. Her interpretations became more searching—what was spiritually happening to Katherine Mansfield gives signs of itself in the stories, one by one. Her art followed her being's, it would seem, inevitable course. Very important indeed is the continuity, and I therefore feel it very important that the stories given be in the right time-order. John Middleton Murry, her husband, established this (as nearly as could be done) for the 1937 collected edition—departing from it, he tells us, at one point only: "At the Bay," conceived as a continuation of "Prelude," is placed by him immediately after "Prelude," though actually it was written four years later. I have, in arranging my selection, kept to the Middleton Murry order, abiding by his allowable one change.

To select is a grievous responsibility, because it involves representation also. In reducing eighty-eight stories to twenty-six, there is danger of giving untrue proportion to the "body" of Katherine Mansfield's work. Stories I have had to omit could have given further significance to those chosen—for there is no doubt that short stories by the same hand do have a bearing on one another. They enhance, they throw light on each other; together they acquire composite meaning. Also, stories fall into groups according to scene, mood, subject: each masterpiece, planetlike, has satellites. In making this Vintage choice, it becomes my business to give you no two Katherine Mansfield stories of the same kind, in order to give you as many kinds as possible. Her range was wide, and I want to stress that. How her manner varied—yes, to the point, as said, of never having hardened in a manner—I also want to bring to your notice. Working on these lines has entailed, alas, the isolating of almost every story from its creative sur-

round—that is, from others which led either up to or away from it. The transitions, the subconscious links between story and story have had to go. To be forced to disturb relationships makes one, often, more conscious of their reality.

IV

I have touched on Katherine Mansfield's alternatives: the evidences, that is, in her early stories that she could have been a writer of more than one kind. Alternations went on throughout her working life. In her letters appears a brusque, formidable, masculine streak, which we must not overlook in the stories. Her art has backbone. Her objectiveness, her quick, sharp observations, her adept presentations—are these taken into account enough? Scenically, how keen is her eye for the telling detail! The street, quay-side, café, shop interior, teatime terrace, or public garden stand concretely forward into life. She is well documented. Her liking for activity, for the crowd at play, for people going about their work, her close interest in process and occupation, give an extra vitality to stories. Admire the evening Chinamen in "Ole Underwood," or Alice, the servant in "At the Bay," taking tea with Mrs. Stubbs of the local store.

She engraves a scene all the more deeply when it is (as few of her scenes are not) contributory to a mood or crisis. Here, at the opening of "The Voyage," are the awarenesses of a little girl going away with her grandmother after her mother's death:—

The Picton boat was due to leave at half-past eleven. It was a beautiful night, mild, starry, only when they got out of the cab and started to walk down the Old Wharf that jutted out into the harbour, a faint wind blowing off the water ruffled under Fenella's hat, and she had to put up a hand to keep it on. It was dark on the Old Wharf, very dark; the wool sheds, the cattle trucks, the cranes standing up so high, the little squat railway engine, all seemed carved out of solid darkness. Here and there on a rounded woodpile, that was like the stalk of a huge black mushroom, there hung a

lantern, but it seemed afraid to unfurl its timid, quivering light in all that blackness; it burned softly, as if for itself.

Fancifulness, fantastic metaphor, play more part in her London (as opposed to New Zealand) scene-setting. Less seems taken for granted. "The Wrong House" (not in this selection) furnishes one example. Here, in a residential backwater, an unloved old woman looks out of a window:—

It was a bitter autumn day; the wind ran in the street like a thin dog; the houses opposite looked as though they had been cut out with a pair of ugly steel scissors and pasted on to the grey paper sky. There was not a soul to be seen.

This factual firmness of Katherine Mansfield's provides a ballast, or antidote, to her other side—the high-strung susceptibility, the almost hallucinatory floatingness. Nothing is more isolated, more claustrophobic than the dream-fastness of a solitary person—no one knew the dangers better than she. Yet rooted among those dangers was her genius: totally disinfected, wholly adjusted, could she have written as she did? Perhaps there is no such thing as "pure" imagination—all air must be breathed in, and some is tainting. Now and then the emotional level of her writing drops: a whimsical, petulant little-girlishness disfigures a few of the lesser stories. Some others show a transferred self-pity. She could not always keep up the guard.

Katherine Mansfield was saved, it seems to me, by two things—her inveterate watchfulness as an artist, and a certain sturdiness in her nature which the English at their least friendly might call "colonial." She had much to stand out against. She was in danger of being driven, twice over, into herself—by exile to begin with, then by illness. In London she lived, as strangers are wont to do, in a largely self-fabricated world.

She lived, indeed, exactly the sort of life she had left New Zealand in hopes of finding. Writers and intellectuals surrounded her—some merely tempestuous, some destructive. She accustomed herself to love on a razor's edge.

Other factors made for deep insecurity. She and her husband were agitatingly and endlessly short of money; for reasons even other than that they seemed doomed to uproot themselves from home after home. As intelligentsia, they were apt to be preyed upon by the intelligentsia-seeking sub-*beau monde*—types she was to stigmatize in "Bliss" and again in "Marriage à la Mode." Amid the etherealities of Bloomsbury she was more than half hostile, a dark-eyed tramp. For times at a stretch, there was difficulty as to the placing of her stories; individually, their reception was uncertain: no full recognition came till the volume *Bliss*. In England she moved, one gets the impression, among nothing but intimates or strangers—of family, familiar *old* friends, neighbours, girlhood contemporaries there were none. Habits, associations were lacking also: here was a background without depth, thwarting to a woman's love of the normal. From this parched soil sprang the London stories.

To a degree it was better, or always began by being better, in the South of France. She felt a release among Mediterranean people and the Midi light reminded her of New Zealand's. It was at Bandol, late in 1915, that she began "The Aloe," original version of "Prelude," and thereby crossed a threshold. At Bandol was suffered the agony out of which the story had to be born. She had come to Bandol to be alone with loss: her brother Chummie, over with the army from New Zealand, had been killed fighting in France. His last leave had been spent with Katherine in London. That same month, late at night in her sea-facing hotel room, she wrote in her journal:—

The present and future mean nothing to me. I am no longer "curious" about people; I do not wish to go anywhere; and the only possible value that anything can have for me is that it should put me in mind of something that happened or was when we were alive.

"Do you remember, Katie?" I hear his voice in the trees and flowers, in scents and light and shadow. Have people, apart from these far-away people, ever existed for me? Or have they always failed me and

faded because I denied them reality? Supposing I were to die as I sit at this table, playing with my Indian paper-knife, what would be the difference? No difference. Then why don't I commit suicide? Because I feel I have a duty to perform to the lovely time when we were both alive. I want to write about it, and he wanted me to. We talked it over in my little top room in London. I said: I will just put on the front page: To my brother, Leslie Heron Beauchamp. Very well: it shall be done.

That winter, though she had other maladies, tuberculosis had not declared itself. When it did, South of France winters became enforced. War continued, the wind whistled, *volets* clattered, the Mediterranean sea turned to black iron. She burned, shivered, coughed, could not bear herself, wrote, wrote, wrote. 1919-20 brought the Italian nightmare, Ospedaletti. These weeks, months, in cut-price hotels, ramshackle villas, were twice over exile, exile with doubled force. One man's letters from London were the lifeline, and letters did not invariably come. Who can measure the power of that insatiable longing we call homesickness? Home, now she was torn from it, became hers in London. She thought of the yellow table, the Dresden shepherdess, the kitten Wingley—growing up without her. Loneliness, burning its way into Katherine Mansfield, leaves its indelible mark upon her art.

She wrote the august, peaceful New Zealand stories. They would be miracles of memory if one considered them memories at all—more, they are what she foresaw them as: a re-living. And, spiritually as in art, they were her solution. Within them fuse the two Katherine Mansfields: the sturdy soul and the visionary are one. The day-to-day receives the full charge of poetry.

And now one and now another of the windows leaped into light. Someone was walking through the empty rooms carrying a lamp. From a window downstairs the light of a fire flickered. A strange beautiful excitement seemed to stream from the house in quivering ripples.

This is the child Kezia's first, late-night sight of the Burnells' new home. Katherine Mansfield the artist is also home-coming.

V

The writer was a woman of strong feeling. How quick were her sympathies, vehement her dislikes, total her angers, penitent her forgivingness, letters and journal show. If we had not these, how much would we know of her from her stories? Impersonality cannot but be the aim of a writer of anything like her calibre, and she fought to keep her stories clear of herself. But, human temperament and its workings being her subject, how could she wholly outlaw her own? And temperament played in her work an essential part—it was to provide as it were the climate in which ideas grew and came to flower. That throughout years of her creative life Katherine Mansfield was a sick woman, and that tuberculosis engenders a special temperament, or intensifies the one there already, must be allowed for. It has been more than allowed for—there is danger, in her case as in Keats's, that the medical history be overstressed. We are to marvel at the persistent strength with which Katherine Mansfield the artist threw off the sick-room. She was conscious only of her vocation—she *was* to write, she wrote, and wrote as she did. It may be that brutalities on the part of fate made her the more feel singled out, set apart. The battering at her health accounts for the inequalities of her accomplishment: that there was any trace of the pathological in the art itself, I imagine nobody could assert.

She was not by nature dispassionate. In the New Zealand, the "far-away people" stories, conflict seems stilled—there is an overruling harmony, the seer come to rest with the seen. Katherine Mansfield's ethics and partisanship come through far more in the English pieces (possibly because of their thinner fabric) and in some of those set in the South of France—though in "The Young Girl" and "The Doves' Nest" we again have a shining impartiality. . . . She loved righteousness and hated iniquity: what, for