

**Katherine Mansfield Society**

**Online Creative Works Series**

**Short Story**

**Kath MacLean**

**‘This Little Bird’**

## This Little Bird

“. . .some people live in cages. . . on the awful wall over the gulf of eternity we must sing – sing<sup>i</sup>

Katherine Mansfield letter to John Middleton Murry, October 1919.

It's quiet now, the type of quiet one can't find in the city, but instead, sitting on this balcony overlooking the Rocky Mountains, the air sings of the moment before snow when the world holds its breathe & all the birds are still. Without her now too familiar New Zealand/British-I've-been-abroad-much-of-my-life-&-not-come-home accent, I see Katherine — legs tucked around the top of a mountain in the distance. As if she is trying to balance herself, But even here, I can't fool myself into believing I'm alone. Silence like solitude doesn't last even when you wish it something breaks -- her hand reaches out over the space between us, presses gently against my shoulder & reminds me once found, bound: like a duty, there's no forgetting her, not for a moment, not above a whisper of wind, not above the constant bang of workman's hammers, not even when they let up, dropping their equipment onto the sidewalk, straightening their backs, shielding their eyes from the glare of light, or when they look dreamily off into the horizon. Do they see her too?

Perhaps these mountains, like the country she flees from, might help her stand still a while, or sit & read a book & think, or breathe, just breathe. *Can* she breathe? Is the body at last free of itself & its own slow rot?<sup>ii</sup> Today the air tastes of February, tastes blue like the blossom of sky pressing against my nose when I raise my head to look at the horizon. I write in a lined notebook, my feet propped against a wooden rail, the blood rushing past my toes. When I close my eyes I see blood dripping down the rail, drop by drop, then more violently, it gushes from my feet, until my legs go limp, & my shoulders lean forward into the light. My body wants to slip

from its chair, slide under the rail to float down upon the concrete sidewalk & grass beneath me. Free from its cage of flesh, one moment I'm recognizably me, the next I'm someone else, older, my body so soft it slips, silently, effortlessly out of its chair. The earth shifts & sighs -- barely a whisper above the breeze as I slide into another place.

Perhaps I've fallen asleep. But when I land with a thump in the sunlight I remember. How rehearsing in the car as I drive past Calgary, as I drive away from the city into the mountains, I promise myself I'll try harder; I'll try to listen to what Katherine says, get it all down, every word & phrase. We ought to remember; we ought to know what happened, really happened; what makes a life? Hers? Mine? I must separate the threads & write it down.

But sometimes Katherine's angry, sometimes she simply disappears or refuses to answer questions, or worse, laughs them off & then they coil around her neck until she pulls upon them, twisting them with her thumbs & there I've done it -- cut off her air, left her with her tongue hanging out; her eyes bulging, her head turned to the side, choking. My stupid questions are killing her, or so she'd like me to believe.

On a good day, Katherine might poke me between the shoulder blades with her walking stick as I lean into the computer trying to make sense of her words, mine, as I try to sort out who says what, when was it said, *can* I believe it? When she's quite bored, she'll pick at a book on my desk, turning a page here, pausing to muse over a phrase there, pointing her finger, following a line she'll chase off the page, then in a fit of rage or carelessness, she'll toss the book across the room shouting, *lies, all of this!* She doesn't like John's autobiography<sup>iii</sup> she doesn't like what the critics say, even when they call her terribly clever, she questions their intentions.

On bad days, it rains. Katherine hates the rain; she feels trapped inside the house, & sulks about sitting in my chair refusing to move, rubbing her hands together, shivering, she'll ask me to turn up the furnace. She'll want a cup of tea (only English will do), & very politely inquire, *have you any crumpets? Are you out of apricot jam?* Forget about working, she won't let me. Could you *get me a hot water bottle? Is there a blanket for my feet? Is this all the milk?*

In the beginning I am enticed by her & the stories she brings in small bundles under her arms, trinkets wrapped about a hanky, stuffed in a pocket. How her words unearth a life I can never know, not like this, not as if I'm living it, seeing it through her eyes, hearing her voice shout, *no, it didn't happen that way, that's not the way it was at all!* But one can only live so long through another before the past gets old; nostalgia looks tired, & however thrilling the story is today, tomorrow I might find it terribly dull. How quickly the sky turns from spring to fall & then to winter again as Katherine speaks my pen moves frantically over the page trying to get what it is she is saying to settle down, to sit still on the page, to quit trying to rewrite itself. After a while her stories repeat themselves, fold back upon each other, until truth becomes so buried, so unrecognizable, I begin to feel her relentless hit & miss: *today I shall tell you this, tomorrow I shall deny it -- Did I say that? I didn't mean it, that's not what I meant at all.*

The mark missed, she begins to wear me down, teases me until I feel as if I've been hit hard across the back of my head & when I come to, the room is out of focus. Somewhere in this purples haze, spots of colour float along the walls & ceiling, shadows of people come & go or watch me sitting & watching them. I try to walk about the room, but my legs are wobbly. *You are a light headed idiot*, she says, & laughing I nod *yes, yes*, thinking how very lucky I am she has found me out.

But now the mountains press upon me & although I can escape to the hallway, press a button & dash into the elevator; it doesn't matter. Before the door shuts no matter where I am, in my room, roaming the halls, or snug between the aluminum walls of the lift, she finds me. She seems to know what I say when she's not around, if I've spoken unkindly, or cursed her in my sleep. She's listening at the door, or hiding, lost in the folds of my life, telling her tale with mirrors; this writer's prison; this huge terrain of words leads me backwards, forwards, round & round about; a labyrinth of story where Katherine flies freely, sings in the tree outside my window, some happy & annoying tune -- not a care in the world, not a care--

*She's doing me a favour* I tell my friends when they inquire about my writing; *she's helping me out.* & tucking her legs around a chair at the kitchen table, rolling a cigarette, placing it between the first two fingers of her right hand, she is ever present -- I watch smoke circle about her head too critically I think, because suddenly she looks quite serious & says, *don't look a gift horse in the mouth.* In the early days, when I speak about her to colleagues, my voice is loud; I speak quickly, excitedly because her overbearing habits haven't yet worked their way under my skin. But lately, I confess, there are some things about Katherine & the life she carries with her yet, that are starting to annoy me -- her horse bays when I'm sleeping, grunts & groans, & lifts its tail to show me how it shits. It tracks mud across the living room with its great hoofed feet; there are stains on the carpet & the kitchen floor is black with dirt. I've grown round-shouldered hunching protectively over a plate of greens, I'm overly possessive about carrot sticks. I dream so often of horses my sheets smell of barns & bales of hay. Once I found a strand of hair on the pillow long & thick like a horse's mane. These piles of hay & barley, rows of waving books -- biographies & critical studies of her short stories, miles & miles of reading -- to turn another page, to find another thread of story, to listen to another fading voice. As if it were again our first meeting,

when the shadow of an elm tree brushes against the window, its leaves stretching towards me, & the sun, spent after a long August afternoon, creeps in under the crack of the windowpane, sneaks beneath the static of the librarian turning on the PA announcing in a rusted voice, *the library is closing, please make your selection, hurry up, hurry up* –

*Do*, Katherine says, poking a finger at my manuscript, *finish this*.

Perhaps I had been searching for a slim volume of verse by Marianne Moore, or an anthology of early American literature, or had a sudden craving for Walt Whitman's lilacs, or the tanned faces of his pioneers. Was I was wanting a whiff of the old West? Horses & dust & carriages, but not finding what I came for, I reach into the stacks as if books were gumballs, a rainbow of flavours beneath my fingers. How i must choose one -- not looking, not really noticing -- & the surprise of finding what it is I'm left holding almost as great as the first chew --

If you ask for her version of the story she might sigh; she might remember saying, *I hate England, I hate the city & this lollipop life!* & just like that Katherine refuses to continue because the answer to her is so evident & one must be a light-headed idiot not to see that. Months pass, time becomes a lump of sugar that won't melt beneath her horse's tongue until she tells *her* story—*her* way. *The story must be complete*, she says, *without holes* where a cigarette stubs out truth in a fit of rage, or tea stains a memory, or the moment transforms into an odd twisted shape that neither ends, nor begins where one expects. There are breadcrumbs on the table, trails of forgotten conversation, spots of sticky jam where Katherine has coughed suddenly, her hand shaking tilting the spoon so that jam slips from the spoon onto my clean tablecloth. I may have lost my patience; I may have raised my voice.

What was said? Implied? What is remembered now?

Katherine creeps along the building pressing her small frame against the mountains & follows me on a cement path clutching her shawl about her. Shivering, she slips on a patch of ice & regaining her balance, asks would I mind slowing down a little. Her hip hurts, she hasn't brought her walking stick; she isn't used to this kind of cold; she's been watching, waiting for me to come, but I had taken so long. *It's winter* she says, *I HATE snow. It's all white, ghostly, silent, eternal – all this whiteness has a kind of mock mystery about it that I dislike very much. It's like living in the moon.*<sup>xv</sup>

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(An exercise in interpretation:)

which story,

which life?

Whose truth?

1. She closes her eyes & smells foxgloves blossoming in a field. As if time doesn't care a whistle; what time is it that tosses her about the bed? What wave of salt?

2. To be teased by the rug's *welcome* & clearing its throat begins again to blow up buff, *welcome welcome* in a fit of dust-- English rain makes the sidewalk's ribs glisten, the sitting room cold, the carpet in the parlour threadbare & dirty.

But return to the question. Yesterday gnaws my thoughts. Little mouse between the walls scratching frantically, hardly scratching at all, scurrying from room to room, little mouse squeaking, little mouse lurching in the living room smelling shit & hay where the horse chews its cud -- the same bit over & over --

I must not run on. <sup>iii</sup>

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Sheep willow

cabbage, mimos

wild strawberry

Is it possible to be trapped in one place, feet buried in the grass, the heels of one's shoes sinking in the mud? How walking all afternoon, leaning upon a stick, waiting for his letter she pokes about the lawn, & tiring of her pigeon-French, reassures the Heron fleeing from the beach: – *come back, come back I do love you.* With each passing hour she cries, *what, what?* Before arriving finally, most painfully at *why?*



3. In another time she might wedge her toes deep in the warm sand, & digging a space big enough for foot & ankle, stand upon the shore holding her arms out by her side as if they were wings. Lifting her palms towards the sun she stands a fixture in the landscape. She might stand like this for years, her skin hardening into a white shell. She might be mistaken for rock, for a mystical figure rising from the sea; she might, she might -- live her life secretly, waiting & watching, turning seasons with her stony fingers as if months were beads she sorts them one by one among the anemones, the seaweed frilling, fanning its tale of self-contempt counting over & over among the deep sea pools, praying for the sea to rise, to fall back again, & for the tide coming in, washing her face with salt-water, polishing the ends of her fingers red like the tips of ferns, Deadman's bread, the dull gleam of a too tired sun -<sup>iv</sup>

To choose the role of dutiful daughter, wahine,<sup>v</sup> mistress to the famous, friend of the Lady, authoress, poetess -- why choose one & not the another? Why *this*? Not *that*? Private/ public; what is here today, tomorrow is unfashionable.

*I don't care a whistle*<sup>vi</sup> she says.

*I don't care --*

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*I wish he were here.*<sup>vii</sup>

Part of Katherine believes in monogamy, she wished for mate – perfect-perfect. A heart so full she might embrace love completely. It might sink her (*he's beautiful*), or convince her for a moment -- (*he's so clever, he pa-man; he deepa* –<sup>viii</sup>), but it doesn't happen, can't before it's *I love you now, more, always*.

*I release you.*

When Katherine finally marries John, she writes to him from the shores of a foreign country, the confines of an unfamiliar villa where she waits patiently, & not so patiently for his letters that do not arrive. Wishing he were there with her, wishing so hard, sitting in her wicker chair hour after hour watching for the post, watching the sea & the tide come & go, her sides cramp, -- the rope she images dangling above her swims about in knots, waves spill over her head & wash out the sun. For a fortnight she sinks in her underwater world quite without beginning or end.<sup>ix</sup> Quite without song.

*When will you go from me, Katherine? When can I be free?*

When she threatens to leave, I apologise for my behaviour, return to my desk, flip open my laptop & write another poem frantically. But the poem isn't mine; everything belongs to Katherine & if she were to go --

*I depend on you* I confess one afternoon just as the sun peaks through a particularly ugly group of black clouds for the hundredth time that day pushing, for a moment of light. *I depend on us. Do you need me too?* My voice sounds desperate & breathy like Robert Creeley reading a love poem to one of his several wives he's left or forgotten & desperately wants back. But Katherine

ignores me, continues to stroke her horse's nose & does not look up. The horse does, its eyes, two great big brown circles penetrate into my skull as if it is waiting for me to say something more interesting, something -- How to get Katherine's attention? *I want to play you a recording of Creeley's "For Love;"* I tell her trying harder to control the emotion in my voice. I want to tell her about breath, how it moves a poem, a line like a wave, but she's given up breathing. Instead, she coughs; I cough too. Sometimes we cough together for a few moments before Katherine walks away disgusted. *I'm not mimicking you,* I yell after her. *I'm sick! You are a proper idiot* she says calmly & turns from me.

Katherine steps through the glass door onto the balcony, then taking a giant step she lands on her feet on the cement path beneath my window. There she walks past the Leighton cabins & stops to knock upon the door where a woman is writing before the window. I imagine Katherine asking for a cello to play as if this is a perfectly normal thing to do, but the woman at the door shakes her head *no* & points to another cabin further along the path. Katherine walks a little faster swinging her cane at the pine trees & when she gets to the said cabin she knocks on the door & is greeted by a tiny man who invites her in. He shuts the door & moments later I think I hear the beginning of a Bach sonata as it slides off the cello's strings. The notes are clear & hang in the cold air for as long as they can before dropping to the ground slivers of ice that shine for a moment or two before the sun takes them, slips them into his pockets & they're gone for good. A while later, the music stops, the cabin door opens, & Katherine emerges beaming, her steps a little lighter than they were before as she hurries down the path towards the mountains.

When Katherine is gone, when I feel myself alone, my body relaxes. First my shoulders flatten themselves against the back of the chair, then crossing one foot over the other, my legs relax too.

I breathe a little easier. But shortly after lunch, when I'm on the verge of feeling cocky, when I actually convince myself she is gone, I find her sitting on the top of a mountain outside my window looking quite content. Katherine waves to me excitedly, gestures me to join her, but I can't follow, can't float from this chair & rise slowly up the rock. She doesn't understand, thinks I'm being purposely mean & tells me I'm not trying hard enough. *You lack imagination* she tells me later. *You lack the Will.*

& I can't help but think she's right.

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I have written Katherine in letters, in verse, in essays where she cries out for me pronouncing each syllable of my name slowly, precisely; it comes out 'clean'-- & then taking her hand, I pull her back from where she's fallen -- that spot in the sky, that space under the fence where the earth seems to pull away from grass, where the fencepost arches its back as if anticipating her curious crawl-to-the-other-side. Katherine smooths out her frock, pushes her chin length hair behind her ears, rubs away bits of dirt & pebbles embedded in her palms, & asks for something to eat. I feed her ham sandwiches, & billies and billies of milk & hot tea, until she's had enough & leaning towards me, wipes the sides of her mustard -stained mouth with her napkin, & asks without looking at me, without meeting my eye, for a cigarette. Time & again I tell her *I don't smoke*, but she forgets, deliberately I'm sure, & keeps asking. *Perhaps you'll change your mind.* Later in the kitchen when I am busy writing a poem I slip my arms into a jacket, gather my purse, & rush out the door to the corner store quickly so as not to lose the moment. Katherine wants to tell me somethingsomething but when I return to her minutes later with pack of Export A, she takes one from the package as if she's never seen it before, as if somehow I've done

something wrong -- & placing the cigarette between her two first fingers, holding it in her mouth just long enough to strike a match, paces about the room puffing, blowing smoke until she's smoked one down to its filter, then without hesitation, she lights another. Katherine still hasn't spoken & I don't say a word until she's inhaled almost half of her second cig, then I ask her quietly, almost under my breath, if she'll be staying. She nods her head, *I think so*, but we both know, she'll unpack her things tonight, lay them out on the bed as if to admire her fine taste, then, after hanging her clothes over top of mine on the hangers, she'll close the wardrobe door, & tell me she'll stay a day or two. When I'm at work, when I'm busy writing, she slips away, but not before writing a letter, a perfectly worded tentative letter explaining herself, her need to be alone, her desire to be on her own -- is it the same thing?

*haerera --<sup>x</sup>*

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I refuse to become attached. To her; to anyone.

A note on my pillow reads:

*Let's separate at the hip, let's turn down the volume -- stop speaking, stop writing me formal little letters that reek of being proper; stop trying on my clothes pacing before my window dressed up like me.*

## K

There are holes in the earth, where birds sing another language, the flowering sky blooms yellow manuka, pink honeysuckle, periwinkle. Where are the fruit trees? Do pines bend toward the mountains, or lean out past the sea? When I think, whose thoughts are they? When I speak is it

her voice or mine leaning over a poem, standing before the open refrigerator, hers or mine asking, *is this all the milk?*

This little bird, this little bird who longs to be free chokes on a worm, stumbles on the Hydro line, its wings spread as far as far as they can -- before it falls in a mad flap afraid to sing. What comes out is wrong & hopelessly out of tune.

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*It's okay* Katherine says shaking her head, releasing the bird from her chest, her heart beating faster as she tames the welcome mat with a plastic broom -- (wdd wdd) *i don't love him*, (wdd wdd)

*it's okay* –

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How long do you wear a ring? How often do you gaze at it dreaming, Katie, Kass, Kathie, Katerina, Katherine? Mrs. Beauchamp, Mrs. K Bendall, Marguetire Bombard? Who are you?

Who?

Climb into a carriage. Send the ring by post, or hand? Write a perfectly agreeable letter; make him angry, make him cry; churn his stomach by committing unspeakable acts so he can't stand the sight of you, or the sound of your name.

Good God – *had* he really loved you?

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*1 nightgown*

*3 petticoat bodices*

*2 pr. drawers*

*dress shields*

*handkerchiefs*

*2 pr. stockings*

*3 vests*

*2 blouses<sup>xi</sup>*

List the things you need & leave it on the kitchen table.

Forget to include: Russian *potai*, black straw *potai*, lace shawl, coat that might belong to Dostoevsky.

Shiny brass buttons, a fur lined collar, the hem of a dress must hang below the knee & no more –

*It's the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Show a little leg.*

Katherine lifts her skirt above her knees, throws back her head, & laughs.

*That- a-girl.*

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Posing in the mirror in the clothes I've brought her, she traces the outline of her thighs. Katherine's never seen them look like this before -- two thin sticks in cherry leggings & her skirt so slim she tries to jut her knees out as if she's wrapping them around her cello. *You'll have to wear something else to play* I tell her. But she isn't listening. She's bending towards the mirror so close, so close you can see the tops of her small breasts in her v-necked t-shirt. She moves closer & softly kisses her own reflection.

*I look perfectly charming*<sup>xii</sup> she says.

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To pose before the mirror, to wish oneself someone else, to step into another time in the future, in the past (*what'd you want to go back there for?*) *You remind me of someone.* A character, not thought up quickly in a flash of impatience or a patch of gloom, but slowly, over time, trying a self on as one would an outfit -- perfect today, but tomorrow clownish, the colours vulgar, the outfit tight in the bodice. The image now hopelessly out of fashion.

*You look like an old woman in that. As if you were going to a funeral.*<sup>xiii</sup> *It's the twenty-first century. Show a little leg.*

Black speaks volumes. *Hey little rich girl, bohemian, poet, translator, critic, writer, who are you?* Mourning a life lost too soon self-sunk, riches -to -rags & almost back again. That's too



many pounds for a hat, too many shillings for a bunch of violets. This exquisite coat, this sweet frock, the piano needs a room of its own --

Self –shaping, rounding the edges, smoothing the corners, bending the line so nothing nicks the keep- it –even- it- means- not –eating- for- a- fortnight life-- Hands about the wheel, steering our course, shaping what can bend this way, that. *How far to the infinite, how far?*

*Nothing of any worth comes from a disunited being.*<sup>xiv</sup>

Catch a ride on the cosmic motorway, thumbs out, without a pen to record the story. Nothing but cool breeze – salt-spray -clouds reminiscing a garden party of wave & surf. Sand settles in the corners of Katherine’s eyes like something forgotten -- it’s hard to recognize what one knows; this far up things looks smaller than what you remember. *You remember, what?*

Katherine is sitting at the kitchen table rubbing her arms & wrists before she rests both hands around a mug of steaming tea. Chilled by her arrival, grasping a cup until the warmth of the liquid penetrates her cold fingers, her hands curl about the mug as if they might beg or pray, which? What might she beg for? Money, a child, uninterrupted time to write? Pray for a miracle, for the baby to kick just once so she might remember how it feels, pray to return to her studio, the clock ticking, the city asleep behind the curtain. Sitting on bamboo mats, leaning on Japanese cushions against the walls, lighting candles in a skull, a small fountain splashes about in the middle of the room, the sound of running water, the piano in one corner & two tigers<sup>xv</sup>

sitting crossed- legged talking past midnight. Talking, until one convinces the other that friendship might be extended, that one might bed with the other, that love might be possible, anything is –

To live life once, & not waste it. You wouldn't want to waste it.<sup>xvi</sup>

To waste the blood she images pulsing in her veins. Not again, not now. When does a small degree of comfort fade? & in its place cold pours in the crack under the door, frosts up the windows, freezes the ice along the path. When should one put on gloves? Bury icy fingers into a fur muff? Keep one's hands to oneself & rub the palms & fingers together. Curve them, turn them towards the sky & ask for a little more time to get things done, to find the last- chance - cure, the run-away-mate. Ask for the world to wake its dreamers, to spin the hands on the clock back to when it must have happened; it must have happened just like that -- the world gone REAL.

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Is time strong enough to hold her? Close the blind; I don't want her looking, dreaming her way to freedom, or unlatching the window, opening its mouth wide enough so it can cry out *help, help she's captured me!* to anyone who might hear.

I want to be done with her story so badly I arrange the kitchen chairs around her in a circle so I know exactly where she is. She can sit in any chair, keep sitting & telling her story until I get it right, until I get it all. But something gives. Something isn't right.

*I can't cage you in Tig* I tell her. *I just can't.*

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Today she is wearing a plum coloured silk dress & moves her head from left to right; she lifts up her chin to the window, lowers it again, & when she thinks the light is just right coming through the curtain, & the green in her hat glows the green she remembers in the leaves & bushes of home,— her hat becomes a great bird shaking its wings. It spreads out over the room & landing softly on the bed, begins to coo. For the comforts of home, for red clumps of toi –tio, the blush in Katherine’s cheeks as she stands on the shore with the wind billowing her frock, or steeping out into the water to feel its tongue lap against her ankles, or the brush stroke blue of an afternoon sky. The sun is hotter than she remembers, the violets in her arms as she places them before the window, more sweet. All afternoon Katherine waits, trying on costume after costume, she compares the blue purple of the violet’s petals to her plum coloured frock. Does one compliment the other? She moves her head from left to right; she lifts her chin ever so slightly...

Katherine might listen quietly to the rustle of taffeta as she moves forward in her seat, as her soft glove lifts to her ear & pushes away a lock of hair, as the notes of Erlkonig fill the Bechstein Hall, as the pianist strikes the notes & just as she’s entering the space in the sonata where the notes rise to the ceiling—instead there are black birds, black birds spreading their wings they block out the light -- every bit of it.

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Moving from house to house, country to country, travelling across the sea, drifting over waves for weeks, months. Tasting the sea air, listening for the far cry of gulls, getting close to the

harbour, then landing, the great noisy flap of wings, Katherine steps off the boat in her best black frock --

I could whistle like a bird -- mouth the sound of green – *pipi wharura* – the shining cuckoo a streak of emerald, spearmint, lemon-lime – the tongue eager for the first lick, sugar --

A hawk announces: *Stupid girl, stupidstupid* –soars into the topmost branches of the pine tree outside my window where a t-shirt I've laundered flings its self over the rail.

*You are a proper idiot* i shout. But Katherine's gone, really gone & the shirt still wet, drips over the balcony.

After a while her stories repeat themselves, fold back upon each other, until truth becomes so buried, so unrecognizable, I choke on a worm, stumble on the Hydro line, fall in a mad flap afraid to speak – to write this, that; it comes out wrong. It comes out hopeless.

The shirt continues to drip. I continue to feel restless with this hit & miss: *today I shall tell you this, tomorrow I shall deny it -- Did I say that? I didn't mean it, that's not what I meant --* I am mis (interpreted).

## This Little Bird

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<sup>i</sup> Katherine Mansfield in the *Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield*. Ed. Vincent O’Sullivan and Margaret Scott. Letter to John Middleton Murry, Oct, 20, 1919. Clarendon P., Oxford, 1993. 37

<sup>ii</sup> Toward the end of her life Katherine began to read a great deal of Shakespeare liking lines to her own life such as the one she quotes from Anthony and Cleopatra” Like a to a vagabond flag upon the stream/Gone to and back, lackeying the varying tide/To rot itself with motion. (IV. Ii.15-15). *Collected Letters of KM*. Vol. 5. Viii.

<sup>iii</sup> John writes about his relationship with Katherine in his autobiography, *Between Two Worlds*.

<sup>iv</sup> Deadman’s bread is a type of New Zealand berry Katherine and her brother, Leslie name in childhood. In a letter to John, June 1, 1918, Katherine states, “[t]hen I went among the deep sea pool & watched the anemones and the frilled seaweed, and a limpet family on the march!” *Collected Letters*. Vol. 2, 209.

<sup>v</sup> This means wife in Maori. Katherine learns some Maori and used it throughout her travels across New Zealand bush country in 1907 and 1908. Instances of this can be found in her “rough Notebook”, later renamed by scholars, *the Urewera Notebook*.

<sup>vi</sup> Katherine

in *Collected Letters*. Vol.. 2. Letter to John , June 1, 1918, 210. The full quote reads: “I don’t care a whistle for them all.” Katherine is referring to the Bloomsbury writers with whom she is a feeling :”untouched.”

<sup>vii</sup> Katherine is referring to John and longs for him to join her. Letter to John June 1, 1918, *Collected Letters*. Vol. 2, 209.

<sup>viii</sup> These are terms Katherine uses to describe men in her life who are very masculine and/or manly in appearance and aptitude.

<sup>ix</sup> Katherine writes to John June 11, 1918 while awaiting his arrival, “A fortnight in MY world... is a thing quite without beginning or end – *Collected Letters*. Vol. 2. 232-233.

<sup>x</sup> Maori word meaning “goodbye to you leaving.” Katherine records the meaning of several Maori words in her journals in the *Urewera Notebook*. Ed. Ian Gordon. Oxford UP, 1978. 92.

<sup>xi</sup> List of Katherine’s laundry as she records it in the *Urewera Notebook*. 92.

<sup>xii</sup> Katherine in the *Urewera Notebook*. 90.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ida Baker recalls Annie Beauchamp’s greeting to Katherine when her mother meets her at the boat-train platform in England May 27, 1909. Katherine is wearing her black wedding attire, her best outfit, but one her mother finds completely unsuitable. In Anthony Alper’s *Life of Katherine Mansfield*, Oxford UP., 1982, 93.

<sup>xiv</sup> Katherine. *Collected Letters*. Vol. 5. “Introduction,” vii. The original reads: “Nothing of any worth can come from a disunited being.”

<sup>xv</sup> Katherine and John, were affectionately known to their friends as the “Two Tigers.”

<sup>xvi</sup> In a letter to her friend, Ottoline Morrell, January 24, 1922, Katherine writes, “Life is only given once and then I waste it. Do you feel that?” *Collected Letters*. Vol. 5. 24.