



ISSN 2514-6092

Heron

CREATIVE JOURNAL OF
THE KATHERINE MANSFIELD SOCIETY

ISSUE 1

MARCH 2018

ISSN 2514-6092

HERON

Creative Journal of the Katherine Mansfield Society

Issue 1 March 2018



Contents

Introduction	1
<i>Lesley Sharpe</i>	
Birds	3
<i>Tom McLean</i>	
One Thousand Selves	4
<i>Órfhlaith Foyle</i>	
<i>from K: Risk Anything</i>	8
<i>Iain Britton</i>	
This Little Bird Part One	11
<i>Kath MacLean</i>	
<i>from K: 14 Sonnets</i>	14
<i>Iain Britton</i>	
An Epic Mistake	21
<i>Alex Reece Abbott</i>	
La Croix Rouge	28
<i>Jan Kemp</i>	
<i>from K: Sleepers</i>	32
<i>Iain Britton</i>	
This Little Bird Part Two	34
<i>Kath MacLean</i>	
Elegy	41
<i>Tracy Miao</i>	
<i>from K: The Vignettes, 2 & 4</i>	43
<i>Iain Britton</i>	
Notes	45
Biographical Notes	47

Introduction

For Katherine Mansfield, Heron was the country retreat she and Murry dreamed of, and named after her lost brother, Leslie Heron Beauchamp. A pastoral idyll, it was another of Mansfield's landscapes of the mind, where there would be 'bees, a cow, fowls, 2 turkeys, some indian runner ducks, a *goat*, and perhaps one thoroughly striking beast like a unicorn or a dragon.' But in spite of her capricious imagination, or perhaps because of it, Mansfield's creative project was always an investigation of 'Life', present to the senses, felt in the blood and bones. The physicality of her writing, with its corresponding subjectivity, is one of its most penetrating features.

It is fitting that all the writers in our first issue of *Heron*, following in this imaginative tradition, respond to Mansfield's distinctive curiosity, her determination, her engagement with the liminal and unexpected. There are experiments with form, with viewpoint, with voice. In some, she is an active presence, in others a kind of literary ghost, at times inspirational, at others tormenting. For Tom McLean's speaker in 'Birds', Mansfield leads the way: *I walk behind her in the botanical gardens*. But following her is like tracking a scent: *She is three or four people/and most of a century away*. At other times it is Mansfield's pursuit which is relentless. *When will you go from me, Katherine?* asks Kath MacLean's narrator in 'This Little Bird'. *When can I be free?*

The recurring motifs from Mansfield's work in these writings articulate the pressure of multiple selves, the constant urge to shift shape, take flight. Birds abound, and, unsurprisingly, the elegiac note in response to a creative life cut short. Yes! Time is brief. Risk everything! Anything! It is the cry that pushes at the edge of confinement and convention. But the dominant note in this selection is the anxiety of self-presentation. Who to be? There are catalogues of intimate and theatrical names.

In different forms we find Mansfield's repeated longing for the kind of intimacy which might resolve difference, her final conviction that *nothing of any worth comes from a disunited being* ('This Little Bird'). These poems and stories push at the edges of intimacy to find, like her, a voice for those feelings that sit closer than our own skin. They press for the same kind of subjectivity with which Mansfield enlivened her objects and thought. There are the bright pink leather boots that race their owner along the street in Jan Kemp's story, 'La Croix Rouge', the *yellowy, billowy* croissants, and *short green jacket bobbing* with a life of its own. But human relations are more problematic. The wife in 'La Croix Rouge' thinks of her new husband, wonders *did he feel the missing layer he'd given her?* Like Mansfield, Kemp explores the unfamiliar intimacy of husband and wife in snippets of dialogue and monologue that seem to both merge and separate them. *I am here*, he says finally, in a reassuring act of assertion.

Is it her voice or mine leaning over a poem? asks the narrator of 'The Little Bird', feeling the incessant pressure of Mansfield's dominance as something by which she both defines and judges herself. Kath MacLean's extended monologue explores, in its series of enquiries, the ambiguities of a dependence on Mansfield - how far she even desires its repeated submissions. By contrast, in Órflaith Foyle's story 'One Thousand Selves', it is Mansfield who resists Ida and her dependence. Everything about Ida becomes repulsive to her, as if to enforce a physical separation - she smells of egg, and even her shoes walk about the room as if they might eat her. The story shows Mansfield at her most exacting, both of herself and others, in the polarities of her desire and frustration.

But other poems and stories here lead us through nature, gardens, rooms, as well as the more intricate paths of self-examination, to a kind of freedom. All the compass points of Mansfield's world are here - Menton, Bloomsbury, Cornwall, *Home*. In Alex Reece Abbott's New Zealand story, Kay's adolescent

imagination presses at the edges of her known world, feels the exhilaration of the *creamy goblet blossoms* of Mrs Devine's old magnolia tree, even though her relationship with her mother is bound instead by the demands of the cryptic crossword. In this terrain of adolescent consciousness, we find, with a Mansfieldian exactitude, Mrs Devine *snipping away in her kitchen with an old tea-towel for a hairdresser's cape*.

The boundaries of time and place are often fluid in these pages. Here *the small girl chasing a bird's shadow* of Iain Britton's sonnets merges with the wildness of a woman *unwrapping stars*, applying *moonlight/ to her lips*. There is the difficult *persistence of the primal* and *the constellations which strip us bare*. These powerful sonnets bring together the lyrical and rational, interrogating with their distinctive form arguments against containment. Their tensions also speak to our own inconsistencies, and our own uncertain times. How do we confront *this upheaval of native origins*? What can we be sure of from one moment to the next? Where is home? What can we, need we, risk? There are the imaginative forces of night, of the dark, the moon, *the tyranny of lost and found* to navigate. It is writing ultimately that proves the consolation: *the woman/uncouples her late-night dependencies she writes/ poetry / /in red ink* ('Risk Anything').

This first issue of *Heron* is an exciting new venture. There is, of course, a long tradition of writing that engages with other writers - we feel the enduring influence of Sappho or Petrarch, find T.S. Eliot gathering fragments of lost civilisations in an act of restoration. Mansfield herself mined Chekov, much as many writers continue to rework her material, finding in it a consciousness that articulates their own. In a similar way these responses to Mansfield, as well as perhaps being part of the way we mythologise her, also explore how far our creative engagement with her writing and life enables us to give an account of our own. Each one, as Kay observes in 'An Epic Mistake', has *her Katherine* – perhaps the one who risks everything, or is, like her, confined by the restless search for completion – with Murry, Lawrence, Virginia and Co, Ida, her own creative energy. We can follow her to New Zealand, find, with her, lost Edens, as well as the valley of the shadow. We can follow her to Fontainebleau, to Gurdjieff, to a cow barn that feels like home. But the final 'Vignettes' in this issue preserve Mansfield *in media res*, the echo we still feel of someone moving in the next room.

Lesley Sharpe, editor

February 2018

Birds

Tom McLean

I walk behind her in the botanical gardens,
 Kass with her enigmatic smile.
 When I speak her name, she turns
 Looking through me to a future
 Which became our past.
 Towards the end of the day,
 When the light is long and golden,
 And her smile is as enigmatic
 As the movement of birds, I walk in the botanical gardens
 Following her.

I never catch up to her. She is three or four people
 and most of a century away. To touch her,
 A handshake at a seminar, a cup of tea with an old woman
 Who touched the academic's shoulder
 As she was touched by a girl, dark hair moving with laughter.
 Each generation she is a touch further away,
 And her eyes become golden.

A net of hands interlinked, pulling me away.
 Running away together into the brown-gold maize
 Where we hid, and were lost, and wandered to the edges,
 Watching the dried stems drooping under the weight
 Of food for cattle. A grasping hand worming for comfort,
 Grubby fingernails into her palm. She pulled me with her,
 On her determined quest for the edges of things.

The albatross woman with the clumsy hands touched her,
 And the touch was like a redemption and a blessing,
 A way of saying that she loved her.
 The invalid squirmed away from it,
 Revolted by our hands
 And the heavy breath of cows,
 Which reminded her of the smell of home,
 And the cows standing at the fenceline
 With brown and placid eyes.

An adolescent diary has something written.
 'Nothing remains but the shelter of her arms.' Home from the gardens
 I rip sheaves of green stuff away from sweetcorn,
 And observe how the husking reveals
 Leaves more delicate at the centre.
 I smile at the inversion.

She is a revelation, tougher the closer you get.
 She needed no-one to hold her hand;
 except, perhaps,
 at the very end,
 maybe.

One Thousand Selves

Órfhlaith Foyle

I have tried to lose the stray dog in the mountains, but it has followed me here to the Select Hotel in Paris...to these queer, cheap rooms that overlook the roofs of the Sorbonne.

I can see the sky and there are vacant windows like those vacant holes in my lungs, gobbling up my air the way a dog gobbles up meat...

...and LM is stretching to light the lamp now. She wants to tempt me with pallid egg on toast. I want champagne.

The fire licks my slippers.

I am so full of blood.

'No egg then?' LM says.

I shake my head, reach my hand to my face and she reacts.

'Are you too hot?'

She planks her body in front of me. I can see her chest. Her breasts would smother me if I let them. I stare at the small lace frill of her blouse. She smells of egg. I hold my breath and her face pushes down to look at me. Then she smiles and plumps the edges of the pillow behind my head.

'There...' she tells me.

She pokes the fire hard and its heat climbs up my face. Sometimes I think that LM would like to preserve me here. Not really dead, but not able to live away from her either.

'Did you write any letters today, Katie?'

'I wrote to Jack,' I answer.

LM tightens up her lips. I lean back against my chair and push my hands through my wrap. I would like Jack's head to be in my lap; just to hold him and make him listen.

But I've torn out the page from my journal. Even as I was writing the words I could see all of me change. All those other KM's, Katies, Japanese Kate, Russian Kate, Tinakori Kass, falling into one thousand selves.

The self with Lawrence.

'You are a loathsome reptile,' he wrote to me in Capri. 'I hope you will die.'

Jack never really saw Lawrence. I saw Lawrence.

Lawrence playing with a string between his fingers. I loved his eyebrows how straight they were across his eyes. I used to try and straighten mine in the mirror. I tried to put myself inside Lawrence once. Closed my eyes under the sun one day and I felt the heat crawl in through my fingernails. I tried to feel all that heat boil in my heart, then roll down to between my legs. Is that what it was for Lawrence when he saw Jack? That boiling heat, ready to make flesh wrestle?

He put me as Gudrun. I put him as myself.

All my selves spattering at my feet. If I look hard enough they soon disappear into the carpet; my mouths trailing into rose thorns, my eyes rolling behind rose leaves; all my faces spreading out, then being eaten by LM's shoes as she walks about the room, undoing the frill at her throat.

She stands facing the locked hotel room door and she twists her fingers. She whispers something before she turns and faces me.

'Cocoa then?'

'Champagne,' I tell her.

LM shakes her head, then wriggles her fingers in front of her bosom.

'No,' she says. 'No...no...too many bubbles...they aren't good for your lungs.'

I look towards the window. LM has not yet drawn the curtains. I'm afraid that the dog is out there waiting for me; his large paws placed one above the other; his tail a fat brush of hair and dirt. He has ticks and loose gums.

He reminds me of Wyndham, all long with the hang-dog jaws of his self-portraits. I had all my 'Ts' with me when I went to lunch with Sydney and Violet Schiff in Cambridge Square, and there was Wyndham, wiping his hands clean from painting Violet, and my 'Ts' bristled beneath my skin. I felt them pull and squeeze my words as I talked. Wyndham licked his moustache. Violet smiled and Sydney poured a little wine.

'I have not read your work, Miss KM,' Wyndham said. 'I have read the notices.'

I tried to like him. I tried to please him like you would a dog, but I was never fond of dogs. I prefer cats. I mentioned my selves, my 'Ts', running around my body like screws working a machine. I mentioned Ouspensky who had said that Leonardo and Michelangelo were not artists; but very fine machines.

'All the art we know is mechanical and subjective.'

Wyndham laughed at me. He called me a vulgar writer. My characters had sliding smiles like small sharks and lived dull café lives or hid in the New Zealand bush, brushing their hair in front of mirrors, contemplating some minor fantastical lover.

'A magazine story writer of the machine variety,' he announced to Violet and Sydney, who did nothing; who only remarked on the weather for this time of the year; who said how they liked Sundays and how the day was always perfectly suited to its name.

And LM was saying now:

'You have to have a little something for your birthday, Katie.'

I stare back at her. All that love for me inside her. It twists me.

I remember Granny Dyer in the bath and I wish I was a little girl again, watching Granny lift the sponge to her arms and her beautiful face. I wish I saw Maata again, or even had that moment on the ship when Papa looked at me as if he was afraid of how I was made.

And Virginia, marvelling at the words in me, using her bird's eye to mark down each word I used to describe Lady Ottoline's garden. The *bright dazzle* of tulips, the *pairs* of walkers; the conversations like music *set to flowers...and* later in Virginia's story, it was all there, all that living light and bright air.

Who was I to her then?

'It's not too far gone, Katie,' LM was saying. 'Your birthday...'

Her face eats me like a cow eats grass.

'Your birthday,' she says again.

The words sound so lovely from her mouth. They could be real if I could just live and work and write. In Fontainebleau I will be reborn. I will be that self of selves. None of them ever saw that self. Not LM, not even Jack, neither poor old Carco or Goodyear, nor Kot, who once gave me a bright Russian dress. Not even my brother Leslie, my Chummie...

He and I had been walking up and down the garden in Acacia road when a pear fell from the tree. Chummie picked it up and polished it with his handkerchief. He asked if I remembered the pear tree at home and the old Southerly Buster wind that would tear them down for the ants to eat.

'We shall go back when it's all over,' he promised. 'And find everything.'

I scribbled down something for him before he left. It wasn't a letter but just my arms around him. He died out there, blown to bits, showing his men how to throw a hand grenade.

In Bandol I sat and watched the red sun sink into the sea until a man found me.

'You are alone, Madame?'

'Alone, Monsieur.'

'You are living at the hotel, Madame?'

'At the hotel, Monsieur.'

'Ah, I have notice you walking alone several times, Madame.'

'It is possible, Monsieur.'

He blushed and put his hand to his cap.

'I am very indiscreet, Madame.'

'Very indiscreet, Monsieur.'

But one self of mine – a high, wild self who wanted to tear the dark red sun apart with her fingers—she wanted to say something so different.

She wanted to say: 'I am discreet. I am very discreet.'

And she wanted that quiet discreet to be nothing more than a white sheet brought over her head so she could sleep.

But she wrote for Leslie instead. She wrote about their childhood. She wrote about Kezia touching Pat the handy man's earrings—after he had chopped the head from a white duck—'*Do they come on and off?*' and Mouse, little Mouse – '*Je ne parle pas français*' – and there was a dog

there too; and Beryl, the real Beryl behind the false one, a shadow behind the mirror... *'And then after six years, she saw him again'...*

...and Laura visiting the dead young man laid out on a table...that strange, sly beauty
Death...then her brother Laurie...

'Isn't life—'

But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

'Isn't it, darling?' said Laurie.

But LM is at the curtains. She pokes her head between them, sighs, then pulls them shut.

'Is there a dog out there, Ida?' I ask her.

LM shakes her head, smiles and turns about the room, then taps her foot on the edge of the fireplace before she says:

'There is nothing out there, Katie.'

On the 16th of October, two days after her thirty-fourth birthday, Katherine Mansfield went to Fontainebleau in the hope of regaining her 'self'¹ amongst an extended family under the guidance of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, founder of the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man.

'Live in your body again,' Gurdjieff advised her.

She scraped carrots, inhaled cows' breath and she pinned back her fringe. On Boxing Day she wrote:

'You see, my love, the question is always: "Who am I?"... "Is there a Me?"

On Katherine's invitation, Jack arrived on Tuesday the 9th January 1923, and Katherine decided to comb her fringe back down to welcome him.

After supper she ran up the stairs ahead of him, but her lungs loosened and her blood spurted out. Jack led her to her bed and rushed for the doctor. He was pushed out of her room and Katherine died minutes after.

from 'K'
Iain Britton

Kokiri te manu
Takiri ko te ata
The bird awakens
Dawn breaks

RISK ANYTHING

Risk! Risk anything!'

Journal entry (14 October 1922), published in The Journal of Katherine Mansfield (1927)

intervention
 punctures an aquifer's skin the amniotic sac of a
half-formed moon
the worn faucet of a bible's blocked well
my shoes
 scuff at gravel /
 townsfolk
 bedeck the walls of churches the band rotunda /

Friday night and the choristers sing
holy holy holy
 someone calls
 sells fruit
 to passers-by / to the couple
concealed by shops
 by the bright lights / who think
 invisibility
 act out instant opportunities trade secrets /
 swap intakes of intimacy
the woman
 lives in a doll's house
 coffee for two / & then dancing / today's
 fragrance
 spills from the frangipani
& i observe every movement every twitch

every sentence she blots /
 she coughs / converses on the phone
 she shifts dolls
 without consultation
 from kitchen to lounge
 to verandah / she talks to family /

*

 piano & cello compete
 for
 air space for
 the dolls all listening
 in a row
 the choristers sing
 the churches puff on spirituality & i take
 notice /
 she coughs repeatedly
 intervention
 is the hot effervescence
 which fizzles from a fractured stream the moon's
 divisive splashes
 of light / a stone-god's rising
 from his dust bowl of powdered
 bone
 the couple
 sit motionless
 facing one another / they are painted /
 wooden-like / transfixed eyes dipped in eyes
 hands interlocked
 their cue call suspended
 she writes poetry / in red ink
 reads bedtime Chekhovs / cosmology / aspects of
 alchemy / a tourist's guide to Gondwanaland
 i add my name to her shopping list
 my initials my aliases / / she adds

Katya
 in waiting
 she shifts dolls
 without asking /

the afternoon tea
 starts with sitting in the sun
 speech marks
 are blotted /
 Virginia prefers milk not sugar
 her husband prefers rock cakes baked by his
 mother

*

today's meeting
 is about proofing *Prelude*
 i keep notes of hot memories /
 travel / the fragments of islands
 still afloat / /
 of Kupe's
 second transpacific crossing
 i risk living in the doll's house cohabiting with silence /
 outside
 the choristers sing
for all the saints
 & The Chapel of the Holy Child
 slides into Zion
 with consent forms carefully
 folded
 &
 filed
 the woman
 uncouples her late-night dependencies she writes
 poetry /
 in red ink

This Little Bird

Kath MacLean

I

...some people live in cages. . . on the awful wall over the gulf of eternity we must sing – sing

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? 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, 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 purple 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 – another page, another thread of story, 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 have been searching for a slim volume of verse by Marianne Moore, or an anthology of early American literature, or have had a sudden craving for Walt Whitman's lilacs, or the tanned faces of his pioneers. Am I was wanting a whiff of the old West? Horses & dust & carriages, but not finding what I've come 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 have 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.*

14 SONNETS

from 'K'

Iain Britton

BLISS

'driving through Eternity in a timeless taxi'

the couple sit motionless
 they are alone / transfixed / 2 people
 in a room in a terrace block
 packed against a park & a Novotel / 2 people
 in a street
 populated by hawkers tourists
 down&outs reading DH Lawrence / a girl
 who hides her Maori lover in a hitch-hiker's bag /
 the couple
 roped together
 by intertwining their pulses
 seize the moment / split the starlight's dominion
 & all paradise breaks loose / like war horses
 sparking steel hooves at the sky

FLOWERS PLANTED BY THE MIND

'I love ... wild places'

i keep alive hot memories / travel
 the fragments of islands / the figure
 of Maata Mahupuku tumbles earthwards
 through grass
 through the fragrance
 of a hillside with summer
 fingering at the soil / the worm-casts
 the uncorked cicadas
 gannets plunge / rocks breach
 the surf / i love wild places
 & the girl walks through a profusion of
 fuschias / family names
 exhilarate at the feeling / this news
 exclusive pretends to pull us closer

KATYA FIRST

'don't lower your mask until you have another mask prepared beneath'

from Virginia & Co
 come pastoral clay samples
 of an ancient society
 of woodland witnesses /
 in their deepest of bones
 they hold on to glade / copse / bush
 an esplanade
 of earthly responses /

in Katya
 there's this disarticulated assembly
 of natural longing / this upheaval
 of native origins / obsessive she might be
 unavoidable she isn't / she habitually
 washes her face her hands / her face

THE WONDERS THEREOF

'to enter into it, to be part of it, to live in it'

the husband knocks / the moon knocks
 & sidesteps & catches a woman
 unwrapping stars
 the new spring leaves
 a man's luminosity / she applies moonlight
 to her lips / *he loves me* / she wears
 a white veil for the occasion / she's
 a silhouette in the making

in London / in Te Wairoa
 the daffodils push upwards
 in their selected sockets / the birches
 explode green confetti / the world tilts acutely
 & blossoms
 shower the eyes of the blind

FROM THE VILLA

'Should I never return, all is in order. This is what life has taught me'

Africa floats on horizons
 of altar-blue cloth
 a warm shimmer
 unrolls the afternoon
 & rooftops
 gather to talk / K
 labels her garden
 attends to unravelling

the cobwebs
 of an antipodean dynasty
 i pick up a feeling of fragility /
 tomorrow's
 unpredictable gesture / this woman with
 a lamp

AT THE LAKE

the girl fondles supplejack creepers
 brushes off pumice / walks
 under wild flowers & listens
 to the lake's gravelly susurrations
 memories
 pour through windows / doors
 Te Wairoa shifts on its hinges
 the tohunga who lives on bread
 & wairua / & people's thoughts
 is guarded by black knuckles of mamaku
 a visible twilight cuts through this placenta
 of trees rippling in green veins
 the lake is all to do with Katya
 to realise nature's savagery entirely

POUNAMU

'the rainbow shell ... sings in the profoundest ocean'

my birthdate is acknowledged /
 husband & wife meet for servings
 of Cornish weather / for an intimacy
 squandered at a table / they love hate
 the philosophies of tandem living
 the companionship of isolation
 they baulk at their dependence on
 primal reactions / the grey
 asphalt skies / the hymn-struck foxes /
 rainbows which dip double-headed
 into the sea / a candle
 burns in a window / my birthday gift
 perhaps / tonight Katya
 pins her brother's pounamu to her scarf

45 COURTFIELD ROAD

'One feels half disembodied, sitting like a shadow ... while the dark tide rises'

often streetworkers on night shift
 pass my flat / some sing
 American Pie or smoke
 rolled-up grass clippings
 from Columbian jungles /
 others like K come to my room
 displaced / split skeletally down
 the middle / dispersed individuals /
 i study the lifelines that crinkle
 my walls the Mansfields the Baxters
 the Curnows / K lives in my
 encyclopaedic entrails of thoughts
 in Courtfield Road we analyse
 the constellations which strip us bare

GLORIOUS EXPECTANCY

'with a rapacious appetite for everything'

ko Maata ahau she whispers
 pushing her reflection
 under the soup-foamed lake
ko Maata & Katya
 tastes the name on her lips / on the tip
 of her tongue / on the soil of her teeth
Maata with island stains
 rubbed into her skin / her dark features
 indistinguishable from the silhouetted
 smudges of Katya's lovers in waiting
 at Te Wairoa i dine on a roll call
 of gratifications / i pack & unpack
 our suitcases our books & photos
 her nine short lives portrayed in sketches

SOMETHING ANYTHING

'I long ... above everything else, to write about family love.'

in Katya there's this upheaval
 of native origins / the tyranny
 of lost & found forces her to change sides /
 traverse two worlds / she reads another letter

from LM /
 the missing link the go-between
 for the living & the dead / she furnishes
 K's spaces she is mother father sister

 a terror to appease /

under the purple-fisted wisteria
 K's family pause permanently in shadows /
 i step into a child's story of parents
 offering gifts of something anything
 personally wrapped

THE BURIED VILLAGE

'and if the other can keep calm, it is all the help we can give each other'

the iwi dug it out of grey mud
 grey ash grey rain / the iwi dug up
 the corpses of cats
 & dogs
 chooks / people / the iwi
 resurrected Katya's dreams

they washed them
 scrubbed them
 hung them out to dry /

from the darkness
 she feels their heartbeats hears
 breathing hears songs she
 emerges echoing distantly
 from a broken room

A TANGLE OF CAMELLIAS

'Let it be at that. A child of the sun'

Virginia prefers the river
 the done days the hiking across paddocks
 the oozing
 of water through green recesses
 ghosts past which loiter under trees

K plays her games / she eternalises
 privet-flung particles of air

she lies in a tangle of camellias
 & i touch her clothes / the shifts
 in her thinking / her looks / her
 country sleep
 she imagines her body on fire

 nearby a nuclear divinity
 powers her silence forward

THE MONASTERY

'What am I guarding myself for so precious? This is the mystery'

 i add my name to hers
 to the aliases
 barred-up behind windows

she stares beyond the graffit'd walls
 of her home
 the crucifixes the gargoyles
 the small girl chasing a bird's shadow

she rubs her hands
 for a whiff of her brother's hair
 for words dripping in red ink

K deciphers her emotions
 soaks her prayers in water / she feels
 the twilight pains
 of a solitary white gardenia

“K”

‘for personal friends & family’

please call her	kass	
	kathy	
	katya	
	katie	
	kezia	
	karenza	
	katerina	
	kate	
	katherine	
	katharina	
	katriona	
	kissienka	
	kathleen	
	katushka	many already do

An Epic Mistake

Alex Reece Abbott

It was one of those oppressive, humid Auckland days and Kay Munroe was dawdling home from school, scuffing her sandals and kicking out at pebbles. She sent a chunk of pock-marked scoria pinging off the transformer box at the end of her street and it landed back at her feet, stubborn as the shame that trailed her home.

Most of her class had at least one parent at prize-giving that afternoon and her mother’s very public display of disinterest had not gone unnoticed, although Kay had faced the principal’s interrogation without lying. She’d stretched things slightly in the direction of untruth, that was all, saying that her mother was too unwell to attend.

The sky darkened and dumped down a shower. Kay walked on through the drenching rain

without changing her pace, still basking in her book prize.

Not a prize, thought Kay, a sign...and the message: she could write. And, she'd write herself right out of this place.

The rainburst was over as suddenly as it started. Only Mrs Devine's old magnolia tree distracted her, laden with glowing lotus flowers floating in the air. The creamy goblet blossoms were swollen with promise and for a moment, it seemed like there was some magic in her neighbour's garden and like a lotus-eater, Kay forgot that she was heading home.

Kay braced herself and took a deep breath as she walked through the back door. She found Mrs Munroe in the lounge, coiled in her usual spot on the vinyl sofa, catching the afternoon sun as she smoked and worked her way through another cryptic crossword.

Kay held out her book prize and waited.

"Where did you get that?" said Mrs Munroe, glancing up from her *New Zealand Women's Weekly*.

"The Governor General at prize-giving," said Kay, aiming for the right mix of pride and modesty. "He didn't wear the hat with feathers though. Best prose."

"Self-praise is no praise at all, Kay Munroe," said her mother, taking the prize from her. She flicked the Katherine Mansfield book open, pausing at the neat certificate glued on the alabaster flyleaf.

Don't break the spine, don't let your fag-ash fall on my brand new book, prayed Kay.

Mrs Munroe took a long drag on her cigarette. "Don't go getting all big-headed on us," she said, the cylinder of ash wagging dangerously close to the pages.

She blew a plume of smoke that wrapped Kay in a stinking wreath. Then she snapped the book shut and swapped it for her dog-eared thesaurus.

Later that afternoon, Kay sidled into the kitchen and overheard her mother on the phone, talking about the prize as if it happened every day. When Mrs Munroe noticed her, she ended the conversation and hung up.

"Party line," she said, stirring her instant coffee. "What did you get that book for again?"

Kay crossed her fingers behind her back. "My story was chosen for the school magazine." Mrs Munroe's eyes wandered to Georgette Heyer's latest paperback on the kitchen table. Kay could feel two competing plaits tightening around her temples; one hankering for her mother to show some enthusiasm, while the other begged Georgette to divert Mrs Munroe from asking any more questions.

And they *would* have been awkward. Kay couldn't say that the story was about a runaway who knew exactly what day it was because she could smell savoury mince stewing away on the stove, the same way that Kay could smell it now. Which meant it was Tuesday, *their* day for mince. She kicked herself for not changing her story title.

"Hope it's better than that other story you wrote," said Mrs Munroe, stabbing her words in the air between them with her cigarette. "You know, that one where you cheated."

Kay remembers like it was yesterday. Racing home from primary school.

Holding her breath, taking the certificate from her book bag. Sighing with relief – the cardboard’s only slightly creased. Carrying it with gentle pincer fingers to her mother.

Yawning, Mrs Munroe puts her paperback down on the *Formica* dining table. “What’s this?” she says, taking the certificate from Kay.

“They read my story. In front of the whole class. Mr Russell gave me and Robin King a certificate. Each.”

“I,” says Mrs Munroe.

“Robin King and I.” Kay speaks slowly, to demonstrate that she stands corrected. “For Composition.”

“Where is it?” Her mother drops the certificate on the table and reaches for her cigarettes. She rolls her eyes. “If you don’t want to show me your story...”

Keen not to squander this flicker of interest, Kay scrabbles through her satchel.

Mrs Munroe lights another cigarette and drums the *William Tell Overture* on the certificate with her fingers.

Just as she stops, Kay finds the page with the gold star.

Mrs Munroe wafts the A4 sheet between them. “Not very long.”

Kay shifts from foot to foot. “We only had half an hour –”

“–Shhhhhh, I’m concentrating. God! Your handwriting.” One long crimson nail stalks the words down the page. At the end of the second side, she grinds her cigarette butt into her glass ashtray very slowly until every little spark is extinguished. “I’ve read this before.”

Kay hesitates, gored by her words. “I don’t think I’ve showed...”

“*Women’s Weekly* last month. Cheats never prosper, Kay Munroe.

You’re grounded for the rest of this week.”

“But I didn’t even see...” Words swirl in her head but Kay can’t get them out. Her unused explanations sink to the pit of her stomach and turn to acid.

“But nothing. Make it two weeks for lying.” Mrs Munroe stands.

“Anything else?”

Kay shakes her head and goes to her bedroom to the sound of ripping cardboard. She stays there for most of the next fortnight – about long enough to re-read all her *Secret Seven* books.

On prizegiving night, Kay went to bed early with Katherine Mansfield cradled in her arms. A proper hardback, big as a Bible, the biggest book she’d ever owned. The black dust-jacket had a picture of posh Edwardian ladies enjoying a garden party, their arms swathed in leg of mutton sleeves.

She repeated the title like a mantra: *The Complete Stories*. All the stories, in her hands, won with her own writing. And the stories belonged to her – not some battered book in a cracking cellophane cover that had to go back to the library.

My eyes, first to read these words. And stories, all written by a woman from...well, Wellington, but...still from New Zealand and good enough to be published fifty years on.

A literary giant, shouted the blurb. Not eccentric or wealthy like Dame Ngaio – or Janet, who they'd said was mad. And, Katherine had mixed in London's rarefied world of letters.

London. The word set Kay's mind buzzing like the transformer box at the end of her street. She was a writer, free to tap away at her typewriter, the ring of her carriage return sounding each fresh line of her latest story.

If she could survive high school then, like Katherine, she could read what she liked and write what she liked – and go wherever she liked – away from this stifling world and her mother's judging eyes. Then there'd be other pressures, other eyes. But she wouldn't be stuck under the same roof with them.

While she brushed her hair, Kay studied the black and white portrait inside the cover. Katherine's haircut was modern, a dramatic China-girl bob. Not like the helmet that she'd been assigned by Mrs Devine, snipping away in her kitchen with an old tea-towel for a hairdresser's cape.

Pale Katherine gazed straight into the camera with soulful, knowing eyes, eyes that wouldn't miss a thing. Yes, she looked like a real author alright.

Kay practised her successful writer poses in the mirror: amused; intense; friendly; reflective; moody; intellectual. Then she examined the portrait again. Katherine was a frail giant.

When she started reading the introduction, numbers leapt out from the lines of text. Kay rubbed her eyes. The numbers were still there on the page in crisp black and white.

Was she dreaming? Katherine Mansfield had *her* exact same birthday.

First, the prize and then, like a fairy tale, this mysterious coincidence...no, omen. She longed to tell someone about October the fourteenth.

She slowed down her breathing and made herself read on. The caption said Katherine had about three years to live when the photo was taken. *Circa.*

Thirty-four years old. Me in twenty years, thought Kay.

But Katherine's story started to shift. There were charges of plagiarism, she was a restless nomad, a Bohemian living on an experimental commune in France – and dying from TB that was probably curable – certainly curable now.

It was all turning unsavoury and tragic. She preferred *her* Katherine, the innovator, the adventurer, the rebel. She studied that solemn gaze and decided that no-one could take Katherine away.

Kay slipped off the shiny book-cover and stashed it in the bottom drawer of her tallboy with her certificate that she'd rescued from the rubbish bin and repaired. She'd done her best but the rips were still visible, fingerprinted fault lines taped on the grubby ivory cardboard.

She kept the book hidden underneath her bed. Every night she read, blankets propped around her like a *tepee*, tracing the words with her torch-beam, loving the directness and ordinariness of the moments and lives distilled and made fresh by Katherine.

After devouring every story, she went back for seconds. But the joy of her prize was dulled

by knowing the grim risk she was courting. Niggling worries began to corrode her pleasure. Kay ran her hands over the pages, hoping to absorb Katherine's courage. If her mother found the book, then she'd remember the prizegiving.

So far, Mrs Munroe hadn't asked to read her winning story, but it could only be a matter of time and then she'd use it like a weapon. And Kay would end up confessing to *Tuesday: Mince*, her harmless flight of fancy. And in the face of such outright disloyalty, the backhand compliment would soon turn into one of Mrs Munroe's backhands.

The next morning, it still felt too unsafe to keep the book but her plan had crept forward: Katherine had always been a rule-breaker. Kay took out her journal – the other part of her prize – and drew her initials in black pen, then decorated them like she'd seen in a photo of the Book of the Kells. Inside the journal cover, she copied Katherine's words: "*I don't mean that any eye but mine should read this.*" Then she hid the journal under her mattress and got ready for school.

She lugged herself to school, the strap of her battered leather satchel biting into her shoulder all the way. Double maths class dragged but the numbers on the clock face held her attention.

As soon as the bell rang for morning interval, she hurried to the library where Mrs Hogben-Troutt presided with her plum-in-her-mouth and her silent "G".

She twiddled with the gold chain of her glasses as she gave Kay the once over.

Kay pushed her shoulders back, emboldened by her new status. "I'm here to make a donation," said The Benefactor.

"I see," said Mrs Hogben-Troutt. She peered across the borrowing counter and let out a heavy sigh when she spotted Kay's brown paper grocery bag.

But when Kay gently placed the pristine book on the counter,

Mrs Hogben-Troutt caressed the spine and inspected the volume for damage.

"Quite generous," she murmured. "And in very good condition, even the cover. Hardly used. Are you certain?"

Kay nodded, not feeling at all sure.

The librarian lifted her cats-eye glasses onto the end of her nose. She pointed to the certificate. "It says that this was your prize..."

"I've read all of her now, so I thought that other students might..." Kay had been expecting gratitude, not the third degree, and her voice came out as a croak.

Mrs Hogben-Troutt raised a mouse-brown pencilled eyebrow. "I can remove the page with the certificate if you like?"

Kay stared at the floor and said thank-you.

Mrs Hogben-Troutt rested the book on the counter and went to her desk.

Kay thought about legging it with Katherine but her clammy wave of courage passed too quickly and before she could make a move, Mrs Hogben-Troutt was at the counter, wielding a craft knife.

She slipped a thin sheet of cardboard between the pages and made one perfectly straight cut near the binding, then took the flyleaf back to her desk.

Kay stared at her mutilated book and wondered...no, knew that she'd made an epic mistake. But before she could work out what to do, Mrs Hogben-Trouitt handed her a dull manila envelope.

Kay's stomach turned. The gum on the top flap smelt sour as sick.

"Your certificate. Thank you." Mrs Hogben-Trouitt tucked glossy black Katherine under her arm and marched off to silence some squabbling third-formers.

Kay wandered to English, remembering the words she'd copied into her journal that morning.

Care no more for the opinions of others.

That's what KM would have told her.

Kay Munroe strode along Micklegate, pausing to sneak a look in her favourite bookshop. When her phone buzzed a reminder, she hurried on to her hairdressing appointment, still thrown by the sight of the fat black anthology of short stories in the window.

It had started her thinking about Auckland and the first time that she'd seen Katherine Mansfield – not that anyone knew who'd taken the photo or the exact date. Typical enigmatic, elusive Katherine, all *circa* and probably.

By the time that Chantelle had freed her from the black nylon cape with a rip of Velcro and a matador flourish, Kay was still thinking about the book prize and Katherine who'd haunted her for thirty years.

Kay admired her sleek bob in the mirror as the tips of her dark sculpted hair tickled her cheekbones. Congratulating herself for making Chantelle do something different, she decided that she'd have the fat anthology for a birthday treat.

The next week when she went back to the bookshop, the ransacked window held only a few scraps of paper and a battered chair.

Walking back to the agency, she kicked out at the autumn leaves and falling conkers all the way.

"Someone's not happy," said Nic at reception, when Kay collected her messages.

Kay shrugged. "My bookshop's closed after twenty years and I wanted to get a birthday present..."

Nic took less than five minutes to track down the same prizegiving edition at a bookseller in Tasmania.

"English, wasn't she?" said Nic, handing her the receipt. "One of those Bloomsberg people..."

Kay scowled. "Only if you think New Zealand's still one of your colonies. And it's Bloomsbury." She sipped her coffee.

"Didn't you have any heroes when you were growing up?"

Nic screwed up her nose. “Does Margaret Thatcher count?”

“No,” said Kay.

While Kay waited for the book to arrive, she looked online for an article about Katherine so that she could educate Nic. Instead she uncovered a virtual shrine, photographs for anyone with prying eyes or prurient interest to see Katherine’s letter knife with the *pounamu* handle. And her portable, prematurely stilled – the shiny black baby Corona 3, a poignant symbol of her freedom to write wherever she wanted. Even her clothes and her perfume.

And her hair. *Her home, her life. Is nothing sacred. Everything is sacred.*

By now, Kay knew all about that nagging drive to escape her despised confining Paradise at the edge of the world.

The price that Katherine had paid for all her attempts at freedom had taken longer to comprehend – the restless, sharp-eyed colonial girl who’d traded her privileged Karori villa for a London life of wretched urban squalor, the dark-eyed tramp, the outsider among the Bloomsbury set, shabby and inky, triggering Virginia’s jealousy and conjuring up the dream babies with Dora.

And, her productive flurry in Menton, the tick-tick-tock of Katherine’s energy waning and still so many stories to tell.

The Timekeeper had shown scant respect for Katherine’s youth or talent, her intentions or her ambitions. And as October fourteen loomed, Kay knew that there was nothing – nobody – holding her back. Not like Katherine with her self-appointed archivist husband who’d trapped her like a moth in *kauri* gum with his definitive versions.

She shuddered as she pictured Katherine’s words – her drafts, her stories, her letters, even her journals and notebooks - submerged like bleaching bones in his simmering pan of boil-up, as he fed off her stock again and again. When the book finally turned up from Tasmania, Kay knew that her purchase was a childish indulgence, yet somehow it was completely natural to reclaim Katherine, as if a book could lay the past to rest.

She studied Katherine’s portrait once more, that bold straight hair, those clothes. *Your armour to mask the maze of twists and turns inside. Compulsive liar?*

No, imaginative and misunderstood, a closer relationship with fiction than the truth. *Kathleen-Kass-Katie-K.M.-Mansfield-Katherine-Katharina-Kezia-Kissienka-Katya* was telling stories. Wasn’t that what made her a great writer? Kay smiled as she flicked through the pages. No inscriptions. No excisions. Only Katherine’s words. Mine, she thought.

She left work early that evening with Katherine wrapped tight in a brown paper coat. Over the weekend she took her time and consumed the book again. And was consumed. Funny and fierce, stories of women alone, who didn’t quite fit, women like me, thought Kay.

Eight hundred and thirty pages, hers to read, hers to keep. Katherine’s words had long outlived her, stable and timeless on the page—whether or not she’d intended them for any eye but her own.

After reading the last story, Kay rested the fat black book on her shelf so that solemn gaze

was in her eye-line. More than any birthday or hairstyle, words had brought her back to Katherine.

Free, free to risk, risk anything, she thought.

She switched on her laptop and began to type.

La Croix Rouge

Jan Kemp

It had been the night of the full moon. Both had turned and tossed. The shutters he'd wanted not quite shut so that the light would wake him had woken her. He lay on his back, snoring. She called his name. Don't tell me not to snore. Just call my name. She'd remembered to count the days. Twenty-six. It could be less, this time, because of the travelling. She was so hot. She touched herself, lightly, wanting him.

The morning light woke her. She wrote a letter to her sister and put the letter in a pastry thin square blue airmail envelope to post on the way to the market. Then he woke up.

He dressed. He pulled her to him, standing. They hugged and swayed forward and back. This time, she pulled him back to the bed. *Why do we rush so*, he asked, already in her. The touching moved into their eyes.

* * *

He wore the black and purple packsac over his short warm jacket. She wore her quilted pink silk one. They stepped over the dogshit. Why are the streets full of dog piss and shit, he grumbled. The sunlight fell on the side of the street they climbed up.

In the silk weaver's house they talked about warp and woof and weft. The shuttles lay idle in their bright colours half-way through their beautifully intricate tasks. The industrial revolution had happened before the weaver's eyes. The colours were garish, the ties wide or the designs only for the church. The two bought nothing. A weaver wove some more centimetres on a black and white silk picture on a loom for the party of school-children and teachers. It was of a maiden led over river stones by a man with a tuft wearing a three-cornered hat. *Napoleon's grandson!* he whispered. *Look how finely her face is drawn.*

It was cold in the street. Walk in the sun. She was glad he must now be feeling warm enough. Her bright pink leather ankle boots raced her along the pavements slightly ahead of him.

They inspected the vegetables. Too spotty. The tomatoes too squelchy. He priced the goat's cheeses. *We'll wait*, she said, *till we're at the main part*. Then she stopped and bought fennel and a red pepper, four potatoes and two endives. He took a photo of her there. You can put it all in the rucksack. He turned his back to her. She unzipped his packsac and loaded in the two full cloth bags. I'm cold. I didn't wear enough. She was glad it wasn't him. Already a week in bed, their first week, with fever. Coughing. Her going alone up the hill to the farmer's market. Creeping back in to the studio so as not to wake him if he were asleep. *Hi! Hi. Any better? Not much.*

They sat in a cafe. Two espressos. *Shall I wear your other t-shirt under my jacket, as you've got your thick one on?* A quick change in a cubicle. Even so, it was still cold outside. *Eight degrees in the sun maybe*, he said. On. On. *But it's the olive man and the cheese man at the end who are best*. On, on. Past rosemary and dried thyme. The madman isn't here today singing a French song. *Shall we have a croissant?* Great yellowy, billowy ones from the bakery in the row of shops behind the stalls. On, on. His dark head and the short green jacket bobbing along in the crowd behind her. She stopped and turned back and checked now and then. Keeping him in view. *Fromage du chevre frais 4.50. Deux.* She waited. The cheeseman was by himself serving many customers. Despite his long-sleeved t-shirt, the cold bit into her too, through the light silk jacket. Why hadn't she worn her parka too?

I'm going to go back into the sun. But I want to get the bread now. Cold. Her toes biting together in the bright pink boots. The leather was too thin for this temperature. *I'll go back down the sunny side. I'll meet you at the end.* He'd gone. She went. Fast. She walked fast. Will he walk as fast on the opposite side? Through the laden women. He'll be walking past all the crummy clothes stalls on the other side. In the sun at least. Parallel. He'll warm up. She'd hate him to get chilled again. If she walked fast she wouldn't. The herbs lady. The fish lady. The other cheese man where they'd bought the Roquefort. Past mandarins, oranges, banana stalls, the handicapped man handing out leaflets, a side street, the pink trout stall where she'd asked: *On fait cuire dans l'eau ou dans l'huile, s'il vous plait? I cook it in water or oil?* Still on the shady side of the street with splashes of sun now and then. Was he warm? Did he feel the missing layer he'd given her? Was he walking as fast?

At last, the bread stall. *Au noix, oui. Nut-bread, yes.* She crossed the street and stood in the sun. It was on the corner near the cafe. The girl with the miniature goats in a cage was still there, and the man, offering bonbons. *Madame, bonbons gratuits. Bonbons. Gratuit.* Free sweets. How I hate refined sugar. Don't look at her eyes. She looked up the sunny side between the stalls, the crimplene skirts and trousers hanging over the stall-keeper's heads, draped over the stalls. No green jacket, dark head.

Opposite, a Muslim in a cap stood begging. Little Mediterranean men with lined brown faces sat outside the cafe on chairs, smoking. Near the Muslim, the stall sold acrylic blankets and sofa seats. The sun fell down on her. She was warm. She put her sunglasses back on. *Madame, bonbons. Gratuit.* Insistent. If she said Non, merci there'd be more insistence. And then there'd be something dreadful with the little goats. Why were they in a cage? Where was he?

She went to the roadway and looked up the long row of stalls, vans and cars parked, scaffolding and the backs of the plastic awnings that gave on to the pavement. The market was as authentic as the guide book had said. A real farmer's market. *La Croix Rouge*. Colourful, noisy, busy. Both sides of a long street on the ridge of a hill, with the sun on this side. But he, where? She crossed the side street and stood on the step of the acrylic blanket truck, holding her two cloth bags, refilled again with mushrooms on top so as not to crush them, the cheeses, the clementines, the basil, the bread. Where was he? The sun fell on her face. Her toes warmed in the boots. The madame with the goats insisted. *Bonbons, Madame! Gratuit, gratuit.*

* * *

My love! Come back! Where are you? Her tears fell under her sunglasses down her face. She paced forward and back, craning up and down the street crying openly now, softly but aloud in her high-pitched voice: *My love, where are you? Come back!* If only they'd said, we'll meet at the cafe. But her toes had been cold. He'd coughed. He'd said, I've had enough on this side, I must walk in the sun. And he'd been so sick, just before. And she'd said, I want to get the bread, I'll meet you at the other end and they'd both walked off, away from the other, he across the road and she on back down through the fruit and vegetable stalls. I'll meet you at the other end, but where? where? Did he know she'd meant the bread end? Which end did he mean? By the cafe? They'd neither stayed long enough to say.

And now she paced up and down, a little German woman on her honeymoon, the tears streaming, the cries coming out of her like a child. She didn't care. I'm panicking, she told herself, but couldn't stop it. I've got the rest of the francs and the studio key and he can't get in and he can't sit at the cafe and order another coffee and wait because I've got all the francs. He'll catch cold and why didn't we say? She paced up and down and the bonbon woman gave up pestering her. And the French people stared as she paced up and down with her German environmentally-friendly cloth bags full of marketing, in her bright pink boots, the tears streaming and her head running only with holding him, his neat light shape in her arms, his warm skin on her neck, his dark head.

* * *

He must have gone back. He must have walked faster though she'd never have thought it, at the fast pace she'd walked. She was on the shady side. And death must be like this when he'd die and she'd be facing, the tears coming out of her, spilling like this, that he'd gone, not willingly, but just taken from her out of daylight. And that was what she'd thought and he'd thought when he'd had the fever. That when they were old, and their marriage was old, they'd become even more like two voices floating into the dark of a bedroom. First one, then the other would be silent and the other would fold into itself and listen for what had once been there to comfort it, until it could accept only the silence that helped it listen and calmed it.

She walked on and on between the last of the stalls and between the uncut plane trees with

their hundreds of gnarled yet new sproutings, knuckles with too many new fingers. A Metro station's steps spewed up from the ground. On, on, down the end of the street, still saying *Meine liebe* and sobbing, not caring if the French stared. She turned right down the rue Montée and over the dogshit and dried-out piss down the steep street past the parked cars and the Frenchman on the other side going up who was calling out: *Qu'est ce que c'est que ca?* She couldn't speak to explain what it is that it is anyway, she was so choked up and maybe he was already back at the studio in the residence, waiting for her to bring the key and the rest of the shopping, waiting outside in the sun and the cold wind.

Meine liebe! The Frenchman poised on the residence wall with his painting poised before him looked up. No, Not him. Not there. Not round the corner. Not on a bench in the garden beneath the wall near the forsythia and cherry and flowering hawthorn blooming on this ridge overlooking the wide ice-green Rhone. She unlocked the door that said *Tirez* and the second door that said *Poussez* next to the little white button and the second plaque that said *Tirez* on the handle and was surprised to see the receptionist there, as it was already a quarter past twelve. She lifted the two cloth bags up onto the high counter, past her breasts, clutching at the key, the crying still coming out and said sobbing, *J'ai perdu mon mari au marché! Mais, Madame, ce n'est pas grave!* The receptionist said it twice, astonished. Concerned. *Le marché la-bas? Oui.* The blonde woman rushed out again, leaving the marketing on the reception sill. She rushed sobbing down the long facade of the residence and over its flagstones and the floodlight under a grating which added to the lumière effect at night, knowing she was panicking, yet unable to stop and ran again up the steep street a little and then she saw him, the bobbing dark head, packsac, green jacket and stopped, sobbing, and leaned against the stone wall in the sunlight and he came down and took her hand and said, *Bitte hor auf, please stop* and led her back down, saying it again, and she took his hand and went with him and unlocked the two doors with the key and he picked up the cloth bags of marketing and collected the proffered messages that had come for them from the receptionist and he thanked her politely and they went upstairs to their studio room in the *ascenseur*.

* * *

She went into the bathroom and came back. *Well, that was partly why. The moon was full.*

You mustn't panic, he said. *I panicked, I couldn't help it. I'm a bit mad.* No, he said, no. His arms were warm around her. *I won't just leave you, just like that,* he said. *Unless you give me cause to leave you and you won't. And if I left it wouldn't be like that. I'd explain and you'd know.* And she: *I didn't want you to get sick again. You know I had the key and the leftover francs.* He: *I'd have waited in the sun in the garden. Till you came. We weren't far from home. Just up a hill I don't want to go through whose fault if either's it was. That's pointless.* She: *I told the receptionist I'd lost my husband at the market, and then her eyes brightened. 'But it's not a grave matter, Madame,' she said.* No, he said. *It isn't. Here I am.*

SLEEPERS

from 'K'

Iain Britton

'The world to me is a dream and the people in it are sleepers. I have known a few instances of intensity but that is all'

the forest has its own
 reincarnations
 the city's war horses are
 waking
 the hooves
 the snuffles
 the smell
 of body heat passes / my house
 switches off
 its night lights & the morning
 clicks open
 like a lupin pod / the woman
 at the store
 shuffles cards
 reads of coronations of thorns of
 crowns
 the slow drip-feeding of one's
 personality
 taking sides changing roles / of
 being delusional
 the woman
 at the window
 stares out
 at the gusting
 pumice dust / her daughter
 jots down notes / sulphur burns the
 tongues
 off boulders
 glossy frogs
 leap pools

i hand K
the small feathered smear of a fantail
which flutters
messages
from aunts & uncles /
from Virginia
& Co come
weather reports
life's fluctuations
the sunshine hours /
the girl
sees her image
snapped by a window's box camera
she picks white-
starred manuka
for the men
who live with codes
grooved
into their skin
who mix with trees
earthed
to the floor /
carved sleepers who never close
their eyes
who collectively stare then rake at
the acrid air /
i help fashion
their language
from silica particles
which sparkle
& duel /
the woman
joins the exodus
of birds / bats sprites
the patupaiarehe the forest's
tellers of tales /
with the lights of my house
flicking at ghosts
she chooses the best-looking war
horse for her daughter

This Little Bird

Kath MacLean

II

(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 lunching in the living room smelling shit & hay where the horse chews its cud – the same bit over & over – I must not run on.

Sheep willow

cabbage,

mimosa 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, learning 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 –

To choose the role of dutiful daughter, wahine, 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 she says.
I don't care –*

I wish he were here

Part of Katherine believes in monogamy, the 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 -*), 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.⁹ 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 though 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.

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 something something 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–

**

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.

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 –

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, Marguerite 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?

*1 nightgown
3 petticoat bodices
2 pr. drawers
dress shields
handkerchieves
2 pr. stockings
3 vests
2 blouses*

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 21st century. Show a little leg.*

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

That-a-girl.

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 she says.

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. 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-if-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.

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 look 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 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.

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.

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.

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 *Erlkönig* 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.

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, stupid stupid* – soars into the topmost branches of the pine tree outside my window where a t-shirt I've laundered flings itself 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)*

ELEGY

the eternal escape

Allow me, Dearest, to take you
 To the Oriental land of escape—
 Where daisies lean against purple trees,
 Cranes bury their heads under the white wings;
 Where clouds linger—
 like your New Zealand mist,
 And the snail crawls away from
 That ONE leaf, stenciled with your name—
 Nature's elegy to the cherry blossom spirit
 Wrapped in cool winter breeze—
 Where you can lay your head
 On your knees,
 And the wind, caressed by
 Dark rocks
 Takes you back
 To your heart's True Place.

Tracy Miao, May 2012



The eternal escape, Tracy Miao

VIGNETTES

from 'K'

Iain Britton

2

'Kezia and her grandmother were taking their siesta together' —At the Bay

blowflies belt hectically
 into houses into hot
 gumless plants / cooking
 meat & the fly rage is on
 white distances of memory
 invade my close past / we
 sleep under a chestnut
 swap bloodlines / comment
 on Dostoyevsky's *Notes from
 Underground* / Katya goes
 with her grandmother up
 the beach / a slow procession
 of figures follow / each
 trading whispers / near
 home the girl veers away
 & alone steps into a music
 hall of birds a forest
 of percussive shufflings
 in canopies / she senses
 an exploratory intrusion / a
 restless fierceness passing

4

It was like a play. It was exactly like a play' —Miss Brill

my shoes scuff gravel
early risers suck in
the moist soggy air /
bottle brush pregnancies
tease / ferries unload
day-trippers licking
ice creams / K listens
to an owl trapped in its
day-time cage of sunlight
it cries softly distantly /
she shows me the imagined
grave of her brother / the
epitaph of no fixed
abode / i offer solace
in the shape of an orchid's
speckled grin / a neighbor
offers K an apple from her
fruit bowl in the mirror

Notes

A Thousand Selves *Órfhlaith Foyle*

p.5 There is an imaginative re-working of letters and notes passed between Katherine Mansfield, Wyndham Lewis and Violet Schiff: letters from Wyndham Lewis to Violet Schiff at Roquebrune, 6 February 1921, and 20 September 1922. Letter from Wyndham Lewis to Sydney Schiff, 20 September 1922.

p.6 Words from Katherine Mansfield's letter to Lady Ottoline, Wednesday 15 August 1917, Dialogue from *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, Sunday (December) 1915-'An Encounter'.

p.7 Prose and dialogue from Katherine Mansfield's 'Prelude,' 'Je ne parle pas français', 'A Dill Pickle' and 'The Garden Party'.

A Little Bird *Kath MacLean*

p.11 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

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.

p.34 John writes about his relationship with Katherine in his autobiography, *Between Two Worlds*.

p.35 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.

wahine 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*.

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."

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

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

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.

p.14 & 37 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.

p.38 List of Katherine's laundry as she records it in the *Urewera Notebook*. 92.

p.39 Katherine in the *Urewera Notebook*. 90.

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.

Katherine. *Collected Letters*. Vol. 5. "Introduction," vii. The original reads: "Nothing of any worth can come from a disunited being."

Katherine and John, were affectionately known to their friends as the "Two Tigers."

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.

Elegy Tracy Miao

When I finished I realized how the shape of the poem looks like a vase or an urn.

The poem is inspired by the image of Katherine Mansfield, which is a sketch I did based on a photo of her taken in c.1912 (*The Material Mansfield: Traces of a Writer's Life*. ed. Harris, Laurel, Mary Morris et al. Auckland: Random House, 2008.)

Her gaze is mesmerizing – so steady and gentle, like the close-up of a Qing Dynasty lady portraiture, and then it occurred to me: has an *oriental* elegy been written for her sake? In an oriental Babylonian garden, KM belongs with the undying spirit.

Biographical Notes

Since 2008, **Iain Britton** has had five collections of poems published, mainly in the UK. Recently, poems have been published or are forthcoming in the *Harvard Review*, *Poetry*, *Stand*, *Agenda*, *The Reader*, *The Literateur*, *The Black Market Re-View*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *Long Poem Magazine*, *Poetry Wales*, *M58*, *Hypnopomp*, *The Projectionist's Playground* and the *Journal of Poetics Research*. A new collection of poetry THE INTAGLIO POEMS was published by Hesterglock Press (UK), 2017.

We are pleased to publish selections from his long poem 'K' which follows many thematic paths. Crossing timelines and geographical boundaries it swings between Europe and New Zealand. Katherine Mansfield is more of a 'soul presence' and, like the 'I' in the sequence, appears to have the poetical license to shift through many dimensions.

<https://www.facebook.com/ianbrittonpoet/>

Órfhlaith Foyle is a novelist, short story writer and a poet. Her first novel *Belios* was published by The Lilliput Press in 2005 to critical acclaim, as was *Revenge* (Arlen House, 2005), a collection of Foyle's short fiction and poetry. Her debut poetry collection, *Red Riding Hood's Dilemma* (Arlen House, 2010) was short-listed for the Rupert and Eithne Strong Award in 2011. The title story from her short story collection *Somewhere in Minnesota* (Arlen House, 2011) was first published in Faber and Faber *New Irish Short Stories* (2011), edited by Joseph O'Connor. It was also long-listed for the Edge Hill Short Story Prize 2012 and the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award 2012. Her story 'One Thousand Selves' is also from this collection. For more information about Órfhlaith Foyle and her writing please visit her [website](#) and her [blog](#).

Jan Kemp New Zealand-born poet Jan Kemp's latest collections are two bilingual editions *Dante's Heaven / Il Cielo di Dante* (transl. by Aldo Magagnino) Edizioni del Poggio, Poggio Imperiale, Italy (2017) and *Dante Down Under* (transl. by Dieter Riemenschneider) from Tranzlit www.tranzlit.com (2017). These follow *Voicetracks* (2012) & *Dante's Heaven* (2006) from Puriri Press, Auckland, N.Z. & Tranzlit, Kronberg im Taunus. Kemp established the *Aotearoa/New Zealand Poetry Sound Archive* (2004) www.aonzpsa.blogspot.com and since 2006 has her own webpage <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poet/jan-kemp> She lives with her husband in Kronberg im Taunus, Germany where she sings in St Johann choir & is preparing poems for her 9th collection of poems, *Black Ice & the Love Planet*. In 2005 she was awarded an MNZM in the NZ Queen's Birthday Honours for services to literature.

Tom McLean is a student at Victoria University of Wellington. He is also an editor of *Three Islands Magazine*.

KMS member **Kath MacLean** is a multi-media artist and performer. Her creative fiction 'A

Little Bird' is part of a larger body of work to be published in due course. Kath has published two books of poetry, her first winning the Muse Award for new writers, and her second, recently published by University of Alberta, *Kat Among the Tigers* (2011), based on the letters and journals of Katherine Mansfield. She has also published works of fiction, creative nonfiction, and critical reviews in Canadian, American, and European journals, and has collaborated with other artists to record a CD of performance poetry and two video poems, one of which, Doo0Daa-Doo-Da is based on Mansfield's experience of the bombing of Paris in March 1915. A professor of creative writing much of the time, Kath was Writer in Residence for the Canadian Author's Association (2009/10). She is currently working on a book of essays, many of which involve Katherine Mansfield – she refuses to go away! For more details on Kath's work please visit her website <http://www.kathmaclean.com/about.html>

Tracy Miao is currently a PhD student whose research involves Katherine Mansfield and visual art. She has published articles on Katherine Mansfield and Chinese art, reviews on recent Mansfield publications, and chapters on Jane Austen, George Eliot, T.S. Eliot, and James Joyce in the 2012 Jiaotong University Anthology of English Literature. Her enthusiasm for Katherine Mansfield has inspired her to create paintings, poems, and short stories.

Alex Reece Abbott's short story 'An Epic Mistake' was inspired by KM. Since focussing on creative writing in late 2010, Alex's stories have been published in anthologies including *Take Tea with Turing* (University of Edinburgh) and *Journeys & Places* (YSJU Press). Her short prose has won the *Arvon Prize*, *CWA Debut Dagger Opening Lines* and *Liars' League* and been shortlisted for the *Bridport Prize*; *Cúirt New Writing Prize*, *Wells Festival*, *Ilkley Festival*, *BLOC*, *New Writer*. Her debut novel *The Maori House* was shortlisted for the ABNA Prize. She has an MA Creative Writing (Distinction) and occasionally blogs at www.alexreeceabbott.info