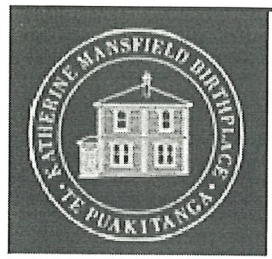


Katherine M



VISIT THE HOUSE KATHERINE MANSFIELD NEWS



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### Significance as a Writer

Katherine Mansfield was part of a "new dawn" in English literature with T S Elliot, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. She was associated with the brilliant group of writers who made the London of the period the centre of the literary world.

Nevertheless, KM was a New Zealand writer - she could not have written as she did had she not gone to live in England and France, but she could not have done her best work if she had not had firm roots in her native land. She used her memories in her writing from the beginning, people, the places, even the colloquial speech of the country form the fabric of much of her best work.

KM's stories were the first of significance in English to be written without a conventional plot. Supplanting the strictly structured plots of her predecessors in the genre (Edgar Allen Poe, Rudyard Kipling, H G Wells), KM concentrated on one moment, a crisis or a turning point, rather than on a sequence of events. The plot is secondary to mood and characters. The stories are innovative in many other ways. They feature simple things - a doll's house or a charwoman. Her imagery, frequently from nature, flowers, wind and colours, set the scene with which readers can identify easily.

Themes too are universal: human isolation, the questioning of traditional roles of men and women in society, the conflict between love and disillusionment, idealism and reality, beauty and ugliness, joy and suffering and the inevitability of these paradoxes. Oblique narration (influenced by Chekhov but certainly developed by KM) includes the use of symbolism - the doll's house lamp, the fly, the pear tree - hinting at the hidden layers of meaning. Suggestion

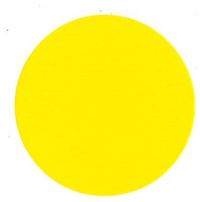


about this image

**"I must experience first, how can I write about things if I don't experience them."**  
Journal 1908

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and implication replace direct detail.

Katherine Mansfield transformed the representation of childhood in English literature and, in evoking the world of childhood, enables us to glimpse turn-of-the-century Wellington through the eyes of the little girl who was born in the house at 25 Tinakori Road.

The Katherine Mansfield Birthplace has an extensive range of publications about the life and works of KM for sale. Visit **shopping**

Katherine Mansfield Birthplace Society Inc. thank The Stout Trust for generous sponsorship of the web site.

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