

Preface

This study is both a descriptive and an analytic examination of dominant themes and patterns in Katherine Mansfield's stories. Arbitrarily referred to as the author of "The Fly" or "Prelude", Mansfield remains something of an enigma, shrouded in mystery. Much of the confusion may directly be attributed to her wild propensities. Tolerance and a comprehensive judgment are absolute essentials for studying the works of a writer who has performed with great elan.

The present work intends to discern the shifts and displacements of a sensibility, rather than to proffer a bland discussion of essential thematic structures in Mansfield's stories i.e. the question how Mansfield in "The Woman at the Store" differs from Mansfield of "Prelude" has been regarded as more important than the intrinsic qualities of each as a short story. Her almost belligerent insistence on the rational incoherence in the sequence of feeling in each character has been highlighted. Yet the incoherence is psychologically fully convincing. Mansfield's protagonists are incapable of leading a strict and methodical life. Their wavering may be partly ascribed to the lapse of time sense in the sleepy, temperate and equable climate of New Zealand. The luxuriant vegetation and sub-tropical forests with dense undergrowth have active participation in the human drama.

What may be called Mansfield's 'strife' is strangely woven into modern consciousness, possessing the power to startle and to charm. In striving to explore the ramifications of her obsessive themes(themes that are topical but nevertheless arresting and compelling), this study purports to do justice to a rather neglected writer of considerable talent.

It is impossible to name the variety of sources that have enhanced this project. Professor K. K. Roy is to be thanked for his wonted, meticulous supervision despite his many academic engagements. Dr. Probir Hui of W.B.S.E.S has provided generous assistance over the years. The National Library, Calcutta, the British Council Library, Calcutta and the USIS, Calcutta, have encouraged this project. Mr. S. Bagchi of Siliguri College Library and his colleagues are to be thanked for their encouragement and support. Dr. Chandanashish Laha is to be thanked for his valuable suggestions. Special thanks are due to Mr. Manoj Chakraborty who has undertaken the arduous task of typing out this thesis. Finally, I thank my family for keeping my spirits up.

↓
djantha Deb
9 July, 1999.