

Reviews

Jan Pilditch, ed. *The Critical Response to Katherine Mansfield*. Critical Responses in Arts and Letters. 21. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996.

Jan Pilditch's selection of critical articles on Katherine Mansfield (KM from now on) is one more added to the range of publications on her done for the last six or seven years. That is, since the hundredth anniversary on the birth of this New Zealand-British short story writer in 1988, some collections of articles on her have seen the light in Europe, America and New Zealand. I am referring to, for example, *The Fine Instrument*, edited by P. Michel and M. Dupois, *Worlds of KM*, edited by H. Ricketts, *Critical Essays on KM*, edited by R. B. Nathan or *KM. In from the Margin* edited by R. Robinson. But *The Critical Response to KM* is different from these. It is not a compilation of the last critical trends or studies on her, but one of articles ordered chronologically to show the evolution of criticism.

This book belongs to the collection "Critical Responses in Arts and Letters," whose aim is, in the words of its Series Adviser, Cameron Northouse, "to present a documentary history of highlights in the critical reception to the body of work of writers and artists and to individual works that are generally considered to be of major importance." However ambitious the project of the present volume might appear at first, it is fulfilled in the end, giving us a useful, though probably too general a view of the "critical response" KM received since her early publications till very recently, in very different places (New Zealand, France, Great Britain, U. S. A., China) and from very varied critics (most of whom outstanding KM's experts).

The book consists of a Chronology of Mansfield Works, an Introduction by the editor, five sections of articles and a Select Bibliography. The introduction by Jan Pilditch is suitable for the series objectives: she writes a chronological brief account of KM's reception, organised in the same way and following the same points as the different parts of the book do.

Most of the articles included in the first section of the book ("The Early Years") were published during KM's lifetime. They are mainly reviews on the publication of her stories and on the posthumous publication of her *Poems* and *Journal*. They coincide in several points: they consider KM a promising, though a bit immature young writer; they compare her with A. Chekhov; and they already qualify her craft as innovative of the short story form. The article by Conrad Aiken, one of the American critics who wrote more articles on KM at the time, is very well chosen as it is half way between his very positive criticism on Mansfield (see his review on *Bliss*) and the not so positive criticism on *The Doves' Nest and Other Stories*. This review on the publication of *The Garden Party* shows both positive and negative aspects. As a whole, this section gives us an overview of success of KM's works, which makes us think of a manipulated choice or at least of one aimed in some specific direction.

“Towards Assessment” covers almost thirty years of criticism after Mansfield's death (from 1928 to 1956). This section includes ten articles and their general tone is one of lament on KM's death, a so-called “unfulfilled artist.” The analysis of her stories is now deeper, though some articles still have a literary more than a critical value: E. Wagenknecht analyzes technique and associates the stories with psychoanalysis; E. Schneider defends her against the accusation of plagiarism; D. Daiches compares some of her stories with others by J. Joyce; an anonymous reviewer of her collected stories from the *TLS* makes a comparison between her stories and music and painting. But none is able to separate the analysis of KM's works from her tragic life and neither are E. Bowen, K. A. Porter or J. M. Murry who was later on accused of having contributed a lot to the creation of KM's “legend.” The only negative article in the section is the one by Sam Hynes who, basing himself on her personal writings as well, speaks of her not possessing “artistic maturity” and of her short stories being “monotonous,” “repetitive,” “escapist” and with “immature themes.”

Each of the other three chapters of *The Critical Response to KM* covers about ten years of study on the New Zealander. Criticism evolved much faster then.

“New Approaches” opens with the article of a pioneer in the field of Mansfieldian studies, Ian A. Gordon. According to the following articles this will be a turning point in the evolution of the criticism. It is a comment on the manuscripts acquired by the Government of New Zealand and a comparison with their publication by J. M. Murry in the *Journal and Scrapbook*. He concludes that he included the material in one or the other indiscriminately and this had given a false image of KM and so created a false “legend” of her life. Gordon rejects Murry's collections as the base for any “critical or biographical work on KM.” From this on Murry is very much criticised, as shown in Bateson and Shahevitch's article who analyse “The Fly” as a realist story and reject previous interpretations; or in Christiane Mortelier's who studies the reception of KM in France and the “phases of interest” she attracted since her death. The two other articles included here are also very interesting. Brigid Brophy studies the difficulties the writer had to construct her own identity and the roles that her family and friends played. And Eileen Baldeshwiler analyses her creation of “form,” her “technique” and “language” and opposes those critics, common in the 1920's, who characterize her work as the result of her inspiration.

Chapter IV, “Consolidation,” copes with the criticism on KM during the 1970's. The first article is a very good description by Margaret Scott of Mansfield's manuscripts, the real source of her work and personal writings. The other articles include studies of the influences on her (apart from the already well-known of Chekhov): T. O. Beachcroft traces Theocritus' *Adonizusae* or XVth *Idyll* in some of her stories. Vincent O'Sullivan finds several influences: O. Wilde, Walter Pater, Joyce, Chekhov, Yeats... and analyzes some images, the epiphanies, her bisexuality and the figure of the father in her stories mainly in relation to these writers. Jeffrey Meyers studies her poem “To Stanislaw Wyspianski” and the relation with and influence of her Polish friend Floryan Sobieniowski. Once more the critics coincide in stressing the negative influences of Murry's publications of KM and his commentaries on her. The New Zealand critic, novelist and poet C. K. Stead criticizes Murry's analyses of her stories and so does Ruth Elvish Mantz, who made a biography of KM together with Murry. All agree in the need to

change the course of criticism and disengage the writer from her legend in order to make deeper and new studies of her stories. The already mentioned C. K. Stead makes an account of the phases in which "Prelude" was written. Jean E. Stone analyzes her earliest publications and her early life as a writer in New Zealand. And Cherry Hankin, an expert on KM, goes from her very youthful stories to the most famous and mature ones relating them to other genres, examining the different types of endings and the use of fantasy to contrast with reality.

The last chapter of the book, "One Hundred Years On," includes eight articles which could be grouped in at least three categories: biographies, new focuses and new aspects studied.

The already classical biography of KM by Antony Alpers is present with a portion of one of its last chapters which is an analysis of "At the Bay." And from the more recent biography by Claire Tomalin we get the final chapter about Mansfield's death, the reactions it provoked and her popularity. Susan Gubar's article shows the feminist perspective. Andrew Gurr asks for a more ample perspective to study writers as opposed to the too regional one. Ken Arvedson studies KM's religiousness. Judith Dale starts from her sketches and analyzes how the written stories were adapted to radio broadcasts, to the stage and the cinema. Shifen Gong's portion of his dissertation is one of the surprising but not unique studies of KM's influence on Chinese literature. The very last article is itself an homage on KM by the New Zealand Maori novelist and short story writer Witi Ihimaera and, placed here, also an homage and perfect end from the editor Jan Pilditch.

The only aspect left to comment on is the Select Bibliography included at the end of the book. It is divided in four parts: Bibliographical, Biographical, Books, and Essays and Articles. A section usually included in critical studies, Primary Works by the Author, is missing, though this can be compensated by the Select Chronology of Mansfield Works at the beginning of the book. The bibliography is quite comprehensive. It includes most of the references mentioned along the book and some others. However, it may be worthwhile mentioning some works which should not be missing. In the Bibliographical section, and due to the fact that the editor refers to it at the end of the Select Chronology of Mansfield Works, these could have been included: "KM." *Twentieth-Century Short Story Explication*. Comp. Warren S. Walker. Hamden: The Shoe String Press, 1967. 465-76; "KM." *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*. Ed. I. R. Willison. Cambridge UP, 1972. 653-59; and G. N. Morris. *Mansfieldiana. A Brief KM Bibliography*. Wellington: The Belknap Book Bureau, 1948. In the Books Section, Van Gunsteren's book *KM and Literary Impressionism*. Amsterdam: Rapodi, 1990 is missing. And in Essays and Articles an old antecedent of this study on Mansfield's criticism is missing: Jack Garlington. "KM: The Critical Trend." *Twentieth Century Literature* 2.2 (1956): 51-61, which very well summarizes the criticism till his own day.

There are also some mistakes which could be disconcerting and should be corrected in subsequent editions: in Jeffrey Meyers, "KM: A Bibliography of International Criticism, 1921-1977," there is the number of the volume missing (no. 2). Isabel C. Clarke, *KM: A Biography* is in the Books section instead of the Biographical one. In *The Fine Instrument* there is a printing mistake: the year is 1989 instead of 1889. A. Sewell's book *KM, A Critical Essay* is not written in italics, and it adds "pp 1-32" as if it were an

article. In *Worlds of KM* there is another printing mistake: “Ngaere” instead of “Nagare”. The page numbers are missing in C. R. Allen, “KM Legend” and in B. Brophy, “Don't Never Forget” (pp. 255-263). In L. Bogan, *Selected Criticism*, we do not get the publisher's name: Noonday Press. In B. Clarke, “KM's Illness” there is a printing mistake again: the number of the pages is before the date of publication and in J. M. Murry, “In Memory of KM” there is a number “1” after the year which is the number of the volume of *The Adelphi* where the article can be found. Philip Waldron, “KM's Journal” is printed twice and with a different format. Apart from all this the Bibliography is quite good and fulfills the objective of the collection.

The Critical Response to KM is a good collection of articles with no precedent. The articles are well chosen and ordered, they are from critics from many different parts of the world, and in the end we get a general view of the criticism on KM, with both positive and negative commentaries on her along the century. However, it is focused, not without justification, on some of the habitual topics on this writer and it is limiting, as expected, for it cannot deal with absolutely all the criticism on her and it is not a critical study on her reception either. In spite of this it is a useful book for it can open many ways for the study of KM.

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A Spanish Gift To Edith Wharton Scholarship

Edith Wharton. *Cartas a Morton Fullerton (1907-1931)*, (Barcelona, Grijalbo Mondadori, 1995). Ed. Marina Premoli. Translation: Esther Gómez.

Vous qui nous jugez, savez-vous quel boivre nous avons bu sur la mer? (Joseph Bédier)

A recent item of interest to Anglo-American studies in Spain is the publication of a selection of Edith Wharton's letters to her friend and lover Morton Fullerton. Although Edith Wharton is not certainly unknown in Spain—in fact in the last ten years several of her most significant novels and short stories have been translated and published—, this initiative is a welcome surprise as it provides the Spanish readers with details about a woman whose literary achievements, courage, passion and love of life were indeed extraordinary.

Edith Wharton met Morton Fullerton, an American journalist for the London *Times* and a friend of Henry James, in the spring of 1907. A man of singular attraction, the author of works like *In Cairo*, *Terres Françaises* or *Problems of Power*, Fullerton was a familiar and yet oddly elusive personality in Parisian circles, culturally sophisticated, with a strong vein of dreamy idealism and a no less positively marked erotic energy and a strong sexual appeal. By the time they made their acquaintance, Wharton's emotional life was going through a difficult time and she felt weary, psychically suffocated and emotionally starved. Her husband had fallen into another nervous depression and it was evident that their marriage, wretchedly unsatisfactory for years, was reaching an end. In