

My life after
Kathleen Mansfield
Beauchamp

Rachel Bernard





**an illustration to
the journal of Katherine Mansfield
by Rachel Bernard.**

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“ YOU MUST BE STILL IN ORDER TO HEAR AND SEE ”
Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands*.

.....

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The artist's statement

No need to search the details of my previous exhibitions; my work is one of silence, darkness and voluntary servitude dating back to the times of Vulcan and Pluto and their subterranean laboratories.

By the time I was 25, I came across the journal of Katherine Mansfield, a well-known short story writer from New Zealand. For some reasons, while reading her journal some words and sentences triggered glimpses in my mind like stars in the very dark of the night. From that moment on, I have tried to capture these sparkles of truth. They may be seen as an echo from my Unconscious to that of the writing of Katherine Mansfield, as a kind of instant and automatic answer to the sound of Katherine Mansfield's voice.

In that context, this present work might be regarded as an "automatic illustration" of her journal, in reference to the "automatic writing" the surrealists adopted. Like them, I have indeed fed at the source of the Unconscious, and though I have definitely lost the original enthusiasm they displayed, I can surely say, as they did earlier, that I have unearthed primary forms of visual art.

My journey through this underworld has indeed allowed me to rekindle the spirit of Miniature Art at its début when it was invented in Egypt and India as a way to depict daily life and social realities. Choosing a writer's journal to underpin my work was a means to remain faithful to the narrative aspect of Miniature Art. My main concern was to shed light on the trivial, hopeless and nonsensical aspects of our daily lives so as to wake up "the spirit of the poor underfed dog", which we could refer to as the sickest part of our anatomy. Accepting to pass through this deflation process contains the most luminous antidote, that of eventually contacting what K.M.

.....

defined in 1922 as: “the child of the sun” -a metaphor that emerged only three months before her actual death. Katherine Mansfield’s “child of the sun” can be understood as an epiphany, something she experienced after a long process of transformation through illness. Illustrating her journal, I humbly underwent a similar maturation process, bowing my head to her shameful confessions, and the shameful pettiness of human nature itself, thinking, searching, cutting.

The exacto knife revealed itself as the only tool capable of helping me both to differentiate myself from Katherine and to capture these sparkles of truth, these “moments of suspension” as she called them. However, my technique remains one of severing and sealing, hence my alliance to the surrealists’ collages. Although even upon close examination you might be unable to perceive that each miniature has been made of cut-outs extracted from women’s magazines, let me tell you, it has indeed allowed me to reconcile dissenting elements of the world I stumbled across along my way. No other technique would have permitted this.

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Katherine Mansfield left New Zealand in January 1903 to enter Queen's College, Harley Street, London. She was fourteen. A year before, she had met in Wellington a gifted young cellist, Arnold Trowell, who was native of the city. She had made friends with him, conceived a girlish passion for him, and began to learn the cello herself. He is the Caesar of some of the following entries. He and his brother, Garnet Trowell, a young violinist, left New Zealand some six months after Katherine to study at Brussels conservatoire.



1904 January 1

It is twelve o'clock. The clear starry sky. It was only during the silent prayer that I made up my mind to write this.

I mean this year to try and be a different person

.....

1904

1904 April 1

Today the weather has been very dull and gray.

I woke this morning at four and since then I have heard nothing and feel nothing except a great longing to be back in the country, among woods and gardens and the meadows and the chorus of the Spring orchestra. I found myself dreaming of the woods, and the little secret nooks that I have been mine, and mine only, for many years.



1906

It was decided that Katherine must return to New Zealand at the end of October 1906. She arrived in Wellington, reluctant and rebellious, on December 6. The style of her journal is overwrought and hectic. Deeply influenced by the reading indicated in the preceeding, she was enamoured of the idea of experience at all costs, and passionately bent on returning to England. She found a provisional reconciliation of her two purposes in the idea of making herself so impossible to her parents that they would have to send her away. At the same time, she really abandoned her previous intention of becoming a musician, and concentrated more and more upon her writing.



1906 October 1

I walk along the broad, almost deserted street. And now I pass through the narrow iron gate up the little path



November: on the S.S. Corinthic

Swiftly the night came. Through the darkness the stars shone. I lay on the deck of the vessel, my hands clasped behind my head, and watching them I felt a curious complex emotion—a swift realisation that they were shining steadily and ever more powerfully into the very soul of my soul. I felt their still light permeating the very depths, and fear and ecstasy held me still shuddering. Then I was drifting, drifting—where, whence, whither? I was drifting in a great boundless purple sea.



1906 November: on the S.S. Corinthic

They are worse than I had even expected. My Father spoke of my returning as dammed rot, said look here, he wouldn't have me fooling around in dark corners with fellows.

I am full of a restless wonder but I have none of that glorious expectancy that I used to have so much. They are draining it out of me

.....

1907

Edie in the following, is E.K.B., an artist who drew pictures of children, and with whom for a time Katherine eagerly collaborated, writing verses for children, which E.B. illustrated. At the same time she sought the company of Cæsar's father with whom she practised the cello. Adelaida is Ida baker.



1907 February

I am at the sea—at Island Bay in fact—lying flat on my face on the warm white sand. And before me the sea stretches.

Sunday night. I am here almost dead with cold, almost dead with tiredness. I cannot sleep, because the end has come with such suddenness that even I who have anticipated it so long and so thoroughly am shocked and overwhelmed



1907 Sunday Night

She enthrals, enslaves
me—and her personal
self—her body absolute—
is my worship.

The soul of me goes into
the streets and craves love
of the casual stranger, begs
and prays for a little of the
precious poison. I am half
mad with love

1907 June 1

I could not wake her.
I tried to, but without
avail; and each moment
my horror of everything
seemed to increase. In
the yard the very fence
became terrible



I took off my dressing
gown and slippers and sat
on the edge of the bed,
trembling, half crying,
hysterical with grief





1907 June 25

I must wander;
I cannot-will
not-build a house
upon any damned
rock



1907 June

I want to write a book that is unreal, yet wholly possible .

I am sitting right over the fire as I write, dreaming, my face hot with the coals. Far away a steamer is calling, calling

At this time Mr. Trowell left Wellington for England. His departure evidently reduced Katherine to despair; and she plucked up courage to give her father a kind of ultimatum.



1907 June 25

One day I shall
not do so...
I shall strike
while the iron
is white-hot,
and praise
myself and my
unconquerable
soul



1907 June 25
One day I shall
not do so... I
shall strike while
the iron is white-
hot, and praise
myself and my
unconquerable
soul



1907 September 6

I am frightened and trying to be brave. This is the greatest and most terrible torture that I have ever thought of enduring. But I must have courage, face him bravely with my head high, and “*fight*, for life, absolutely. Here at least I am standing terribly, absolutely alone

.....

It seems to have been provisionally agreed that Katherine might be allowed to return to England at the beginning of the next year, 1908. The first paid publication of some of her work in an Australian magazine, The Native Companion, happened at this moment, and seems to have influenced her father.

1907. October 1
I am full of ideas tonight. And they must at all costs germinate. I should like to write something so beautiful, and yet modern, and yet student-like and full of
Oh, do let me write something really good, summer ...
let me sketch an idea and work it out



.....

1907 October 21

I am so eternally thankful that I did not allow J— to kiss me. I am constantly hearing of him, and I feel that to meet him would be horrible. I used him merely for copy



1907 August 20

Rain beating upon the windows and a windstorm violent and terrible. I began thinking and looking at Caesar's portrait and wondering. Words will not be found, but how I felt! And now to bed, hopefully, to lie and look into the darkness and think, and weave beautiful scarlet patterns, and hope to dream

.....

Whether to fill up the time before her proposed departure, or to be freed from her embarrassing presence while he came to a firm decision, or—it is conceivable—to make her acquainted with an aspect of New Zealand she ignored in her passionate repudiation of its urban civilisation, her father arranged for her to take part in a caravan expedition to Tawharetoa Territory—the King Country, Katherine always called it incorrectly—which lasted from November 15 to December 17.



1907



1907 December 31

In the room below me a man is smoking a cigarette. The perfume floats through my window, and I am besieged by so many memories that for a little space I forget to remember. Outside in the evening sky there is a wide lightness. It is the 31st of December, very cool and quiet



.....

1908

Evidently, from the bare fact of the succeeding entries, her father had withdrawn his provisional permission for Katherine to return to England. Katherine appears to have written an impassioned account of an adventure after a dance which fell into her parents' hands. Not unnaturally, they thought twice about letting her loose.



1908

January 23

How one day
she puts two
roses in her
hair and stands
in front of a
mirror and sees
that she
is beautiful

1908 March 18
It were better that I were dead really
I am unlike others
because I have experienced
all there is to experience





May 17

9 p.m. Sunday night. Full Moon

O, Kathleen, do not weave any more of these fearful meshes for you have been so loathsomely unwise. Do take wisdom from all that you have and still must suffer. I really know that you can't stay as you are now

each day fills me with
terror



1908 October 12

This is my unfortunate month. I dislike exceedingly
to have to pass through it

.....

1908 May

I feel that I do now realise, dimly, what women in the future will be capable of. We are firmly held with the self-fashioned chains of slavery. Yes, now I see that they are self-fashioned, and must be self-removed. Independence, resolve, firm purpose, and the gift of discrimination, mental *clearness*—here are the inevitables. Here then is a little summary of what I need power, wealth and freedom



.....

Eventually Katherine was allowed to depart, with an allowance of £100 a year. She sailed from Lyttleton in July, arriving in London on August 24, 1908, and went to live at Beauchamp Lodge, a hostel for women music-students. She lost no time in renewing her relations with Caesar's family, who were living at Carlton Hill, and fell in love with Caesar's brother, Garnet. He was now a violinist in a travelling opera company. She stayed with him in November in Hull. In spite of this, she suddenly married George Bowden, a teacher of singing, on March 2, 1909; and as suddenly left him on the morning after. An account of this extraordinary episode will be found in Alpers. She returned for a time to her lover, now in Liverpool. News of her marriage and separation reached new Zealand, and her mother came post haste to England to save what could be saved of the situation, arriving on May 27. Alpers says that her mother was ignorant of the fact that her daughter was pregnant. It may be so; but it is scarcely credible that Katherine herself was ignorant of it, as he suggests. Mrs. Beauchamp, having taken her daughter to Bavaria, and arranged for her to stay in a convent there, left for New Zealand on June 10.



She suddenly married George Bowden, a teacher of singing, on March 2, 1909, and as suddenly left him on the morning after

.....

1909

Shortly afterwards, K.M., who passionately desired to have her baby, had a miscarriage. Finding the loss unbearable, she craved a child to take the place of her own. Ida Baker, charged with finding one found Walter, a little boy who lived in Mews off Welbeck Street and had lately been ill. Walter went to Woerishofen for several weeks, and was nursed back to health by Sally, as he called Katherine.

June 1909 Sunday Morning

It was a night of agony. When I felt morning was at last come, I lighted a candle, looked at the watch, and found it was just a quarter to twelve!





1909 Good Friday

I always, always, feel the nail-prints in my hands, the sickening thirst in my throat,
the agony of Jesus.

Let me be crucified so that I may cry “It is finished”



1909 Good Friday

In the train to Harwich. I am afraid I really am not at all myself. Bought a second-class ticket, and here I am, tired out still but unable to sleep. To escape England-it is my great desire. I loathe England. It is a dark night, full of rain. There is a little child opposite me in a red cloak sleeping; she shakes her hair just as Dolly did when I was a girl in Brussels so many years ago. Everybody sleeps but I. The train shatters through the darkness. I wear a green silk scarf and a dark brown hat.
I travel in the name of Mrs. K. Bendall

.....

June 1909

I think I must
have caught cold
in my beautiful
exultant walk
yesterday, for
today I am ill. To
be alone all day,
in a house whose
every sound
seems foreign to
you, and to feel a
terrible confusion
in your body
which affects
you mentally,
suddenly pictures
for you detestable
incidents,
revolting
personalities
which you only
shake off to find
recurring again as
the pain seems to
diminish and grow
worse again, Alas!
I shall not walk
with bare feet in
wild woods again.
Not until I have
grown accustomed
to the climate...





June 1909

The only adorable
thing I can imagine is
for my Grandmother
to put me to bed and
bring me a bowl of hot
bread and milk,
and standing, her
hands folded

1910-1911

In January 1910, Katherine returned to London, and apparently returned for a little while to her husband, at whose suggestion she took some of the stories, written in Bavaria, to The New Age. A.R. Orage, the editor, welcomed them. In the spring she underwent a painful operation for peritonitis. A difficult convalescence at Rottingdean was complicated by rheumatic fever. When Katherine returned to London she went to live in Cheyne Walk, where she formed a friendship with William Orton, who gave an account of it in his autobiographical novel, The Last Romantic.



1910-1911

*At the beginning of 1911
Katherine moved to Clovelly
Mansions in the Grays Inn
Road. Katherine spent much of
her secret life in hoping against
hope for the child*

which never came

.....

1912-1913.

At the end of 1911 Katherine and I met at the house of W.L.George. The meeting and its consequences are described in Between Two Worlds. At the end of April 1912, I became lodger in her flat, and after some weeks, her lover. The following fragment of her journal relates to the former phase of our relation. After many vicissitudes, described in Between Two Worlds, in December 1913 we went to live in Paris, where I hoped to be able to make a living. My hope was disappointed, and at the end of two months I had to return to London.



1914

I went to J.'s room and
looked through the
window. It was evening,
with little light, and
what was there was very
soft—the Freak Hour
when people never seem
to be quite in focus.

I watched a man
walking up and down the
road—and he looked like
a fly walking up a wall

1914

By the end of February 1914 we had returned to London, with very little but the clothes we stood in. For a few weeks we lived in a furnished flat in Beaufort Mansions Chelsea. From the back windows one had a view of a timber-yard and a cemetery.



***1914 The Child
in My Arms***

It is as though God
opened his hand and
let you dance on it a
little, and then shut it
up tight—so tight that
you could not even
cry... The wind
is terrible to-night



1914 March 21

Travelled with two brown women. They both carried babies bound, somehow, to them with a torn shawl. Neat spare women with combed and braided hair. They slung talk at each other across the bus

.....

We moved to two rather unpleasant top floor rooms in Edith Grove, Chelsea, where we both had pleurisy. The Lawrences arrived from Italy in July and were indignant with me for making Katherine live in such depressing rooms.

We hunted for something better, found a charming set of rooms in Arthur Street, and were driven out of them by bugs. In mid-July we took for a fortnight a furnished cottage at Udimore, near Rye. Deaf House Agent records one of our efforts to find a cheap cottage in the neighbourhood. After a fortnight in a furnished cottage at Merryn in Cornwall, in September we took for five shillings a week a damp and ugly cottage at The Lee, near Missenden in Buckinghamshire, a mile and a half from the Lawrences at Cholesury.



1914 March 28

Birds are far more savage-looking than the wildest beasts

Thinking of a forest of *wild* birds



1914 April 3

Went for a walk by the
river this evening and
watched the boats.
Two had red sails and
one had white

1914 November 3
I feel very deeply happy and free





1914 November 3
To-morrow at about 10.30 I go into action



A slight attack of flu
is boiling me over
There is a glimpse of sun
The trees look as though
they were hanging out
to dry

1915

*An unposted letter to Frieda Laurence written
in the diary.*



1915 January 1
I live within sound of a rushing river that only I can hear



1915 January 4

I make a vow to finish
a book this month. I'll write
all day and at night too,
and get it finished.

I swear



1918 January 20

A man outside is
breaking stones.
The old man chops,
chops, as though it
were a heart beating
out there

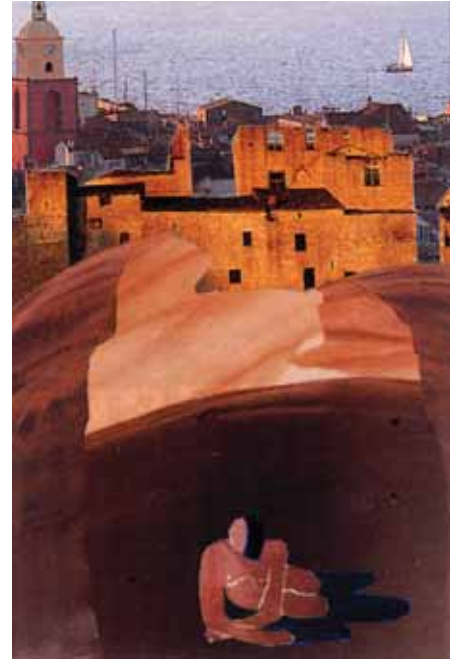
January 21

The old man breaking
stones is here again.
A thick white mist
reaches the edge
of the field



it is so funny to sit quietly
sewing, while my heart is
never for a moment still
I am dreadfully tired
in head and body

1915 January 21



1915 January 22

I simply felt for a moment
overcome with anguish
and came upstairs and put my
head on the black cushion
My longing for cities engulfs me



1915 February 20

I simply felt so happy that I leaned out of the window with my arms along the brass rail and my feet crossed and the sunlight and the wonderful country unfolding



1915

It was as though we were on a boat.
The sword, the big ugly sword, but not
between us, lying in a chair

The act of love seemed somehow quite
incidental, we talked so much. It was
so warm and delicious, lying curled in
each other's arms, by the light of the
tiny lamp

Katherine Mansfield returned disillusioned to England at the end of February and left for Paris once more in March, and again in May.

.....

1915 Sunday May 16. Paris

I crossed and recrossed the river and leaned over the bridges and kept thinking we were coming to a park when we weren't



.....

After some weeks in rooms in Elgin Crescent, in July we took a house at N^o5 Acacia Road, St. John's Wood. Here Katherine Mansfield's brother, Leslie Heron Beauchamp [Chummie], came to stay with her for a week before going to the front at the end of September. He was killed almost immediately, on October 7. The following entry is a record of one of their conversations together.

1915 *Femme Seule*

It is morning. I lie in
the empty bed—the huge
bed—big as a field, and
as cold and unsheltered





1915

A dog barks. The
gardener, talking
to himself, shuffles
across the new
raked path, picks
up his weed basket
and goes off

.....

1915 Wednesday

December

To-day I am
hardening my heart. I
am walking all round
my heart and building
up the defenses.

I do not mean to leave
a loophole even for a
tuft of violets to grow
in. Give me a hard
heart, O Lord!

Lord, harden thou my
heart!



.....

1915 *Et in Arcadia Ego*

To sit in front of the little wood fire, your
hands crossed in your lap and your
eyes closed—to fancy you see

again upon your eyelids all
the dancing beauty of the
day, to feel the flame on
your throat as you used
to imagine you felt the
spot of yellow when Bo-
gey held a buttercup un-
der your chin...

when breathing is such a
delight that you are almost
afraid to breathe—as though
a butterfly funned its wings
upon your breast.

Still to taste the warm sunlight that melted
in our mouth



1916

At the end of December 1915 I returned to Bandol. Katherine had taken a tiny four-roomed villa, Villa Pauline, with an almond-tree that tapped at the window of the salle à manger. There we stayed until April 1916; and there Katherine wrote the first version of Prelude.



1916 February 13

Nothing could be
nicer than this spot,
and it's so quiet and
so high, like sitting
up in a tree. I feel
I shall be able to
write here, especially
towards twilight.
Ah, once fairly
alight—how I'd blaze
and burn!



1916 February 13

But then, when I leaned
out of the window
I seemed to see my
brother dotted all over
the field—now on his
back, now on his face,
now huddled up, now
half-pressed into the
earth. Wherever I
looked,

there he lay

.....

1916 February 14

Each time I take up my
pen you are with me. You
are mine. You are my
playfellow, my brother, and
we shall range all over our
country together. It is with
you that I see, and that is
why I see so clearly. That is
a great mystery





1916
I must get deep down
into my book

1916 A recollection of Childhood

Things happened so simply then, without preparation and without any shock. They let me go into my mother's room (I remember standing on tiptoe and using both hands to turn the big white china door-handle) and there lay my mother in bed with her arms along the sheet, and there sat my grandmother before the fire with a baby in a flannel across her knees. My mother paid no attention to me at all. All day, all night grandmother's arms were full. All belonged to Gwen



The following is an unposted letter written to Frederick Goodyear a close friend of both Katherine and myself. He was at this time serving in France in the Meteorological section of the Royal Engineers. A few months afterwards he applied for a commission in an infantry regiment in order to go to the fighting line. There he was killed, in May 1917. It should be put on record that no single one of Katherine's friends who went to the war returned alive from it. This will explain the profound and ineradicable impression made upon her by the war, an impression which found perfect utterance in the last year of her life in the story, The Fly.

After our return from Bandon in April 1916, we lived next door to the Lawrences at Higher Tregethen in North Cornwall, then at Mylor in South Cornwall. In September 1916 we came to London.



1915 Evening, October

I think it was the family feeling—
we were almost like one child.
I always see us walking about
together, looking at things together
with the same eyes, discussing...
I felt that again—just now—when
we looked for the pear in the grass.
I remembered ruffling the violet
leaves with you

Oh,
That
Garden!



1916 Notes on Dostoevsky

How did Dostoevsky know about that extraordinary vindictive feeling, that relish for little laughter—that comes over women in pain? It is a very secret thing, but it's profound, profound. Are his women ever happy when they torment their lovers? No, they too are in the agony of labour. They are giving birth to their new selves. And they never believe in their deliverance



1916 Villa Pauline. Bandol

The kind of day when you want a tremendous feed
for lunch and an armchair in front of the fire to bo-
constrict in afterwards



I may be dead and gone to hell
Before the brute has chimed well
My hunger and my real distress
It seems to talk and slyly mock
Twenty to twelve



1916 *The New-born Son*

“Von Koren took a pistol from the whatnot, *and screwing up his left eye, took deliberate aim at the portrait of Prince Vorontsov*, or stood still at the looking glass and gazed a long time at his swarthy face, his big forehead and his black hair, which curled like a negro’s...”
(Tchegov: The Duel)



**1916 November 3,
Gower Street**

It is so strange!
I am suddenly back
again, coming into my
room and desiring to
write, *Knock*, goes
Miss Chapman at the
door. A man has come
to clean the windows.
I might have known it!

And so death claims
us. I am sure that just
at that final moment
a knock will come and
Somebody Else will
come to "clean the
windows"

.....

1917

Beware of the Rain!

Late in the evening,
after you have cleared away your
supper, blown the crumbs out of
the book that you were reading,
lighted the lamp and curled up
in front of the fire, that is the
moment to beware of the



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1917 *Love and Mushrooms*

If only one could tell true love from false love as one can tell mushrooms
from toadstools./.../ It takes a dreadful number of toadstools to make you
realise that life is not one long mushroom



1918

In November 1917 Katherine caught a chill, which developed into pleurisy. When she had partly recovered her doctor advised her to go to the South of France.

She was overjoyed at the prospect. She did not realise, neither did any of her friends, that during the two years since she was last in Bandol conditions in France had utterly changed. Railway travelling was difficult, food bad. And, perhaps most serious of all, she would not admit that she was gravely ill. Her courage and confidence deceived herself as well as her friends. She persuaded herself and them that she was the one to be envied for being sent into the sun.

After an appalling journey, described in one of her letters, she reached Bandol on January 10, 1918, to find that the little Mediterranean town she remembered so beautiful was dirty and neglected. From the moment she arrived she was seriously ill and quite alone, until in February her friend, Ida Baker [L.M.], managed to get to her.



1918 January 12

When I am sitting above the rocks near the edge of the sea, I always fancy that I hear above the plash of the water the voice of two people talking somewhere I know not what. And the talking is always broken by something which is neither laughter nor sobbing, but a low thrilling sound which might be either and is a part of both

.....

At last, after many wearing delays, Katherine received permission from the authorities to return to England. On the day, however, on which she reached Paris, March 22, the long-range bombardment of the city began, and all civilian traffic between Paris and London was instantly suspended. For nearly three weeks she was detained in Paris, exhausted by her illness, yet continually having to visit various authorities for permission either to stay or to depart. She managed to get to London on April 11, a shadow of herself. The ravages of four months' anxiety and illness had been terrible.



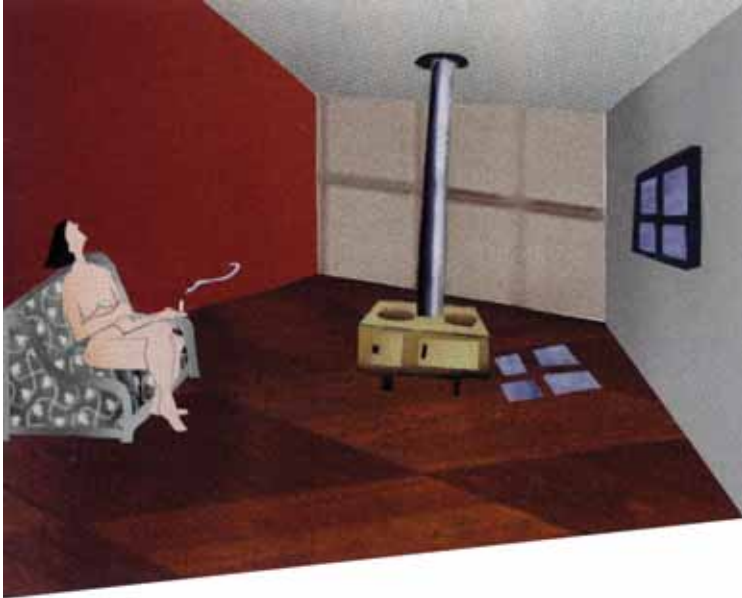
1918 February 19

I woke up early this morning and when I opened the shutters the full round sun was just risen, I began to repeat that verse of Shakespeare's: "Lo, here the gentle lark weary of rest", and bounded back into bed. The bound made me cough—I spat—it tasted strange—it was bright red blood. Since then I've gone on, spitting each time I cough a little more



This recital, in that dark moving train, told by that big woman swathed in black, had an effect on me that I wouldn't own and never mentioned. I knew the woman was a fool, hysterical, morbid, *but I believed her*; and her voice has gone on somewhere echoing in me ever since...

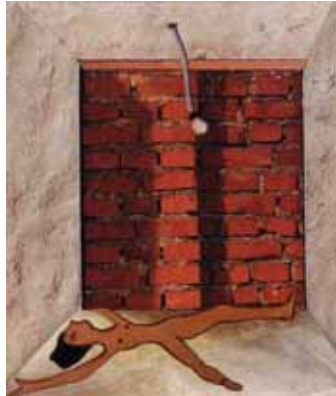
1918 February 19



1919
White net curtains hang over the windows. For all
the sun it is raining outside. The gas in the middle
of the room has a pale yellow paper shade

.....

Since it seemed out of the question that Katherine should remain in my two dark ground-floor rooms in Redcliffe Road, she went on May 17 to Looe in Cornwall, while I searched for a house in Hampstead.



**1918 May 21 Looe,
Cornwall**

I positively feel, in my hideous modern way, that I can't get into touch with my mind. I am standing gasping in one of those disgusting telephone boxes and I can't "get through"



1918 Looe

She was the same through and through.
You could go on cutting slice after slice and
you know you would never light on a plum
or a cherry—never a piece of peel

*Mrs. Honey, in the following note,
was the chambermaid in the hotel
at Looe, and like most of her ser-
vants, devoted to Katherine.*



1918 June

At 4.30 to-day it did conquer me and I began, like the Tchekov, students, to “pace from corner to corner”—then up and down, up, and down, and the pain *racked* me like a curse and I could hardly, breathe. Then I sat down again and tried to take it quietly. Trop malade

1918 Hotels

I seem to spend half of my life arriving at strange hotels. And asking if I may go to bed immediately. The strange door shuts upon the stranger, and then I slip down in the sheets. Waiting for the shadows to come out of the corners and spin their slow, slow web over the Ugliest Wallpaper of All





Jack, that's all. Let's do it nicely and go to the funeral in the same carriage, and hold hands over the new grave

.....

The man in the room next to mine has the
same complaint as I. When I wake in the night
I hear him turning. And then he coughs. And
I cough. And after a silence I cough. And he
coughs again. This goes on for a long time.
Until I feel we are like two roosters calling
to each other at false dawn. From far-away
hidden farms



1918 Pulmonary Tuberculosis

The man in the room next to mine has the
same complaint as I. When I wake in the night
I hear him turning. And then he coughs. And
I cough. And after a silence I cough. And he
coughs again. This goes on for a long time.
Until I feel we are like two roosters calling
to each other at false dawn. From far-away
hidden farms



1918 Pic-Nic

Then *She* went off and dabbled
her legs in a pool thinking
about the colour of flesh under
water. And *She* crawled into
a dark cave and sat there
thinking about her childhood

*At the beginning of July Katherine
returned to Redcliffe Road. On
August 26, we moved into No. 2
Portland Villas, East Heath Road,
Hampstead.*



1918 July 5

Ach. Tchegov! why are you dead? Why can't I talk to you; in a big darkish room, at late evening—where the light is green from the waving trees outside. I'd like to write a series of Heavens: that would be one



1918
the
Middle
of the
Note

I begin
to wish
to God
I could
destroy
all that
I have
written
and start
again:
it all
seems like
so many
“false
starts”



1918 *The Redcliffe Road*

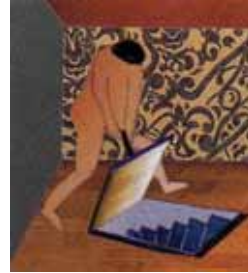
This is the hour when the poor underfed dog appears, at a run, nosing the dry gutter. He is so thin that his body is like a cage on four wooden pegs. (What I'd like to convey is that, at this hour, with this half light and the pianos and the open, empty sounding houses, he is the spirit of the street—running up and down, poor dog, when he ought to have been done away with years ago)



1918 September 20

My fits of temper are really terrifying. I had one this (Sunday) morning and tore up a page of the book I was reading-and absolutely lost my head. Very significant. When it was over J. came in and stared.
“What is the matter? What have you done?”
“Why?”

“You look all *dark*”
He drew back the curtains and called it an effect of light, but when I came into my studio to dress I saw it was not that. I was a deep earthy colour, with *pinched eyes*. I was green



1918 September 20 Good-night
And once again the door opened, and she passed
as it were into another world—the world of night,
cold, timeless, inscrutable

1919

In September 1919 Katherine went to San Remo, and, after a few weeks, took a little furnished cottage—the Casetta—at Ospedaletti near by. I was with her in San Remo, but returned to England to my work on The Athenaeum as soon as she was settled into the Casetta with L.M. For a time Katherine was happy; but then illness and isolation and the everlasting sound of the sea began to depress her.



1919

Not a soul knows where she
is. She goes slowly, thinking
it all over, wondering how she
can express it *as she wants*
to—asking for time and for
peace



1919 May The Angel of Mercy
The day the housemaid had to leave because her husband
“didn’t want her to work no more” and, to consolidate his authority,
had punched her so hard in the neck that she had a great red swelling under
for her. Stairs were rays of light up which she floated
an angel of mercy. Nothing was too much



1919

Every time she left me, she
left me for her mysterious
reasons—to lay out the body
again and again—to change
the stiffened hand-to pull the
paper frill over the ominous spot
appearing



1919 Cook to See Me

As I opened the door, I saw her sitting in the middle of the room, hunched, still... She got up, obedient, like a prisoner when you enter a cell. And her eyes said, as a prisoner's eyes say, "Knowing the life I've had, I'm the last to be surprised at finding myself here"



1919 June 21

The clocks are striking ten. Here in my room the sky looks lilac; in the bath-room it is like the skin of a peach. Girls are laughing. I have consumption. There is still a great deal of moisture; (and pain) in my BAD lung: But I do not care. I do not want anything I could not have



1919 June 21

What I felt was, that I wasn't in the whole of myself at all.

I'd got locked in, somehow, in some little...

top room in my mind, and strangers had got in—people I'd never seen before were making free of the rest of it. There was a dreadful feeling of confusion, chiefly that, and... vague noises like things being moved, changed about in my head.

I lit the candle and sat up and in the mirror I saw a dark, brooding, strangely lengthened face



1919 November

Mrs. Nightingale: A Dream

Walking up a dark hill with high
iron fences at the sides of the
road and immense trees over.
I was looking for a midwife,
Mrs. Nightingale. A little girl,
barefoot, with a handkerchief
over her head pattered up
and put her chill hand in mine;
she would lead me



December 15, 1919 Death

I must put down here a dream. The first night I was in bed here, i.e. after my first day in bed, I went to sleep. And suddenly I felt my whole body *breaking up*. It broke up with a violent shock—an earthquake—and it broke like glass. A long terrible shiver, you understand—and the spinal cord and the bones and every bit and particle quaking. It sounded in my ears—a low, confused din, and there was a sense of flashing greenish brilliance, like broken glass. When I woke up I thought there had been a violent earthquake. But all was still. It slowly dawned upon me—the conviction that in that dream I died/.../ I am (December 15, 1919) a dead woman, and *I don't care*

.....

1919 December
“Any children?” he asked, taking out his stethoscope, as I struggled with my nightgown.
“No—no children”.
But what would he have said if I had told him that until a few days ago I had had a little child, aged five and three-quarters—of undetermined sex. Some days it was a boy. For two years now it had very often been a little girl



.....

1920

On January 21 Katherine finally left the Casetta for the Villa Flora, a nursing home in Mentone.



1920 January 2

The house was empty
and quiet. I was ill all
day—exhausted. In the
afternoon I fell asleep
over my work and
missed the post. My
heart won't lie down



1920 January 11
In the sea drowned souls sang all night



1920

February 7

Had a bath— but all was in a tearing hurry and clatter. Had a strange dream.

“She is one with the moonlight”. George Sand —
ma soeur

Shortly afterwards Katherine left the nursing home to stay at the Villa Flora with her cousin Miss Conny Beauchamp, and her friend Miss Jinnie Fullerton, whose devoted care of her was rewarded by a marked improvement in her health.

The Glimpse

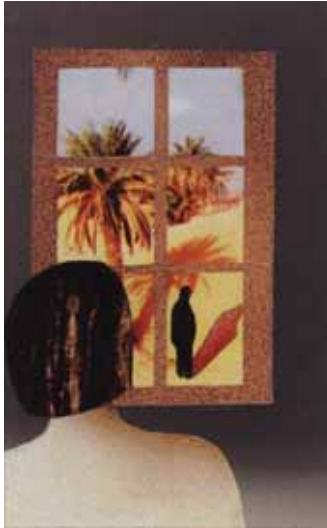
One has these “glimpses”, before which all that one ever has written (what has one written?)—all (yes, all) that one ever has read, pales... The waves, as I drove home this afternoon, and the high foam, how it was suspended in the air before it fell... What is it that happens in that moment of suspension? It is timeless. In that moment the whole life of the soul is contained. One is flung up—out of life—one is “held”, and then,—down, bright, broken, glittering on to the rocks, tossed back, part of the ebb and flow





1920 *February 29*

Oh, I failed to-day; I turned back, looked over my shoulder, and immediately it happened, I felt as though I too were, struck down.
The day turned cold and dark on the instant



1920 April 19

Cold and windy. Out of
the window the writhing
palms—the dust—the
woman with a black veil.
I feel I must live alone,
alone, alone

*At the end of April Katherine re-
turned to England, to her house in
Hampstead.*



1920 September

The scene at the Baths: the coldness, the blueness of the children, her size in the red twill bathing-dress

.....

1920 Foundlings

L.M. is also exceedingly fond of bananas. But she eats them so slowly, so terribly slowly. And they know it—somehow; they realise what is in store for them when she reaches out her hand. I have seen bananas turn absolutely livid with terror on her plate—or pale as ashes





October 18 1920 The Doll

“Well, look!” muttered Miss Sparrow.
I’ve nothing to be ashamed of. Look as much
as you like. I defy you. It’s what I’ve wanted all
my life”, she cried brokenly, “and now I’ve got
it. I defy you. I defy the world!”. And she drew
herself up in front of the window, proudly,
proudly; her eyes flashed, her lips gleamed.
She pressed the doll to her flat bosom.
She was the Unmarried Mother



1920 Suffering

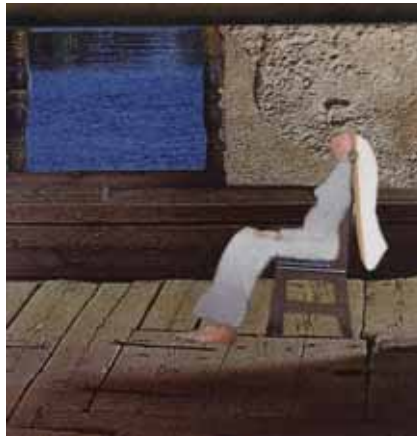
I should like this to be
accepted as my confession.
There is no limit to
human suffering. When
one thinks: “Now I have
touched the bottom of
the sea—now I can go no
deeper”, one goes deeper.
And so it is for ever. I
thought last year in Italy:
any shadow more would
be death. But this year
has been so much more
terrible that I think with
affection of the Casetta!
Suffering is boundless, it
is eternity

I do not want to die
without leaving a record
of my belief that suffering
can be overcome. For I do
believe it. What must one
do? There is no question
of what Jack calls “passing
beyond it”. This is false.
One must *submit*. Do
not resist. Take it. Be
overwhelmed.
Accept it fully. Make it
part of life



1920 December 27

In dusky rooms where the shutters are closed the women, grave and quiet, turn down the beds and see that there is water in the water-jugs. Little children are sleeping...



1920 “Oh dear”, she said, “I do wish I hadn’t married. I wish I’d been an explorer”

1921

Sophie Bean sat at the dining-room window in her black dress, hemming pillow-slips. She was pale, but in the dusky room a whiteness came from the pillow-slips, like the whiteness of snow, and made her paler. Her hands moved slowly—something depressed her—but it had to be done.



1921 January 30
J. accused me of always bagging his books as soon as he had begun to read them. I said: "It's like fishing. I see you've got a bite. I want your line. I want to pull it in"



1921 Sophie Bean

She sat at the dining-room window in her black dress, hemming pillow-slips. She was pale, but in the dusky room a whiteness came from the pillow-slips, like the whiteness of snow, and made her paler. Her hands moved slowly—something depressed her—but it had to be done



**1921 *The Last
Waiting-Room***

Think of the strange
places that illness carries
one into; the strange
people among whom
one passes from hand
to hand; the succession
of black-coated gentlemen
to whom she'd whispered
99, 44, 1-2-3
The servants she'd smiled at



1921 *The Last Waiting Room*

Think of the strange places that illness
carries one into; the strange people among
whom one passes from hand to hand; the
succession of black-coated gentlemen to
whom she'd whispered 99, 44, 1-2-3.
The servants she'd smiled at

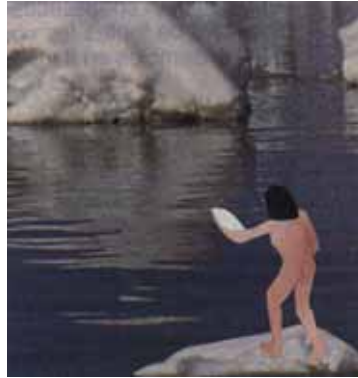


1921 An unposted letter:

I lie all day on my old balcony

On May 4, 1921, Katherine left Mentone for Baugy in Switzerland while I returned to England to give some lectures at Oxford. She moved to Sierre at the end of May where I rejoined her early in June. With some trepidation, for fear of the effect of the altitude on her heart, we went up to Montana, first to a sanatorium and then to the furnished Chalet des Sapins.

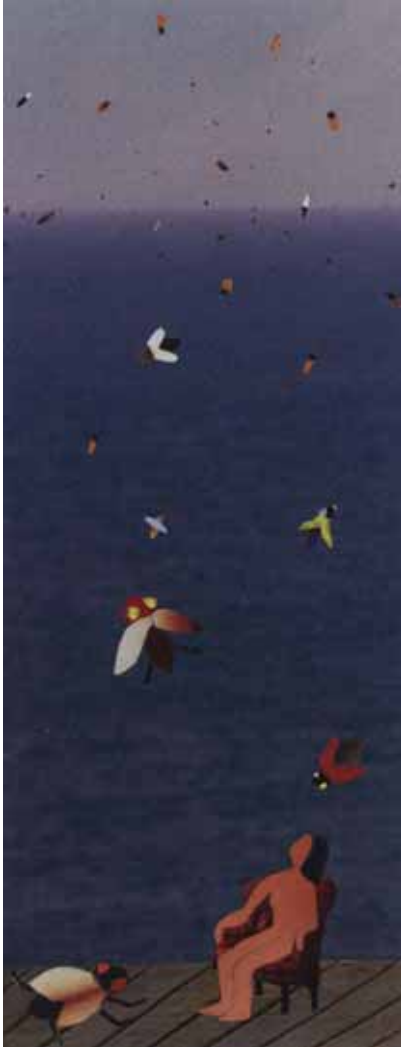
I have been trying for a long time now to “squeeze the slave out of my soul.” . . I just want to let you know.



1921 *Next Day*

What happens as
a rule is, if I go on
long enough, I *break*
through.

Yes, it's rather like
tossing very large flat
stones into the stream



1921 Next Day

A bell sounds from afar; the birds sing one after another as if they called across the treetops and I love this settled stillness, and this feeling that, at any moment, down may come the rain. Where the sky is not grey, it is silvery white, streaked with little clouds.

The only disagreeable feature of the day is the flies. They are really maddening, and there is nothing really to be done for them:
I feel that about hardly anything



On her way
back to the
garden
Susannah sat
down
on the hall
chair for a
minute
to take a
pebble out of
her shoe



1921 October 13
An unposted letter
I have been trying for a long time now to
“squeeze the slave out of my soul”
I just want to let you know

At the end of the manuscript of The Garden Party which was finished on October 14: “this is a moderately successful story, and that’s all. It’s somehow, in the episode at the lane, scamped.”

.....

1921 October

I wonder why it should be so difficult to be humble. I do not think I am a good writer; I realize my faults better than anyone else could realize them. I know exactly

where I fail. And yet, when I have finished a story and before I have begun another, I catch myself *preening* my feathers. It is disheartening. There seems to be some bad old pride in my heart





1921 October

If I were well, I would go off by myself somewhere and sit under a tree.
One must learn, one must practise, to *forget* oneself

1921 November
Lord, make me crystal clear for thy light to
shine through!



1922

The sisters Bead, who come to stay. The white sheet on the floor when the wedding dress is tried on. Yes, I've got the details all right.



1922 January 1

I dreamed I sailed to Egypt with
Grandma —a very white boat.
Cold, still

.....

1922 January 1

I want to remember how the light fades from
a room-and one fades with it, is *expunged*,
sitting still, knees together, hands in pockets...



.....

1922 January 12

J. and I “typed”. I hate dictating; but the story still seems to me to be good
I don’t feel so sinful this day as I did, because I have written something and the tide is still high. The ancient landmarks are covered





1922 January 18

H. Is a man to remember. When he was little, I imagine he pulled the wings off flies. And I still see suicide as his end, in a kind of melancholia, and “nobody wants me”, and “damned if I won’t”



1920 *The Kiss*

...I kissed
her. Her flesh
felt cold,
pale, soft.
I thought
of nuns
who have
prayed all
night in cold
churches...



**1922
*January 24***

Wrote and
finished
Taking the
Veil. Writing
about the
convent
seemed so
natural. I
suppose I have
not been in the
grounds more
than twice.
But it is one of
the places that
remains as
vivid as ever



**1922
*Lumbago***

This is a very
queer thing.
So sudden,
so painful.
I must
remember
it when I
write about
an old man.
The start to
get up—the
pause—the
slow look of
fury—and
how, lying
at night, one
seems to get
locked



1922 January 28

The only way to keep calm is to play crib. J. and I sit opposite each other. I feel we are awfully united. And we play and laugh and it seems to keep us together. While the game lasts, we are there.

A queer feeling...



1922 February 5

Something has been built, a raft, frail and not very seaworthy; but it will serve. Before, I was cast into the water when I was “alone” -I mean during my illness - and now something supports me. But much is to be done. Much discipline and meditation is needed



1922 February 9

Spent the day in bed, reading the papers. The feeling that someone was coming towards me was too strong for me to work. It was like sitting on a bench at the end of a long avenue in a park and seeing someone far in the distance coming your way. She tries to read. The book is in her hand, but it's all nonsense, and might as well be upside down



1922 February

Manoukhn drew the picture of my heart. I wish
he had not. I am haunted by the hideous picture,
by the thought of my heart, like a heavy drop in my
breast



1922 February 14

I had one of my perfect dreams.

I was at sea, sailing with
my parasol opened to just
a “freshet” of wind.

Heavenly the sea, the
sky, the land -parasol
pink- boat pale pink...



1922 May 3 Paris

The sisters Bead,
who come to stay.
The white sheet on
the floor when the
wedding dress is
tried on. Yes, I've
got the details all
right

In May Katherine left Paris to spend the summer in Switzerland, her plan then being to return to Paris in October for a second course of the same treatment, which seemed to the outside observer to have been beneficial. But Katherine never believed that she would die of consumption, but always of heart-failure, and she thought that her heart had grown worse under the treatment. And, deeper than this, she had come to the conviction that her bodily health depended upon her spiritual condition. Her mind was henceforward preoccupied with discovering some way to "cure her soul"; and she eventually resolved, to my great regret, to abandon her treatment, and to live as though her great physical illness were incidental, and even, so far as she could, as though it were non-existent.

If I were well and could spend the evenings sitting up writing till about eleven... to look up through the trees to the far-away heavenly blue. It is greater happiness than I had ever thought possible.



1922 June

If I were well and could spend
the evenings sitting up writing till
about eleven...

To look up through the trees
to the far-away heavenly blue.
It is greater happiness than
I had ever thought possible

At the beginning of July Katherine descended to Sierre, while I remained at Randogne, visiting her at week-ends. The following fragments represent her abortive attempts to work during this period. She also tried to continue the title story of the Doves' Nest, which she had begun in January. But the experience in Paris had exhausted her. She had originally planned to return to Paris on August 20 to continue the Manoukhin treatment. But early in August she suddenly decided to return to London. On August 8 she wrote me a letter to be handed to me after her death, on August 14 she made her will, and went to London on August 17. The treatment—the irradiation of the spleen—was continued for a while by a London radiologist named Webster; but her heart was no longer in the attempt at a physical cure. The purely formal entries in her diary which are unprecedented seem to indicate her spiritual preoccupation.

On October 3, Katherine went to Paris, ostensibly to continue the treatment under Manoukhin. She said she was dissatisfied with the experimental treatment in London. "I would endure any hotel, any Paris surroundings, for the sake of Manoukhin himself," she wrote to me on September 27. Nevertheless, I felt that she was pretending, and that her real intention, though perhaps only half-formed, was to get into touch with Gurdjieff. And on October 16 she went to Le Prieuré at Fontainebleau, and did not return.

The following entry was torn out of her journal to be sent to me. But Katherine changed her mind. I found it among her papers with this superscription, "These pages from my journal. Don't let them distress you. The story has a happy ending, really and truly."

I want to be all that I am capable of becoming so that I may be.
Let it be at that. *A child of the sun.*



1922
October 14
Can I walk ?
Only creep.
Think of
five year's
imprisonment.
Someone has
Got
to
help
me
To
get
out



1922 October 14

I want to be all that
I am capable of
becoming so that
I may be a child of
the sun.
Let it be at that. A
child of the sun

The following list of words and phrases, for which she sought the Russian equivalent, is eloquent of the discomforts which Katherine deliberately endured at the Gurdjieff Institute at Fontainebleau.

.....

I am cold.
Bring paper to light a fire.
Paper.
Cinders.
Woods.
Matches.
Flame.
Smoke.
Strong.
Strength.
Light a fire.
No more fire.
Because there is no more fire.
White paper.
Black paper.
What is the time ?
It is late.
It is still early.
Good.
I would like to speak Russian with you.

Katherine Mansfield died at 10.30 p.m. on January 9, 1923, on the evening of the day on which I went, at her request, to visit her. An account of her conversation with me on that day will be found at the end of her Letters to J. M. M.



Acknowledgements I am grateful to Katherine Mansfield for allowing the emergence of “the spirit of the poor underfed dog” throughout her lifelong journal. Big white bones she unearthed, polished and assembled year in and year out. I also dearly thank Nikko, my lover, for his endless patience and constant support to help complete this book. Not to mention his smooth fight against my own discouragement and fatigue. Thank you, Josiane for your immediate recognition of the work and your enthusiasm and devotion to English literature. Thank you, Romain for the presentation of this work, the patience, accuracy and generosity you demonstrated.

I remember the making of the cut-outs at my parents’ place somewhere in the south of France, in an age-old house in the company of benevolent spirits who guided my hand, allied to the discreet presence of Lydia and Louis-René, my parents. A special thank to my sister Flo, who kept my work and soul in a safe place while I ventured into the world. Hail to Jean-Claude Reynal and his foundation which awarded me a travel prize for part of this work, therefore allowing me to keep the fire burning. Thanks to the Surrealists for their inventiveness and folly which have been greatly inspirational. A warm cheerio to both my grannies, Augustina and Augustine and to Juan, my grandpa whose subterranean visits have been precious. My special regards to Vincent who is intimately connected to the power of Pluto, and who talks to me like no other man, to Michel who alone unearthed a mammoth’s skeleton without telling anyone about it, to Beatrice who intimately knows what a waiting room is, to Bibou who first crossed the underground wonderland with me when we were both hungry travellers, to Florian my unique cousin who bravely rides the Spanish bull of our heritage, to Dave who has created, with his heart alone, a springboard of songs between his France and his America, and last but not least to Brelon I met in the magic night of the underworld.

A future wish addressed to my nephews Guillaume and Leo. Let them discover this path and hopefully follow it. Finally, a big hug to Victoria, my artistic and talented sibling, who gave birth to Maria-Luna while I completed this book, in 2004.



.....



.....



by the time I was ...

By the time I was 25, I came across the journal of Katherine Mansfield, a well-known short story writer from New Zealand. For some reasons, while reading her journal some words and sentences triggered glimpses in my mind like stars in the very dark of the night. From that moment on, I have tried to capture these sparkles of truth. They may be seen as an echo from my Unconscious to that of the writing of Katherine Mansfield, as a kind of instant and automatic answer to the sound of Katherine Mansfield's voice...

