



Katherine Mansfield and France

**International conference organised by the Université Paris III
—Sorbonne Nouvelle
in conjunction with the Katherine Mansfield Society**

19–21 June 2014

Guest speakers will include

C. K. Stead and Gerri Kimber

2014 seems the ideal year to celebrate Katherine Mansfield's lifelong attachment to France, and her passionate involvement with all things French: not just the language, literature and the arts, but the everyday world too, from recipes and customs to the contemporary socio-political context, transport, economics and of course the devastating impact of the war. France for Mansfield was a land of transit, a haven to escape to and a place of exile; it was an adopted home and a sad reminder of how far away those she loved were; life the other side of the Channel was sometimes a source of wonder and inspiration, at others the trigger for comic irony and bitter satire.

Mansfield's biographers have minutely charted out her constant channel crossings in the years 1914–1923. Her letters, notebooks and stories all point to the different repercussions of France and French culture on her vivid imagination. Recent critical studies have explored both the story of Mansfield's reception in France and the various influences French arts had on her own creative output. But the time now seems ripe to bring together scholars, researchers and students to try and piece together an overall picture of Mansfield in France and 'une Mansfield française'.

Suggested topics for papers might include:

- ❖ **Mansfield and French arts and literature:** her reception in France; Mansfield as reader, critic and reviewer of French arts in Great Britain; her influence on

contemporary and later French authors; translations and the publication history of her works in French.

- ❖ **The French influence on Mansfield:** French language and culture in her education and apprenticeship years; France as a setting for her stories; French life recorded in the journals in early story sketches; her readings of key French authors and their influence on her works; French aestheticism, fin-de-siècle and early-twentieth-century philosophy.
- ❖ **Mansfield and French life and society:** as journalist and eye-witness of war-torn France; a satirist of local habits and customs; a bemused observer of expatriate and émigré life; Paris and the French Riviera as the specific locations that have become so much associated with her work, but also French geographies of displacement, both real and affective.
- ❖ **Mansfield, the polyglot, cultural ambassador and cosmopolitan:** France as a step outside Englishness; forms of cultural otherness, alienation and renewal through the meeting and mixing of identities; language as empowerment and disempowerment; nationalism versus the political repercussions of border crossing; bilingualism; redefining the self as other; Mansfield the European.
- ❖ **Mansfield and Frenchness as a means of thinking *between*:** cross-dressing, role-play, borrowed identities, impersonation; travesty, but also Frenchness itself seen from within and without, from the privileged outsider's point of view, the 'devenir français' from Mansfield's perspective.
- ❖ **Biographical, linguistic, literary, sociological, political comparative . . .** all approaches are welcome in this endeavour to embrace Katherine Mansfield's *French* life.

Our exploration of the various French avenues in her life, works and afterlife will take place in the heart of Paris, and time out will be programmed into the conference to enable all those who attend to obtain a very literal sense of place and setting. Possible Mansfield-inspired walks within Paris itself and additional excursions to the immediate environs will be suggested later.

The three-day conference will also include an alternative, intercultural approach to Mansfield's French life in the form of a cello recital given by London-based cellist Joseph Spooner and New Zealand pianist Kathryn Mosley with a programme of early twentieth-century French music and works by Arnold Trowell.

**Please submit abstracts of 250 words plus a bio-sketch of 50 words to the conference
organisers : kminparis@gmail.com**

Deadline for abstracts: December 31st 2013

Organisers:

Claire Davison, Caroline Pollentier, Anne Mounic, Anne Besnault-Levita