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certainly be some—may be warned in advance about the rage of Caliban at beholding his own face in the glass.

What about New Zealand, in all this? But that is just the point. Man is a Godwinian abstraction; the creative writer has to deal with men and women in a given setting of race, moment, milieu. And Sargeson at his best, writing about men and women whom he knows—the city fringe, the struggling fruit-farmer, the innumerate New Zealander provided he does not live too far away from Auckland—brings them before us with dingy and heart-breaking fidelity. It is a bleak little world, with not much colour and warmth in it despite the Auckland sunshine: the sunshine, as in *That Summer*, merely heightens the human tragedy. It is not the whole truth, but what writer ever gave us that? Even a limited truth has value, if it is true to experience.

The little world of Sargeson is aware of the sea, but ignores the mountains. Rather surprisingly, too, it ignores the bush—for me at least the one exception in this volume, *Gods Live in Woods*, does not come off. But this little world and its people are real; and in their own clipped and graceless idiom they talk the language of the heart. (The language, by the way, belongs to Auckland: it has certainly more Americanisms than New Zealand speech in general.) In this world Frank Sargeson is at home. When he strays out of it—as in the one obviously imitative story in this collection, *An Englishwoman Abroad*—his writing becomes merely clever, like an early Katherine Mansfield sketch.

That name again! And some comparison, I suppose is as inevitable as the blurb. New Zealand has firmly claimed K.M.—though only after she had made her name abroad. Will it be the same with Sargeson, a writer who has chosen the more difficult task of staying and working in the country of his birth?

Katherine Mansfield's best stories on New Zealand were written either out of love, or something very near hate; and love came only at the end. With love came happiness, and it was caught forever in those few last stories that may be an idealisation, but that dangle in time like crystals, clear without a flaw. Yet in herself she was obsessed by the flaws—by the snail beneath the nasturtium-leaf—until finally that obsession stopped her writing, and she died.

In Frank Sargeson's world, the snail is there: indeed, he seems sometimes to spend a good deal of time turning over the leaves searching for it. Having found it, he looks at it steadily: the snail is still there, the sun is still shining, all may not be right with the world, but these are human beings and this is how they behave. Better to write about it all straight without agonising, without becoming "a sensitive leaf on the hot hand of thought." And so we have these stories, where the slight nugatory gesture alone may speak of human feeling, where even children are not innocent: "They know things that men and women don't know, but when they grow up they forget them."

Whether you like them or not, these stories are a part of our life; and perhaps their greatest virtue is that "they speak directly to our lost condition."

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