

THE UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

Part II

Notebook I (described in the *Record* of March 1970) contains all of the *Juliet* material as well as a number of shorter pieces, six of which are given here, and the last few of which will appear in Part III of this series. These six were written concurrently with *Juliet*, between May and October 1906, when Katherine Mansfield had been away from New Zealand for over three years. With one exception they have New Zealand settings, and 'The Tale of the Three' is perhaps an embryo which eventually matured in several directions into the best of the New Zealand stories.

The only one to achieve any kind of completeness, 'Summer Idylle', is also the one with the most contrived New Zealand setting, employing a tui in the bush, sprays of manuka, a Maori or part-Maori girl, a European girl with a Maori name, ferns, rata, kumaras. In the extant manuscripts this is KM's earliest sustained attempt to capture the 'idyllic' flavour of her New Zealand childhood. It is interesting for other reasons too. Marina, although a name she used for herself in 'An Attempt', is here the name she gives to the Maori girl (who is probably based on 'Maata', KM's friend Martha Grace), while Hinemoa seems to be KM herself. (The Hinemoa of Maori legend was forced, for lack of canoes, to swim to an island to join her lover.) Yet Marina and Hinemoa can also both be seen as projections of the uneasy personality of KM's adolescence. At the age of 17 she *was* both imperious and frightened, cruel and suffering, graceful and clumsy, sophisticated and naive, dark and fair. It may be significant that 'Summer Idylle' is the most difficult to decipher of all the manuscripts. To the uninitiated it looks like the seismological chart of an unstable region. I was fortunate in being able to work on this piece with Mr Owen Leeming who had already tackled it independently. By correspondence we made successive contributions until we reached a transcription which seems to be final, in spite of the persistent intractability of a few words and phrases.

Katherine Mansfield's self-destructive impulses are explicit in her juvenilia. One is scarcely surprised in 'What You Please' to find the heroine with an irreparably damaged hand, after such earlier sentences as 'I'll love anything that really comes fiercely' and 'She wished that there were great thorns on the bushes to tear her hands.' And, as in *Juliet*, one is struck by the coincidence of later reality echoing early imagined situations. In 'What You Please' her brother Leslie's misadventure with explosives and her own consequent suffering are a nasty reminder of Leslie's actual fate and what followed.