



Katherine Mansfield and the 'Blooms Berries'

An international conference organized by the Katherine Mansfield Society, to be held at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois, USA

28-30 May 2015

Keynote Address:

Professor Sydney Janet Kaplan

University of Washington

In his eagerness to establish Katherine Mansfield's place among her peers, John Middleton Murry sometimes published work that she, herself, would have rejected. Likewise, the extent of his culling of her letters and notebooks glossed over Mansfield's complex personality and relationships, elements of her life that provide a context for better understanding her fiction. This 'Mansfield Myth' made her appear out of touch with the social and cultural upheaval of her time.

Having generally been relegated to the fringe of literary modernism during her lifetime, especially among the influential 'Blooms Berries', as Mansfield referred to them in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell on 15 August 1917, she nevertheless worked her way into enviable positions of prestige in some key literary magazines, and had become well known as a writer by the end of her life. It is as a member of the social fringe, though, that Mansfield becomes the most intriguing. As Sydney Janet Kaplan demonstrates in her seminal book, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*, Mansfield brings a different perspective – and, like Virginia Woolf, provides a corrective – to the dominant, male-centered version of modernism. Likewise, as a colonial, Mansfield remained free of the traditions that haunted most of the Bloomsbury group, including their 'anxiety of influence'. In this, Mansfield demonstrated herself as more 'modern' than some of her contemporaries; having less 'tradition' to overcome, she was able to adopt a style that was unselfconscious of influence. The focus of this conference will therefore allow us to place her more firmly within the literary context of her time.

Suggested topics for papers might include:

- **Mansfield and the ‘Blooms Berries’**, focusing on her personal and/or professional relationships with particular members of the Bloomsbury group.
- **Mansfield on the Fringe**, exploring her relationship with other fringe-members of the Bloomsbury group such as D.H. Lawrence and T.S. Eliot, or perhaps the impact her relegation to the fringe had on her personal and/or professional life.
- **Mansfield and Style**, which could address some of the literary influences of some of the Bloomsbury group on Mansfield or her influence on them.
- **Mansfield and Art**, focusing on the shared influences the post-impressionists had on both Mansfield and the members of the Bloomsbury group, as well as other cross-fertilizations.
- **Mansfield ‘in’ Bloomsbury**, exploring how Mansfield has been portrayed in the fiction and letters of the various members.
- **Bloomsbury ‘in’ Mansfield**, turning the tables to focus on how members of Bloomsbury are portrayed in Mansfield’s fiction and letters.
- **Mansfield, herself**. We would entertain proposals that focus more specifically on Mansfield; however, priority will be given to those proposals that tie more directly to the conference theme.

What better venue to explore Mansfield’s interrelationships with the members of Bloomsbury than the beautiful Newberry Library in Chicago, the world’s second largest holder of Mansfield’s papers. As part of the conference, Huntington University will sponsor an exhibit of some of the library’s Mansfield holdings. Those interested in staying over on Sunday can arrange to visit the Shedd Aquarium, the Art Institute of Chicago, or the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History.

Please submit abstracts of 250 words plus a bio-sketch of 50 words to the conference organizers, Todd Martin, Erika Baldt, and Alex Moffett, to:

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Complete panel proposals of three speakers plus a chair, are welcome.

Deadline for abstracts: 30 October 2014