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Creators: Kimber, G.

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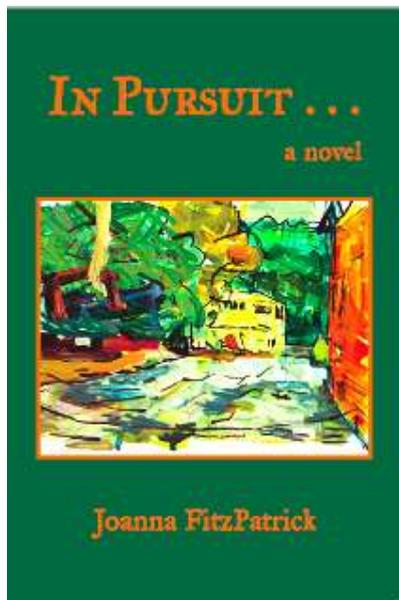
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Book Review: *In Pursuit . . . a novel*, by Joanna Fitzpatrick

This new book, based on the life of Katherine Mansfield, follows a rich tradition of such fictionalised accounts. The first was a rather romanticised tale by the American author Nelia Gardner White (1894-1957), *A Daughter of Time*, recounting KM's life from a young girl in Wellington to her death in France, but with names aside from KM's changed (e.g. Murry is 'Aaron Barr', Lawrence and Frieda are 'Davies' and 'Marta', Ida Baker is 'Cecilia'). The book was published in England in 1942, when most of the characters would have been very much alive and which may account for the sometimes bizarre name changes. In 2004, the Canadian Janice Kulyk Keefer published *Thieves*, which interweaves a modern day story of a scholar on the hunt for new KM manuscripts, with the fictionalised account of the love affair between KM and Garnet Trowell. Also in 2004, C. K. Stead published his fascinating novel *Mansfield*, which recounts the life of KM during the three vitally important years 1915-17, during which she began to see clearly the sort of fiction she wanted to write, and when she was still in reasonably good health. 2008 saw the publication of *Katherine's Wish* by Linda Lappin, a novel which more or less takes up the story of KM's life where Stead left off, from 1918 onwards, and her descent into illness, her constant wandering in search of a better climate to relieve the symptoms of her tuberculosis, and her final moving journey to Fontainebleau and death four years later.



Joanna Fitzpatrick's new book is a welcome addition to this collection of fictionalised accounts. Starting with her arrival in London in 1908, Fitzpatrick traces the whole of KM's adult life, using real names, and sticking closely to biographical facts. One of the delights of the book, which adds to the poignancy and authenticity of the story as a whole, is the frequent use of direct passages taken from KM and JMM's own words, mostly italicised (except in the case of telegrams), to differentiate them from the fiction content. Many of these inserted quotations will be familiar to KMS readers, such as the following telegram KM sent to JMM in December 1920, in response to a letter he had sent her, detailing his feelings for Princess Bibesco: 'STOP TORMENTING ME WITH THESE FALSE TORMENTING LETTERS. STOP. AT ONCE BE A MAN OR DONT WRITE ME' (p. 184). Or this – some of the last words she wrote in her notebook, in December 1922 in Fontainebleau: '*I am cold – bring paper to light a fire – cinders – wood – matches – strong – because no more fire – white paper – what is the time – it is late –*

it is still early – is there a glass of wine?' Fitzpatrick has Adele Kafian read out these words in the novel, whilst sat with KM, astutely observing: 'But this reads like a poem of your experience here at the chateau' (p. 307), which of course they were, as KM struggled to make herself understood to the many Russians residing with her at Gurdjieff's Institute. They also attest to the physical hardships of KM's final weeks of life during the bitterly cold winter of 1922-3. This book will delight all KM devotees, who will relish another chance to live through the extraordinary life of KM – a life which never ceases to fascinate and move, no matter how many times it is retold.

Gerri Kimber

In Pursuit . . . a novel, by Joanna Fitzpatrick (2010, La Drôme Press, USA) is available from Amazon.com: http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=in+pursuit+joanna+fitzpatrick&x=8&y=22