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Review of *The Urewera Notebook by Katherine Mansfield*, edited by Anna Plumridge,
Edinburgh University Press and Otago University Press. 2015.

Janet Wilson

When Harold Beauchamp agreed in 1907 that his daughter Katherine Mansfield should go off with friends on a camping trip into the Ureweras, the rugged hinterland of the North Island, he believed it would distract her from a craving for England and overcome her unhappiness and dissatisfaction with her own country. He could not have predicted that the brief diary she would keep over the three weeks she was away would come to occupy a foundational place in her oeuvre, that this journey and the new perspectives it opened up to her would become a vital link between the European world she moved to in 1908 and the colonial world she would leave. Today the 'Urewera Notebook' is seen as 'an exquisite literary relic' (3). For researchers and readers of Katherine Mansfield it is a rich resource because of the wealth of her detailed observation of places and sights in the region known as "New Zealand's Heart of Darkness", and her responses to her travelling companions and the people they encountered, in particular the remote Tuhoe inhabitants of Te Urewera. Most of all its value is for the unrivalled revelations it offers of the youthful KM, a reluctant colonial poised between the England to which she longed to return and her New Zealand country of origin about which she had such ambivalence, unexpectedly finding herself in the little known world of the Tuhoe Maori, a wild and untamed terrain yet also marked as western by the exotic tourist attractions of Rotorua and Whakawerawera; this was a source of curiosity, fascination and, on occasion, frissons of dislike and disappointment.

From an editorial point of view the 'Urewera Notebook', as Plumridge points out, is a notoriously difficult text, because of Mansfield's indecipherable handwriting and the haphazard presentation of entries on the page, with observation and comment about the journey intermingled with ephemera -- laundry lists, accounts, Maori phrases, recipes -- so undermining any narrative coherence. It had previously been edited by John Middleton Murry (*The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (1933) and the *Journal of Katherine Mansfield 1904-22: Definitive Edition* (1954)); by Ian Gordon in an independent edition titled *The Urewera Notebook* published in 1978; and by Margaret Scott in her 1997 two volume edition of Katherine Mansfield's Notebooks. Anna Plumridge's authoritative and scholarly edition does justice to the complexity of the text for the first time, and locates it more comprehensively and accurately in its historical, linguistic, and cultural contexts than any of these. She provides a comprehensive textual apparatus, editorial history and detailed exposition of the itinerary accompanied by full page photographs, some never previously published, a biographical register of members of the camping party, and full annotations (Gordon provided only 43 notes on the text). Her transcription gives readings of difficult to decipher words or words not previously transcribed; for example the epigraph missed by previous editors consisting of the Maori proverb or whakatauki, 'He huruhuru te manu ke rere' (As clouds deck the heavens, so feathers adorn the bird).

Plumridge's overview of the history of the period and of the region benefits from the advances in historical scholarship since Gordon's 1978 edition, largely informed by the revisionist approach to the Treaty of Waitangi and the work of the Tribunal. She had access to records such as the Mohaka ki Ahuriri Report by the Waitangi Tribunal on treaty settlements (2004); Michael King's *History of New Zealand*; Judith Binney's studies of the Ngai Tuhoe and the Urewera during the period of colonisation; and to Lydia Wever's work on tourism and colonial stereotyping of the Maori. She also draws on contemporary newspapers, and archives from the Alexander Turnbull Library. Among the insights into Maori Pakeha relations in the region during this era of rapid colonial expansion is the fact that Beauchamp himself was engaged in landsales on behalf of the Bank of New Zealand. None of the previous editors was familiar with the area or its people but Plumridge visited the Tuhoe, was introduced to descendants of the guides who showed the camping party the route, and includes their personal communications. Her introduction also refers to recent Mansfield scholarship which examines her work in relation to its colonial and metropolitan influences, and she analyses the complexity of Mansfield's responses to landscape as emerging from her mixed progressive English education and her New Zealand childhood: the dominant Romantic gaze of European high culture and her unguarded, intuitive reactions as a 19-year-old, recently returned from England to the colony.

Plumridge's wide-ranging research provides expanded contexts for reading and appreciating the diary, but her main achievement is to reposition Mansfield's journal within a new critical framework of interpretation. She provides a rationale for her new edition by pointing out that her predecessors show no agreement in terms of their editorial approach or their presentation of the text, and that each has been guided by a personal agenda. Focused on Mansfield's subjective impressions, the previous editors were motivated by a biographical impulse to 'locate' the meaning of the diary in the narrative of her life; vastly differing perceptions of KM can therefore be inferred from their textual decisions and interpretations of the manuscript. Plumridge points out that Murry, now widely discredited as an editor, omitted substantial portions of the original text, emphasised Mansfield's unhappiness and anger at being remote from Europe, and aimed for a text that could be read as a personal diary. Gordon, reacting to these limitations, overturned Murry's interpretation by offering the complete text and a largely positive image of the author: his Mansfield was buoyantly happy on her journey, and showed an independence of thought that reflected a growing engagement with the country of her birth, and her 'writers notebook' illustrates a developing craft. Scott, essentially in agreement with Gordon's interpretation of Mansfield, provided a more authoritative transcription but offered minimal scholarly apparatus, very few annotations, and her fidelity to the original layout of Mansfield's page in her text made little sense of her chaotic jumbled jottings, while her interventionist punctuation led her at times to reconstruct Mansfield's voice. Plumridge's skilful piece of reconstruction with its fresh perspectives on past editions can be located within the current momentum of Mansfield studies, in particular Margaret Scott's editions of the *Notebooks*, the five volumes of the *Letters* edited by Vincent O'Sullivan and Scott, and the other editions of Mansfield's entire oeuvre in the Edinburgh University Press series, all of which are making possible new readings of her life and art.

Unlike her predecessors, Plumridge is a scrupulously non-interventionist editor. She offers a faithful transcription which preserves Mansfield's misspellings, odd capitalisations, and above all her punctuation, and she creates narrative continuity in ways that reinforce the sequence of the itinerary, rather than conforming to a preformed image of Mansfield as author. Her decision to preserve the evidence of Mansfield's hastiness -- as in her use of ampersands, which Gordon expanded to 'and', and dashes, which Scott often substituted with alternative punctuation such as commas and full stops -- changes the experience of reading: for the representation of fragments or phrases joined only by dashes acquires rhythmic power, mimicking the flood of thoughts that tumbled through her mind and the speed with which she committed them to paper. This becomes performative and dramatic when Mansfield, writing in the third person, represents a Wagnerian romantic climax: a moment of discovery, with a Maori guide, of the Waikato River, recorded in tumultuous, passionate prose -- complete with a musical subtext -- of heightened affirmation:

with head bent -- hands out -- they battle through -- Then suddenly a clearing of burnt manuka -- and they both cry aloud -- There is the river -- savage grey -- fierce -- rushing tumbling -- madly sucking the life from the still placid flow of water behind -- like waves of the sea -- like fierce wolves -- the noise is like thunder -- & right before them the lonely mountain outlined against a vivid orange sky. (103)

From Plumridge's assured transcription, detailed annotations and illuminating insights, a sharpened, deeper understanding of Mansfield emerges, of a colonial metropolitan on the brink of her departure to Europe, a complex and divided individual conscious of her multiple cultural heritages, able to move between them, eagerly embracing the new territory through which she was travelling, even romanticising the Maori presence, yet capable of being disillusioned at the same time. This more nuanced image than Gordon's and Murry's stresses Mansfield's susceptibility to extremes of excitement and despair, also evident in much of her travel writing set in Europe, as well as her perceptiveness: here it appears, for example, in her intense engagement with Mrs Warbrick, a local of European and Ngati Porou descent who taught her Maori, and her empathy for the niece who read Byron and Shakespeare because of her lack of educational opportunity, and her revulsion at the commercial tourism and sulphuric smells of Rotorua which she associated with the commodification of Maori culture. Plumridge's imaging of the author may be influenced by the argument of Angela Smith, that she is essentially a liminal, in-between figure on the threshold of different worlds. This, of course, is also an interpretation, just like Murry's and Gordon's, but it meshes with other images of subjectivity in Mansfield's prose written at this time, as for example in the sketch 'In the Botanical Gardens', published in December 1907 (so probably written close to the time of this diary), whose narrator moves between a manicured garden and wild bushland. In implying a closer relationship between the author of the notebook and the narrator of her sketches than that proffered by earlier editors, Plumridge seems to bring us closer to the real life Mansfield. Such glimpses into the overlap between KM and her narrative counterparts are likely to inspire rather than close off further investigation about the relationship between her real and fictive selves.

On account of its authoritative introduction, accurate transcription, and extensive annotation, Plumridge's edition of the 'Urewera Notebook' will undoubtedly be regarded as a landmark in the history of this difficult text. My only caveat about this splendid edition, a tribute to the commitment of Edinburgh University Press which has published four volumes of the Edinburgh Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield since 2012, is why the actual text of the Notebook is presented at the end of the lengthy introduction, rather than following immediately after the Textual Introduction and the Note on Editorial Procedures, and why it is reproduced in a smaller font than the General Introduction. The avid Mansfield reader who might want to encounter her words sooner might feel kept in suspense. But with a text as complex as the 'Urewera Notebook' and an edition as fine as this, the question of where the diary is positioned amidst the editorial apparatus is perhaps not all that relevant — and it only draws attention to the real challenges concerning narrative order that Mansfield's chaotic text presents and that Plumridge has dealt with so skilfully.

