PREFACE

Katherine Mansfield has her secure place in the development of the modern short story among an impressive list of writers who were making English literary history. But there is an all-pervasive freshness in her writing; and her capacity for creating convincing dialogue and her acute observation as well as her extraordinary visual memory, make her stand out among her contemporaries. As Virginia Woolf confided in her diary:

"I was jealous of her writing. The only writing I have ever been jealous of?"¹

We might say that her talent was far greater than her achievements, because of her untimely death in 1923. Her stories are significant and are read all over the world with great interest. She had the power of presenting a situation or an atmosphere within a paragraph or a single page. Her characters and the story situations arouse not only our interest but also as it often happens, our sympathy. Her stories are about ordinary people and she succeeded in her aim of writing about them simply, honestly and truthfully.

This study is an attempt to trace the sources of the readers' enthusiastic response to her work through a consideration of her themes and the skill with which they

have been presented, since appreciation is based on the nature of the themes as well as the excellence of the technique.

The work has been divided into six chapters. The First Chapter, introductory in nature, presents a brief account of the life of Katherine Mansfield. Here we see to some extent how her work has been influenced by her life. This is followed by a broad outline of the theory and the history of the short story up to and including her time. The Second Chapter presents an account of her themes in order to bring out their variety as well as to identify dominant trends in her choice of themes. The Third moves on to technique to consider her skill in the devising of crucial plot-situations. The Fourth discusses the range of the characters and the devices of characterization employed. The Next discusses other aspects of technique such as the use of symbolism, the narrative approaches adopted, and devotes a section to her skill in the manipulation of language - among the chief delights of a Katherine Mansfield story - for the purposes of description, narration and dialogue. The Final Chapter briefly reviews the findings and attempts an evaluation of Katherine Mansfield as an artist in this form in terms of her themes and technique.