



# Poems

*Katherine Mansfield*

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## **Poems** Katherine Mansfield

"Damn Katherine! Why can't I be the only woman who knows how to write?" Virginia Woolf Katherine Mansfield was, most of all, a passionate spirit. Her poems are sometimes traditional, sometimes outbursts of emotion, sometimes experiments akin to prose poems. In all she manages a strange alchemy; ordinary words are somehow transformed into powerful arrows of meaning. Into the world you sent her, mother, Fashioned her body of coral and foam, Combed a wave in her hair's warm smother, And drove her away from home. In the dark of the night she crept to the town And under a doorway she laid her down, This little blue child in the foam-fringed gown. And never a sister and never a brother To hear her call, to answer her cry. Her face shone out from her hair's warm smother Like a moonkin up in the sky. She sold her corals; she sold her foam; Her rainbow heart like a singing shell Broke in her body: she crept back home. Peace, go back to the world, my daughter, Daughter, go back to the darkling land; There is nothing here but sad sea water, And a handful of sifting sand. The Sea-Child 1911 These 69 poems were collected together and published in 1923, just after Katherine Mansfield's death. Many had never been published before; others only in magazines. John Middleton Murry explains in his introductory note that they are effusions of what he calls her 'exquisite spirit, ' the uniqueness of which guarantees Mansfield her permanent place in twentieth century literature.

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