

Rue de K. Mansfield

Often have I had thoughts (d’pensez vous)
Working away – consumptive, cold in cold
Life wasn’t always summer in Menton.

Now many seasons, passed, I sit outside
Breathing the collective expiration
Of the antipodean writers since,
Who have followed you to Garavan –
Michael King, Margaret Scott, Owen Leeming and
Janet Frame, Lloyd Jones, Lauris Edmond and
Each finding their way in a foreign land.

Cypress trees did not impair your view and,
La Gare – did it not disturb the trains of thought that
Brought “The Colonel’s Daughters”, “Bliss” and ‘Miss Brill’.

Now Te Urewera’s daughter reposes at your gate sitting
On the verge of memories, under a heavy French sky and
We pen our cards. My friend sends impressions
Home to Auckland while I attempt to live
For an hour, the life of the mentor and
Ponder on changes time has brought to all
Humankind.

Menton unchanged, the Niçoise salads, a
Glass of red wine, enjoyed but not agog
Antipodeans have maturity
From Katherine who was close to Home, England.
In 1923, your travels mind
Blending, your sorrow, your success, approach
And acceptance within the Bloomsbury crowd.
This we only can observe from afar, but
Today I feel close.

Nineteen twenty-three now ninety-seven
Mentor to your antipodean links
Some with aspirations to pen some prose,
Some make a curiosity visit.
This stone memento, the road with your name.
For my friend and I memories stored and
We return to Nice.

Beverley M. Smith