

Notes

AT THE BAY

1. *At the Bay*: the story is set in Karori, the small seaside community outside Wellington, where K.M.'s family moved in 1893, when she was four years old. Her father leased a large house there called 'Chesney Wold' after a stately home in Dickens's novel *Bleak House*.
2. *bush-covered hills . . . bungalows began*: Mansfield never explicitly tells us when a story is set in New Zealand, but relies on indirect clues. 'Bush' was a word used in the British colonies – particularly in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand – for uncleared or untilled land, or simply land outside towns, whether there were trees or shrubs on it or not. And 'bungalows' meant, in Mansfield's day, country cottages erected by settlers in the colonies (the word comes from India and derives from Hindustani).
3. *toi-toi*: a native New Zealand name for cabbage palms – a Maori variant on a Polynesian word. Like the gum-tree on p. 6, with its eucalyptus smell, the toi-toi are a reminder that we are emphatically not in England, despite the familiar-sounding fuchsias, nasturtiums, marigolds and pinks.
4. *telegraph poles*: Antony Alpers points out that these should be telegraph wires, and in his 'Definitive Edition' of *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (Oxford University Press, 1984) he changes the text accordingly.
5. *summer colony*: the transplanted community at the sea for the summer. In fact K. M.'s family lived at the sea all the year round for five years, and her father – like Stanley here – commuted to work every day. The word 'colony' was used at the time for New Zealand itself. With characteristic indirectness, K. M. alludes to this by referring to a colony *within* the colony.
6. *the Burnells' cat Florrie*: the Burnell family are introduced via their cat – appropriately, perhaps, since they are a very extended family, as was K. M.'s own. As in her earlier autobiographical story 'Prelude', her actual Beauchamp family are transformed into Burnells: father Harry becomes Stanley Burnell, mother Annie becomes Linda, and K. M.'s three sisters and one brother (who was known as 'Boy' when he was small) become two sisters and the baby boy. K. M.'s maternal grandmother, Granny Dyer, is renamed Mrs Fairfield, a punning translation of Beauchamp, and also a partial allusion to her maiden name, Mansfield, which K. M. borrowed. Annie's sister Belle, who lived with the Beauchamps, is rechristened Beryl. And Annie's brother-in-law, Valentine Waters, who moved with his family to a smaller neighbouring house in Karori

at the same time as the Beauchamps, is Jonathan Trout. Like his fictional counterpart he worked for the Post Office in Wellington, was musical (a church organist) and had two sons, Barrie and Eric (Pip and Rags in the story). K. M. was not at all alone in using the materials of her own life in this way: D. H. Lawrence did so habitually, including indeed K. M. herself (see Introduction pp. ix-x). It's often said that 'At the Bay' is a kind of answer to Lawrence's *Women in Love*. She wanted, she said in a letter, to explore 'the love between growing children - and the love of a mother for her son, and the father's feeling - but warm, vivid, intimate - not "made up" - not *self-conscious*'. Another, younger woman writer, Christina Stead (an Australian, and a modernist), made elaborate and sometimes vengeful use of her own family, and seems to have taken her cue in part from Mansfield, in autobiographically based novels like *The Man Who Loved Children* (1940) and *For Love Alone* (1944).

7. *whare*: a Maori word for a hut or shack.

8. *The whole family of Samuel Josephs*: the family was based on the family of Walter Nathan, a Jewish friend and business-partner of Harry Beauchamp. Mrs Samuel Joseph's adenoïdal voice (amused/abused) is a low-comic device that has as much to do with class as with race. K. M. harks back to Dickens's broad social comedy, but her addiction to mimicry also points forward to a modern interest in telling stories from the inside of characters' heads, not from any neutral-seeming narrator's angle.

9. *dinkum*: an Australian word meaning honest, genuine or real.

10. *In a steamer chair, under a manuka tree*: a 'steamer chair' was a lounging-chair, of the kind used on passenger ships. 'Manuka' is the Maori name for a local tree with aromatic leaves. These names underline the sense that this is a distant world, across the ocean, and also prepares for Linda's mental travels in her chair.

11. *Picotees*: a kind of carnation.

12. *Johnny cake*: according to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'Johnny-cake' was perhaps once upon a time journey cake, and may have an African-American origin.

13. '*Where are the other noble dames?*': Jonathan Trout is literary and sentimental, and talks in garbled quotations from poems and plays. For instance, 'Or do I fondly dream?' on p. 31 echoes John Milton's elegy *Lycidas*, line 56, 'Ay me, I fondly dream!'

14. *Nobody answered him*: after this line, in the 1922 American edition published by Knopf in New York, K. M. inserted a final division, and numbered the last short paragraph XIII.

THE GARDEN PARTY

1. *The Garden Party*: the story seems to have been based on events one day at 75 Tinakori Road in Wellington, the house K.M.'s family had moved to in 1898. K.M. and her sisters returned there from school in London in 1906, and

she described it in her journal as 'a big, white-painted square house with a slender-pillared verandah and balcony running all round it'. There was a view over the harbour in one direction, and in the other were workmen's shacks.

2. 'You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one.': Laura is usually taken to be an ironic portrait by K. M. of herself during her brief career as a young lady. Her name, and the names of her sisters Meg and Jose and her brother Laurie have been borrowed from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Their surname, Sheridan, is mentioned casually later (p. 41).

3. *karakas*: 'karakā' is a Maori name for a native tree with leaves rather like those of English laurel.

4. *Telephone*: the telephone was a fairly new and exciting gadget: a sign that the Sheridans, like the Neaves in 'An Ideal Family', live in most modern middle-class luxury.

5. *canna lilies . . . on bright crimson stems*: canna lilies come in red, orange and yellow as well as pink, and are natives of warm climates.

6. '- and I can't understand . . . those poky little boles -': Mrs Sheridan's words are almost exactly the same as those used by Constantia in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' - "I can't think how they manage to live at all" (see p. 53) - except that Constantia is thinking about the fate of mice in a house with no crumbs. And there is a thematic connection between the two, for Mrs Sheridan's bright idea (p. 48) of giving party leftovers to the family of the dead man is based on the assumption that the poor are parasites, or at least indebted to the rich for the crumbs that fall from their tables. A submerged pattern of association is at work (see Introduction, p. xix): earlier on Mrs Sheridan misreads a sandwich label "Egg and -" Mrs Sheridan held the envelope away from her. "It looks like mice. It can't be mice, can it?" "Olive, pet," said Laura . . . (p. 43)

THE DAUGHTERS OF THE LATE COLONEL

1. *Ceylon mail* . . . : Ceylon, a British colony in the era of this story, is now Sri Lanka. K. M. seems to have been drawing on the experience of her friend Ida Baker, who had been born in Burma, and was never exactly at home in London (see Introduction p. xi). Almost all K. M.'s British characters are uprooted people, with few local family ties.

2. *Bushes*: the steel or whalebone stiffeners used in corsets.

3. *evening Bertha*: a name for the lace collar of a low-necked evening dress.

4. *It was inside her that queer little crying noise*: compare the last words of 'Miss Brill' (p. 114): 'But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying.'

5. *Until the barrel-organ stopped playing . . . Now? Now?*: this closing sequence was directly inspired by some of Ida Baker's own words. See Introduction, p. xvii.

NOTES

MR AND MRS DOVE

1. *Rhodesia*: this country, settled by British colonists led by Cecil Rhodes in 1890, is now Zimbabwe. Reggie (compare Benny in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel') is another of K. M.'s unheroic colonial adventurers.

THE YOUNG GIRL

1. *the Casino*: this is almost certainly the one at Monte Carlo, a favourite winter haunt of a moneyed, restless international set: "I've just met Mrs MacEwen from New York" (p. 80).
2. *I*: the narrator remains nameless, and almost sexless – though asking the young girl's permission to smoke (p. 82) reveals him as a man. The girl's namelessness is more interesting and suggestive, emphasizing her archetypal quality, and the ready-made role her world has handed her.

LIFE OF MA PARKER

1. *Shakespeare, sir?*: the reference to Shakespeare is a fairly heavy hint that we're to think of Ma Parker as the sort of person a real writer would be – or should be – portraying. The story's modern 'literary man', for whom Ma Parker chars, shows only a token interest in her, unlike (of course) K. M.

MARRIAGE À LA MODE

1. *Moirra Morrison's*: this character is husband William's main rival, the leader of the little band of fashionable free-loaders who have invaded his home. She mocks conventional morality and is sexually ambiguous herself (compare Mrs Harry Kember in 'At the Bay'), though here with an artistic slant. 'Titania' is Shakespeare's Queen of the Fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the trip to Paris is shorthand for avant garde taste and sexual adventure.
2. *'would you like me to wear my Nijinsky dress tonight?'*: Nijinsky was the male star of Diaghilev's Russian ballet. The use of the word 'dress' is deliberately ambiguous: Bobby Kane's style is outrageously camp, a teasing challenge to straight William.

THE VOYAGE

1. *The Picton boat*: this announces a New Zealand setting: K. M. had made more than one childhood voyage to Picton, once as a baby and again when she was five.
2. *ulster*: a long, loose overcoat, first introduced in 1867, by a manufacturer from Belfast, in Northern Ireland.

NOTES

3. *fascinator*: a headscarf or shawl for wearing at home in the interests of warmth and decorum, rather like a bedjacket.
4. *bush* . . . *umbrella ferns*: the bush and umbrella ferns remind us of the remoteness of the place: the little girl awakening to a strange early morning view is like a discoverer.
5. *bluchers*: boots named after a Prussian commander, von Blücher (compare Wellingtons, named after the Duke of Wellington). Grandpa has been gardening.

MISS BRILL

1. *Jardins Publiques*: public gardens. This alerts us to the setting on the French Riviera, where Miss Brill is a year-round resident, supporting herself by teaching English (as usual, the reader assembles this information bit by bit).
2. *They were all on the stage*: something of this feeling is generated in the other Riviera story, 'The Young Girl', with its role-playing and voyeurism, but theatricality is pervasive in K. M.'s writing, from the excitement of back-stage preparations in 'The Garden Party' to the dramatic monologue of 'The Lady's Maid'.

HER FIRST BALL

1. *the Sheridan girls and their brother*: this story's young girl, Leila, is a country cousin being introduced into society by the smart Sheridans of 'The Garden Party'.
2. *Twig?*: middle-class slang meaning 'understand' or 'catch on'. On the brother-sister relationship see Introduction, pp. xiv-xvi.
3. *'More pork'*: more pork is the popular name for this New Zealand owl, a name which echoes its call.

THE SINGING LESSON

1. *The Singing Lesson*: music is central to this story, but plays an important part in many others: K. M.'s characters' lives are full of popular tunes, sentimental songs and dance music, and she often imagines them setting their own inner thoughts to music, like Constantia in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel', inspired by a barrel-organ in the street (*'A week since father died / A week since father died'*), or Reggie in Rhodesia in 'Mr and Mrs Dove', who sat on his dark veranda 'while the gramophone cried, "Dear, What is Life but Love?"' In 'The Singing Lesson' music's power to accommodate secret, private meanings in public is the point.

NOTES

THE STRANGER

1. *I brought her up here . . . myself*: for the background of this story, see Introduction, p. xix. Antony Alpers (ed. cit.) changes the disguised place-names back to Auckland (here Crawford) and Napier (here Salisbury).

BANK HOLIDAY

1. *Bank Holiday*: this story, and particularly the first paragraph, is a clear example of Post-Impressionist word-painting. For once it is nearly impossible to decide on the setting, for this is a slice of the kind of carnival life that occurs in countries around the world – at once festive, time-bound and tawdry.

AN IDEAL FAMILY

1. *No man had a right . . . it was uncanny*: see Introduction, pp. xv — xvi: Harold – compare Harold Kember in 'At the Bay' and Basil in 'The Singing Lesson' – is a version of what was known as a 'ladies' man', with not only a hint of the gigolo, but also (much more disturbing to the family's patriarch) of bisexuality, hence 'uncanny'.
2. *cabbage palms outside the Government buildings*: the palms and Government buildings announce a New Zealand setting.
3. *the sixty-guinea gramophone*: the Neaves (compare the Sheridans in 'The Garden Party') live in bourgeois luxury: the price of the gramophone is a reminder of the wealth needed to sustain their style (this would have been at least a third of a clerk's annual salary at the time). The relation between work and play is one of this story's themes. In Mr Neave's ideal family men should work and women are obliged to play: son Harold, however, threatens to make a nonsense of this neat division of labour.

THE LADY'S MAID

1. *Eleven o'clock. A knock at the door*: apart from this brief stage direction, the whole story is told in the words of the lady's maid herself. We are meant, however, to read between her lines, and see implications that she does not. K. M., describing another story she wrote about this time, said: 'the story is told by a man who gives himself away, and hides his traces at the same moment'. It is an effect characteristic of her style – oblique, ironic, sometimes comic but more often haunting – pointing to the gaps between people, and the divisions inside people's personalities. It is also something the short story is well-fitted to do, since readers are invited to scrutinize this kind of text, hold it in their minds all at once, and think twice (at least) before moving on.

PENGUIN BOOKS

The Garden Party and Other Stories

Katherine Mansfield was born in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1888 and died in Fontainebleau in 1923. She came to London for the latter part of her education, and could not settle down back in Wellington society; in 1908 she again left for Europe, never to return. Her first writing (apart from some early sketches) was published in *The New Age*, to which she became a regular contributor. Her first book, *In a German Pension*, was published in 1911. In 1912 she began to write for *Rhythm*, edited by John Middleton Murry, whom she eventually married. She was a conscious modernist, an experimenter in life and writing, and mixed with others of her kind, including D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. With 'Prelude' in 1916 she evolved her distinctive voice as a writer of short fiction. By 1917 she had contracted tuberculosis, and from that time led a wandering life in search of health. Her second book of stories, *Bliss*, was published in 1921, and her third, *The Garden Party*, appeared a year later. It was the last book to be published in her lifetime. After her death, two more collections of stories were published, as well as her *Letters* and later her *Journal*.

Virginia Woolf wrote of Katherine Mansfield: 'She was for ever pursued by her dying, and had to press on through stages that should have taken years in ten minutes . . . She had a quality I adored and needed; I think her sharpness and reality – her having knocked about with prostitutes and so on, whereas I had always been respectable – was the thing I wanted then. I dream of her often . . .'

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