

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Treatment of Childhood
in Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand
Stories

By

Elizabeth Jean Tarrant

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 1988

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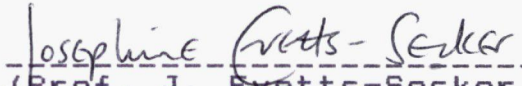
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ISBN 0-315-46654-5


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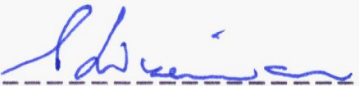
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "The Treatment of Childhood in Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand Stories" submitted by Elizabeth Jean Tarrant in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



(Prof. J. Evetts-Secker,
Dept. of English)



(Dr. R.S. Struc,
Dept. of Germanic and
Slavic Studies)



Supervisor
(Dr. C.S. Wiseman,
Dept. of English)

(Date) 28. 9. 88-----

ABSTRACT

During the last years of her life, Katherine Mansfield focused on the memories of her New Zealand childhood for the material which she used to create her masterpieces "Prelude," "The Doll's House," and "At the Bay." These memories became the shaping influence for many of her short stories. She used and explored what had happened to her as a child, and thus interpreted accurately and beautifully a part of New Zealand history at the turn of the twentieth century. But in her delineation of childhood her stories transcend mere locality, and she brings to them a universality of experience. Furthermore, she is careful not to name Wellington or New Zealand, even though to New Zealanders the settings are unmistakable. Katherine Mansfield's work reveals her unique ability to create an intimate approach to childhood, and she allows the reader to see the world through the eyes of a child. Her stories reflect upon the mysteries of subtle relationships between adults and children within a middle class colonial family. She assiduously avoids the trap of sentimentality in her treatment of childhood, and reveals a keen sense of humour with a natural

sense of comedy. Her New Zealand stories and critical writings which deal specifically with stories about childhood emphasize the importance of memory and imagination. Consequently, the fictitious children in the Burnell family sequence in "Prelude," "The Doll's House," and "At the Bay," are based on the author's own family. Towards the end of her life, disillusioned and weakened through chronic ill health, Katherine Mansfield nostalgically thought back to the happier times of her New Zealand childhood for material which she turned into some of her finest work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Christopher Wiseman, for his scholarly advice, guidance, help and encouragement. I am grateful as well to my friends Donald and Carol Bain, whose generosity made it possible for me to visit Wellington New Zealand. And I would like to extend special thanks to Michael and Sarah Tarrant for the time they have spent on the word processor on my behalf, and to Neil and Paul Tarrant for their support and sense of humour.

DEDICATION

In memory of Iris and Patrick Curran

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INTRODUCTION

Philippe Aries, in his book Centuries of Childhood, states that "the idea of childhood corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult"(128). This thesis proposes to examine this concept in Katherine Mansfield's short stories "Prelude," "The Doll's House," and "At the Bay," as well as in her critical writings which deal specifically with the treatment of childhood in fiction.

Katherine Mansfield's short stories, set in the New Zealand of her childhood, are now generally agreed to be her greatest achievement. They contain many recollections of her own childhood, and the fictitious Burnell family depicted in "Prelude," "The Doll's House," and "At the Bay," are based on Katherine Mansfield's own --the Beauchamps. In these stories, the author evokes a serious and realistic concept of childhood, and assiduously avoids any sentimentality. Indeed, the printer of "Prelude" is said to have exclaimed: "My! but these kids are real!" (Bates 132). At one time or

another, many authors have written about childhood, but few more honestly, and with more understanding, than Katherine Mansfield.

Her views concerning an author's interpretation of childhood in fiction are recorded in a collection of her critical writings--Novels and Novelists. For example, in the chapter "Magic Door," she encapsulates her theory of how an author should recreate childhood memories:

And therefore the childhood that we look back upon and attempt to recreate must be --if it is to satisfy our longing as well as our memory-- a great deal more than a catalogue of infant pleasures and pangs. It must have, as it were, a haunting light about it. (Novels and Novelists 288)

As several critics have observed, this view of childhood closely resembles that of Walter Pater, whose work Katherine Mansfield admired. In her Journal (December 1908), Katherine Mansfield acknowledges her admiration for Walter Pater: "I should like to write a life much in the style of Walter Pater's 'Child in the House'" (37).

George Shelton Hubbell sees a similarity between Katherine Mansfield's attitude towards children and that of Samuel Butler:

Samuel Butler held that children are human beings, and Katherine Mansfield insists upon treating them as such; not withstanding our ancient social usage to the contrary....In her stories, each child must be treated separately, and the parents are lucky if they get as much attention as their offspring, or as much respect. (326)

Indeed, Katherine Mansfield places the children in her stories in their own world, with its own laws of good and evil, and one which is distinctly separate from the adult world. Not that it is all that unusual to separate a child's world from the adult's, as Philippe Aries confirms: "Today, as also towards the end of the nineteenth century, we tend to separate the world of children from that of adults"(38). But what Katherine Mansfield does is to make the world of a child to be every bit as exciting, interesting and enlightening as an adult's.

One of the salient features of the Burnell children and their cousins as they appear in "Prelude," "The Doll's House," and "At the Bay" is that they have a special understanding between them. Russell King aptly describes this as "a corporate spirit and natural understanding" (105). This "corporate spirit and natural understanding" is not to be found anywhere else in her stories. As she once confessed to another young writer, she "wanted to get as near the exact truth as possible" (Cox 164).

It was the death of her only brother Leslie Beauchamp in World War One (1915) which seems to have convinced Katherine Mansfield to write stories about their childhood memories of New Zealand. During his last leave in London, Leslie and Katherine talked and reminisced about their lives as children in Wellington. All this is recorded in her Journal in October 1915:

I think it was the family feeling--we were almost like one child....I felt that again--just now--when we looked for the pears in the grass. I remembered ruffling the violet leaves with you --Oh, the garden....We shall go back there one day--

when it's all over. (84-85)

And again after his death, which left a tremendous void in her life:

Now --now I want to write recollections of my own country. Yes, I want to write about my own country till I simply exhaust my store. Not only because my brother and I were born there, but also because in my thoughts I range with him over all the remembered places. I am never far away from them. I long to renew them in writing....That's all. No novels or problem stories, nothing that is not simple, open. (93-94)

This was written in December 1915, and early in the new year she started writing "Prelude."

In "Prelude," and in the other Burnell stories, the children live a deceptively comfortable existence within a tranquil middle-class family. Their lives are seemingly taken up with nothing more serious than moving house, the arrival of a doll's house, or a sea-side holiday. The time is Wellington during the Victorian era. Wellington then was at an awkward stage of transition between town and city. Its buildings,

its social gatherings, its proverbial wind, even its special brand of snobbery are all woven into the stories (McCormick 90). Consequently, what is so remarkable about "Prelude," "The Doll's House," and "At the Bay," is the way in which Katherine Mansfield makes the seemingly ordinary and trivial everyday events appear so memorable. Nowhere else in her work is she so brilliant as in her technique of handling the deceptively narrow range of childhood experiences. As early as 1909, in a poem she wrote dedicated to Stanislaw Wyspianski, she reveals a certain fondness for her roots in New Zealand:

From the other side of the world,
 From a little island cradled in the giant
 sea bosom,
 From a little land with no history,
 (Making its own history, slowly and
 clumsily
 Piecing together this and that, finding
 the patterns solving the problem,
 Like a child with a box of bricks)
 (Letters and Journal 39)

Chapter One will examine Katherine Mansfield's approach to the delineation of childhood in her

critical writings. Emphasis will be placed on those writings which deal exclusively with her views of other writers about children. Furthermore, Katherine Mansfield's view regarding the writer's use of memory will be examined. References will also be made to her admiration for Anton Chekhov and Walter Pater who influenced her in writing about children.

Chapter Two will concentrate on "Prelude." A link will be established between an early story "The Birthday" and "Prelude," as a means of showing Katherine Mansfield's development as a writer of stories to do with childhood. In addition, I should try to show how her art reaches a high point with "Prelude." A close examination of the child Kezia will be incorporated, as she is the crucial link between the stories.

Chapter Three will focus on "The Doll's House," and will examine the author's handling of the issue of class structure in a village school, as seen through the eyes of children. "The Doll's House" reveals Mansfield's understanding of the rebellious child. Here I shall also discuss her avoidance of the trap of sentimentality.

Chapter Four will conclude the thesis with a

discussion of "At the Bay," which like "Prelude", includes all the members of the Burnell family. Here too, as in "Prelude," the grandmother plays a significant role in the lives of the children. Consequently, it is to her that the child Kezia turns regarding the subject of death. This is started in "Prelude", and is finally dealt with fully here.

CHAPTER ONE

"THE MAGIC DOOR"

William Walsh describes Katherine Mansfield as "a writer of a markedly autobiographical sort. She explored, used and organised what had happened to her" (155). He further describes her as "the poet of a family with young children" (155). For, during the last years of her all too short life, she focused on her New Zealand childhood for the material which she used to create such masterpieces as "Prelude," "The Doll's House," and "At the Bay." A look at some of the pertinent details of Katherine Mansfield's life is necessary as a means of gaining a deeper insight into her work. This is particularly important in the study of her treatment of childhood in the New Zealand stories, when she draws on her own memories of her childhood in Wellington. Her husband John Middleton Murry agrees with Walsh when he writes about Katherine Mansfield and her approach to her work: "If ever there were a writer whose life and work were inseparable, it was she" (71).

Katherine Mansfield was the pen-name of Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp (1888-1923). She was born in Wellington, New Zealand, the third daughter of Harold and Annie Beauchamp. Katherine had two older sisters, Vera and Charlotte, and a younger sister and brother, Jeanne and Leslie Heron. Along with her two sisters she was sent to Queen's College, London to complete her education from 1903-6. Katherine returned to Wellington, but was unable to settle there. Consequently, with a small allowance from her father, she returned to London. She is now considered to be one of New Zealand's most accomplished self-exiles. She left Wellington because she was convinced, as were other New Zealand and Australian writers at the turn of the century, that the only avenue to artistic success lay through escape to Europe (Jones 23).

Having been fortunate to have had a comfortable and secure childhood, her adult years proved to be the very opposite. Katherine Mansfield led an unsettled, reckless life. In 1909, she married George Bowden, but left her husband the next day. She became pregnant by another man, and subsequently gave birth to a stillborn child in Bavaria. She later used Bavaria

as the background for her first collection of short stories In a German Pension (1911). In 1911 she met John Middleton Murry, who was then the editor for Rhythm and The Blue Review. Mansfield contributed stories, and many were based on her New Zealand childhood. From the beginning, Murry and Katherine's relationship was unsettling and insecure. They moved constantly from one place to another. And after she obtained a divorce from her first husband, they were married in 1918. Their unsettled existence and her own carelessness finally took its toll on her health, and she developed tuberculosis and a weak heart. As a result, Mansfield had to spend the winters alone in the south of France. Sometimes, her old schoolfriend Ida Baker kept her company there. Nevertheless, she still endured long bouts of loneliness. In a desperate attempt to regain her health and a cure, she entered the Gurdjieff Institute at Fontainebleau in August, 1922, and died there on January 9, 1923.

What is so remarkable is that out of this sad turbulent adult existence, Katherine Mansfield managed to create her brilliant and tranquil New

Zealand stories which are considered to be her finest work.

It is generally accepted that Katherine Mansfield turned to writing about her Wellington childhood after the death of her only brother Leslie in France in World War One. He had spent his last leave with her in London, in 1915, and they had talked at length about their childhood in Wellington. Leslie re-awakened for Katherine Mansfield precious memories of their grandmother, parents, sisters and cousins. He was killed that same year in October.

She was devastated over the news of his death, and subsequently returned to the south of France to recover. Her friend Anne Estelle Rice describes Mansfield in her grief: "Katherine deeply loved this little brother. He was a link with her childhood; a link with nostalgic memories. She sat in a rocking chair humming, and the hidden grief was measureless...." (80). As a lasting tribute to the memory of her brother and their childhood she revised a story called "The Aloe," and this became the masterpiece "Prelude." It was followed by family stories such as, "At the Bay," "The Doll's House," "The Garden Party" and others. Anne

Estelle Rice also recalls another time when Mansfield was recovering from her grief. They were sitting on top of a cliff overlooking the open sea and eating strawberries:

The tips of her fingers were stained a bright red. She said "But what strawberries! Each one was the finest--the perfect berry--the strawberry absolute--the fruit of our childhood!" The very air came fanning on strawberry wings. And down below in the pools, little children were bathing with strawberry faces.... (82)

Elizabeth Bowen believes that when Katherine Mansfield wrote "Prelude" "she crossed a threshold" (129), and, that in her New Zealand stories the characters were known to the author, whereas her Londoners were only guessed at (Bowen 133). But Katherine Mansfield, like her brother, was never to see New Zealand again.

Katherine Mansfield died when she was only thirty-four, and left behind about ninety stories, some of them unfinished (Stead 29). During her lifetime, three collections of her short stories were published. They include: In a German

Pension (1911); Bliss and Other Stories (1920); and The Garden Party (1922). Two collections were published posthumously called The Doves' Nest and Other Stories (1923), and Something Childish but Very Natural (1924).

From Dickens and Wordsworth, Katherine Mansfield inherited a knowledge of the ineradicable value of childhood, which is at the core of her imaginative world, providing its meaning and redeeming myth. In her process of recollection she used her memories of childhood as the shaping influence for many of her short stories. As D. W. Klein suggests:

Expert in the weathers, mental and circumstantial, which authenticate a child's milieu (and guiltless of the bathos and charlatanry which are often their Dickensian equivalents), she exerts at times a unique, puzzling power over memory, refreshing it to remind us what we have forgotten.... (202)

Indeed, her first stories were written for and about children. When she was just twenty and still living in Wellington (1908), Katherine Mansfield and her friend Edie Bendall planned a book

together. Edie was responsible for the illustrations, and Mansfield wrote the stories and poems (Meyers 27). Even though the book was never published, the stories and poems remain: unfortunately the illustrations are lost. The poems are a pastiche of Robert Louis Stevenson's A Child's Garden of Verses, and Claire Tomalin describes them: "on the sweet side for modern tastes, they are charming and skilfully written and certainly publishable" (35). Years later, in 1921, Katherine Mansfield used Edie's surname for the characters in her story "Sixpence" (Meyers 27).

Her first collection of short stories In A German Pension was published in 1911. Out of these, one is of interest to this thesis, and requires more extended notice. This is "A Birthday" which was first published in Orage's New Age (18 May 1911). Despite the German names, the story is considered to be the first in the Burnell family sequence, and is set in Wellington, New Zealand (Alpers 549). E.H. McCormick suggests that the story is clearly an early attempt to handle the characters and scenes which later appear in "Prelude" (88). For instance, the father figure of Andreas Binzer is really Stanley Burnell with a

different name. The setting maybe German, but to New Zealanders the people and places are unmistakable:

The picture of Binzer peering with disgust into a "gully", filled with empty tins and fennel, and, as a result, "a letter to the papers", is one that fits with ease into the New Zealand landscape, though scarcely Bavarian. The grandmother, the wife, the servant girl are lightly but recognizably sketched, and we are introduced to the close intimacy of the New Zealand home, with its emotional cross-currents, and small antagonisms. (McCormick 88)

Another important feature to be found in this early story is the "wind." Wellington is, of course noted for being an extremely windy city. And the author herself was born on a stormy night. Mansfield's grandmother often told her of the storm on the day of her birth. Consequently, she more than half believed she remembered it herself:

She had come forth squalling out of a reluctant mother in the teeth of a "Southerly Buster". The grandmother, shaking her before the window, had seen

the sea rise in green mountains and sweep the esplanade. The little house was like shell to its loud booming. Down in the gully the wild trees lashed together and big gulls wheeling and crying skimmed past the misty window. (Mantz 62-63)

This passage is reminiscent of the storm in "A Birthday", which also centres around the birth of a child:

A tremendous gust of wind sprang upon the house, seized it, shook it, dropped, only to grip the more tightly. The waves swelled up along the breakwater and were whipped with broken foam. Over the white sky flew tattered steamers of grey cloud.

(740)

Probably no one in her family attached any romantic significance to the fact that Katherine's birth took place during a storm, but she was later to make much of it as a symbol and prophecy (Dinkins 20).

Two stories, "New Dresses" (1910), and "The Little Girl" (1912), were published after the author's death in 1923, in a collection called Something Childish (1924). These two stories are

significant because they indicate Mansfield's true craft--the short story of childhood based on her own memories. Furthermore, they are, as McCormick suggests, the main links between "A Birthday" and "Prelude" (89).

For instance, in "New Dresses", the central figure is a child "Helen". Helen will later evolve into the recurring child "Kezia" in the Burnell family chronicle. The story develops along the lines of "A Birthday" with the family arrangement of father, mother, grandmother and sister. Later, of course, other children will be added to the list. According to Antony Alpers, Mansfield gave the characters in "New Dresses" German names, but J.M. Murry, her husband and literary executor, changed the family surname to "Carstairs" (552).

"New Dresses" lacks the charm and tenderness of her later stories. Moreover, like "The Little Girl", it is sentimental -- an aspect which she vehemently avoids in her later stories about childhood. Mansfield also displays a hostile attitude towards her depiction of the child's parents; something that will soften in her later stories. What is significant is the manner in which the children and grandmother are consistently

perceived. Elizabeth Bowen in her elegant essay "A Living Writer" describes her technique thus:

Katherine Mansfield, we notice, seldom outlines and never dissects a character: instead, she causes the person to expose themselves--and devastating maybe the effect....The New Zealand characters are on a quite other, supreme level. They lack no dimension. Their living-and-breathing reality at once astonishes and calms us: they belong to life, not to any book--they existed before the stories began. In their company we are no longer in Katherine Mansfield's: we forget her as she forgot herself. The Burnells of "Prelude", "At the Bay" and "The Doll's House" are a dynasty....old women, young girls, children are in a major key. (132-133)

Furthermore, "New Dresses" marks the appearance of the "difficult child." Helen, like Kezia in the other Burnell stories, reveals a rebellious non-conformist side to her nature. However, apart from the parents, the other adults see Helen's spirited nature in a more positive light. As the doctor

says in the story: "Give me Helen every time. She'll come to her own yet and lead them just the dance they need" (544).

In "The Little Girl" Helen is now the little girl Kezia. And, like Helen she gets herself into trouble. Moreover, it was Murry again who changed the little girl's name from Kass (the shortened form for Kathleen, the author's real name) to Kezia, when he included the story in Something Childish (Alpers 552). This time, the trouble erupts between Kezia and her father, as a result of Kezia's tearing up some valuable papers to make stuffing for a cushion. The father is again depicted as tyrannical. Antony Alpers suggests that it was written by Katherine Mansfield as a subconscious attempt to deal with her ambivalent feelings towards her father (552). This severe portrait of the father figure is to be softened in her later stories.

This story, like "New Dresses," has a sentimental ending. By the time her technique is firmly established in "Prelude", the question of sentimentality no longer exists. In a letter to her friend Ida Baker in August, 1921, Mansfield

makes her distaste for anything sentimental quite clear:

That kind of yearning sentimental writing about a Virginia Creeper and the small haigh voices of tainy children is more than I can stick. It makes me hang my head.... (L&J 229)

Much has already been written about Chekhov's influence on Katherine Mansfield's stories, and there is no doubt that his influence shows up in her early stories. In a letter to Sydney Schiff, dated 1 December 1920, she writes: "I confess that Tchekov does seem to be a marvellous writer. I do think a story like "In Exile" or "Missing" is frankly incomparable" (L&J 203). However, by the time the author had published "Prelude" in 1918, her own inimitable style and technique were firmly established. Elizabeth Bowen is surely right when she says "Tchekov was her ally, but not her authority. In her field, Katherine Mansfield worked by herself" (121). H.E. Bates believes that she learned two important things from Chekhov: first, the use of casual and oblique narration; and second, the possibilities of telling the story by

what was left out as much as by what was left in (128-129).

But it was Walter Pater who influenced Mansfield quite early in her writing about children. Vincent O'Sullivan believes that her conception of life was close to Pater's own (101). He suggests that towards the end of 1908, after her own return to England, it was Pater who was the obvious model for Katherine Mansfield (O'Sullivan 101). In her Journal during this period she writes:

I should like to write a life much in the style of Walter Pater's "Child in the House" about a girl in Wellington; the singular charm and barrenness of that place - with climatic effects - wind, rain, spring, night - the sea, the cloud pageantry. (37)

No such story was written; nevertheless, she drew on this concept in later years, and expanded the overall design--hence the Burnell family sequence.

"The Child in the House" by Walter Pater, is a portrait of a young anti-hero, Florian Deleal. The descriptions in the story are presented as recollections of the grown man, and throughout the

story he remains a sensitive, but disembodied consciousness. The strong sense of home is one of the chief means Pater uses to bring the child before the reader. For example:

For it is false to suppose that a child's sense of beauty is dependent on only choiceness or special fineness, in the objects which present themselves to it, though this indeed comes to be the rule with most of us in later life; earlier, in some degree, we see inwardly; and the child finds for itself, and with unstinted delight, a difference for the sense, in those whites and reds through the smoke on very homely buildings, and in the gold of the dandelions at the road-side, just beyond the houses, where on a handful of earth is virgin and untouched, in the lack of better ministries to its desire of beauty. (18)

It is not surprising after reading this, that there is a similar quality of drawing on childhood memories. As O'Sullivan observes:

A reader is not likely to turn from the Journal entry to Pater's tale without its

early pages putting to one with surprising accuracy, not how Mansfield wrote, but the manner in which she remembered.... those houses where they had lived as children.

(103)

Ian Gordon, editor of Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand stories in Undiscovered Country, argues that critics and biographers have been led astray by a "too-ready and facile identification of her characters and the real-life figures that lay behind them" (xvi). Consequently, he emphasizes, it is well to remember that Mansfield was a writer of creative fiction. Nevertheless, he does acknowledge, that everything in her stories is unquestionably based on experience: "Katherine wrote of nothing that she had not herself experienced. But it is always experience transmuted" (xvii). Gordon stresses this aspect of her work as a means of showing how easy it is to make false assumptions, and therefore belittle her achievement as a writer of fiction.

He cites a story written by Mansfield in 1916 called "A Recollection of Childhood" as a good example of the difference between fact and fiction. In this story, he asserts that she is creating much

more than she is remembering (xvi). The story revolves around the author's memories of her baby sister Gwen, who died in infancy. As Gordon points out, at the time of Gwen's birth Katherine Mansfield was only two years old. Therefore, the story with its "rounded and sharply realized characterization and authentic dialogue, is pure imaginative creation of a high order" (Gordon xvi). The same year that "Recollections" was written, Mansfield also finished "Prelude," and used Gwen's name in one of the children's imaginary games. Furthermore, a "doll's house" makes its first appearance in "Recollections," and later is developed into the story of the same name in 1921. C. K. Stead, also asserts similar views about Mansfield's handling of fact and fiction. He claims "she learned to re-enter the characters of her childhood.... and imaginatively to reinterpret them in terms of an adult consciousness" (37).

Her critical writings, as well as the development of her early stories, provide a valuable insight into her method of depicting children in fiction. Mansfield became a regular fiction reviewer for The Atheneum, a position she held from April 1919 until December 1920. Her

reviews are to be found in a collection called Novels and Novelists (1930). Unfortunately, only a small number of those writers she reviewed are remembered today and most of the writers in whom she herself was most interested she had no opportunity to treat (Dinkins 30). In broad terms, Mansfield wanted her criticism to be more personal and more concrete; much in the same way as she wanted her fiction to be "personal" (Hanson 2). Of the author's emphasis on memory, and her use of it at the centre of the artistic process, Clare Hanson suggests that she used her memories in such a way as to be:

both selective, isolating salient features of a particular event or experience, and synthetic, superimposing and juxtaposing remembered scenes and images so that in time (in the fullest sense experience is literally reconstituted. (11)

Hanson equates this method with Wordsworth's almost mystical sense of the beneficent process of memory in "The Prelude" (13). She further cites Katherine Mansfield's review of Dorothy Richardson's book The Tunnel as being close to the reviewer's own: that is, that memory idealizes and makes judgements and

discriminations (Hanson 12). We may examine an excerpt from Mansfield's review of The Tunnel:

And then it is, in the silence, that memory mounts his throne and judges all that is in our minds--appointing each his separate place, high on law, rejecting this, selecting that--putting this one to shine in the light and throwing that one into the darkness.

We do not mean to say that those large, round biscuits might not be in the light, or the night in spring be in the darkness. Only we feel that until these things are judged and given each its appointed place in the whole scheme, they have no meaning in the world of art.

(N&N 6)

Some of her other reviews for The Atheneum are equally interesting, because they deal specifically with books about childhood. This is where Katherine Mansfield is able to assert her own specific views on the subject. Furthermore, her own style as a writer of short fiction was established by the time she was to write for the magazine. And of course, she had already published

"Prelude" (1918) in her collection Bliss and Other Stories, which had received much praise.

The subject of memory surfaces again in her review of The Gay Dombeys by Sir Harry Johnston (1919). She equates Johnston's style with Dickens, and claims that the characters in his story are quite realistic. Interestingly enough, Katherine Mansfield considers this to be something of a flaw: "for the reader, they are never quite so convincing as the unreal" (16). Obviously, she prefers the method which Gordon describes as "creating much more than she is remembering" (xvi). In this review, she also conveys a sense of sadness as she remembers her own childhood:

Perhaps one of the rarest and most delicious is meeting with an old play-fellow who is just come from the country of our childhood, having an endless talk with him about what is changed and what is the same....

We shall never see those people again; we shall share nothing more with them. We shall never push open their garden gates and smell our way past the flower bushes to the white verandahs where

they sit gossiping in the velvet
moonlight. (14)

This could well be an excerpt from her own Journal and similar to those thoughts which she recorded after the death of her brother Leslie:

And now I know what the last chapter is.
It is your birth--your coming in the
autumn.... That chapter will end the book.
The next book will be yours and mine. And
you must mean the world to Linda; and
before even you are born Kezia must play
with you--her little Bogey. (L&J 66)

Clare Hanson suggests that there is a particularly close connection between Katherine Mansfield's critical and creative writing, which she believes, arguably, to be a trait belonging to modernist writers of fiction (9). She compares Mansfield's critical writings with Virginia Woolf's early essays. Her belief is that most modernist writers found it necessary to prepare and create the audience for their work, explaining their aims and technique (Hanson 9).

This indeed, could be argued for Mansfield's review of two stories, Adam of Dublin by Conal O'Riordan, and Forgotten Realms by Bohun Lynch--

both of which are reviewed under the title "The Magic Door." Her critical views in this section are important, because they re-echo what she herself has already created in her masterpiece "Prelude" and which she is to continue to do in "The Doll's House" and "At the Bay" in 1921. In the first paragraph Mansfield asks the question: "How shall a child express what is the essence of childhood--its recognition of the validity of the dream?" (288). Her answer is that "It is implicit in the belief of the child that the dream exists side by side with reality; there are no barriers between" (288). Mansfield is referring as much to herself as she is to the author of Adam of Dublin when she writes about the child who is stolen away by the fairies: "What the exile, the wanderer, desires is to be given the freedom of his two worlds again--that he may accept reality and live by the dream" (288). She commends the author for his proper use of atmosphere in the novel, and the way in which O'Riordon never lets the reader forget the setting which is Dublin. The same can be said of Katherine Mansfield's New Zealand stories. Adam she describes as "one of those small boys (why are they always boys?) who occur from time to time in

literature to trouble our hearts. Mr. O'Riordon has but discovered a new name for him--and a new place" (290).

Forgotten Realms is as different a novel as is possible, but the intention of the author the same. The hero is a grown man, who seems impelled suddenly to leave home and familiar surroundings and to set about "as a child might in imagination, to discover, to observe lovely things, to seek adventure" (291). Mansfield quotes from the novel: "such moments held a child's attitude towards the universe, induce a child's vision. Children were much nearer to the secret" (291). In her discussion of the why and wherefore that the man had this need to wander, Mansfield could very well be describing her own wanderings. She too wandered a great deal during her adult life from house to house, and back and forth between England, France and Germany. Therefore, her eventual need to return to her happier memories of childhood:

And thus he is led to look back with longing upon the time when the "magic door" was not shut for him, and the purpose of his journey is revealed might one then in after years, after searching

and much pain, find one's way back to it,
and would they open it when he came again?

(291)

More than anything, in her reviews which deal with childhood and childhood memories, is the idea of freedom for the child to develop his or her imagination. The children in her stories are given a great deal of freedom to play and to have fun. She also emphasizes the sense of belonging a child must feel in the home. These qualities she discusses in her reviews of Jeremy by Hugh Walpole and The Bonfire by Anthony Brendon. She believes Hugh Walpole has been successful in his portrayal of Jeremy, but fails in conveying a sense of wholeness in the family. As for The Bonfire, from start to finish she considers it to be "a sorry view of childhood.... we find this idea of the persistent viciousness of normal healthy children very hard to swallow" (46).

Both Ian Gordon and Clare Hanson agree that Katherine Mansfield's time spent writing for The Atheneaeum was to be of enormous help to her in shaping the material she used in her "best stories." What makes Mansfield's stories of childhood so special, particularly in light of her

personal suffering and chronic ill-health in her adult life, is that she was still able to bring to her stories the freshness and untouched apprehension of a child. Christopher Isherwood, suggests that in order for her to re-enter her childhood paradise, Mansfield wanted to turn herself back into a child--and, of course, this was not possible (65). In an attempt to find a solution to what was her dilemma, Isherwood believes that:

We can never return to our childhood paradise in a state of primitive simplicity. For we have eaten the apple of experience and we cannot unlearn the knowledge it has brought us. But what we can do, is to reconcile experience with innocence, intellect with instinct. (68)

Katherine Mansfield's childhood had been a happy one; therefore, the reason why she returned to her childhood, as Isherwood suggests, particularly in her best stories, was an attempt to relive the childhood paradise which she had lost (65).

CHAPTER TWO

"PRELUDE"

"Prelude" is subtle and evocative, and is regarded by some as one of the most sophisticated stories ever written (Allen 173). It began as a novel The Aloe in 1915, and then was put aside by the author until the following year. Early in 1916, while still grieving over the loss of her only brother in World War One, Katherine Mansfield returned to The Aloe. In her Journal dated February 16, she addresses the memory of her brother: "The Aloe is right. The Aloe is lovely. It simply fascinates me, and I know that it is what you would wish me to write (L&J 66). The story was revised between 1916-1917, and became "Prelude." In 1918 it was published on its own by Leonard and Virginia Woolf. Then in 1920, it became the principal story in Mansfield's second collection Bliss and Other Stories (Stead 38). "Prelude" also marked the beginning of the richest and most fruitful period of the author's working life. Moreover, in her technique and the handling of

material, it makes a decided advance on her earlier work.

"Prelude" is crucial in the criticism of Katherine Mansfield's art, because it represents something of a breakthrough in the short story. With "Prelude," her emotional, intellectual, and creative powers came together fully for the first time. It is the story in which Mansfield felt she had found her method as a writer (Hanson "Essay" 29). Above all, the story is a triumph of discipline over the unruly circumstances and confusion of her personal life (Porter 49-50). Katherine Anne Porter describes "Prelude" and the other New Zealand stories that follow as "having a quality of a curious timelessness about them" (51).

Her mature technique in "Prelude" eliminates explanation and analysis. Consequently, she expresses her themes concretely through dramatic action. She uses interior monologue, and evokes a scene through associating patterns of imagery. Each scene contrasts with the next, and the story just ends, without any climax, conclusion, or dénouement. Jeffrey Meyers compares Katherine Mansfield's style with Watteau and Chopin in her use of subtle details, precise phrasing, delicate

observation and concentrated emotion (128). For instance, in the opening paragraph of "Prelude," she manages to introduce no fewer than six of her main characters with apparent ease:

There was not an inch of room for Lottie and Kezia in the buggy. When Pat swung them on top of the luggage they wobbled; the grandmother's lap was full and Linda Burnell could not possibly have held a lump of a child on her for any distance. Isabel, very superior, was perched beside the new handy-man on the driver's seat. Holdalls, bags and boxes were piled upon the floor. "These are absolute necessities that I will not let out of my sight for one instant," said Linda Burnell, her voice trembling with fatigue and excitement. (Collected Stories 11)

Elizabeth Bowen in her discussion of Katherine Mansfield's method of characterization believes that "Character cannot be more than shown--it is there for use, the use is dramatic. Foreshortening is not only unavoidable, it is right" (132). This is, indeed, the case when one reads the opening paragraph. The reader is able to infer immediately

that the grandmother is the one bearing the load of the move, that Linda Burnell is more interested in her belongings than her children, and that she has a nervous temperament.

In "Prelude," her first major story set in New Zealand, Katherine Mansfield creates visible pictures of the landscape and people. Inanimate objects, such as a table, a lamp, a chair, become imbued with a life of their own. Anne Estelle Rice sums it up with "her pen a magic wand lighting on any detail to impart a fairy transformation" (85).

"Prelude" marks a return to the author's interest in the depiction of childhood, which she adapts perfectly to her needs. Like all her best New Zealand stories, it transcends mere locality (Gordon 11). She is careful not to name Wellington or New Zealand. When Katherine Mansfield was born in a square wooden house with a red tin roof, the country was only forty-eight years old (McIntosh 76). The newness and the rawness, as well as the open environment, are all recaptured in "Prelude." The story is set in a conventional Colonial Victorian background, and the children are depicted as children anywhere in a middle class family. What is significant is the author's interpretation

of the facts of childhood as she remembered them. Their shaping influence is important to the understanding of a writer in whose work childhood--as state and as experience--plays so great a part (Dinkins 21).

The story revolves around the moving from one house to another, and covers a period of about forty eight hours. There is no conventional plot, and the story is divided into a series of twelve episodes. In a letter to Dorothy Brett October, 1917, Katherine Mansfield states her intention more fully:

"What form is it?" you ask. Ah Brett, it's so difficult to say. As far as I know, it's more or less my own invention.... You know, if the truth were known, I have a perfect passion for the island where I was born. Well, in the early morning there I always remember feeling that this little island has dipped back into the dark blue sea during the night only to rise again at gleam of day: all hung with bright spangles and glittering drops.... I tried to catch that

moment--with something of its sparkle and its flavour. (Letters Vol.I 331)

In all that concerns her craft, I believe that her childhood years spent in Wellington and Karori were more important than the rest put together. And it is pertinent to emphasize that the recollections of her childhood, which she drew upon for her stories, have qualities other than nostalgia.

Katherine Mansfield does not explain everything in her stories. As she describes her method in her Journal:

The truth is one can only get so much into a story; there is always a sacrifice. One has to leave out what one knows and longs to use. Why? I haven't any idea, but there it is. It's always a race to get in as much as one can before it disappears.

(L&J 251)

She succeeds in "Prelude" in putting together things from her own experiences in such a way that the reader understands and recognizes them. And she does this with her own brand of freshness. Sidney Cox describes her method: "her many kinds of personal and artistic fastidiousness provide

readers of her stories an unusual fullness of fresh significant realization" (163).

In "Prelude," essentially the stress is on character, and the subtle interrelationships between the children and adults. For her, this one family was enough to express a universality of experience (Gordon 19). "Prelude" is the story in which Katherine Mansfield "found" her method as a writer. It also includes the major theme--returning to her natural roots in the New Zealand of her childhood (Hanson 30). Ian Gordon believes "Kezia and the children occupy the eternal present of childhood" (23). Moreover, the children in "Prelude," and particularly little Kezia, seem to have much more awareness of life than the adults are disposed to imagine.

Most of the incidents in the story belong to the world of children, and the problems are never more serious than those of a tranquil household. "Prelude" shows an immense advance in anything preceding it. Thus it reveals a maturing technique now perfectly adapted to her needs (McCormick 89). Furthermore, she is primarily important to New Zealand culture because in "Prelude" and the other "Burnell" stories, Katherine Mansfield interprets

accurately and beautifully a part of New Zealand history (McCormick 91).

It is not surprising that Mansfield turned to the world of childhood for her stories. During the last few years of her all too short life, she suffered from chronic ill health, and no doubt was disillusioned with life in general. In her Journal May 19, 1919 she writes:

Now it is May 1919. Six o'clock. I am sitting in my own room thinking of mother: I want to cry. But my thoughts are beautiful and full of gaiety. I think of our house, our garden, us children--the lawn, the gate, and mother coming in. 'Children! Children!' I really only ask time to write it all.... (154)

Jeanne Renshaw, the author's younger sister, confirms the happy time they shared as children:

Indeed, as children we had nothing but love, discipline and security--what more does a child need? Our parents were not possessive or restrictive, and we were encouraged to make our own pleasures.

KM and I were born with a sense of wonderment and awareness of this lovely

world and our early days were spent among the most beautiful sites our native land could offer--New Zealand being a country of sun and freedom. (74)

This is exactly what Mansfield manages to convey in "Prelude," and particularly the sense of "security," "wonderment" and "awareness."

The child Kezia is central to the story, functioning as the important link between all the characters. She is the idealized picture of the child Katherine Mansfield ("Kass" or Kathleen Beauchamp) never was. The name "Kezia" is to be found in the Book of Job. Kezia or Cassia, was Job's second daughter. Written on an endpaper of Katherine Mansfield's Bible, now located at the Turnbull Library, Wellington, is a pencilled note to this effect (Alpers 190). Antony Alpers also suggests that she must have been familiar with the use of the name "Kezia" in the Wellington "social notes" on the "Ladies Page" of the Evening Post. The column always opened with "My dear Kezia" (Alpers 190). In fact, all the characters names in "Prelude" are based on her own family, or people she knew. "Burnell" was her mother's middle name; "Stanley" was her paternal grandmother's maiden

name: "Fairfield" is the Anglicized Beauchamp; "Beryl" after Aunt Belle; "Pat" was the real Pat Sheehan handyman to the Beauchamps; and the "Kelvey's," based on the MacKelvey's who also worked for the Beauchamps; and "Mansfield" was the author's grandmother's name (Berkman 88-89).

Jeffrey Meyers suggests that the title "Prelude" alludes to Kezia moving to a new experience: "Now everything familiar was left behind" (17). Furthermore, like Wordsworth's long poem of the same title, the story portrays an imaginative awakening and the "growth of a poet's mind" (Meyers 128). Kate Fullbrook calls Kezia the "Wordsworthian child, who wonders at the world and who is alternately shocked and delighted by her explorations (68). Broadly speaking, not only "Prelude", but all her work contains something of Wordsworth's concept that "we may all become as little children to know the kingdom of heaven on earth" (Berkman 13). In Wordsworth's "The Prelude," he places great emphasis upon the part played by the restorative power of imaginative moments recollected from his own childhood (Noyes 243):

Oh mystery of man, from what a depth

Proceed thy honors. I am lost, but see
 In simple Childhood something of the base
 On which thy greatness stands.

("The Prelude" xii 272-5)

As already seen in her Journal, after the death of her brother, this is exactly what Katherine achieved with "Prelude." Moreover, like Wordsworth, she wrote her "masterpiece" when she was at the height of her powers as a creative writer, and when her emotional recollections of early childhood were vividly remembered.

The Burnell family is depicted in this, and in other stories, like all early colonial families. They are virtually self-sufficient and fairly isolated. The stories evoke images of the silence of the bush; the clear bright light; the smell and sounds of exotic trees, plants and birds unlike anything in Europe. And in the background are the blue mountains with the sea around them (McIntosh 81). As McIntosh sees it, this was the element in "Katherine's 'undiscovered country' that she had managed to convey, and convey better than any other New Zealand writer" (82).

This is what Kezia sees during the move to the family's new house. The author's technique

involves a continual shifting of focus from the close view to a larger perspective. In the first episode of the story, Kezia wanders back alone to have a last look at the old house. First, she looks through the coloured glass squares in the dining room window. It becomes a kaleidoscope to her. She sees her little sister Lottie outside:

Kezia bent down to have one more look at a blue lawn with blue arum lilies growing at the gate, and then at a yellow fence. As she looked a little Chinese Lottie came out on to the lawn and began to dust the tables and chairs with a corner of her pinafore. Was that really Lottie? Kezia was not quite sure until she had looked through the ordinary window. (14)

This is what any child, with a child's curiosity, would do, and Kezia seems more thoughtful and imaginative than most. Then she moves to what has been her grandmother's room, and in one brilliant paragraph the author creates vivid images of those unseen dangers which disturb Kezia and most children:

Kezia liked to stand so before the window.

She liked the feeling of the cold shining glass against her hot palms, and she liked to watch the funny white tops that came on fingers when she pressed them hard against the window pane.... With the dark crept the wind snuffling and howling.... As she stood there, the day flickered out and dark came. Kezia was suddenly quite, quite still with wide open eyes and knees pressed together. She was frightened.

(15)

The Samuel Josephs, the Burnells' next-door neighbours, provide the humour in the first part of the story. They help to alleviate the tension when Kezia and Lottie are left behind during the move. Mrs. Samuel Josephs is kind-hearted, but the antithesis of the more refined Burnells. The S.J.'s, as the author calls them, are hospitable towards the little girls, but one of the boys cannot resist teasing Kezia: "Moses grinned and gave her a nip as she sat down; but she pretended not to notice. She did hate boys" (13). Mrs. Samuel Josephs is the target for Katherine Mansfield's keen sense of humour. She is described as being like "a huge warm black tea cosy," and, to

make matters worse, she is afflicted with nasal speech: "It's all right, by dear. Be a brave child. You come and blay in the durserly!" (12). Katherine Anne Porter describes Mansfield's sense of humour thus:

She possessed, for it is in her work, a real gaiety and natural sense of comedy; there are many sides to her that made her able to perceive and convey in her stories a sense of human beings living on many planes at once, with all the elements justly ordered and in right proportion.

(49)

It is this sense of humour which saves a situation from becoming sentimental, such as the above when Kezia is close to tears and missing her family. The Samuel Josephs reappear in "At the Bay" and their antics on the beach are again contrasted with the behaviour of the Burnell children. Moreover, as in "Prelude," the Samuel Josephs only appear once, and then they are forgotten --as if to say "they have served their purpose."

The district and house where the Burnells move to in the story is based on the one in which Katherine Mansfield and her family lived when she

was five to ten years old. Karori is a secluded valley 800 feet above the sea, closed by rugged hills covered by gorse. By 1843, the road had crossed the steep rural settlement connected with Lambton Harbour. The road was a difficult mountain one, which wound for three and a half miles S.W. from Wellington (Mantz 95). This was the road which the "Store-man" followed on the windy night, when Kezia and Lottie make their journey to the new house. When the little girls arrive, Kezia rushes towards her beloved grandmother: " 'Dah!' cried Kezia, flinging up her arms. The grandmother came out of the dark hall carrying a little lamp. She was smiling" (18).

Mrs. Fairfield, the grandmother, appears to be the central figure in the lives of the children far more than is the mother. Linda Burnell is portrayed as a woman worn out with child-bearing and is pregnant again in "Prelude." Consequently, the grandmother takes charge of the children, the settling in of the new house, and the running of the home in general. The author paints a loving picture of Mrs. Fairfield, and Kezia refers to her as "my granma." She certainly conveys an air of common-sense, serenity, kindness and wisdom, and it

is obvious that the entire family love and respect her. Mansfield describes her in vivid terms when the old lady is washing up at the kitchen sink:

Old Mrs. Fairfield's arms were bare to the elbow and stained a bright pink. She wore a grey foulard dress patterned with large purple pansies, a white linen apron and a high cap shaped like a jelly mould of white muslin. At her throat there was a silver crescent moon with five little owls seated on it, and round her neck she wore a watch-guard made of black beads. (29)

When Kezia first sees her grandmother in the new house, she is coming towards her carrying a little lamp: "The grandmother came out of the dark hall carrying a little lamp. She was smiling" (18). This "little lamp" is an important symbol in the story, because it is associated with the grandmother who is a source of light and comfort to the whole family, and especially to Kezia. Moreover, Mrs. Fairfield passes the little lamp to Kezia. "Kezia," said the grandmother, "can I trust you to carry the lamp?" "Yes, my granma" (18). Thus, the link is established between the generations. In the next story, "The Doll's

House," the little lamp becomes the key symbol; in "At the Bay," the grandmother is seen lighting the lamp at the end of a perfect day. Elizabeth Bowen believes that Katherine Mansfield was drawn to old people: "She was drawn to old people seeing them as victors. They stood to her for vision, and for the patience she impatiently longed to have" (121). Indeed, in "Prelude," Katherine Mansfield gives the grandmother pride of place.

Willa Cather tells an interesting true story told to her by a fellow passenger whom she met and talked with during a trip home from Naples in 1920. He (she calls him Mr. J--) had actually come across the Beauchamp family when they were sailing from New Zealand to an Australian port. He was particularly struck by the way in which the grandmother had the children "perfectly under control" (129). He distinctly remembered "the old lady, and a little girl with thin legs and large eyes who wandered away from the family and who apparently wished to explore the steamer herself" (Cather 129-130). What is so curious about his story is that his descriptions of the grandmother and the little girl are so reminiscent of the grandmother and Kezia in "Prelude." What he

noticed especially about the little girl was that she like to wander about by herself:

.... intensely alert, with a deep curiosity altogether different from the flighty, excited curiosity usual in children. She turned things over in her head and asked him questions which surprised him. She was sometimes with her grandmother and the other children, but oftener alone, going about the boat, looking the world over with quiet satisfaction. (Cather 131)

Years later he came across Katherine Mansfield in London, and was saddened to see what had become of her: "she seemed very frail" (Cather 133). The significance of the anecdote is that one is immediately struck by the similarities between the real-life people and the characters in her story.

Kezia feels perfectly safe when her grandmother is around. They even share a bedroom in the new house. The children and Mrs. Fairfield are seen in a clear uncomplicated light, whereas the other adults appear to be more complicated and bathed in a light haze. Linda Burnell and her unmarried beautiful sister Beryl admire their

mother. Linda, like her children, loves her and admires her serenity which Linda has not inherited:

She thought her mother looked wonderfully beautiful with her back to the leafy window. There was something comforting in the sight of her that Linda felt she could never do without. (31)

Linda shows very little interest in her children, and is more than happy to let her mother run things. In fact, she appears to be just like another older child whom her mother continues to care for. This is a character trait that Katherine Mansfield will pay attention to later in the sequel to "Prelude"--"At the Bay."

William Walsh suggests that Katherine Mansfield has created in "Prelude" the ideal family, which combines the keeping of the very old and the very young (161). He describes the grandmother in the story as someone who combines "in a surprising but harmonious way the virtues of the well-bred with the quality of classlessness" (Walsh 161). And as for the children, Walsh describes them thus: "The young, on the other side, show vitality unqualified by the bias of a priori.

Their innocence is not merely negative but a living capacity for experience" (161).

The aloe is the central symbol in "Prelude," which the original title indicates. The plant reveals a special link between the three generations--Mrs. Fairfield, Linda Burnell, and Kezia. Moreover, they are the only ones to notice it in the story. Kezia sees it for the first time when she is exploring the garden in the new house. The reader follows the little girl through the garden, and the author draws attention to the flora - native plants to New Zealand which grow in abundance:

There were clumps of fairy bells, and all kinds of geraniums, and there were little trees of verbena and bluish lavender bushes and a bed of pelargoniums with velvet eyes and leaves like moth's wings. There was a bed of nothing but mignonette and another of nothing but pansies-- borders of double and single daisies and all kinds of little tufty plants she had never seen. (33)

The peacefulness of the garden contrasts with the previous one where the women are busy sorting

out the interior of the new house. And the garden assaults the senses--one can almost smell the flowers and marvel at the variety and abundance of growth. Anne Estelle Rice, a friend of Katherine Mansfield, recalls her friend's love of colour: "Strong colour gave her joy; she had no use for pastel shades, being a reminder of the endless days of English mist and fog" (82). Kezia's explorations end with her attention being drawn to the large aloe plant that grows on a little island in the middle of the drive. The child is immediately fascinated because it is a plant she has never seen before:

Nothing grew on the top except one huge plant with thick, grey-green, thorny leaves, and out of the middle there sprang up a tall stout stem. Some of the leaves of the plant were so old that they curled up in the air no longer; they turned back, they were split and broken; some of them lay flat and withered on the ground.
(34)

As a symbol, the aloe and its exact meaning in this story has never been agreed upon. Most critics assume, for example, its obvious phallic

connotations, or its symbol of female fertility. Clare Hanson in her interesting essay "Katherine Mansfield and Symbolism," sees the aloe as an image of the fundamental life force itself, which of course includes sexual force, in human life (33). Moreover, Hanson suggests the aloe belongs to what Katherine Mansfield called "the flowering of the self" (Journal 205). Linda and Kezia notice that the plant is about to flower. Consequently, Hanson sees the aloe foreshadowing the future blossoming of the child Kezia and Linda's future acknowledgment of her love for her baby son in "At the Bay" (33).

Of the many critics I have read who discuss the aloe's symbolic function in the story, not one has seen it as a symbol of death. This is the opposite of Hanson's view, but it is, nevertheless, a plausible supposition, particularly, when one considers that the story was written as a tribute to her dead brother and in memory of their childhood in Karori. Furthermore, Katherine Mansfield was herself dying from tuberculosis just when she was about to come into her own as a writer of distinction. In "Prelude," when Kezia asks her mother whether the plant ever flowers, her mother

answers "Once every hundred years" (34). Then later when it is dark, and Linda and her mother are again looking at the plant in the moonlight, they notice the plant has buds and is about to flower. The aloe plant, sometimes called "the century plant" dies after it flowers (Encyclopedia 11), which in turn is the opposite view of the plant being a flower of life. One can suggest, therefore, that the aloe is more a symbol of death rather than the flowering of life.

Moreover, the plant as a symbol of death brings to mind a conversation Katherine Mansfield had with Sidney Schiff. Schiff was a patron of the arts, and Stephen Hudson records their meeting. He visited her at a villa where she was living in the south of France. During a walk in the garden, they came across an aloe plant, and Katherine turned to Schiff and said "Aloes only flower once in seven years and then die, they say. A symbol! Of what, do you think?" (Hudson 205). She does not choose to elaborate further. There are several varieties of aloe plants to be found in warm climates and she must have been remembering the big aloe plant in the garden in Karori when she was a child. Moreover, she goes on to ask Schiff: "Do

you understand? Have you ever felt that strange familiarity?" (Hudson 205).

The supposition that the aloe is a symbol of death in "Prelude," is further justified when only the very next day after Kezia has seen the plant, she witnesses the killing of the duck. And this scene proves to be the most significant and dramatic scene in the story. Moreover, what proves to be Kezia's first encounter with death is further explored in "At the Bay," when she openly asks her grandmother about death and its consequences.

Kezia, her sisters and boy cousins lose some of their innocence when they witness the handy-man, Pat Sheehan, killing a duck for their dinner. Pat Sheehan, like Mrs. Fairfield, becomes a significant figure in the childrens' lives. As their mother appears totally disinterested, she allows them freedom to play and explore without too much intervention. Pat Sheehan is based on a real character who was a handy-man in the Beauchamp house when they lived in Karori (Mantz 102). Like Mrs. Fairfield, and the "real grandmother," Pat genuinely loved the children. He understood the child's world, and obviously had a wonderful way with them. Katherine Mansfield wrote one of her

first stories about him called "About Pat" in 1905. In her Scrapbook (1905) she describes him:

At that period our old Irish gardener was our hero. His name was Patrick Sheehan.... He used to hoist me up on to the table, and recount long tales of the Dukes of Ireland whom he had seen and even conversed with. We were most proud of our gardener having rubbed shoulders with Ireland's aristocracy.... of those late evenings he had wonderful stories to tell.

(4-6)

In "Prelude," Katherine Mansfield immortalizes the character of Pat Sheehan. Frank O'Connor describes this episode as "one of the most remarkable scenes in modern literature" (140). Katherine Mansfield in her brilliance, juxtaposes and contrasts two scenes with the children playing games. The first which leads up to Pat and the killing, involves the children playing innocent games of make-believe. They play "house," with Isabel, the oldest, in the role of mother, bossing her little sisters. Kezia is the cook "beating up a chocolate custard with half a broken clothes peg.

The dinner was baking beautifully on a concrete step" (40-41).

Their cousins Pip and Rags and their dog Snooker join them, and they continue playing happily for awhile:

Both of them liked playing with girls--Pip because he could fox them so, and because Lottie was so easily frightened, and Rags for a shameful reason, he adored dolls.

(43)

And even the dog is involved, if somewhat reluctantly. Then Pat enters the scene, and subsequently comes the complete switch around.

Pat, believing he is entertaining the children, shows them how to go about killing a duck for dinner. "Come with me," he said to the children, "and I'll show you how the Kings of Ireland chop the head of a duck" (45). The children, apart from Pip are not that sure they should witness it. Isabel asks "Do you think we ought to go?" (44). The children show signs of nervousness when they see all the ducks milling around: "their darting heads and round eyes frightened the children--all except Pip" (45). The children are obviously not prepared for what is to

follow: "up the blood spurted over the white feathers and over his hand" (46). Poor frightened Kezia screams "Put the head back! Put the head back!" (46). But Katherine Mansfield does not allow sentimentality to ruin the reality of the scene. Because, like most happy and secure children, their attention is soon diverted. Pat in his wisdom and kindness lifts up Kezia:

"There now," said Pat to Kezia. "There's the grand little girl."

She put up her hands and touched his ears. She felt something. Slowly she raised her grieving face and looked. Pat wore little round ear-rings. She never knew men wore ear-rings. She was very much surprised. (47)

Frank O'Connor in his discussion of Katherine Mansfield's works writes:

For me this is one of the most remarkable scenes in modern literature, for though I have often accused myself of morbid fastidiousness, of a pathological dislike of what is obscene and cruel, I can read it almost as though it were the most delightful incident in a delightful

day.... This is the Garden of Eden before
guilt or shame came into the world.

(140)

C.W. Stanley makes an interesting observation by drawing a similarity between the duck-episode and the last part of one of Katherine Mansfield's early stories "The Child Who Was Tired." This story was included in the early collection In A German Pension. It is a chilling tale about a little girl who deliberately smothers a baby to death (30). When the baby struggles, the author describes it as "like a little duck with its head off wriggling" (752). Similarly, when Pat Sheehan catches the duck, Pip says "I don't mind how much he kicks" (45). All the children are affected afterwards, and it signifies the beginning of the end of their innocence. It is something a child would never forget.

Pat, like Uncle Jonathan in "At the Bay," is sensitively portrayed. Stanley Burnell in marked contrast is what Katherine used to call "the Pa Man." In "Prelude," she has softened his character from the totally insensitive portrait of Andreas Binzer in "The Birthday" (1911). Binzer is an earlier version of the Stanley Burnell character.

Burnell is probably no worse than most fathers in his social position in Victorian Wellington. Nevertheless, he is unequivocally portrayed as being loud voiced and patronizing towards his family, but not tyrannical. He obviously loves his wife and children and is generous towards Mrs. Fairfield and Beryl. He is depicted as either getting ready for work, or returning from work. Consequently, he only appears briefly around three times in the story. Living in a house full of women and little girls he constantly seems to be demanding attention when he is at home, and is never once shown playing with the children. But the children have Pat, and are perfectly contented to be left alone. The lasting impression that Stanley Burnell leaves is of one who is always thinking of food, or demanding someone find his slippers.

"Prelude" begins and ends with Kezia. She is to appear again in "The Doll's House" and "At the Bay." Kezia and the other children become memorable for the way Katherine Mansfield creates through them an intimate approach to childhood. George Hubbell says it best when he refers to Kezia as the "complete child, having whom, we may take

the others for granted.... in her and in the art which she is presented, we find the best possible summary of the genius of Katherine Mansfield" (335).

CHAPTER THREE

"THE DOLL'S HOUSE"

George Hubbell describes Katherine Mansfield as "a prophet of children"(325). And nowhere is this more evident than in her little masterpiece "The Doll's House." The story is a continuation of the Burnell family chronicle, and an enduring record of the small country school in Karori which Katherine Mansfield attended along with her sisters Vera and Chaddie (Meyers 151). "The Doll's House" is a much shorter story than "Prelude", and is comprised of four sections. It deals exclusively with the Burnell children and their friends, who are in opposition to the washerwoman's children--Lil and Else Kelvey. The adults are only allowed brief appearances.

At the centre of the story is the wonderful, life-like doll's house, which is placed in the Burnell's front garden because of the smell of new paint:

There stood the doll's house, a dark, oily, spinach green, picked out with bright yellow. Its two solid little

chimneys, glued on to the roof, were painted red and white, and the door, gleaming with yellow varnish, was like a little slab of toffee. Four windows, real windows, were divided into panes by a broad streak of green. There was actually a tiny porch, too, painted yellow, with big lumps of congealed paint hanging along the edge. (Collected Stories 383)

In "The Doll's House", Katherine Mansfield expresses through the child Kezia, her understanding of, and sympathy with, the realities of social barriers between children in a country school. Furthermore, the doll's house becomes a simulacrum of the adult world, and the adult world finds its image in the school children (Kleine 204). This brings to mind William Wordsworth's "The Child is Father of the Man;" (Preface 327). Russell Noyes in his introduction to Wordsworth's poem "Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood," says "Childhood has the vision, and manhood the wisdom, their days bound each to each by a continuous, indestructible spiritual energy"(244). This seems to be an appropriate comment for Katherine Mansfield's

recollections of her childhood in "The Doll's House."

She first used the title "The Washerwoman's Children" for her story, but she later changed it to "The Doll's House" (Scrapbook 224). It was published posthumously in the collection The Doves' Nest, and Other Stories, 1923.

As the story is based on actual persons from her childhood (Alpers Stories 573), some details of her early schooldays provide a better understanding of her story. Karori primary school under New Zealand's Education Act of 1877, provided free, secular and compulsory schooling for all children (Alpers 13). In 1893, the three Beauchamp children enrolled in the school since it was the only one available (Mantz 116). Few children in those days began their education in private schools, but at Karori certain social barriers set apart those children from the "big house" with their special pinafores and special voices--accurately re-created in "The Doll's House" (Alpers 13). William Walsh suggests:

The judgment that "the line had to be drawn somewhere" points more to a desire for differentiation--of dress and

behaviour, perhaps--than the plain recognition of it one would get in a society irremediably involved with class. But in whatever way class existed in Wellington, the doll's house was the occasion for its intrusion into school in the fiercer and less compromising way it takes with the young. The purity of the children's attitude to the doll's house is muddled as the toy becomes a piece in the political game of in-and-out. Fascination becomes hysterical excitement, then impersonal cruelty as the children turn on the outsiders, Lil and Else. (166)

"The Doll's House" is primarily the story of Kezia and the Kelvey children. Kezia has a key role similar to her role in "Prelude". And the author takes the reader in amongst the children as a means of seeing the action through the eyes of a child. Not since her early story "The Child-Who-Was-Tired" (1911), does Katherine Mansfield make such a moral and social statement. Hubbell suggests that the character of Else meant a great deal to the author (333). Else is characterized as being a quiet artistic child, who is always in the

shadow of her older sister Lil. Similarly, Kezia is a thoughtful child, something of a loner, and also in the shadow of her older popular sister Isabel. Consequently, they can be seen as kindred spirits.

There is evidence to be found in a collection of Katherine Mansfield's Juvenilia that she wrote an early story about the Burnell children's doll's house called "The Tale of the Three" (Juvenilia 47). Antony Alpers also suggests that "the germ of 'The Doll's House' "existed earlier in a story Katherine Mansfield wrote for her High School Magazine called 'A Happy Christmas' (15). It tells the story of the well-to-do family the Courtneys, and the children's preparation for a Christmas party at which there will be "a tree for the poor children" (Alpers 15):

Such a funny crowd it was that came that night, ragged and dirty, but having a look of curiosity on their faces. When they had all come, the study door was thrown open and the Christmas tree was seen in all its splendour. I wish I could have let you see the delight on the faces of the children. (Alpers 16)

Similarly, Lil and Else show the same sense of wonder and delight when they get a look at the inside of the doll's house.

The school that Katherine Mansfield and her sisters attended in Karori stood back from the road on a slight rise. Above, there was a gully where the children played during their dinner break. All the local children living in and around Karori attended this school. It was then a rough building consisting of three rooms, and outside surrounded by pine trees (Mantz 116). These are the trees which the children in "The Doll's House" sit under to eat their dinner:

The little girls sat under the pines eating their thick mutton sandwiches and big slabs of johnny cake spread with butter. While always, as near as they could get, sat the Kelveys, our Else holding on to Lil, listening too, while they chewed their jam sandwiches out of a newspaper soaked with large red blobs.

(387)

The boys and girls playground areas were marked off by "tarred palings." This was the only evident division among them (Mantz 116-117). For Katherine

Mansfield and her sisters, it was an easy one mile walk from "Chesney Wold" in fine weather; in bad, Pat the handyman drove them to school in the cart (Mantz 116).

It is fortunate that the author and her sisters were placed in this school, or we would not have had "The Doll's House" and its magic. As Sylvia Berkman describes it:

Out of the memory of the village school with its social differentiations, primitive and cruel, as such distinctions always are among children, flowered the beautiful "The Doll's House" after a score of years. (19)

There were, of course, classes in the sense of the rich and poor. In each settlement small cliques usually ran all public functions. But, there was little of the forms or trappings of the English class system (Sinclair 98). Nevertheless, in "The Doll's House", Katherine Mansfield draws attention to the plight of poor children, and their exclusion from the other children's fun and games. There is evidence that Kezia's social conscience was present in the real-life Katherine Mansfield

when she was a little girl. A friend has described an incident that reveals her sympathy and courage:

When the teacher of the school rebuked a lad for sleeping at his desk, Katherine spoke up to explain that he was forced to rise at three o'clock each morning to help with the family milk delivery, and the boy escaped a caning. (Meyers 7)

Kezia's mother makes it quite clear to her daughter her strong feelings regarding the Kelveys children. When Kezia asks permission to show Lil and Else the doll's house her request is denied:

"Mother," said Kezia, "can't I ask the Kelveys just once?"

"Certainly not, Kezia."

"But why not?"

"Run away, Kezia; you know why not."

(387-8)

By this time, everybody in school has been invited to see the doll's house except for the Kelveys. Kezia, in keeping with her natural rebellious spirit turns her mother's denial into a challenge. She eventually finds a way to show Lil and Else the doll's house.

The doll's house represents a microcosm of the larger Burnell house. The joy that the gift of the little toy house brings to the children is more than evident. The author lets the reader see the house for the first time along with the children. Pat is given the honour of opening the front of the house. It has to be prised open with his penknife because the new paint has jammed the door:

Pat prised it open with his penknife, and the whole house front swung back, and--there you were, gazing at one and the same moment into the drawing-room, the kitchen and two bedrooms. That is the way for a house to open! Why don't all houses open like that? How much more exciting than peering through the slit of a door into a mean little hall with a hat-stand and two umbrellas!....

"Oh-oh!" The Burnell children sounded as though they were in despair. It was too marvellous; it was too much for them. They had never seen anything like it in their lives. (383-4)

The delight that the children show when they are given this wonderful toy, and their obvious

pleasure with the exactitude of the miniatures inside, show that it is going to supply many hours of fun. Philippe Aries believes that "in order to retain the favour of children, a toy must have some connection with the world of adults" (95). Certainly, the doll's house fits in perfectly with this theory. Furthermore, Aries concludes, when community games were destroyed with the onset of modern society, and divisions were created by those games played by adults and children, and between the lower class and the middle class, a connection was established between the idea of childhood and the idea of class (99). Therefore, in "The Doll's House," only the middle-class children are given a beautiful replica to play with, and the poor Kelveys remain onlookers.

The Burnells belong to what Aries defines as "The Middle Class phenomenon", or "the New Society":

The new society provided each way of life with a confined space in which it was understood that the dominant features should be respected, that each person had to resemble a conventional model, an ideal

type, and never depart from it under pain
of excommunication. (415)

Not that the Burnell children live too restricted a life. In fact, the reader is aware of the freedom the children are given to play and explore from reading "Prelude" and later "At the Bay." Still there is no doubt that they belong to the middle class and all that it entails.

Kezia makes an attempt to cross the class barrier with the help of the "little lamp." One of the most concrete symbols in the story is the perfect little lamp in the doll's house. It serves as the important link between Kezia and Else, and symbolizes a source of comfort and hope for the children. Kezia is quick to notice that the little lamp seems to belong in the house more than anything else, whereas the mother and father dolls appear to be out of proportion with the other things in the rooms. Kezia's beloved grandmother does not appear in this story, but the lamp is there as a source of comfort and joy to her granddaughter. In "Prelude," the grandmother is a figure who provides a sense of security and warmth in the lives of her children and grandchildren. When Kezia first sees her in their new house in

Karori she is carrying a lamp. Consequently, it is not surprising that the child Kezia compares the artificiality of the dolls with the perfect little lamp:

It stood in the middle of the dining-room table, an exquisite little amber lamp with a white globe. It was even filled all ready for lighting, though, of course, you couldn't light it. But there was something inside that looked like oil and moved when you shook it.... The lamp was real. (384)

Kezia's strong affinity with the lamp also suggests that she has inherited her grandmother's generous nature and sense of responsibility towards others, which becomes evident in her kindness towards the Kelveys. And in "At the Bay," she is depicted as always coming to the rescue of her sister Lottie. As Sylvia Berkman rightly points out: "As moving as "The Doll's House" is in isolation, its fullest poignancy is revealed only when it is related to "Prelude" and "At the Bay" (201).

The washerwoman and her children are based on the real MacKelvies, who were well-known characters

in Karori when Katherine Mansfield was a child. The father was said to have been in prison. Mrs. MacKelvie was a stout neat little cockney with "an Australian voice." She was the village washerwoman, and was amusing and a great talker (Mantz 113). Everyone hired her, therefore, she knew everything and everyone, and talked to all alike. Lil was her eldest daughter, and "Our Else" was the quiet, shy artistic one, and her mother's favourite. She called her "The Heavenly Child" and they all looked after her (Mantz 114).

Lil and Else are, indeed, the antithesis of the beautifully turned out Burnell girls. The author devotes a lengthy description to the two waifs, thus making them more memorable than the better dressed children:

Why Mrs. Kelvey made them so conspicuous was hard to understand. The truth was they were dressed in "bits" given to her by the people for whom she worked. Lil, for instance, who was a stout, plain child, with big freckles, came to school in a dress made from a green art-serge tablecloth of the Burnell's, with red plush sleeves from the Logan's curtains.

Her hat, perched on top of her high forehead,....It was turned up at the back and trimmed with a large scarlet quill....It was impossible not to laugh. And her little sister, or Else, wore a long white dress, rather like a nightgown, and a pair of little boy's boots. But whatever our Else wore she would have looked strange. She was a tiny wishbone of a child; with cropped hair and enormous solemn eyes--like a white owl! Nobody had ever seen her smile: she scarcely ever spoke. She went through life holding on to Lil, with a piece of Lil's skirt screwed up in her hand. Where Lil went, our Else followed. (386)

This is where Katherine Mansfield reveals her wicked sense of humour. It prevents the story from falling into the trap of sentimentality. Moreover, the humour helps to relieve the tension, much in the same way the author uses the Samuel Josepchs to relieve the tension when Kezia and Lottie are left in her charge in "Prelude". Kezia is quick to notice how the Kelvey girls never fail to

understand one another, something she and her sisters fail to do.

Mansfield does not give a detailed description of Kezia in the story, or in "Prelude" and "At the Bay." But one can assume that she must have looked a lot like the child Katherine. In a family album there is a photograph of a buxom little Katherine Mansfield in steel-rimmed spectacles, looking sullen, rebellious and very set. And, as her friend Anne Estelle Rice sees the little girl:

As one gazes at her round face and tight lips there is every expectation she will stick her tongue out in sheer defiance. One might say she was an ugly duckling, but she grew up to spread her wings and became beautiful. (79)

The arrival of the doll's house in the Burnell's household certainly advances the sisters' popularity in school. Isabel, being the eldest, takes charge in her usual bossy manner, and Lottie is quite happy to follow in her path. Only Kezia shows some discontent, because she feels not enough attention is being given to the little lamp. But, as usual, nobody pays much attention to her requests. The doll's house is used as a game of

who is allowed in, such as, the mean and spiteful Lena Logan, and of course, those who are out of favour, such as the Kelveys. The playground scenes are particularly memorable, because of Katherine Mansfield's skillful handling of the children in a realistic manner, and devoid of any sentimentality. When Lena taunts Lil and Else during their dinner hour, the author draws the reader into the confrontation between the children. It is impossible not to side with the Kelveys, and to want to punish Lena, Isabel, and the others, for their deliberate nastiness. Mansfield is no doubt hinting here of the children's false behaviour, which they have learned from their parents. Even the teacher is said to have a "special voice" for the Kelveys. Consequently, they are "shunned by everybody."

The very same day after school, Kezia, swinging on the garden gate sees the Kelveys walking up the lane: "One was in front and one close behind" (389). Against all orders, the thoughtful, but defiant Kezia persuades the girls to come through and see the doll's house. Lil and Else are the only children left who have not seen it. "Come on. Nobody's looking" says Kezia.

Kezia led the way. Like two little stray cats they followed across the courtyard to where the doll's house stood....

"I'll open it for you," said Kezia kindly. She undid the hook and they looked inside.

(390)

Just at this moment the magic is broken by the scolding voice of Aunt Beryl. She has had a rotten day and lashes out at her niece and the Kelveys. Nevertheless, Lil and Else's dream is realized, and Kezia is triumphant in her desire to let the outcasts see the doll's house. As the little girls rest at the side of the road after their adventure, Else nudges up to her sister, and with a smile "'I seen the little lamp,' she said softly. Then both were silent once more" (391).

What is so remarkable about Katherine Mansfield's ability in a story such as "The Doll's House," is that she is able to allow the reader to see the world through a child's eyes. This is truly remarkable when one considers her turbulent life and suffering as an adult. As Sylvia Berkman rightly observes, "it is not often that the untouched apprehension of the child fuses perfectly

with the view acquired through circumstances of her life" (203).

C. S. Stanley believes that Katherine Mansfield remained child-like in her outlook, and thus was able to delve with affection into her childhood; hence her "directness and unstudied lack of Euphemisms" (35). Furthermore, in his discussion of another of Katherine Mansfield's stories about childhood called "Sea-Saw," he suggests that "It was as natural for her to write "Sea-Saw" as it was to eat dinner" (36).

Indeed, both Sylvia Berkman and Christopher Isherwood call attention to Katherine Mansfield's preoccupation with littleness. Obviously, in dealing with a subject such as a doll's house, the imagery is concentrated on the miniature. Nevertheless, Berkman and Isherwood emphasize Mansfield's frequent use of the small in her imaginative detail. Berkman associates this fascination with the very small to be a quality more often found in women than in men. But she qualifies this view in relation to Katherine Mansfield's work as "belonging more generally to the curious and observant child" (191). Virginia Woolf, writing in her diary after Katherine's

death, recalls a visit she made to her friend's house in France: "Everything was very tidy, bright, and somehow like a doll's house..... She had the look of a Japanese doll, with the fringe combed quite straight across her forehead" (226).

CHAPTER FOUR

"AT THE BAY"

"At the Bay" was first published in the London Mercury in January, 1922. Although some critics reacted unfavourably towards it Katherine Mansfield still received many appreciative letters from friends, and known and unknown readers (Clarke 36). She was surprised and pleased with their response to her story:

I feel like Lottie and Kezia's mother after the letters I have got this month. It is surprising and very lovely to know how many people love little children--the most unexpected people. (Clarke 36)

That same year, the story was included in her third collection of short stories called The Garden Party.

Like "Prelude" and "The Doll's House," "At the Bay" belongs to a period of peace and love in Katherine Mansfield's life (Stead 43). Once again she re-assembles her cast of characters--the Burnells and their cousins last seen in "Prelude," but now the action is moved to the family's sea-

side cottage situated at "Crescent Bay"--based on the original Beauchamp's summer cottage, which was located at "Day's Bay" outside Wellington. "At the Bay" was begun towards the end of July 1921 (Alpers 339), and in a letter to the Hon. Dorothy Brett, dated 8 August 1921, Mansfield writes:

I must stop this letter and get on with story. It's called "At the Bay" and it's (I hope) full of sand and seaweed, bathing dresses hanging over verandas, and sandshoes on the window wills, and little pink "sea" convolvulus and rather gritty sandwiches and the tide coming in. And it smells (Oh I do hope it smells) a little bit fishy. (Letters and Journals 227)

Katherine Mansfield made four false starts on her story, nevertheless, she still finished it in record time (Cather 144): and in another letter to the Hon. Dorothy Brett dated September 1921, she writes:

I've just finished my new book.... The title is "At the Bay." That's the name of the very long story in it--a continuation of "Prelude".... My precious children have sat in here, playing cards. My heart and

soul is in it.... It is so strange to bring the dead alive again. There's my Grandmother back in her chair with her pink Knitting, there stalks my uncle over the grass; I feel as I write, "You are not dead, my darlings. All is remembered.... I have tried to make it as familiar to "you" as it is to me. You know those pools in the rocks?, you know the mousetrap on the washhouse windowsill?.... I mustn't say any more about it. (L&J 232)

The Burnell's sea-side cottage in the story is based on the one Harold Beauchamp bought for his family in Day's Bay. It was located across the harbour--about five miles by ferry from Wellington (Foot 55). To Wellingtonians, this sea coast has always been known as "The Bay." It has a milder climate than Wellington and the inestimable advantage of very little wind. Harold Beauchamp and other prominent figures in the community bought all of the property around Day's Bay, and then presented it as parkland. Consequently, the Bay area is little changed today (Foot 54).

It is not surprising, therefore, that Katherine Mansfield used this beautiful setting for her story as the ideal place and a paradise for children. Indeed, at the time of the story--towards the end of the nineteenth century--except for the occasional pavilion open for entertainment, those few families staying at The Bay had it to themselves (Mantz 139). "It is a sweet affection of the mind which can gather pleasure from the empty elements" wrote Sir Joseph Banks, the first literate visitor to New Zealand (Foot 54). And John Foot suggests that "KM would have subscribed to this" (54). Ruth Mantz supports this notion and asserts that "The quietness of Day's Bay became for Katherine Mansfield a standard of stillness, friendly and benign" (140). During a period of happiness in her adult life, Mansfield described the atmosphere at Day's Bay to a friend thus: "the air just lifts enough to blow on your cheeks. Ah, how delicious that is...." (Mantz 140).

It becomes clear from reading "At the Bay" that the beaches were, indeed, as peaceful as the author remembered them to be during the idyllic summers of her childhood. Bathing was just coming into fashion when she was a child, and there were

the usual summer activities available such as fishing, boats for hire, and a slide into a tiny lake. Sometimes a great balloon was sent up from William Park. And except for the boat-trolley slide and the balloon, most of it is much the same now (Foot 56). However, Foot is surprised that Katherine Mansfield does not mention the ferry in her story, as it was the usual way summer residents travelled to and fro from Wellington when she was a child (56). The ferry boats at that time were called "The Duke" and "The Duchess" (Mantz 139). Not that these slight detours from factual accuracy matter in the least.

A Canadian childhood friend of Katherine Mansfield called Marion Ruddick recorded some of the happy times she spent with the Beauchamps by the sea-side. To the Canadian child, this semi-tropical life was filled with surprises. Her reminiscences are so close to Katherine Mansfield's own that they too conjure up images of Isabel, Lottie, Kezia and the Trout boys having fun on a hot summer's day:

When we weren't paddling in the sea, we were digging sand castles with marvellous moats and drawbridges. Zoe initiated us

into the joys of shrimping in the rock pools; and we loved seeing shrimps, in their silly way, into their nets.... From delving in the rock pools, we evolved the idea of rock-pool gardens; each selecting a pool, we collected seaweed, pearly shells, colored stones, sea anemones and starfish. (Mantz 140)

These magical moments in a child's life are brilliantly brought to life for the reader in Katherine Mansfield's story. Who can forget the awful Samuel Joseph boys pouring water down the girls' necks, or the girls getting their own back by trying to put little crabs into the boys' pockets? All is remembered in "At the Bay."

"At the Bay" is divided into twelve sections like "Prelude." However, the story does not contain one outstandingly dramatic scene such as the killing of the duck. In keeping with the overriding atmosphere of tranquility and the soothing background of the sea, each episode is given equal weight and one scene is contrasted with the next which gives the story an overall harmonious quality. Kezia is not as central to the story as she is in "Prelude" and "The Doll's

House," but Katherine Mansfield still devotes a significant section exclusively to her and her grandmother. The children still figure predominantly in the story, and there is an addition to the family--the longed-for son has been born. In real life this is the author's only beloved brother who rekindled memories of their childhood memories in her unique style:

Memory in Katherine Mansfield's work, consecrates the commonplace and particularly the routine of family life, not in any muffling or mystical way, but in a manner which made it capable of revealing the intricate, amazing richness of the ordinary. (Walsh 177)

Furthermore, the author is again careful not to fall into the trap of sentimentality which is evident in her careful handling of the perfectly natural children in "At the Bay."

The action in the story takes place over one hot summer's day --early morning, late morning; early afternoon, late afternoon; evening, night. Sylvia Berkman draws attention to the similarity between the framework of "At the Bay" and Virginia Woolf's novel Mrs. Dalloway (1925) (168).

Moreover, there is the obvious parallel between Woolf's other novel To the Lighthouse (1927), which is also based on the author's own childhood. The latter was published four years after Katherine Mansfield's death, but Claire Tomalin asserts that neither writer knew of the other's use of the sea-side theme (201).

In keeping with "Prelude" and "The Doll's House," "At the Bay" focuses primarily on the world of women and children. Stanley Burnell is once again portrayed as the bombastic patronizing husband and father, who is either getting ready for work or returning from work. Consequently, in this story he only appears at the beginning and towards the end. He pays attention to his wife, and now there is his son whom he is obviously delighted with. But he does not seem to pay his little daughters all that much attention. The only other significant man in the family is the children's uncle and Stanley Burnell's brother-in-law Jonathan Trout, who is depicted as a more sensitive figure. He pops in and out of the story, and is the one who lends a sympathetic ear to Linda Burnell and her sister Beryl. Jonathan Trout is based on Katherine Mansfield's uncle Frederick Valentine Waters. He

and his wife and two sons lived near the Beauchamps in Karori (Mantz 98). His wife suffered from severe headaches, and the children remembered her as always lying down in a darkened room which had the sweet odour of eau-de-cologne. Frederick Waters was a man more at home in the child's world than in the world of adults (Mantz 98). Uncle Jonathan in the story is drawn like Katherine Mansfield's real uncle, and as she thought "like a Cezanne" (Mantz 98). Ruth Mantz quotes the author's own words on the subject:

One of his men gave me quite a shock. He's the spit of a man I've just written about, one Jonathan Trout. To the life. I wish I could cut him out and put him in my book. (98)

Pat Sheehan the gardener and general handyman, last seen opening the doll's house, does not appear in this story. He is replaced by another handyman called Kelly, who has only a very minor role. Pat belongs to the children's world in Karori and "Chesney Wold." In her Scrapbook dated 1905, Katherine Mansfield explains what became of Pat:

When we left that house in the country and went to live in town, Pat left us to try

his luck in the goldfields. We parted with bitter tears. He presented each of my sisters with a goldfinch and me with a pair of white China vases cheerfully embroidered with forget-me-nots and pink roses. His parting advice to us was to look after ourselves in this world and never to pick the flowers in the garden.... From that day to this I have never heard of him. (7-8)

"At the Bay" opens very early in the morning with a view of the bay, then around the corner of Crescent Bay appears a familiar New Zealand sight--a flock of sheep: "They were huddled together, a small, tossing, woolly mass, and their thin, stick-like legs trotted along quickly as if the cold and the quiet had frightened them". (Collected Stories 205-6). And of course behind them is the sheep-dog: "his soaking paws covered with sand, ran along with his nose to the ground, but carelessly, as if thinking of something else". (206). Then the shepherd comes into view "a lean upright old man, in a frieze coat that was covered with a web of tiny drops" (206). This is a typical pastoral scene except for the touches of the New Zealand

landscape such as "the big gum tree outside Mrs. Stubbs's shop" and the "strong wiff of eucalyptus" (206). The sound of the sheep and the "myriads of birds singing," are heard in the dreams of the children as they still sleep. The scene is then interrupted by the splashing noise of two early morning swimmers Stanley Burnell and Jonathan Trout. The day has begun.

Traditionally, sheep symbolize longevity. The fleece of the sheep or lamb has a special symbolic significance of its own since it is equated with the fat of the animal. This was always regarded as its life-force, and by extension, it represents all life-sustaining produce and hence longevity (Cooper 60). The sheep, therefore, can be seen as symbolizing what Katherine Mansfield deals with in this story, and that is the celebration of life. All three generations of life are represented as well as the joy over the birth of a son in the Burnell family.

The children appear at breakfast, and they are closely followed by their grandmother, Mrs. Fairfield. Mrs. Fairfield, in keeping with her important role in the Burnell family, is again in charge of the children and the running of the

summer cottage. Linda Burnell sleeps late recovering from the birth of her son. The three little girls make a charming trio:

They were dressed alike in blue jerseys and knickers; their brown legs were bare, and each had her hair plaited and pinned up in what was called a horse's tail. Behind them came Mrs. Fairfield with the tray. (210)

Stanley Burnell pays no attention to his daughters; his main concern is getting himself to work in the city on time. But he is obviously delighted with his baby son: "Morning, mother! How's the boy?" "Splendid! He only woke up once last night. What a perfect morning!" (211).

The children make their way down to the beach after breakfast. This is where Katherine Mansfield's talent as a writer who excels at depicting scenes from childhood is shown at its best. In just a few brush strokes she manages to bring the children alive for the reader. Take, for instance, Lottie's effort to get over a stile:

There was poor Lottie left behind again,..... When she stood on the first step her knees began to wobble; she

grasped the post. Then you had to put one leg over. But which leg? She could never decide. And when she did finally put one leg over with a sort of stamp of despair-- then the feeling was awful. She was half in the paddock, still and half in the tussock grass. She clutched the post desperately and lifted her voice. "Wait for me!" (213)

Kezia as usual comes to the rescue of her older sister. Similar to her role in "Prelude," Kezia seems more capable than her older sister, and has an inborn sense of responsibility towards others. She carefully helps Lottie over the stile, and harmony is once again restored to the trio.

The Samuel Josephs are also spending the summer at Crescent Bay and they too are to be seen on the beach on this fine morning. However, the Burnell sisters avoid their old neighbours because of their overly boisterous behaviour. Mrs. SJ (as Katherine Mansfield calls her) is a target for the author's keen sense of humour. She has engaged a lady's-help who sits on a camp stool with a whistle tied around her neck, and who is also in charge of organizing the Samuel Joseph children's games.

Mrs. SJ draws up a "brogramme" every day to keep them "abused and out of bischief" (214). Kezia, her sisters and cousins are not impressed with such organization; they much prefer to be left to their own devices.

Anyone who has ever had the good fortune to spend a holiday by the seaside as a child will instantly recognize some of the familiar rituals and pleasures associated with a family on the beach. The children are obviously in their element as they rush to meet their cousins Pip and Rags. The boys are already well into building their sandcastles. William Walsh calls attention to the liveliness of the children, and their perfect adaptation to the moment and the seaside environment (182). He cites a passage from the story:

On the other side of the beach, close down to the water, two little boys, their knickers rolled up, twinkled like spiders. One was digging, the other pattered in and out of the water, filling a small bucket. They were the Trout boys, Pip and Rags.... "But why does Rags have to keep pouring water in?" asked Lottie.

"Oh that's to moisten it," said Rags.

And good little Rags ran up and down,
pouring water that turned brown like
cocoa. (215-6)

By eleven o'clock all the women and children residing in the summer colony are assembled and have the sea to themselves. Mrs. Fairfield joins her grandchildren "in a lilac cotton dress and a black hat tied under the chin, gathered her little brood and got them ready" (217). All five children rush towards the water "while their grandma sat with one hand in her knitting-bag ready to draw out the ball of wool when she was satisfied they were safely in" (217). Katherine Mansfield vividly brings to life this warm, perfect summer's morning by the sea in New Zealand. She conjures up images of all the familiar sights such as heaps of clothes strewn all over the beach, and big summer hats "with stones on them to keep them from blowing away, looked like immense shells" (216). The sea is invaded by young and old alike: "It was strange that even the sea seemed to sound differently when all those leaping, laughing figures ran into the waves" (217). The only blot on the landscape is the arrival of Mrs. Harry Kember, a friend of the

children's Aunt Beryl. Mrs. Fairfield openly disapproves of her daughter's friendship with Mrs. Kember, and her daughter knows it. Mrs. Kember is said to be "very, very fast." The author describes her as "swimming quickly, like a rat" (220).

All the Burnell children and their cousins seem to get on very well together. While Lottie is quite content to sit at the edge of the water with her legs straight, and knees pressed together, the others have fun trying to swim. Katherine Mansfield has the gift of drawing attention to the trivial, and making it relevant. She pays attention to such details as the difference between the "firm compact little girls" bodies, and Pip and Rag's skinny little bodies as they crouch shivering in the water but, nevertheless, having fun. And that Isabel is able to swim twelve strokes, and Kezia nearly eight, becomes important, making the scene human.

Katherine Mansfield cannot seem to resist poking fun at the Samuel Josepchs. In "Prelude," they are a source of contempt for little Kezia who is rather overwhelmed by their brashness and often misdirected hospitality. The less sensitive Lottie in the first story is quite happy to sit with the

Samuel Josephs and eat thick slices of bread and dripping. Mansfield takes great delight in the activities of Mrs. Samuel Josephs whom she depicts as always giving children's parties at the Bay, but always serving the same food--"A big washhand jug full of something the ladyhelp called "Limmonadear"" (215). Moreover, the Samuel Joseph children are described as "leaping like savages on their lawn. No! They were too awful" (215). The Burnells solve the problem by avoiding them altogether.

Linda Burnell stays behind with the baby, and sitting in a deck chair under the shade of a manuka tree: "She dreamed the morning away. She did nothing.... On the grass beside her, lying between two pillows, was the boy" (220-1). The baby is not given a name in the story. When Katherine Mansfield's real brother was christened in Karori church, he was given the best names the family could provide--Leslie Heron--and was no longer called the "Boy," which is what Stanley Burnell calls his son in the story (Mantz 108). The boy child in this story is of great importance, as one has to remember that it was the death of her only brother which ultimately propelled Katherine

Mansfield into writing stories about her recollections of their childhood in Wellington: "in my thoughts I range with him over all the remembered places. I am never far away from them. I long to renew them in writing" (L&J 65).

The scene between mother and child is also significant because of Linda Burnell's change of heart towards her son. The mother readily admits that she has a particular dread of having any more children, and obviously cannot cope with her brood--hence the capable and loving help from her mother. And what makes it doubly bad is that "she did not love her children" (223). Just as all these thoughts are going through her mind something bordering on the miraculous occurs. The baby wakes up, turns over, and looks at his mother and smiles:

Linda was so astonished at the confidence of this little creature.... Ah no, be sincere. That was not what she felt; it was something so new, so.... The tears danced in her eyes; she breathed in a small whisper to the boy, "Hello, my funny!" (223)

The totally unexpected has happened--Linda realises she loves her son.

While Linda sits under the manuka tree the leaves keep falling on her and she has to keep brushing them off. The manuka tree is to be found nearly everywhere in New Zealand. To see it in full flower is an attractive sight. If the tree grows to be fifteen meters or so, it can provide shelter for re-generating plants (Wilson 16). As Linda brushes off the leaves, she thinks to herself "Why then, flower at all? Who takes the trouble-- or the joy--to make all things that are wasted, wasted.... it was uncanny" (221). Katherine Mansfield may well have been thinking of her brother's tragic death as she wrote this; even her own life was uncertain when she wrote "At the Bay," as she was in the final stages of tuberculosis. Even though she called her New Zealand stories "debts of love," they can also be called what D. W. Kleine sees as "transfigurations of a obsessive sorrow" (203). This tender scene between mother and child is immediately followed by the equally tender scene between grandmother and granddaughter, and one in which Kezia asks Mrs. Fairfield about death.

While Kezia and Mrs. Fairfield are resting during their afternoon siesta, Kezia asks her

grandma whether she still feels sad over the loss of her son William. This is typical of a child's curious nature, and especially so in a thoughtful curious child such as Kezia. Mrs. Fairfield handles the question in a straightforward manner. When Kezia asks her grandmother whether she still feels sad her grandma replies, "No, life was like that" (226). But the little girl is not quite satisfied so she pursues the matter further:

"But why?" asked Kezia.... "Why did Uncle William have to die? He wasn't old."

Mrs. Fairfield began counting the stitches in threes. "It just happened," she said in an absorbed voice.

"Does everybody have to die?" asked Kezia.

"Everybody!"

"Me?" Kezia sounded fearfully incredulous.

"Some day my darling."

"But, grandma." Kezia waved her left leg and waggled the toes. They felt sandy.

"What if I just won't?"

The old woman sighed again and drew a long thread from the ball.

"We're not asked, Kezia," she said sadly.

"It happens to all of us sooner or later."

(226)

Kezia accepts what her grandmother has to say on the subject, and they both end laughing as the little girl tickles Mrs. Fairfield. Kezia is still too young to really understand and is easily distracted. This is reminiscent of the scene in "Prelude," after the duck has been killed, and Kezia is naturally upset, but easily distracted by Pat's earrings. In other words, a child will only accept as much as she wants to know, and no more. Therefore, Katherine Mansfield handles this poignant scene with her own particular skill and understanding of a child's mind. What could have developed into a sentimental, morbid scene, is treated as simply as another stage in a child's development. Moreover, the conversation between Kezia and Mrs. Fairfield illustrates the special rapport between grandmother and granddaughter.

William Walsh believes that the relationship between Kezia and her grandmother to be the purest of those that Katherine Mansfield explores in "At the Bay" (178). Moreover, he goes on to say that "An image of this wholesome simplicity is supplied

by the very furniture of the room in which the little girl and the old woman are taking their siesta together" (179):

This room that they shared, like the other rooms of the bungalow, was of light varnished wood and the floor was bare. The furniture the , shabbiest, the simplest.... On the table there stood a jar of sea pinks,.... and a special shell which Kezia had given her grandma for a pin-tray, another even more special which she had thought would make a very nice place for a watch to curl up in. (225)

This scene more than any other shows the special bond between Kezia and Mrs. Fairfield, and contrasts with the distant relationships Linda Burnell has with all her children. She openly confesses "she did not love her children. It was useless pretending" (223). However, there are hopeful signs that the baby is breaking down her resistance. And the children still come across as being a happy lot, and seem none the worse from their mother's lack of interest in them.

In Katherine Mansfield's stories about childhood, the mother and grandmother are always

contrasted. It is generally accepted that Mansfield felt rejected after the new baby arrived, which is not uncommon in families with more than one child. But Mansfield seems to have felt it more deeply than most, and, consequently, turned to her grandmother--hence the loving portraits of Mrs. Fairfield in her stories. Katherine Mansfield's own grandmother had nine children of her own, and then went on to care for her daughter's five children. She helped raise her grandchildren with the aid of servants and her unmarried daughter. She ran a smooth household for thirteen years. Every time her daughter had a baby, she happily handed it over to the grandmother (Alpers 9). In a story "Recollections of Childhood" (1916), the author describes her grandmother taking care of a new baby called Gwen. Kezia appears in it and the doll's house.

With the presence of the three generations so distinctly portrayed in her stories of childhood, Katherine Mansfield is able to reflect on the mysteries of relationships which involve birth, love and death. The themes that are started in "Prelude" come to fruition in "At the Bay." In her discussion of Katherine Mansfield's technique,

Elizabeth Bowen recognizes that "Katherine Mansfield's stories cover their tracks; they have an air of serene inevitability, almost a touch of the miraculous" (125).

Mansfield also continues the image of the grandmother and the lamp in this story. It is one that the author started in "Prelude." When Kezia arrives at the new house, the first glimpse she gets of old Mrs. Fairfield is her grandma carrying a lamp. And once daylight begins to fade in "At the Bay," it is Mrs. Fairfield who lights the lamp: "And somewhere far away, grandma was lighting a lamp" (234). Similarly, in "The Doll's House," even though the grandmother does not appear in the story, nevertheless it is the little lamp that lights up Kezia and the Kelveys' lives. It is a significant source of comfort to the children.

The grandmother and Kezia must be seen as the key figures in these stories about childhood. Indeed, the stories draw attention to the distance between the parents and children. Stanley Burnell is a father who is so absorbed in his own life and work that he unwittingly keeps the sensitive Kezia on the edges of his affection (O'Sullivan 128). In spite of, or because of, the parents' casual manner

towards their children, they still seem to thrive, and obviously have enough love and security and a great deal of freedom to develop their imaginations.

A delightful episode in "At the Bay," shows the children playing cards in the washhouse at the end of "a perfect day." It is reminiscent of the one in "Prelude" when they were all playing out in the garden. Once again, Katherine Mansfield, in her unique way, takes the reader in and amongst the children. As usual, Lottie is slow to catch on, and as usual Kezia comes to her rescue:

"Why don't you call out, Lottie?"

"I've forgotten what I am," said the donkey woefully.

"Well, change! Be a dog instead! Bow-wow!"

"Oh yes. That's much easier." Lottie smiled again. But when she and Kezia both had one Kezia waited on purpose. (234)

Katherine Mansfield devotes a whole section to the children's card game, thus suggesting how precious these memories were to the author. One can also assume that she must have derived a great deal of

comfort from these memories during those final, painful years of her life:

Smack went the cards round the table. They tried with all their might to see, but Pip was too quick for them. It was very exciting, sitting there in the washhouse; it was all they could do not to burst into a chorus of animals before Pip had finished dealing. (233)

This episode fits exactly with George Hubbell's view of Katherine Mansfield's treatment of childhood when he says "Katherine Mansfield respects children" (325).

The spell in the washhouse is broken for the children when uncle Jonathan comes to take his sons home. It also proves to be an occasion for Lottie to have her moment of attention: "Suddenly Lottie gave such a piercing scream that all of them jumped off the forms, all of them screamed too. 'A face--a face looking!' shrieked Lottie" (235). But all it turns out to be is Jonathan Trout.

The story ends as it began--with Stanley Burnell, this time returning from work, and the sea. "At last the milk-white harbour catches the glitter and the gulls floating on the trembling

water gleam like the shadows withing a pearl" (L&J 210). This is what Katherine Mansfield wrote in her Journal when she was creating her story. O'Sullivan suggests that the author used the presence of the sea as another way of taking a "long look at life" (15).

"At the Bay," like "Prelude" and "The Doll's House," shows children in distinctly different situations. They have no trouble adapting to new experiences. Even the more sensitive Kezia shows a certain inner strength of character in one so young. In real life, when Katherine Mansfield was a child, and every time her father went up a notch in his work, the family moved house--altogether about six times (Foot 26). By modern standards this is fairly common practice, but in Victorian times it was probably considered unusual. And in all her stories about childhood she brings in all the different houses she lived in as a child. Indeed, one can say it set a precedent for her adult life when she moved around a great deal.

The New Zealand of her childhood brought her to the height of her artistic powers as she recreated her early years, transforming reality by the sheer power of imagination and her own unique

fictional techniques. And at the end of her life it is that New Zealand childhood she remembers with particular clarity and an almost fierce affection. In a letter to her father, dated 18 March 1922 (a year before she died), Katherine Mansfield writes:

The more I see of life the more caution I feel that it's the people who live remote from cities who inherit the earth.... And another thing is the longer I live the more I turn to New Zealand. I thank God I was born in New Zealand. A young country is a real heritage, though it takes one time to recognize it. But New Zealand is in my very bones. What wouldn't I give to have a look at it! (L&J 260)

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