

WALKING IN THE MODERNIST SHORT STORY
1914 – 1939

by

MAGGIE WOODS

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Department of English Literature
School of English, Drama and American
and Canadian Studies
Department of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
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Abstract

This thesis analyses the significance and narrative effect of walking by characters in the short stories written by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield and Elizabeth Bowen between 1914 – 1939. The thesis builds a link across their short stories through analysing their writing of walking and the purpose that it serves in the narrative of each writer. It is argued that walking in the modernist short story facilitates an insight into the content and meaning of the walker's accompanying thought which informs the reader's understanding of their motives and behaviour. Walking creates spaces in the narrative which can be filled with characters' thought, reflection, memory, ideas and a response to events or circumstances. It is more than a narrative device to move a character to another setting because it provides the opportunity to simultaneously include and explore their thinking. This reflects the human experience of the mind which is always working so that passing time is used to develop understanding, experience emotion, respond to experience and shape decisions. In the modernist short story a walker's hidden thoughts accompanied by concealed emotion can provide an insight into their character and behaviour. The ongoing thought process includes reflection on the present or recall of earlier events and feelings while also anticipating the future through imagination so that it is working across past, present and future time.

The introduction to the thesis discusses the ideas and reading on which it is based. It includes some of the significant secondary sources which inform the analysis and discussion. Each of the following four chapters discusses the short stories written between 1914-1939 by one of the four

writers considered in this study. The stories included are those in which walking is a significant activity which provides insight into a character's thinking and leads towards the story's conclusion. It is argued that walking is a significant aspect of each writer's short stories but with a distinctive approach which characterises each writer's work. Virginia Woolf writes with an understanding of the contrast between the routine ordinariness of everyday existence and the occasional but powerful moments of insight which create 'moments of being'.¹ James Joyce's short stories in *Dubliners* show the significance of the emotions, aspirations and hopes which accompany everyday city life and the disappointment which may follow.² Katherine Mansfield's short stories demonstrate her understanding of human emotion with its hopes and disappointments. Among her women walkers are several who represent the hardships encountered by women of her time who work to support themselves.³ Elizabeth Bowen is a contemporary of the other writers but is not usually regarded as a modernist writer. She is included here because her short stories demonstrate that walking is not only significant in the modernist short story but is an interesting feature of other short fiction of the interwar period.⁴ She writes with an understanding of the impact of place on behaviour and with an awareness of human eccentricity and the strangeness of apparently ordinary events. In the final chapter of the thesis the analysis and discussion are drawn together to offer a conclusion to the research.

¹ Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being* (St Albans: Triad/Panther Books, 1978) p. 90

² James Joyce, *Dubliners* [1914] (London: Penguin, 1996)

³ Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin, 2007)

⁴ Elizabeth Bowen, *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999)

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INTRODUCTION

This study addresses the significance and narrative effect of walking by characters in the short stories written by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield and Elizabeth Bowen between 1914-1939. It aims to build a link across their short stories through analysing their individual writing of walking and the purpose that it serves. It is argued that walking in the modernist short story facilitates an insight into the meaning and content of accompanying thought giving a deepened understanding of human behaviour and motive. Walking creates space in the narrative which can be filled with thought, reflection, memory and a response to circumstances. It is more than a narrative device to move a character to another setting because it provides the opportunity to simultaneously represent and explore human thinking. It uncovers the depth of understanding, experience and response to context or events which lies beneath surface behaviour. It therefore adds this layer of inner human experience to the story. The shift in narrative voice in modernist short fiction from description, omniscient narration and moral argument to the use of free indirect discourse allows presentation of the direct experience and thoughts of ordinary people as they walk. These four early twentieth century modernist writers used the opportunity of the 'time in between' offered when characters walk to include their thoughts and feelings directly in their own words.⁵ The inclusion of thought during walking gives an insight into individual human consciousness and places it at the centre of narrative. The stories which are discussed here show how walking in the modernist short story provides a context to uncover the workings of the mind underlying the actions in the

⁵ Rebecca Solnitt, *Wanderlust* (London: Granta, 2014), p. xiii

story and to demonstrate how walking is an important narrative opportunity to understand human thinking and reflection.

This thesis has arisen from an earlier undergraduate level dissertation which introduced the idea that walking could occupy a significant and often overlooked place in modernist short narrative. It was suggested that walking made a useful and interesting but overlooked contribution to the representation of human experience and noted the significance of including the thought process which accompanied a walk. Feedback on this earlier piece of work through assessment encouraged further analysis and development of the idea. This thesis is a response to that advice. It develops the argument that walking is important and interesting in modernist short stories because it carries meaning and significance through exploring the thoughts and consciousness of the walker.

The study of walking contributes to an understanding of modernism which records the simultaneous experience of 'the two levels of action [...] the rapid passage of events and actions; the slow opening up of single and solemn moments of concentrated emotion'.⁶ Woolf uses this description of narrative in her discussion of biography but it is also useful in describing the link between walking and thought in the modernist short story. The two levels of experience occur as a character engages in the activity of walking with its accompanying passage of external events while the narrative gives a simultaneous account of their private inner thoughts and emotions. These can be moments which embody inner reflection, decision, memory, change or liminality conveyed through the character's voice. They are intense, unguarded moments which explore the inner life and the reality of subjective experience for

⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'The Art of Biography' in *The Collected Essays of Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth Press, 1967) <<http://gutenberg.net.au>> [accessed August 2024]

individuals. They reveal and explore the depth and intensity of the character's inner life. The interest of modernism in exploring character and identity can be presented through the stream of consciousness which conveys the walker's private thoughts and feelings. It uncovers layers of subjective human experience, including thought and feeling, through narrative. Short narrative is an effective vehicle for presenting this depth of human experience with its focus on brief interludes of human life which may include the experience of a walk.

The focus of this study on the modernist short story recognises the significance of this literary form in the years between 1914-1939 when it was employed by several contemporary writers. The four writers discussed in the thesis used the short story to create studies of individual human behaviour which describe the experience of one or a few characters over a short time unlike the nineteenth century novel which explored more characters in greater depth and usually over a longer period of time. Ali Smith describes the short story form as 'so easily dismissed' and identifies the skill it requires when she describes Katherine Mansfield's short stories as 'near-plotless pieces of glinting brilliance, with the hint in them of light, energy' which can combine contrasting concepts such as naivety and knowledge and 'where form simultaneously mimics and questions the conventional shape of narrative.'⁷ In *the first person and other stories* she recognises the twentieth century development in short story writing by describing the novel as 'a flabby old whore' while the short story is 'a nimble goddess [...] because so few people had mastered the short story she was still in very good shape'.⁸ This study aims to explore the qualities of this genre with its succinct form which carries the structure and purpose of the narrative.

⁷ Ali Smith, introduction to *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin Classics, 2007), p. ix

⁸ Ali Smith, *the first person and other stories* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 4

It discusses the innovative short story writing published between 1914 – 1939 by four of its significant proponents in order to identify how they are linked through connections in writing, form and ideas about walking in narrative. It will show how walkers' thinking can be a catalyst prompting actions or developing inner thought and understanding. Walkers' thoughts may also prompt an emotional insight and a response to individual experiences or memories. It is because the short story explores a brief interlude of human experience in depth rather than the experiences of several characters through the longer, more complex plot in a novel that the effect of the walk is particularly significant in the short story. The short story provides the opportunity for walking to be the context for an exploration of the mind with the walker's thoughts as the focus of the narrative.

Among the writers discussed in the thesis, Virginia Woolf and Elizabeth Bowen particularly enjoyed walking themselves in both urban or rural settings. They used time spent walking to explore their own thoughts and occasionally walked together. In 'Street Haunting' Woolf writes biographically about the pleasure of walking through London and observing the place and other walkers.⁹ Her own enjoyment of walking regularly for exercise and to think is reflected in this essay and in references to her walks in the country around Monk's House which are contained in her letters.¹⁰ In *Square Haunting* Francesca Wade describes how Woolf 'associated walking in London with fertile trains of thought – she often referred to 'making up' phrases and scenes as she rambled through Bloomsbury or around Charing Cross'.¹¹ Her

⁹ Virginia Woolf, 'Street Haunting' in *The Collected Essays of Virginia Woolf* (Read Books, 2012), pp. 57-74

¹⁰ *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson 2 vols (London: The Hogarth Press, 1975)

¹¹ Francesca Wade, *Square Haunting* (London: Faber & Faber, 2020), p. 315

enjoyment of walking in London was shared with Elizabeth Bowen with whom she walked and talked in the city.

Virginia strolled with Elizabeth Bowen from Mecklenburgh Square through Temple and along the river to the Tower of London, then rode back again on the top of a bus, talking away about house moves, writing and the escalating tensions between Britain and Ireland.¹²

While Bowen and Joyce did not walk together, Russell McDonald has argued that they were connected by their strong sense of Irish identity which was reflected in ideas about walking found in their writing.¹³ He suggests that these ideas indicate how 'both writers construed Irishness' by arguing that the importance of walking was as 'a beneficial means of expressing and experimenting with different permutations of Irish identity, largely because of the opportunity it presented to negotiate a variety of dangers'.¹⁴ He gives an example of these dangers in the impact of English landowners' activities on Irish culture with walking providing an opportunity to observe and monitor their effect on Irish lives and way of life through their property ownership. McDonald's analysis connects social and political aspects of rural walking in the early twentieth century to the political climate in Ireland at the time in order to link literary criticism with contemporary issues. He suggests that Joyce's political views are indicated in the Catholic Irish perspective of his short stories set in Dublin. For example, in 'An Encounter' in which 'a ragged troop' call after the truant school boys shouting "Swaddlers! Swaddlers!" thinking that we were Protestants'.¹⁵ Bowen's political stance is more complex as she was born and brought up in Dublin

¹² Wade, *Square Haunting*, 267

¹³ Russell McDonald, 'Pedestrian perils on the road to Irish identity in Joyce and Bowen' in *Irish Studies Review* 2015 Vol 23 (4) pp. 385-406

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 385

¹⁵ James Joyce, 'An Encounter' in *Dubliners* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1996), p. 22

with a rural home in County Cork but lived much of her adult life in England and was identified as English. In World War II she had a role in reporting on Irish life to the British Ministry of Information although she regarded herself as neutral and used her reports to justify Irish neutrality.¹⁶ Her short stories discussed in the thesis are set in a variety of contexts and reflect her enjoyment of place, travel and oddness rather than her political views.

Literary criticism provides studies of modernist narrative which inform the theoretical understanding of the short story developed in this thesis. In Frank O'Connor's *The Lonely Voice* he offers an understanding of the short story form which supports an analysis of walking and its significance for short fiction. He describes characters in the short story as often marginalised and mediocre unlike characters in a novel who are likely to be more conventionally competent so that the reader more readily identifies with them.¹⁷ He argues that it is the trajectory of each short story, rather than convention, which determines its length and represents the 'difference between pure and applied storytelling, [...] Pure storytelling is more artistic, that is all'.¹⁸ It is this pure story-telling skill employed in the short story which characterizes the writing of walking in the modernist short stories discussed in the thesis. This is walking which represents an interlude in a life rather than its development over time as in the novel. Walking is unobtrusively placed in the narrative as an ordinary activity but it plays a subtle although significant part in developing believable characters whose thoughts and experience engage the reader. O'Connor argues that this is an important difference between the short story and the novel which does not concern

¹⁶ Heather Laird, 'The placing and politics of Bowen in contemporary Irish literary and cultural criticism', in Walshe, E. (ed), *Irish Writers in their Time: Elizabeth Bowen* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009), pp. 193-207 <<https://irishacademicpress.ie>> [accessed 26/11/2024]

¹⁷ Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (London: Macmillan, 1965), p. 93

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92

length but is about the purpose of the short story in exploring human consciousness and which is highlighted in unique episodes of experience including walking. The reader is not required to identify with the character but enters, through their thoughts, into the human reality of their immediate experience. O'Connor describes characters in the short story as a 'submerged population group' who are discouraged by the society with which they repeatedly try to engage.¹⁹ This downtrodden group which O'Connor identifies appears in short stories by James Joyce and Katherine Mansfield which place walking at the centre of the story and will be discussed in the thesis. Among Bowen's walkers the 'submerged' group includes those who are more prosperous but disadvantaged by their inability to negotiate daily life successfully and with confidence. For Joyce's Dubliners, who are ordinary working people living in the city, life offers few choices and they often struggle to survive. His stories address the tension between reality and hope with an accompanying loss of optimism. In Woolf's short stories her characters are usually more affluent and less materially vulnerable although they also experience the challenging social conditions of the early twentieth century including the aftermath of war and its economic pressures as well as the significant social change to which they must adapt.

Since O'Connor's discussion of the short story was published in 1965 there have been further analyses of the form's characteristics and development including those published in various critical compendia such as those edited by Dominic Head, Ann-Marie Einhaus and Adrian Hunter.^{20 21 22} Among this range of handbooks discussing

¹⁹ O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice*, 86

²⁰ Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

²¹ Ann-Marie Einhaus, *The Cambridge Companion to the English Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

²² Adrian Hunter, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

aspects of the modernist short story there are some useful, succinct summaries of its characteristics and some useful literary criticism. For example, in *The Modernist Short Story* Dominic Head's analysis of the short story form and its development includes the helpful reference to the contribution of Mikhail Bakhtin.²³ Bakhtin develops an understanding of the significance of the voices of a story's characters so that through their thought or speech they convey their first-hand experience and its meaning in the short story. Head discusses how Bakhtin recognised that the importance of speech in literature was achieved through the development of a range of voices and dialogue which interact with each other in texts including the short story. Bakhtin's recognition of the importance of inner dialogue in the short story is reflected in the argument made in the thesis that the significance of walking in the short story includes its role as the context for the inner dialogue occupying the walker.²⁴

In *The Cambridge Companion to the English Short Story* Adrian Hunter offers a useful discussion of Elizabeth Bowen's short stories in relation to those of other modernist writers.²⁵ He argues that her fiction is 'more diverse' than other modernist fiction because it employs a wider range of genres including 'psychological realism, pastiche, the ghost story, the Gothic drama, the thriller and the comedy of manners' and depends on plot as well as omniscient narration.²⁶ This distinguishes it from modernist fiction which presents the reality of human life through the immediate experience and understanding of its characters using free indirect discourse.

²³ Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 33

²⁴ Mikhail M Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (London: W.W. Norton, 2010), pp. 1076 - 1106

²⁵ Adrian Hunter, 'Elizabeth Bowen and V.S. Pritchett', in *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* ed. by Adrian Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 113 - 124

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 113

Bowen's interest in place informs the settings in which her characters walk. They are described in detail in the narrative and provide an evocative and important context for the events and actions in the story. This study will show that while there are clear differences between her writing and that of the modernist writers discussed in the study she can be included here as a contemporary of the other three writers also sharing an interest in characters who walk and encounter significant experiences as they do so. Her stories contribute to an understanding of the significance of walking in the short stories written between 1914 – 1939. They reflect a shared interest in a narrative of human experience which includes moments of being when understanding deepens or life is fundamentally changed as well as experiences of epiphany and examples of the experiences of women who walk.

Claire Drewery's study of liminality in short fiction by Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson develops the analysis of the modernist short story by moving the discussion from form to narrative strategy and the human experience which it explores. She argues that 'short story as a genre is pre-occupied with transgressing boundaries, and thus offers an ideal platform from which to examine the Modernist fascination with the liminal'.²⁷ Drewery's analysis is connected with the interest of this thesis in the significance of walking in the modernist short story because walking involves a change of place while also allowing time for thought. Walking can therefore include the crossing of a threshold which may be physical or in the mind of the walker. It involves a transition between places and experience and can be seen as a metaphor for change or liminality. The thesis argues that walking concerns the physical process of moving from place to place accompanied by ongoing thought so that the boundaries between ideas or an

²⁷ Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 2

understanding of life may be crossed alongside physical boundaries crossed on the route of the walk. The study recognises and explores the liminal or transitional characteristics of such walking when it occurs in the modernist short story. It discusses the narrative effect of familiar walks and those which are exploratory for the walker, both of which may include transitional moments leading into new places or ideas.

In 'The Modernist Short Story: Fractured Perspectives' Claire Drewery addresses the understanding of the concept of epiphany in the modernist short story.²⁸ She discusses the concern of modernism to present the reality of ordinary individual experience in the context of everyday activity. This is illustrated in the experiences of walking for characters in the short stories described in the thesis. Drewery describes the development of 'the notion of epiphany as an aesthetic of *disunity*' and notes Head's identification of 'a non-epiphany principle in Joyce's stories'.²⁹ Head uses this term to describe moments which embody the reality of everyday experience. These are moments in which the ordinary understanding of life is extended although they are seldom revelatory. Drewery illustrates this with an example from Joyce's 'The Dead'. She describes Gabriel's experience as 'a series of anti-epiphanies' which 'finally convey less the revelation of a spiritual reality behind surface appearances than instances in which the reader and protagonist become aware of irresolvable conflicts of identity'.³⁰ This is a view discussed in the thesis which identifies walking as an opportunity for a character to reflect on their individual circumstances and experience the moment of personal insight which Joyce described as 'epiphany'.

²⁸ Claire Drewery, 'The Modernist Short Story: Fractured Perspectives' in *The Cambridge History of the English Short Story* ed. by Dominic Head (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) p. 135

²⁹ Drewery, *The Modernist Short Story: Fractured Perspectives*, 141

³⁰ Drewery, *The Modernist Short Story: Fractured Perspectives*, 141

Morris Beja argues that Joyce defined the impact of such moments as 'a sudden illumination produced by some apparently trivial, even arbitrary cause which seems out of all logical proportion to the moment of enlightenment [...] to which it leads.'³¹

This thesis shows that those characters who experience such moments often do so as they walk and reflect on their everyday life. They encounter moments of insight which lead to clearer understandings of the ongoing experience of ordinary life.

Beja challenges interpretations of the epiphanies in *Dubliners* which emphasize the term's connection with religious belief such as those of Florence Walzl. She defines epiphany as a spiritual 'revelation of inner significance by means of outward appearance' and suggests that epiphanies in *Dubliners* are a reversal of its traditional meaning. Beja questions this interpretation and describes Joyce's collection of at least 40 examples of the epiphanies which he has encountered as a 'mixture of lyricism, drama and records of seemingly mundane trivia' which Joyce found 'fascinating'.³² He argues that modernist epiphanies are secular experiences which reflect the psychological experience of ordinary human life and are grounded in Joyce's own experience. Beja identifies the autobiographical basis for several epiphanies in *Dubliners* including the day of truancy in 'An Encounter' which 'was derived from a day's 'miching' by Joyce (aged 13) and his brother Stanislaus (aged 11) during which they met 'an elderly pederast''.³³ Beja notes that among Joyce's short stories some include an experience that can be described as epiphanic. This group includes 'An Encounter' or 'The Dead' in each of which walking provides a significant opportunity for an epiphanic insight to occur as the thesis will show. In other stories the final insight is an anti-epiphany in which the new understanding is

³¹ Morris Beja, *James Joyce* (London: Macmillan 1992), p. 29

³² Beja, *James Joyce*, 35

³³ Beja, *James Joyce*, 35

negative. This group of stories includes 'A little Cloud', 'Counterparts' and 'A Painful Case' which will be discussed in the thesis. Beja suggests that Joyce drew on memories of his own experience to provide an authentic insight into these experiences of ordinary life in Dublin before World War 1.

Beja's view of Joyce's understanding of epiphany is consistent with that of Deborah Parsons who argued that Joyce used the term 'epiphany' to reflect experiences of clear understanding or insight. She describes his narrative use of examples of epiphany in his short stories as showing an insight which explores 'the significance of trivial things' or is 'an aesthetic revelation rather than a prosaic object or instance from everyday life.'³⁴ She refers to his interest in the impact of such epiphanies in individual lives and describes them as 'a sudden illumination produced by some apparently trivial, even arbitrary cause which seems out of all logical proportion to the moment of enlightenment or vision to which it leads.'³⁵ The thesis will argue that those characters who experienced such moments of epiphany while walking were using the opportunity of a solitary walk for reflection and deeper understanding of their own life as they did so.

The analysis of walking in narrative is also reflected in historical and personal accounts of the experience of walking such as those of Rebecca Solnitt. In her discussion of the human significance of walking, Solnitt develops an understanding of the liminal effect of walking to previously unknown or unrecognised places with her argument that 'never to get lost is never to live'.³⁶ She quotes Thoreau's assertion that 'Not till we are lost [...] do we begin to find ourselves' and rephrases it

³⁴ Deborah Parsons, *Theorists of the Modern Novel* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 38

³⁵ Parsons, *Theorists of the Modern Novel*, 38

³⁶ Rebecca Solnitt, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2017), p. 14

to say 'Lose the whole world, he asserts, get lost in it and find your soul.'³⁷ ³⁸ Both Solnitt and Thoreau are describing a walker's experience of finding themselves somewhere previously unknown whether physically or in thought and discovering new ideas there. In narrative this occurs, for example, in short stories by Bowen or Mansfield which present walking as both an ordinary, everyday activity and an opportunity to experience change and transformation. These stories will be discussed in the thesis in chapters focused on the work of each writer. It is this understanding of walking as both ordinary and transformational which makes it a significant and interesting feature of the modernist short story.

Virginia Woolf includes walking as both an ordinary and also a significant experience in several of her short stories. In *The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* Lorraine Sim discusses Woolf's representation of the ordinary, which includes walking, in her fiction and non-fiction.³⁹ Sim argues that Woolf's exploration of everyday activity provides examples of moments of significant personal meaning, social understanding and ethical value in her short stories. She notes that Woolf frequently uses the word 'ordinary', for example, in the essay 'Modern Fiction' in which she invites the reader to 'Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day.'⁴⁰ Sim recognises that 'special moments comparable to those described by Woolf also occur in the work of a number of other modernists'.⁴¹ The ordinary is an important feature of the short stories by the other writers discussed in the thesis. In *Dubliners* Joyce builds up a picture of the lives of ordinary working people, usually men, living

³⁷ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 217

³⁸ Solnitt, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, 15

³⁹ Lorraine Sim, *The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Australia: Taylor and Francis Group, 2010)

⁴⁰ Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction' in *Collected Essays Vol II* ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Chatto & Windus 1966) p. 106

⁴¹ Sim, *The Patterns of Ordinary Experience*, 138

and working in the city as they address the challenges of their time and reconcile optimism with reality. Mansfield's short stories include an interest in the lives of a diverse group of ordinary women whose walking is integral to their daily life. It is a feature of Bowen's short stories that she places the bizarre alongside the ordinary so that oddness encountered while walking is reinforced through this contrast.

Walking is both the straightforward physical activity which is a means to move from one place to another but it is also imbued with memory, reflection, decision, freedom and imagination so that it is important for storytelling. Solnitt's description of walking as 'one of the best ways of exploring the mind' again echoes Henry David Thoreau when he says that 'the moment my legs begin to move, my thoughts begin to flow'.⁴²

⁴³ Similarly William Wordsworth walked vast distances around his rural home in the Lake District as he created his poetry while Charles Dickens' nocturnal walks covering extensive areas of London informed his writing.⁴⁴ The connection between walking, thought and creativity which was experienced by these writers and was important to them is also illustrated in the short stories of the modernist writers discussed here through the experience of their characters. Their stories show how walking is integral to human experience and thought both in fiction and real life. It informs the understanding of experience and builds up knowledge and a view of the world.

Another genre of literature which can contribute to an understanding of walking in the short story is the twenty-first century biographical literature of walking which discusses the individual experience of ordinary walkers including Lauren Elkin and

⁴² Rebecca Solnitt, *Wanderlust* (London: Granta 2001), p. 13

⁴³ Henry David Thoreau, 'Walking' published in *Atlantic Monthly* 1862

⁴⁴ Claire Tomalin, *Charles Dickens A Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), p. 375

John Haag in addition to Rebecca Solnitt. Their accounts analyse the significance of walking and its effect on human well-being. They contribute to an understanding of the individual experience of walking which is conveyed in fictional accounts in the short story. John Kaag's *Walking with Nietzsche* narrates his own experience as a walker from his particular philosophical standpoint and in the first person.⁴⁵ He describes two trips he made to the Swiss Alps to recreate Nietzsche's walks and reflect on his philosophical principles by bringing his experience of walking to life. Kaag describes these walks as intensely challenging and meaningful but also a deeply significant experience. His account brings together the physical experience of walking with the accompanying cognitive process.

In *Flâneuse* Lauren Elkin illustrates the human experience of walking in an urban environment. She writes about her experience as a walker in Paris, New York, London and Tokyo as she develops biographical accounts of being alone or included as part of a crowd while she explores each city on foot.⁴⁶ Through her own walks Elkin develops an account of the experience of a woman in the street whom she describes as 'an unstable figure [...] Is she a carefree flâneuse, or the object of the male gaze [...]?'⁴⁷ Her question is addressed in the modernist short stories discussed in the thesis which suggest that the woman in the street is much more than this. The women in these modernist short stories are walking to achieve the requirements of everyday life. Elkin argues that 'Space is not neutral. Space is a feminist issue.'⁴⁸ Her analysis leads to the conclusion that 'Cities are made up of invisible boundaries, intangible customs, gates that demarcate who goes where [...]

⁴⁵ John Kaag, *Hiking with Nietzsche* (London: Granta, 2018)

⁴⁶ Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse* (London: Vintage, 2016)

⁴⁷ Elkin, *Flâneuse*, 286

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 286

all manner of apparently public places are reserved for different kinds of people.’⁴⁹ Her autobiographical account of walking offers an insight into the experience of a late twentieth century woman walking through city streets as women do in the short stories of Mansfield and Woolf. However, the late twentieth century, feminist perspective does not sufficiently inform an understanding of the modernist stories because they concern the everyday need to walk as a means of travel as well as, occasionally, for leisure. Elkin concludes *Flâneuse* with a reference to Woolf’s essay ‘Street Haunting: A London Adventure’ as ‘an attempt to claim an ungendered place in the city by walking through it.’^{50 51} She suggests that ‘Woolf is telling us that we can integrate ourselves into the world of the city by becoming attentive to the shifts in the affective landscape.’⁵² This concept of female flânerie which Elkin discusses in her study provides a biographical analysis which opens up the idea that walking is both purposeful and a meaningful human activity. However, this does not address the accompanying thought process which is at the centre of this study of walking in short literature written in the early twentieth century because her concern is with the context for walking rather than the process by which it carries meaning.

In *Wanderlust* Rebecca Solnitt refers to the ‘time in between, the time of walking to or from a place’ as time which is not wasted but ‘uncluttered time’. She expands this understanding of walking by adding that because ‘while walking, the body and mind can work together, so [...] thinking becomes almost a physical, rhythmic act’.⁵³ This experience is captured in her biographical accounts which also inform an

⁴⁹ Elkin, *Flâneuse*, 286-7

⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf, ‘Street Haunting: A London Adventure’ in *The Collected Essays of Virginia Woolf* (Milton Keynes: Read Books, 2012)

⁵¹ Elkin, *Flâneuse*, 288

⁵² Elkin, *Flâneuse*, 288

⁵³ Rebecca Solnitt, *Wanderlust* (London: Granta 2001), p. xiii

understanding of the powerful interaction of walking and thought in the short stories written by the four modernist writers and discussed in this study. Solnitt discusses how the experience of time is altered for a walker as past and present are brought together through reliving an event or retracing a route in thought while walking and she describes this as creating 'continuity in life'.⁵⁴ This continuity of time can be seen in examples of the modernist short story discussed in the thesis. These short stories show how walking is more than movement through a space towards a destination but involves an understanding of real everyday life which includes ongoing thought and passing time as well as historical or future time. The thesis will show how each writer uses walking in their short stories to explore this understanding of human consciousness as activity, thought and time.

In addition to the literature of walking which is connected with literary analysis and the discussion of short fiction there are also biographical texts which describe and sometimes reflect on the first-hand experience of walking. They place walking at the centre of the physical process simultaneously with the thought process in which the walker is engaged. Examples of this genre include first-hand accounts of pilgrimage such as *The Way Under Our Feet* by Graham B. Usher which is subtitled 'A Spirituality of Walking' and describes walking as 'one of the simplest things we do as humans.'⁵⁵ His account of walking for pilgrimage, which is defined as 'a journey to a sacred place' suggests a historical connection with Chaucer's series of short stories in *The Canterbury Tales* in which travel was the story and the destination its end point.^{56 57} Usher's account illustrates the link between walking and thought with the

⁵⁴ Solnitt, *Wanderlust*, xv

⁵⁵ Graham B. Usher, *The Way Under Our Feet* (London: SPCK, 2020)

⁵⁶ Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

⁵⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer *The Canterbury Tales* 1375-1400

suggestion that walking is 'a form of active idleness' which can be 'used for problem solving, aiding creativity and fostering better communication'.⁵⁸ However, these examples indicate that the walking concerned is not idle but more intellectually active than he suggests. This genre of walking literature also includes biographical accounts of walking for pleasure or because it is regarded as a healthy activity. These are not benefits included in the accounts of walking from the modernist writers discussed in the thesis who write about walking as every day travel. The twenty first century writer, Duncan Minshull, has assembled collections of individual accounts of walking by a range of different individuals brought together into the books which he has edited.⁵⁹ These biographical accounts of walking as a record of a planned activity describe the first-hand thoughts and experiences of walking, usually for leisure, experienced in many different settings. They provide an account of the human experience of walking and thought which can contribute to an understanding of walking as leisure or exercise. They present walking as a purposeful and productive activity which can contribute significantly to human thought, wellbeing and experience. This is in contrast with the purposes of walking in the early twentieth century which usually had the more pragmatic purpose of travelling between two points in order to conduct everyday life.

Virginia Woolf's writing reflects her belief that human life is underpinned by both change and continuity. She describes much of ordinary life as 'non-being' which is not lived consciously while beneath it lies the intense and memorable human experience contained in 'moments of being'.⁶⁰ She argues that 'To tell the whole

⁵⁸ Usher, *The Way Under Our Feet*, 32

⁵⁹ Duncan Minshull, *Where my feet fall* (London: William Collins, 2022)

⁶⁰ Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past' in *Moments of Being* ed. by Jean Schulkind (St Albans: Triad/Panther Books, 1978), p. 81

story of a life the autobiographer must devise some means by which the two levels of existence can be recorded – the rapid passage of events and actions; the slow opening up of single and solemn moments of concentrated emotion'.⁶¹ These are moments which contain 'the change and continuity of personal identity' through that which is on the surface and that which is below.⁶² A moment of being is described as 'a sledgehammer blow', or a shock, the meaning of which unfolds after the experience.⁶³ This thesis argues that moments of being occur for characters in Woolf's short stories when they are occupied by walking and therefore have the opportunity for thought and reflection prompted by their surroundings and the accompanying sensory experience. This can lead to liminal moments of deep change or understanding. They are stories which illustrate how such moments of being can alter the pathway of a life, a relationship or the understanding of self. Among Virginia Woolf's 41 short stories there are 11 which include walking as a significant aspect of the narrative. She shows how moments of being occur as her characters walk and demonstrates the importance of walking as a context for human reflection and feeling. She writes about the interaction of the walker's thoughts with their surroundings and people observed so that walking becomes a catalyst for the development of the story.

In *Dubliners* James Joyce sets twelve short stories in Dublin in the early years of the twentieth century so it is unsurprising that in these stories eight of his young working men, who are struggling to achieve their dreams of success, walk frequently through the city streets with their thoughts reflecting their optimism, which is seldom fulfilled,

⁶¹ Virginia Woolf, *Collected Essays Vol. IV*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Chatto and Windus 1966), p. 6

⁶² Woolf, *Collected Essays*, 22

⁶³ Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past' in *Moments of Being* ed. by Jean Schulkind (St Albans: Triad/Panther 1978), p. 90

or a personal crisis, which is. Walking is an integral part of urban life as it is the means of moving around the city. It is also a chance for busy working people, sometimes also with a busy family life, to be alone and to think. It is the opportunity for moments when, although the story is being told in the present, it looks back to previous events and forward to its possible consequences. Joyce's writing of passing time with its emphasis on the reality only of the single present moment is often linked with walking because it is the opportunity for thoughts to reflect on past or future. Joyce uses the occasions when his urban characters are walking alone as a context for exploring and sharing with the reader their optimistic inner lives which often contrast sharply with the reality of ordinary working life in Dublin in 1914. Walking is the context for emotional experiences to occur and some of Joyce's characters illustrate the human capacity to move quickly through a series of strong and conflicting emotions while walking. These are stories which end with a recognition of the relentless ordinariness of life and the absence of any realistic hope for something better.

Joyce frequently uses free indirect discourse to present his walkers' thoughts and to give an insight into their everyday experience. His, sometimes marginalized, outsiders may develop an understanding of themselves and their circumstances through using the rare time alone to think while they walk. Their stories start with optimism but subsequent success is elusive. They seek change and experience moments of crisis which seldom lead to any improvement but can strengthen the status quo through an absence of change which leads to the final anti-epiphany. The stories end with an often negative but insightful moment of being which may include the walker's realisation that nothing will change or improve. These endings, containing disappointment and a recognition of the reality of their lives, are Joyce's

anti-epiphany for his characters as their dreams cannot be realised. It is only in 'The Dead' that an ending suggests any possibility of hope.

Katherine Mansfield's short stories written between 1914-1923 (when she died) include powerful examples of ordinary women struggling to survive in the period after the first world war with walking as their means of travel. They need to support themselves independently but have limited opportunities for employment in order to earn enough to do so. These are walkers whose stories reflect the everyday routines and quiet drama of human experience through the depth of their emotional experience and the narrative opportunities for epiphanic or anti-epiphanic moments to occur while they walk. Such moments can be significant turning points in the characters' lives although their impact may lie in the absence of change. Their walks include encounters with moments of emotional distress, insight and understanding. As these women walk in each of the nine stories the narrative shares their thoughts and their emotional response to their circumstances in their own voice through the use of free indirect discourse which accompanies their walking. Their experience includes liminal moments of deep feeling in which life changes as an emotional threshold is crossed often leading to the personal crisis which then occurs. There is an example of a positive experience of epiphany in 'The Garden Party' but this occurs for an affluent young woman in a rural home who has her first experience of seeing death and finds it 'simply marvellous' because it is peaceful, and 'as it should be'.⁶⁴

Mansfield's stories demonstrate the form's capacity to explore significant, emotional experiences or powerful turning points for her walkers with their consequences

⁶⁴ Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Stories* (London: Penguin Classics, 2007), p. 261

indicated but not described in the story. By uncovering the walker's thoughts Mansfield's stories place their individual inner experience at the heart of its focus on emotion and epiphany. Her stories reflect a range of circumstances with her single women walkers usually living in urban areas while the more affluent and less isolated occupy a rural setting. The walker's familiar environment contributes to the physical and sensory context for thought and may anticipate imminent events, for example, through the metaphor of a sudden chill, an icy wind or the shadows of trees in the background but the familiar can also still lead to danger as it conceals risk. Walking becomes a metaphor for the process of transition which can be an outcome of thought which accompanies a walk. Walking can prompt change through the opportunity for a shift in understanding, emotion or feeling. Mansfield's stories demonstrate the form's capacity to explore significant, emotional experiences in depth through walking with their consequences indicated but not described in the story.

Elizabeth Bowen's short stories do not conform to conventions of interwar modernism but she writes similarly of interludes of experience showing how strange and unexpected experiences can occur while ordinary people are out walking. Twenty-two of her short stories include walking which is integral to the narrative. These short stories give direct access to the thoughts of her walkers through a narrating voice as she writes of interludes of experience. Her stories include emotion and moments of epiphany prompted by her characters' experiences, thoughts or their conversation with another walker. They draw the threads of the characters' experiences together into a conclusion which, unlike the modernist short story endings which leave subsequent events to be imagined, completes the story. Bowen's interest in the short story is reflected in Ali Smith's summary of her view that

it is a focused and creative form when she states that 'Elizabeth Bowen says the short story has the advantage over the novel of a special kind of concentration, and that it creates narrative every time absolutely on its own terms.'⁶⁵ Bowen's writing demonstrates this argument that the tightly focused short story can include the odd and unexpected to give an insight into the eccentricities of human behaviour and consciousness which prompt actions. Her short story writing is included in this study because her short stories show how walking, although ordinary and often overlooked, plays a significant role in her short narrative alongside that of contemporary modernist writers of the interwar period. Like Woolf she was herself a great walker and her stories include an understanding of thinking while on the move with her characters who walk sometimes having strange and unusual experiences as they do so. Walking is the context for the impact and consequences of events which happen during the time covered in the short story which may include a discovery or intense emotion. Bowen's stories describe strange and unexpected experiences which occur while ordinary or sometimes more affluent people are out walking. She describes both their experience and emotional response to events and their setting, often placing them in unusual places or situations. She draws together the threads of their experience into a conclusion which, unlike endings by the other writers, rounds off the immediate events of the story. Omniscient narration rather than free indirect discourse describes the emotion and moments of epiphany prompted by her characters' experiences, thoughts or their conversation with another walker. Unlike the other writers included in this study, her stories more often include two or more characters walking together so that their conversation or influence on the other conveys their experience as their thoughts are described by the narrating voice.

⁶⁵ Ali Smith, *the first person and other stories* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 15

Bowen was particularly interested in place and physical setting and also wrote about her own experience as a traveler, for example, in a biographical account of a long stay in Rome.⁶⁶ Place is therefore at the centre of Bowen's stories as the setting which influences behaviour, experience and emotion. It is the context for moments of being to occur for her walkers and for the human behaviour which responds to an extraordinary event taking place in an ordinary setting and leading to a strange ending. In Bowen's stories place is an influence on experiences, thinking and emotional responses. Her stories are characterised by detailed, evocative and sensory description of the surroundings in which events occur. This description then connects with the thoughts of her walking characters to create their response to, often unusual, experiences. Walking influences their actions by providing the space for thought and decision which is influenced by that place. The, sometimes eccentric, responses to circumstances made by Bowen's walkers parody conventional behaviour by placing strange events in ordinary settings which demonstrate her interest in the strangeness of the ordinary.

This thesis will discuss the short stories written by Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, James Joyce and Elizabeth Bowen to show how walking in short narrative in the period between 1914 – 1939 forms an important context for their focus on moments of being, the significance of walking, individual thought and ordinary human experience which together exert a strong influence on an understanding of the lives of their individual walkers. These short stories illustrate the significance of these themes across the writers' short stories. They show the unique individual experience of the activity of walking in which their characters engage as each writer

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Bowen, *A Time in Rome* (London: Vintage Books, 1959)

balances the ordinary together with the uniquely individual to show how an ordinary walk can carry significant human experience and meaning.

CHAPTER ONE

VIRGINIA WOOLF: WALKING AND MOMENTS OF BEING

This chapter will discuss the role of walking in Virginia Woolf's short narrative showing how it can initiate a sequence of events or may be the context for the events which take place. Her short stories demonstrate how walking provides the opportunity for uninterrupted thinking and for the mind to wander alongside the repetitive action of walking which usually requires little attention until terrain is difficult or a road must be crossed. Walking may introduce a line of thought prompting actions or events as in Woolf's 'Solid Objects' or it may be in response to the setting which the walker observes in depth as in 'Kew Gardens'.⁶⁷ These and other examples will be discussed in this chapter. The chapter will examine how Woolf's understanding of moments of being is developed and illustrated when her characters walk.

Woolf used her own experience to illustrate how walking can influence thought and feeling in 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' in which she describes her thoughts and observations while walking in London with the first paragraph providing her definition of this form of flânerie as 'street rambling'.

there are circumstances in which it can become supremely desirable to possess [a lead pencil]; moments when we are set upon having an object, an excuse for walking half across London between tea and dinner. [...] when the desire comes upon us to go street rambling the pencil does for a pretext, and

⁶⁷ Virginia Woolf, 'Solid Objects' (1920), 'Kew Gardens', (1919) in *A Haunted House and other stories* (London: Vintage Classics, 2003)

getting up we say: 'Really I must buy a pencil,' as if under cover of this excuse we could indulge safely in the greatest pleasure of town life in winter – rambling the streets of London.⁶⁸

This walk, taking place on a dark and lamplit winter evening, is described as full of fleeting impressions and sights observed imaginatively and interpreted in the narrative. It is an enjoyable and unique experience of ordinary walking as a result of the walker's interest in all that she observes. She is one of many 'anonymous trampers' freed from any ties or associations and able to absorb the sights and brief impressions of the streets while observing other walkers and speculating on their background and individual reasons for walking. This experience of walking, observing and reflection occurs also in Woolf's short stories which provide similar, fictional accounts of walkers who respond reflectively to their surroundings as she does in 'Street Haunting'. These stories which include walking therefore explore both the thoughts of the walker and their impact on the walker's life.

Woolf's short fiction reflects her view that much of ordinary life is not lived consciously but provides the continuous activity beneath which lies the intense and memorable human experience which occurs in significant 'moments of being' and can create change.⁶⁹ She describes these moments of being as 'embedded in many more moments of non-being. [...] A great part of every day is not lived consciously.'⁷⁰ They are the significant moments in which an understanding of meaningful life beneath the superficial surface of routine activity is unexpectedly encountered and understood. They can be moments of insight which require concentration and

⁶⁸ Virginia Woolf, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure', (1927) in *The Collected Essays of Virginia Woolf* (Milton Keynes: Read Books, 2012), p. 57

⁶⁹ Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past' [1939] in *Moments of Being* ed. Jean Schulkind (St Albans: Triad/Panther Books, 1978), p. 81

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82

reflection in order to be understood. These are moments of discovery and intense emotion which include shock, surprise or fear but also pleasure, understanding and curiosity. They are so powerful that they are remembered and can later be recalled in detail. These moments of being occur as characters walk and think in several of Woolf's short stories which illustrate the importance of walking as a context for human reflection and feeling. They are integral to everyday human experience with its inner life of thoughts and emotions and are an important part of real everyday life. Deborah Parsons describes the modernist writers of fiction which conveys this ordinary, everyday experience as 'pioneers of a new subjective realism' with its presentation of individual 'internal consciousness [...] momentary thoughts and impressions that constitute mental life'.⁷¹ She applies this description to Virginia Woolf and also to James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson. This thesis argues that the writers discussed in the thesis use walking as an effective means to include and explore this subjective thought process among their characters. They can do so because walking is an opportunity for the mind to work while simultaneously being physically occupied in the ordinary and often overlooked human activity of walking.

In *how novels work* John Mullan discusses how subjective realism can be presented through the use of parentheses with an analysis of Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* which is derived from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*.⁷² He shows that both writers use brackets to show how layers of life experience can occur simultaneously. Mullan argues that Cunningham reflects Woolf's accounts of internal consciousness with brackets 'giving us life in its layers and consciousness' so that 'actions are set amongst thoughts'.⁷³ This use of brackets is also illustrated in *Mrs Dalloway in Bond*

⁷¹ Deborah Parsons, *Theorists of the Modernist Novel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 53

⁷² John Mullan, *how novels work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

⁷³ Mullan, *how novels work*, 237

Street where thoughts and actions can occur simultaneously.⁷⁴ For example, as Mrs Dalloway recalls the previous night's party while waiting to cross the road. 'How people suffered [...] she thought, thinking of Mrs Foxcroft at the Embassy last night [...] eating her heart out, because that nice boy was dead, and now the old Manor House (Durtall's van passed) must go to a cousin'.⁷⁵ These thoughts lie behind her actions which are their context with both behaviours happening simultaneously and brackets used to convey these two simultaneous levels of experience. The physical activity which is developing the narrative provides an indication of the setting as Mrs Dalloway waits to cross the road. It also provides the context for her two layers of thought which continue while she waits through using brackets to note her awareness of the traffic. Mullan notes Michael Cunningham's similar use of parentheses to enable text to include the two layers of thought and consciousness of which walking and thought are a particular example. 'For the rendering of the oddity of consciousness, of the way the mind can insert one incongruous thought into another, [parentheses] can be one of a novelist's most subtle resources.'⁷⁶ This use of brackets in Cunningham's novel reflects Woolf's short stories in which walking can include the two levels of external action and internal thinking in order to develop an understanding of behaviour or events in the narrative.

Woolf's story of Mrs Dalloway's walk from her London home in Westminster to Bond Street places the account of this walk at the heart of the story concurrently with the thoughts, feelings and memories which it generates as the walk progresses. This example of Woolf's narrative of ordinary experience is described by John Mullan as

⁷⁴ Virginia Woolf, 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' (1923) in *A Haunted House and other stories* ed. Susan Dick (London: Vintage Classics, 2003)

⁷⁵ Woolf, 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', 146

⁷⁶ Mullan, *how novels work*, 239

showing how her characters think actively by showing ‘the way memories [...] keep bursting into the present [...] Narration follows the activity of memory but without returning us to the past. [...] this is not memory but the activity of remembering.’⁷⁷ This activity of remembering is central to Mrs Dalloway’s thoughts as she walks through London and responds to it. The underlying importance of the steady rhythm of the activity and of the day as time passes while she walks is marked by the repeated sound of Big Ben chiming and the reference to an ‘unused hour’ which Mrs Dalloway is about to fill with her walk to Bond Street.⁷⁸ The rhythm of time passing sequentially is in contrast to her more disordered sequence of recollections that are triggered by observations and run through her mind as she walks. Her thoughts and chance meetings with strangers or an old friend are woven together to provide the interactions, remembered or immediate, which occupy her progress. The walk begins with her awareness that those she sees walking have an underlying story which is not apparent to an observer: ‘There is much more to be said about us than that we walk the streets of Westminster’.⁷⁹ This thought acknowledges the significance of walking and the shared experience of it reflected in her chance meetings. She puts this into words when she greets Hugh Whitbread with ‘I love walking in London [...] Really it’s better than walking in the country!’⁸⁰ Mrs Dalloway’s fictional comment reflects Woolf’s own first-hand account of London walking in ‘Street Haunting’ as both fiction and non-fiction demonstrate how urban walking creates a very effective and evocative context for a walker’s thoughts.

⁷⁷ Mullan, *how novels work*, 247-8

⁷⁸ Virginia Woolf, ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’, 146

⁷⁹ Woolf, ‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’, 146

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147

In both Mrs Dalloway's fictional walk and her first-hand account Woolf is sparing in the range of words which she uses for the act of walking and most frequently she simply uses 'walking'. This strengthens its purpose as an ongoing thread through the narrative which provides the structure and context for the thoughts and events which occur. The focus is on the state of mind and immediate experience of the walker rather than the physical activity of walking which is its context. This is a perception of walking not as habit or routine but as an opportunity 'to show the subtle richness of the everyday.'⁸¹ The occasional use of other terms for walking in these two accounts highlights the particular meaning they add to the story. For example, when Mrs Dalloway is crossing the road she 'pressed forward' while at the same time she is recalling a memory of childhood in the country.⁸² The text comes back to her awareness of her surroundings as she cautiously 'stiffened a little, waiting for Durnall's van to pass' while Big Ben chimed again.⁸³ She is thinking about Hugh while 'walking on' before the language shifts to indicate both her changed movement and location as 'She had passed through the Admiralty Arch' and then 'crossing the road, entered the Park, holding herself upright'.⁸⁴ This description of her erect posture while walking is repeated in each of the following paragraphs as, having 'mounted the little hill lightly' she 'held herself upright' while thinking about a friend who has died.⁸⁵ After this more controlled and deliberate way of walking while managing emotion there is a shift in her demeanour as she 'taking her time, crossed, walked towards Bond Street'.⁸⁶ Mrs Dalloway's walk is full of fleeting impressions

⁸¹ Lefebvre quoted in Lorraine Sim, *The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Australia: Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), p. 2

⁸² Woolf, 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', 146

⁸³ Woolf, 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', 146

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147

⁸⁵ Woolf, 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', 148

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 148-9

and sights observed with her imagination expanding on and interpreting them as the story opens up a strong sense of place, time and emotion as she walks.

In several of Woolf's short stories walking is an opportunity to initiate the ideas, experiences or imagination which subsequently prompt significant life changes as shown in 'Solid Objects', 'Lappin and Lapinova', 'The Legacy', or 'The Duchess and the Jeweller'. In another group of her short stories walking is the context which stirs imagination, memory or reflections on life and setting to create a deeper understanding as in 'Kew Gardens', 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', 'A Simple Melody', 'An Unwritten Novel', or 'The Searchlight'. These are stories which show how much of life can be experienced through thought while walking. Among the 46 short stories which Woolf wrote between 1912-1939 there are 12 which include walkers whose reflections, observations and activities develop and extend the narrative in these ways. In five of these stories an experience during a walk creates a significant life event, greater understanding, a shift in ideas, a change which determines the subsequent events of the story or even a death. In a further seven stories walking is the context for the narrative which is built round the walk and prompts significant moments of being or experience.

'A Simple Melody' is different from Woolf's other stories concerning walking because the walk it describes is itself part of the process of thought and reflection rather than being the context for thought. Individual subjectivity is at the centre of this walker's story which includes Woolf's two levels of consciousness.⁸⁷ Mr Carslake is both present at a party while at the same time walking elsewhere in his thoughts. He is 'unable to perform' at the party so his thoughts wander into an imagined walk set in

⁸⁷ Virginia Woolf, 'A Simple Melody' ((1925) in *A Haunted House and other stories* (London: Vintage Classics, 2003), p. 195

the landscape of a picture on the wall.⁸⁸ He is easily drawn into this distraction because he regards walking as 'the best way of passing one's time'.⁸⁹ Walking is described as his only gift and enables him to be 'in two places at once' as he attends the party while in his mind he is in the country walking with the latter generating the most interest for him in both thought and emotion.⁹⁰ His imagined walk is linked to his immediate experience as it includes a random group among those attending the party while also walking with him in his mind as they 'swam side by side in the greatest comfort' with their 'thoughts and emotions [...] largely made up of these outside influences'.⁹¹ In his mind he distinguishes these walking thoughts as 'airier, more impersonal' while in the room 'thoughts were jostled together like fish in a net, struggling'.⁹² His uncomfortable response to the social expectations of the party is his sense that 'all society is an attempt to seize and influence and coerce each thought as it appears and force it to yield to another.' while his imagined walking is a relaxed and inclusive activity.⁹³ This experience illustrates the principle of the two levels of consciousness which Woolf identifies in her definition of being and non-being.⁹⁴ His imagined walk reflects a powerful moment of being for Mr Carslake while the party gives him a sense of uncomfortable non-being. This story of his experience gives an account of the differences between the objective, physical experience of being present at the social gathering and his underlying subjective response in the strong desire to be elsewhere. This story illustrates how walking, even in imagination, can facilitate experience on the two levels of external behaviour

⁸⁸ Woolf, 'A Simple Melody', 195

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 195

⁹⁰ Woolf, 'A Simple Melody', 199

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 200

⁹² Woolf, 'A Simple Melody', 200

⁹³ Ibid., p. 200

⁹⁴ Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past' in *Moments of Being* ed. by Jeanne Schulkind (St Albans: Triad Panther, 1976) p. 82

and inner thought with the imagined activity of walking still the bridge between the two.

Woolf's short stories reflect her argument that in order to explore all aspects of a life the writer 'must devise some means by which the two levels of existence can be recorded – the rapid passage of events and actions; the slow opening up of single and solemn moments of concentrated emotion' which contain the 'change and continuity of personal identity'.⁹⁵ She illustrates these two levels with memories of her own childhood walks in Kensington Gardens. On one occasion she recalls being frozen with a sense of unreality and unable to step across a puddle while on another occasion she experienced a sense of shock when a disabled boy 'sprang up with his hand outstretched' causing her to panic and give him a whole bag of toffee.⁹⁶ She describes these two incidents as examples of powerful childhood memories the impact and intensity of which later influenced her writing of the human experience of her characters. In her short narrative the strength of such moments of walking can be the catalyst for change or deeper understanding. Elaine Showalter describes this understanding of such intense experience as Woolf's 'own acute psychological method of explaining sensation, memory and repression [...] which uses [...] the levels of human consciousness'.⁹⁷ This view illustrates how her stories include her understanding of this intensity by showing how levels of human consciousness experienced through moments of being can alter the pathway of a life, a relationship or an understanding of self.

⁹⁵ Virginia Woolf, 'De Quincey' in *The Common Reader* ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth, 1932)

⁹⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past' in *Moments of Being* (ST Albans: Triad/Panther, 1978), p. 90

⁹⁷ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* ed. by Elaine Showalter (London: Penguin, 2021), p. xvii

In her introduction to *Moments of Being* Jeanne Schulkind defines Woolf's moments of being as 'privileged moments' when a deeper 'truth' or reality is understood.⁹⁸ She describes how the two levels are interwoven:

'The moments of being, sometimes charged with revelations of astonishing intensity, are threaded in among scenes, of typical days and occasions, describing the physical environment, the social forces, the family and personal attachments and passions which shape the outer self'.⁹⁹

These moments are experienced by Woolf's characters who are immersed in the activities of everyday life and do not immediately recognise the impact of the moments which take them beyond everyday experience. An example of a significant moment which is recalled and understood later occurs in 'The Searchlight' in which a remembered walk to reach a former family home years later prompts detailed, forgotten recollections of the place and a great-grandfather.¹⁰⁰ Memories are grounded in the remembered walk to visit the house and are evoked through recalling that experience:

'We had to leave the car and walk across the fields. There isn't any road to the house. It stands all alone, the grass grows right up to the gate...there were chickens pecking about, running in and out of the rooms. All gone to rack and ruin. I remember a stone fell from the tower suddenly [...] There they lived,' she went on, 'the old man, the woman and the boy.'¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being* ed. by Jeanne Schulkind (St Albans: Triad/Panther Books, 1978), p. 20

⁹⁹ Schulkind, (ed.) *Moments of Being*, 23

¹⁰⁰ Woolf, 'The Searchlight' (1929) in *A Haunted House and other stories* (London: Vintage Classics, 2003)

¹⁰¹ Woolf, 'The Searchlight', 127

This story illustrates Woolf's view that life is composed of moments of intense experience which are remembered later and can exert an influence on present experience. These moments recall and reflect on an experience after it has occurred so that it later retains the impact of a moment of being. In Woolf's short stories, walking is a significant context in which such moments can occur because the walker is free to allow thoughts to wander, to remember and reflect. Walking provides opportunities to experience moments of thought, emotion, insight into reality, secrecy and deep understanding. Lorraine Sim describes them as the ordinary experiences through which Woolf explores 'the potential of everyday experience as a site of personal meaning, social understanding and ethical value.'¹⁰² She notes how 'Woolf associates this term [moments of being] not only with heightened or dramatic experiences but quite ordinary moments of pleasure, such as walking through the country or the city, writing or reading a book.'¹⁰³ Sim shows how Woolf's characters engage with these everyday activities and describes how 'Everyday life is more than routine and static [but] can be creative and dynamic'.¹⁰⁴

Woolf's juxtaposition of the ordinary and the significant is illustrated in 'Lappin and Lapinova' in which walking is a metaphor for experiences of emotion including love, hope, disappointment and resignation. At the start of this story the newly married couple create their own stories imagining themselves to be a rabbit couple while on 'their long solitary walks' in the rain during their honeymoon.¹⁰⁵ These shared stories continue when they return home and maintain the shared 'private world, inhabited

¹⁰² Lorraine Sim *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Australia: Taylor and Francis Group, 2010)

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 140

¹⁰⁴ Sim, *The Patterns of Everyday Life*, 11

¹⁰⁵ Virginia Woolf, 'Lappin and Lapinova', (1939) in *A Haunted House*, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: Penguin 1973), p. 76

[...] entirely by rabbits'.¹⁰⁶ The story concludes when this fantasy which masks the fragility of the marriage is abruptly ended by the husband's response to his wife's anxious recollection of it. 'Yes,' he said at length. 'Poor Lapinova...' [...] 'Caught in a trap,' he said, 'killed.' And sat down and read the newspaper. So that was the end of that marriage.'¹⁰⁷ The range of words for walking used in this story sums up its journey from romance to 'the end of that marriage'. In the first paragraph walking is cheerful with a 'wedding march' and a dog that amusingly 'sauntered across the path'.¹⁰⁸ Walks taken during the honeymoon seem superficially happy but are 'long solitary walks' during which there was much rain and a day of 'climbing' which resulted in blisters but no sympathy.¹⁰⁹ Growing secrecy is indicated with 'stealing off' and then 'roaming' which suggest the loss of the shared fantasy. The wife dreams unhappily about walking using words suggesting confusion and uncertainty including 'wandering, turning twisting, in and out, round and round, hunting [...] flying, escaping..'.¹¹⁰ Her growing unhappiness and sense of loss prompts her to go out and walk to relieve powerful emotion as 'She walked along the Cromwell Road' but street walking was not able to assuage her sadness and sense of loss.¹¹¹ The honeymoon walks together later become the wife's solitary city walking which attempts to find comfort by imagining happier walking 'on a moor' where there was 'a stream rushing' and a 'dark wood'. Like Mr Carslake in 'A Simple Melody', she is in a different, imagined place from that where she is physically walking. Walking, which at

¹⁰⁶ Woolf, 'Lappin and Lapinova', 77

¹⁰⁷ Woolf, 'Lappin and Lapinova', 74

¹⁰⁸ Woolf, 'Lappin and Lapinova', 74

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 76

¹¹⁰ Woolf, 'Lappin and Lapinova', 82

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 83

first supported the changes arising from early married life, becomes a metaphor for the changed emotions associated with disappointment and loss.

An example of the very significant experience of change created by the consequences of walking which is the context for decisive action occurs in 'The Legacy'.¹¹² The story uncovers the powerful aftermath of walks taken by two characters who do not themselves appear in the story although their separate walks are at its centre. Instead, it presents the experience of the bereaved husband, who moves from confidence to shock through a conversation with his deceased wife's secretary followed by reading his wife's diary. His assumptions are challenged when he discovers that his wife had formed a romantic relationship and that she has died shortly after her lover and in the same way. He finds the entry 'He has done what he threatened' and then, on the day before her death 'Have I the courage to do it too?'.¹¹³ His reading prompts him to picture her death and to realise that she deliberately walked towards it: 'He could see her in front of him. She was standing on the kerb in Piccadilly. Her eyes stared; her fists were clenched. Here came the car'.¹¹⁴

He telephones her secretary to ask,

'Who,' he thundered, is B.M.?' [...] Then at last she said: 'He was my brother.' He was her brother; her brother who had killed himself. [...] He had received his legacy. She had told him the truth. She had stepped off the kerb to rejoin her lover. She had stepped off the kerb to escape from him.'¹¹⁵

¹¹² Virginia Woolf, 'The Legacy' (1940) in *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories* ed. by Susan Dick (London: Vintage 2003), p. 275

¹¹³ Woolf, 'The Legacy', 141

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 281

¹¹⁵ Woolf, 'The Legacy', 140-1

The story shows him how she had used an apparently ordinary walk as the action which would end her life. Walking plays a highly significant and powerful place in this story as the means for two characters to take control of their unhappiness through an apparently ordinary walk in London. The ordinariness of walking which had allowed their identical deaths to be perceived as coincidence has previously masked the cause and connection between them.

Other short stories written by Woolf also show how walking can play a significant part in creating the narrative context for life changing moments of being to occur as a consequence of a walk. The ordinary seaside walk which begins 'Solid Objects' is an example of this process. The beginning of the story describes two young men walking along a beach.¹¹⁶ One of them discovers a piece of glass buried in the sand with the process of his discovery and his thoughts about the object described in detail. His thoughts shift from immediate reality into a deep reverie which creates a moment of significant change for him. The object's impact on him is suggested in the first words used to describe it. It is an object of 'wonder', 'almost a precious stone', 'perhaps [...] it was really a gem', 'It pleased him; it puzzled him', it was 'so definite an object'.¹¹⁷ As he dropped it into his pocket this moment of being when it is found leads into fantasy and the attribution of human feelings to the stone which promised 'a life of warmth and security upon the [...] mantelpiece, [...] believing that the heart of the stone leaps with joy when it sees itself chosen from a million like it, to enjoy this bliss'.¹¹⁸ These imagined feelings create the outcome of the beach walk which alters the life of the walker as it triggers an obsession with collecting which overrides everything else. This story is about the life changing outcome of a walk with its

¹¹⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'Solid Objects' (1920) in *A Haunted House* 1920 (London: The Hogarth Press 1944), p. 96

¹¹⁷ Woolf, 'Solid Objects', 86-7

¹¹⁸ Woolf, 'Solid Objects', 87

moment of intense being at the start having a life- long impact as the catalyst for the walker's subsequent, increasingly obsessive behaviour.

Walking serves a different purpose in other short stories by Woolf when it is the context for describing the attributes of a character through the way that they walk and their accompanying thoughts as they do so. This occurs in 'The Duchess and the Jeweller' in which the jeweller's distinctive style of walking reflects his perception of himself.¹¹⁹ On the day described in the story he was impeccably dressed when he 'passed out into Piccadilly' as if stepping onto a stage and then 'swayed slightly as he walked, as the camel at the zoo sways [...] when it walks along the asphalt paths'.¹²⁰ Like the camel he despised those around him as he 'swung down Piccadilly, perfectly dressed, with his gloves, with his cane; but dissatisfied still' until he 'strode through the shop without speaking'.¹²¹ This walk is integral to the development of the story not only because it takes him from one setting to another but because it is the context for description of his character and motives which are the centre of the story. The word 'walk' is used only once in the story but the other terms for his manner of moving during his walk, including 'swayed', 'dissatisfied' and 'half snuffed, half sighed' evoke his demeanour and pride in the social position which he has acquired. His feelings and character are conveyed indirectly in the description of the manner of his walking.

In another group of stories Woolf uses walking differently so that it runs through the story as the context which allows a stream of thought to develop while a character walks. These stories concern characters whose main activity in the story is their walk

¹¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, 'The Duchess and the Jeweller' (1937) in *A Haunted House* (London: Penguin Books, 1973)

¹²⁰ Woolf, 'The Duchess and the Jeweller', 243

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 243

rather than any other events or thoughts. In 'Kew Gardens' the variety of characters are spending a hot summer afternoon walking in the park with their thoughts, conversation and behaviour described as each group passes by the snail who is given a voice through a mix of free indirect discourse and anthropomorphism. He serves as a reliable fixed point and marker of progress which every character passes because he moves particularly slowly as he considers how to negotiate the obstacles in his way.¹²² He also introduces a sense of jeopardy as he is at risk of being trodden on at any moment but remains safely hidden, making his own form of progress throughout the story. He has a role in the narrative which provides structure and pattern to the story. He provides a fixed central point which links the progress of the walkers in the story. The family group who pass him first 'straggled past the flower-bed with a curiously irregular movement not unlike that of the white and blue butterflies'.¹²³ The choice of 'straggled' for their walk describes slow movement and indicates that they are not walking together but are spread out in an irregular and untidy group which facilitates their individual thought. The man is initially 'strolling carelessly, while she bore on with greater purpose'. He is intentionally using the opportunity of the walk to think about former experiences and 'kept this distance in front of the woman purposely, though perhaps unconsciously, for he wished to go on with his thoughts.'¹²⁴ Their conversation is slow and disjointed as walking side by side and not looking directly at each other allows them to discuss individual memories of the past apparently not shared before. It is the woman who recognises the effect of walking on their thoughts saying 'one always thinks of the past, in a garden with men and women lying under the trees? Aren't they one's past, all that

¹²² Virginia Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', (1919) in *A Haunted House* (London: Penguin Books, 1973)

¹²³ Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', 84

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84

remains of it [...] those ghosts lying under the trees?'.¹²⁵ Their exchange ends abruptly with a further reference to the two children's manner of walking in the mother's brisk prompt to them to keep up in 'Come, Caroline, come, Hubert.'¹²⁶ The parents' moment of sharing has passed and the text returns to a description of their brisk way of walking as they depart from the story in 'They walked on past the flower-bed, now walking four abreast'.¹²⁷

The snail then provides a link to the next walkers who pass him as he 'began to labour over the crumbs of loose earth which broke away [...] as it passed over them.' and then 'there came past the bed the feet of other human beings'.¹²⁸ These are two men, the younger of whom is looking steadily at the ground while 'The elder man had a curiously uneven and shaky method of walking' which necessitated guidance from the younger man.¹²⁹ The gait of these two walkers conveys their relationship and character by suggesting that the purpose for walking is exercise for the older man. Curiosity about their unusual progress makes the link to the next walkers 'two elderly women of the lower middle class' who were 'frankly fascinated by any signs of eccentricity betokening a disordered brain, especially in the well-to-do'. However, their progress and curiosity are interrupted as the more 'stout and ponderous' of the two is transfixed by the flowers and stops walking to look 'through the pattern of falling words to the flowers standing cool, firm and upright in the earth. [...] She stood there letting the words fall over her.'¹³⁰ The contrast is drawn between the initial insensitivity of the women and then their deeper underlying appreciation of the

¹²⁵ Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', 85

¹²⁶ Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', 85

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 85

¹²⁸ Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', 86

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 86

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 87

natural environment of the park. The snail finally completes the last duty as the fixed point making a link between each group of walkers when 'having considered every possible method of reaching his goal' and assessed the options he creeps under a leaf as the last two young walkers come past.¹³¹ They are at a significant point in their lives and saying little but meaning a great deal as they seek the café. Her wish to continue walking is curtailed by his wish for tea and the introduction of a different, more tentative, word to replace 'walking' as she allows herself 'to be drawn down the grass path'.¹³² Woolf draws the end of 'Kew Gardens' together with reference to all the walkers in the park who are exhibiting 'much the same irregular and aimless movement passed the flower-bed' as they were absorbed into 'the green-blue atmosphere' and the heat.¹³³ The final paragraph uses words associated with walking or movement to sum up the activity in the park through the thrush who 'chose to hop', the butterflies 'were not rambling vaguely but danced' while walkers 'wavered and sought shade'.¹³⁴ Woolf's story uses a range of vocabulary for walking which captures the breadth of the individual walker's experiences. It places walking at the centre of each character's experience of the park as the setting for their memories and a sensory response to them.

Woolf's short stories show how accounts of everyday experience can provide opportunities for a deeper exploration of meaning in life through accounts of social experience which can touch on ethical issues while also portraying the strangeness of the apparently ordinary. The everyday activity of walking is an opportunity for these moments of being to cause a shift in the walker's understanding and

¹³¹ Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', 87

¹³² Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', 89

¹³³ Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', 89

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 89

perception of life. This understanding of walking in her narrative also reflects the importance of walking for Woolf in her own experience as she frequently walked considerable distances each day because she found that it helped her physical and mental health.¹³⁵ Her writing draws attention to its importance for human well being through the opportunity it provides for effective thinking.

The importance and significance of moments of being for the individual walker are illustrated in several examples of Woolf's short stories. Walking can be a particularly rich opportunity for this to occur as it allows for the exploration and development of character, state of mind and response to surroundings or events which are observed or experienced. Woolf often shows how the interaction of the walker's thoughts with their surroundings and the people observed allow walking itself to become the catalyst for the development of the story. Walking both initiates events through the flow of thought and is the context for narrative or cognitive events to occur.

¹³⁵ Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf A Biography by Quentin Bell* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973), pp. 168-9

CHAPTER TWO

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: WALKING IN WOMEN'S LIVES

'there was a faint chill, like a chill from a glass of iced water before you sip'

Katherine Mansfield 'Miss Brill' in *The Collected Short Stories* 1921

This chapter will argue that Katherine Mansfield develops the time which her characters spend walking as an opportunity to present their individual experience of life through their own thoughts and voice. Walking has a significant place at the centre of their story because their thinking as they walk is conveyed through their unguarded inner voice using free indirect discourse. This brings the ordinary experience of a walk to the centre of the story as a powerful feature of the narrative. The private thoughts which occur while walking contain the direct and undisguised emotional or cognitive experience of the events encountered so that the reader shares the character's first-hand experience. This chapter will explore examples of Mansfield's writing of walking accompanied by private thought in order to show its effectiveness as a means to structure and deepen the meaning conveyed in the narrative.

Mansfield uses walking as a powerful means to convey thought, emotion and the experience of epiphanic or liminal moments in order to show how an apparently ordinary activity can contain considerable human significance. The familiar activity of walking, which could be overlooked, is central to human experience and this is demonstrated in these stories. By enabling characters to communicate their thoughts, which reflect and determine their actions, while they walk the path of the

narrative is driven by its characters rather than through describing events without their direct involvement in telling their own story. Walking is therefore placed at the centre of key moments of emotion or epiphany in many of Mansfield's short stories.

The experience of powerful turning points or 'moments of epiphany' is described by Stephanie Forward as 'a key aspect of modernist writing' and is central to many of Mansfield's stories as her walking characters move beyond their everyday lives to encounter significant moments of emotional distress, revelation or understanding.¹³⁶

It is the privacy of thought accompanying an individual who is walking, usually alone, which is employed to powerful effect to gain insight into the mind of the walker.

Mansfield's short stories use walking to capture ordinary human experience interspersed with occasional, liminal moments of deep and powerful feeling in which life makes a permanent and unalterable shift to become different from all that went before as an emotional threshold is crossed. Like James Joyce she often writes about ordinary people struggling to survive and find some success or pleasure in their lives. They are not seeking an epiphany but hope for something better in life so that this aspiration is a thread of their thinking as they walk. However, alongside their hopes they are also caught up in the immediate reality of their circumstances which can prompt an emotional response and may lead to change which may be positive or negative.

Mansfield explores the juxtaposition of the external and internal for walking characters through her concern 'with the psychology of her characters' and with the 'nuances of emotion' encountered in human experience as they address disappointment or seek change in order to achieve a better life offering more security

¹³⁶ Stephanie Forward 'Introduction to Katherine Mansfield's short stories' <<http://www.bl.uk>> [accessed 26th May 2021]

and comfort.¹³⁷ This hope is expressed through free indirect discourse which Mansfield uses to carry significant meaning when it accompanies walking through taking the reader directly to the uninterrupted thoughts and feelings of the walker. It emphasises the strength and deep emotion of the walker's feelings as well as their humanity by putting their thoughts at the centre of the narrative. Mansfield's short stories often place the uninterrupted emotional or liminal thought process occurring while walking in the context of a physical and sensory experience of the walk, such as the chill which runs through 'Miss Brill' and deepens the significance of its key narrative moments which may lead to change.¹³⁸ This pattern of the feeling of a chill in 'Miss Brill' will be discussed in this chapter.

Claire Drewery argues that liminal moments of transition leading to epiphanic change are significant in the short stories of Mansfield as well as those of Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and May Sinclair.¹³⁹ Mansfield employs walking as a context and a metaphor for this process of transition because it includes a change of place or setting through the journey of walking. This change of context then becomes a metaphor for the changes of identity, ideas or experience which can occur during the walk. The changes which occur in a character's life can come during the process of walking which offers the opportunity for the character's shift of understanding, emotion or feeling alongside the physical change of scene. It is the time and opportunity for private thought provided by the walk which enables this personal change for the character to occur so that it does more than to act only as a metaphor for change. It is a catalyst for the changes which take place in the narrative.

¹³⁷ Forward, 'Introduction to Katherine Mansfield's short stories', 3

¹³⁸ Katherine Mansfield, 'Miss Brill' (1922) in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin Books, 2007) p. 330

¹³⁹ Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women* (London: Routledge, 2011) p. 2

Mansfield's stories provide chronological accounts of events which occur while a character walks with many of these events happening in their thoughts as they walk. This understanding of walking anticipates and illustrates Rebecca Solnitt's description of walking as 'time in between' which is not wasted but 'uncluttered' and is reflected in Mansfield's use of walking in her short stories to develop narrative and character.¹⁴⁰ In 'Taking the Veil', for example, it is the walk to the library which explicitly provides the opportunity to think: 'For Edna had made going to the Library an excuse for getting out of the house to think, to realise what had happened, to decide somehow what was to be done now.'¹⁴¹ This walk achieves its purpose by bringing her to an important conclusion as: 'she realised that now at last for the first time in her life – she had never imagined any feeling like it before – she knew what it was to be in love, but – in – love!'¹⁴²

Mansfield's main characters are often single women who are working to support themselves and finding it hard to do so although she does include some more affluent individuals who have a different experience of walking with a purpose which is directed outside the character's own material needs. For example, in 'The Garden Party' Laura begins her walk to deliver some food to a bereaved family still thinking about the success of the earlier party.¹⁴³ As she crosses a road and her thoughts shift to the situation which she is about to enter the text also shifts to free indirect discourse as she realises that:

¹⁴⁰ Rebecca Solnitt, *Wanderlust* (London: Granta, 2014) p. xiii

¹⁴¹ Katherine Mansfield, 'Taking the Veil' (1923) in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin, 2007) p. 407

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 412

¹⁴³ Katherine Mansfield, 'The Garden Party' (1922) in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin, 2007) p. 245

It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now? No, too late. This was the house.

Laura was terribly nervous.....Oh, to be away from this! ¹⁴⁴

The walk is taken in response to her mother's sudden 'brilliant idea' to respond to news of a sudden death by helping the bereaved family with a gift of the leftover but 'perfectly good food'. ¹⁴⁵ It leads Laura into a much more profound encounter with death as she inadvertently views the dead man's body and experiences a deep understanding of its powerful significance which she tries to explain to her brother on the walk home: "No," sobbed Laura. 'It was simply marvellous [...]' 'Isn't life, she stammered, 'isn't life-' But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.' ¹⁴⁶ The unexpected outcome of the, initially reluctant and anxious, walk was her unplanned opportunity to see the dead young man's peaceful face, which was 'wonderful, beautiful'. ¹⁴⁷ As a result she is changed as she gains a new level of maturity and experience which creates a deeper sympathy with a family whose circumstances she had not previously encountered.

Mansfield's characters reflect a variety of circumstances with her single women usually living, working and walking in urban areas while the more affluent and less socially isolated, together with their servants, may occupy a rural environment. It is the servants of the affluent country dwellers who are anomalous to this pattern as they also walk to travel in rural settings. Alice, in 'At the Bay', is an illustration of this. ¹⁴⁸ She is worried about walking alone on the apparently empty and unfamiliar

¹⁴⁴ Mansfield, 'The Garden Party', 259

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 258

¹⁴⁶ Mansfield, 'The Garden Party', 261

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 261

¹⁴⁸ Katherine Mansfield, 'At the Bay' (1922), in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, (London: Penguin 2007), p. 228

rural roads despite the excitement of her rare outing. The reader shares her fears about the possible dangers of walking alone along the deserted country road through her anxious thoughts. Free indirect discourse captures her character and voice as she walks:

Alice did wish there'd been a bit of life on the road though. Made her feel so queer, having nobody behind her. Made her feel all weak in the spine. She couldn't believe that someone wasn't watching her. [...] She [...] said to the distant gum tree, 'Shan't be long now.' But that was hardly company.' ¹⁴⁹

The story of Alice's outing is a brief interlude in the longer story of the leisured life of her employers. Her thoughts as she walks give the reader a greater understanding of her character and life experience which have so far only been glimpsed through brief reference to her domestic tasks as 'the servant girl'. ¹⁵⁰ This sympathetic portrayal shows, through her walking thoughts, that she is purposeful, reflective, brave and engaged with the local community.

Alice is a lone walker who is very observant of her surroundings while her thoughts concern her own situation and feelings. She is not aware that she is herself being watched by her hostile employer although she is very conscious of her vulnerability as a solitary woman walking in the country. ¹⁵¹ Her fear is conveyed in the sense of isolation and loneliness as she walks which 'Made her feel all weak in the spine' despite her excitement about the rare outing on an afternoon off. ¹⁵² Alice plays a small part in a longer story but, as a walker, she emerges as an engaging and authentic character through her entirely credible feelings. She is a walker for whom

¹⁴⁹ Mansfield, 'At the Bay', 228

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 213

¹⁵¹ Mansfield, 'At the Bay', 228

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 288

the destination is significant because the adventure of the walk takes her to an exciting and unusual experience which rewards her bravery with the enjoyment of tea with a friend. She is not one of Mansfield's confident urban women walkers but is nonetheless a woman earning her living who successfully challenges herself to complete this rural walk alone during her leisure time.

Mansfield's short stories of single women walkers exemplify the focus of this thesis which argues that, by uncovering the thought process which accompanies the walk, the story places the individual inner experience of characters, such as Alice, at the centre of the narrative's focus on emotion and epiphany. This reflects Deborah Parsons' argument that the short story is psychologically based and therefore 'must be more concentrated, more visionary' by creating (and being carried by) a constant 'electrical imaginative current'.¹⁵³ This current of energy and thought is found in the use of the inner voice of Mansfield's characters as they walk but for them it is seldom positive. Several of her walkers are carried by a negative current of distress or anxiety which is uncovered through their thoughts as they walk in order to try and contain their emotion or to decide what to do.

This negative current of deep sadness is illustrated by Ma Parker whose experience of walking is neither visionary nor the catalyst for imagination but contains the powerful, human experience of grief. Her poverty and sadness are described by the narrating voice at the beginning of the story which then slips into free indirect discourse to uncover her deep and important memory of her deceased grandson's affectionate interaction with her as it runs through her mind:

¹⁵³ Deborah L Parsons *Streetwalking in the Metropolis Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 200

‘Gran! Gran!’ Her little grandson stood on her lap in his button boots. He’d just come in from playing in the street.

‘Look what a state you’ve made your gran’s skirt into – you wicked boy!’

But he put his arms round her neck and rubbed his cheek into hers.

‘Gran, gi’ us a penny!’ he coaxed.

‘Be off with you; Gran ain’t got no pennies.’

‘Yes, you ‘ave.’

‘No, I ain’t’

‘Yes, you ‘ave. Gi’ us one!’

Already she was feeling for the old, squashed, black leather purse.

‘Well, what’ll you give your gran?’

He gave a shy little laugh and pressed closer. She felt his eyelid quivering

against her cheek. ‘I ain’t got nothing’, he murmured¹⁵⁴

She emerges from this memory and recalls where she is but her mounting despair as she cleans continues to dominate her mind and therefore her story. This leads her to ask ‘Why must it all have happened to me? [...] What have I done?’¹⁵⁵ and this powerful feeling prompts her to walk away in a liminal moment of insight in which she perceives her life clearly. Mansfield describes her despair as purposeful walking which contains grief ‘like a person so dazed by the horror of what has happened that

¹⁵⁴ Katherine Mansfield, ‘Life of Ma Parker’ (1922) in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin 2007), p. 302

¹⁵⁵ Mansfield, ‘Life of Ma Parker’, 307

he walks away – anywhere, as though by walking away he could escape. . . .’¹⁵⁶ As Ma Parker walks away from her job she is consumed with deep grief: ‘Her misery was so terrible that she pinned on her hat, put on her jacket and walked out of the flat like a person in a dream. She did not know what she was doing.’¹⁵⁷ Once in the street she is met by Mansfield’s familiar metaphor for desperation – the cold air and ‘a wind like ice’.¹⁵⁸ Like Mansfield’s other unhappy female walkers her distress is unnoticed by busy passers-by. Although desperate to weep in order to grieve she keeps walking because a moment of epiphany has already shown her that she has nowhere to go. ‘Wasn’t there anywhere in the world where she could have her cry out – at last?’¹⁵⁹ The weather in the form of the ‘icy wind’ and the rain give narrative confirmation of the despair that ‘There was nowhere’.¹⁶⁰ Ma Parker is a poor and deeply sad walker with nowhere to retreat and grieve in privacy away from the public setting of the street as her endless grief and sadness are reinforced by the lack of escape. This is an occasion in Mansfield’s stories when the emotion experienced by the walker and the epiphany it triggers are the cause rather than the outcome of the walk: ‘It was cold in the street. There was a wind like ice. [...] And nobody knew – nobody cared [...] If she could only cry now, cry for a long time, over everything.’¹⁶¹ As she walks in the street she is telling her own story of her experience and feelings with her only purpose being to cry and to grieve. This intense, final section uses free indirect discourse to express her grief through her own voice. This emphasises her hidden thoughts and emotions including that ‘It would frighten Ethel out of her life’, ‘people would come asking her questions’, ‘she had no right to cry in strangers’

¹⁵⁶ Mansfield, ‘Life of Ma Parker’, 308

¹⁵⁷ Mansfield, ‘Life of Ma Parker’, 308

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 308

¹⁵⁹ Mansfield, ‘Life of Ma Parker’, 308

¹⁶⁰ Ibid p. 309

¹⁶¹ Mansfield, ‘Life of Ma Parker’, 308

houses', and finally finishing the story with despair as 'Ma Parker stood, looking up and down. The icy wind blew out her apron into a balloon. And now it began to rain. There was nowhere.'¹⁶²

Distress of a different kind is explored in Mansfield's 'The Little Governess' whose walk is the context for another tragic ending stemming from the emotion of loneliness exacerbated by isolation and the naïve innocence of a very young woman in an unfamiliar place who is manipulated by a wily old man through the device of an apparently harmless walk which is full of danger. He plays on the vulnerability of her innocence and her isolation. He succeeds because she sees him as a grandfather figure with the narrative introducing this possibility indirectly through the thoughts attributed to him: 'Who knows he was not murmuring in his sentimental German fashion: 'Ja, es ist eine Tragödie! Would to God I were the child's grandpapa!'.¹⁶³ It is as he takes her out to walk and enjoy small treats that her thoughts also reflect on this idea although with a different motivation. She refers to him as 'her grandfather' and is persuaded to trust him: 'In spite of the ice-cream her grateful baby heart glowed with love for the fairy grand-father.'¹⁶⁴

Through the strategy of a sight-seeing walk in the city the old man continues his seduction using her naivety and curiosity to build trust. Walking is the context for danger because it seems deceptively ordinary and the little governess is lonely and impoverished therefore vulnerable. Her response of childlike excitement is captured in her own voice through her thoughts:

¹⁶² Mansfield, 'Life of Ma Parker', 309

¹⁶³ Mansfield, 'The Little Governess' (1920) in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 180

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 187

She wanted to run, she wanted to hang on his arm, she wanted to cry every minute, 'Oh, I am so frightfully happy!'

And then they took a cab and really she must have seen thousands and thousands of wonderful classical pictures in about a quarter of an hour!¹⁶⁵

She has suppressed her initial anxiety about trusting a stranger because she is lonely and her feelings are a response to their walk but also to her earlier fear arising from the solitary journey. She is seduced by the walk to accept his duplicitous care which leads to fear and horror as the old man finally moves to take what he wants from her. He is no longer the fairy grandfather but a threat and this realisation abruptly shifts her experience of their earlier walk so that her final flight alone through the city is one of fear and panic conveyed through her voice expressing her thoughts:

It was a dream! It wasn't true! It wasn't the same old man at all. Ah, how horrible!

She ran, ran down the street until she found a broad road with tram lines and a policeman standing in the middle like a clockwork doll.¹⁶⁶

This young woman's experience of walking presents a transition of feelings which are less well controlled than in Mansfield's other stories of vulnerable lonely women who are older, more familiar with hardship and therefore less gullible. It leads from childlike excitement through the strong emotional shift leading to shock and isolation. The range of emotional experience and the negative epiphany which the walk

¹⁶⁵ Mansfield, 'The Little Governess', 186

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 188

includes take the lonely, very young woman from naïve pleasure, excitement and a sense of safety to one of great shame, disappointment, isolation and fear:

the little girl with her hat on one side, crying without a handkerchief [...] She rocked herself and cried out loud and said 'Ah, ah!' pressing her hands to her mouth. [...] While the tram swung and jangled through a world full of old men with twitching knees. ¹⁶⁷

The ending illustrates the powerful shift in her understanding from her expectations at the start of the story to the terror of a final walk in great distress in which isolation heightens the emphasis on strong and overwhelming emotions.

Mansfield's short stories develop a narrative of women's experience which uses the time her characters spend walking as well as the impact of their context to explore, often unexpected, moments of exceptional emotion or epiphany. Her walking women encounter powerful experiences which create an altered or more intense perception of the world which might be positive but more often is not. This is illustrated in Miss Brill's life changing experience during her regular Sunday afternoon walk in the park with its powerful account of the emotional shock which she experiences. It is introduced with the awareness of a chill in the air 'like a chill from a glass of iced water before you sip...' which gives the first suggestion that Miss Brill's walk would not provide its usual pleasure and entertainment but would lead to a deeper and more distressing experience.¹⁶⁸ The ominous anticipatory metaphor for her emotional experience of this particular walk recurs as she listens to the band while feeling 'just a faint chill' which again indicates that disaster may be imminent.

¹⁶⁷ Mansfield, 'The Little Governess', 188 - 9

¹⁶⁸ Mansfield, 'Miss Brill' (1922) in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin, 2007) p. 331

It is the weather's hint of impending events which indicates the writing of time in the story. Miss Brill's regular Sunday afternoon walk captures her experience of past, present and future time as she recalls her previous observations, comments on the present and imagines strangers' likely subsequent behaviour. This example from Mansfield's writing reflects the view expressed by Elizabeth Bowen that the way in which time is written in the short story is as an 'interplay between present and past'.¹⁶⁹ This interplay occurs in Miss Brill's stream of thoughts with the sudden, catastrophic end to the walk forcing her harshly from an imagined present which is outside reality and back into her sad and impoverished present. Miss Brill's walk through the busy park stimulates her observations and creates the imagined interaction which she enjoys. As she participates in the conventional Sunday afternoon stroll she creates her own place in it through her commentary on what she sees. She is an urban walker strengthening her sense of identity and place in the world by walking while also demonstrating a contrasting 'independence and sympathy with the crowd'.¹⁷⁰ She has carefully constructed her apparent engagement and independence as she walks in order to create for herself the external identity behind which her loneliness is concealed.

'Miss Brill' is an example of a story which contains an emotional reversal in the narrative through an ordinary activity which contains extraordinary emotion and forces an abrupt and complete change in the character's understanding of their life. This process of change is illustrated in the nature of Miss Brill's walking which begins as a leisurely stroll in the park and becomes a desperate flight, blindly walking home and overwhelmed by shock. The contrast in her manner of walking is integral to the

¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth Bowen Introduction to *The Faber Book of Modern Short Stories* (Faber and Faber, 1937)

¹⁷⁰ Parsons, *Streetwalking in the Metropolis*, 76

writing of her emotional experience and a metaphor for the emotional reversal which leads to the conclusion of the story. It is a strong example of the ending which Sportelli describes as giving a short story its meaning and purpose.¹⁷¹ However, this view of the effect of the ending overlooks the important process of unfolding human experience which the walker's story presents as it emerges through the narrative. To focus on the ending is to diminish the importance of the emotional journey which Miss Brill has experienced. A narrative reversal in the story can encompass a liminal moment of transition through time and space which alters identity or crosses a threshold into new experience. This transition connects the walker's experience of liminality with the impact of accompanying emotion.¹⁷² For Miss Brill, this process begins with her initial thoughts which convey her resilience and a resolute optimism about her life. This is apparent, for example, in her deliberate enjoyment of the band and her interest in conversations overheard or other walkers observed:

Now there came a little 'flutey' bit – very pretty – a little chain of bright drops.

She was sure it would be repeated. It was; she lifted her head and smiled.¹⁷³

Only two people shared her 'special' seat:.....They did not speak. This was disappointing, for Miss Brill always looked forward to the conversation. She had become really quite expert, she thought, at listening as though she didn't listen, at sitting in other people's lives just for a minute while they talked round her.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Annamaria Sportelli 'The Short Story: The Form in Time' in *Time and the Short Story* ed. by Maria Teresa Chialant and Marina Lops, (Bern: Peter Lang 2012), p. 32

¹⁷² Claire Drewery *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 2

¹⁷³ Mansfield, 'Miss Brill', 331

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 332

Oh, how fascinating it was! How she enjoyed it! How she loved sitting here, watching it all! It was like a play.¹⁷⁵

The eventual reversal in her experience of this particular walk is introduced in descriptions of activity in the park as she recognises a shared pattern of behaviour in which she is included but with which she does not identify as the story leads towards the impending final liminal moment.

Other people sat on the benches and green chairs, but they were nearly always the same, Sunday after Sunday, and – Miss Brill had often noticed – there was something funny about nearly all of them. They were odd, silent, nearly all old, and from the way they stared they looked as though they'd just come from dark little rooms or even – cupboards!¹⁷⁶

The final catastrophe occurs when her comforting, imagined world and her determined resilience are destroyed. The swift walk home which follows is covered in one short paragraph full of her distress:

On her way home she usually bought a slice of honey-cake at the baker's. It was her Sunday treat.....But today she passed the baker's by, climbed the stairs, went into the little dark room – her room like a cupboard – and sat down on the red eiderdown. She sat there for a long time.¹⁷⁷

It is the words 'But today' which mark the contrast between past enjoyment, however illusory, and the new, present reality which she must conceal until she reaches home and can allow her feelings to emerge as she sat dazed on the bed 'for a long time' before quickly removing and hiding the comforting, old fur which had been the object

¹⁷⁵ Mansfield, 'Miss Brill', 334

¹⁷⁶ Mansfield, 'Miss Brill', 332

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 335-6

of derision and is now the metaphor for her tears.¹⁷⁸ Mansfield's story is focused on a single emotional experience which demonstrates the capacity for the short story to explore one significant event deeply and fully. Ali Smith quotes Todorov who explains this by saying that such short stories are powerful because they do not 'allow us time to forget that it's only literature and not actually life'.¹⁷⁹ Mansfield's short stories develop examples of this authentic narrative of women's experience by using the time her characters spend walking as well as the impact of their context to explore, often life changing, moments of exceptional emotion and epiphany. Her walking women encounter powerful experiences which significantly shape and determine an altered perception of their world which may be positive but more often is not.

The emotions of fear, desperation, distress and resignation are addressed again in Mansfield's 'Pictures' as Miss Moss walks the streets to avoid a suspicious landlady waiting for overdue rent and to dream of getting a good part in a well-paid production.¹⁸⁰ The description of her walk expands and deepens an understanding of her impoverished situation. However, reality does not match her dreams and, as often with Mansfield, the weather reflects her plight: 'She walked along the street asking herself those questions. There was a high, cold wind blowing; it tugged at her, slapped her face, jeered; it knew she could not answer them.'¹⁸¹ She is cold and hungry with her response to the sight of a cat drinking spilled milk when she has not eaten emphasising her need and desperation with the old cat as a harsh metaphor for a needy, aging woman.

¹⁷⁸ Mansfield, 'Miss Brill', 336

¹⁷⁹ Ali Smith *the first person and other stories* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p. 15

¹⁸⁰ Katherine Mansfield, 'Pictures' (1920) in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Penguin 2007) p. 122

¹⁸¹ Mansfield, 'Pictures', 127

.....the milk-boy went his rounds. Outside Brittweiler's Swiss House he made a splash, and an old brown cat without a tail appeared from nowhere, and began greedily and silently drinking up the spill. It gave Miss Moss a queer feeling to watch – a sinking, as you might say.¹⁸²

It is the culmination of her morning of desperate walking and resolute optimism that she abandons hope and the ending comes after 'a good cry' which relieves her distress and produces a resolute cheerfulness which includes the fantasy of a meeting in a café in which:

'A dark handsome man in a fur coat comes in with a friend, and sits at my table, perhaps. . 'No, old chap, I've searched London for a contralto and I can't find a soul.' And Miss Moss heard herself saying: 'Excuse me, I happen to be a contralto, and I have sung that part many times....'¹⁸³

This dream is followed by her visit to a café during which she does meet a strange man but one who offers her employment of a very different kind. The life she resolutely planned and imagined as she walked collapses in the face of reality and despair.

Like Mansfield's other poor, single women Miss Moss controls her feelings and conceals her need and distress by blending in with other walkers on the street.

Unlike Mansfield's other stoical and determined single women Miss Moss abandons the pretence that all is well with her outburst of tears which relieve her feelings and sustain her courage while the other women maintained the outward pretence that all was well.¹⁸⁴ She is also the only one of these women walkers who reaches the end

¹⁸² Mansfield, 'Pictures', 122

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 127

¹⁸⁴ Mansfield, 'Pictures', 127

of her capacity to struggle on and shifts from brave to tragically pragmatic resignation as she accepts the advances of the 'very stout gentleman' in exchange for a brandy.¹⁸⁵ Her final decision to accept is explained by an understanding of the thoughts and emotions which she has experienced as she walked and which have led her on an emotional journey culminating in this outcome.

The fragment of story in 'Second Violin' presents the story of another single, impoverished woman who is struggling to survive despite insufficient food or warmth with her circumstances again conveyed through thought as she walks:

She is conscious of her cold hands, her cold nose and her colder feet. She can't feel her toes at all. Winter is a terrible time for thin people.....she thought of nothing but the cold.She had just drunk three large cups of really boiling tea. Surely, they ought to have warmed her.¹⁸⁶

Her awareness of 'nothing but the cold' suggests the ominous metaphor for her possible subsequent experience in this unfinished story as it did for Miss Brill and Miss Moss.¹⁸⁷ The image of her 'threading her way like a needle' picks up the sharpness of cold and suggests that walking connects places and feelings as stitches do.¹⁸⁸ This is another story of resilience and optimism despite hardship which follows Miss Bray's resolute and positive stream of thought as she walks. She is creating her own emotional experience of the morning through her imagination. She occupies another of Mansfield's stories of single women struggling with financial hardship as they support themselves but also with the emotional hardship of a lonely, isolated life for which there is no immediate remedy. These women are each

¹⁸⁵ Mansfield, 'Pictures', 128

¹⁸⁶ Mansfield, 'Second Violin', 494-5

¹⁸⁷ Mansfield, 'Second Violin', 495

¹⁸⁸ Mansfield, 'Second Violin', 495

vulnerable in different ways through their isolation and poverty with walking as their only means of transport and their opportunity for thoughts reflecting determined optimism.

In Mansfield's short stories, with their focus on women's experience, walking often presents life changing moments of exceptional emotion and change. She creates narrative experiences which change the direction or experience of a character's life and address the 'interplay between past and present' which is contained in the thought process through which emotions are recalled and then experienced again in memory.¹⁸⁹ Her walkers show how deep emotional experiences can occur through unremarkable moments. These moments uncover the gap between the external self and the concealed, internal identity where powerful moments of emotion are experienced. Mansfield's walkers reflect ordinary workers' lives at a time when walking was the main means of transport for many including her impoverished single women. She writes particularly strongly about the emotional content of their walking which is for a range of purposes often related to the need to earn and support themselves. Her focus has some similarity with that of James Joyce whose short stories based on walking also address reversals of emotion and connected experiences for working people so that across his stories the reversal of expectations, hopes and feelings is central to the experience of these characters and often leads to disappointment. Head describes the short story as presenting an experience of epiphany or 'the sudden illuminating moment' but with an accompanying ambiguity creating the 'apparent epiphany'.¹⁹⁰ However, alongside their ambiguity, these short stories might also be seen as illustrating a slower, more

¹⁸⁹ Dominic Head, *The Cambridge History of the Modernist Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2016) p. 7

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7

complex and less cataclysmic process of the gradual emergence of a character through their varied life experience. Lucás is quoted by March-Russell as describing modernism as the 'need to grasp the meaninglessness of existence' but this is not reflected in Mansfield's short stories which instead grasp the everyday ordinariness and quiet drama of daily human experience, as it is lived moment by moment, with its courage, depth of emotional experience and its opportunities for epiphanic moments to occur as characters walk.¹⁹¹ This is not meaningless.

¹⁹¹ Paul March-Russell *The Short Story: an Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2009), p. 88

CHAPTER THREE

JAMES JOYCE: WALKING AND ANTI-EPIPHANY

'he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.'

James Joyce 'The Dead' in *Dubliners* 1914

This chapter will consider James Joyce's presentation of the thoughts of his *Dubliners* as they walk.¹⁹² It will explore the narrative effect and the consequences of walking in each individual's story. These consequences reflect Katherine Mullin's description of Joyce's Dublin 'as a second-rate place of paralysis' which produced the 'isolated, questioning' individual who is alienated and anonymous.¹⁹³ She notes how his short stories refer to the effect of the contemporary social conditions in the city which impacted on the experience of everyday life. It is through the private thoughts of his walking characters that Joyce's view of life in the city is shown to the reader. His *Dubliners* are seeking change in their lives through personal epiphanies which suggest a need for societal as well as individual change. While the movement and change of place entailed in walking create a metaphor which suggests that personal change is possible Joyce's negative and sometimes violent endings indicate pessimism about his characters' future in the Dublin of his time. Although his

¹⁹² James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914) (London: Penguin 1996)

¹⁹³ Katherine Mullin, 'Cities in Modernist Literature' <<https://www.bl.uk>> [Accessed 30 August 2021]

characters experience moments of insight or understanding these do not lead to change or improvement for them. Their eventual outcomes can therefore be seen as moments of anti-epiphany because they lead back to their starting point rather than to any change. His, usually male, urban working people trying to make a living in Dublin build a picture of life in a real place and context at a given time. Time and place are important features of their stories and are specific to their Dublin setting. This chapter examines how the connection between Walter Benjamin's concept of *flânerie*, which is made by critics such as Parsons or Elkin, when writing about walking in cities, is not useful in a discussion of Joyce's short stories because his walkers are not leisured, detached observers of urban life but working people purposefully carrying out their everyday lives.¹⁹⁴ ¹⁹⁵ They are walking as a means of travel. It is argued that the critical reading of city walking as though it must always be *flânerie* can be misleading and diverts attention from an understanding of the broader place that walking has in short narrative for a much wider range of individual characters with differing connections to city life.

Joyce's characters demonstrate their position as marginalised outsiders or unrealistically optimistic workers through their walking thoughts which reflect on their own everyday lives unlike those of the *flâneur* who is an observer. They illustrate the reality of hard lives lived at a challenging historical time with their personal experience shown through their thoughts which are not mediated by a need to present a good appearance for other people. They live lives surrounded by others and have little opportunity other than walking for private, reflective thought. These

¹⁹⁴ Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 31

¹⁹⁵ Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse* (London: Vintage, 2017), p. 1 - 7

are walkers who think about and seek change but this focus is emphasised in the lack of change available for those, including Farrington in 'Counterparts' or the unnamed boy in 'Araby', who strive for it. At the beginning of 'Counterparts' Farrington is aggressively reprimanded by his bullying manager. He becomes equally aggressively resentful by the end of an evening of drinking punctuated by walks between pubs. He finally walks back to the home he loathes to conclude the story with the brutal thrashing of his small son which recalls the abuse he had received himself. The circular story structure has moved from the initial act of unreasonable aggression to end with another indicating that there is no hope of change. Joyce writes often of these moments when a crisis occurs or there is a dark realisation that nothing can be different so that acceptance or resignation to circumstances is a strong feature of his stories with characters' walking offering the opportunity to dream or plan but with little real hope that an epiphany will be realised. Similarly, in 'Araby' the story begins with boys playing in the street and a secret infatuation with a friend's older sister but ends with the failure to buy her a gift after walking aimlessly round the local fair unable to find anything suitable. In each of these stories an evening passes with no change in the circumstances which have prompted its unsuccessful events and without creating any improvement or epiphany in the life of the main character so that the story concludes with the absence of change.

Joyce's contribution to the understanding of the modernist short story is cited as an illustrative example by Flora De Giovanni when she notes that 'at the core of the lyrical short story lies the revelation – the epiphany, in Joyce's definition'.¹⁹⁶ She then

¹⁹⁶ Flora De Giovanni, 'An event in the lives of the living: Time and Death in the Modernist Short Story' in *Time and the Short Story*, ed. Maria Chialant and Marina Lops (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 74

links his exploration of personal epiphany to the writing of passing time by describing it as 'a moment of crisis at a point in time' in which '[t]he moment of truth becomes the climax of the narration'.¹⁹⁷ This analysis shows how the modernist short story is not only a chronological account of events but may revolve around a significant moment of epiphanic understanding because that is the point at which truth and reality become apparent to the character and therefore also to the reader. It is the moment when, although the story is clearly in its narrative present, it also looks back to its antecedents and forward to its consequences. This writing of passing time with its emphasis on the reality only of the single present moment is a strong feature of Joyce's stories and often linked with walking because it is the opportunity for thought. The pattern of looking back is stronger in *Dubliners* than in the short stories of the other writers considered in the thesis which usually remain in the present. The retrospective moment highlighting the significance of current time frequently occurs during a walk because Joyce's characters are ordinary, urban working people, usually men, for whom walking through the city is the means of everyday travel and allows them time alone to think in lives otherwise crowded with other people. De Giovanni's analysis gives examples of the central place of epiphany in Joyce's short stories but in doing so does not acknowledge the associated importance of walking or the way that passing time is written to indicate its effect on the human meaning for the walker in the story. The accompanying experience of emotion for the walker which, while it is experienced, is often outwardly concealed by Joyce's (usually male) characters is not included in De Giovanni's analysis although it characterises their response to epiphanic moments or their absence. For Joyce's walking *Dubliners* this experience of emotion and epiphany interacts with his writing of time to show the

¹⁹⁷ De Giovanni, 'An event in the lives of the living', 75

significance of walking for the lives of these working people. It is this significance of epiphany and time interacting together which this discussion of *Dubliners* addresses.

Time is significant for many walkers in Joyce's short stories as they experience moments of sudden, pragmatic understanding about their future and realise that it will be a negative experience which will not differ from the present. They are caught up in the reality of their everyday circumstances unlike walkers created by Virginia Woolf or Elizabeth Bowen who more often reflect on and are absorbed into the immediate, sensory or imaginative experience of their walk so that their thoughts are held in the present moment. A powerful example from Joyce's stories which illustrates a walker's moment of epiphany linked to time passing in a series of present moments occurs in 'The Dead' as Gabriel experiences his sudden and unanticipated retrospective moment of truth about his life with Greta.¹⁹⁸ De Giovanni makes the point that this is a moment which looks back to understand the previously unrecognised basis on which their marriage is built but also looks forward towards the epiphanic change that this will create for Gabriel and which will determine their future together.¹⁹⁹ That they are both walking is key to this moment because Gabriel is following behind Greta, walking alone and therefore prompted to observe and think about her, recognising and strengthening his feelings as he does so. These are moments of sudden passion and longing for him as the 'sudden tide of joy [which] went leaping out of his heart.' before they left the party now becomes

¹⁹⁸ James Joyce, *Dubliners* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1996), p. 250

¹⁹⁹ De Giovanni, 'An event in the lives of the living', 77

The blood went bounding along his veins and the thoughts went rioting through his brain, proud, joyful, tender, valorous.

She was walking on before him so lightly and so erect that he longed to run after her noiselessly, catch her by the shoulders and say something foolish and affectionate into her ear. She seemed to him so frail that he longed to defend her against something and then to be alone with her. Moments of their secret life together burst upon his memory.²⁰⁰

Gabriel's strong emotion, experienced as he walks, is grounded in the shared experience of their life together and his happy expectation that it will continue. The story sees both the retrospective and the anticipated emotional shape of his life by illustrating how the epiphany, around which these two perspectives of time revolve, is an immediate moment of profound emotion but also permeates through time using memory and its expectation of the future. This significant moment, occurring towards the end of the walk is created by Gabriel's established and confident love for Greta and is heightened by his sudden recollections of the romance, already shared or anticipated, in their relationship.

Gabriel's passion is not, however, matched by Greta's response as the falling snow triggers a different emotion for her with a memory of snow at a significant moment long before when her former lover took the walk to see her which led to his death. Their shorter walk together after the party in Dublin has allowed a great deal of thought and change to occur during a brief journey. While it has prompted a deeper, passionate closeness to Greta for Gabriel it has prompted very different thoughts for her as she suddenly recalls and recounts the death of her former lover. Gabriel's

²⁰⁰ Joyce, 'The Dead', 243

reaction is initially angry and ironic but he is quickly ashamed of his lack of sympathy recognising the contrast for each of them in the thoughts which walking has prompted.

Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony..... While he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another.²⁰¹

The combined emotional impact of two very different walks, both focussed on love for Greta, with one in the present and the other long past, but both prompting emotion in their present, leads to an ending for the story which includes the unresolved issue for Gabriel. He is deeply aware of his love for Greta while also feeling strongly connected to her dead former lover through the link in the image of walking in snow falling simultaneously in Dublin and on a distant grave. His thoughts about walking form the context for the final liminal moment of the story as he recognises the connection of the living and the dead.

It had begun to snow again. [...] The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. [...] It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. [...] His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.²⁰²

There is a suggestion in this reference to his own journey of his hope that Greta will also think of him long after his own death as she has Furey. The liminality of the moment lies in the personal change which her revelation and the effect of the

²⁰¹ Joyce, 'The Dead', 251

²⁰² Joyce, 'The Dead', 255-6

immediate and past images of walking in snow have created for him. It is Joyce's very economical writing of feeling, time and revelatory memories grounded in the emotional impact of the simple, planned walk back to the hotel and then Greta's memory of Furey's final walk which convey the strong emotional theme of the story. Walking is the trigger and the context for the emotional experiences which take place in this short story. It is the narrative context in which powerful memories for its characters are contained.

Dominic Head argues that Joyce's characters are written as believable, fallible individuals rather than being written following the pattern of the more formulaic writing of moments of epiphany with which he suggests that the modernist short story has become associated.²⁰³ He defines this pattern as the use of 'devices such as the single effect, the moment of revelation or the surprise ending – sometimes seeming too predictable or uninventive'.²⁰⁴ He argues that Joyce avoids this formula through 'obfuscation of a simple, single revelation [to] facilitate a very economical suggestion of the hidden, and perhaps contradictory complexity of personality, as in Joyce's 'The Dead'".²⁰⁵ This argument is developed in Head's examples of Joyce's writing which illustrate the human capacity to move swiftly through a series of conflicting emotions as Gabriel does during the conversation with Greta which follows their walk to the hotel. He ranges through anger, jealousy, humiliation, shame, irony, terror, humility, shyness, generosity and sadness until he, very plausibly, falls asleep.

²⁰³ Dominic Head 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of the English Short Story* ed. by Dominic Head (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 3

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8

In his discussion of Joyce's short stories Head argues for the powerful effect of the 'non-epiphany' which addresses the 'social constraints that hinder a character's understanding of him or herself' and, he argues, are to be found in Joyce's interpretation of the epiphany through its 'transcendent moments'.²⁰⁶ He cites 'The Dead' as an illustration of this argument with its concluding section exploring Gabriel's final understanding of Greta's earlier relationship with Michael Furey and its significance for maintaining their relationship as past underpins present. Such moments of non-epiphany in *Dubliners* often coincide with characters walking and thinking while the stories explore their experiences of change or its absence. The emotional response these experiences generate is often a negative one including disappointment, rejection, an illicit relationship or bullying. These feelings are shown through the fragments of human life which occur in an identified place and time. For example, in 'Araby' the young boy narrating the story has an unfulfilled crush on his friend's older sister although his contact with her is limited to following her down the road every morning:

When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.²⁰⁷

Or to imagining himself her medieval knight while carrying bags for his aunt as she shops in the market:

²⁰⁶ Head, *Cambridge History of the English Short Story*, 8

²⁰⁷ James Joyce, 'Araby', 30

On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels [...] the nasal chanting of street-singers [...] or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand.²⁰⁸

These strong emotions experienced in the course of everyday walks which imagination turns into opportunities for romance eventually culminate in the story ending with failure to purchase a gift for the older girl leading to the boy's disappointment and a lost fantasy as 'I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.'²⁰⁹ The boy's experience illustrates how Joyce writes about ordinary walkers who gain or lack understanding of themselves as they walk with the behaviour which follows reflecting this understanding. They are experiencing the hard reality of urban everyday life in 1914 and are grounded in this authentic experience of Dublin. In his short stories Joyce writes about people who are struggling to survive and to find a level of satisfaction in life which few of them attain and which Head therefore defines as their non-epiphany. These endings may also be termed as an 'anti-epiphany' because there is not only an absence of change in the conclusion but also a new realisation that, despite the optimism which hopes for improvement, life will not alter.

²⁰⁸ Joyce, 'Araby', 21

²⁰⁹ Joyce, 'Araby', 36

Joyce's 'A Painful Case' illustrates how he explores his characters' previous experience and its effect on subsequent events or feelings through the emotional content of walking which, in this example, leads eventually to the avoidance of reality and therefore an anti-epiphany. This is a story in which the strong feelings experienced during the walk emerge as Mr Duffy progresses. The first indication of his emotional turmoil occurs as he reads a paragraph in the evening paper while dining which moves him from initial disgust to a sense of responsibility and then an unaccustomed understanding of his own life. He feels the powerful emotions which prompt him to a sense of regret for the harsh morality of his life:

Those venal and furtive loves filled him with despair. He gnawed the rectitude of his life; he felt that he had been outcast from life's feast. One human being had seemed to love him and he had denied her life and happiness: he had sentenced her to ignominy, a death of shame.²¹⁰

This rigidly moral and unemotional man experiences both this deep emotion and a powerful understanding of the true reality of his life. His experience of these very powerful and potentially significant feelings has occurred through the solitary walk which has reminded him of occasions when he had walked with Mrs Sinico. However, the final paragraph provides another sharp reversal in the emotional journey he has experienced while walking. At the point when the story seems to indicate that her death may enable him to become a more sympathetic character he turns to walk 'back the way he had come'.²¹¹ As he does so he also turns back emotionally to become again the person he had been before he read the newspaper article:

²¹⁰ Joyce, 'A Painful Case', 130

²¹¹ Joyce, 'A Painful Case', 131

He began to doubt the reality of what memory told him [...] He could not feel her near him in the darkness nor her voice touch his ear. He waited for some minutes listening. He could hear nothing: the night was perfectly silent. He listened again: perfectly silent. He felt that he was alone.²¹²

Joyce's placing of 'perfectly' conveys Mr Duffy's implacable view of the world which had been indicated at the start of the story when it notes that he has chosen to live as far away as possible from other people. The story has moved from this starting point through a walk full of emotion and memory but which finally creates no change in his life and leaves him to continue as the person he has already become. It is the narrative opportunity provided by the walk and its capacity to contain and convey a character's thoughts that has been used to create another of Joyce's characters who remains stuck in unchangeable circumstances. As Mr Duffy walked it seemed that he would experience an epiphany through reviving the past and reflecting on it with new and unexpected honesty but finally he firmly suppresses it again. The 'painful case' of the title is not so much the death of Mrs Sinico but rather the emotional death of Mr Duffy which occurs as he passes through this very negative anti-epiphany.

The short story has the advantage over the novel of highlighting these moments of epiphany, or anti-epiphany, with their connected emotion which takes a character across a boundary. The short story form places a simple focus on one event or experience together with its associated feelings and thoughts. This is an effective context for exploring the liminal as it addresses moments of transition and crises of identity. Joyce's short stories featuring characters who walk show how, for some, change can occur through the impetus of thought leading to a new understanding or

²¹² Joyce, 'A Painful Case', 131

a disappointed acceptance of altered circumstances. For others it prompts the confidence to make a decision or accept a new emotional state. While for a third group the story ends with the realisation that nothing has changed despite the walker's dreams so that all the struggles of everyday life will continue. It is a feature of Joyce's short stories that any of these three outcomes may occur for his walking characters although the most likely is the anti-epiphany which occurs in the absence of change.

Joyce's writing of change in the experience of his walking characters partly reflects Drewery's argument, made with reference to four modernist women writers, that liminal moments of transition are highly significant in modernist short stories which focus on 'threshold states'.²¹³ These are moments of transience involving rites of passage or a journey. She suggests that these moments concern 'transgressing boundaries' through the moments of transition in which emerging thought or experience allows the character to review the previously taken for granted or routine and choose a different path.²¹⁴ However, in *Dubliners* Joyce's walkers rarely succeed in achieving this choice because they are often stuck in unfulfilling lives in which they are struggling to survive. They are therefore unable to change or alter their identity because it is integral with their plight. Their strong moments of apparent epiphany, transition or realisation more often become moments of resignation, disappointment, grief, anger or frustration at their inability to create the change to which they aspire. Their epiphany represents the loss of optimism and may be better seen as an anti-epiphany in which the opportunity for change produces no alteration.

²¹³ Claire Drewery *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) p. 2

²¹⁴ Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women*, 2

Drewery argues that liminality in the modernist short story is the context for 'crises of identity' to occur during moments of change which occupy points in time.²¹⁵ This argument uses the analogy of crossing point or a journey as characters move from one situation to another. This argument uses the analogy of crossing point or a journey as characters move from one situation to another. The image of the journey which she recognises as a frequently used theme in modernist writing is described as an interlude characterised by travelling literally or metaphorically between two worlds. It is through this concept of pilgrimage, which is usually defined as a long journey made on foot to achieve personal change, that her analysis can be connected with the argument that walking is of particular significance in modernist short story. It is an opportunity for physical and personal change with potential alternatives emerging for characters including openings and choices which could go in more than one direction and are seldom resolved. Although Drewery's analysis does not discuss Joyce's short stories there is a resonance with them as she addresses 'crises of identity encapsulated in moments or interludes of transition.' which can be taken to include walking.²¹⁶ Drewery's interest is in liminality in short fiction by the four women writers but a similar analysis can be applied to Joyce's short stories which also take characters through experiences of change, decision, disappointment or regret. However, the change that is experienced by walkers in Joyce's short stories is seldom an improvement on what went before with the only exception being a stronger, more respectful friendship between two boys following an unpleasant experience at the end of their walk in 'An Encounter' which ends with a change in their perception of each other:

²¹⁵ Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women*, 2

²¹⁶ Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women*, 2

I went up the slope calmly but my heart was beating quickly with fear that he would seize me by the ankles. When I reached the top of the slope I turned round and, without looking at him, called loudly across the field: 'Murphy!'

My voice had an accent of forced bravery in it, and I was ashamed of my paltry stratagem. I had to call the name again before Mahony saw me and hallooed in answer. How my heart beat as he came running across the field to me! He ran as if to bring me aid. And I was penitent; for in my heart I had always despised him a little.²¹⁷

At the end of their illicit day off school the boys have roamed widely around the dock area in Dublin as well as through local countryside until they lay down in a field to rest. There is nothing of pilgrimage in this walk which does not reflect significant life change or deep reflection but only their 'weariness of school life' as summer holidays approach.²¹⁸ However, it presents its one life changing impact in the final shift in their friendship and regard for each other. The ending of the story, with the boys endeavouring to slip back into their daily routine unnoticed, is an example of Joyce's anti-epiphanic endings as the boys hope to ensure that it appears that nothing out of the ordinary has happened.

Joyce's use of the anti-epiphany is also illustrated in 'A Little Cloud' which shows how his walking characters may fail to achieve the positive change which they seek; are too reluctant to grasp opportunity or are too disadvantaged to risk embracing new circumstances. In this story Little Chandler's familiar walk away from work is set in the streets of Dublin which is evocatively described but of which he is, for once, oblivious because he is looking forward to meeting Gallagher. His character is

²¹⁷ Joyce, 'An Encounter', 28

²¹⁸ Joyce, 'An Encounter', 20

captured in his excitement and anxiety about walking in the city at night because he usually experiences it as an unsafe place.

It was his habit to walk swiftly in the street even by day, and whenever he found himself in the city late at night he hurried on his way apprehensively and excitedly. Sometimes, however, he courted the causes of his fear. He chose the darkest and narrowest streets and, as he walked boldly forward, the silence that was spread about his footsteps troubled him; the wandering, silent figures troubled him; and at times a sound of low fugitive laughter made him tremble like a leaf.²¹⁹

Little Chandler has acquired a sense of importance from his association with Gallagher and this influences his walk which is more confident and less resigned to Dublin life than usual as he 'stepped onward bravely'.²²⁰ His reflections as he walks are all about himself, his skills and potential opportunities. There is nothing to indicate in his fanciful walking thoughts that he has a dull domestic life which burdens him with responsibility and limits his opportunities. It is only at the end of the story that this emerges and uncovers the limitations which will bring the imagined changes to a sharp and unavoidable end. The hopes and apparent opportunities suggested through his walks come back down to reality in the ending which allows no hope of liminal moments of change leading towards the life of which he dreams as he walks but only a return to his disappointing regular routine.

Joyce's short stories present small insights into ordinary human life at a given time and place in order to explore shared human behaviours and responses. He illustrates the humanity of characters who are usually ordinary working people and

²¹⁹ Joyce, 'A Little Cloud', 78

²²⁰ Joyce, 'A Little Cloud', 79

usually men so that there is a difference of circumstances between his walkers and those of Elizabeth Bowen or Virginia Woolf. There is a greater similarity with some of Katherine Mansfield's walking characters who are usually also impoverished working people, often women. Deborah Parsons argues for a class distinction between the varied range of walkers who may be seen on urban streets noting that they include workers 'traveling on foot' whose presence on the street is more ambiguous while it connects the walker to a sense of individual self through the opportunity it provides for intense, uninterrupted thought.²²¹ It leads towards a strong and meaningful ending so that 'every plot [is] elaborated to its denouement'.²²² Solnitt's argument that walking offers 'time not wasted but uncluttered' which gives the opportunity for reflection and insight provides a useful perspective on the link between walking, epiphany or anti-epiphany and emotion in *Dubliners*.²²³ In Joyce's stories walking creates a rhythm for thought and feeling through the conjunction of walking with the working of the mind. This link is apparent in Joyce's writing as his walkers cover the city's streets reviewing their circumstances and eventually having to accept them and therefore not gaining an experience of change.

²²¹ Deborah L Parsons, *Streetwalking in the Metropolis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 31

²²² Edgar Allen Poe, in Annamaria Sportelli, 'The Short Story: The Form in Time' in *Time and the Short Story*, ed. by Maria Teresa Chalant and Marina Lops (Bern Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 31-36, p. 32

²²³ Solnitt, *Wanderlust*, xiii

CHAPTER FOUR

ELIZABETH BOWEN: WALKING AND PLACE

‘nothing can happen nowhere’

Elizabeth Bowen in *‘Notes on Writing a Novel’* 1945

This chapter argues that in Elizabeth Bowen’s short stories published between 1918–1939 her detailed depiction of the setting for each story frames significant moments of being in the experience of characters who walk and demonstrates that ‘nothing can happen nowhere. The locale of the happening always colours the happening, and often, to a degree shapes it.’²²⁴ This happening can be a brief but significant moment of insight, experience or understanding. Bowen’s interest in place provides the context for her characters’ walks which are then shaped by their setting as they respond to its sensory and physical influence on their behaviour. In his introduction to a collection of Bowen’s stories Angus Wilson suggests that they place the reader ‘at once in a marvellously evoked moment of place and time’ in order to explore their influence on human experience and on the thinking and behaviour which lie behind the conventions of acceptable behaviour.²²⁵ The short stories which include significant walks illustrate how Bowen presents an external view of her characters but also uncovers their concealed emotional life through the account of their experiences as they walk. This is where their ‘moments of being’ can occur.²²⁶

²²⁴ Elizabeth Bowen, ‘Notes on Writing a Novel’ in *Collected Impressions* (London: Longman, 1950)

²²⁵ *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* ed. by Angus Wilson (Vintage: London 1999), p. 11

²²⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being* ed. by Jeanne Schulkind (St Albans: Triad/Panther Books, 1976), p. 81

Bowen's 22 short stories written between 1920 and 1929 include seven in which walking is a key aspect of the narrative while of the 22 written during the 1930s it is significant in fifteen. Bowen's interest in modernism is reflected in these stories in which characters walk and their individual experience is explored. They are studies of individual human behaviour which show how walking is connected with thought and emotion. The inner life of the character is conveyed through this account of their thoughts as well as their actions. Her stories explore character, identity, motives and feelings in a range of, often unusual, settings. These walks occupy periods of time of varying length, sometimes as short as a few moments but each has an impact on the events of the story and their consequences for its characters.

Bowen's view of her relationship with modernism is addressed in her introduction to *The Faber Book of Short Stories* which Hunter describes as showing 'how she maintained an ongoing discourse with the aesthetic and cultural values of modernism' although she viewed it as a constraint.²²⁷ He argues that her interest was in 'human unknowableness'.²²⁸ This interest is demonstrated in the aim of the short stories which Hunter describes as asking questions which lead 'some [stories to] end with a shrug and others with an impatient or dismissing sigh'.²²⁹ The stories illustrate her interest in extraordinary events mismatched with ordinary settings.

There can be a final twist in events at the conclusion of a story so that when characters walk they reach an unexpected and sometimes strange ending. These endings differ from those of other modernist writers addressed in the thesis who do not usually provide an outcome which draws the events to a conclusion. They

²²⁷ Adrian Hunter, 'Elizabeth Bowen and V.S. Pritchett' in *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* ed. by Adrian Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 114

²²⁸ Hunter, 'Elizabeth Bowen and V.S. Pritchett', 116

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 116

present instead a snapshot of ongoing reality filtered through what Henry James calls a character's 'chamber of consciousness' and which he describes as the thought process which flows steadily through life and evolves over time.²³⁰ This is not an image of the events in a life but of continuous reflection and interpretation of experiences as they occur. Hunter argues that, unlike James, Bowen does not consider the 'inner life of her characters' with their depth of human consciousness but presents them as 'entirely performative figures' who are defined by their actions through her focus on behaviour and implied motive.²³¹ As a result of this emphasis on performance when her characters walk their thoughts are presented as an accompaniment to their physical progress and a response to their surroundings.

Bowen's introduction to *The Faber Book of Short Stories* is described by Hunter as 'post-modern' because it reinstates 'plot and omniscient narration' but he also acknowledges that she maintained an interest in modernism.²³² This view is reflected in this thesis which considers how walking in her stories written before 1939 shares characteristics with those of her modernist peers and should therefore be considered alongside them. These stories which include walking show how it can play a significant part in her narrative of this time with characters experiencing notable events or thoughts as they walk and respond to their surroundings.

Place is significant for walkers in Bowen's stories written before 1939 because it influences their thinking, experience and the emotional effect of context as well as offering a metaphor for their behaviour and feelings. For example, in 'Human Habitation' the two walkers are particularly affected by the place in which they find

²³⁰ Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction' in *Tales of Henry James* ed. by Christof Wegelin and Henry B. Wonham (London: W.W. Norton, 2003), p. 382

²³¹ Hunter, 'Elizabeth Bowen and V.S. Pritchett', 116

²³² Hunter, 'Elizabeth Bowen and V.S. Pritchett', 114

themselves because they are lost and confused, while also 'never quite in step' with each other either as walkers or as friends.²³³ They are lost in the dark but the reader is given a clear description of their surroundings and shown that they are as uncomfortable with their awkward relationship as with their location in the story's first sentence: 'For the twentieth time, as the wet dusk became impenetrably charged with darkness, Jefferies looked distrustfully up at Jameson and challenged him: 'I suppose you *are* sure we're going the right way?'. This first sentence of the story shows the importance of place in 'Human Habitation' as the two walkers become lost in unfamiliar surroundings. The scene is set for an account of the lost walkers' increasingly tense relationship and their anxious search for the right path late in the day in an unfamiliar, rural place and inclement weather. Their conventional walking tour leads to an odd experience of hospitality underpinned by the mystery of an absent husband which remains unresolved. The subsequent events in the story then occur against the continued background of uncertainty while finally leaving the walkers more united, although still lost in an unfamiliar place, as they 'stumbled forward in the dark with tingling minds.'²³⁴

Bowen's walking characters reflect her interest in place by connecting physical surroundings with their effect on thought and experience. In the introduction to his collection of Bowen's essays Hepburn argues that it is her vivid descriptions of contextual place which provide 'the undercurrents that motivate human interactions'.²³⁵ He is arguing for the influence of place on behaviour and emotion by connecting the physical contexts of stories with the feelings or actions which take

²³³ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Human Habitation' (1926) in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 147

²³⁴ Bowen, 'Human Habitation', 159

²³⁵ Allan Hepburn, 'Introduction' in *People, Places, Things: Essays of Elizabeth Bowen* ed. by Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2008), p. 7

place in them as will be shown in 'The Contessina'.²³⁶ He suggests that these actions can be generalized as examples of universal, shared behaviour so that 'individual experience broadens into human truth.'²³⁷ This illustrates how place, as a context for walking, influences actions through providing space for thought and decision in response to emotions prompted by the environment. Hepburn's argument can be extended to suggest that walking influences behaviour by giving the opportunity for thought and decision making which reflects human emotion and response. Bowen's, usually respectable and affluent, characters are able to express their more unconventional and creative ideas while walking because it allows them the opportunity to think more radically than convention might allow. It provides freedom for creative thought because it is private and makes few other demands or expectations on the walker so that the mind can explore widely.

Hepburn suggests that Bowen shows her interest in the strangeness of the ordinary through her inclusion of unusual features of familiar objects which stand out against their conventional setting.²³⁸ Walking also reflects this pattern because it is a very ordinary and overlooked behaviour, which becomes interesting as it provides an opportunity for features of a place to appear strange and to influence narrative. Walking provides the opportunity to uncover the more adventurous thoughts which lie beneath the surface of conventional behaviour while simultaneously taking characters to another setting. Ordinary behaviour placed in a strange context shows how an individual experience 'broadens into human truth' which is captured in

²³⁶ Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Contessina', (1924) in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 136

²³⁷ Hepburn, *People, Places, Things*, 2

²³⁸ Hepburn, *People, Places, Things*, 1

walking.²³⁹ For Bowen walking provides a narrative opportunity for the human eccentricity which lies behind conformity to be uncovered. She uses vividly described scenes as the context for her accounts of the strangeness of the ordinary by placing the walkers in unexceptional and conventional settings against which their experiences seem more bizarre and unusual by contrast.

The influence of setting is significant in 'The Contessina', with its story of a walk told through combining events, setting and hidden motives.²⁴⁰ The Contessina is a performative figure whose thoughts are demonstrated through her actions while Barlow's motives are indicated through his thoughts as the text recounts her actions and his thoughts. For example, it is when she is 'shrieking and sobbing', having 'missed her footing' during their walk, that his feelings in response are indicated by the emotion he experiences:

But the Contessina positively roared, and disengaging her fists assailed his breast and shoulders with a rain of blows. One of these caught him on the chin, and he released her sharply. Above the intimidating cavern of her mouth, between the smears and crumples of her face, two slits of eyes blazed out upon him icily. Those eyes were pale with contempt. Mr Barlow was appalled by them.²⁴¹

The nature of the terrain's influence on events and its contribution to their occurrence is shown in this outburst. The invitation to walk away from the group and explore separately had been prompted by awareness of the concealment offered in the setting: 'Above went up the great sheer sweep of the hill; tree-trunks crowded

²³⁹ Hepburn, *People, Places, Things*, 2

²⁴⁰ Bowen, *Collected Stories*, 136

²⁴¹ Bowen, *Collected Stories*, 145

endlessly, impenetrably, up into the sky.’²⁴² The opportunity to sit down then prompts the temptation which entices Barlow into an inappropriate advance while also indicating the purpose behind the Contessina’s behaviour: ‘When they came to a bank of cushiony grass she sat down’.²⁴³ Her action indicates her intentions while a natural event occurring as ‘...a stone from miles above dislodged itself and came hurtling down through the trees into the lake.’ reminds but does not deter him from risk.²⁴⁴ He is driven by emotion and unhappiness while her actions are calculated and objective. The ending of this story therefore places responsibility for the incident on the Contessina’s purpose rather than Barlow’s response to temptation although it is he who is deemed to be culpable. She is the principal actor in the sequence of events and uses the setting to trigger the outcome to the walk which she intends. The setting for the story encourages both characters to exploit each other’s emotions but only one wins.

Walking in Bowen’s short stories is usually a social activity with characters’ shared experience of place reflected in their conversation, thoughts and their response to surroundings. Their setting frames the events in the narrative to provide a common stimulus for their thoughts and responses prompted by context. Individual emotion and reactions to the shared surroundings interact to prompt or facilitate a response to events individually through each character’s separate experience of the walk. Each walk can therefore include the individuals’ separate response to the shared physical, sensory setting and is the context for each walker’s stream of thought which they may share but do not always. This is demonstrated in ‘Telling’ as Terry’s walk through the garden with Josephine starts from their shared familiarity with the

²⁴² Bowen, ‘The Contessina’, 145

²⁴³ Bowen, ‘The Contessina’, 144

²⁴⁴ Bowen, ‘The Contessina’ 145

family garden. However, while she 'walked down the garden ahead of him' in a casual response to his invitation to 'Come out!' he was focused on making 'justice perfect'.²⁴⁵ The same setting accommodates two very different perceptions which are both significant for subsequent events as it does in 'The Contessina'. In the example of 'Telling', Terry's actions, occurring during an apparently ordinary walk through the family garden, occur within the context of a very conventional, affluent family setting of the inter war period to which he does not at all conform. His behaviour, which is odd, is placed against the conventional, affluent background which contrasts powerfully with his strange perception of his world.

Walking alone in order to think is an important feature of this story as Terry tries to resolve his hidden emotional distress. He has spent the whole night walking and thinking about his relationship with Josephine before carrying out what he believes to be a just response to her behaviour.

She had laughed, you see. She had been pretending. There was a tender and lovely thing he kept hidden, a spark in him; she had touched it and made it the whole of him, made him a man. She had said: 'Yes, I believe, Terry. I understand.' That had been everything. He had thrown off the old dull armour...Then she had laughed.²⁴⁶

The significant event in the story, the murder of Josephine, has already occurred when the story begins. It is not at the core of the narrative which is concerned with Terry's state of mind and his frequent walks in the garden rather than the murder

²⁴⁵ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Telling' (1929) in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999) p. 327

²⁴⁶ Bowen, 'Telling', 326

which is given less attention or emotional significance. The remaining focus of the story is on Terry and his justification for his action.

He fell into, had his part in, some kind of design. Josephine had come down in her pleated white dress (when she turned the pleats whirled). He had said, 'Come out!' and she gave that light distant look, still with a laugh at the back of it, and said, 'Oh – right-o, little Terry.' And she had walked down the garden ahead of him, past the delphiniums into the chapel. Here, to make justice perfect, he had asked once more: '*Do you believe in me?*' She had laughed again.²⁴⁷

The ordinary familiarity of walking together deceives Josephine into trusting Terry when he says 'Come out!' and her response allows him to think that his action is justified.²⁴⁸ Walking enables him to prepare his plan by giving him time to think alone rather than connect with her and it prompts her response. His experiences of walking during the story contain the strange emotional core of his thinking. It also represents Bowen's view that identity 'resides in the actions [her characters] perform'.²⁴⁹ Terry's identity is created in the narrative more by his thoughts and behaviour while he walks than by the murder of Josephine which has happened before the story begins. The story illustrates how Bowen uses very ordinary settings for very odd events.

Bowen's use of omniscient narration, rather than the modernist use of free indirect discourse, in her accounts of characters walking provides the opportunity for the human reality of their thoughts and responses to their context or to others to be explained. In 'Human Habitation' it is the weather which reflects and describes an

²⁴⁷ Bowen, 'Telling', 327

²⁴⁸ Bowen, 'Telling', 327

²⁴⁹ Hunter, 'Elizabeth Bowen and V.S. Pritchett', 116

increasingly tense relationship as: 'It rained a little on the second day [...] The third day was nearly all wet [...] They trudged; the rain stung their faces to stiffness; their minds grew numb.'²⁵⁰ The walkers' thoughts and feelings are presented in description and conversation through the use of omniscient narration which favours narrative which includes walking in pairs or occasionally in groups. Bowen's walkers are often in company and able to express their thoughts to a companion so that their individual thinking is woven into the narrative. This also occurs in 'The Secession' as the underlying feelings between Mr Carr and Miss Phelps are shown in their exchange during a walk:

'And look back at these days. They have been strange, haven't they, and precious for some of us?' She repeated dully: 'Yes, precious for some of us.' If there were an implication there, he ignored it; he bent forward eagerly: 'Then you've shared —'.²⁵¹

This leads them to disclose their feelings for each other and the difficulty of Miss Selby's expectations of him. It is three days after this walk which has defined their relationship that they meet again in Miss Selby's room as he begins to sort out her belongings following her death. The events of the significant intervening three days not having been included in the narrative. Where Bowen's characters walk alone omniscient narration describes their thoughts but this distances the narrative from the character's individual voice. Narration constrains the opportunity to capture individual walkers' thoughts or moments of being because they are described at second hand therefore distanced from their authentic voice. Narration therefore

²⁵⁰ Bowen, 'Human Habitation' (1926) in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999), 148

²⁵¹ Bowen, 'The Secession', 166

increases the number and range of relationships between characters needed to tell a story and makes it more complex.

In Bowen's 'The Apple Tree' the telling of the story begins with the introductory conversation between two house guests. This apparently ordinary exchange between two people who are already familiar to each other provides the first indication of strange events to follow. They are walking back to the house where they are staying after a village concert and their discussion of their host and his new wife begins to indicate obliquely that something is oddly amiss:

'You think she *is* what is the matter?'

'Obviously there's nothing funny about the *house*.'

'She does seem to me to be only half there,' confessed Lancelot, 'Not, of course, I mean mentally, but –'

'She had that frightful time – don't you know? *Don't* you know?' [...] She was at that school – don't you remember?'²⁵²

The mystery at the centre of the story and which drives its events is first indicated through the ordinary behaviour of this walk shared by two acquaintances talking about someone known to them both and not present. It is this account of their ordinary behaviour which Bowen uses to take the story into an account of a strange encounter with their hosts discovered in the library during the night and its subsequent events.

Adrian Hunter argues that Bowen's omniscient narration can be 'intrusive' because the paragraphs of description, including those which create a sense of 'psychological

²⁵² Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Apple Tree' (1934) in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 462

realism, pastiche, ghost story, Gothic melodrama, thriller and comedy of manners', take the reader's attention away from the direct experience of characters whose thoughts and experience are the focus of modernist writing.²⁵³ However, the effect of omniscient narration need not be a distraction when it builds the reader's picture of the story so that they understand the physical and sensory context which the writer makes integral to the characters' experience. Although a different process from free indirect discourse narration can also build an awareness of the sensory experience of place as context, using metaphor effectively and prompting an imaginative reader response.

In 'Attractive Modern Houses' the detailed description of place captures Mrs Watson's overwhelming melancholy following the house move by showing how the ordinary seemed unfamiliar to her. It imputes sympathetic human feelings to familiar belongings so that: 'her things appeared uneasy in the new home' while 'The armchairs and settee [...] the alabaster light bowls, even the wireless cabinet looked sulky, as though they would rather have stayed in the van'.²⁵⁴ It is through the imagined unhappiness of ordinary household objects that Mrs Watson's isolation and sense that 'the move had been like stepping over a cliff' are conveyed through the narrative rather than in her words.²⁵⁵ These feelings precede and are the context for the emotions which will prompt her to seek relief through a walk. They reflect her deep depression while her appearance also changes to reflect her sinking feelings as her perm falls out, she never takes off her overall and the front room is 'made water-grey by the elms opposite, that had not shed their rotting autumn leaves – there was no frost, no wind, no reason why they should ever fall. There are no words

²⁵³ Hunter, 'Elizabeth Bowen and V.S. Pritchett', 114

²⁵⁴ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Attractive Modern Houses' (1941) in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 521

²⁵⁵ Bowen, 'Attractive Modern Houses', 524

for such dismay.²⁵⁶ This evocative account of unhappiness, captured through the metaphor of the ordinary objects trapping her indoors and the sense of greyness, uses omniscient narration to set the scene for the walk which begins a process of change. It is when Mrs Watson walks outside in the new place that she begins to recover as walking influences her mood to allow unfamiliar surroundings to seem less strange. Her initial unhappiness in her new house and the strange place is shown through her experience of new and unfamiliar local walks. She is isolated and lonely because she has no-one with whom to walk round the shops or to meet when she walked down the road.²⁵⁷ She does not like walking outdoors after dark because there was so little street lighting that it was hard to 'pick your way on the kerb, and her dread of stepping into the deep mud became neurotic' while strangers 'walked past without knowing her'.²⁵⁸ She has formed strong views about these new experiences of walking because they prompt unfamiliar feelings which epitomize her changed life.

The Watsons' different responses to the new place are considered through their individual opportunities for walking there. Mr Watson is employed so it is only on Saturday that he can explore their new surroundings. His exploratory walk is described in detail and is accompanied by his thoughts. He is initially also uncomfortable about going out alone to explore and can do so only because 'there was no one to wonder'.²⁵⁹ From this insight into his feelings the narrative shifts to an account of his behaviour in language which indicates his negative experience of the place and the similarity of his thoughts with those of his wife. The new houses looked

²⁵⁶ Bowen, 'Attractive Modern Houses', 524

²⁵⁷ Bowen, 'Attractive Modern Houses', 523

²⁵⁸ Bowen, 'Attractive Modern Houses', 524

²⁵⁹ Bowen, 'Attractive Modern Houses', 525

‘unliving – what should animate them?’.²⁶⁰ The new windows ‘entombed’ the daylight and the lane was ‘full of builders’ rubbish’. He was ‘stepping from rib to rib of slimy hardness over chasms of mud. Rotting leaves made silent whole reaches of lane’. His walk is summed up as above all about the ‘strangeness’ of the place.²⁶¹ The culmination of this already strange walk in the wood is the unexpected discovery of his wife ‘face down on the ground’ which makes him feel ashamed, rather than concerned about her odd behaviour.²⁶² The common experience of walking and the unfamiliarity of place finally opens up a sharp discussion about their feelings and unhappiness as the Watsons walk home beside, rather than facing, each other. As they exchange strong, angry feelings of disappointment they also move towards accepting change through the effect of their conventional roles. Their unexpected walk together has allowed them to share, if not resolve, their unhappiness and to resign themselves to the new place. As they reach home there is the first sign of hope as a new neighbour, also living in the street, prompts them to the reluctant start of an acceptance of change.

‘I always say, continued Mrs Dawkins, ‘that it takes time to settle into a place. Gentleman, being out so much, don’t feel it the same way.’

‘It’s hardly to be expected,’ said Mrs Watson.[...] ‘Still, I’ve no doubt a place grows on one. It’s really all habit, isn’t it?’²⁶³

The understanding of emotion which is opened up by walking in Bowen’s stories is reflected in Helen Rydstrand’s argument that a feature of the modernist short story was the use of the rhythm of language to represent and make sense of a

²⁶⁰ Bowen, ‘Attractive Modern Houses’, 525

²⁶¹ Bowen, ‘Attractive Modern Houses’, 525

²⁶² Bowen, ‘Attractive Modern Houses’, 525

²⁶³ Bowen, Attractive Modern Houses’, 528

contemporary and unfamiliar world. She suggests that this was achieved through a 'rhythmic mimesis' which is 'especially appropriate to the short story because in rhythm's promise of continuation, it serves the form's aim of implying more than is shown in a brief glimpse of a life or situation'.²⁶⁴ This can be achieved through characters' walking which allows the two processes of movement and thought to be conveyed simultaneously in narrative. The examples of the rhythm of walking indicating continuity that can be found in Bowen's short stories offer deeper insight into the experience of characters through the repetition of the movement which is inherent in walking. Her use of a variety of synonyms for walking conveys the rhythm and characteristics of the walk. In 'Human Habitation' the lost walkers initially 'plodded on' with a slow, heavy walk.²⁶⁵ As the rain fell they slowed to heavier steps conveyed by 'trudged' and then 'went squelching on' as they trod through deep mud.²⁶⁶ These verbs indicate the nature of the walk, the feelings of the walkers and reflect the state of their relationship. As they continued to struggle along together they dragged their feet 'shuffling, sometimes desperately changing step in an attempt to establish rhythm'.²⁶⁷ When they resume their walk after tea at the unknown house they 'went forward again, briskly, breathlessly, shuffle-shuffle; never quite in step.'²⁶⁸ The pattern of their walking together, which is awkward and never quite synchronised, mirrors the fluctuations in their friendship which is not sufficiently established for them to feel at ease with each other and is not resolved by their strange experience of the tea. As they trudge along an unfamiliar, muddy and wet path feeling anxious and lost they are too ill at ease to converse but the repeated

²⁶⁴ Helen Rydstrand, 'Rhythmic modernism, mimesis and the short story' in Bloomsbury Academic July 2019

²⁶⁵ Bowen, 'Human Habitation', 148

²⁶⁶ Bowen, 'Human Habitation', 148-9

²⁶⁷ Bowen, 'Human Habitation', 150

²⁶⁸ Bowen, 'Human Habitation', 159

rhythm of their walking accompanies their streams of thought and indicates the state of mind of each. The use of the rhythm of walking to suggest the emotions presented in modernist short stories is also demonstrated in Bowen's other short stories. For example, in 'The Secession' a contrast is drawn between Humphrey's stooping and deferential pace with Miss Selby who was 'quicker in motion'.²⁶⁹ The consequence of the wrong shoes in 'An International Episode' caused Dillie to 'totter' and to 'limp' reflecting her feelings and the relationship with her husband on that day.²⁷⁰ The illustration of emotion through the rhythm and nature of walking in Bowen's stories links her writing with that of the other modernist writers discussed in the thesis who also make this link.

The connection of emotion with the experience of walking is a key feature of 'Aunt Tatty' which shows the importance of the walker's opportunity to explore daring ideas while occupied with walking as the story includes several significant walks. These are the context for important developments in Paul's visit to the unfamiliar countryside and in his relationship with Eleanor. Their walks together at intervals during the day eventually allow them to privately resolve their feelings and plans under cover of walking in order to explore the countryside. During his first walk with Eleanor from the station to her home they are constrained by the requirement to 'avoid any show of affection with people, Eleanor's neighbours, about'.²⁷¹ However, he responds with instinctive pleasure to the rural setting so that 'As Paul tasted the air and coming out onto the road saw the pale fields washed over with sunshine, with knolls of trees rising here and there like islands, he tingled'.²⁷² This sensation tempts

²⁶⁹ Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Secession' (1926) in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 163

²⁷⁰ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Shoes: An International Episode' (1929) in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 244-5

²⁷¹ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Aunt Tatty' (1929) in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 264

²⁷² Bowen, 'Aunt Tatty', 263

him to the indiscretion of coaxing her into a copse for an embrace which she resists as incompatible with acceptable rural behaviour. It is the opportunity and limitations of outdoor place and the heady, sensory experience of country walking which makes him aware of 'his shortcomings' while his confidence remains fragile in the unfamiliar place.²⁷³

The restrictions on walking alone together in 1929 which underpin 'Aunt Tatty' create the difficulty this young couple encounter in finding privacy to resolve their relationship. Walking plays a key part in the narrative as their only means to get away from well-meaning family to talk. It provides a setting in which this is possible although still hard to achieve at a time when labour intensive employment placed many people out in the countryside or on roads.²⁷⁴ Walking finally provides the opportunity for the epiphanic 'one wild moment' in which they suddenly laugh together and decide to elope.²⁷⁵ As they set off towards the station to do so the final epiphanic moment occurs as they meet with Aunt Tatty occurs. She intervenes in their plan, sending Eleanor home which prompts Paul's strong emotional response as he wonders 'if just such blind black moments as this preceded murder. He found himself moving forward numbly, sucked in the wake of the stout lady'.²⁷⁶ However, this walk is a significant moment in the story as her unexpected understanding leads her to direct him to 'Come out into the open, [...] take your chances.'²⁷⁷ It is the various experiences of walking in the evocatively described rural setting created by Bowen to frame the narrative and explore the emotional threads running through it which form the framework for the story. Walking is the catalyst and the context for

²⁷³ Bowen, 'Aunt Tatty', 264

²⁷⁴ Lesley Lewis, *The Private Life of a Country House* (Cheltenham, Glos: The History Press Ltd, 2011), p. 151

²⁷⁵ Bowen, 'Aunt Tatty', 272

²⁷⁶ Bowen, 'Aunt Tatty', 273

²⁷⁷ Bowen, 'Aunt Tatty', 274

the decision to which the story finally leads. Throughout the story walking is both an ordinary activity used routinely for travel and for entertainment while also the opportunity for Eleanor and Paul to resolve their relationship. Walking, emotion and place are brought together as the significant influences on Paul's experience of the day and its outcome.

Bowen's interest in walkers' experience of place, walking and emotion is also illustrated in her stories of tourism. In 'Shoes: an International Episode' a couple who take their role as tourists in France very seriously are thwarted by the loss of the wife's suitable footwear.²⁷⁸ Her anger caused by the discomfort of the wrong shoes permeates the day as they continue their planned sightseeing walk in contrasting states of mind. It is as they walk that the story describes the emotional impact of their different responses to the loss. Her role in this episode is emotional while his is performative as the text describes her feelings and his actions.

Bowen's personal interest in walking as a tourist is shown in her biographical account of an extended stay in Rome.²⁷⁹ This interest is reflected in 'The Secession' which presents a group of visitors diligently undertaking sightseeing walks in Italy. These walks are a central feature of the story in which the social opportunities they offer together with Miss Selby's determined management of her fellow tourists leads to the fatal conclusion. It is the interactions which she orchestrates during their walks which enable her to imply a close relationship with the old friend who is trying to end their relationship in order to form a new one with another walker. Bowen uses the context provided by walking to highlight the absurdity of conventionally correct

²⁷⁸ Bowen, 'Shoes: An International Episode', 242

²⁷⁹ Elizabeth Bowen, *A Time in Rome* (1959) (London: Vintage, 2010)

behaviour while showing how the requirements of politeness can conceal personal emotion and lead to much misunderstanding and a fatal conclusion.

Expectations of proper behaviour and the emotional pressure which they can create are treated with dark humour in 'The Working Party' which presents walking as both an ordinary means of local travel and the trigger for strong and contrasting feelings. These feelings are linked to walking as the story begins with Mrs Fisk's anxious anticipation of the socially important gathering of the approaching Working Party.²⁸⁰ Her panic stricken walk later in the afternoon is a vehicle for emotion of a very different and more surprising kind. Bowen emphasizes the humour in the odd emotional contrast between two walks of which one is an ordinary journey while the second is in response to a shocking event. The Working Party's first, sedate walk to their meeting at the farm house is uneventful but also prompts strong feelings for Mrs Fisk as she watches her guests approach, 'When by twos and threes, at first very indistinctly and slowly, the Working Party came into sight her heart leapt to her mouth and she could hardly contain herself for apprehension and pleasure.'²⁸¹

The afternoon, which had been so carefully organized, leads finally to an event connected to the Working Party, whose presence underlies the subsequent events, only because they must not know that it has occurred. The bizarre discovery of a dead body prompts Mrs Fisk to panic and run away to find her husband having entirely forgotten her visitors. Bowen vividly describes the setting for her escape and contrasts the sense of rural peace and its slow pace with her impulsive flight.

The first thin film of evening covered the sky; in the rickyard the pigeons
fluttered and flopped: she fled through them, half mad from the outdoor

²⁸⁰ Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Working Party' (1929) in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 286

²⁸¹ Bowen, 'The Working Party', 286

silence, raising a cloud of dust and chaff. She rattled the gate, it was locked; she bundled her skirt up and climbed it [...] she fled up the valley; the cows looked after her placidly; further on lambs fled to their mothers.²⁸²

The story illustrates Bowen's interest in the short story as a microcosm of a present moment which requires no account of what has preceded it nor what will follow. This reflects a modernist approach to short narrative but is written in a more traditional style with the omniscient narrator providing the description of setting, events and behaviour. Walking is an aspect of these stories used as a narrative means to include an account of the strong emotions which walkers may experience as their minds run actively on the events which are occurring simultaneously with the walk. In her introduction to *The Faber Book of Modern Short Stories* Bowen indicated her view of this approach to story endings. She argues that the short story 'does not attempt a synthesis [...] But action, which must in the novel be complex and motivated, in the short story regains heroic simplicity'.²⁸³

'The Working Party' reflects Hunter's analysis of the short story as 'creating narrative not by extended exposition, as the novel does, but by implied actions or thoughts, brief references or suggestion, in a form which avoids detailed description or elaboration and has no superfluous explanation'.²⁸⁴ He sees it as a literary form which reflects the social and intellectual thinking in 1918-1939 through narrative which evokes the sense of anxiety about both the past and the imminent future. Hunter's view is demonstrated in Bowen's short stories although she provides more unusual settings than are found in other modernist stories. She uses these settings

²⁸² Bowen, 'The Working Party', 296

²⁸³ Elizabeth Bowen, 'Introduction' in *Faber Book of Modern Short Story* (London: Faber and Faber 1936), p. 7

²⁸⁴ Adrian Hunter, (ed) *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), p. 3

to point towards the reasons for the behaviour described. It is because the context is strange that behaviour also becomes strange with its oddness highlighted by its setting.

Bowen has been described as interested in the strangeness of ordinary things and this chapter argues that she explores them through introducing walking, itself a very familiar and ordinary activity, to her short stories as an everyday context for their strangeness.²⁸⁵ Walking provides both the opportunity and the narrative means to explore what lies beneath outward behaviour and prompts it to occur or triggers its consequences. Bowen's interest in portraying odd experiences and events accommodates her interest in exploring thoughts arising from a character's inner life. She uses the 'time in-between' spent walking to explore this inner life of her characters which accompanies their 'walking to or from a place'.²⁸⁶ These are not liminal moments of epiphany, transition or crisis but the ordinary walking moments which address the strangeness of everyday life.

²⁸⁵ Hepburn, *People, Places, Things*, 1

²⁸⁶ Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust A History of Walking* (Granta: London 2014), p. xiii

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the significance of walking as a narrative strategy in modernist short fiction written between 1914-1939. In doing so it builds on and develops a literary tradition in which walking has contributed to narrative. Chaucer's varied group of pilgrims exchanging stories as they travel towards Canterbury provide an early example of narrative which occupies time spent travelling with reflections on life experience.²⁸⁷ In some nineteenth century novels there are examples of walks which play a significant part in the development of the story. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth Bennett walked across country to visit Jane who was ill at Netherfield. She walked 'alone, crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity' and arrived at the house 'with weary ankles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise'.²⁸⁸ This led the disapproving Miss Bingley to describe her dismissively as 'an excellent walker [...] She looked almost wild.'²⁸⁹ Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* describes the main character's escape from Thornfield which included a long, hard walk in unfamiliar country. She describes this experience as though recalling the memory of an earlier experience and so uses omniscient narration to do so.²⁹⁰ This study has shown how walking in the modernist short story builds on and reflects the significance of these earlier narrative examples of a familiar activity undertaken in circumstances which influence its meaning and its outcome for the walker.

²⁸⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature The Middle Ages* (London: W. W. Norton, 2012), p. 241

²⁸⁸ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* 1813 (Oxford: Oxford World Classics 2008), p. 24

²⁸⁹ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 25

²⁹⁰ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics 2019), p. 314

Several famous literary walkers recorded their own enjoyment of walking and thinking in diary form. In the seventeenth century Samuel Pepys described his walk through London as the fire burned in 1666. He gathered information as he 'simply walked on, fascinated by the strangeness of everything, seeing what he could see'.²⁹¹ Henry David Thoreau frequently walked in order to think during his stay at Walden Pond while for William and Dorothy Wordsworth walking in the Lake District was a daily activity and a source of inspiration.²⁹² ²⁹³ These writers observed the settings in which they walked and used their observations to inform their writing. However, in the early twentieth century modernist writers began to use walking in a different way in their short narrative often employing free indirect discourse. While recognising how walking has contributed to earlier narrative this thesis explores how it was used in a very specific and new way in the modernist writing of the early twentieth century.

For the twentieth century modernist writers of the inter war period walking occupies a distinct place in narrative as it is no longer part of the background or the context for actions but becomes an integral part of the firsthand experience of characters. For these walkers their journey is an immediate, personal encounter with a place at a particular time. Their setting is a transitional space through which they walk as the story progresses leading them towards a threshold into a new or different experience. Walking therefore becomes the subject of the story rather than its context.

²⁹¹ Claire Tomalin, *Samuel Pepys The Unequalled Self* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 228

²⁹² Henry David Thoreau *Walden and Civil Disobedience 1854* (London: Penguin, 1983)

²⁹³ Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals* 1987 <<https://www.gutenberg.org>> [accessed 23/8/2021]

Through close reading and discussion of secondary sources the thesis analyses the literary effect of walking in the short stories by Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, James Joyce and Elizabeth Bowen. It juxtaposes the ordinariness of walking with the significant and transitional impact which it can create in a life through the opportunity it offers for significant, private thought. Each chapter of the thesis has explored the significance of walking as a transition between experiences or understandings of ordinary life from one of the four writers. For each of them the experience of walking, usually alone, with the opportunity to reflect on life experience and to address the significance and impact of a particular event is at the heart of the story. These are epiphanic moments of insight in their characters' lives although the change experienced is not always a positive one. Joyce's stories differ from those of the other writers because they usually end with a moment of anti-epiphany and the realisation that life is not going to improve. There are also anti-epiphanic endings among the short stories written by the other writers but they are balanced by other stories with more positive outcomes. For example, while the ending of Mansfield's 'Miss Brill' can be described as anti-epiphany, the ending of 'The Garden Party' is an example of an epiphany.

This study offers a fresh understanding of the significance of walking in the modernist short stories discussed. It distinguishes its meaning and purpose in modernist narrative from that found in earlier nineteenth century fiction. This understanding is developed through an analysis of the contribution made by walking to the experience of characters who reflect on issues concerned with the unfolding story as they walk. The analysis shows how their experience, emotions and interpretation of events lead to the development of the narrative through the underlying individual cognitive, emotional and thought process which occurs. The

evidence leads to the conclusion that walking plays an overlooked but significant part in the writing of human experience in the modernist short story. This thesis shows how the ordinariness of walking can cause its place in short narrative to be overlooked.

In conclusion, the thesis has presented an analysis of a previously overlooked aspect of the short story writing of four significant early twentieth century writers. It has brought together ideas and experiences of walking which stem from nineteenth century biographical writing with twentieth century firsthand accounts from Rebecca Solnitt or Lauren Elkin in order to show how walking contributes to an understanding of human experience which is captured in the twentieth century modernist short story. In order to take this study further it would now be interesting to add an analysis of two other writers who were also publishing short stories between 1914-1939. Dorothy Richardson and May Sinclair were well known and well regarded at this time but are now largely overlooked. It would be an innovative extension of this study to develop the research so that it also includes an analysis of their short stories of the same period.

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