

# Knowing Their Space: Feminist Geography and Embodiment in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories

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October 2016

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## Summary

This thesis develops a feminist narratology of literary space in which the gendered bodies of focalizing characters are 're-read' in accordance with contemporary feminist geographical understandings of space. While experimental literary techniques produced primarily at the turn of the twentieth century – stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse, and shifting focalization – are generally understood as revealing how individual minds grappled with modernity, these techniques can also be used to investigate the role of the gendered body in the construction of literary and non-literary spaces. This is done by drawing upon the sub-discipline of feminist geography and the gendered politics of positionality. Feminist geographers argue that our gendered identities fundamentally shape how we experience and understand our spaces, while also dismantling the historical public/private, work/home, masculine/feminine binaries that have structured spatial and gender relations throughout history. By introducing 'feminine' bodies to the construction of space and spatial knowledge, feminist geographers offer an alternative epistemology that validates 'feminine' embodied processes of emotion and imagination in the construction and experience of our spaces, particularly 'feminine' spaces like the home. The literary techniques developed by many women modernist writers – techniques this thesis re-conceptualizes as 'techniques of embodiment' – can be re-read through feminist geographical theory. This new narratological understanding also extends to how texts position the reader through 'techniques of embodiment' to reflect upon the role of the gendered body in our construction and experience of space in both literature and beyond.

## Acknowledgements

Whenever I ripped a hole in a shirt or a pair of pants, I would take it to my neighbour Janine for repairs. My mother knew how to sew, but not like Janine. She was a dressmaker, and over the course of my childhood she made dresses and costumes for myself and my best friend – her daughter – to play and perform in. I would spend my afternoons at Janine's house while my mum worked late, sometimes 'til after dark. She would feed me and ask me questions and show me how to fix holes. Her favourite skirt was denim, and it fell to her ankles. She slept in old plastic hair curlers, and laughed quietly.

Janine died in 2012 from a cancer that had spread to her lungs.

As a young feminist woman, I'm constantly reminded of those women who history has left behind. Women like Janine who were, in the eyes of history, unexceptional (or even conventional), have rarely, if ever, been recognised or validated beyond their families and friends. Feminism, for me, is a political movement as much as it is a way of acknowledging and appreciating the women who have made us who we are; the women who offered us comfort, lessons, and opportunities for reflection.

This thesis is dedicated to Janine, and to all the women that history may forget, but who were exceptional none the less.

A further thank you to my thesis supervisor Stephanie Russo, for showing me the kind of scholar I want to become. Thank you to my high school English teacher Alexander Judge for handing me those extra projects after class that made me believe in myself. Thank you to my partner Dale for keeping me grounded and putting this process into perspective whenever I got caught up in the details.

And thank you to my mother, Sandy, for creating the sense of home, love, and empathy that is the beating heart of this project.

## Candidate Statement

I certify that this work, entitled "Knowing Their Space: Feminist Geography and Embodiment in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories" has not been submitted for a higher degree, or as part of requirements for a degree, to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

This thesis is an original piece of research, and any help or assistance I received during the research process or during the construction of this thesis has been appropriately acknowledged.

All information sources and literature used are cited in the thesis.



## Introduction

In a letter to her husband John Middleton Murry in 1915, Katherine Mansfield wrote

Why haven't I got a real 'home', a real life – Why haven't I got a Chinese nurse with green trousers and two babies who rush at me and clasp my knees – Im [sic] not a girl – Im [sic] a woman. I want things. Shall I ever have them? ... all this life drying up, like milk, in an old breast. Oh, I want a life – I want friends and people and a house. (l, 177)

She wrote this letter years after escaping from the “small petty world” (V, 80) of colonial New Zealand and its bourgeois family values. Like many young women at the turn of the twentieth century, Mansfield had moved to London searching for financial independence, education, relationships, and a public outlet for the stories she had been telling from a young age. She was, in many ways, a ‘New Woman’ (Grand 1894; Ledger 2007); part of a generation of young women “[who] were awaking from their long apathy, and, as they awoke, like healthy hungry children unable to articulate, they began to whimper for they know not what” (Grand, 271). New Women abandoned traditional notions of home and family in their pursuit of freedom, authority, and representation in and from a society that had rarely validated or encouraged them. Mansfield's involvement in progressive publications like *The New Age*, her friendships with notable political women like Virginia Woolf and Beatrice Hastings (Ardis 2007; Smith 1999), and her unconventional sexual relationships with John Middleton Murry and Ida Baker (Kaplan 2010, 30), suggest she was part of this

New Woman movement. For some scholars, her work reflects these emerging feminist politics, particularly in the discontent and restlessness her woman characters feel with their prescription to the domestic space (Kubasiewicz, 53-6; Kokot, 70-3; Reid, 150). However, as the letter to Murry above indicates, Mansfield's relationship with conventional notions of home and family became ambiguous (Martin, 66-8).

Scholars understand Mansfield's turn back towards conventional notions of home and family in a number of ways. Her later stories, which have been interpreted as memories of her childhood in New Zealand, are read by some as ways of coping with her infertility (Kaplan 1991, 157; Jones, 125). Others link her desire for home to her status as an unsettled expatriate (King, 100; Wilson 2013, 1), or her inability to reconcile work with family (Martin, 68). What the home *means*, then, is far more nuanced than the static, categorically disempowering setting within or against which women's lives unfold (Young 2005). Indeed, these various interpretations of Mansfield's work suggests that the home is subject to various other social discourses that change over time. "[W]e do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things," Foucault says, "we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (231).

As a 'set of relations', or a combination of various discourses, the meaning and value of home can change as and when wider society changes. And yet, the home is still considered a feminine space defined and controlled by patriarchal ideals (McDowell, 306-11). For some, the home is inescapably oppressive for women: a space of

violence, alienation, and existential oppression (Blunt and Dowling, 15; Friedan 15-16; de Beauvoir, 535-6; Mezei and Briganti, 10-11). Indeed, the New Women and early feminists who demanded equal access to public spaces of work, education, and politics depended upon a negative construction of the home in order to justify their abandonment of it (Heilmann, 34-41, 63; Ledger 150-3). As Carole Pateman says of early pro-suffrage arguments in the late nineteenth century, “[w]omen will not be able to learn what their interests are without experience outside domestic life” (130). The public space was the space of empowerment and citizenship, while the private space was one of political oppression, sentimentalism, and intellectual naivety. The politics of early feminism was founded upon this spatial and gendered binary; a binary that continues to shape contemporary gender relations. And yet, Mansfield found that the home was not so dichotomous, and she expressed her complex understandings of home and family in a number of ways in her stories. Some of her characters, like Mrs. Fairfield and Kezia in “Prelude” (1917) and “At the Bay” (1921), find significant existential meaning in the home and its activities, while others, like the title character from “The Life of Ma Parker” (1921), find that the home can be both a site of memory and community, as well as of grief and regret.

The ways in which contemporary scholars of narrative investigate the complexities of space in literature, specifically the domestic space, are under-developed. Indeed, beyond a basic metaphor or symbol for other narrative elements like character and plot, literary spaces are still seen by some as nothing more than “the container of the events and existents represented by a story” (Caracciolo, 428). Narratology in particular is notable for its lack of spatial concepts and vocabularies (Scholes, Phelan



and Kellogg, 336), for reasons that will be addressed in Chapter 1. As discussed above, however, space is a multi-layered, contradictory, fluid conglomeration of discourses, with meanings and values that change for various reasons and for various people at various times. Narratologically, this understanding of space has not produced the same scholarly interest as other narrative concepts, such as time, voice, or consciousness. Identifying this lack, Buchholz and Jahn (2010) argue that literary studies in general and narratology in particular could benefit from drawing upon theories of space developed by geography and spatial theory, to produce a 'narratology of space' that addresses how literary spaces are both constructed in texts and experienced by readers. Therefore, this thesis investigates specifically and with more geographical rigour the role and function of the literary domestic space in the lives of characters, as well as how this space is constructed and experienced by readers.

As the turn of the twentieth century saw the beginnings of feminism, and thus a reorganization of the historical gendered and spatial binaries that had defined men's and women's lives, it is appropriate that a study of gender and space in literature addresses the texts produced during this time. In fact, this thesis argues that a number of experimental literary techniques produced by modernist writers can be re-read for how they reveal the complex dynamic between gendered bodies and spaces in texts.

## Gender, Space, and Modernism

In many western societies, the period from 1880-1940 ushered in rapid and complex change. War, technology, urbanisation, imperialism, feminism, and consumerism fundamentally shaped the individual's experience of the world (Fussell 2013; Jameson 1988; Said 1994; Karl 2013; Scott 1990), coupled with the growing popularity of theories by Freud (Micale 2004), Nietzsche (Gogroff-Voorhees 1999), Einstein (Whitworth 2001), and Marx (Lunn 1984). The growing anxiety and moral uncertainty brought about by these various changes was a major catalyst for the formal innovativeness of art and literature around the turn of the twentieth century. Ezra Pound's famous ethos to "make it new" (1934) epitomized this attempt at re-fashioning the shattered pieces of the old world and to come to terms with the nature of modern existence (Lewis 2007). In literature, techniques associated with nineteenth-century realism such as third-person omniscient narrators and descriptive prose were questioned by writers who no longer believed in the grand narratives of religion or politics. Instead, many writers turned inward to explore their own changing consciousnesses in reaction to the acceleration of modern life, attempting to find new forms of expression. These new literary techniques – stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse, and shifting focalisation – characterised this inward turn, as they organised and revealed new aspects of the individualised, impressionistic modern mind as it grappled with change. Experimental writing from this period has come to be defined by fragmentation, abstraction, artificiality, uncertainty, and decay. Its writers – T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and Ernest Hemingway, among many others –

were celebrated for developing styles that were ironic, detached, and impersonal (Blair, 158-9; Dekoven, 214); techniques that distanced the individual from society, and that have characterised literary modernism for much of its scholarly life.

It appears self-evident in canonical modernist texts that stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse, and shifting focalisation are literary techniques that foreground the individual mind as it experiences and understands the world. However, this prioritising of the active mind – the thing that experiences – subsequently characterises the spaces the mind experiences as passive and static; things to be experienced. This thesis proposes that, contrary to this conceptualization, the relationship between subjects and spaces is not so clearly unidirectional. Indeed, the assumption that these literary techniques are techniques of the *mind* ignores the fact that minds are located in the bodies of subjects; bodies that are defined various discourses of identity, as well as by the spaces in which those identities are ‘performed.’ The mind is *embodied*, and these bodies are fundamental to the ways in which individuals experience and understand themselves and their worlds. The techniques developed by literary modernists, then, are not merely techniques of the mind; they are ‘techniques of embodiment.’ This thesis focuses specifically on the role of the gendered body in the construction, experience, and understanding of domestic space, but there is potential for this new term to apply to a variety of different bodies and different spaces in texts that use these same literary techniques.

The emergence of feminist scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s questioned the canonical understanding of modernist literary techniques as expressions of the

increasingly isolated modern consciousness by instead recontextualising them through the lens of gender. Feminist scholars such as Sydney Janet Kaplan (1975) positioned modernist woman writers at the centre of modernism, which fundamentally alters the way these techniques are interpreted by scholars. These techniques no longer describe and organise the 'universal' experience of modernity, but rather, the 'masculine' experience. Kaplan's important early feminist revision spawned a vast collection of scholarly work that addresses the role of gender in the art and culture of the turn of the twentieth century (Scott 1990, 2007; Linett 2010; Showalter 1993; Felski 1995; Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 1988). Dissatisfied with conventional styles and forms of expression, women modernists also "found it necessary to break with tradition by shifting their focus from the outer world to the inner, from the confident omniscient narrator to the limited point of view, from plot to patterning, and from action to thinking and dreaming" (Kaplan 1975, 1-2). However, women writers and their women characters did not follow the same aesthetic path of their male counterparts who characterised the modern consciousness as detached, impersonal, and fragmented.

Importantly, feminist analyses of modernist literary techniques reveal that male modernists experienced and understood their worlds in particularly *masculine* ways. Leopold Bloom in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), the narrators of T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1917) and "The Waste Land" (1922), Pound's "The Cantos" (1922-), and the protagonists of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1925) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) personify what Janet Wolff terms the literary "flâneur" (38) of the modern world. For Charles Baudelaire, who conceptualised the figure, the flâneur is

“at the centre of the world and at the same time hidden from the world” (9). The flâneur moves through the urban and city spaces of modernity anonymously, unaffected and ineffectual; observing, but never observed. The flâneur experiences reality at a distance, and his identity rarely, if ever, comes to bear on his access to and experience of his spaces. Positioned as we are in the minds and bodies of these male characters, readers of male modernist literature are led to believe that this impersonal, indifferent detachment from the world, as well as the privileging of the mind over the body, is a universal experience. However, as aforementioned, the mind is always embodied, and thus subject to various discourses of identity. As such, the construction and experience of literary spaces for readers, aided by these experimental literary techniques, cannot be separated from the gender of the characters in whose minds and bodies we are positioned by the text.

The flâneur, as Wolff goes on to explain, is characteristically and historically *masculine*. His ability to exist unacknowledged by others and unaffected by his (mostly public) spaces is due to his social status as a white, primarily middle-class man (Wolff, 40). Indeed, the one-way “directionality of the gaze” (Massey, 234) structures his relationship with space: the masculine flâneur observes, but is not observed. Frequently, the objects of his gaze are the public spaces of the city and women, and his unidirectional gaze creates the detachment and objectification that is characteristic of male modernism (Pollock, 51-90). The privileging of his gendered body means his identity is not called into question in these spaces; the world does not gaze back. In contrast, the presence of women in these same urban and city spaces is marked by their status as gendered bodies first; the gazes of others structure their identities. As

Wolff says, “women had to take a good deal more care about the ‘signs’ of their dress, which would be scrutinised for an indication of their social rank” (41). Even in Lauren Elkin’s recent *Flâneuse* (2016), which attempts to construct a female flâneur, women do not exist apart from their spaces: she “fit[s] *into* the cityscape” (8, my italics), as something *to be gazed at*. The preoccupation many female characters have with their bodies and with spatial concepts such as thresholds and peripheries is not only a testament to the social status of woman at the turn of the twentieth century, but also to fundamental differences in the way men and women, as gendered bodies, relate to space.

In sum, this thesis proposes the term ‘techniques of embodiment’ to account for the fact that the experimental literary techniques developed at the turn of the twentieth century do not simply demonstrate a free-floating mind as it experiences reality, but a mind that is located in a gendered body. As will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 1, this gendered body fundamentally affects the ways in which men and women access and understand their spaces. Positioned as readers are within these bodies, the reading experience itself – how readers construct and experience the spaces of a text – is significantly shaped by the gendered bodies of focalising characters. This new term acknowledges the lack of narratological scholarship that addresses the gendered body in relation to experimental literary techniques, as well as more aptly describing the insidious and complex ways the gendered body affects how both characters and readers access and experience different spaces.

## Domestic Modernism

While male modernists and their male protagonists were primarily concerned with the universal (male) modern experience of the urban (McCracken 2013; Harding 2004), many women modernists and their female protagonists instead focused on the changing nature of domesticity and the private world of the home. This focus on the home culminated in what Briganti and Mezei describe as “domestic modernism” (1), inspired by writers such as Virginia Woolf, May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson, Radclyffe Hall, and the Bloomsbury artists of the Omega Workshops, who “saw the home as the locus of all great aesthetic, social, and political change” (Morgan, 91). In contrast to many male modernists, whose male characters agonize over the nature of the artistic self in the public sphere, women modernists whose texts explore the everyday domestic experience display a “search for and creation of the self and a subtle pursuit of the art of living” (Briganti and Mezei, 1). The focus on the domestic space by some women modernists paralleled the broader aesthetic turn inward to examine the interior lives of ordinary people. Just as experimental modern literature was a vehicle for writers to explore changing consciousness at the turn of the twentieth century, the home underwent a similar re-assessment by modernist women through literary experimentation, offering a “discourse of interiority” (26) that countered the dismissal of domestic narratives from high modernist art, which continued to see the home as “conservative, old-fashioned, or provincial” (11).

Domestic modernists used literature to question and challenge various 'separate spheres' discourses of the home that were widespread in the earlier Victorian era. One of the most famous proponents of the separate spheres ideology was John Ruskin, who characterised the home as "the place of Peace; not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division" (90). His "Sesame and Lilies" lecture, described by Kate Millet as "one of the most complete insights obtainable into that compulsive masculine fantasy one might call the official Victorian attitude" (64), implicitly connected public and private spaces with gendered bodies. Man, Ruskin argued, is "active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest" (90). Woman's intellect, on the other hand, is "for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims and their places.... By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation" (90). Indeed, "wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her" (91). The prescription of men and women to different spaces of society was historically justified by what were believed to be essential differences anchored in the body. As objective, rational individuals, men naturally occupied the public world of politics and learning; the space of the mind. Defined as not-male (Irigaray 1985; Cixous 1975), and therefore as not-objective and not-rational, women naturally occupied the private world of eating, sex, illness, birth, and death; the space of the body.

In reaction to this separate spheres ideology that had plagued the nineteenth century, some women writers engaged with literary experimentation in order to undermine the various discourses and stereotypes that had kept men and women prescribed to



certain roles and spaces of society. Mona Caird's novel *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) echoes the male modernist's engagement with myth and history, but dismantles the muse/whore dichotomy by re-writing Greek myth to allow her historical protagonist Hadria to maintain her feminist principles even within traditional discourses of home and marriage. Dorothy Richardson's sequence novel *Pilgrimage* (1915-1938) was one of the first to utilize the stream of consciousness technique and follows the protagonist, Miriam, as she navigates her various public and private spaces. Miriam works, attends lectures, learns to ride a bicycle, has affairs with both men and women, and becomes politically active. Notably, she is almost always considerably poor. The life she leads is emblematic of the everyday, 'unexceptional' modern women attempting to navigate the changing discourses of femininity and space; women whose ambiguous politics were rarely represented by the homogeneity of mainstream feminism. Readers vicariously experience how Miriam struggles and grows as she moves through the world *as a woman* specifically through Richardson's use of 'techniques of embodiment.' And George Egerton's collections *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1895) reject third-person realist descriptions of women's lives to instead allow readers to access her female characters through dreams or visions, as well as intense emotional and psychological moments. These stories explore subjects considered taboo such as female sexual desire, gender identity, and the often tragic complexities of motherhood in the lives of everyday women in the home by inviting the reader to occupy the minds and bodies of her characters.

"Domestic modernism" was thus an aesthetic space created by women writers to explore with more nuance and complexity the same issues that preoccupied the

emerging feminism of the early twentieth century. Ideas surrounding motherhood, marriage, desire, sex, and illness were examined through the minds, bodies, and spaces of female characters from different social backgrounds. Women writers used the same experimental literary techniques as their male modernist counterparts, but 'ma[d]e it new' (Pound, 1934) by using them to organize and validate 'feminine' bodies and spaces, and the connections between them. Readers were able to truly understand and empathise with the uncontrollable social and cultural discourses that shaped women's subjectivities and identities; their bodies and spaces. In other words, domestic modernist texts positioned readers to acknowledge that women characters were independent, capable, desiring, and political individuals who could nonetheless find meaning and purpose in the home and its activities; a space early feminism had characterized as inescapably oppressive and disempowering (Grand, 274). While modernist women writers developed what Showalter calls "a new literary form for the feminine unconscious" (1993, xiii), it can be further argued that they also developed a new way of understanding how the gendered body affects the construction and experience of spaces in texts and beyond them.

Indeed, Briganti and Mezei conclude from domestic modernism's valuing of the domestic space through techniques of embodiment that a potential "epistemology of the domestic" (13) can be developed. This thesis embraces this idea of the home and the gendered body as sites and processes of epistemological significance, but redirects this proposed epistemology to instead suggest the beginnings of a new feminist narratology (Mezei 2000) of space. It will do so by drawing upon concepts developed within the discipline of "feminist geography" (McDowell 1999; Massey 1994; Rose

1993), particularly the gender politics of positionality and the collapsing of binaries, which will be discussed in Chapter 1. Analysing techniques of embodiment from the perspective of feminist geography enables scholars to better investigate the various connections between gendered bodies and spaces in texts, as well as highlighting how the gendered politics of positionality affects the reading experience itself.

This new feminist narratology of gendered space is inspired by Helene Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975), which positions the female body and its feminine processes at the centre of language. Cixous's essay is unconventional in its structure, ebbing and flowing according to the rhythms of 'feminine' desire; rhythms traditionally dismissed by the impersonal, objective, disembodied rationality of modern masculinity. Indeed, Cixous's work engages in the same experimental literary techniques developed at the turn of the twentieth century: stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse, and shifting focalisation. One could suggest that modernist women writers' experimentation with techniques that centred the gendered body as the primary site of experience laid the foundation for Cixous's important theories regarding gender and language. However, such a complex understanding of the power of language to shape gendered identities and subjectivities was not obvious to women writers at the turn of the twentieth century. As Dorothy Richardson acknowledged in "Women and the Future" (1924), "how difficult it is, even for the least prejudiced, to think the feminine past, to escape the images that throng the mind from the centuries of masculine expressiveness on the eternal theme: expressiveness that has so rarely reached beyond the portrayal of women, whether Madonna, Diana, or Helen, in her moments of relationship to the world as it is known to men" (411). It is thus necessary

to analyse texts produced at this time for how their politics are implicitly embedded within their artistic choices: women characters may appear traditional and conventional, even shallow or naïve, but the way they are presented by writers, and the way readers are positioned to understand and empathise with them, are themselves political acts. This positioning creates a 'reverse-discourse' (Ledger, 21) that enables readers to further question how our individual experiences of spaces change depending upon our gendered bodies; to acknowledge the subjective, personal, contextual nature of spatial experience both in texts and beyond them.

Domestic modernism, then, or texts that explore the experiences of women in the home through techniques usually attributed to high (male) modernism, developed what can be called a 'feminine and feminist aesthetic,' not only by validating these bodies and spaces, but also by inviting readers to overcome the politics of gender difference through empathetic reading. Domestic modernist fiction narrated by female characters in particular allows male and female readers alike to access a female point of view; not just a glimpse into the consciousness of the 'other,' but a chance to understand and empathise through the sharing of emotional and imaginative – human – moments, an overcoming of difference through a particular type of narrative engagement. As Martha Nussbaum argues in *Poetic Justice* (1995), certain types of literature invite readers to overcome the differences that social discourses solidify between individuals and groups. Literature that utilizes techniques such as those exhibited by domestic modernist writers can show readers "what it is like to live the life of another person who might, given changes in circumstance, be oneself or one of one's loved ones.... In their very mode of address to their imagined

reader, they convey the sense that there are links of possibility... between the characters and the reader” (Nussbaum, 5). This understanding of literature simultaneously values the various identities and circumstances that both characters and readers bring to textual and human interactions more generally. While some differences highlighted by the reading process may appear impossible to overcome, our inability to form these connections can itself be a revelation. Engaging the reader emotionally and imaginatively through techniques of embodiment enables what is effectively a *sharing of positions*; an overcoming of differences that various social discourses have implicitly characterised as insurmountable.

Beyond the home as a static ‘container’ or ‘background setting’ within or against which the ‘real’ action and events of narratives unfold (Caracciolo, 428), this thesis enables a fuller comprehension of the complexity and function of gendered bodies and spaces both in literature and beyond. Recent studies of gender in modernist women’s writing have begun to address these spatial themes (Rosner 2008; San 2013; Elkin 2016), but few address the narratological construction of space from the position of gendered bodies. This gap in the scholarship is arguably due to two factors. The first is that narratology’s conceptualisation of literary space is under-developed; many still see literary spaces as static settings in which things occur, with little significance beyond metaphor or symbol (Buchholz and Jahn 2010; Kort 2004; Hones 2010), and therefore rarely appreciate how gendered bodies affect the construction or experience of literary spaces for readers. The second is that there remain reservations about traditional ‘feminine’ bodies and spaces as sites of liberation, perhaps stemming from the work feminist theorists such as Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir, who

regularly expressed “a negative valuation of the activity of giving meaning to and maintaining home” (Young, 138). However, as Iris Marion Young argues, a “completely negative valuation [of domestic space] flies in the face of the experience of many women, who devote themselves to caring for house and children as a meaningful human project” (138). Addressing the historical discourses that have kept women’s bodies and spaces on the periphery does not mean categorically rejecting the concept of home alongside the concept of femininity, but rather re-assessing how and why we value certain spaces and bodies over others. This re-assessment has the potential to re-shape narratology itself by acknowledging the gendered and spatial complexities embedded within groups of texts often disregarded by mainstream literary scholarship such as domestic modernism, ‘feminine’ genres such as the romance novel, and children’s and young adult literature.

The attempt to re-affirm the home as a site of knowledge, value, and meaning for women *and* men, as Young spells out, is far more in keeping with a feminist critical method, as “[m]uch of typically women’s work... is at least as fundamentally world-making and meaning-giving as typically men’s work,” as are the spaces in which this work is carried out (145). Following bell hooks, Young suggests that the project of women’s liberation requires a complete overhaul of what we consider meaningful in the context of gender and space, and to expand the meaning of home to encompass values that we all share (149). Dislocating domestic space from stereotypes constructed by both feminists and anti-feminists alike enables a more nuanced and complex investigation of the various ways in which this space functions. In literature, the home can be a site of exploration and realization, of identity, agency, community,

and creativity, but it can also, simultaneously, be a space of oppression, restriction, and violence. Acknowledging this multi-dimensionality is crucial for the feminist project of dismantling gender stereotypes and enabling a fuller empathetic appreciation of the complexities of women's lives and spaces.

There has yet to be a feminist narratology developed that takes this fluid, sometimes contradictory, understanding of gendered bodies and spaces into account, particularly as it unfolds in the reading process. This lack of narratological development becomes even more apparent when one realizes that the bodies of characters in many modernist texts are fundamental to the reader's construction of narrative space.

Without the minds and bodies of characters, the spaces of the text would be significantly different, if not altogether absent. The relationship between reader, character, and narrative space – a relationship which is shaped by gender as much as other identity categories – is far more complex than this thesis can explore, but asks questions that future studies can answer. Therefore, Chapter 1 offers the beginnings of a new feminist narratology for understanding what space can be and do in texts as it is constructed through the gendered body; a narratology that moves toward more contemporary understandings of space developed in geography and spatial theory which recognize space as a complex and ever-changing discourse subject to gender relations (Harvey 1973; Soja 1989; Massey 1994).

Chapter 1 will draw upon the sub-discipline known as "feminist geography" (Rose 1993; Massey 1995; McDowell 1999), and its gendered politics of positionality, to draw conceptual parallels between geography and techniques of embodiment.

Feminist geography investigates how gendered binaries such as male/female, mind/body, public/private, and rational/emotional play into the construction of knowledge about ourselves and our spaces, and offers avenues for complicating those binaries. One way is to re-assess how we understand and value parts of the binaries that have been historically excluded. Feminist geography, then, allows us to validate the home as a site of tension, exploration, failure, and realization for different women simultaneously. It demonstrates the importance of the feminine, the bodily, the private, the imaginative, and the emotional in human life, challenging the binary value systems that have dismissed women throughout history. However, feminist geography itself has yet to be utilized in a narratological study in the way proposed by this thesis. Thus, far beyond contemporary understandings of literary space as “the container of the events and existents represented by a story” (Caracciolo, 428), feminist geography allows for a more complex understanding of the importance and function of gendered bodies and spaces in texts.

Chapter 1 will draw particularly upon Gillian Rose’s ideas in *Feminism and Geography* (1993), which explores the role of gender in the construction of spatial knowledge: the position of and power imbalance between the researcher and the researched, or subject and object. Rose argues that traditional geography requires occupying a “masculine subject position” (15); a position of rationality, objectivity, and empiricism, and evacuated of personality, contingency, and context. The institutionalisation of this subject position has affected the very concept of space and how we experience it. Despite being fundamental to human life, “the bodily, the emotional, the passionate, the natural and the irrational” (Rose, 28) are not considered useful or meaningful in



how we construct and experience spaces in texts or beyond them due to the universalisation of the masculine subject position.

Therefore, Chapters 2 and 3 will address in more detail two of these ‘feminine’ embodied processes – the emotions, and the imagination – and demonstrate how these processes are often more valuable to arriving at knowledge about ourselves and our spaces than ‘masculine’ processes of objectivity or reason may not be. Indeed, these two chapters will draw parallels between the emotions and imaginations of characters and the emotions and imaginations of readers in the construction and experience of literary spaces, and suggest that this sharing of ‘feminine’ embodied processes constitutes a significant political and ethical activity. Taking these two chapters into account, Chapter 4 will then address the material and discursive aspects of home in relation to a number of feminist theorists who have either rejected or embraced the domestic space as a site of oppression and/or liberation for different women across time. It will offer a reconceptualisation of the home that allows scholars to re-read female characters who have previously been considered ‘trapped’ by the discourses of home and femininity, and explore the various ways in which conventional or ‘traditional’ women find existential and epistemological significance in the domestic space. Through this discussion, we arrive at an alternative understanding of techniques of embodiment; these techniques can be read as valuing a subject position that is contextual, contingent, subjective, and personal, in contrast to the detached, ironic, impersonal ‘masculine’ conceptualisation of experimental modernist writing.

Katherine Mansfield's short stories, as exemplars of domestic modernism (Briganti and Mezei, 54, 166), are therefore used in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 as case studies to examine how this new feminist narratology of space can be applied. Mansfield's work engages with techniques of embodiment to artistically and epistemologically validate the experiences of women and girls in the home. While Kaplan argues that Katherine Mansfield engaged in T.S. Eliot's concept of "impersonality" (1919) by evacuating her stories of personal ideologies or judgements (Kaplan 1991, 169-85), this technique in fact allowed Mansfield to structure a distinctly 'feminine and feminist aesthetic.' Rather than indicating a lack of political engagement, the absence of an authoritative, omniscient narrator instead enabled Mansfield's female characters to speak individually and authoritatively for and about themselves.

Indeed, by positioning readers to access multiple women's perspectives through her use of techniques of embodiment, Mansfield provides avenues for readers to form connections of empathy and understanding across difference. Focusing on aspects of 'feminine' experience not traditionally associated with knowledge production – the emotions and the imagination – Mansfield's stories will be interpreted through this new feminist narratological lens as showing the value of these gendered, bodily processes in the production of alternative knowledges about and within the home, and how these processes contribute to the reading experience. As Nussbaum argues, "[t]he reader cultivates concern with human agency and autonomy and, at the same time, a capacity to imagine what the life of [another person] is like" (77). Being positioned in the minds and bodies of the 'other,' and thus in their everyday spaces,

“promotes habits of mind that lead toward social equality in that they contribute to the dismantling of the stereotypes that support group hatred” (92).

The realisations that both Mansfield’s characters and readers arrive at in and through the domestic space are no less relevant or valuable because of where or how they occur. Rather, by positioning readers to experience these realisations alongside her characters – many of whom cannot find the words to understand or express these realisations – Mansfield re-frames this space from its historical association with oppression and intellectual naivety into one of fruitful and creative production of alternative knowledges. By engaging the reader emotionally and imaginatively, Mansfield implicitly validates the women whose embodiedness has been dismissed by a history and a culture that privileges the reason, objectivity, and empiricism of the public mind over the emotional, sexual, and imagining private body, and invites readers to acknowledge the embodied processes that have the potential to show us what we know and value.

# Chapter 1

## Gender, Space, and Narrative

While a number of narratological studies connect techniques of embodiment to socio-political changes at the turn of the twentieth century (Gilles and Mahood 2007; Dekoven 2011; Linett 2010; Scott 2007), few connect these literary techniques to how the spaces of the textual world are constructed through the gendered bodies of characters. There are, however, signs that some areas of literary studies more generally are beginning to consider the importance of space in texts. Indeed, Mao and Walkowitz identify a “spatial broadening” (738) of modernist studies that extends the movement geographically, temporally, and politically. As a result, the emergence of terms such as “geomodernisms” (Brown 2010, 144) and “new geographies of identity” (Friedman 1998, 17) indicate that literary studies more broadly, and narratology specifically, is beginning to see the potential of spatial concepts to literary analysis. Furthermore, the influence of other disciplines, such as postcolonial studies (Okeke-Agulu 2015; Zecchini 2014), has contributed to the expansion of literary modernism today beyond British and American traditions, further demonstrating the importance of geographical ideas to understanding and appreciating art and literature from around the world.

When narratology has engaged specifically with literary space, however, it has often been conceptualised as something ‘within which’ characters, objects, and events exist; an empty, passive ‘container’ to be filled with other things. Buchholz and Jahn argue

that the lack of spatial concepts in narrative theory is due to two reasons. First is the influence of Gotthold Lessing's characterisation of narrative as "a 'temporal' art (as opposed to 'spatial' arts like painting and sculpture)" (551). This characterisation seemed "too evident to be seriously interrogated" (551), because narrative, and the reading of narratives, appears to unfold primarily across time rather than across space. The second is that "space in narratives – especially pre-nineteenth century [narratives] – often seemed to have no other function than to supply a general background setting, something to be taken for granted rather than requiring attention" (551). This thesis challenges both of these misconceptions. The spaces of narratives are not merely settings within or against which plot and characters occur; instead, space is fundamental to both the 'inner world' of the text – the characters, objects, and events – as well as the 'outer world' of the reading experience itself.

The relative lack of spatial engagement in narratology is perhaps because the understanding of space as a container has only been questioned at the level of geographical theory within the last few decades. Geographers such as David Harvey (1973), Edward Soja (1989), and Doreen Massey (1994) "repositioned the understanding of space from given to produced, calling attention to its role in the construction and transformation of social life and its deeply power-laden nature" (Warf and Arias, 3). These theorists transformed how geographical scholarship understands space; it is no longer something 'given' or 'prior to' social relations. Instead, it occurs *with and through* various discourses that constitute our societies, from religion to economics to gender. As such, spaces have porous parameters and fluid definitions; spaces change as and when discourses change. Wesley Kort suggests

that “[s]patial language may be so difficult to tie down [in literary studies] because the primacy of absolute or abstract space [space as a container] seems consistent with common sense” (8). It is difficult for the average person to see how these recent geographical re-definitions of space manifest in the real world, Kort argues. Indeed, narratology continues to position “temporal language, that is, the language of actions and events, central to narrative discourse” (10), which makes the introduction of a spatial language to narrative all the more complicated.

There are some exceptions to narratology’s lack of engagement with spatial ideas, however. Joseph Frank’s essay “Spatial Form in Modern Literature” (1945) was one of the first to examine how modernist novels juxtapose simultaneous events to create a spatial rather than a temporal ‘form.’ Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1958) drew upon phenomenology to discuss how we respond to architecture both in literature and life. Mikhail Bakhtin’s “chronotope” (1981) and Maurice Blanchot’s *The Space of Literature* (1982) made time and space inseparable in the reading experience. And Carl Jung, predecessor of Sigmund Freud, developed his theory of the psyche after dreaming about a multi-storey house: an image that he was able to ‘read’ and understand like a text (Hauke, 103-104).

Recently, the use of spatial concepts and vocabularies to examine literature has moved in two different but related directions. The first addresses the construction and symbolism of spaces like rooms, streets, cities, and gardens (Shrayer 1997; Warhol 2014; Despotopoulou 2004; Rosner 2008). The second uses spatial concepts to describe the spaces that are created or collapsed in the reading experience (Friedman

1993; Caracciolo 2013; Hones 2011; Ryan 2014). Hones suggests that the slow uptake of geographical vocabularies into narratology is a disciplinary issue. Geography has developed increasingly fluid definitions of key terms, which can be seen in Jeff Malpas' criticism of Edward Casey for using "space" and "place" interchangeably despite Casey basing his argument upon their distinctiveness as terms (Malpas, n.4 on 20). By contrast, narratology's effectiveness depends upon the ever-increasing definitiveness of terms. Subsequently, narratologists may be either unwilling or unable to redefine their parameters to foster true interdisciplinarity (Hones, 686-88). Despite this, bringing geographical concepts into conversation with literature clearly opens up a number of questions regarding how texts construct the spaces and places that are crucial for the existence of characters and plots, as well as enabling greater understanding of how those spaces are experienced by readers.

## Feminist Geography

Geography tells us that our spaces are shaped by various discourses that influence one another; discourses that affect how individuals and groups experience certain spaces. As discussed in the Introduction, there is perhaps no group of people whose lives have been fundamentally shaped by space than women. However, few narratological studies that adopt geographical concepts address the role of gender in the construction and experience of literary spaces for characters and readers (Higonnet and Templeton 1994; Kreuger 2014). Indeed, discourses of the gendered body were central to the way men and women related to their spaces historically, to the point

where certain areas of geographical scholarship have begun to conceptualise spaces themselves in gendered ways. Feminist geography (McDowell 1999; Massey 1994; Rose 1993), which developed primarily in Britain and the United States in the early 1980s, explores the complex connections between gendered bodies and spaces; how individual and group identity shapes spatial interactions. However, feminist geographical concepts have rarely been applied to literary spaces or narrative theory. This chapter, therefore, answers Hones' call for narratologists to share "technical vocabularies and concepts" (686) with geography by drawing upon feminist geography in order to theorize the construction and experience of textual spaces through the gendered bodies of characters.

Feminist geographers draw attention to the impact that individual and group identity has on our relationships with spaces. The social privileging of some identities over others in the context of certain spaces determines how much influence and power those identities hold. Judith Butler's theory of performativity, for example, is useful for feminist geographers as "individuals, forming their biographies in time and *space* through the routines of everyday life, reproduce and transform their social worlds without meaning to do so" (Warf and Arias, 4; Butler 1990, my italics). By employing feminist theories such as Butler's and applying them to the ideas of canonical spatial theorists such as Henri Lefebvre ([1974] 1992), feminist geographers (Conlon 2004; Morton 2009) can draw attention to how geographical concepts such as Lefebvre's 'perceived,' 'conceived,' and 'lived' spaces are fundamentally shaped by one's social identity, and the identity of the spaces in which individuals 'perform.' Our identities and the identities of our spaces, both of which are subject to various fluid discourses



that define and value those identities, are therefore co-constituting and always changing.

This focus on social identity and space by feminist geographers led to an examination of how various discourses that define and value gendered bodies affects access to and production of knowledge about our spaces. Gillian Rose, for example, suggests that “geography holds a series of unstated assumptions about what men and women do” leading to a narrow concentration on “the spaces, places, and landscapes that it sees as men’s” (11). This argument stems from feminist geography’s utilization of Helene Cixous’s concept of binaries (1975). Linda McDowell and Doreen Massey similarly argue that these binaries, which historically positioned men and women as mutually exclusive, also structure how we conceptualize space/time, public/private, outside/inside, work/home, independence/dependence, and production/consumption (McDowell, 12; Massey, 7-9). Given that spaces are the materialisation of various intersecting discourses, spaces are therefore defined in relation to other spaces in a socially-prescribed hierarchy: “space is by its very nature full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination” (Massey, 265). Gendered binaries, as well as how and why societies value one side of the binary over the other, are thus of central concern to feminist geographers.

Recognizing how gendered binaries structure our experience of spaces has led some feminist geographers to reconsider how we come to know our spaces at all. As McDowell says, “[t]he significance of uncovering the ways in which commonplace assumptions about gender structure the very nature of thought, of knowledge itself, is

huge. It means that rethinking gender divisions requires nothing less than the reconstruction of Western knowledge itself” (McDowell, 13). To this extent, Gillian Rose was one of the first to explore the theoretical implications of deconstructing geography’s gendered binaries. She begins *Feminism and Geography* (1993) with the suggestion that “to think within the parameters of the discipline in order to create geographical knowledge acceptable to the discipline... is to occupy a masculine subject position. Geography is masculinist” (15). She borrows the term “masculinist” from Michele Le Doeuff, who defines it as “work which, while claiming to be exhaustive, forgets about women’s existence and concerns itself only with the position of men” (42). Historically, the masculine subject position was considered the universal subject position. The social privileging of this position is evident in traditional geography’s focus on public spaces, as well as in the objective, detached methodological apparatuses traditional geography employed to study these spaces. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that both canonical modernist texts and subsequent scholars of these texts focused so heavily on the ‘universal’ experiences of men in urban and city spaces.

The institutionalisation and normalisation of the masculine subject position, public space, and objectivity – and thus the dismissal of the feminine subject position, private space, and subjectivity – leads Rose to conclude that traditional geography (and epistemology) had forgotten women. In elaborating upon geography’s masculinist objectivity, Rose adopts Donna Haraway’s (1988) concept of the “master subject,” or “the subject constituted as white, bourgeois, heterosexual and masculine” (Rose, 18), whose position had been accepted as universal. This understanding of the subject

began with René Descartes' (1641) separation of mind from body, wherein 'knowledge' is pursued with a certain type of rationality that is "autonomous, context-free, and objective" (Rose, 20), untainted by the identity of the thinker. As Liz Bondi and Mona Domosh explain, geographers in particular continue to see themselves as "detached explorers," that "in order to be completely objective [and therefore universal], the subject or knower must be able to transcend his or her historical, social, and personal worlds, and to remain wholly detached from the object being studied" (203). This detachment requires a separation from the contextual, subjective, *gendered* body. The impact that historically masculine ideals of rationality, objectivity, empiricism, and impartiality has had on geography is even evident at the level of language, which is "transparent, characterless, neutral, evacuated of any particular author" (Rose, 23).

Women, as the binary opposite of men, are thus defined by everything man is not: "the bodily, the emotional, the passionate, the natural and the irrational" (Rose, 28). This understanding of gender relations explains the logic that had upheld the separate spheres binary for centuries. The home is the central location of natural bodily functions like sex, eating, cleaning, illness, and childbirth, while the public sphere is the location of the mind, of politics, culture, law, learning, and violence. The subsequent de-valuing of women's bodies and spaces as a result of binary thinking is what feminist geographers like Rose draw attention to. In response, Rose proposes a "paradoxical space" (263) that dissolves the Same/Other binaries traditional geography depends upon. This new space is constructed through a subject position that is no longer objective and context-free, but embodied, multi-layered, intuitive,

and contradictory (265-7). “This space,” she says, “is multidimensional, shifting and contingent,” combining various discursive spaces (masculine and feminine, centre and margin, public and private) into a simultaneous spatial experience (268).

This thesis argues that such an understanding of space re-conceptualised through the ‘feminine’ subject position can be used to re-read texts that utilize the techniques of embodiment established in the Introduction. Adapting Rose’s framework, the techniques of embodiment used in domestic modernist texts can be understood as validating the interior, subjective, bodily, contingent positionality of the ‘feminine’ experience of space. By putting the gendered body at the centre of geographical knowledge, feminist geography and domestic modernism’s techniques of embodiment in combination offer what this thesis argues is a feminist narratology of space. The precedent of a feminist narratology set by modernist scholars (Briganti and Mezei 2006; Mezei 2000; Warhol 1992; Friedman 2000), in combination with feminist geography’s demonstration of the epistemological potential of this feminine standpoint/subject position in reconstructing our spaces (Rose 1993; McDowell 1999), provides a useful interdisciplinary framework for understanding how texts construct and readers experience literary spaces. Specifically, techniques of embodiment – stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse, and shifting focalisation – allows readers to experience space from a non-masculine subject position. In domestic modernist texts such as those by Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, Mona Caird, and George Egerton, which position women’s bodies as central to the experience of reality, ‘feminine’ spaces such as the home become more than a mere ‘container’ or background setting within or against which the lives of

characters unfold. Instead, as contemporary geographers state, this space becomes multi-layered, contingent, and shifting in its meaning and value for different individuals, just like identity. Positioned as we are within these bodies and spaces, readers are invited to reflect upon the role of their own gendered body in their spatial lives, as well as how the identities of others fundamentally affects their experience of their worlds.

The positioning of the 'feminine' body at the centre of spatial experience thus also means the positioning of the feminine body's processes, especially those that have been neglected by masculinist geography and epistemology. Therefore, the rest of this thesis will focus on two embodied processes that fundamentally shape both our identities and experiences of spaces: the emotions and the imagination. These two processes offer a feminist "reverse-discourse" (Ledger, 21) to the masculine subject position that Rose argues privileges objectivity and reason. By anchoring the production of knowledge about our everyday spaces in the feminine body and its feminine processes, as many domestic modernists did, the space of the home, in particular, transforms. Instead of a static, unchanging narrative setting that parallels the static, unchanging stereotype of the home as oppressive and disempowering for women, the home when understood as a discourse constructed through the feminine body becomes "open and porous"; its own identity "always unfixed, contested and multiple" (Massey, 5). This new understanding of literary space as constructed through the gendered body not only enables readers to better understand how they experience the various worlds constructed in texts, but also draws attention to the status of their own gendered body in both the reading experience and in their

relationships with non-textual spaces. Indeed, by destabilising the systems that value some bodies, processes, and spaces over others, literature teaches readers to question the same systems in the wider world.

## Chapter 2

### The Emotions

For many feminist scholars within geography and epistemology, the emotions have been historically positioned as the antithesis to reason. As Alison Jaggar says, “[n]ot only has reason been contrasted with emotion, but it has also been associated with the mental, the cultural, the universal, the public and the male, whereas emotion has been associated with the irrational, the physical, the natural, the particular, the private, and, of course, the female” (151). Jaggar defines emotion as an often-indistinguishable combination of physical and psychological responses to our environments, which are rooted in our morals and values. Our values, Jaggar argues, are revealed through how we emotionally respond to some things and not others. The emotions, therefore, are politically and ethically significant processes, and can be more highly valued for what they reveal about ourselves and our worlds than traditional processes of objectivity or reason. Importantly, our emotional reactions to the world and the knowledge we produce about that world are co-constituting (160). She says, “we absorb the standards and values of our society in the very process of learning the language of emotion, and those standards and values are built into the foundation of our emotional constitution” (165). The space created between the emotions we do experience and the emotions society expects us to experience are one way of determining our place in the world; a way that has been traditionally neglected by geography and epistemology because of emotion’s association with the feminine.

While there is an emerging body of geographical work assessing the role of emotion in our experience of space (Davidson 2007; Thien 2005; Bondi and Mehta 1999), there remains a gendered divide that separates 'masculine' from 'feminine' conceptualisations of emotion. Tolia-Kelly notes that the two terms "emotion" and "affect" – the former preferred by feminists – have been "simultaneously conjoined and separate because of their subject matter, language, their political vision and genealogies" (213). Similarly, Joanne Sharp reads these two terms as exhibiting still-prevalent gender binaries, as researchers continue to 'masculinise,' and thus 'legitimise,' concepts derived from feminist theory (76-7). Although emotions are central to experience, Anderson and Smith acknowledge that "[t]he gendered basis of knowledge production is probably a key reason why the emotions have been banished from social science and most other critical commentary for so long" (7).

The definition of emotion established by Jaggar, as well as its aforementioned relationship to gender politics, can be applied to literature. Martha Nussbaum (1995), for example, argues that our experience of reading fiction – engaging with texts emotionally and imaginatively, before approaching them critically – can teach us how to empathise across difference. Fiction writers in particular use various literary techniques that invite "identification and sympathy in the reader" by demonstrating "the effect of circumstances on the emotions and the inner world" of characters (5). Texts can transport readers into the minds, bodies, and spaces of characters, whose love, fear, pain, and joy we share because they are heightened by our own emotional histories. In other words, the emotions enable readers to form connections of



similarity across whatever discourses of difference that conventionally keep individuals apart. Indeed, “[e]motions are not just likely responses to the content of many literary works; they are built into their very structure, as ways in which literary forms solicit attention” (53). The very act of reading, then, is a spatial one: it depends upon a difference of position between reader and character, but enables an overcoming of those differences of position through literary techniques that align readers with characters in a variety of ways. Empathy, therefore, as an emotional response, can be understood as a *sharing of positions*; of recognising that difference is solidified by socio-spatial circumstances often beyond our control. Nussbaum implies that what we share – namely, the capacity to empathise by forming emotional and imaginative connections – is far more powerful and meaningful than what separates us. By positioning readers to share the emotional and imaginative spaces of characters, literature can illuminate the importance of the ‘feminine’ body and its processes in how we construct and experience the spaces of our lives, as well as the lives of others.

While many of Katherine Mansfield’s stories engage with Alison Jaggar’s definition of emotion to various degrees, the potency of emotion in its ability to shape our perceptions and knowledge of reality is most apparent in her short story “Bliss” (1918). McDonnell (2010) notes that this story was marketed in the *Athenaeum* as “more appropriate to women writers such as Rose Macaulay and Sheila Kaye-Smith”; writers who Mansfield disliked because she thought they compromised artistic success over popularity with a female audience (134). It is perhaps clear to see why the plot of “Bliss” can be dismissed as stereotypically ‘feminine’ in this way: Bertha, an upper-

class woman, hosts a dinner party with her interesting socialite friends. She muses upon her husband, Harry, her child, Little B, and her lavish home and lifestyle. As the party winds down, Bertha realises that Harry is having an affair with her mysterious new friend, Pearl. The story is left open-ended, as Bertha (and the reader) wonder what happens next. As has been regularly noted (Davison, 41-8; McDonnell, 123), Mansfield took inspiration from Russian short fiction writer Anton Chekhov: rather than a 'plot' or 'events' that unfold temporally across the narrative, Mansfield adopted Chekhov's desire to create a mood beneath the surface of writing, wherein "meaning seems to amplify outward from the curtailed centre" (Hunter, 71). This spatial conceptualisation of meaning in narrative that 'amplif[ies] outward' instead of unfolding causally across time is evident in how Mansfield positions both Bertha and the reader to see and not see simultaneously. Through focalisation, the reader is embedded in Bertha's bodily space just as Bertha is embedded in the space of her home, and this embeddedness – this positionality – affects the overall meaning that both the reader and Bertha construct in and from the narrative.

Bertha's constantly shifting emotional state affects how she experiences and understands her reality. From the opening sentence, she is depicted as child-like and immature in her emotional constitution: "Although Bertha Young was thirty she still had moments like this" (69). While the story opens in third-person, Mansfield's use of shifting focalisation seamlessly inserts the reader into Bertha's mind and body, which can be seen in the transition from third- to the second-person "you." This second-person positioning creates an intimacy between Bertha and the reader, wherein we are invited to share an acknowledgement of the uncontrollability of emotions by

drawing upon our own emotional histories. In other words, we are invited to empathise: “What can *you* do if... turning the corner of *your* own street, *you* are overcome, suddenly, by a feeling of bliss” (69, my italics). However, this intimate connection with the reader is almost immediately qualified by Bertha reminding us of her gender, and that her ability to express her emotions – rather than to simply feel them – is dictated by her context. She references the “hysterical woman” stereotype when she asks, “is there no way you can express it without being ‘drunk and disorderly’?” (69) The use of quotation marks emphasises the discursive status of “drunk and disorderly,” and its connections with “hysteria,” as phrases transplanted from wider cultural commentary, indicating Bertha’s awareness of herself as a gendered body and how society ‘reads’ her. It also points to the spaces in which women’s self-expressions are normalised. The phrase echoes the formal wording of a police report, implying that the public space where one is arrested for being ‘drunk and disorderly’ is one in which it is unsuitable for women to be emotionally expressive.

The only way Bertha can express her emotional energy is through domesticated artistic creation. This first occurs when she composes a bowl of fruit on a table, which “in her present mood, was so incredibly beautiful... She began to laugh. ‘No, no, I’m getting hysterical’” (70). Rather than seeing a simple bowl of fruit on a table, Bertha’s emotional constitution shapes the very nature of the space and its objects, which subsequently affects how the reader imagines them: “the dark table seemed to melt into the dusky light and the glass dish and the blue bowl to float in the air” (70). Mansfield uses this image in reference to famous ‘still life’ paintings of fruit by artists throughout history, suggesting that artistic creation requires an inner emotional

vibrancy to find beauty and meaning in everyday domestic life. Positioned in her mind, the reader, too, is able to make this historical connection. Bertha has the same mind that many (male) artists had the opportunity to express in paintings, but is never presented with the same opportunities of expression, just like Judith Shakespeare in Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" (592-595).

Bertha's inability to express her emotions also occurs in her relationships with others, such as her young child: "she loved Little B so much... that all her feeling of bliss came back again, and again she didn't know how to express it – what to do with it" (71). This moment draws attention to Bertha's lack of an emotional vocabulary. She experiences what Jaggar calls "outlaw emotions," or emotions that are conventionally unacceptable, and is thus unable to "name [her] experience" (166). While Bertha is stereotypical in her external or spatial identity, the reader sees her private and intensely emotional individual reality; she is not the passive, peaceful 'Angel of the House' but rather an energetic, desiring, and unpredictable emotional being. By aligning the reader with Bertha in this way, Mansfield offers readers a chance to validate and find meaning in Bertha's subjective experiences of herself and her domestic world, as well as acknowledging the role of the emotions in constructing and experiencing our everyday spaces.

Some scholars read Bertha's emotional bliss as lesbian desire towards Pearl Fulton (Dunbar, 104; Kaplan 1991, 58). Bertha, however, is once again never able to articulate precisely the nature of her interest in Pearl. Indeed, all she knows is that she *feels something* towards her ("Bliss," 72). Harry's dismissal of Pearl is ignored by Bertha due

to her own 'gut feeling' about the woman, which is made explicit when she thinks, "she never doubted for a moment that she was right, and yet what had she to go on? Less than nothing" (76). This lack of 'evidence,' and thus perhaps of 'rationality,' does not deter or confuse Bertha; on the contrary, she trusts and finds value in what her emotions tell her. Bertha's thoughts about Harry are evident in her plain, conventional descriptions of him – "Harry had such a zest for life.... for seeking in everything that came up against him another test of his power and of his courage" (75) – in contrast to Pearl, who is presented by Bertha in poetic and sensory terms: "Her heavy eyelids lay upon her eyes and the strange half-smile came and went upon her lips as though she lived by listening rather than seeing" (75). This contrast in descriptions suggests, as Jaggar implies, that Bertha finds meaning and value in her embodied emotional reactions over and above what she 'ought' to feel for others in the context of the conventional heteronormative home. Alex Moffett notes that, when describing her feelings for Pearl, Bertha uses images of fire: heat, sparks, light (64-5). The intensity of these emotions reaches a point where they are "indistinguishable from real existence" (64); indeed, just as the reader 'sees' and 'feels' Bertha's world through sensory descriptions, these emotions constitute her existence. Pearl's 'coolness' is regularly juxtaposed with Bertha's warmth, both in their first names and their bodies. Upon physically touching each other, these two thermal states collide. Rather than extinguish the flame, however, this bodily interaction heightens Bertha's bliss: "What was there in the touch of that cool arm that could fan – fan – start blazing – blazing the fire of bliss that Bertha did not know what to do with?" ("Bliss," 75) Bertha's consciousness of reality is transformed by these embodied emotions, collapsing her inner and outer worlds into a single "paradoxical space" (Rose, 263): "did Miss Fulton

murmur: 'Yes, just *that*.' Or did Bertha dream it?" (77) Pearl effectively replaces Harry as Bertha's object of desire; a desire she is unable to express due to her socio-spatial position in the heteronormative family home. Neither space nor language offers Bertha an outlet for her "outlaw emotions."

Moffett suggests that Bertha's belief in her deep connection with Pearl, which is undermined upon Bertha's discovery of Harry's infidelity, is therefore 'false.' Indeed, Moffett implies that Bertha's emotions are fundamentally distortive and misleading, inhibiting any possibility she has to 'know' reality (Moffett, 67). However, Bertha's emotional state is crucial for her coming to realisations about herself and her domestic life. Positioned as the reader has been in Bertha's mind, we have vicariously experienced the growing intensity of her emotions. Bertha's discovery of Harry's infidelity, in an extreme departure from the 'mood' of the story thus far, is narrated with a noticeable lack of emotion altogether. All that Bertha (and the reader) sees at the climax of the story is Harry and Pearl in the hallway, "Harry with Miss Fulton's coat in his arms and Miss Fulton with her back turned to him and her head bent" ("Bliss," 79). Their body language is objectively, unemotionally observed; she does not think or feel anything in this moment of realisation, as the plain descriptive prose indicates. It is precisely through the *lack* of emotional reaction to this expected emotional climax that both Bertha and the reader come to understand the façade of her happy domestic life. She does not feel anything in this moment because she never did. Her and Harry are, simply, "good pals" (75), keeping up appearances. While her emotional entanglement with Pearl – her embodied and embedded positionality – did blind her

to Harry's infidelity, it also allowed her, in Jaggar's terms, to recognise what she does and does not value.

Contrary to Moffett, Mansfield validates Bertha's emotional constitution, presenting it as a facilitator of knowledge. Her heterosexual married life, like the lives of her caricatured socialite friends, is a performance on the stage of the domestic space. The discourse of the domestic that Mansfield brings to bear on Bertha – that she ought to think, feel, and act towards her home and family in a particular way – is entirely undercut by Mansfield's portrayal of Bertha's intense, non-heterosexual emotions, which ultimately reveal her happy home and family life to be a façade. The home, then, is not simply a setting for the unravelling of plot and character. In "Bliss," it is a discourse that is identified and critiqued for the limitations it places on women, as well as the site at which these significant realisations occur. The reader's alignment with Bertha as she explores and recognises these aspects of herself, her life, and her spaces allow us to acknowledge the complexity and insidiousness of discourses of the domestic space that both constrict and enable knowledge simultaneously. The home, for Bertha, is both a space of oppression and of liberation; indeed, the oppressive discourse of the heteronormative family home is *necessary* for Bertha to realize its meaninglessness, and thus to arrive at significant knowledge about herself and her world.

The same theme of the emotions both distorting and revealing realities is also explored in Mansfield's story "Psychology" (1920). The reader is primarily aligned with the woman narrator through focalisation as she receives a male guest in her home,

remarking that “the best of it was they were both of them old enough to enjoy their adventure to the full without any stupid emotional complication. Passion would have ruined everything; they quite saw that” (86). Like Bertha, the woman perceives the emotions as immature. However, unlike “Bliss,” Mansfield uses free indirect discourse to show the reader that both individuals are intensely emotional; “[h]is heart beat; her cheek burned” when they are together (88). Like Bertha, this couple’s relationship is prescribed by the domestic space: they are unable to express their “outlaw emotions” for one another. Noticeably, the breaking of social expectation in the expression of intense emotion would have greater negative consequences for the woman than the man: “She was the one who would be destroyed – not they – and they’d be no party to that” (88). Whereas Bertha’s emotional connection to Pearl is one-sided, Mansfield’s use of the third-person “they” in “Psychology” connects the two individuals as if they share the same thoughts and feelings, which, as Mansfield’s free indirect discourse shows us, they do. Despite their own (and the reader’s) desire for this relationship to blossom, as romances so often do, socio-spatial convention comes to define their very identities and modes of expression, as “[t]hey saw themselves as two little grinning puppets jigging away in nothingness” (89). Indeed, the dramatic irony of the story is brought about by Mansfield’s contrasting of dialogue with thoughts and emotions, the silences often ‘saying’ more than words:

[The silence] was anguish – anguish for her to bear it and he would die – he’d die if it were broken... And yet he longed to break it. Not by speech. At any rate not by their ordinary maddening chatter. There was another way for them to speak to each other, and in the new way he wanted to murmur: ‘Do you feel



this too? Do you understand it at all?' ... Instead, to his horror, he heard himself say: 'I must be off; I'm meeting Brand at six.' (89)

This "new way" the man wants to create is the language of emotion. By placing these thoughts and desires in the mind of her male character, who the reader is positioned to empathise with through shifting focalisation, Mansfield suggests that the experience and desire for expression of 'outlaw emotions' is not exclusively gendered. Rather, emotion is a human experience; a truly universal way of reaching across voids of difference. This reaching across difference is also, importantly, how we read the story. We are positioned by Mansfield to empathise with the internal struggles of these two characters who want nothing but to form connections across the discourses that keep them apart. Our own personal experiences of love – missed opportunities, regrets, miscommunication, fear, loneliness – inform how we understand and empathise with the two characters; we effectively share their positions by engaging with our own emotions and imaginations, collapsing the spaces conventionally created by discourses of difference through reading.

Standing at the threshold of the front door, the tension between the personal and the social discourses of desire come into conflict: "Could they leave each other like this? How could they? He stood on the step and she just inside holding the door.... 'You've hurt me – hurt me,' said her heart. 'Why don't you go? No, don't go. Stay. No – go!'" (89) Upon the man's departure, the woman rushes back into her home and releases her built-up emotions, "[flinging] herself down on the sommier thinking of nothing – just lying there in her rage" (90). Time distorts as she contemplates what has occurred

– “[a]fter a long long time (or perhaps ten minutes) had passed in that black gulf” (90)

– but is interrupted by the ringing of the doorbell. This collision of inside and outside, public and private – this “paradoxical space” (Rose, 263) – parallels the dynamic of Jaggar’s “outlaw emotions,” where emotional expectation and emotional reality intertwine. The woman experiences emotions that she recognises are unexpected and unconventional in the discursive space of the home, when she says “of course, she oughtn’t to have paid the slightest attention to it but just let it go on ringing and ringing.” Despite this, her personal, emotional life overpowers convention, as “[s]he flew to answer” (90). The home is not one simple ‘container’ space or background setting in this story; various discourses of gender and space affect the identities and relationships that exist within it. The home is a site of both tension and release, re-defined as and when various internal and external discourses come to bear on its meaning and function.

As a way of recognising this changing space, Mansfield uses the emotions as an avenue for characters and readers to access and explore themselves and their worlds in a variety of ways, with a variety of effects. The emotions are as porous, changing, and influential as the domestic space in how we understand ourselves and others. By being positioned to experience these emotions vicariously, Mansfield allows readers to understand the role the emotions play in our own lives and spaces, as well as the variety of ways spaces can change depending on who does or does not occupy them. Just like these characters, the sharing of emotions across difference offers a subversive critique of dominant discourses of bodies and spaces. As Jaggar suggests, “[w]hen certain emotions are shared or validated by others... the basis exists for forming a

subculture defined by perceptions, norms, and values that systematically oppose the prevailing perceptions, norms, and values” (166). By using the emotions as the primary avenue for characters to come to realisations about themselves and their spaces, Mansfield offers a reverse-discourse (Ledger, 21) that values the ‘feminine’ modes of knowledge production traditionally neglected by patriarchal and masculinist discourses such as traditional geography.

## Chapter 3

### The Imagination

The imagination, which includes dreams, nightmares, visions, and memories, has been neglected by traditional geography in a similar way that the emotions have been.

Indeed, canonical spatial theorists like Henri Lefebvre ([1974] 1992) take for granted the idea that we can ‘perceive’ our spaces clearly and without interruption, as if our senses were transparent lenses that allow us to experience reality ‘as it is.’

Psychoanalysis, however, suggests that our imaginations are inseparable from our experience of the world. Sigmund Freud, for example, saw dreams as “distortive derivatives of a latent reality. These images are not what they seem to be or seem to mean” (Adams, 9). If this is so, the purpose of psychoanalysis is to “expose the distortion... and provide a rectification of the fantasy in strict accordance with reality” (Adams, 9). On the other hand, for Freud’s predecessor Carl Jung, “the images in a dream – or in active imagination – are exactly what they seem to be or seem to mean” (Adams, 9). The images our imaginations present to us are necessarily symbolic and can be ‘read’ or interpreted like a text. Its images are not deceptive due to their nature as images; rather, our own interpretive limitations are revealed by our inability to understand what the images ‘mean.’ For Jung, then, the imagination is a text, consisting of metaphors and symbols, which are always open to meaningful and differing interpretations (11). Applying this understanding of the imagination to literature means the images characters produce in their minds, which the reader is positioned by the text to witness, are not necessarily distortions of reality but

significant and relevant images to be analysed by the reader, who does the job of the psychoanalyst. Interpreting these images can reveal aspects of characters either to themselves, to others, or to readers. In a similar way to the emotions, readers become better attuned to the role of their own imaginations – their own dreams and visions, nightmares and memories – in how we construct and experience our spaces, both during the reading experience and beyond it.

The emotions and the imagination do not conform to traditional masculinist geographies or epistemologies, in that they are not objective, rational, or verifiable. However, this thesis argues that this masculinist mode is not the only way to know or value our worlds. As Donna Wilshire suggests, “both the literal and the metaphoric are true and have value for knowledge. Both, not either/or” (102). Adams’ understanding of the imagination and Jaggar’s theory of emotion are similar in that “what is ultimately important is not the literal, objective event but the subjective metaphorical experience of that event” (Adams 11). Both ‘feminine’ processes have the potential to reveal to us what we love, fear, value, and believe. The dismissal of these alternative ways of being and knowing has fundamentally shaped the ways in which we understand and relate to our bodies and spaces, both on a literary and epistemological level.

Mansfield’s “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” (1922) is a powerful example of how dreams and memories shape our experiences of ourselves and our spaces, as well as how the imagination is an escape or coping mechanism that reveals significant connections between real and imagined spaces. As the title suggests, the story focuses

on the two daughters of a recently deceased colonel, and the reader comes to recognise the various ways in which both his authoritative occupation and his status as a patriarch has affected the lives and spaces of his daughters. The story opens with Constantina and Josephine deciding what to do with their father's belongings. The reader begins to sense the all-consuming power of the former patriarch when the narrator says, "[e]ven when they went to bed it was only their bodies that lay down and rested; their minds went on, thinking things out, talking things over, wondering, deciding, trying to remember where..." (211). In this most private space – the bedroom – the colonel still controls their lives. They even suggest they dye their dressing-gowns black in mourning; clothing items which are only ever seen by themselves and each other in the home. It is clear that the domestic space is a site of oppression for both women physically and psychologically, even in the absence of the patriarch. The story, then, follows their attempt to re-construct their individual identities separated from their markers as "the daughters of the late colonel," which they do by reclaiming the feminine space of the home for themselves.

Although the colonel is absent from their material lives and spaces, he is still powerfully present in the imaginations of the daughters. For example, Constantina suggests they give their father's top-hat to the porter, and Josephine cries almost instinctively, "[b]ut... father's head!" (211), as though he were present in the room, listening to their plans. Through free indirect discourse and shifting focalisation, the reader is then positioned in Josephine's imagination where we see the colonel's head spontaneously disappear under the hat while the head of the porter "pop[s] out, like a candle" (211). This absurd image forces Josephine to stifle laughter as she "frowned

fiercely at the dark and said 'Remember' terribly sternly" (211). Rose's "paradoxical space" (263) is evident here as reality and imagination coexist in the same moment, and the reader comes to recognise through this internal/external dynamic that Josephine's creative imagination has been stifled by daughterly duty. This use of the imagination to escape anxiety, fear, or tediousness is continued throughout the story. Infuriated by Nurse Andrews' lack of etiquette, for example, Josephine "fastened her small, bead-like eyes on the tablecloth as if she saw a minute strange insect creeping through the web of it" (213). At the same moment, Constantina's "long, pale face lengthened and set, and she gazed away – away – far over the desert, to where that line of camels unwound like a thread of wool..." (213). The seamless transition from reality to imagination brought about by Mansfield's free indirect discourse implies the regularity and familiarity of these imaginary, spatial escapes for the daughters. In a Jungian sense, the images of Josephine's insect in a web and Constantina's train of camels, as well as their domestication in references to the tablecloth and the thread of wool, symbolise their unconscious beliefs about their lives: trapped, ineffective, displaced, and desiring freedom. In one sense, the domestic space for these women parallels what Brown and Gupta identify as the rigid, logical, masculinist 12-part "clock-time" structure of the story (107). This static, controlling structure of home/clock is juxtaposed with the vague, ephemeral dreams, memories, and imaginings of escape to the outdoors that the daughters regularly experience. It is as if they are stuck both 'inside' and 'outside' as a result of the incompatibility of rigid masculine and fluid feminine discourses, within a "paradoxical space" (Rose, 263).

Free indirect discourse and shifting focalisation also allows Mansfield a glimpse into the mind of Kate, the housemaid, who sees herself as “the enchanted princess” working for two “old tabbies” (214). Echoing the Cinderella folk-tale, Kate is trapped by unfortunate circumstances, perhaps waiting to be ‘rescued.’ Mansfield’s focalisation of Kate, Josephine, and Constantina highlights the social hierarchy of the home while simultaneously demonstrating that the imagination is a shared experience of liberation from these structures for many women. As Angela Smith suggests, the imaginations of these characters also overpowers or minimizes the traditional clock-time narrative structure that surrounds them, questioning the very nature of traditional narratives to organize and communicate women’s experiences (1999, 196). Positioned to empathise with these women, and to recognize the value of our own imaginations in how we cope with our own circumstances, the reader is thus also led to question how dominant narratives use inclusion and exclusion to shape how we value or de-value some bodies and spaces over others in both literature and the wider world. Indeed, the ‘space’ created by Mansfield’s narrative is complicated in sections 7-10, which, in hindsight, the reader recognizes as being structured entirely by memories; the temporal direction of the narrative is reversed, sliding back into the past as the story moves forward. This disruption of the conventional narrative structure is triggered by Constantina’s contemplation of a watch, and Wim Tigges understands this sequence overall as the opposition of “the alienating fixity of the intellect and the fluidity of the intuition” (226); two embodied, gendered processes and narrative modes struggling for dominance.



“The Daughters of the Late Colonel” also explores the idea of absence, and how power lingers when the epicentre of power has disappeared. For example, “Josephine had a moment of absolute terror at the cemetery, while the coffin was lowered, to think that she and Constantina had done this thing without asking [father’s] permission” (216). The terror of acting against the colonel’s wishes prompts a nightmarish vision, where “[s]he heard his stick thumping” from inside his grave. The father is felt and imagined as controlling and authoritative even beyond death. In this way, the colonel is a symbol of patriarchy: as an ideology, the patriarchy does not die with individuals or groups, but lingers in the imaginations, discourses, and structures it has influenced. When they enter the colonel’s bedroom for the first time, their experience of the space is similarly shaped by his absent presence. The space and its objects are full of memories, which fundamentally changes how the daughters experience them: “how could she explain to Constantina that father was in the chest of drawers? He was in the top drawer with his handkerchiefs and neckties, or in the next with his shirts and pyjamas, or in the lowest of all with his suits. He was watching there, hidden away – just behind the door-handle – ready to spring” (218). Josephine doesn’t just *feel* him there; he *is* there, as real as the drawers they see and touch. The space itself transforms due to Josephine’s memories. In the first moment of defiance and autonomy the reader has seen, Constantina locks the wardrobe and removes the key, “showing Josephine by her extraordinary smile that she knew what she’d done – she’d risked deliberately father being in there among his overcoats” (219). Josephine is convinced that the wardrobe will rock forward and fall onto Constantina in retaliation, but Constantina’s act of anti-patriarchal power disrupts Josephine’s imaginings

entirely: “nothing happened. Only the room seemed quieter than ever” (219). By reclaiming the space, Constantina reclaims her and her sister’s identities.

The final section is cathartic for both the daughters and the reader, as they realise the colonel is ‘gone.’ A barrel-organ begins playing in the street below and, out of instinct, the daughters rush about the room finding coins to pay the organ-player to stop or move along. But “[t]hen they remembered. It didn’t matter. They would never have to stop the organ-grinder again... The organ-grinder might play there all day and the stick would not thump” (226). The freedom felt by the daughters is also felt by the reader as Mansfield introduces various types of sensory elements into the narrative, such as the organ and some nearby birds: “It never will thump again, It never will thump again, played the barrel-organ” (226). The rhythm and musicality of the repeated lines coupled with what memories individual readers may have of organ-music and birdsong invigorates this literary space in our own imaginations; it is no longer dark, silent, and oppressive, but rather open, light, and joyous, full of sound and movement. The space of the home begins to change: the Buddha statue “smiles” at Constantina, and the sunlight has a new, physical presence as it “presse[s] through the windows” (227). The reader also gets a first glimpse of their mother, whose warmth is indicated by the sunlight “linger[ing]” over her photograph, earrings, and feather boa (227). Contemplating her mother, the birdsong outside is imagined by Josephine to be coming from within her, “a queer little crying noise... so weak and forlorn” (227). The juxtaposition of the happy external organ music with the sad internal birdsong reflects the increasingly “paradoxical space” (Rose, 263) of the home for the daughters; it is

both “tomblake” (Dunbar, 154) in its historical oppressiveness, while also being a site of connection, realisation, and liberation.

Constantina remembers her childhood laying on the floor of the house in the light of the moon, and remembers journeys to the ocean: symbols of empowerment, continuity, rebirth. Her memory becomes a tunnel, and these feminine images of moon and water are where she emerges, where “she really felt herself” (228). While she does not understand these images – “What did it mean? What was it she was always wanting? What did it all lead to? Now? Now?” (228) – that she is able to recognise that they *ought* to mean something is none the less important. As Jung suggests, her inability to understand the images of her imagination is not a personal failure; her world has not provided her with the language for her inner life. So stifled has her consciousness been in the patriarchal home, she has had few moments to know herself, or put that ‘self’ into words. However, the reader can interpret and understand these images her imagination presents to her conscious mind and to our own, and acknowledge that her path towards liberation is beginning. Importantly, Constantina realises this; she realises she has arrived at something significant about herself, but that realisation slips away, inexpressible in conventional language.

Kubasiewicz argues the daughters lead an “inauthentic existence” (59-61) because of this inability to express their inner worlds appropriately, suggesting their lives are devoid of subjectivity. However, as Susan Reid suggests, their failure to communicate their realisations is “not an indication that ‘they lack the will to escape,’ but that they lack the means to do so; the discourse in which to make themselves known” (157).

While the daughters may forget the significance of these imagined images, the reader,

significantly, does not. It is precisely through the limits of narrative and language that readers come to appreciate how conventional discourses are ill-equipped to account for various alternative modes of expression. Although there is no 'fairytale ending,' which some scholars find pessimistic (Dunbar, 154-5; Brown and Gupta, 109), both the daughters and the reader recognise the desire we all have to reach across the voids created by discourses that solidify binary thinking and difference and to move beyond them; a desire Mansfield leaves open to being fulfilled in the future. The "death of the father" both literally and symbolically transforms this conventionally oppressive feminine space into one full of hope and potential for subjectivity.

The power of the imagination to shape one's experience of bodies and spaces has yet to be explored at length in "Life of Ma Parker" (1921). Indeed, as Susan Lohafer points out, this story is "rarely anthologized and hardly ever taught" (476), despite being rich in its demonstration of modernist techniques. The opening line introduces us to Ma Parker's current circumstances: she cleans the apartment of a "literary gentleman." He asks after her grandson, and it is only when Ma Parker dutifully and respectfully shuts the door after entering the home does she reveal that she buried her grandson a day earlier. The seemingly-genuine reaction of the gentleman is undercut by his later objectification of Ma Parker, describing her entire social class as "these people" (244), and his social status is heightened by his use of 'proper' language, in contrast to Ma Parker's "'Beg parding, sir?'" (244) The reader thus constructs an image of Ma Parker as she speaks and moves in and through the home: she "hobbles," carries "an old fish bag", and rubs her knees: "[t]o take off her boots or to put them on was an agony to her, but it had been an agony for years" (244). The reader constructs both Ma Parker's

identity and her spatial world through their simultaneous interactions; it is only *after* she is indoors, in the space of the home, that she feels it is suitable to express private information, suggesting she understands the conventions surrounding public and private worlds.

Ma Parker's memories and her domestic spaces are co-constitutive. Her first memory, brought about by her sore knees, is indicated by ellipses that transition from 'reality' to 'imagination,' where we see Ma Parker's grandson sitting on her knees. The distance between the present and the past – the space in between them – is collapsed through this almost seamless transition between timeframes, which the reader is positioned to simultaneously experience both in the world of the text and in the reading experience itself. The shared colloquial language between Ma Parker and her grandson, in contrast with the conversation between her and the gentleman previously, indicates their physical and emotional intimacy; their shared positions in society. However, as the ellipses appear again, Ma Parker is shocked back into reality by the sound of the iron kettle: her domestic duties (245). The space between Ma Parker and the reader is similarly collapsed when Mansfield shifts from third- to second-person, and describes how domesticity shapes Ma Parker's very consciousness of reality: "you could see an immense expanse of sad-looking sky, and whenever there were clouds they looked very worn, old clouds, frayed at the edges, with holes in them, or dark stains like tea" (245). While sweeping, Ma Parker's memories are triggered again, beginning with her childhood and moving through to her adult life. The reader has full access to these intensely private, emotional memories, and we are able to see what Ma Parker values in what she chooses to remember: her mother's

house is constructed through the smell of bacon and bushes, while her first employer's house is described as "a dreadful place," with no sensory, 'embodied' memories at all (246). Like Josephine and Constantina, the objects and activities of the domestic space regularly prompt Ma Parker to contemplate her past and current life and come to realisations about herself and her world. These same objects and activities also pull Ma Parker away from these contemplations, preventing her from further discoveries. The meaning and function of domesticity is therefore unclear, and even paradoxical: for some it is an avenue of exploration, for others it is preventative of alternative possibilities, and sometimes it is both for the same individual simultaneously.

A variety of domestic spaces are constructed in the story through Ma Parker's consciousness and memories, all of which have different meanings and 'feelings' that the reader is able to discern through our emotional and imaginative alignment with her. Our ability to imagine these different spaces, which we compare to and construct with our own spatial lives and histories, intensifies this empathetic connection we form with Ma Parker. We recognise the role spatial circumstances play in dictating the course of one's life, while also becoming aware that we have a choice over how and why we value some spaces over others. Ma Parker's lack of complex language, demonstrated in her pronunciations of "kitching-maid," "arsking," and "chimley," suggests it is necessary for the reader to have access to her imagination in order to understand and empathise. We come to appreciate Ma Parker based on the images her mind chooses to hold on to; images that we trust over and above any translation of those images into her own language, which is simple and colloquial. As with the function of time in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," Ma Parker's 'intuitive'

imagination overpowers the temporal narrative of the traditional story; she (and the reader) often emerge from her memories to discover her tasks have been completed while she was absorbed in the process of remembering (247). There are, in other words, multiple, contradictory, simultaneous timeframes and spaces that occur throughout the story, with the movement between and through them triggered by various domesticated objects, feelings, or words. The literary gentleman's general dismissal of Ma Parker's life and individuality is reversed by Mansfield, who places him on the periphery of this modernist short story, challenging the very notion of what qualifies as art at the turn of the twentieth century. Mansfield draws attention not just to the 'what' of art, but also, significantly, to the 'who' and the 'where.'

Like Bertha, the home is both a site of oppression and a site of exploration. This space gives Ma Parker the opportunity to acknowledge and criticise the circumstances of her life while simultaneously reinforcing those circumstances. Making the gentleman's bed, for example, she remembers her grandson's failing health as he was confined to his own bed: "[d]readfully offended with her he looked – and solemn", as if she were responsible (248). Overwhelmed by emotions, Ma Parker pulls herself out of this memory, and acknowledges her own frailty: "She'd borne it up till now, she'd kept herself to herself, and never once had she been seen to cry.... But now! Lennie gone – what had she? She had nothing" (248). She abandons her duties and "walked out of the flat like a person in a dream.... She was like a person so dazed by the horror of what has happened that he walks away" (249). The use of the male pronoun here arguably alludes both to the literary gentleman who, earlier in the story, left the house to go 'walking,' and also to the freedom of spatial movement reserved for particular

social groups, epitomized by Wolff's literary flâneur; a freedom many conventional, poor, domestic women like Ma Parker have never had. Her memories have reinforced the idea that the domestic space is inextricably tied to family, so much so that she must force herself away from the home to grieve; an attempt at "avoiding reality" as Perez argues (135). But as soon as Ma Parker enters this "strange and hostile public space" (Perez, 133), she realises that an expression of grief here would be disastrous: "she'd find herself in the lock-up as like the not" ("Life of Ma Parker," 249). Ma Parker and the reader reflect once again upon her life through her memories, the struggles created by her socio-spatial positions, and her inability to find a space of her own to mourn every terrible circumstance of her life: "Where could she go? ... Wasn't there anywhere in the world where she could have her cry out – at last?" But "[t]here was nowhere" (249).

There is an unsettling feeling created by Mansfield's use of third-person to describe the thoughts of a woman in whose mind the reader is intimately situated through focalisation. While third-person traditionally creates a distance between the narrator and the character, this double technique serves to highlight Ma Parker's otherness, particularly at the climax of the story. The inescapability of her social position as a working-class, older woman is made clear through third-person narration, but the reader's position in Ma Parker's consciousness, created through sustained focalisation, means we do not objectify or stereotype her, as the literary gentleman does. By contrasting third-person narration with this fixed focalisation, Mansfield shows how individuals can create bridges of empathy, or what Lohafer calls "imaginative empathy" (475), across the void that traditional language and discourse maintains



between us. We can empathise with Ma Parker's struggles and her circumstances because we have been given access to her mind, while simultaneously acknowledging the limits of such empathetic efforts. We do not come to understand her through 'facts' or 'evidence,' but through her memories, her grief, and her moments of powerlessness in the face of an uncaring world; universal human moments emotionally and imaginatively experienced by the reader. By sharing the position of the imagination with Ma Parker, Josephine, and Constantina as their understanding of home transforms, the reader comes to recognise how spaces are created and collapsed in the reading process itself, as well as how rigid traditional discourses of space come to bear on how we relate to and express our inner worlds.

Importantly, these analyses do not suggest that 'real women' are always emotional or significantly affected by their imaginations; nor, indeed, that all women are 'feminine,' or experience their bodies and spaces in similar ways. Instead, a reverse-discourse (Ledger, 21) has been developed as an alternative to the masculinist 'disembodied' processes of objectivity and reason that feminist geography criticises. This reverse-discourse utilises discourses traditionally associated with the concept of 'woman' – the bodily, the subjective, the emotions, the imagination, the private – and challenges how and why we have been taught to de-value them.

## Chapter 4

### The Home

The home in domestic modernist writing is the primary site of the emotional and imaginative experiences discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. While a number of theorists have constructed different feminist and feminine epistemologies along emotional and imaginative lines (Haraway 1988; Rose 1997; Grosz 1995; Fricker 2009), all of them share a negotiation of gendered bodies and space. Masculinist ways of being and knowing, normalised through the public spaces of the university, parliament, laboratory, or law court, dismiss what is offered “from private places like dreams and women’s bodies, [which] can be communicated and understood across vast geographic distances and cultural differences” and across generations (Wilshire, 97). Subsequently, Wilshire argues for a “different kind of consciousness” that

is very much like the mental activity of a woman who is tending to sewing and hearth while simultaneously listening to a friend, watching the clock, planning dinner, and minding the children. This inclusive method of minding – whether its tasks be those of homekeeping or science – does not deal with isolated data. Instead it looks at the data all together in situ, in the surroundings in which they naturally occur.... The minding, the consciousness, is aimed beyond the facts into the murky darkness and uncertainty; concentration is on the misty, fuzzy, unfocused disorder of the collage, attending without prejudice to

the chaos it temporarily presents, letting the assemblage form itself into its own pattern. (98-9)

Lacking the desire to control or categorise what she sees, the 'feminine' subject not only becomes knowledgeable, but also wise in her embeddedness and embodiedness; able to recognise "wholeness, universals, and what people share" (102) across difference. To value positionality – our bodies in space – we must "learn to listen with empathy when we have been taught only to look with detachment; and that we employ ways of thinking and seeing that for the most part have been excluded from western science and epistemology" (109). The techniques of embodiment developed by many domestic modernist writers offer us the opportunity to re-value these bodies and spaces, both as textual elements and as necessary aspects of our lived realities. By positioning readers in the bodies of various women characters in particular, Mansfield's techniques of embodiment reveal the importance of the feminine body and its processes in how readers construct and experience literary spaces. Furthermore, by contextualising her woman characters in and around the home, and allowing readers to see how the meaning of this space changes from individual to individual, the domestic space itself transforms into a site beyond a 'static container' and into a space full of nuance, texture, and complexity when experienced by both characters and readers.

Just as Bruce Harding (2011) reads one of Mansfield's most popular stories, "Prelude" (1918), alongside its earlier draft version, "The Aloe," this chapter will read "Prelude" alongside its later companion piece, "At the Bay" (1922). The connection between

these two stories and the theme of home is acknowledged by scholars who argue Mansfield 'travelled back' to her childhood to deal with unconscious feelings of unbelonging, grief, and death (Dunbar, 138; Kaplan 1991, 111-2). "Prelude" and "At the Bay" revolve around the women of the Sheridan-Fairfield family, either in their new home in the New Zealand countryside or at their holiday bungalow in a small coastal town. Reading the two stories in connection with one another reveals much more about the different Sheridan women and how their understandings of themselves and their spaces develop over time and space than if the stories are read in isolation.

These two stories are particularly useful in exploring how conventional or traditional women find meaning and purpose in the domestic space. In "House and Home," Iris Marion Young (2005) argues that women's liberation from patriarchy requires a re-assessment of the home as a site of meaning and value for everybody. The rejection of the home by feminism is understandable if and only if "house and home mean the confinement of women for the sake of nourishing male projects" (Young, 123). Many canonical feminist theorists have highlighted that the stereotype of the home is constructed at women's expense. For example, Young paraphrases Luce Irigaray's (1992) idea that

man projects onto woman the nostalgic longing for the lost wholeness of the original mother. To fix and keep hold of his identity, man makes a house, puts things in it, and confines there his woman, who reflects his identity to him. The

price she pays for supporting his subjectivity, however, is dereliction, having no self of her own. (Young, 124)

In "Prelude" and "At the Bay," this dereliction is most evident in the character of Linda. Her husband, Stanley, is the stereotypical patriarch, requiring the women of the house to do various things for him, from feeding his driver to finding his slippers and walking stick. The morning after arriving at their new home in "Prelude," Stanley wakes up and prepares to leave for work. Mansfield's use of free indirect discourse and shifting focalisation allows the reader a glimpse into Stanley's consciousness as he does his morning exercises: "He was so delighted with his firm, obedient body that he hit himself on the chest and gave a loud 'Ah'." (16) While tangled in his shirt, the focalisation then moves to Linda, who describes Stanley as "'a big fat turkey,'" to which he replies "'I haven't got a square inch of fat on me. Feel that.'" Linda, feeling his body, says, "'It's rock – it's iron'" (16-17). Mansfield, however, explicitly states that Linda is "mock[ing]" Stanley, which he does not realise. Instead, he continues to observe his body "as though this were intensely interesting." Again, Linda says to him, "'My dear, don't worry. You'll never be fat. You are far too energetic'", and Stanley agrees, "comforted for the hundredth time" (17). Like the mirror into which he looks as he grooms himself, Linda "reflects his identity to him." This scene demonstrates Irigaray's argument that the home is a site where women are required to reflect the image of man at her expense. However, feminist geography allows us to find flaws in Irigaray's argument that this 'reflecting' capability of women means they are incapable of developing their own identities and subjectivities in the home. It is precisely through Mansfield's use of techniques of embodiment that the reader is able to see

both how Linda humours and supports Stanley externally, while also showing how she privately thinks and feels about herself and her life. Linda *does* have her own identity; it merely changes depending upon the socio-spatial position she occupies. Indeed, the reader's spatial position both outside and inside Linda simultaneously further reinforces the idea that identity is a matter of spatial positioning; the reader simultaneously experiences this "paradoxical space" (Rose, 263) through this internal and external positioning.

In "Prelude," our position in Linda's consciousness allows us to see how her identity changes depending on the nature of her external spaces: "she did not rest again until the final slam of the front door told her that Stanley was gone" (17). Finally alone in her new bedroom, we watch Linda trace an invisible poppy onto a nearby wall, which then comes alive in her imagination. Far from lacking her own subjectivity, we see and feel Linda's intensely active mind: "She could feel the sticky, silky petals, the stem, hairy like a gooseberry skin, the rough leaf and the tight glazed bud. Things had a habit of coming alive like that" (17). In contrast to Irigaray's perception that "women's existence [is] deprived of active subjectivity because their activity concentrates on serving and supporting men in the home" (Young, 124), Mansfield's use of techniques of embodiment allows readers to access the very minds and bodies of the women these feminist theorists fail to take into account when dismissing the home. Indeed, Mansfield suggests through Linda that fluid and shifting identities that adapt to various spatial circumstances is a strategy used by women to negotiate their socio-spatial lives.

Mansfield clearly understood that women's identities and lives in the home are not as clear or simple as various 'separate spheres' discourses on women's bodies and spaces suggest. In fact, Mansfield addresses these gendered and spatial dynamics with more nuance and compassion than even canonical feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir, whose conceptualisation of domesticity is almost entirely negative. Housework, for de Beauvoir, parallels the myth of Sisyphus, who pushed a boulder up a hill forever: "she does nothing, she only perpetuates the present" (de Beauvoir, 539). However, as Young points out, de Beauvoir "misses the creatively human aspects of women's traditional household work" (124). Indeed, the idea that domesticity is unable to provide its own meaningful justification for existence, identity, and subjectivity "flies in the face of the experience of many women, who devote themselves to caring for house and children as meaningful human projects" (Young, 138).

A moment in which Mansfield contradicts de Beauvoir is in "At the Bay," after Stanley leaves the bungalow for town. Through free indirect discourse and shifting focalisation, the reader is taken through Stanley's consciousness, while he is the centre of the household, to Beryl's consciousness after Stanley has departed:

Into the living-room she ran and called 'He's gone!' Linda cried from her room: 'Beryl! Has Stanley gone?' Old Mrs Fairfield appeared, carrying the boy in his little flannel coatee. 'Gone?' 'Gone!' Oh, the relief, the difference it made to have a man out of their house. Their very voices were changed as they called to one another; they sounded warm and loving and as if they shared a secret.

(171)

Importantly, the Burnell women celebrate their newfound freedom from Stanley by engaging in traditionally 'feminine' activities: childcare, cleaning, taking care of animals, drinking tea. The home is no longer a site where women must construct and reflect the patriarch's identity back to him; now, "the whole perfect day was theirs" (171). This line alone suggests Stanley's very presence automatically makes their days – their lives, their spaces – *not* theirs. These 'feminine' activities are no longer seen as expectations or burdens on the women; rather, they *choose* to spend their time in these ways. The very activities of domesticity take on new meaning and value in the absence of the patriarch; the nature of the space transforms.

Many women in "Prelude" and "At the Bay" challenge de Beauvoir's idea that domesticity is inherently existentially or intellectually void. Their domestic activities partake in what Young calls "preservation": acts of "meaning maintenance" (127). The home is the spatial manifestation of one's identity, events, values, routines, choices, and memories. As Linda observes in "Prelude,"

All the furniture had found a place – all the old paraphernalia – as she expressed it. Even the photographs were on the mantelpiece and the medicine bottles on the shelf above the washstand. Her clothes lay across a chair – her outdoor things, a purple cape and a round hat with a plume in it. (16)

The home, then, rather than the existentially barren space conceptualised by Irigaray and de Beauvoir, is instilled with individuality, history, and memory, which build up or



'sediment' over time, creating layers of meaning. This accumulation of meaning transforms the home into a significant existential space, and housework into an activity of preservation and reflection. The maintenance of household objects, like Josephine and Constantina's mother's photograph or Bertha's fruit bowl, is fundamental to the construction and maintenance of identity. Housework can therefore be read as a metaphor for "[p]ersonal identity [which] in this sense is not at all fixed, but always in process" (Young, 140). Appreciating the space and activities of home is Young's way of valuing these forgotten women who are "the primary preservers of family as well as individual histories" (141).

Two of Mansfield's women characters who have been generally ignored in "Prelude" and "At the Bay" because they, at first glance, simply conform to stereotypes of womanhood and femininity in the home, are Beryl and Mrs. Fairfield. Beryl is "vain and self-regarding" (Dunbar, 138) and "narcissis[ti]c and env[ious]" (Kaplan 1991, 115), while Mrs. Fairfield is "more traditional and totally accepts her role" as "generous, practical, hard-working, and sensitive" domestic goddess (Kaplan 1991, 116), existing in a "state of enslavement" (Harding, 123). However, Mansfield's use of techniques of embodiment undermines these assessments. In "Prelude," the reader is positioned to witness Mrs. Fairfield's thoughts as she washes dishes, looking out into the garden. These activities trigger a memory of a young Beryl being bitten by an ant at their old Tasmanian house. In the paragraph itself, this memory is situated in between descriptions of domestic tasks and of Mrs. Fairfield's conventional outfit, including a necklace "with five little owls seated on it" (19), representing her two daughters and three granddaughters. Mansfield's description of how Mrs. Fairfield moves through

this space – “She put the crocks away with a sure, precise touch, moving leisurely and ample from the stove to the dresser” (19) – does not suggest she is unhappy or discontent with her role; instead, “a smile beamed on her lips; she thought [the space] looked very nice” (19). The reader, positioned with Mrs. Fairfield through these moments, comes to recognise the domestic space as a site of meaning and purpose for those women neglected by feminist discourse on the home. Generalised conceptions of the home as oppressive for all women, and descriptions of traditional or conventional women as “enslaved” (Harding, 123) in these spaces, ignores and invalidates woman characters such as Mrs. Fairfield who find great significance and value in their roles as homemakers; supporting others and maintaining a sense of love and community.

In another important scene often overlooked by scholars, Mansfield allows the reader another glimpse into Mrs. Fairfield’s consciousness as she talks about the death of her husband to her granddaughter, Kezia:

“‘Does it make you sad to think about him, grandma?’ She hated her grandma to be sad. It was the old woman’s turn to consider. Did it make her sad? To look back, back. To stare down the years, as Kezia had seen her doing. To look after them as a woman does, long after they were out of sight. Did it make her sad? No, life was like that.” (181)

Mrs. Fairfield personifies Young’s idea of the homemaker as the preserver of identity, history, and memory. This conversation takes place in a bedroom, with Kezia laying on

the bed as Mrs. Fairfield knits in a nearby chair. They go on to discuss the nature of death; a topic that would typically end in a grim reminder of mortality but that, here, ends in Kezia on Mrs. Fairfield's knees, as they laugh and tickle each other (182). Death is, in a sense, overcome by the bonds of love and friendship between women in the home. Far from being a site of intellectual stagnation, Kezia learns about her own mortality, and about the ways in which we can cope with it, through forming emotional and imaginative connections with other women in the home. This feminine space and these feminine processes allow Kezia to arrive at knowledge about herself and her world that she will value forever, and the reader comes to recognise similar moments of realisation in their own lives; realisations they perhaps have not appreciated because of where or how they occurred.

Reading "Prelude" and "At the Bay" against each other allows us to see how characters change over time, and there is perhaps no other character who readers come to understand and empathise with better across both stories than Beryl. Indeed, the fact that Beryl's contemplations of herself and her world form the conclusion to both stories suggests that she is a far more significant character to Mansfield than some scholars believe. Dunbar, for example, describes Beryl as "somewhere between" the two main protagonists, Linda and Kezia (148), as though she were not substantial enough for her own analysis. Indeed, she is barely mentioned in a number of important Mansfield studies (Kaplan 1991; McDonnell 2010).

The final section of "Prelude" opens with a letter from Beryl to a friend. Until this section, the reader has been made to believe Beryl's mind is preoccupied with

“shallow” thoughts regarding romance and her own appearance. However, for the first time in the story, Mansfield positions the reader in Beryl’s consciousness, where we see her ‘construct’ the letter. Her discontent with her domesticity is demonstrated when she writes, “[o]f course mother simply loves the place, but then I suppose when I am mother’s age I shall be content to sit in the sun and shell peas into a basin. But I’m not – not – not” (41). However, the free indirect discourse then allows the narration to shift from the letter and into Beryl’s mind, which immediately reveals to the reader the ‘performance’ of letter-writing: “In a way, of course, it was all perfectly true, but in another way it was all the greatest rubbish and she didn’t believe a word of it.... It was her other self who had written that letter” (41). There is some truth, then, even in the performance, which Beryl recognises. This moment demonstrates that Beryl’s shallowness is not as obvious as some scholars have made it out to be. Indeed, the idea that concepts like romance, domesticity, or the ‘performance’ of identity are ‘shallow’ is arguably the result of the historical characterisation of women’s lives and experiences as frivolous, self-absorbed, and lacking complexity. Beryl’s hostility to the home and to the domesticity of Mrs. Fairfield is, therefore, no longer apparent; the home becomes ambiguous.

Looking at herself in a mirror and imagining she were a potential romantic suitor watching her from afar, Beryl then goes on to think “[o]h God, there she was, back again, playing the same old game. False – false as ever.... False even when she was alone with herself, now” (42). It is only through this shifting focalisation through Beryl’s different psychic ‘spaces’ that the reader comes to appreciate Beryl’s struggle: to maintain the ‘performance’ of the pretty young socialite desperate for marriage and

family, or the confused, deeply thoughtful woman we now see. Beryl contemplates the very nature of her identity and existence, which fundamentally alters how we understand her character. The letter and the mirror – domestic objects – now contain double-meanings through Beryl's use of them. She sees the Beryl she performs – the self she wants the world to see – while also simultaneously seeing the self she keeps hidden: "She saw the real Beryl – a shadow... a shadow" (43), a "paradoxical space" between inner and outer worlds (Rose, 263). Reminiscent of many (male-produced) paintings of women looking into mirrors, but far from a critique of these images as revealing woman's "vanity," Beryl's domestic act is one of existential contemplation. She is not "inauthentic" in her inability to reconcile these various selves or unaware of her social and spatial circumstances as Kubasiewicz argues (56); rather, Mansfield positions us to empathise with Beryl to the point where she is one of the most authentic and 'human' characters of the story.

It is this complex understanding of Beryl that readers bring to the concluding section of "At the Bay," which begins with a similarly intimate narrative mode: second-person. Mansfield's use of "you" in place of "Beryl" positions the reader immediately into the space of the bedroom the narrator constructs: "Lightly, stealthily, *you* move about your room. *You* take something off the dressing-table and put it down again without a sound. And everything, even the bedpost, knows *you*, responds, shares *your* secret" (193, my italics). Mansfield's use of second-person invites us to bring our own rooms, our own objects, to how we imagine this literary space. It is no longer a simple bedroom; our construction of it in our minds is strengthened by our own memories of the rooms that we have filled with meaning in our own lives. At first it is an empty

space, but once you have occupied it and filled it with the objects of your life, “it’s suddenly dear to you” (193). Just as Virginia Woolf in “A Room of One’s Own” contemplated the importance of having a space to oneself, Beryl, too, recognises the importance of personal, private spaces to one’s existence: “It’s a darling little funny room. It’s yours. Oh, what a joy it is to own things! Mine – my own!” (193)

Importantly, this space gives Beryl the opportunity to explore her sexual desires. However, as her interactions with the progressive Mrs. Kember earlier in the story suggest, Beryl is caught between desiring traditional romance and the unconventional sexual lifestyle of many New Women. Beryl’s contemplation of this tension in the text itself is structured by the opinions of others (194); her desires are shaped by society’s various competing discourses about women’s lives and bodies, to the point where she does not know what she wants. At this moment of tension, like a conventional romance story, we shift from Beryl’s thoughts to her vision, where a figure emerges from the darkness and asks her to join him from a moonlit walk. Beryl sees this figure as a sign – an answer to her ongoing questions – and yet, Beryl’s many selves appear once more: “already something stirred in her, something reared its head. The voice said, ‘Frightened?’ It mocked, ‘Poor little girl!’ ‘Not in the least,’ said she.... [s]he longed to go!” (195) Ultimately persuaded by the discourse of romance in which the woman waits to be ‘saved,’ Beryl climbs out of the window to join the man, but immediately the nature of this new public space changes: the moonlight “stared” and “the shadows were like bars of iron” (195). No longer enchanted by the traditional discourse of home that solidifies these romantic ideas of men ‘saving’ women, Beryl’s reality begins to come into focus: the man’s smile “was something she’d never seen

before. Was he drunk? That bright, blind, terrifying smile froze her with horror” (196). As if emerging from a fog, Beryl asks herself “[w]hat was she doing? How had she got here?” (196). After being attacked by the man and slipping away, her contradictory impulses are exposed: “‘You are vile, vile,’ said she. ‘Then why in God’s name did you come?’ stammered Harry Kember. Nobody answered him” (196). The home, then, is both a site of contemplation and of distortion; the domestic space and its objects enable Beryl to recognise the multiplicity of identity, while simultaneously reinforcing rigid romantic stereotypes that, in her case, put her in danger. As Nancy Gray highlights, “we watch Beryl push against the parameters of convention while simultaneously invoking them, [and so] we have the opportunity to experience struggle itself as the story’s site of meaning” (86). Using feminist geography to help narrow our focus on how the home comes to shape the realities of the gendered individuals within it, readers come to recognise the complexity and nuance of the home as a site of both liberation and tension in literature and beyond.

Far from what Joanna Kokot argues is “no evolution, no development” (75) in Mansfield’s characters “because the ‘real self’ never has a chance to come to the surface,” Mansfield’s use of techniques of embodiment allow readers to access and empathise with the various selves that come to the surface in different spaces at different times. Mansfield herself was aware of this multiplicity of identity, writing in her journal: “True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many – well really, that’s what it looks like coming to – hundreds of selves?” (“The Flowering of the Self,” 38-9) The home, then, is a site where both the desire for “a settled, safe, affirmative, and bounded identity” (Young, 146-7) can be met, but also where we can recognise that

identity is multifaceted, porous, uncertain, and contingent. By drawing upon feminist geography, readers from various different social positions can come to appreciate the complex and ever-changing meaning and value this space can have; a space that enables contemplation, creativity, desire, memory, and preservation, as well as oppression, fear, regret, and guilt. To dismiss the domestic space in literature as nothing but a simple setting or a symbol of women's confinement and oppression is to dismiss the variety of important ways the home can function in texts and in wider society.



## Conclusion

By bringing geographical and spatial theory into conversation with narratology, we begin to see how the concept of 'space' in narrative can no longer be considered a simple 'container' or 'background setting' within or against which characters, objects, and events occur. Instead, space as contemporary geography understands it is the manifestation of various, sometimes contradictory, discourses that individuals experience and navigate in different ways. One of the benefits of this re-conceptualisation of space in narrative is that spaces which have been subject to static stereotypes, such as the domestic space, become far more complex and significant to how readers understand and empathise with the lives of 'othered' characters. More than a simple site of oppression, restriction, or intellectual naivety, this thesis has provided a way of understanding how the home in particular functions as a space of possibility, grief, comfort, memory, regret, and enlightenment simultaneously. We can better appreciate how women in particular grapple with the various traditional discourses of the home that come to bear on their identities and subjectivities; discourses that have shaped the very nature of their relationships to themselves and to others.

The introduction to this thesis discussed the need for a new term to describe experimental literary techniques developed by writers at the turn of the twentieth century. While these techniques were useful in exploring the impact of modernity on individual consciousness, they can also be used to better understand how discursive gendered bodies navigate(d) the discursive spaces of the modern world. Indeed,

widespread conceptualisations of these experimental literary techniques in scholarship positions consciousness as unidirectional; as an active mind experiencing and understanding passive spaces. Instead, the term ‘techniques of embodiment’ was proposed to collapse this unidirectionality and draw attention to the various ways in which individuals are embedded in their spaces; spaces which are not passive or static, but play a significant role in how individuals construct and experience themselves and their worlds.

The introduction then argued that the development of ‘techniques of embodiment’ for modernist writers was fundamentally shaped by the gendered and spatial subject position of both writers and characters. Some of modernism’s most famous texts focus primarily upon the experience of the “literary flâneur” (Wolff, 38); the white, middle-class man who explores the urban and city spaces of modernity anonymously, ‘unaffected and ineffectual; observing, but never observed.’ He objectifies both women and space due to the ‘unidirectionality’ of his gaze. The use of experimental literary techniques by these (mostly male) writers therefore significantly affects the way that readers construct and engage with the spaces of the text; the relationship between reader and literary space is one of detachment and isolation. In contrast, women writers and characters are historically far more ‘embedded and embodied’ subjects; their identities are determined by their spaces and their bodies to a greater extent than men (Wolff, 41). Women observe and are observed in turn. The use of techniques of embodiment by these (mostly female) writers also significantly affects how readers construct and engage with the spaces of the text; our relationships with its literary spaces is noticeably fluid, dynamic, and always changing. This thesis uses

the home as a specific example of what a reconceptualisation of literary space through the gendered bodies of characters could look like, as the home has historically been the site most often associated with women's bodily processes (Ruskin, 91). The genre of domestic modernism was used as an example of how women writers utilised techniques of embodiment to re-assess the meaning and value of the home in the context of aesthetics; the home becomes the locus of art and life due to these new framing devices. This re-valuing of the home through the re-positioning of the subject is similarly addressed by contemporary feminist theorists such as Iris Marion Young, who argues that for many women past and present, the home and home-making are significant world-building activities (138). As such, the home transforms from the static stereotype reinforced by the 'separate spheres ideology' and into a space of existential and epistemological significance for everyone.

Chapter 1 began with a discussion of the current state of space in narrative theory, and highlighted potential avenues down which narratology can move in addressing spatial concepts. It explained the evolution of space from a 'container' into space as a discourse, and moved into a discussion of feminist geography, which addresses how the discourse of gender affects the relationship between identities and spaces. It highlighted feminist geography's preoccupation with the construction and dissolution of gendered binaries, which structure space as much as they structure identity, and illuminated the gender politics and the epistemological ramifications of positionality. Gillian Rose proposes a "paradoxical space" (263) in response to the static, Self/Other binary dynamic of masculinist spatial theory; a new space that acknowledges both the embodiedness of the gendered subject and the multi-layered, intuitive, and

contradictory nature of real, embodied experiences of space as multiple overlapping discourses. It then discussed two aspects of 'feminine' embodiment – the emotions and the imagination – for how they affect our relationships with and construction of our lived spaces, and suggested ways in which these theories can be applied to literature. This chapter proposed a feminist narratology of space that draws upon feminist geography in order to better explore how the experimental literary techniques developed at the turn of the twentieth century construct literary spaces through the gendered bodies of characters. Indeed, through a focus on the 'feminine' bodily processes of the emotions and the imagination, both the home and the female body are reconceptualised through this new narratology as significant existential and epistemological sites both for characters and readers.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 demonstrated how this new feminist narratology of space can be used to better understand the relationship between gendered bodies and spaces through a close analysis of several of Katherine Mansfield's domestic modernist short stories. These chapters were divided thematically into 'The Emotions,' 'The Imagination,' and 'The Home,' with each chapter exploring two of Mansfield's stories. The discourses of the domestic that come to bear on Mansfield's characters are both solidified and challenged simultaneously due to Mansfield's decisions to validate the emotions and imaginations of her characters. Positioning the reader to experience the bodies and spaces of her (mostly female) characters, Mansfield invites us to recognise the role of the gendered body and of gendered processes both in how readers relate to textual space, and also how we experience and understand the spaces of our own worlds. By combining the two different strands of 'space in narrative' – spaces as

symbols, and space as it characterizes the reading process – we come to recognise the value of geographical theory when we engage with both texts and our own spaces of existence.

Indeed, this thesis intertwines these two spatial narrative strands by suggesting that texts which utilise techniques of embodiment in particular transform reading into a spatial experience; an experience that draws attention to one's own positionality in the world, to how that positionality affects what we can know and value about the world, and to how differences structured by positionality can be overcome through the sharing of emotional and imaginative moments, as well as through processes of reading. This positionality, a theme addressed by feminist geography, allows us to question the 'who' and the 'where' of knowledge, just as much as it draws attention to the gendered nature of the 'how' (rationality, objectivity, and empiricism over the emotional, the subjective, and the imagined). Techniques of embodiment, which fosters a sharing of positions between readers and characters, can therefore be interpreted through the lens of feminist geography as a politically and ethically significant literary device; these techniques offer avenues for overcoming the differences social discourses have solidified between individuals whose identities are defined by their bodies and spaces.

As Martha Nussbaum suggests, techniques of embodiment can teach readers "what it is like to live the life of another person who might, given changes in circumstance, be oneself or one of one's loved ones.... In their very mode of address to their imagined reader, they convey the sense that there are links of possibility... between the

characters and the reader” (5). This new feminist narratology of space enables scholars of narrative to better interrogate the relationship between gendered bodies and spaces in texts, and particularly how the gendered body and its processes as a narrative focaliser affects how readers construct and experience literary spaces. Most importantly, the framework developed by this thesis teaches and encourages readers to acknowledge the various spatial and gendered discourses they themselves negotiate in their everyday lives, and appreciate the fact that differences solidified by these discourses can be overcome through empathy, or a sharing of embodied positions.

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