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Title	The 'placing' and politics of Bowen in contemporary Irish literary and cultural criticism
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Publication date	2009-04-01
Original Citation	Laird, H. (2009) 'The 'placing' and politics of Bowen in contemporary Irish literary and cultural criticism', in Walshe, E. (ed.), Irish Writers in their Time: Elizabeth Bowen. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, pp. 193-207.
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	https://irishacademicpress.ie/product/elizabeth-bowen/
Download date	2026-11-03 00:44:18
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/7895



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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The 'Placing' and Politics of Bowen in Contemporary Irish Literary and Cultural Criticism

HEATHER LAIRD

When compared with other examples of single-author scholarship, the body of criticism concerned with Elizabeth Bowen's writing appears extremely fragmented. Amongst the Elizabeth Bowens figured in literary and cultural criticism is the 'Anglo-Irish Bowen', the 'modernist Bowen', the 'postmodernist Bowen', the 'bisexual Bowen', the 'woman writer', the 'British wartime author', and the 'writer of Irish Protestant Gothic'. Indeed a novice to Bowen's work, browsing through the bookshelves of an academic library or through the multitude of Bowen websites, could be forgiven for assuming that during the course of the twentieth century there had been a number of different authors called 'Elizabeth Bowen'. This chapter provides an overview and an analysis of writings about Elizabeth Bowen in contemporary Irish literary and cultural criticism. It suggests that questions concerning Bowen's national and ethnic identity (or identities) and affiliations, and of the manner and ways in which Bowen's Anglo-Irish heritage shaped her more overtly Irish writings, are now, as they were in her own day, a central and reoccurring concern for critics who read Bowen's work in the context of Irish literature and culture. The chapter will examine the role assigned in writings from various critical and ideological perspectives to what is sometimes described as Bowen's lack of roots, but might perhaps more accurately be referred to as her profusion of roots, highlighting what I consider to be the more fruitful critical approaches to this aspect of her life and work. It will pinpoint what tends to be omitted, primarily issues

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of gender and sexuality, in analyses of Bowen as an Anglo-Irish writer. In the concluding paragraphs, it will suggest ways in which her in-between status can be most successfully linked to what might initially appear to be very different aspects of her writing, demonstrating the connections that exist between her literary writings set predominantly in Ireland and her other works of fiction.

Bowen was famously described by her erstwhile lover, Sean O'Faolain, as 'heart-cloven and split-minded ... consistently declaring herself born and reared Irish, residing mostly in England, writing in the full European tradition'.[1] This characterization of Bowen is echoed in the work of more recent commentators, many of whom make reference to Bowen's description of her childhood identity crisis in her autobiographical *Seven Winters* when embarking on a discussion of her in-between status and the divided loyalties engendered by such a hyphenated existence.[2]

With regard to the 'placing' of Elizabeth Bowen, the Irish revisionist historian, Roy Foster, and Jack Lane, a member of the nationalist Aubane Historical Society, are at opposite ends of the spectrum. Bowen's in-between status for Lane ensures that she cannot be categorized as Irish or as an Irish writer: 'Elizabeth Bowen has an attribute which it is difficult for an Irish writer to acquire – she was English. Her youth was spent between Dublin, the South of England, and North Cork – *correction*, Bowen's Court: not North Cork.'[3] For Foster, however, it is this same in-between status that qualifies Bowen as 'distinctively if uncomfortably Irish'.[4] In Foster's account of the connections in Irish and English history, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, 'cross-channel borrowings', too often dismissed as the 'historical consequence of exploitation', are implicit in Irish history ensuring that Irish culture is indelibly comprised of multiple and variant traditions.[5] Lane, who acknowledges connections between Ireland and England but suggests that in the case of Anglo-Irish families like the Bowens such connections were quintessentially 'predatory', asserts that Elizabeth Bowen should only be included in an anthology of North Cork writers under erasure.[6] In his introduction to a published volume of the espionage reports Bowen sent to the British Ministry of Information during the Second World War, Lane explains that while excerpts from *Seven Winters* and *The Last September* were included in the *North Cork Anthology* published by the Aubane Historical Society in 1993, a line was put through Bowen's name

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in the title to signify that 'though Ms Bowen had been physically connected with North Cork through Bowen's Court, she was not a North Cork writer'.[7] Bowen was included in the anthology in deleted form, Lane tells us, 'in order to explain why she does not belong to it'.[8]

While Foster and Lane situate Bowen at opposite ends of the Anglo-Irish hyphen, ethical evaluations of the nature of the historical relationship between Ireland and England, and between the Anglo-Irish and the 'native' Irish, are of fundamental importance to both commentators' delineations of Irishness. Foster, who as an Irish revisionist historian is far too wary of apportioning blame in an analysis of these relationships,[9] argues that those who believe that 'the "real" Irish experience is that of unrelieved pain' and who consequently focus exclusively on the exploitative nature of Anglo-Irish relations proffer too limited a definition of Irishness.[10] In contrast, Lane, whose sympathies are recognizably (and narrowly) nationalist, suggests that those who ignore the exploitative nature of Anglo-Irish relations and of the relationship between the Anglo-Irish and the 'native' Irish put forward too broad a definition of Irishness. Journalists and academics, some of whom, according to Lane, go on pilgrimages to the turnip field where Bowen's Court once stood, lamenting the loss of a house paid for and sustained through the exploitation of a local tenantry, 'are trying to redefine Irish culture in a way that makes it meaningless'.[11]

One of the principal focuses of interest (and anxiety) for commentators concerned with the geographical and ethnic placing of Bowen as a writer are the aforementioned confidential reports on political and civic life in Ireland that she compiled for the British Ministry of Information during the period of the Second World War. These reports, now accessible in the National Archives in Kew, were published by the Aubane Historical Society in 1999 as justification for their earlier included exclusion of Bowen in the *North Cork Anthology*. Sardonically suggesting in his introduction to these reports that the 'media opinion-formers and academics' who had been so critical of the *North Cork Anthology* demonstrate how highly they rate Elizabeth Bowen by unearthing further reports and making them generally available, Jack Lane is unequivocal in his assertion that Bowen's voluntary involvement in espionage amply demonstrates 'where her loyalties lay'.[12]

Contrary to what Lane anticipated, however, accounts in Irish literary

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and cultural criticism of Bowen's spying activities focus predominantly on mixed allegiances, her assumption of the role of spy being pitted against the actual content of the reports she sent to the British Ministry of Information.[13] Bowen spied for England, but, as numerous commentators point out, in her spy reports she contextualizes and, most notably in her earlier reports, justifies Irish neutrality. Moreover, while prone to condescending assessments of Irish people and their opinions, she is unabashedly critical of English attitudes towards Ireland. Drawing attention in her reports to anti-Irish feeling in England, Bowen points out that 'this assertion of her neutrality is Eire's first *free* self-assertion' and consequently the Irish people quite rightly view neutrality 'as positive, not merely negative'. Just prior to this, however, she states that 'the childishness and obtuseness of this country cannot fail to be irritating to the English mind'.[14]

The most recent commentary on Bowen's espionage activities is to be found in Clair Wills's *That Neutral Island*. In this ambitious cultural history of wartime Ireland, Bowen's involvement in clandestine information- and opinion-gathering work is interpreted in conflicting ways. In Wills's introduction, Bowen would appear to be numbered amongst the Irish intellectuals whose close links with the Allies should be viewed less in terms of mixed allegiances than in the context of a desire to see themselves, and be seen, as the 'voice of the nation's conscience'.[15] Later in the book, however, Wills, who points out that Irish neutrality was 'to increase the alienation of some Anglo-Irish, who felt forced to choose between England and Ireland', tells us that 'although [Bowen] claimed she always thought of herself as Irish, the war called forth her obligation towards England'.[16]

Bowen's mixed allegiances and the extent to which, and ways in which, these mixed allegiances shaped her literary writings have, in my opinion, best been explored within the Irish context by critics whose work is informed by post-colonial literary and cultural theory. This approach has to date been somewhat limited by a failure on the part of such critics to engage in potentially fruitful comparative work that reads Bowen alongside settler colonial writings from other geographical locations.[17] It has succeeded, however, in shifting the focus, in an analysis of Bowen's divided loyalties, from the personal to the structural, thereby allowing us to move beyond the aforementioned circular debates that

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have tended to dominate analyses of the 'Anglo-Irish Bowen'. Both Declan Kiberd and Margot Gayle Backus, for example, position Bowen as a descendant of a settler colonial elite. This elite, they tell us, was separated by class, education and religion from the majority of Irish citizens, but was equally estranged from an England in which they were invariably considered Irish or at least too Irish to be comfortably classified as English. In Kiberd's 'Elizabeth Bowen – The Dandy in Revolt', which, like the work of so many, perhaps too many, Irish literary critics, focuses almost exclusively on *The Last September*, Bowen is both a product of, and a commentator on, a planter community. This was a community, Kiberd states, that assumed a pose or, more specifically through the Big House, an 'exterior show of spaciousness and command' to mask an inner uncertainty that resulted from its contentious origins and its subsequent failure to naturalize its rule.[18]

Kiberd and Backus, in their writings on Bowen's fiction and on Anglo-Irish society in general, draw our attention to strained inter-generational relations. For Kiberd, it was the preservation of the aforementioned pose that placed inordinate pressure on the younger members of the settler familial system. For Backus, this pressure was, and still is, primarily the result of the perpetuation of specific patterns of loyalty and animosity. With reference to *The Last September*, Kiberd asserts that 'Lois is as much a victim of Danielstown values as the Irish rebel who crosses her path: for the Anglo-Irish are as guilty of ignoring the needs of the heirs within as the dependents without. In return for nothing, the young are compelled to adopt a time-honoured set of manners and attitudes, to be "sealed" and "finished", so that the social forms may survive the death of their contents.'[19] In *The Gothic Family Romance*, Backus acknowledges the toll elicited from the younger generation through the process of maintaining 'a time-honoured set of manners and attitudes' but chooses to foreground 'recurring narrative conventions testify[ing] to the continuing cost that is being exacted from children born within a settler colonial order that prioritizes loyalty to an abstract national identity above local cooperation and identification'.[20] When referring to the above-cited statement by Kiberd, Backus quite rightly points out that while 'all Big House children were "effectively told to embalm themselves alive, perform approved routines, and deny all feeling", only the female half were reduced to this living death … "in return for nothing"'.[21]

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While Backus's introduction of a gender dimension is an important addition to Kiberd's post-colonial analysis of the 'Anglo-Irish Bowen', an engagement with the writings of such internationally renowned scholars of settler colonialism as Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis would have significantly enhanced her argument. In their introduction to *Unsettling Settler Societies*,[22] Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis locate the divided loyalties of settler women in a colonial system that they were part of and fundamental to but also separate from and, to some extent, restricted by. Settler women, it is stated, are fundamental to the colonial system in that they are the biological and cultural carriers of colonial communities, expected to propagate with members of their own grouping and to transmit the symbols and ways of life associated with that grouping to their children. This introduction also draws our attention to the extent to which settler women are constrained by their role in the perpetuation of the colonial system and the guarding of its ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Backus fails to refer to such international scholarship on the gender aspects of settler colonialism, but her commentary on the Anglo-Irish community in *The Gothic Family Romance* makes it clear how relevant this scholarship would be to an analysis of Anglo-Irish women. She draws our attention, for example, to the physical, psychological and sexual restrictions associated with the breeding and the ideological tasks of reproducing the Anglo-Irish settler community. She asks whether these restrictions may be why 'Anglo-Irish women often depict the burning of [the Big House] during the Troubles with an astonishing degree of complacency, if not enthusiasm'.[23] A prime example of the kind of depiction that Backus is referring to is to be found in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*, which concludes, rather spectacularly, with the front door of the novel's Big House standing 'open hospitably upon a furnace'.[24]

The Last September, which records the demise of the Ascendancy and is considered by many to be the quintessential Big House novel,[25] is one of two out of the ten novels written by Bowen that is set exclusively in Ireland. *A World of Love*, the second of these two novels, was written twenty-six years after *The Last September* and is centred on a former Big House turned working farm which has grown so isolated that neighbours believe it to be uninhabited.[26] Two of Bowen's other novels, *The House in Paris*, which begins and ends in Paris, and *The Heat of the Day*, which is set principally in wartime London, make substantial detours to Ireland and a number of her short

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stories were republished in 1978 under the title *Elizabeth Bowen's Irish Stories*.[27] In *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House*, Vera Kreilkamp offers a nuanced reading of the 'Anglo-Irish Bowen' that engages with these texts and other writings by Elizabeth Bowen.[28] In general, however, Bowen scholarship, in contemporary Irish literary and cultural criticism, focuses predominantly and, too narrowly on *The Last September*, with analyses of this novel frequently accompanied by brief references to *Seven Winters*, an autobiographical description of Bowen's Dublin childhood, and *Bowen's Court*, a family chronicle that is also a history of Bowen's ancestral Cork home.[29]

The Last September, typically contextualized in Irish literary and cultural criticism in relation to the aforementioned life writings and the allegiances and loyalties expressed therein, has, since its publication, been read by critics in varying and conflicting ways. Most notably, it has sometimes been read as a memorial to, and sometimes as a condemnation of, the Ascendancy that was Bowen's heritage.[30] In recent years, it has been most commonly and, in my opinion, more accurately viewed as a curious combination of the two, censure and admiration. The interpretation of certain key passages in the novel suggests much about the individual critic's approach. One of these passages, already mentioned in my brief discussion of Margot Gayle Backus's work, describes the burning of the Big House. Two other pivotal passages tell of an encounter or, on one of these occasions, a near encounter, that takes place between Lois, a young inhabitant of the Big House, and an IRA man. On the first of these occasions - the near encounter - a member of the IRA, walking through demesne land, passes close to where Lois, the protagonist of the novel, is standing watching him:

> It must be because of Ireland he was in such a hurry; down from the mountains, making a short cut through their demesne. Here was something else that she could not share. She could not conceive of her country emotionally ... Quite still, she let him go past in contemptuous unawareness. His intentions burnt on the dark an almost visible trail; he might well have been a murderer he seemed so inspired. (*TLS*, p.34)

Later in the novel, Lois, accompanied by Marda, a female visitor to the Big House, happens upon a republican gunman in an uncanny ruined mill:

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> The man's eyes went from one to the other, and remained ironically between them. His face was metal-blue in the dusk and seemed numbed into immobility. 'It is time', he said, 'that yourselves gave up walking. If you have nothing better to do, you had better keep in the house while y'have it.' Marda, a hand on the frame of the doorway, remained unmoved, but Lois could not but agree with him. She felt quite ruled out, there was nothing at all for her here. (*TLS*, p.125)

In relation to these extracts, what tends to preoccupy critics is the level of affinity that is established between Lois and the IRA men she encounters and the extent to which her desire (often conflated with Bowen's own desire) to break free of the confines of the house is shown to correspond with their desire to burn it to the ground. Roy Foster, while acknowledging that elsewhere in the novel Anglo-Irish contempt for the English 'comes ironically close to national pride in their own revolutionaries', asserts that the first two of these passages – the burning of the house and the encounter on demesne land – are 'quintessential views from inside the demesne walls'. The destruction of Danielstown at the end of the novel is described by Foster as an enactment of Bowen's worst fears for Bowen's Court.[31] The more ideologically opposed critics of Bowen are to Foster's revisionist perspective, the more likely they tend to be to stress ties between Lois and the revolutionaries and to read the burning of the Big House as the register as much of authorial desire as of anxiety. In Declan Kiberd's analysis, tentative bonds are formed between Lois and the insurgents. Lois, we are told, 'feels a weird mixture of envy and terror' when she sees the IRA man on the demesne lands.[32] She is both fearful of what he is capable of doing in the name of Ireland and envious that in the process of resisting the very traditions that are having such a deadening effect on her, he has become so animated. The burning of the house, which by the end of the novel Lois is no longer present to comment on, 'means that at long last she can escape the cocoon: she is free now to enter a world of risk and growth rather than languish in one of fear and inexperience'.[33] Margot Gayle Backus establishes still closer and more active links between Lois and the anti-colonial insurgents, reminding us that Lois and Marda make a secret pack with the gunman in the derelict mill and physically block Mr

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Montmorency from entering the building to pursue him. Lois's pre-emptive flight of fancy in which she imagines the carpet in Marda's bedroom burning 'with the house in a scarlet night' is one of a number of passages cited by Backus when she writes of the 'unspeakable wish on the part of Ascendancy women [in *The Last September*] that the settler colonial system might disintegrate'.[34]

Bowen's Court, a microcosmic history of both the establishment and disintegration of this system, has in recent years begun to be justly elevated to the status of a significant Bowen text in its own right. Though the focus of critics who engage with the text is still on Bowen's allegiances, this family chronicle no longer functions solely in Irish literary criticism as an indicator of how Bowen might have wanted us to read *The Last September*. Astute commentators, such as Raphael Ingelbien who reads *Bowen's Court* alongside Bram Stroker's *Dracula*,[35] draw our attention to Bowen's lapses in *Bowen's Court* into plural pronouns and to the corresponding extent to which her identity as a narrator repeatedly blends with that of her subjects: 'We north-east County Cork gentry began rather roughly, as settlers' (*BC*, p.17). Closely identifying herself in such passages with her ancestors and the colonial community that they belonged to, Bowen also makes clear, through the chapter titles of her Ascendancy (auto)biography, her marginal position within this community and the marginal position of the Anglo-Irish women who preceded her. Most of the individual chapters are named after Bowen's male forebears with roman numerals attached, as if they were monarchs (Henry I, Robert III, and so on). The section of the book that tells of Bowen's own 'reign' is simply entitled 'Afterword', not 'Elizabeth I', which connects Bowen in terms of familial and linguistic importance to the pair of sisters mentioned in 'John Bowen I' 'whose sex did not even allow them capital letters in their father's will' and whose lives Bowen can only speculate about since 'they were not important, and ... left little trace' (*BC*, pp.77, 78).

Perhaps the lives of these sisters were similar to the imagined lives of the living ghosts whose ghostly presence Stella senses in the drawing-room of the Irish Big House featured in Bowen's wartime novel *The Heat of the Day*:

> After all, was it not chiefly here in this room ... that Cousin Nettie Morris – and who now knew how many more before her? – had been pressed back, hour by hour, by the hours themselves, into

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> cloudland? Ladies had gone not quite mad, not quite even that, from in vain listening for meaning in the loudening ticking of the clock ... Therefore, her kind knew no choices, made no decisions – or, did they not? Everything spoke to them – the design in and out of which they drew their needles; the bird with its little claws drawn to its piteously smooth breast, dead; away in the woods the quickening strokes of the axes, then the fall of the tree; or the child upstairs crying out terrified in its sleep. No, knowledge was not to be kept from them; it sifted through to them, stole up behind them, reached them by intimations – they suspected what they refused to prove. That had been their decision ... And though seated together, hems of their skirts touching, each one of the ladies had not ceased in herself to reflect alone; their however candid and clear looks in each others' [*sic*] eyes were interchanged warnings; their conversation was a twinkling surface over their deep silence. Virtually they were never to speak at all – unless to the little bird lying big with death on the path, the child being comforted out of the nightmare without waking, the leaf plucked still quivering from the felled tree. (*HD*, pp.166–7)

The cousin referred to in the opening lines of this passage is the present 'lady of the house', who is so reluctant to reassume the role of Anglo-Irish wife and assume the role of Anglo-Irish mother that she feigns insanity and remains voluntarily incarcerated in Wisteria Lodge, a home for the mentally ill. Her life in this plush asylum is shown to be a living death, but it is also made clear to us that for Nettie Morris the living death she has chosen is vastly superior to the living death she has left behind at Mount Morris.

It is not always necessary, however, to search in Elizabeth Bowen's 'non-Irish' novels and short stories for passages set in Ireland or for an overtly Irish theme in order to form interesting connections between her writings set exclusively in Ireland and her other literary works. Inter-generational tensions of the sort that Declan Kiberd and Margot Gayle Backus discuss in relation to *The Last September* are also a focus of interest in a number of critical studies of Bowen that centre on her writings set in England and on the continent, and pay scant attention to her Irish origins and Anglo-Irish heritage. One such study is *Elizabeth Bowen*

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and the Dissolution of the Novel in which it is stated that Bowen's novels 'embrace the concerns of both modernism and postmodernism as well as engaging with the historical specificity of two world wars, the changing role of women and the nuclear age'.[36] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, in this book, make reference to the importance of strained intergenerational relationships to *The Death of the Heart*, *The House in Paris* and *To the North*.[37] *The House in Paris*, for example, is described as being 'centrally concerned with the terrifying pressures which adults impose on children as they grow' and with the 'haunting of children by their own, and, more importantly, by others' pasts'.[38] Bennett and Royle's psychoanalytic analysis of the damaging genealogical structures revealed in the 'non-Irish' components of this novel offers insights to those critics who read Bowen in the context of Irish settler colonialism, just as a greater knowledge and understanding of Bowen's Anglo-Irish heritage would be invaluable to critics interested in such seemingly 'non-Irish' elements of her work.[39]

Façades (and the forces that threaten to shatter them) is another aspect of her work that critics of Bowen who fail to take fully into consideration the Irish context and critics who view her primarily as an Anglo-Irish writer find equally compelling. Drawing attention to St Quentin's quasi-Shakespearean assertion in *The Death of the Heart* that 'the world's really a stage', Bennett and Royle astutely point out that in Bowen's writings '"original" feelings are always in advance "in imitation"; unwitting or unconscious caricature ... marks every identity; the theatrical and dramatic inscribes every social relation, every experience of the self'.[40] In Irish literary criticism, the façade explored in relation to Bowen's work is almost invariably the pose assumed by the Anglo-Irish Naylors who in *The Last September* organize dances and tennis parties while outside the demesne walls a war of liberation takes place. In recent years a number of commentators who are interested in surfaces and their disruption in Bowen's work have begun the necessary task of linking themes considered central to an analysis of Bowen as an Anglo-Irish writer to what might initially appear to be very different aspects of her writing. In *The Gothic Family Romance*, for example, Margot Gayle Backus reveals points of conjuncture between Bowen's representation of the forces that seek to rip through the façade of Anglo-Irish society and her representation of the sexual desires and practices that threaten to shatter

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what is often depicted in Bowen's writings as the cracked surface of heterosexuality.[41]

This chapter opened with the observation that Bowen scholarship is extremely fragmented. To some extent, the disjointed nature of this body of criticism is an understandable consequence of the range and complexity of Elizabeth Bowen's work, but it is also the result of a failure on the part of many Bowen scholars, including ones engaged in Irish literary criticism, to trace the threads that run through what might appear, at first glance, to be a fragmented body of work. One of these threads, as I have suggested, is a fascination with fragmentation itself, with fragile or cracked surfaces and the pressures they are seeking to contain. This fascination is at the core of many of the different themes running through her novels and, consequently, connects the 'Anglo-Irish Bowen' with other Elizabeth Bowens of literary criticism, most notably the 'bisexual Bowen'. As an Irish woman writer from a settler colonial community that adopted a grandiose style in an attempt to cover up the repressed stories denied by its official narrative, Bowen was more attuned than most to the unspoken and, for some, unspeakable sexual desires that challenge what Adrienne Rich has termed 'compulsory heterosexuality'.[42] Her status as an Irish woman writer from a settler colonial community and the divided loyalties that this engendered also ensured, however, that Bowen's work never fulfilled its radical potential. The burning of Danielstown at the end of *The Last September* may be depicted as a necessary release for the stifled Lois, but the reader is also encouraged to admire the nonchalance of the older Naylors whose tennis parties are part of an attempt to maintain a slipping façade.[43] Same-sex desire is acknowledged in much of her writing but it is often rejected by characters in her novels as a non-sustainable life choice in favour of heterosexuality.[44] If Bowen was conscious of the fragility of surfaces and of the forces within that struggled to be released, she also had a fondness for the surfaces themselves and for those who sought to maintain them.

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NOTES

1. Sean O'Faolain, 'A Reading and Remembrance of Elizabeth Bowen', *London Review of Books* (4–17 March 1982), pp.15–16.
2. See, for example, Margo Gayle Backus, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1999), p.75.
3. Jack Lane, 'Introduction', in *Elizabeth Bowen: 'Notes on Eire', Espionage Reports to Winston Churchill, 1940–2; With a Review of Irish Neutrality in World War 2*, by Jack Lane and Brendan Clifford (Aubane: Aubane Historical Society, 1999), pp.5–9 (pp.5–6).
4. Roy Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p.122.
5. Ibid., pp.xvi, xii.
6. Lane, 'Introduction', p.5.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p.6.
9. See also the work of J.C. Beckett and F.S.L. Lyons.
10. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, p.xii.
11. Lane, 'Introduction', p.6.
12. Ibid., pp.6, 7. This volume also contains a somewhat biased account of the controversy generated in the *Irish Times* and other Irish newspapers by the publication of the *North Cork Anthology*.
13. See Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, p.113. See also Neil Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.184–5. Reminding us of a belligerent speech made by Churchill in the House of Commons shortly before Bowen's first report, Corcoran points out that Bowen's earlier overwhelmingly sympathetic reports on Irish neutrality were compiled at a time when Churchill was considering a possible re-conquest of sovereign Irish territory in order to access certain Irish ports.
14. Lane and Clifford, *Elizabeth Bowen: 'Notes on Eire'*, p.12.
15. Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland During the Second World War* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), p.12.
16. Ibid., pp.61, 80.
17. An example of such comparative work would be an essay that explores the points of conjuncture between Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* and Nadine Gordimer's South African female *Bildungsroman*, *The Lying Days* (1953).
18. Declan Kiberd, 'Elizabeth Bowen – The Dandy in Revolt', in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), pp.364–79 (p.367).
19. Ibid., p.370.
20. Backus, *Gothic Family Romance*, pp.172, 19.
21. Ibid., p.172.
22. Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Introduction: Beyond Dichotomies – Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class in Settler Societies', in *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of*

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Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class, ed. D. Stasiulis and N. Yuval-Davis (London: Sage, 1995), pp.1–38.

23. Ibid., p.214.
24. Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (London: Vintage, 1998 [1929]), p.206, hereafter referred to in the text as *TLS*.
25. For a concise historical overview of the Big House novel, see Seamus Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994 [1986]), pp.203–6. Bowen's *The Last September* is aptly referred to in this overview as the novel in which the Sheridan Le Fanu and the Somerville and Ross literary heritage is combined (p.205).
26. Elizabeth Bowen, *A World of Love* (London: Vintage, 1999 [1955]).
27. Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris* (London: Vintage, 1998 [1935]); *The Heat of the Day* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1949), hereafter referred to in the text as *HD*; *Elizabeth Bowen's Irish Stories* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1986 [1978]).
28. Vera Kreilkamp, 'Stages of disloyalty in Elizabeth Bowen's Irish Fiction', in *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), pp.141–73.
29. Elizabeth Bowen, *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1943 [1942]); *Bowen's Court* (Cork: Collins Press, 1998 [1942]), hereafter referred to in the text as *BC*.
30. See, for example, Hermione Lee's description of the novel as a 'form of elegy' that nostalgically marks the passing of the Ascendancy in *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1981), p.51, and Edwin Kenney's assertion that the novel reveals the 'guilty void at the center' of the Anglo-Irish community in *Elizabeth Bowen*, Irish Writers Series (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1975), p.34.
31. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, p.106. See also Heather Bryant Jordan's assertion that the final scene of *The Last September* is best interpreted in the context to Bowen's claim in *Bowen's Court* that she survived the instability of Bowen's Court's tenure during the period of the 1920s by teaching herself to imagine the house in flames, in *How Will the Heart Endure? Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of War* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p.59.
32. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p.369.
33. Ibid., p.372.
34. Backus, *Gothic Family Romance*, p.180. In *Heathcliff and the Great Famine: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), Terry Eagleton expresses a marked degree of understandable skepticism when discussing the kinds of alignments and connections that Kiberd and Backus draw our attention to in their analyses of *The Last September*: 'There is a spurious kind of fellowship between oppressor and oppressed: if the exploiter is an outcast, then so are those on whom he battens; if they have no identity, then neither has he. What this conveniently overlooks is that if the ruler bears the mark of Cain it is because of his own actions, which is why the oppressed are outcast too; but in Ireland this symmetry can pass as plausible, since the governing class really does have good reason to feel paranoid. Their sense of persecution, in part at least, is a dread of the vengeance of those they have persecuted. Estranged from the populace

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by culture and religion, the elite can easily mistake itself for the marginal, and so misperceive itself as a mirror image of the people themselves' (p.191).

35. Raphael Ingelbien, 'Gothic Genealogies: *Dracula*, *Bowen's Court*, and Anglo-Irish Psychology', *English Literary History*, 70, 4 (2003), pp.1089–1105.
36. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p.xiv.
37. Elizabeth Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* (London: Vintage, 1998 [1938]); *To the North* (London: Penguin, 1986 [1932]).
38. Bennett and Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel*, p.43.
39. Rare examples of how Bowen's 'non-Irish' writings can be effectively interpreted in relation to her Anglo-Irish heritage include Claire Connolly's fascinating reading of the 'uneasy textualization of belonging' in *Eva Trout*, a novel in which there is not a single mention of Ireland, in the context of 'Bowen's own near feudal understanding of the relation between people and property in her native Ireland'. See Claire Connolly, '(Be)longing – The Strange Place of Elizabeth Bowen's *Eva Trout*', in *Borderlands: Negotiating Boundaries in Post-Colonial Writing*, ed. Monika Reif Hülser (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp.135–43 (p.139). See also Margo Gayle Backus' analysis of Bowen's celebrated short story, 'The Demon Lover', as a text which, notwithstanding its English wartime setting, 'displays a narrative logic that exhibits patterns of repetition and historical recurrence that are characteristic of Anglo-Irish narrative structure', in *Gothic Family Romance*, p.157.
40. Bennett and Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel*, p.73.
41. Backus, *Gothic Family Romance*, p.180.
42. Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979–1985* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), pp.23–75.
43. In 'The Big House' (1940), in *Collected Impressions* (London: Longmans, 1950), pp.195–202, Bowen expresses approval for the 'Big House people [who] concealed their struggles with such nonchalance and for so long continued to throw about what did not really amount to much weight. It is to their credit that, with grass almost up to their doors and hardly a sixpence to turn over, they continued to be resented by the rest of Ireland as being the heartless rich' (pp.197–8).
44. See Emmeline's assertion in *To the North* that 'houses shared with women are built on sand' (p.208).