CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	“Not like a person at all": Bowen, the 1920s and ‘The Dancing-Mistress’
Authors	Coughlan, Patricia
Publication date	2009
Original Citation	Coughlan, P. (2009) ‘“Not like a person at all": Bowen, the 1920s and ‘The Dancing-Mistress’”, in Walshe, E. (ed.), Elizabeth Bowen, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, pp. 40–65
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	https://www.irishacademicpress.ie/product/elizabeth-bowen/
Rights	© 2009 by Irish Academic Press. Chapters © Individual Contributors
Download date	2026-11-15 17:51:34
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/15584

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

CHAPTER FOUR

'Not like a person at all': Bowen, the 1920s and 'The Dancing-Mistress'

PATRICIA COUGHLAN

Vigorous critical growth during the 1990s and 2000s in the re-conceiving of anglophone modernisms and in arriving at less monolithic and more varied understandings of the inter-war decades is healthily affecting Bowen studies, as has strong and increasing feminist interest in her work from the 1980s onwards. An equally productive turn by scholars of Irish literature towards less parochial analysis of her writing has also become evident. From another critical direction, the rich and innovative socio-historical work by cultural historians and biographers on the first three decades of the twentieth century, including the development of queer studies of this period, are also gradually providing Bowen criticism with deeper, fuller and more accurate contexts and interpretative perspectives. The appearance since 2000 of the Corcoran and Ellmann monographs, both useful and serious contributions to the field, is a sign of the continuing development both of critical thought concerning Bowen's work and of fuller acknowledgement and appreciation of her extraordinary fictional vision.[1] There remain, however, many avenues in Bowen criticism which have yet to be adequately explored.

Of the two recent full-scale studies, Maud Ellmann's psychoanalytically attuned discussion especially advances the analysis of questions of desire and their role in Bowen's art. Furthermore, it is the most effective, focused and searching analysis to date of Bowen's constantly recurring and intensely felt representations of triangular loves and of the extraordinary difficulty for characters in her fictional universe of achieving

relationships *à deux*. I see this seemingly inescapable triangulation as itself an indication of Bowen's pervasive scepticism about the adequacy of given social forms, a scepticism which her work most satisfyingly realizes and most arrestingly expresses in connection with the norms of romantic and sexual love. Her writing always also interests itself in the social construction of femininities: Bowen's delicate, sceptical anatomy of the permissible modes of being feminine, in all its ironies, is emerging in the best recent criticism as one of her most remarkable achievements. Focusing on a single short story from 1928, this chapter considers our current thinking about Bowen's larger treatment of these interrelated questions.

The texts of Bowen's (and the century's) twenties are still a neglected part of her work, though they are of such interest that to attend to them in more depth and detail will be a productive critical strategy. Especially under-discussed are the first three short-story collections: *Encounters* (1923), *Ann Lee's* (1926), and *Joining Charles* (1929). Of the three novels of this period, *The Hotel* (1927) and *Friends and Relations* (1931), both elegant and mordant English novels of manners, have also had a muted reception by comparison with *The Last September* (1929), deservedly treated as a classic exploration of the demise of colonial culture. It is timely for several reasons to give much fuller consideration to the significance of these earlier stories. For one thing, they include powerful and beautifully executed works of narrative art which question and disturb inherited British ideologies in the era of rapid modernization, with its attendant oscillation between feverish excitements and *anomie*. For another, these early stories play an important role as precursors to the great novels and later classic tales, into which they offer important insights. In particular, their explorations of gender are of great interest, interwoven as these often are with explorations of volatile sexual feeling and of the will to power in interpersonal relations. Furthermore, they were being written at formative intersections of modernity, place and period, as is shown by recent research and writing on anglophone culture *circa* 1922–39, a body of criticism which is dismantling previous monolithic models of modernism.

These stories are predominantly set in the south of England, with a very few in Ireland. In them, Bowen conducts a merciless enquiry into contemporary ways of life, principally among the middle and upper-middle classes, in the rapidly altering context of post-First World War

modernity. It has often been suggested apropos of the novels that this enquiry, with its curious self-positioning both inside and outside these social worlds, is connected with Bowen's own equivocal placing geographically and culturally. All the evidence shows that her Irish planter history and her deeply felt roots in North Cork persist in emotional importance. They form a constant cultural counter-current to her enthusiastic social and intellectual involvement from the mid-1920s onwards with the elite circle of Oxford academics, critics and other writers whom she encountered mainly, at first, through her husband Alan Cameron. She had initially gained access to publication, however, and therefore to intellectual agency in her own right, via the female network of her old headmistress's acquaintance with Rose Macaulay.[2] The chic and witty smartness of her social life as it developed in this period, during which she gradually attained a writer's reputation, forms a glossy patina of faintly ironic grace over the ultimately dark and disruptive scepticism of her work itself. To demonstrate the riches which still lie half-unregarded in these early writings, I have chosen to consider, partly as an exemplary text, 'The Dancing-Mistress'.[3]

This story offers an especially pointed instance of femininity as display, and simultaneously poises this extravagant masquerade amid both verbal and sexual inversion, ambiguous and unfixed gendering, and startling cruelty. Its central character is a memorable obsessive. Shown as driven both by inner forces and economic necessity, this anti-heroine is named Joyce James. I shall argue that, despite (or perhaps partly because of) its relatively low-life setting among characters clinging to the edges of respectability, the story is important in broaching main themes and patterns of desire, ruthlessness and desperation which the mature novelist explores elsewhere on a larger scale. For the setting of the dancing-class, as Glendinning notes, Bowen probably drew material from her own girlhood in Kent between the ages of 7 and 13, during what were to be her mother's last years.[4] The immediacy of this setting is akin to that of another intensely focused story, written before 1923, 'Coming Home'.[5] Both also concern mothering and motherlessness, quintessential Bowen subjects, and, not coincidentally, both invoke raw anger and aggression.

'The Dancing-Mistress' appeared fourth among eleven stories in the collection *Joining Charles*, published on 11 July 1929, only five months

after *The Last September*. As the author by then of two previous short-story collections and a novel, *The Hotel*, Bowen did sometimes get individual stories accepted by periodical editors, but not, it seems, this one.[6] The title story of *Joining Charles*, a pointed critique of domestic patriarchy, had appeared in 1926. It is not surprising that 'The Dancing-Mistress' did not find separate publication in the 1920s, though it was later reprinted twice, opening Bowen's 1946 *Selected Stories* and accompanying many of her most celebrated pieces in *A Day in the Dark*.[7] It is a downbeat, darkly concentrated and rather shocking story with overtones of sadism, largely without humour or even Bowen's characteristic dry irony. It is also, however, a compelling work. In her novels (all but the final two, at any rate) Bowen liked to preserve the surfaces of polite society, however intense the emotional and moral disruptions underlying those surfaces. The narrower compass of the short-story form, as she herself observed, enabled her to breach those surfaces and represent intense and disedifying struggles, on occasion with uncanny overtones, beneath.[8] Also collected in *Joining Charles* is the powerful, uncanny story 'Foothold'.[9] Set in an upper-middle-class Home Counties milieu, this uses a motif of haunting but, as I shall argue, also shows, from a different angle, Bowen's concentrated anatomizing of the array of conventional femininities as these were enjoined upon women in her era.

In the small compass of 'The Dancing-Mistress' Bowen establishes a scene of weariness and drudgery and a set of mainly unspoken tensions. I shall return to the specifics of these strains, and how they are played out, after exploring more fully some central aspects of the story's themes as they are evident more generally in the period and in Bowen's thought. As I have said, the brevity of the genre enforces compression, which can work as an enabling factor rather than a constriction. Here it enables her to look askance at the processes of gender construction and performance and at how these processes are interwoven by the bourgeoisie as a vital part of its own self-reproduction. The story flagrantly connects these processes with cruelty and manipulation; it also hints at the operations, within harsh containment, of irregular sexualities, including what sexological discourse then called 'inversion'. In the months before its first appearance in print, this, as we shall see, was a prominent and contentious topic. Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness* had caused a furore from its publication in August 1928 through and after

the subsequent obscenity trial, which opened in November 1928, eight months before 'The Dancing-Mistress' was published.[10]

The story exemplifies that powerful focus on the morally and psychologically disturbing which is often evident in Bowen's writing. Set in a south-eastern seaside resort, its action is completed in the space of a single foggy November afternoon and evening. The narration is mainly omniscient, with an austere and slightly eerie use of zero focalization: this gives the story a distinctive feel of almost-nowhere-ness. Bowen focalizes her narration only intermittently when she does it through the three main female characters: the dancing-mistress Joyce James, Joyce's pianist Miss Peel, and the child Margery Mannering, a pupil in the weekly class. Lulu the 'hotel secretary', a young Swiss whose viewpoint we are not given, completes the cast of significant adult characters. Despite the normally feminine name, Lulu is male. The swooping, almost predatory, handling of viewpoint produces a pulsing rhythm of competing interiorities, interspersed with a chill detachment on the narrator's part. This spare deployment of focalization leaves the reader with only glimpses of the characters' inner perceptions and motivation, glimpses which are themselves mainly dark and chill like the fog with which the story opens and which deforms the streetscape, making everything appear unreal and impermanent, 'like a painting on blotting-paper': a vintage Bowen effect of insubstantiality, fading and unreliability of perception (*CS*, p.253).

The adult principals are a strange trio. There is the 21-year-old, yet permanently exhausted, Joyce James (an inversion, seven years after the scandals of *Ulysses*, with its literary significance hidden in plain view), her accompanist who lacks a given name as if to underline her purely performative role, and Lulu. He and Miss Peel ('Peelie' to the others) share an intense emotional involvement with Joyce, accompanying, looking after and longing for her. The pianist is swiftly invented in one tiny but telling narrative notation at the outset: she 'moistened the tops of her fingers to flatten her hair back; it was polished against her skull *like a man's*' (*CS*, p.253; my emphasis); she also wears 'a slave-bangle' on each arm. Connected – or rather yoked – to Miss Peel by their common attachment to Joyce is Lulu, described as 'distressingly beautiful' and (femininely) 'fervent and graceful', with his girlish name, who nevertheless pines for her and once gives her a 'straight level look of desire'

(p.257). During the dance lesson he covertly coaxes Peelie, 'brushing her back as she played', to bring Joyce to supper *à trois*: his 'I want her tonight' contrives to sound both pettish and passionate (p.258). They are in competition for her attention, yet also paradoxically in league. Furthermore, they seem interchangeable in role. In the final scene Peel literally swaps places with Lulu when she gently withdraws her supporting arm from under the sleeping girl's head, allowing Lulu to substitute his, in the taxi to the station.

The story's sexualities are plainly non-phallic. Miss Peel is equivocally masculinized, Lulu equally equivocally feminized, and neither can consummate her or his desire. This is partly because its object, Joyce, is desexed, in all but very fleeting moments of affect, by her absolute preoccupation with dance, which the story shows as something between an artist's vocation and punishing hard labour. Furthermore, marrying, pairing off correctly according to the social rubrics, is not envisaged in this off-beat, almost under-world. The reasons for this inability are overdetermined: there are economic factors, in that all three struggle hard for their living and must be seen to maintain respectability, but emotional dysfunction also figures, and it seems to be this which most interests Bowen. 'Distressingly beautiful', Lulu lacks what Donne called 'masculine persuasive force'.[11] This feminized man, then, shares the position of unsatisfied desire with the masculinized woman Peelie (to the fact, already noted, that we know only her *surname*, we might add that we have only his *given* name, which itself inverts the social custom of calling women by their first names and men by their last). If we put this purely in the classic patriarchal (or Lacanian) terms of the inescapable family predicated on heterosexuality (with Peelie and Joyce in a mother–infant dyad), this male figure has not the capacity to break the three-handed relationship in order both to possess the desired woman and to establish the safe future-oriented patriarchal order. I shall return at the end to this curious echoing of the family in the Lulu–Joyce–Peelie threesome.

This triangular relation shares the story with another principal idea and is interwoven with it: the teacher's victimization, amounting to cruelty, of the ungainly and 'overdressed' little girl Margery Mannering. Poor Margery has 'red sausage-curls tied up with lop-eared white bows and spectacles that misted over, blinding her, when she got hot' (*CS*, p.255). She cannot dance, belongs only to 'a grandmother' (p.55), and

is accompanied by a servant where the other little girls have mothers or governesses. Still, she cannot escape the femininity whose painstaking – and painful – construction the story is anatomizing: she also has 'pretty-child affectations that sat forlornly upon her. Now she flung back her hard curls; they bounced on her back' (p.256). The small dancers are being schooled precisely in a repertory of bourgeois womanly graces; the class's handful of little boys are specifically excluded from the 'springing exercises, so graceful' (p.256): a flash of Bowen irony, all the more striking for the general absence of such effects from this text. Bowen's account of that bodily schooling pinpoints the contradiction between these graceful surfaces and the discipline and regimentation of the work necessary to bring about the almost military precision the 'rows of little girls' are required to achieve (pp.253, 256). The story is clear-sighted about the punishing technologies of perfection underlying these feminine forms: compare the child Adele's being recurrently beaten over the knuckles by her piano teacher in Beckett's radio play *Embers* (1955), another scene where the brutal inculcation of feminine graces in the middle-class child is sceptically rehearsed by an equivocally placed Irish writer. This force and effort is displaced into the musical accompaniment, where it is eloquently mimed in the pianist's mute aggression: 'Miss Peel spanked out the Marche Militaire' and 'the chords clanged vindictively, like choppers falling' (pp.255, 256). Margery's last name suggests the 'manner[ing]' of the girls as future ladies, the ways in which they must become mannered.

'The Dancing-Mistress' is of especial interest because of its oppressive staging of a process evidently important to Elizabeth Bowen's own self-presentation, both in actual social life and, arguably, in the contained, distanced elegance of her work. Looking at the photographic studio portraits of Bowen (as distinct from and indeed in contrast to the paintings), the glossy surface patina is striking: within the gleaming hair, dark lipstick and heavy glittering jewellery, what we see is a woman stilled, presented formally in an almost hieratic pose, artfully arranged and offering a smooth, seemingly varnished object to the eye (the 1950 Angus McBean portrait reproduced in Glendinning and Lee is the best example).[12] Whatever may be within withholds itself severely and formidably: the strong bony face suggests not only Anglo-Irish good breeding (the quality Virginia Woolf in her diary unkindly labelled 'horse-faced'), but

also, with mild incongruity, a carapace of urbane social performance.[13] The emphatic femininity announced by such images is simultaneously and piquantly countered by this strength of Bowen's facial features, much more handsome than pretty and easy to re-imagine as capable of a rather different, masculine presentation. Indeed her friend John Lehmann, visiting Bowen in Ireland in 1953, discerned 'a stylish, rather masculine carriage, as if about to settle on a shooting stick and lift binoculars'.[14] Five decades later, gender self-presentation is, of course, often conceived of by theorists as indeed a performance (or a sequence of them). We might, then, read Bowen's portrait images as what Judith Butler calls a set of 'citations' from among certain femininities of the early to mid-twentieth-century period: decorative, highly polished and maybe engaged in containing masked anxieties about inner otherness.[15] The evidence for such anxiety of feminine perfection in Bowen's actual social life has been previously discussed and is not my principal concern here.[16] But this outward image of a high-gloss femininity, with its curious effect of occluding or even blotting out the interior self, is also closely concerned in one of the principal interlocking themes of 'The Dancing-Mistress' as I read it, namely the constraints upon selves of the array of mandatory feminine subject positions. The story, of course, already focuses outwardly on performance in more conventional senses, since it recounts a dance class, including graceful exemplary solo work by the expert teacher.

To help us understand Bowen's working out of these themes, the contemporary socially gendered and sexed contexts of 'The Dancing-Mistress' are worth considering. Recent feminist cultural-historical and biographical, as well as literary, studies of the 1920s and the 1930s have greatly increased our knowledge of this period.[17] As against the constraints upon women to maintain a sanctioned femininity within the rules, we are gaining more detailed and nuanced views of energetic challenges posed by an articulate minority of – mainly upper-middle or upper class – women to the dominant ideology of gender. Such challenges were conducted via dress and coiffure, writing and various other arts, by engaging in concrete physical adventure, and by seizing upon the provisional freedoms women gained by default during the emergency conditions of the First World War. The work of Laura Doan and other scholars from the 1990s on has greatly advanced the study of

social and cultural gendering in these two decades.[18] Where sexual forms and expressions are concerned, research and discussion has illuminated the definitional work of sexology, the new field crucial to modern understandings of the self. This was jointly constituted, from the mid-1880s onwards, by the invention of psychoanalysis and by attempts under the sign of positivism (sometimes prior to, sometimes concomitant with, the psychoanalytic) to classify and explain human sexuality and gendering.[19] On a point specifically relevant to Bowen's story, Doan carefully explores both the distinctions and the connections between a widespread 1920s fashion for masculine dress and coiffure, on the one hand, and the leading of lesbian or female-masculine lives on the other.[20] Those pervasive, widely adopted boyish fashions, whatever their varying relation to women's exploration and expression of variant sexualities, however, met an abrupt disavowal when the *Well of Loneliness* affair erupted late in 1928. Only then, Doan shows, did they become inextricably and narrowly associated with the scandal of female 'inversion'. This, as I have noted, was the exact moment of 'The Dancing-Mistress', with its silk-clad but mannishly coiffed Miss Peel: the multiple inversions in the story as a whole underline this figure's real emotional investment in alternative sexual object-choice, however gracelessly it coexists with her compulsory femininity. It seems clear that the story is invoking such alternative configurations and linking them with the central importance of performance(s).

What is the role of such non-normative or variant sexualities and gender appurtenances in Bowen's vision? The various challenges to normative femininity by women in the period held considerable potential to disturb conventional gender roles and relations, and the self-understanding of thinking individuals, even if in their own lives the norms were ostensibly observed. (At the heart of Bowen's and her husband's personal lives was an example of variance in sexual behaviour, the non-consummation of their marriage, as recorded by her 1930s lover Humphry House.[21]) Contemporary criticism is coming to realize how non-standard sexual arrangements of various kinds are registered, far more widely than has always been granted, in Bowen's earlier work as well as in her last two novels. Often this registering appears mocking, and sometimes also apotropaic, for example in gestures of self-distancing from non-normative sexuality made here and there by characters

within the texts: but the issue is complex, and Bowen's own position rigorously masked.

Readers will recall many such moments of *frisson* and disturbance: I mention only two examples. In *To the North* (published three years after 'The Dancing-Mistress') the young widow Cecilia, the cannier and more conventional of the book's two heroines, warns the other protagonist Emmeline of the undesirability of close association with their acquaintance the lesbian Connie Pleach, whose friendship Cecilia clearly judges to have predatory overtones which risk the social devaluation of Emmeline ('anyone can see her affection for you is unholy').[22] But a significant irony surrounds this reproving moment, undermining Cecilia's exact sense of the socially imprudent. Instead of lesbian Connie with her 'unholy' desires polluting the angelic Emmeline, the latter is in fact using Connie and her convenient possession of a country cottage as a blind for her own non-marital but heterosexual relationship with the cad Markie. This undercutting neatly instances the ambiguous, wavering quality which often marks Bowen's references to lesbian characters and attachments, with distaste voiced by characters not themselves always capable of reliable judgement. In another instance of this, also in *To the North*, the egregiously controlling Lady Waters plays hostess to temperamental composer Marcelle Veness, who has just lost her girl-friend. Bowen represents Veness's tempestuous chain-smoking unhappiness rather less negatively than she does Lady Waters' domination of whomever she can overpower. And Miss Tripp, the bluestocking secretary who falls in love with the abstracted Emmeline, wrapped up in her own emotions, is a semi-comic and pathetic, but morally far from negligible, characterization: her rebellious outburst serves to show up Emmeline's heedlessness of others, symbolized physically by her extreme myopia, a trait of Bowen's own (*To the North*, pp.124–6).

'The Dancing-Mistress', however, is disturbingly different from these instances of a nice balance of negative and positive judgements of lesbian desires. Its representation of Peelie is darkened towards the end by her unpleasant emergence as a quasi-pander figure who enjoys half-pimping Joyce to Lulu, half-withholding her. At first the two 'girls' [sic] (CS, p.259) appear as companions wearily sharing their day's work, 'holding the mirror for one another', with one, Peelie, doing more of the empathetic caring than the other – 'I say sure you don't feel too rotten?'

(p.253). But this affectionate solicitude of the plainer, supportive friend comes to be bound up by the end with manipulation and voyeuristic affect. During the class Peelie repeatedly draws Joyce's attention to Lulu's hovering, watching presence, and when he touches Joyce, even if only to guide her to the dining-table, Peelie's '*hard unabashed* eyes contemplated them *curiously*' (p.262; my emphasis). Later, as they walk by the harbour, in a voice 'tinged with contempt' she underlines her own indispensability in this shared performance of desire, asking 'I wonder what you two would do next if I fell in and never bobbed up again' (p.261). The scene is rendered with all Bowen's economy of figuration to suggest balked sexual appetite and to render it repulsive and predatory (despite the 'slave-bangles' she wears). The extent of Lulu's fulfilment, for his part, is a snatched kiss in the darkness between lamps, beside where 'the dark, polished water *sucked hard-lipped* at the embankment' (p.261; my emphasis). I have noted Doan's account of the move to repudiate any hint of lesbian sexuality from the moment when the *Well of Loneliness* scandal broke: can Bowen's characterization of Peelie be considered an instance of such disavowal? The narrator does little to render sympathetic either Peelie's masculine self-presentation, or her unrequited adoration of Joyce. Altogether this seems a quasi-homophobic representation of lesbian desire and a deliberate recoil from Peelie's part-rejection of prescribed femininity, as from a thing almost grotesque (the man's hairstyle and the silk dress).

I shall return to the specifically psychological struggles of power and desire at the centre of 'The Dancing-Mistress'. But another of its points of especial interest is the important role played in it by the question of class, not a consideration much attended to in Bowen. The dancing-mistress is completely drained by her work, rising early to perfect her dancing at 'Madam Majowski's' studio, then travelling out of London daily to teach. This sharply differentiates her from most of Bowen's heroines: she is respectable but is not a gentlewoman. Such a class perspective, among the underlings of the bourgeoisie – a class still sedulously reproducing itself in the 1920s despite the cataclysms of war and the accompanying and subsequent revolutions and radical shifts – is unusual in Bowen. 'The Dancing-Mistress', which with its opening fog scene echoes *Bleak House*, is nevertheless exceptionally convincing compared to Bowen's other – often quite strained – representations of lower- or

lower-middle class characters, even in some of her finest novels. Besides her eight dancing dresses 'like clouds, in gradations of beauty', a fur coat to cover them and a practice tunic, Joyce possesses only 'a cloth coat-and-skirt that looked wrong in the country and shabby in town' (p.254). Joyce, Peelie and Lulu are, indeed, all credibly rendered as economically subaltern figures under the constraints of an iron respectability. Joyce and Lulu may not be seen to dine *à deux* in the town because he 'showed ladies into their bedrooms' and she 'spent hours in clumsy men's arms', hence it 'did not do' for them to be 'patently man and woman' (p.259). Among the scanty critical mentions of 'The Dancing-Mistress', Mitchell discusses it primarily as an example of Bowen's interest in the inauthenticity of 'being forced to play a role' and considers that 'the essence' of the story is what he calls 'perversion', which he characterizes as a reversal of 'natural and artificial'.[23] He neither addresses the question of specifically economic constraints upon Joyce and Lulu, nor considers Joyce's performance as a gendered one. He therefore passes over the centrality to the story of constructions of femininity, as do most other earlier critics, despite the overwhelming majority of female protagonists in Bowen's work, this story included.

Joyce has aspirations to rise above her chagrin-inducing class position with its oppressive regulation and physically gruelling work. Her art, including her dawn labour, is co-extensive with this ceaseless painful discipline, even punishment, of her own suffering body. This in itself, the intense and vivid realization of Joyce's work *as* work, makes the story stand out amid Bowen's writing, which elsewhere is not especially a writing of the body, still less one which attends to ordinary, harsh working lives as French and English Naturalists such as Zola, Hardy and Gissing had done in pre-First World War novels. Here, however, she does give an arresting, if small-scale, representation of the constraints upon an equivocally classed middle group who served the aesthetic, sensuous and ideological needs of the English middle classes, in whose consciousness they did not figure as existential individuals. The fact that Peelie and Joyce are paid working women, and this in itself no longer compromises their respectability, interestingly acknowledges the twentieth-century widening, however, gradual and grudging, of women's possible roles in non-domestic spheres and in the economy, a widening especially occurring in the 1920s. (If 'The Dancing-Mistress' is indeed,

as Glendinning suggests, autobiographical, then it draws its material from the pre-Great War period, but Bowen does not project the action into that lost pre-1914 world: Peelie's coiffure, to choose only one telling detail, definitely belongs to the 1920s.)

Both women cling to respectable status, but they are paid (however poorly) to serve the partly forcible, even physical, shaping of little girls towards bourgeois womanliness, which is also much more literally examined than is usual for Bowen's work. In her early fiction she more often stages the assumption of femininity as a conscious act, and its mandatory character is less blatantly evident to the protagonists of the gestures making up this act. This is particularly clearly a matter of performance when the character assuming – or, in Butler's term, citing – it is adolescent or a very young woman (the very funny 1926 story 'Charity' offers a vivid example of the channelling and fixing of desire in correctly opposing genitalities, and the corralling of young girls' frank bodily vigour). Theodora, the tall, awkward and clever teenager in *Friends and Relations*, constructs the hilarious telephone persona of Lady Hunter Jervois, nonchalant female aristocrat, as an ironic performance. In various works Bowen adopts a dryly sceptical stance towards almost all the possible modes of femininity. Her fictional vision, taken as a whole, sees – and sees beyond – the channelling and fixing of girls' energies; yet the body of Bowen criticism (with significant exceptions, such as Lee) has managed not to acknowledge the subversiveness of this. 'The Dancing-Mistress' offers a peculiar angle on this complex theme, when in the character of Peelie it shows both equivocal gendering and desire finding its object without discrimination as to gender, indeed in implicit though concealed defiance of conventional social regulation (though as we have seen this is not represented as any kind of moral or emotional ideal).

At the centre of the story, however, the figure of Joyce most clearly shows how female (and indeed Lulu's male) *desire* does not coincide with the living of *femininity*. A central and abiding concern in Bowen's work as a whole is how, even perhaps whether, normative womanhood can be negotiated and lived, and what the living of it might do to the self (as for instance to Lois, Karen, Stella, in three of her major novels). An important strand of my argument in this chapter is that in 'The Dancing-Mistress' Bowen is experimenting with a limit-case of extreme

femininity: the dancer who must subdue and distort her whole bodily and emotional being to the performance of a quintessence or apotheosis of feminine beauty and grace, and as a result becomes 'not like a person at all', as one of her pupils thinks (*CS*, p.256). This late 1920s experiment, with its lower-class register, is part of Bowen's framing of the whole question of feminine being, in the self and in the world, before the majority of her most celebrated work was produced and in an era of fashionable and partly permitted transgression.

Another of her 1920s stories, 'Foothold' (1926), offers a contrasting exploration of different femininities, in the highly regulated milieu of the upper-middle classes (Bowen's more usual territory). Like 'The Dancing-Mistress', it sets up a triangle of attachments, though this is much more Jamesian and less rawly sensational in tone, and the central figure ultimately splits, under the strain of conforming to femininity, into a self and an uncanny double. Janet is married, apparently happily, to the conventional Gerard, and they have moved to a smallish country house at commuting distance from London. Thomas, an unmarried intellectual and old friend, has come to stay. Intensely aesthetic, he admires the perfection of Janet's beauty and is happy to be rid of Gerard during the days so as to wander the house and garden in her company. It is clear that Thomas meets emotional and intellectual needs of Janet's which Gerard does not, but equally evident that his fanatical detestation of children (he will visit only after hers have been packed off to boarding-school) and his arid, fastidious self-importance are markedly negative aspects of his characterization. (They very clearly anticipate Bowen's hostile rendering of Eva Trout's homosexual stepfather and his partner.) He appreciates Janet as aesthetes admire fine things: the narrator labels this admiration 'academic'. Thomas is writing a book about monasteries and is also an expert on gardens, with aspirations to be a Great Writer figure. 'Foothold' alludes to Meredith and Proust (to whose stature Thomas, laughably, aspires), and also, via a teasing remark of Janet's, to the polar opposites of Victorian Catholic devotional author Francis Thompson and the aggressively secular, rational and modern H.G. Wells. The real business of the story, masked by English restraint and phlegm, only slowly emerges: Janet is being haunted by a figure she calls Clara, a previous occupant of the house. The Wellsian rational modernity which Thomas *thinks* he espouses is disturbed as the story unfolds by

psychic phenomena which have not, after all, been suppressed by the practical rationality of the mid-1920s. Playing mockingly with Wells's name, the narrator gives Thomas 'an intuition of some *well* he had half-divined in her having been tapped' (*CS*, p.305; my emphasis). The ghost Clara is an obvious *doppelgänger* of Janet's, and Thomas himself, despite his sceptical stance, eventually sees her walking on the upper landing, at first mistaking her for Janet herself. It gradually emerges that Janet is in the process of mental disintegration, despite her own vehement denials of any trouble.

'Foothold' makes clear that it is indeed the upper-middle-class lady's life, the state of being genteelly *désoeuvrée*, which is psychologically destroying Janet. This scenario, while unfolding in quite a different setting from 'The Dancing-Mistress', has in common with it the positing of a woman's fundamentally unachieved personhood. Thomas, who fancies himself as an interpreter of culture and society, despises the maternal and sensual sides of Janet's being and tries to turn her into an *objet d'art*. Meanwhile, immured with her dogs and her herbaceous borders, in desperation she conjures from within herself the dead woman, who seems, unsettlingly, partly *alter ego* and partly lover. 'Foothold' is full-blown Gothic, playing out the split-personality motif with a ghost, while 'The Dancing-Mistress' might be called merely sensational. Both, however, work from their different angles and class positions to trouble the category of the feminine and to interrogate feminine social roles. Janet's splitting and Joyce's inner emptiness (and, as we shall see, her sadistic affect) are parallel horrors which both manifest the oppression of required feminine roles. Compare the passage in *The Heat of the Day* recalling the near madness of Stella's female Mount Morris ancestors: 'Ladies had gone not quite mad, not even that, from in vain listening for meaning in the loudening ticking of the clock'.[24]

The earlier story 'Ann Lee's' (1924)[25] experiments, by contrast, with feminine agency, as opposed to the hardening or splitting enacted respectively in the constraints upon Joyce and Janet. 'Ann Lee's' is, like 'The Dancing-Mistress', among the few explorations in early Bowen of subaltern lives (a less assured example is 'The Return', whose protagonist is a lady's paid companion who chafes at her subordinate position[26]). 'Ann Lee's', a much more striking parallel with 'The Dancing-Mistress', focuses on a mysterious, priestess-like hat-maker; this brings out another aspect

of the 'The Dancing-Mistress' theme, namely the woman-as-artist. Ann Lee works with her hands and, like Joyce, provides a service to ladies of means, but it is clear that in her own eyes she is an artist, not an artisan. Bowen uses a different narrative technique in this story, never once showing us Ann Lee's inner thoughts and as narrator confining herself to the joint viewpoints of the two vapid young wives who slum it (in the meaner streets of early 1920s Chelsea) in search of elegance. Mysterious and almost silent, by talent and sheer personal force Ann Lee achieves ascendancy over these silly women who come prepared to patronize her but leave overawed (and having spent their husbands' money heavily).

Both Ann's transcendent skill, exercised in a faintly minatory quietness, and Joyce's speechless grace when she is dancing, might be seen as figures of the artist's performance, and therefore as early symbolic explorations by Elizabeth Bowen, angular (and 'farouche') Anglo-Irishwoman relocated to smart London and Oxford, of her own possible creative powers. The hint of malice in Ann, Joyce's far harsher vindictiveness, and the sharp ironic sensibility and occasional capacity for ruthlessness of Bowen their creator, are revealingly linked. Both Joyce and Ann use their art to serve in the construction and adequate maintenance of femininity. Ann also differs from Joyce, however, in two ways. One is the possibility of her self-empowerment, against the odds and all the rules of polite, that is still rigidly hierarchical, society (despite the advent of modernity in some spheres). The other is the fact that Ann Lee uses materials apart from her own flesh, while in her creative enterprise Joyce creates her art in her own body. Bowen represents Ann as capable of seizing and exercising a kind of power over her customers, which reverses the relation of dependence in which, they feel with a certain impotent indignation, she ought to be kept. In this connection it is especially intriguing that Bowen herself had felt attracted by the idea of becoming a maker of hats, handbags and jewellery before her writer's vocation had firmly established itself.[27]

Joyce exercises complete hegemony for the duration of the dance-class, and in this respect resembles Ann Lee. In another sense, though, she is scarcely there at all, being arrestingly characterized as only an appearance. In a phrase suggesting depths of ontological awareness below the story's vivid and carefully delineated scenes, late at night she

'stopped "seeming" too tired to "be"; too tired to eat or speak' (*CS*, p.254; emphasis and quotation marks in original). As the little girls lovingly watch the grace of her curtseying, 'melt[ing] into the floor' and 'flowing', they think: 'If I had a dress like that ...' but also, as we have seen, 'She's not like a person at all' (p.256). 'All day long', says the narrator, Joyce is 'just an appearance, a rhythm'. Dancing, she spreads out into 'delicate shapes like a Japanese "mystery" flower dropped into water' (p.254). Yet, constituted in and by the adoring gaze of so many watchers including Peelie and Lulu, within herself Joyce experiences only emptiness, looking out over her 'delicate cheekbones' with 'dreamy and cold eyes in which personality never awakened' (p.254). Her beauty is a sign with only an aesthetic, not a human, referent or signification: the willed bewitchment of the feminine masquerade in which she has schooled herself has supplanted, or prevented the development of, the potential person.

While Glendinning's vivid biography is still indispensable, we need a much more detailed knowledge of Bowen's social life and connections in England, perhaps especially during her (and during the) twenties, so as to be able to situate her more fully among the various intellectual and other formations of the period. It is possible to gain insights about this from the writings themselves, however: sometimes, as I have suggested, from gestures of disavowal made by characters within them. Where psychoanalysis – in the 1920s a prominent discourse among intellectuals – is concerned, her narrators overtly adopt an amused distance from its aspirations to explain the psyche, including such (then still shocking) notions of the unconscious as a realm inaccessible to everyday rationality, and of the polymorphously perverse character of infancy. Nevertheless her writing shows evidence of its subliminal presence and strikes resonant chords with certain major psychoanalytic writings of the same decade. I shall argue that this is particularly true of 'The Dancing-Mistress'.

Bowen came a generation too late to be part of the early, radical excitement of psychoanalytic invention or discovery, and probably to encounter directly the energetic intellectual women who played such a major role in creating its English traditions: powerfully creative and disruptive at once, such women belonged to the First World War and immediate post-war era. Nevertheless, when in the early 1920s she

began as a young adult to write and publish stories, the institutions of psychoanalysis in London were well established and prominent among upper-middle-class intellectuals, complete with the internal variations and competing practices and understandings of those institutions (Appignanesi and Forrester give an excellent account of this flourishing period of psychoanalysis, including its English manifestations).[28]

Topographically, the psychoanalysts were located principally in Bloomsbury, a district of the mind as much as of the London postal system. In *To the North* Julian Tower, one of Bowen's English gentlemen *par excellence* and a non- or anti-intellectual, evidently sees it as eccentric and slightly threatening, perhaps even desexing to a lady. He asks Emmeline if *all* the clients of her travel bureau are from there, implicitly deprecating its location in that district where so many young women, even well-bred ones, were engaged in paid work by the 1920s. Bowen first met Woolf (herself, of course, both well aware of psychoanalysis and sceptical of it) in Gower Street, Bloomsbury.[29] Certainly it is Lady Waters, not a discerning judge, who, we see in *To the North* bustling off to a lecture by Adler (who conceived the 'masculine protest'). But it is a fair assumption that either the figures themselves of Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere, theorist of femininity as masquerade, or at least talk of their startling work, were not entirely absent from Bowen's intellectual horizons, or at least that their ideas might have indirectly informed her own contemporaneous realizations in fiction of the workings of desire, power and inner compulsion. Riviere was at work in London from the start of the 1920s, and Klein from 1926.

Whether or not Bowen was aware of their writings, the theories of both Riviere and Klein, with their differences from classic Freudian male-centred Oedipal narrative, can be brought into illuminating relation with her work. 'The Dancing-Mistress' might even be read as, in its way, a kind of case-study, exactly contemporary with the work of this second generation of psychoanalysts. Bowen's intense interest in childhood and its formation of the adult self is one of the most characteristic aspects of her vision, and potentially aligns her with Klein's pioneering work in child analysis. Nor are Bowen's child-figures at all sentimentally imagined: the celebrated remark of *The House in Paris*'s narrator about cruelty between children is only the most explicit indicator of this. Furthermore, despite her overt suspicion of psychoanalysis considered

as a universal explanatory model, a suspicion shared with Woolf, Bowen's fiction is nevertheless deeply akin and congenial to psychoanalytic theory, not least in the brilliance and modernity of its insight into the significance of childhood experience. But more specifically, I see 'The Dancing-Mistress' as resonating both with aspects of Klein's 1920s writings, and with Riviere's classic essay on womanliness as masquerade, where Riviere cites passages from Klein which are startlingly relevant to 'The Dancing-Mistress'.[30] Klein's highly original work with children was then foreshadowing the challenge which object-relations theory would eventually offer to Freudian masculine biases: the key essay, 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict', on which Riviere draws, appeared in 1928.[31]

Detailing what she calls the criteria of 'complete feminine development' (an unsurprising list focused on wife and mother roles, on domesticity in general, and on 'maintain[ing] social life' and 'assist[ing] culture'), Riviere observes a certain hollowness and perhaps a secret resistance about some women's fulfilment of these functions, and conceives the sum of such feminine characteristics as a masquerade, that is, a mere guise which is assumed more or less pragmatically but devoid of inner assent. Riviere locates such performances in the carefully managed lives of professional women she had encountered as patients. But her notion of femininity itself as a performance and not nature or essence carries a charge of significance far beyond the specifics of case-histories, as its wide influence on feminist film theory shows.[32] Bowen's persistent and sceptical investigation of modes of femininity, and of desire and power, is illuminated by being brought into relation with Klein's and Riviere's thought. The delineation of Joyce and her life may indeed be read as the representation of a masquerade, but one in which the performance has so possessed the woman, in almost a Gothic-demonic sense, that it has supplanted her selfhood. Hence the emptiness, or paradoxical absence, discerned in her presence by the watching girl-pupils; it attracts *their* admiration as something so perfectly done that it has obliterated her personality, but elicits horror from the reader. It is as if Bowen inverts Riviere's observations, creating a limit case of absolute feminine performance which, to change the metaphor, has supplanted whatever selfhood might have lain behind it.

Furthermore, in the course of her 'Masquerade' essay Riviere cites a

1927 lecture by Klein (who had once succeeded Freud as Riviere's own analyst), on a point which resonates startlingly with 'The Dancing-Mistress'.[33] Klein reported intensely sadistic fantasies by her child-patients, including desires to bite off the mother's nipple and destroy, penetrate and disembowel her ('in consequence of disappointment or frustration during sucking or weaning'), and to castrate the father by biting off his penis. Klein interprets these wishes as responses to a prior fear that the mother will 'destroy the girl's body, her beauty, her children, her capacity for having children, mutilate her, devour her, torture her and kill her'.[34]

If we provisionally sever this intense *affect* – the violent fantasies of causing physical pain – from its fantasized *objects* in Klein's account (i.e. the child's parents), a striking parallel with Joyce comes into view. Recent critics have observed that Bowen herself frequently performs such moves, so dividing affects from their apparent and motivating contexts: Corcoran, for instance, eloquently describes Bowen's 'hollowing-out of subjectivity, as characters... becom[e] sites traversed by the endless mobilities of desire'.[35] In this case Bowen seems to reverse the direction of the violent impulse in Klein's version: Joyce wishes harm, not to a mother- but to a daughter-figure. To Margery (who is motherless at the dancing class) she is a perverse mother, like a nightmare fulfilment of those prior fears of the all-powerful mother by Klein's child-patients. Under its surface, 'The Dancing-Mistress' is among other things a text about mothering, bad and good: I revisit this topic at the end of this chapter.

A realist reading might motivate Joyce's malevolence towards Margery as a displaced resentment of her own harsh life, which earns her so little, apart from the admiration of the miniature world of the dancing class (Gauthier perceptively observes how '*épuisée par son métier*', Joyce is revived only by her own murderous impulses).[35] But the phenomenon is in excess of this: Bowen is elaborating a predatory female characterization which clearly interests her psychologically and which is bound into her several other, mainly later, representations of menacing female authority. These range from the silky and manipulative (Mrs Kerr in *The Hotel*, Mme Fisher in *The House in Paris*), to controlling mothers or aunts (Mrs Michaelis in *The House in Paris*, Lois Farquar's Aunt Myra in *The Last September*) who rigidly preserve the social order, dampen

down the transgressive impulses of the young, or play them puppet-like (Lady Waters in *To the North*). Joyce's cruelty is disturbing in itself, but much more so is its effect on her: she experiences sexual arousal only when actually tormenting Margery or when recalling this. Utterly disengaged emotionally despite the devoted service of others (including the glimpsed sister at home who gives her Bovril and puts her to bed), she mocks the dark-eyed and long-lashed Lulu, who to her is merely instrumental (*CS*, p.260: 'he won't melt any glaciers'), as is the equally devoted Peelie. Though she does not stop him kissing her on the quay between lamp-posts, it is impossible to conceive of Joyce engaging with Lulu – or indeed Peelie – in genital sex.

If we adopt the psychoanalytic focus on the family as matrix and crucible of all subsequent experience, the adult threesome re-emerges as a grotesquely parodic family. This trio is configured with Peelie and Lulu playing the female and male parents who nurture the infantile Joyce between them, competing for her regard and in the concluding scene passing her tenderly from her to his embrace as she sleeps, as parents might a tired child. Lulu's insufficiently forceful masculinity – his querulous pleading and moody hovering – is, however, as I have suggested, quite devoid of the force to enact Lacan's stipulated programme of breaking up the mother–child dyad and thereby establish the normative Oedipally structured domestic unit as conceived in classical psychoanalysis. This impossible family, then, remains inchoate: a situation with strong resonances throughout Bowen's fictional worlds, with their many triangular configurations of characters (Naomi, Karen, Max in *The House in Paris*; Anna, Eddie, Portia in *The Death of the Heart*, and perhaps Eva, Jeremy and Henry in *Eva Trout*).

Within this parodic family structure, Joyce herself is a monster-infant, overwhelmingly bodily and apparently devoid of empathetic emotional or moral interiority. In her fantasy of plunging a knife into Margery's eyes, she also shows a horrifying aggression reminiscent of Klein's child fantasies. As Margery's teacher Joyce owes her the duty of enlightened kindness, a version of good-parent obligation. Instead, however, Joyce offers frank hatred and oppression. As well as being plain, physically graceless and herself sullen and resentful, Margery is isolated and needy, and the sight of that need offends Joyce by making an implicit claim on her: it risks displacing her own centrality to herself,

hollowed out as she is, and she reacts by striking out repeatedly: 'Did you see me killing that child?', she repeatedly asks Peelie, in excitement; and 'I made her waltz till she cried' (*CS*, p.260). Joyce has retained the naked desire of childhood to lash out blindly, without either the inhibition of social regulation or the emotional empathy which is expected to supervene before adolescence.

In this dark world, there is one luminous interval. About midway, 'The Dancing-Mistress' contains a vignette which strikes a classic Bowen note. There is another little girl, Margery's opposite: Cynthia, pretty and talented. She not only is 'Spain itself in the Spanish dance', but holds hands with her mother while they delightedly discuss the castanets she has been invited to bring to the next class (*CS*, p.257).[37] We recognize that intimacy of the mother-and-daughter pair which is Bowen's signature of happy attachment: compare Portia's intensely evocative memories of her and her mother's stay in the Swiss hotels in *The Death of the Heart*. This figure of the pair rapt in reciprocal love is deployed here, however, to do specific work in Bowen's fictional design. It sharply contrasts with the unfulfilled desires of Peelie and Lulu, with the solitary shame of Margery, pilloried for literally putting a foot wrong, and with Joyce's own utterly alienating elevation as ego-ideal and beautiful, but exhausted, object.

Bowen places this mother–daughter scene of happy love at the edge of the story's main action, where it structurally resembles those – normally marginal – figures in medieval or Renaissance pictures, who are blessed in being allowed to lead ordinary lives at the peripheries of great and terrible events. The peasants continue drinking, the woman comes from the well, going about their business, tiny in the corners while Sebastian or Marsyas is pierced or flayed in large scale and centre field. Auden's poem '*Musée des Beaux Arts*', about Breughel's 'Fall of Icarus' (beginning 'About suffering they were never wrong, the Old Masters') makes a similar point about the painter's contrast between the spectacle of important suffering and the continuance of everyday life, though Breughel reverses Bowen's disposition of the contrasting events and figures: in his picture the 'boy falling out of the sky' is placed in the distance, scarcely noticeable compared to the normal quotidian ploughman with his horse on the side of a hill in the foreground. In 'The Dancing-Mistress' the small vignette of Cynthia and her mother's enchanted mutual love throws into

a sharper, contrasting light Joyce's evil-mother hurting of Margery, who sees all too clearly that 'Cynthia never seemed bare of being loved, it was round her at school, everywhere, like a sheath' (*CS*, p.257). By contrast we see Joyce as almost a Snow Queen or monstrous child-eating step-mother from a fairy-tale. It is tempting to suggest that in this aspect of the story (as indeed in the 1923 'Coming Home') Bowen was perhaps transacting emotional work of her own, staging in the one fictional moment what in her own experience were successive states: secure possession of the beloved mother, followed by the completely unannounced loss and absolute bereavement which followed and exposed the child to the colder, comparatively indifferent world. The luminous loving union of Cynthia and her real, kind mother suggests a promise beyond its wicked echo in the oppressive dark pairing of Margery and Joyce, and also beyond Lulu's and Peelie's mimicked parental care and their unsatisfied longings. But the predominating moral-emotional world of the story which remains in our minds is one of cruel command performances, where the warm reality of fulfilled love is almost inconceivable.

NOTES

1. Neil Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).
2. Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p.44.
3. Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Dancing Mistress' (1929) in *Collected Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), pp.255–62, hereafter referred to in the text as *CS*.
4. Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen*, p.68.
5. Elizabeth Bowen, 'Coming Home', in *Collected Stories*, pp.95–100.
6. J'nan M. Sellery and William O. Harris, *Elizabeth Bowen: A Bibliography* (Austin, TX: Humanities Research Center, 1981).
7. Elizabeth Bowen, *A Day in the Dark and Other Stories* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965). Sellery and Harris, *Elizabeth Bowen*, pp.29, 63, 91, 129.
8. See Bowen 1959, quoted in Mary Jarrett, 'Ambiguous Ghosts: The Short Stories of Elizabeth Bowen', *Journal of the Short Story in English*, 8 (Spring 1987), pp.71–9 (pp.72–3).
9. Elizabeth Bowen, 'Foothold', in *Collected Stories*, pp.297–313.
10. See Sally Cline, *Radclyffe Hall: A Woman Called John* (London: John Murray, 1997), pp.242ff.; Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp.95–125 (p.197, n.17).

11. See John Donne, 'Elegy 16', in *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A.J. Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p.118, l. 4.
12. See Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen*, front cover, and Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen*, revised edn. (London: Vintage, 1991).
13. Quoted in Deirdre Toomey, 'Bowen, Elizabeth Dorothea Cole (1899–1973)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.innopac.ucc.ie:80/view/article/30839.
14. Quoted in Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen*, p.187.
15. See Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, ed. Katie Conboy et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.401–17.
16. See Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen*; also Patricia Coughlan, 'Women and Desire in the Work of Elizabeth Bowen', in *Sex, Nation and Dissent*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), pp.103–34.
17. See Janet Montefiore, *Men and Women Writers of the 1930s: the Dangerous Flood of History* (London: Routledge, 1996); Jane Dowson (ed.), *Women's Poetry of the 1930s: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1996); Jane Dowson, *Women, Modernism and British Poetry 1910–1939: Resisting Femininity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Cline, *Radclyffe Hall*; Diana Souhami, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998); and Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*. Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford Unversity Press, 1988) on 1930s literary culture remains indispensable.
18. See Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*; Laura Doan and Jane Garrity (eds), *Sapphic Modernities: Sexuality, Women and English Culture* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2006).
19. Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (eds), *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).
20. See Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*, pp.95–125.
21. Letter quoted in Toomey, 'Bowen, Elizabeth Dorothea Cole (1899–1973)'.
22. Elizabeth Bowen, *To the North* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p.95.
23. Edward Mitchell, 'Themes in Elizabeth Bowen's Short Stories' (1966), reprinted in *Elizabeth Bowen: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), pp.39–50 (pp.41–2).
24. Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p.174.
25. Elizabeth Bowen, 'Ann Lee's', in *Collected Stories*, pp.103–11.
26. Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Return', in *Collected Stories*, pp.28–34.
27. Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen*, p.41.
28. Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester, *Freud's Women* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993).
29. Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen*, p.99.
30. Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929), pp.303–13.
31. Melanie Klein, 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 9 (1928), pp.167–80, quoted in Riviere, http://www.ncf.edu/hassold/Women Artists/riviere_womanliness_as_masquerade.htm.

32. See, for example, Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator' (1982), in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 1999), pp.131–45.
33. Klein, 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict'.
34. Quoted in Riviere, http://www.ncf.edu/hassold/Women Artists/riviere_womanliness_as_masquerade.htm.
35. Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen*, p.128.
36. Dominique Gauthier, *L'Image du réel dans les romans d'Elizabeth Bowen* (Paris: Didier Erudition, 1985 [Etudes Anglaises 91]), p.325.
37. See Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen*, p.38, on Bowen's own talent at dancing.