11. Elizabeth Bowen

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Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973), who is among the most important twentieth-century writers in English, flourished over four decades from the 1920s to the 1960s. Beginning in 1923, she published ten novels, seven short-story collections, the family history *Bowen's Court* (1942) and the brief childhood memoir *Seven Winters* (1942); she was also a prolific essayist, reviewer, broadcaster and travel-writer. Her most celebrated novels are *The Last September* (1929), *The House in Paris* (1935), *The Death of the Heart* (1938), and *The Heat of the Day* (1949), but there is now a growing appreciation of previously neglected work from the 1920s and the 1960s, especially *Friends and Relations* (1931) and *Eva Trout* (1968). Some score of her short stories are genre classics, including many of the dozen set in Ireland, and several wartime stories collected in *The Demon Lover* (1946).

Bowen's Themes and Style: Modernity and Modernism

In terms of theme, from her early work onwards Bowen complicates the conventional scripts of monogamous romance, undoes the marriage-plot, repeatedly stages erotic triangles and writes desire as destabilizing and threatening to complacent notions of the orderly self. Her fiction focuses on women's experiences in modernity. Along a timeline from the 1920s to the 1960s, she plays out their striving, in a transformed world, for love, to satisfy their desires, for freedom from the constrictions of inherited rules of behaviour. Frequently her protagonists must resist control by manipulative, dominating mothers and aunts enforcing those rules in the interest of class continuance. This repeated struggle taps into a deep substratum of her personal thematics, namely the child: she is one of the greatest novelists of children. She dwells especially on orphans, sometimes almost as representative twentieth-

century figures: isolated, pawns to uncaring adults, displaced, refugees. Bereft but – to an almost frightening degree – resolute, the Bowen child is determined to 'make an impression' on her (less often, his) environment. Notably, this child has unfinished business with a 'Bad Mother' figure, cast as controlling and prohibiting, or absent (literally or emotionally); 'Good Mother' versions are scarcer and can offer only uncertain or ineffectual nurture. These unresolved child-mother contentions make distinctive Bowen's handling of the theme of women's self-realization which she shares with her contemporaries. So do her hybrid ethno-cultural identity, making her see Englishness as a learned performance, and her attraction to women, complicating heterosexual desire and the normative life-course of marriage.

Her work has kinship with psychoanalytic perspectives and Proustian insights; her individual characters are divided within themselves and from others, and she anticipates trauma theory in writing memory as an involuntary haunting and as always-already fictional. Her vision is dark, showing human relationships as inextricably entailing power-struggles. She registers urban modernity–speed, technology, cinema, bombing–as galvanizing, yet conveys an acute sense of the growing destabilization after 1914: economic disaster, collapse of the pre-1914 order of class and family, fascism. One of the greatest novelists of children, she dwells especially on orphans, almost as representative twentieth-century figures: isolated, pawns to uncaring adults, displaced, refugees. Her liminal cultural positioning between national identities, in the moment of Irish rebellion and independence, is vitally connected to the unsettled and unsettling nature of her novels and stories; so too is her attention to both heterosexual and lesbian sexualities.

In terms of form, she creatively hybridizes genres, intertwining, merging and subverting *bildungsroman*, comedy of manners, Gothic, and sensation-fiction. The short stories often deploy motifs from the uncanny and sensational tales she relished in adolescence to disturb psychological complacency or explore twentieth-century social disintegration.

Male-centred conceptions and histories of modernism have tended to exclude Bowen. Yet her style is unmistakably modernist in withholding the fluent realist reproduction of an empirical world, estranging conventional assumptions about reality. The objects in her décors – clocks, mirrors, pictures – are never mere possessions but are discrete and often, uncannily, seem baleful. [1] Near-eventless scenes, sinuous, cerebral dialogue, and startling syntactic inversions constitute her narratives. Once condemned as mannered and viewed as blemishes, these disruptive formal choices have won their due respect, and indeed her late work is beginning to be seen as a form of postmodernism. The question of Bowen's style is, however, a complex one. Her categorization as middlebrow arises from the popularity of her middle novels which do give more aid and comfort to realist readings than either earlier or later ones, partly because their plots include love- and lost-children-stories and they move beyond elegant irony into more emotionally searching modes.

While Bowen was a prominent literary figure in her lifetime, her reputation till the early 1980s was seriously circumscribed. 'Had she been a man', John Banville wrote, 'she would have been recognized as one of the finest novelists of the twentieth century', and other processes of gate-keeping based on ethnicity, class origins and geography have combined with gender to play roles in Bowen's categorization in limiting, sometimes patronizing, ways: as a women's writer, a novelist of élite manners between the wars, a Big-House writer (each designation ignoring vital facets of her writing to corral her within a limiting classification). In fact the sheer reach of her work, which encompasses all these characteristics, and the startling strangeness of her vision and style, posed challenges to criticism.[2]

Victoria Glendinning's 1977 biography, Hermione Lee's 1981 critical monograph and her 1986 prose selection marked significant progress in Bowen studies; an ever-broader array of critical viewpoints has since emerged, raising her status.[3] Recent critics such as Maud Ellmann, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle have definitively shown how far Bowen's

achievement exceeds her conventional reception. Bennett and Royle (1995) read her work as 'pervaded by the forces of dissolution and mourning', while Ellmann (2003) reveals Bowen's brilliant realization of fractured interiority and her consistently sceptical account of monogamous romance. *The Heat of the Day* and the 1940s stories were early recognized as classics of war writing: subsequent criticism has expanded this recognition well beyond the specifics of the Blitz, showing how violent historical process and change from World War I onwards preoccupies Bowen and plays a key role in her formidable melancholy vision of modernity.[4]

Scholars of women's writing have been foundational in Bowen studies, seeing beyond her own disavowal of social feminism, discerning the unmistakably interrogative character of her gender representations, and pinpointing her lacerating satire of English upper-middle-class self-assurance with its confining rules about sexuality and gender. Psychoanalytic, poststructuralist, and feminist perspectives figure importantly among these more capacious and dynamic approaches. In 1994 Renée Hoogland pioneered the study of Bowen's imaginative investment in lesbian affect. Hoogland is sometimes felt to overstate the case, but overly reductionist disclaimers have also appeared, regrettably polarizing feminist and queer approaches. Recent scholarship on lesbian social performance in twentieth-century English culture illuminates the insistent presence of lesbian or proto-lesbian characters in the early and late novels and several stories. Moreover, the abiding complexity of sexual choices in Bowen's life has since emerged.[5]

Biography

An only child, Bowen was born in 1899 into the Anglo-Irish landed gentry in North Cork. In 1930 she inherited Bowen's Court, a gaunt eighteenth-century mansion, after the dismantling of landlord wealth and power by successive reforms post-1885. Culminating in the 1923

compulsory government purchase of tenanted lands, these measures removed the economic basis of Protestant Ascendancy. Without the rental income her ancestors enjoyed, Bowen struggled to maintain the house on the proceeds of her writing, eventually selling it in 1959. Her sense of being not quite placed either in geography or in cultural identity—she lived mainly in England, and called herself 'hybrid'—accompanied an awareness of historical belatedness.[6] Perhaps paradoxically, the terminal decline of her caste proved, with her personal experiences of displacement, extraordinarily stimulating to her imagination as a writer. The larger breaks and cataclysms, political, economic and social, marking world history 1914-1945 are vivid historical contexts for her first seven novels.

Bowen's childhood, alternating till 1907 between Dublin, her birthplace, and Co. Cork, was disturbed by family upheavals. Her birth was difficult and dangerous. A much-desired male heir, already named Robert in anticipation, had been expected: Elizabeth was well loved, but her gender and the absence of siblings breached the customary male lineage. Her fiction dwells on both diminishing gentry natality, and a troubled sense by women of their reproductive obligations, with plots involving infertility and miscarriage.[7] When Florence, her mother, almost died of another lost pregnancy, Henry Bowen began suffering the serious mental illness which, two years later, would occasion Florence's taking Elizabeth to England. Bowen explained Henry's startling self-culpabilization to a 1971 interviewer: 'in 1904 he had failed to give new life to the dead Robert, his father, in the birth of Robert, his son, and he had almost killed his own wife trying'.[8] Mother and daughter lived in intense mutual attachment, but after Henry recovered, a second blow fell: Florence died of cancer. Elizabeth was thirteen. Glimpses of this lost life with Florence appear in the powerful early story 'Coming Home' and in orphaned Portia's memories of travels with her mother in *The Death of the Heart*.[9]

The loss permanently scarred Elizabeth, who developed a lifelong stammer.[10] Contemporary class norms required that strong emotion be contained: kept from Florence's funeral, discouraged from open mourning, Elizabeth learned to suppress her feelings rigorously. Much later she wrote: 'I registered what I loved with such pangs of love… only out of the corner of my eye… with an unwilling fraction of my being.' Thus began 'a career of withstood emotion'. Significantly, she wrote, '[s]ensation, I have never fought shy of nor done anything to restrain'; this illuminates her work's distinctive combination of the sensuous and the cerebral.[11] The excoriation of well-bred silences is a major theme in Bowen's work, and burial tropes, incomplete mourning, and returns of the repressed pervade her texts. It is as if Florence's grave, unseen by Elizabeth in fact, must continually be revisited in her fiction, though nothing may be found there: in *The Little Girls* (1963) three schoolgirls bury objects in a coffer and decades later find it empty on disinterment; in *To the North* the widowed Cecilia's heart is 'a little coffer of ashes'.[12] Bowen criticism is now productively addressing this cluster of meanings in which she interweaves personal, intimate loss and its suppression with war, displacement and the public-historical ruptures of her lifetime.

In her later teens she attended the progressive school Downe House, which valued girls' intellectual and aesthetic development; her fiction uses funny, mildly satirical versions of this experience. Henry Bowen, happily remarried, lived till 1930 at Bowen's Court, while Elizabeth 'shuttle[ed] between two countries'.[13] A brief 1920 engagement to a Cork-stationed British officer was quietly terminated with an aunt's help (somewhat similar rash betrothals occur in *The Last September* and her first novel *The Hotel* 1927).[14] Two terms' attendance at a London art school also proved abortive. But Bowen had already begun to write prolifically, and Downe's headmistress Olive Willis enabled her access to London literary circles via Rose Macaulay, who helped her to publication. A first story-collection, *Encounters*, appeared in 1923, and she very quickly turned herself into a professional writer, maintaining lifelong

dedication to her work. After feeling ‘at everyone’s disposition’ in her motherless adolescence, she struggled to achieve what she called ‘a normal relation to society’, later remarking that her writing *was* that normal relation, recalling her sense that ‘an author, a grown-up, must they not be synonymous?’[15] Also in 1923, she further ‘signified her adulthood’ by marrying Alan Cameron, a World War I survivor.[16] The marriage was happy and durable though apparently asexual. Through Cameron, employed at the BBC, Bowen, who loved company, soon flourished in elite Oxford and London intellectual circles. During the’30s the couple gave summer Bowen’s Court house-parties for prominent literary friends.

From at least the mid-1930s Bowen led an active extra-marital sexual life. Bisexual in orientation, she then and later had affairs with women and men.[17] Notable among the latter were her first male sexual partner, Oxford critic Humphry House, Irish writer Sean O’Faolain, and, from 1941, Canadian diplomat Charles Ritchie.[18] This became her strongest emotional relationship, sustained by correspondence and meetings till her death, though Ritchie married in 1948. Both were colonial semi-outsiders who, coming from relatively remote places (in Ritchie’s case Nova Scotia), could, as Glendinning says, ‘pass’ in upper-class English society.[19] This conduct of social life as multi-layered performance, including the discretion Bowen’s married status entailed, contribute significantly to the charged emotional atmosphere of her war novel *The Heat of the Day*, with conflicted identity and betrayal at its heart. Also significant was Bowen’s covert wartime employment gathering intelligence in Ireland for the British Ministry of Information concerning the very vexed question of Ireland’s neutrality. I discuss the whole constellation of Bowen and Ireland below.

After 1949 Bowen, widowed in 1952, wrote less fiction but formidable amounts of occasional prose, in addition to broadcasting, lecturing, and teaching internationally. From the later 1940s her specifically political ideas grew more fixedly conservative. After the 1959

sale (and rapid demolition) of Bowen's Court, she eventually settled in Hythe, scene of her happiest childhood years. She died of cancer in 1973, and is buried—as 'Mrs Cameron'—in the Farahy churchyard beside where Bowen's Court stood.

Bowen and Ireland

Within Irish criticism, contrasting reductionist pitfalls have risked distorting Bowen's reception. On one hand, she is found wanting on political grounds for not having disavowed gentry privilege and hegemony. On the other, Ascendancy dispossession is problematically equated with other far more oppressive forced displacements, encouraging nostalgia. While a more informed understanding of the nature of her Irishness has emerged, she is still in the process of admission to the Irish canon. Sinéad Mooney rightly likens Bowen's perceived lack of Irish 'credentials' to Beckett's, noting her distinct questioning of a realist 'metaphysics of presence', though the masculinist cast of Irish modernist studies has further functioned to exclude her[20]. Nels Pearson's recent re-conception of her beside Joyce and Beckett as an Irish cosmopolitan indicates, however, a welcome passage beyond such binaries.[21] The 1980s historicist turn in Irish criticism did recruit *The Last September* to this narrative, but narrowly as the culminating Big-House novel, making it amenable to post-colonialist readings and acknowledging its power, but by a virtual severance from most of her work and largely ignoring the importance of gender and sexuality in her vision and how strikingly she combines gender critique with her end-of-Ascendancy material. Yet not only are Irish scenes highly significant in two other great novels, *The House in Paris* and *The Heat of the Day*, the admittedly less compelling *A World of Love* (1955) and several of her finest stories, but Ireland with its disruptive narratives is an always ghosting presence throughout the work, significant not merely in specifically Irish scenes. The consensus now is that, far from being important only when explicitly evident in plot or setting, Bowen's conflicted

relationships to Ireland, England, and Anglo-Irishness pervade all her writing and her Irishness, however hyphenated by the 'Anglo-' prefix, deeply underlies and forms her whole vision as a writer of modernity. Roy Foster observes that she 'lived ambivalently between two worlds', never being 'quite able to place herself', and that her oeuvre is inextricably tangled with her biography.[22]

This ambivalence, and extensions and exacerbations of it involving divided allegiance, surveillance, and betrayal, are hallmarks of her imagination, repeatedly appearing in her plots and in her protagonists' experience. Concrete historical contexts—the Anglo-Irish War and World War II—certainly facilitate public instances of these, though illicit or at least clandestine relations in the private, sexual sphere also figure prominently. These insistent duplicities combine with tropes of importunate memory and the uncanny to trouble the narrative surfaces, much as in Sheridan Le Fanu's Irish Gothic, an important influence.

A crux in Bowen's reception has been her wartime reports about attitudes to neutrality among influential Irish people, whom she interviewed concealing her purpose; some have judged these as espionage and as warranting her complete rejection from Irish belonging. Enlightened scholarship, however, especially by Foster, Clair Wills, and W. J. McCormack, has more productively explored her complex allegiance and shifting sympathies as the war unfolded, providing a more nuanced understanding of her relation to Ireland.[23] Foster shows how her 1937 connection with Sean O'Faolain brought her to an extent into the orbit of Irish cultural criticism—at his instance she contributed to the radical journal *The Bell*—and increased her understanding of Irish nationalism. Wills and McCormack helpfully register the currents and counter-currents of contemporary opinion about neutrality both inside and outside Ireland. In *The Heat of the Day* Bowen represents with affectionate humour the landlord Francis Morris' self-contradictions, both defending Irish neutrality in 'almost nationalist' terms, and offering to fight for Britain despite his age. Her family history

Bowen's Court (1942), a minor classic of Irish writing, affords remarkable insights into the Ascendancy as exemplified in a provincial-gentry family living obscurely, intermarrying with equals, alternately provident and improvident. Though the wartime context of composition softens the focus on the settler-colonialist basis of Anglo-Irish culture, Bowen acknowledges the 'inherent wrong' underlying the initial expropriation of indigenous landholders and the maintaining of a privileged caste over centuries at the direct expense of an impoverished population.[24]

Bowen's personal thematics

All her life Bowen fashioned her work from a body of personal material, though with an evident progression as she refined and deepened her art and vision. A deep substratum of the whole is the child: bereft, mourning, but also resolute, often determined to 'make an impression' on her (less often, his) environment. This child has unfinished business with a 'Bad Mother'-figure, very often cast in a negative light, as controlling, prohibiting, or absent (literally or emotionally); 'Good-Mother' versions, mildly nurturing, are scarcer and paler in these fictions. Two early short stories, 'Coming Home' (1926) and 'The Dancing-Mistress' (1929), almost Expressionist in style, pinpoint the emotional suffering which Bowen later turned to such creative account in novels. These unresolved child-mother contentions make distinctive her handling of the theme (shared with her contemporaries) of women's self-realisation in the twentieth century; so do her hybrid ethno-cultural identity, making her see Englishness as a learned performance, and her attraction to women, complicating heterosexual desire and the normative life-course of marriage.

The fiction: phases

I now explore the trajectory of her developing art, focusing principally on the novels. I group the work in three phases: the four novels, 1927-32; the 1935, 1938 and 1949 novels (culminating in *The Heat of the Day*, begun in wartime); then the three post-war novels, 1955-'68. I will attend to the alterations over her career in Bowen's style, narrative strategies and chosen milieus.

Genre, style and narrative strategies: 1927-32

While Bowen's two 1920s novels adopt the *bildungsroman* as the point of departure, she significantly modifies its generic features to address violently changed social contexts (in *The Hotel*, aftermaths of World War I; in *The Last September*, Irish rebellion and the end of Ascendancy). Where Jane Austen's strategy was to create harmony by combining partial reform of the social order with a purge of disruptive figures, Bowen's – emphasized by the anomie of the post-1918 world – is to stage negative plot outcomes, flagrantly repudiating the prescribed accommodation of self with society in English realist tradition. All four of the novels in this group (*The Hotel, The Last September, Friends and Relations, To the North*), moreover, pointedly withhold completion of the heroines' sentimental education. None of these books ends with the promise of a renewed or sustainable social order, but with anti-climactic dispersal, a conflagration, desolate emotional stasis, and a fatal car-crash respectively. Casting in question both prior social norms and their 1920s slippage, these endings undermine the moral legitimacy of the English upper class, belying Bowen's lingering reputation of society novelist. In style, her first three novels are partly comedy of manners and do dryly maintain that genre's defining irony. But from the start Bowen is forging her distinctive disruptive style, which accords with her fierce questioning of the social order by displacing the characters' interior malaise onto weather, windows, furniture, and making protagonists opaque to themselves so that their being seems dislocated.

The perception that, to reproduce themselves, societies consume the lives of the young bears heavily on her young female characters, who struggle to resist that fate and to realize their own–often transgressive–desires. Older women appear as the agents of this social process (leaving her gender constructions troublingly split, posing questions to feminist interpretation).[25] These mothers and aunts are memorably silky, sometimes witchy, sometimes enchantress-like. In *The Hotel*, androgynously handsome Sydney Warren is directionless and too intelligent for an ingénue. She is transfixed by her own erotically charged and ultimately destructive attraction to graceful, manipulative Mrs Kerr. The novel's cast of well-heeled English expatriates in Italy inhabit a doll's-house hotel, whose lift, in a mordantly funny scene, leaves them stranded between floors, as between Edwardian and modern worlds, after the Great War's decimation of marriageable men and the still-reverberating shock of the Bolshevik Revolution. For Sydney, heterosexual romance also duly fails: no plot resolution occurs, but an anti-climactic and blackly humorous scattering of the characters.[26]

The Hotel begins by faintly echoing James, Woolf and Forster; but Bowen soon finds her own voice. *The Last September*, among her finest work, makes extraordinarily assured strides forward. Set in Ireland in 1920, it ambitiously merges Big-House and *bildungsroman* fiction. It unfolds Anglo-Irish gentry life as a set of performances of ostensibly undisturbed order in houses 'without weight', 'like cardboard, high and confident in the sun', full of redundant relics of empire. Dining beneath high ceilings, looking 'unconvincingly painted, startled, transitory', they play tennis like 'figures cut out of light green velvet'.[27] Manifestly discontented in this milieu are penniless young cousins Lois and Laurence, who chafe at their caste's uselessness. The Proust epigraph yokes virginity and idleness with discontent, and Lois is further disaffected with the socially prescribed inactivity of gentlewomen. Tired of 'doing the flowers', longing to experience real desires, she scarcely appreciates the dancing-

and-romancing frivolities fostered by the presence of 'all the lovely troops' (Laurence's sarcastic phrase). Chafing to '*do* something', she finds vicarious excitement in the desultory surrounding war. Laurence shares this sensationalism, entertaining unsuitably positive sentiments, Oxford-nurtured and theoretical, towards Irish republicans. But Laurence has next term to go on with, while watchful Aunt Myra will pack Lois off to France or art-school for, as it were, a finishing-coat of lacquer to render her marriageable.

Bowen, however, creates a disturbance—scarcely noted in predominantly post-colonialist critical accounts—at the book's centre, bringing cool, opaque and sexy Marda to visit. Marda casts not only Lois and Laurence, but also Hugo Montmorency (married, old enough to know better) into states of unsatisfied desire. After two or more failed engagements, troublesome Marda at twenty-nine is marrying the symbolically named Mr Lawe: his role will be to integrate her into society, or at least seem to do so, since she palpably lacks sexual interest in him. The reader enjoys Bowen's tragicomedy of socially inappropriate desires: a quadrille-like pattern between Marda, Lois, Hugo and Laurence (Ellmann shows how such patterns pervade Bowen's novels). As in *The Hotel*, this includes woman-to-woman magnetism: Lois's attraction to Marda is far more intensely felt than her ardent soldier-suitor's kiss.[28]

Along with its attention to lesbian attachment, the novel's striking originality is to create a paradoxical and powerful equivalence between the burning restlessness, the unfulfilment, of the young and especially of women, and the physical burning of revolutionary destruction which eventually destroys Danielstown. Lois fantasizes how a fading carpet, sign of this moribund existence, would flame in the night and be seared into Marda's memory of her visit. Bowen powerfully sustains this equivalence with her distinctive writing of inanimate things as sentient, almost bodily, haunted. Figurations of fire and of forces about to heave up and crack everything open energize the whole. The landscape itself

threatens, seeming, in a glaring sunset, to close in like an invasion from behind the trees. Meanwhile the characters' schooling in repressive social forms has dissociated them from their own feelings and even bodily experiences. At the centre of *The Last September* is its connection of this psychological repression with the political maintenance, in arms, of the landlord order. This is clearly revealed in a famous passage in which looking down from the hills, Lois and Hugo see the concrete facts of forced plantation. Danielstown with its lawns makes a 'dark formal square like a rug on the green country'. Yet it seems 'smothered… afraid', its 'isolation apparent', even 'hiding its face' in 'fright and amazement' at the 'wide, light, lovely unloving country, the unwilling bosom whereon it was set'. The edifice of Ascendancy seems evanescent, dissolving into light and water, the Anglo-Irish presence 'an illusion', 'their passing… less than a shadow'.[29] With a force pushing beyond realist narrative conventions, carpet, rugs, fire and ashes embody inhibition and its violent sweeping away.

Lois feels like a fly imprisoned inside a glass. Her resistance to the constriction and emptiness of gentry's codes and the imperative that young women relinquish active selfhood in marriage echoes Irish demands for freedom and redress of settler colonialism's intrinsic injustice. The 'routine of living' by the rules is also rejected by the radically disillusioned soldier Daventry, traumatized by active war service. Lois's encounter with him at the officers' dance is what shows her she cannot marry ordinary Home-Counties-bred Gerald who loves his country, his mother and his dog. Anticipating other compelling Bowen misfits (Eddie in *The Death of the Heart*, Max in *The House in Paris*), dark haunted Daventry brings the harsh outside world into Lois's waking dream. Recognizing his devastation by real, not desultory or fantasized, war, she sees beyond her relations with the callow Gerald. Bowen ironically provides two plot devices to break Lois' unsuitable engagement: first Lois's aunt

debars Gerald on grounds of income and class inadequacy, then he is killed in a crossroads ambush. Lois is dispatched to France; the rebels burn Danielstown.

In *Friends and Relations*, the first novel set in England, Bowen changes focus to a marriage-plot: indeed she gets the two marriages over with early on, so as to settle to tracing their undoing. Witty, understated and superficially uneventful, the book tingles, paradoxically, with suspense. It develops *The Last September*'s enquiry into desire and disruption, but now in the ostensibly stable Home Counties, where country gentry and professional classes were merging. A highly conscious artist, Bowen said she always thought first of the design of her plots, and afterwards peopled them with characters: she frames her story with two adulteries, one past but casting a long shadow and one which stays in the realm of potential but produces emotional desolation. Daughters of genteel Cheltenham, Laurel and Janet Studdart both marry, it seems suitably. But the calm of a social world Bowen unmistakably renders as claustrophobic and inward-turned is shattered by a combination of the old 'sin' and the clever lesbian Theodora's desire 'beyond propriety' for Janet. One of Bowen's memorable childlike disrupters, Theodora has the brain her father thinks his son would have had, and a too-large personality, like a punt-pole. She triggers the dénouement from malice and emotional desperation combined, an intervention structurally paralleling the conflagration desired by Lois.

Bowen traces the ever-unresolved contention of equal and opposite forces: non-negotiable passion, which can crack open surfaces, and containment: the respectable social order with its 'stiff chintz curtains… whisper[ing] against [Janet's] window sill', its determination as it were to 'stay indoors with the blinds down because of a funeral always going by'.[30] Not coincidentally, this is also the first of Bowen's novels where determined children with an appetite for sensation figure significantly.[31] Pre-teen Anna can 'guess at nothing of what had not occurred' between the adults (the 'not' is quintessentially Bowen),

but will ‘feed on’ the unacknowledged crisis, ‘making her strong young growth, like a tree, from the very thought of ruin’.[32] If Theodora’s destructiveness is childlike, it seems almost preferable to the correct, acceptable femininity of the period, which Bowen shows as infantilizing, even as a form of impairment. Caught in the book’s impasse of misdirected desire, blameless Laurel seems arrested in childhood. They had ‘married her properly, formally, with a marquee’, yet ‘not, somehow, married her off’, thinks her mother (the marquee an ironic master-stroke). Even Mrs Studdart wishes Laurel could be something other than a woman. This constricting womanliness underpins a psychologically moribund society: none of the four younger generation has been or will be able to free themselves into happiness. At the close Colonel Studdart walks into Cheltenham along the Promenade, the chestnuts in flower, with a visiting daughter on each arm: appearances are thus charmingly saved, devastating realities unacknowledged.

In *Friends and Relations* an almost Edwardian stasis anachronistically governs the characters’ lives: only Theodora, whose flat has an aggressively modernist décor, seems to inhabit the freer, jazzy urban Twenties. But Bowen’s next novel, *To the North* (1932), focuses on modern, including modernist, London with its ‘aerial glassy white factories’. Change and motion in several senses seem the very theme of the book. Train and air travel and other mechanizing transformations of life match the energy of the plot’s catastrophic sexual affair. Traffic glares and vibrates, taxis fling and jerk their occupants. Speed, risk, even recklessness sweep away proprieties and restrictions on women’s behaviour.

Emmeline and Cecilia share a modern ménage. Their ‘running about alone’ and ‘talking too freely’ incurs disapproval from Lady Waters, a vintage managing Bowen aunt. Pretty widow Cecilia, apparently a social butterfly, feels unreal when alone, like an unwound clock or breath fading on a mirror, and marries the dull but dependable Julian Tower. By contrast, strong-willed Emmeline is another of Bowen’s disturbing and restless seekers. She

owns a travel agency and drives her own car: her cool manner flouts gender correctness. Bowen here gives us a far more sexually risky milieu than those of Sydney, Lois or Laurel and Janet. Cecilia encounters (on a train, fittingly) the louche, questionable Markie, a modern type recurrent in Bowen. He occupies an apartment at the top of his sister's house, ordering meals by speaking-tube (a brilliant trope of modern social dissociation). When virginal-seeming Emmeline embarks on a disastrous affair with him, he destroys her. But this is not merely an immemorial plotline, what O'Faolain called 'the kid and the cad'.[1] No traditional female victim, Emmeline is a modern active woman, delighting in dispatching travellers to risky destinations. Though drawing on distant Jamesian antecedents, she is a resonant figure in Bowen's developing analysis of twentieth-century femininities. Emmeline's desire is unmistakably physical: 'it was not in words [Markie] was writing himself across her'.[33]

In a scene full of brilliantly displaced eroticism, they fly to Paris. But the force of Emmeline's awakened passion outpaces Markie, who recoils from Emmeline. Her bewildered suffering is powerfully rendered, producing the catastrophic—and strikingly filmic—ending, an ultimate dangerous journey. Accelerating recklessly northward from London, Emmeline carries them both to destruction in a literal death-drive. Her insistently self-authorized desire destroys her by happening to fall on the despicable Markie. Neither Lady Waters' within-bounds ideas of appropriate behaviour for women, nor Cecilia's listless conformism, carries conviction as an alternative. The pronounced modernism of Bowen's vision has gained momentum.

1935-1949

As Bowen's art and thought develop, the initially adolescent drive towards agency, to 'make an impression' on the world, shown in Emmeline as a specifically sexual desire, changes to encompass deep wishes for loving attachment. *The House in Paris* is a hinge work opening

towards this more complex vision, further broadened in the following two novels, *The Death of the Heart* and *The Heat of the Day*. All three contain important representations of mother-child relations; the first and third also see Bowen's finest writing about heterosexual love as a profound transformative experience: these were her most widely appreciated works. This deepening representation of attachment in the personal sphere is accompanied by more attention to history both public and international. Important 1930s stories had registered interwar social change: memorably dystopic, 'The Disinherited' concerns English gentry self-destruction in debt and dissipation, while 'The Tommy Crans' exposes failed Irish Ascendancy fortunes in a Dublin suburb.[34] A masterpiece of sympathetic narration from a young boy's viewpoint, this prefigures the extraordinary first section of *The House in Paris.*

Moving, erotic, and funny, the narration begins near the end of the plot events, which unfold backwards. A one-day encounter of two children, strangers, in the eponymous house, opens the book. Both are displaced, quasi-orphaned ('nobody knows I'm born', says Leopold, angrily). They are also eagle-eyed and determined not to be merely transported like luggage. Not yet bound up in the Oedipal economy of correct social reproduction—the 'rule of niceness'—they are clear-sighted, not yet unfree, full of potential. Their encounter, part-mutual irritation, part-sympathy, is echoed in the later-disclosed scenes between the clandestine lovers Karen and Max, Leopold's parents. The protagonist Karen struggles against a comfortable, deadening upper-class future, desperate to break out and become herself. She feels that Ray, the suitable (and devoted) English gentleman she is engaged to, will keep her controlled exactly as her—grand, distant—mother has, and acts on the transgressive impulse to sleep with Max, her friend Naomi's fiancé, a Jewish-French-English outsider with questionable prospects and a sensual, unsettling intensity.

The House in Paris notably looks beyond England: to the sinking post-decolonization Co. Cork gentry resettled at the edge of Ireland, to French-bourgeois aspiration as embodied

in Madame Fisher, Naomi's ruthless mother, and to the marginal, precarious lives of people designated Jewish that same year.[35] Bowen infuses Karen and Max's impossible love with intense eroticism, but death stalks it. First covertly touching hands in a no-place (the garden of Naomi's dead aunt), they consummate their relations at the edges of France and England (Boulogne, Hythe), in the shadow of the recent death of Karen's aunt. Karen, waking in the night beside Max, understands their future as a 'barred square', inescapable however often or far they travel. Yet, while their hands make no imprint on the grass, their love-making does 'make a mark', embodied in Leopold their impossible, unplanned son (anticipating, in the longer perspective of Bowen's oeuvre, Eva Trout's illegally adopted child Jeremy). Harried by Madame Fisher, Max kills himself. Unable to acknowledge her non-marital child, Karen secretly fosters him, while, later, after miscarried pregnancies, Ray draws her to retrieve the now nine-year-old Leopold: the book ends, however, without a clear signal of Karen's acceptance of him. In all her pre-war novels, Bowen has in her sights the deforming effect of rigorous prohibitions on the expression of feeling, blocking self-recognition. To exhibit emotion is bad form: Karen's mother has 'not wept for years, and never in the drawing-room': she still does not, even at her sister's death.[36] Strong emotion is felt to be a wrecking force; it is adolescent, not socially appropriate. In a moment of terrible insight, Karen sees that while 'love is obtuse and reckless', her mother shows 'not pity or kindness' but 'worldliness beginning so deep down that it seems to be the heart'.[37]

The Death of the Heart is among Bowen's masterpieces. Her most popular novel in her lifetime, it exposes another motherless child to this 'worldliness', exacerbating her danger by entangling her in a plot of desire. Her style is at its most sure-footed, turning the narration's own cool, ironic surfaces against themselves by identifying them with the grand, cold drawing-room which denies feeling and cutting through them with shards of unassuaged emotional pain. Sixteen-year-old orphan Portia, daughter of a disgraced father and *déclassée*

mother sustains herself with memories of her unorthodox but loved childhood in off-season European hotels. She is taken in by her half-brother Thomas Quayne and his wife Anna, who do not love her and whose own union is frozen, like Regent's Park in the superb opening scene. In this portrait of 'an inhibited English marriage', Anna cannot reciprocate Thomas' mute, timid desire.[38] Only the housekeeper Matchett, herself inexpressive, tries to nurture Portia. The irresponsible adult Eddie, another unscrupulous malcontent, exploits her lovelessness with opportunist romantic attention. In desperation Portia seeks improbable refuge with the ex-soldier Major Brutt. A retired soldier and now a socially marginal figure living in a shabby Kensington hotel, he is capable of protective love. This relation and Matchett's clumsy surrogate mothering carry emotional truth. Bowen powerfully contrasts this with both the chill unloving Quayne ménage and the lower-middle-class seaside villa ('Waikiki') of Anna's former governess, brashly modern, slightly raffish, where Portia is summarily dispatched for a summer.

Bowen's social notation of both these milieus is compelling and funny. 1930s historical contexts are recognized. Portia is termed 'displaced' and 'a refugee', Major Brutt is 'dated, like makes of cars', therefore surplus to social requirements despite his courage, and Thomas, perceiving his class's lack of vitality, expects a working-class revolt.[39] There are evident resonances with Bowen's biography, including Matchett's insisting to Portia that to mourn openly is right. Childless Anna intriguingly suggests how Karen might have stagnated: Charles Ritchie perceptively discerned in Anna and Portia two halves of a self-portrait by Bowen. The cynical novelist St Quentin famously describes Portia as like 'the lunatic giant in the drawing-room': her eventual flight after Eddie abandons her is a desperate act, but like other such flagrant moves by the disempowered in Bowen, it reveals the polished social surface as bogus, confronting the Quaynes with their own moral abdication. The story ends

with Matchett standing on the hotel threshold ready to retrieve Portia, but once again it is hard to see any saving resolution.

The Heat of the Day marks the climax of Bowen's career. It subsumes several major strands of her previous work, and forges an altered style which, in its twists and syntactical strains, seems to enact the very pressure of aerial bombardment, invasive technology, and endemic destruction of certainties.[40] Set in wartime London, it presents with unparalleled intensity people's experiences of living in fear, dislodged from secure and predictable lives, daily witnessing death. Some early critics queried the book's public-political aspects, including an English gentleman's covert allegiance to fascism; recent criticism, however, has dispelled these difficulties, using less literal reading strategies. Bowen does not obey spy-thriller conventions, nor provide the satisfactions of that genre, including neat resolution of plot mysteries. Neither (despite fine social notation) does the novel answer entirely to realist reading expectations, with its 'jump-cuts', in Ellmann's phrase, between sensuous description of war streetscapes and demanding, cerebral dialogue. It is a book about epistemological indeterminacy, rendering a claustrophobic psychological climate with solidarity undercut by surveillance, identity requisitioned for a repertoire of roles delineated by propaganda, leaving individual selves violently severed from their mooring.

The main plot concerns Stella Rodney's passionate affair with Robert Kelway, encountered during an air-raid. Stylish and admired, she is a less stunted Anna, a Cecilia with more depth, a Karen who could mother her child. But troubled by Great War loss and 1920s marital breakdown before divorce was respectable, she feels 'she and the century' have deprived her son Roderick of 'organic family life'.[41] Robert and Stella have a rapt mutual involvement. Or so it seems until importunate state agent Harrison appears, asserting that Robert, in high-level secret employment, is an enemy spy. He warns her that to alert Robert will entail his immediate exposure, and offers to spare him or at least defer his arrest if she

switches her affections to the egregious Harrison himself. This destroys Stella's emotional security, installing paranoid fears. If Robert is, as Harrison suggests, a good actor, is his love too a performance? He is watching Robert; so, now, inescapably, is she. Meanwhile, if Harrison's disclosure is reliable, Robert too is watching, for intelligence to pass on. At the dénouement, Robert admits his betrayal but interrogates Stella about Harrison, catching her in their reciprocal surveillance as if in criss-crossing searchlights. She sees their interchangeability. Lover and watcher are doubles, both named Robert, undermining the romance-rhetoric ostensibly occupying centre stage; Robert's limp acquired at Dunkirk matches Harrison's stammer (and Bowen's own).

The Heat of the Day also dissolves the apparent terra firma of national allegiance, along with the authenticity of romantic love. Radically alienated from the England that formed him, Robert declares there are 'no… countries left'; 'words like betrayal can still raise terrific dust in a mind', but 'all that language is dead currency'. Resisting this—'you cannot say there is not a country!'—Stella can summon only personal memories, as of 'that crystal ruined London morning when she had woken to his face'. But their love, their only remaining country, is ripped apart with 'thousands of fluctuations in their own stone country', like bombed London itself.[42]

> Daylight moves round the walls; night rings the changes of its intensity; everything is on its way to somewhere else—there is the presence of movement, that third presence, however still, however unheeding in their trance two may try to stay. Unceasingly something is at its work'.[43]

Nothing is constant but process. And Harrison is inexorably at *his* work: Stella pictures him almost supernaturally multiplied, watching, all round the house.

Especially in directionless Roderick, *The Heat of the Day* crucially represents identity—a once-clear contract between individual, class expectations, and roles—as sapped by one war, further destabilized by interwar turbulence, and now reduced by another to empty performance. Longing for a script, Roderick eagerly accepts the unexpected Anglo-Irish landowner role as a 'historic future', despite the economic improbability of its realization. This emotional investment in his inheritance, imagining Mount Morris 'standing outside the war' as 'standing outside the present', is fantasy. Bowen wittily uses the old caretaker Donovan (echoing Edgeworth's Jason Quirk) to indicate the non-feasibility of Roderick's project, murmuring 'that way, you could sink a terrible lot of money'. This is one strand of a tripartite plot-resolution: the others are Stella's plans to marry 'a brigadier', not even named, and soldier's widow Louie, finally, in a 'now complete life' as mother, showing her infant son three swans flying westwards, after 'our homecoming bombers' have passed 'invisibly high up'. Critics differ as to the force of these resolution(s). While Neil Corcoran celebrates Louie as a hopeful symbol of futurity, and Phyllis Lassner sees Stella as empowered, Gill Plain and Karen Schneider's compelling feminist readings contest such interpretations and see Bowen as critiquing the postwar re-containment of women.

1955-1968

Bowen's '50s and '60s novels used to be considered a falling-off from her best work. They have, however, been significantly re-evaluated in work by several recent critics working from different viewpoints. This has revealed the role of these texts in coherently advancing and completing her project as a novelist. Anne Wyatt-Brown has shown Bowen's weaving of mourning (a lifelong preoccupation) with creativity, often notable in artists' late work, while Clare Hanson's Deleuzian reading, focusing on female embodiment, reveals a strong

continuity with Bowen's earlier work. The last novel, *Eva Trout*, in particular, is increasingly acknowledged within the canon of important twentieth-century fiction.

A World of Love (1955), less compelling than its three predecessors, is an interesting pendent to *The Last September*, being also set in Ireland. In a baking 1950s summer, a penniless Big-House family moulders unregarded: following the heir Guy's World War I death, his illegitimate successor farms with his own hands. The sultry landscape emits uncanny energies, eerily infusing an uneventful plot. An ingénue daughter is a pale after-image of rebellious Lois, and history an affair of distance and diminution. After two world wars, life now seems to work at dispossessing the dead, while a (forgotten) male ancestor has erected an obelisk in his memory; a perfunctory romantic ending involving a wealthy American is sketched in. Wills counters previous dismissal of this novel, perceptively showing how Anglo-Irish isolation reflects, not only contrasts with, the condition of Ireland as a whole: decline and depopulation advance both inside and outside Montefort's walls, in grotesque disparity with nouveau-riche expatriate Lady Latterly's rebuilding of a neighbouring castle, but Bowen does register some Irish modernisations, such as Shannon Airport.[44]

The last two novels, *The Little Girls* and *Eva Trout*, both challenge inattentive reading and withhold smooth narration, definitively barring the passive pleasures of realist style and garnering lively appreciation and respect from readers attuned to postmodernity. They also refuse the future-orientation of the *bildungsroman*: one by savage parody, ending in the heroine Eva Trout's violent death rather than her arrival at satisfactory integration, the other by unfolding backwards to the age before puberty, when 'we were entrusted to one another, in the days that mattered'. Both turn radically inwards, acknowledging both the terror and the potential of self-apprehension: '[n]ow, nothing. There being nothing was what you were frightened of all the time, eh?'[45] Not coincidentally, both novels also resume, but in far more

pressing terms, Bowen's earlier exploration of lesbian feeling, 'bracketing' the middle novels' focus on heterosexual relations.[46]

If *The Little Girls* is ultimately melancholy, though with piercing insights, *Eva Trout*, however, has a quality of exhilaration. Practically a literal embodiment of the 'lunatic giant', the physically awkward and androgynous-looking Eva Trout is first described as 'the giantess'[47]. Her characteristics often echo features of one or other of Bowen's earlier characters and plots. An orphaned heiress with no stable single home from childhood on who speaks like 'a displaced person', she loves technology (like Emmeline in *To the North*). Eva uses her wealth to buy consumer goods avidly, travel afar, and, as an adult, to move house repeatedly. She has experienced a deep and unmistakably lesbian love for a schoolfellow and is passionately attracted to her teacher Iseult. Tina O'Toole connects both Eva's physical 'monstrosity' and these transgressive desires with Rosi Braidotti's conception of the outsider or 'deviant' as a figure both of abjection and of potential transcendence in her very breaching of conventional norms (as done by several previous Bowen characters).[48]

Eva also adopts a son, the deaf-mute Jeremy, illegally in America. They watch many movies together, and Eva's awkward, half-fantasy performance of mothering echoes the unrealized, indeterminable Karen-Leopold bond in *The House in Paris.* Jeremy eventually shoots Eva dead by accident on the railway platform as she leaves on her wedding journey (how performative or parodic is not clear) with a much younger male friend.[49] A tour de force in several ways, Bowen's final novel movingly draws together key strands in her life and work. Eva shares with Jeremy an impenetrable, terrifying innocence and an irreparable homelessness, whether in language or in place: a constellation of all. Discerning its subliminal Irishness, Claire Connolly argues that it 'confronts contemporary readers with a memory of an in-between space in literary and cultural history'.[50] This 'in-between'-ness, simultaneously occasioning insight and a volatile unease, distinguishes much great Irish

literature; in *Eva Trout* it expresses Bowen's self-ascribed hybridity, combining vision and pain with renewed intensity. Eva's isolation and displacement – psychological, emotional, and sexual – recapitulate Bowen's own lifelong personal, cultural and spatial dislocations, speaking eloquently to her rich, complex, aesthetically incomparable life's work.

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[1] See the perceptive discussions by Jacqueline Rose, 'Bizarre Objects: Mary Butts and Elizabeth Bowen', in *On Not Being Able to Sleep: Psychoanalysis and the Modern World* (London: Chatto, 2003), 89-104, and Paul Muldoon, in *To Ireland, I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[2] John Banville, 'In Praise of Elizabeth Bowen', *Irish Times*, Saturday 7 March 2015.

[3] Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977); Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (London: Vision, 1981, revised edition London: Vintage, 1999); Hermione Lee, ed. *The Mulberry Tree*: W*ritings of Elizabeth Bowen* (London: Virago, 1986). Harold Bloom, ed., *Elizabeth Bowen: Modern Critical Views* (New York: Chelsea House, 1987) has some significant contributions.

[4] Heather Bryant Jordan's *How Will the Heart Endure: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992) inaugurated this approach, followed by Gill Plain's excellent 'From Alienation to Absence: Avoiding the War in *The Heat of the Day*', in *Women's Fiction of the Second World War: Gender, Power and Resistance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 166-188.

[5] See Laura Doan and Jane Garrity, eds. *Sapphic Modernities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Patricia Coughlan, 'Women and Desire in Elizabeth Bowen', in *Sex, Nation and Dissent* ed. Eibhear Walshe (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997), 104-134 and '"Not like a person at all": Bowen's 'The Dancing-Mistress', in *Elizabeth Bowen: Visions and Revisions*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Dublin Irish Academic Press, 2009), 40-65; Tina O'Toole, 'Unregenerate Spirits: the Counter-Cultural Experiments of George Egerton and Elizabeth Bowen', in *Irish Women Writers: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. Elke D'Hoker, Raphael Ingelbien and Hedwig Schwall, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011, 227-244.

[6] In 'How I Write: A Discussion with Glyn Jones', and 'A Conversation with Jocelyn Brooke' (both 1950): see Elizabeth Bowen, *Listening In: Broadcasts, Speeches and Interviews*, ed. Allan C. Hepburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010). 272, 324.

[7] See for instance *The House in Paris*, *The Death of the Heart* (London: Penguin, 1987), *The Heat of the Day* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), and 'The Inherited Clock' in *Collected Stories* (London: Cape, 1980). Palko

innovatively brings perspectives from maternality studies to bear on *The House in Paris*, a promising future direction for Bowen studies. See 'Colonial Modernism's Thwarted Modernity: Elizabeth Bowen's *The House in Paris* and Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*', in *Textual Practice* 27, 1 (2013): 89-108.

[8] In the words of the interviewer Edwin Kenney, *Elizabeth Bowen* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1975), 25.

[9] 'Coming Home', Bowen, *Collected Stories*, Introduction by Angus Wilson (London: Penguin, 1983), 95-100.

[10] Her cousin Audrey Fiennes said she 'never got over it' (Glendinning, *Bowen*, 28-9).

[11] *Pictures and Conversations*, foreword by Spencer Curtis Brown (London: Allen Lane, 1974), 9.

[12] Bowen, *To the North*, 160

[13] 'Preface', Elizabeth Bowen, *Early Stories* (New York: Knopf, 1951), x.

[14] Bowen, *The Hotel* (London: Penguin, 1987).

[15] 'Preface', *Early Stories*, x.

[16] Kenney 30.

[17] Virginia Woolf wrote to Vita Sackville-West that Bowen's 'emotions sway in a certain way' (*Letters*, ed. Nigel Nicolson, Vol. 5. (1979), 111; see Glendinning's nuanced discussion (*Bowen*, 188-193 and *Love's Civil War: Elizabeth Bowen and Charles Ritchie: Letters and Diaries from the Love Affair of a Lifetime* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 135); Nicola Darwood, *A World of Lost Innocence: The Fiction of Elizabeth Bowen* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 61-4.

[18] House wrote: 'Why, Elizabeth, did you not tell me when we first slept together that you were a virgin?' (23 July 1934). Quoted in Deirdre Toomey, 'Elizabeth Bowen', *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[19] Glendinning, *Love's Civil War*, 5.

[20] Pearson, Nels. *Irish Cosmopolitanism: Location and Dislocation in James Joyce, Elizabeth Bowen, and Samuel Beckett* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015).

[21] Mooney, Sinéad. 'Unstable Compounds: Bowen's Beckettian Affinities'. 'Special Issue: Elizabeth Bowen'. *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 53: 2 (2007): 238-256.

[22] Roy Foster, 'The Irishness of Elizabeth Bowen'. In *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Allen Lane, 1993). 102-133.

[23] Foster, 'The Irishness of Elizabeth Bowen', *Paddy and Mr Punch*, 102-133, and 'Prints on the Scene: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of Childhood', in *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland.* London: Allen Lane, 2001, 148-163; Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland*

during World War II (London: Faber, 2008); W.J. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History through Balzac, Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

[24] Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court* (London: Virago, 1984), 453.

[25] Though Heather Ingman, drawing on Helene Deutsch, interestingly suggests reading such perverse self-empowerment as an outlet for women frustrated in patriarchal culture. See *Women's Fiction between the Wars: Mothers, Daughters, and Writing.* New York: St Martin's Press, 1998, 73-8.

[26] See Petra Rau, 'Telling it Straight: The Rhetorics of Conversion in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel* and Freud's *Psychogenesis*', in *Sapphic Modernities: Sexuality, Women and National Culture*, ed. L. Doan and J. Garrity (London: Palgrave, 2006), 217-231.

[27] Bowen, *The Last September*, 115-16, 24, 48.

[28] See Patricia Coughlan, 'Women and Desire in Elizabeth Bowen'. In *Sex, Nation and Dissent*, ed. Eibhear Walshe. Cork: Cork University Press, 1997, 123-5.

[29] Bowen, *The Last September*, 65.

[30] Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 85.

[31] But see *The Last September*'s hilarious cameo of the anxious child Hercules Langrishe, last of his name, engaged to retrieve tennis-balls from the hedge, who must overcome his fear of bats before he can go away to school.

[32] Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 145.

[33] Bowen, *To the North*, 70-1.

[34] Muldoon powerfully explores this story's political uncanny in *To Ireland, I (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18-25.

[35] See Jean Radford, 'Late Modernism and the Politics of History', in *Women Writers of the '30s: Gender, Politics and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). 33-45.

[36] Bowen, *The House in Paris*, 126.

[37] Bowen, *The House in Paris*, 174.

[38] As Hermione Lee puts it in *Bowen: An Estimation*, 111.

[39] 'There was of course his courage', but 'makes of men date, like makes of cars; Major Brutt was a 1914-18 model: there was now no market for that make' (Bowen, *The Death of the Heart*, 90-1).

[40] Purdon, James. *Modernist Informatics: Literature, Information and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press. 2015), 185.

[41] Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 61.

[42] Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 267-8, 274-5.

[43] Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, 195.

[44] Clair Wills, '"Half different": The Vanishing Irish in *A World of Love*'. In Walshe, ed. (2009), 133-149.

[45] Bowen, *The Little Girls* (London: Penguin, 1982), 236.

[46] Jane Rule, *Lesbian Images.* Garden City: Doubleday, 1976, 119.

[47] Bowen, *Eva Trout or Changing Scenes* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1969), 13.

[48] See 'Unregenerate Spirits: the Counter-Cultural Experiments of George Egerton and Elizabeth Bowen', in *Irish Women Writers: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. Elke D'Hoker, Raphael Ingelbien and Hedwig Schwall, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011, 227-244. O'Toole also revealingly situates the novel in the context of 1960s and earlier lesbian narratives.

[49] John Coates cogently argues against interpreting this intended marriage as a mere charade ('The Misfortunes of *Eva Trout*' *Essays in Criticism* 48, 1 (1998): 59-79).

[50] 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), 135-143.

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