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Elizabeth Bowen: Empire, Gender and Travel in the Twentieth Century

Edwina Keown

A Thesis submitted to the School of English at the University of Dublin, Trinity College, in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

September 2005

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SUMMARY

'Elizabeth Bowen: Empire, Gender and Travel in the Twentieth Century' examines how Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973) uses travel and transport technologies figuratively throughout her writing to interrogate the historical breaks between pre-World War I British imperialism and post-World War II British decolonisation. Bowen tracks the changes in British identity and society in the aftermath of the fragmentation of the Empire and the concomitant crises in gender.

My focus is firstly on the inter-relation between Bowen's themes and her travel metaphors; on how her themes and metaphors influence her formal development. My thesis is structured into four thematic chapters, according to Bowen's examination of the decline of the British Empire and the changing gender roles of her lifetime through the types of vehicular and travel motifs that she uses to investigate these changes. Chapters one, three and four cross-examine the stories and novels that chronicle her contemporary moment and each chapter is divided into three subsections, which are categorised either by a particular travel metaphor or by a novel. Since Chapter two concentrates on her historical writing it is structured separately from the other chapters.

Chapter one 'If the shoe fits: British travellers between the Wars' introduces the dissolution of the British Empire and changing assumptions on gender as two fundamental and interlocking historical themes in Bowen's work. It puts forward the centrality of Bowen's travel metaphors in calibrating these historical changes by analysing Bowen's childhood memoir of Dublin in 1905, in her essay the 'Horse Show' published in *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* (1942). It then draws attention to the way Bowen's female characters' footwear and walking ability characterise post-World War I changes in British identity in the following short stories and fiction, 'The Contessina' (1924); *Shoes: An International Episode* (1926); *The Death of the Heart* (1938) and 'A Walk in the Woods' (1941). The three subsections chart a geographical movement inwards from Europe in 1924 to London and the dead heart of the Empire in 1941 at the start of World War II, where the geographical contraction parallels the historical decline. Bowen's fictional movement parallels her personal movement from the periphery of British society in 1923 into its literary heartland with the outbreak of World War II. But because of her Anglo-Irish heredity and her gender, she retains the dual perspective of a critical insider and outsider, and uses modern metaphors to analyse the long-term historical causes behind the two world wars.

Chapter two 'Anglo-Irish Nomads (from big house to ship)' concentrates on Bowen's historical writing, all set in Ireland: her two family memoirs *Bowen's Court* (1942) and *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* (1942) and her one historical novel *The Last September* (1929) set during the Anglo-Irish war.[1] In these three texts Bowen cross-examines the influence of history upon her present moment by charting the rise and fall of the Anglo-Irish from 1642 to 1921. Bowen portrays the fragmentation of the Anglo-Irish as an historical prequel to the end of the British Empire. This chapter offers a new historical perspective on Bowen's work as its four chronological subsections track the way Bowen uses a particular travel metaphor to re-write significant moments in her family history and in so doing develops her literary style as a counter-point to British imperialism.

Chapter three 'Boat-train' returns to Bowen's fiction and to three novels *Friends & Relations* (1931), *To the North* (1932) and *The House in Paris* (1935) written during the 1930s (before *The Death of the Heart*). All three investigate Britain's crises-ridden years between the Wars. I now show Bowen bringing Britain's imperial past to bear upon the present through her ship and train metaphors, as these nineteenth-century transport technologies were instrumental in British expansion. Although the chapter's geographical movement reverses that identified in chapter one, as Bowen fictionally moves outward from England to Ireland and to Europe, I show that her train and boat metaphors reveal that by the 1930s Britain is increasingly at risk in a hostile world.

After exploring in the previous three chapters the inescapable impact of history upon individual lives, the final chapter four 'Bowen 707 Take-off': bicycles, motorcars and aeroplanes' charts Bowen's investigation of gender and the possibility of escaping Victorian values, as these twentieth-century technologies promised a break with nineteenth-century imperial politics. I take the title for this chapter from Sean O'Faolain's characterisation of Bowen's writing style, which appositely sums up part of my argument throughout this thesis, that Bowen's travel metaphors, through which her two dialectical historical themes are figured, are the sine qua non of her authorship at the level of subject matter and structure, and prove she is central to the evolution of British modernism and postmodernism. The 'Bowen 707' take-off also appositely identifies my argument in this final chapter that Bowen

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[1] In her preface to the US edition of *The Last September* Bowen writes '*The Last September* is the only one of my novels to be set back deliberately, in a former time. In all others I wanted readers to contemplate what would appear to be the immediate moment – so much so, that to give the sense of the 'now' has been, for me, one imperative of writing. For *The Last September*, that went into reverse – the 'then' (the past) as an element was demanded. The cast of my characters, and their doings, were to reflect the mood of a vanished time.' Bowen, '*The Last September*, preface to the second U.S. edition' (1952) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 124.

fictionally investigates the possibility and cost of trying to break with pre-World War I and pre-World War II identities. I now turn to her novels, short stories and autobiographical fragment written between 1932 and 1973 as follows: *Pictures and Conversations* (published posthumously in 1975), *A World of Love* (1955), *The Little Girls* (1963), *To the North* (1932), 'A Love Story 1939' (1941) and her last novel *Eva Trout* (1968). These works in particular either anticipate or focus on post-World War II politics of British decolonisation, a new Europe, American supremacy, consumerism and complex gender politics in the 1950s and '60s. Her figurative treatment of the three new vehicles investigates the promise of the new world order, gender equality, and plural life styles and values, but Bowen shows the promise encapsulated in automobiles and aeroplanes is overshadowed first by their destructive potential, as realised throughout World War II, and secondly by consumer politics which are replacing imperialism and traditional British institutions as the new value system. Indeed by the 1950s advertising conferred a gendered and cultural identity in the twentieth century based on an illusory return to traditional British family roles that now lack the pre-war substance and confidence. This final chapter is split into three subsections. The first are ordered chronologically according to the dates that bicycles, motorcars and aeroplanes were invented, and then according to Bowen's depiction of them in her fiction. The final subsection explores her last novel *Eva Trout* (1968) in which Bowen suggests that new technologies and the post-World War II world offers more freedom, but in a chaotic and groundless universe.

I have chosen the fiction, which I believe most pertinent and where possible I have focused on work that has been critically overlooked or under appreciated. In chapter one I have omitted Bowen's first novel *The Hotel* (1927), although the novel is under represented in Bowen criticism, in favour of her virtually overlooked short story 'The Contessina' (1924) because the story encapsulates the themes and metaphors explored in *The Hotel*. Both works analyse pre- and post-World War I gender and identity politics among upper class British tourists in a hotel in Italy, but 'The Contessina' shows a more experimental literary style than the later novel. Previous critics have not realised the thematic and stylistic importance of 'The Contessina' in Bowen's literary development as a modernist. For similar reasons I explore Bowen's less well-known 'A Walk in the Woods' (1941) and the overlooked 'A Love Story 1939' (1941) instead of her much anthologised and critiqued 'The Disinherited' (1934), 'Summer's Night' (1941) or 'The Demon Lover' (1945). I also omit *The Heat of the Day* (1949), except for a reference in chapter four, because, as it was Bowen's biggest commercial and critical success during her lifetime, *The Heat of the Day* has received the most attention by Bowen critics as showing her modernist credentials. My intention is to foreground Bowen's modernist techniques in the rest of her novels and lesser-known stories, and to

establish Bowen as a major and innovative British and Irish modernist and chronicler of her century.

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Without all these people this thesis would never have been written, and it is to my family that I dedicate it.

To my family, thank you

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INTRODUCTION: DISLOCATIONS

'I have thriven, accordingly, on the changes and chances, the dislocations and (as I have said) the contrasts which have made up so much of my life'

Elizabeth Bowen 'Pictures and Conversations'

I

This thesis examines how Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973) uses travel and transport technologies figuratively throughout her writing to interrogate the historical breaks between pre-World War I British imperialism and post-World War II British decolonisation. Bowen tracks the changes in British society and identity in the aftermath of the turn-of-the-century crises in gender and the post-war fragmentation of the Empire. Bowen's travel and transport metaphors express her nuanced perspective on these historical changes. Through her vehicular metaphors in particular Bowen links her writing with her present moment and with literary modernism. Her literary strategies not only convey the historical dislocations and existential crises of the twentieth century, but she uses them to reshape the English novel and short story, so that both literary forms can articulate the modern condition. My study considers Elizabeth Bowen as a major Irish and British modernist as well as chronicler of changes in political, social and personal relations in the twentieth century. Bowen suffered from a sense of psychological hyphenation, both geographically and historically. Her parents came from two sectors of the Anglo-Irish community in Ireland, she moved constantly between Ireland and England, and she lived through two world wars.[1] Bowen's personal life and writing style represents these divisions, now seen as the hallmarks of twentieth-century modernity; she also participated in the broader historical changes which her travel metaphors explore.[2]

From the moment Elizabeth Bowen decided to opt for a literary career in London in 1921 she wrote and published fiction and essays until her death. In her own words, Bowen's fiction and memoirs interrogate the historical change in her present moment, "...to contemplate what could appear to be the immediate moment - so much so, that to give the sense of the 'now' has

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[1] Julian Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination of a Hyphenated Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 224-237.

[2] Throughout this thesis I have used Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* (1942 and 1942; London: Vintage, 1999) and *Pictures and Conversations* (London: Allen Lane, 1975); Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (London: Nicholson Weidenfeld, 1977); and Hermione

been, for me, one imperative of writing."[3] Even her historical writing analyses her present moment - the chance encounters between individuals and "place and time" which for Bowen "are more than elements, they are actors" in her fiction and life.[4] Bowen portrays most of her characters as travellers or individuals "in transit consciously", because these types of characters drew her novelist's 'eye' to record real life dislocations and the fictive nature of 'identity' "When they extend their environment, strike outward, invade the unknown, travel, what goes on in them is magnified and enhanced: impacts are sharper, there is more objectivity."[5] Throughout her fiction Bowen deploys transport imagery, in particular ships and railways, to track the evolving gender politics and map the decline in British economic, social and political power.

Elizabeth Bowen was born on the 7th June 1899, at 15 Herbert Place, Dublin. Her parents were both Anglo-Irish gentry – members of the Protestant minority who originated from England in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and took over Irish land belonging to Catholic natives. In the eighteenth century, the Anglo-Irish ruled Ireland through their parliament at College Green in Dublin under the aegis of the British crown and parliament in Westminster. Only Protestant landowners could sit in parliament, the Catholics were disenfranchised.[6] Since the 1801 Act of Union between England and Ireland, which dissolved the parliament in Dublin and passed the government of Ireland over to Westminster, the Anglo-Irish had declined from a ruling class to becoming the handmaidens of British imperialism. The Act of Catholic Emancipation (1829), the Act of Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland (1869) and successive Land Acts undermined Anglo-Irish authority and left them vulnerable to a politically hostile Catholic nationalist majority who were agitating for the end of the Union and political influence of the Anglo-Irish. By 1899 the Anglo-Irish landlords relied on the British government to protect their position in Ireland.

Elizabeth Bowen's parents came from two strands of the Anglo-Irish community – the old style of landed Anglo-Irish and the new professional and urban Anglo-Irish who were changing with the political times. On her father's side Elizabeth descended from the Anglo-Irish who arrived in Ireland with Cromwell in 1649. The Bowens owned Bowen's Court: a big house in North Cork. Her father Henry Cole Bowen had broken with his father's landlordism for a

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Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen*, (1981; London: Vintage, 1999) for Elizabeth Bowen's biographical details.

[3] Elizabeth Bowen, '*The Last September,* preface to second U.S. edition' (1952) in Elizabeth Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen,*ed. Hermione Lee (1986; London: Vintage, 1999)124.

[4] Bowen, '*The Last September,* preface to second U.S. edition' (1952) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 123. For a complete bibliography of Bowen's publications: J'nan Sellery, *Elizabeth Bowen: a checklist* (New York: New York Public Library, 1970).

[5] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 42.

professional career as a barrister in Dublin, but he had held onto Bowen's Court and maintained the big house tradition in which the Anglo-Irish were paternalistic and enlightening leaders. Her mother Florence's family, the Colleys, had been in Ireland since Elizabethan times but sold their big house, Carbery Castle in the middle of the nineteenth century and bought a Victorian villa Mount Temple in Clontarf, Dublin. The Colleys were professional and forward-thinking Protestant gentry not tied to big house traditions "or conditioned by any *place*."[7] Bowen associates the big house with Anglo-Irish guilt and historical entombment and associates the rootless, urban Anglo-Irish with the modern world. Of these, she claims, "in the Bowen sense they were not nervous at all and the past to them was no more than a friendly myth."[8] By 1903 their Clontarf villa had been sold and the Colleys were dispersed throughout Dublin and along the south coast of England. But Bowen also associated Clontarf with petty-bourgeois restrictions on her mother's creativity and independence. Bowen's familial inheritance was itself divided within an already hyphenated community. From her father Elizabeth inherited Bowen's Court (in 1931) and along with it Anglo-Irish ascendancy traditions tempered with liberal politics. From her mother she inherited a modern mindset and desire for travel, for writing, a concern for the position of women, and a desire to escape from the Anglo-Irish big house and history.

Elizabeth Bowen spent her first seven years travelling between these two Anglo-Irish communities, spending her winters in Dublin and summers in Bowen's Court. As a result of financial worries and the threatening political situation in Ireland, Henry Cole Bowen suffered a breakdown from 1905 to 1911. On his doctor's orders Elizabeth and her mother left Ireland in 1906 for their Colley relations along the Kent seacoast in England. They lived in a number of rented villas in Folkestone and then Hythe, which Florence preferred over Folkestone's petty-bourgeois morality. Indeed, Florence preferred villa life in Hythe to Anglo-Irish life in Dublin or Cork, and when diagnosed with cancer in 1912 chose to die at Clyne House and be buried in Hythe. Throughout the worsening political situation in Ireland, Bowen remained living in England with Laura and Wingfield Colley, her mother's unmarried sister and brother. For Bowen, pre-1914 England became a safe house. She attended a local girls' boarding school, Harpenden Hall, as a day student and then entered Downe House as a boarder at the outset of World War I in September 1914, where she remained until 1917. The headmistress of Downe House was the forward-thinking female educationist Olive Willis (ex-Somerville College,

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[6] R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1988)
[7] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 384.
[8] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 385.

Oxford) who founded the school in 1907.[9] Olive Willis inculcated modern views on women's practical roles in society. She later introduced Bowen to Rose Macaulay, giving Bowen access to London's literary circles.[10] Elizabeth and her father exchanged visits between Cork and Kent during her school vacations and he informed her of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, but she later admitted World War I affected her more than Irish politics at the time.

After school Bowen briefly worked as a nurse in Dublin before returning to Bowen's Court for a short spell between 1918 and 1921, to consider her future. In 1918 Henry Bowen married Mary Gwynn. The marriage brought Bowen into close contact with Mary's brother, the writer Stephen Gwynn. Gwynn wrote *The Life of Mary Kingsley* (1932), a study that Virginia Woolf drew upon for her female polemics in *Three Guineas* (1938). The Anglo-Irish war erupted around Bowen and she was sent to Italy in 1921 to escape an unwise engagement and the Troubles. Her father sent her news while she was in Italy that neighbouring Anglo-Irish big houses were being burnt by the Irish Republican Army and she prepared for the burning of her own home. Bowen's Court survived but Elizabeth went to England for two terms at the London School of Art, in Southampton Row, before focusing on a writing career in London in 1921, the same year that the twenty-six counties in southern Ireland achieved independence from Britain. In 1923 Bowen married an English war veteran, Alan Cameron, and spent most of her adult life living in England, first in Northampton, followed by Oxford in the 1920s and early 30s, where, on the success of her short story collections *Encounters* (1923), *Ann Lee's and Other Stories* (1926), *Joining Charles and Other Stories* (1929), *The Cat Jumps and Other Stories* (1934), and her novels *The Hotel* (1927), *The Last September* (1929), *Friends & Relations* (1931), and *To the North* (1932), she joined its literary and intellectual circles. In 1935, the same year that she published *The House in Paris* (1935), she moved to London and the heartland of England's literary scene.

During the interwar years Bowen moved back and forth between Cork and England, with regular trips to the Continent. She spent World War II in London, working both as an air warden and for the British Ministry of Information, for whom she infamously made trips to Ireland in 1942 and wrote her 'Reports on Éire'.[11] Bowen believed it imperative that writers keep writing

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[9] Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* 33.
[10] Bowen, 'Coming to London' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 88.
[11] Bowen, 'Notes on Éire' DO 130/128 and FO 800/310, The National Archives, Kew Richmond, London. For different viewpoints on Bowen's wartime work for the Ministry of Information see W J McCormack, *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen*

during the war. But she found the novel form, even a modernist one, could not articulate the inhumanity of her present moment. Instead Bowen's thematic and formal experimentation with the short story came to fruition in expressing the existential crises of warfare. She published her two powerful wartime collections *Look At All Those Roses* (1941) and *The Demon Lover* (1945). Like many modernist writers of the time, Bowen moved away from the present moment and the novel form to history, mythology and memoir. She rewrote and mythologised her family history (and in doing this, she rewrote and reinterpreted Anglo-Irish and a part of British history). After the war and throughout the 1950s Bowen toured Europe and America lecturing. In 1952 Elizabeth and Alan returned to Bowen's Court hoping to retire there permanently, but in the same year Alan died. Elizabeth tried to live there alone, writing and publishing *A World of Love* (1955), but due to financial strain she was forced to sell the family home in 1959. The house was demolished within a year of the sale. Bowen never recovered from this loss. She returned to Hythe and her childhood territory in England, buying a newly built house and naming it Carbery after the Colley's Irish big house. Throughout the 1960s Bowen continued her frenetic travels, lecturing at American universities, visiting Europe and, despite the loss of her home, regularly returning to Ireland. Bowen wrote two experimental novels *The Little Girls* (1964) and *Eva Trout* (1968) which both increasingly display postmodernist literary strategies. A heavy smoker all her life, she was diagnosed with cancer in 1972. On the 22nd February 1973 she died in University College hospital at St Pancras in London. She had begun working on a new novel *The Move-In*, in which she was developing her themes of dislocation, her vehicular metaphors and the tension between the realist and postmodernist forms. Bowen was removed to Ireland and buried with her husband and father in Farahy churchyard backing onto the former Bowen lands.

In 1906 the British Empire was the leading imperial power with authority over the seas and trade routes and a vast agglomeration of dominions and colonies connected by railway and shipping networks.[12] The British public at home and British citizens across the Empire entertained a jingoistic pride in and duty towards their friends and relations within the Empire and in particular towards the motherland Britain. Yet from 1900 the British government and public speculated about and prepared for a future war either against Britain's old imperial enemies

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(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Robert Fisk, *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality 1939-45* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 1983) 288, 409-440 and 538; Brendan Clifford and Jack Lane, *Notes on Eire: espionage reports to Winston Churchill, 1940-2 / Elizabeth Bowen; with a Review of Irish neutrality in World War II* (Aubane: Aubane Historical Society, 1999).

[12]The historical facts behind the end of the British Empire outlined in this thesis are drawn from Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History* (London: Macmillan 2000); Lawrence James, *The Rise & Fall of the British Empire* (London: Abacus, 1995); and Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century*

France and Russia or Germany's new *Weltpolitik* policy. The race for imperial supremacy was built upon naval power and to a much lesser extent the new airpower. Rising to the German challenge Britain modernised the navy from 1904 to 1914, persuading the dominions into contributing battlecruisers, and building '*cordon ententes*' or treaties with France, Russia and Japan to protect Britain's primacy. Britain entered World War I as the dominant sea power with extensive manpower reserves from its dominions and colonies to fight in the protracted land war. Although Britain won the Great War (1914-1918) and extended its Empire to its greatest size, receiving Germany's Palestine Mandate under the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty as war booty, the Empire had reached breaking point.

In 1914 Britain could afford neither the Great War nor her Empire. Since the 1890s British industry had gone into decline. Pre-war armament merely camouflaged the end of British shipbuilding and the British government incautiously overspent on the war effort. German U-boats sank British battleships and German aircraft and guns breached the Channel ending the view that Britain was impregnable. Economically America had overtaken Britain in the 1890s, and by 1918 America's navy surpassed the Royal Navy. The concept of the Empire as a harmonious family tree symbolically held together by the British monarchy was a myth. At the turn of the century Egypt, South Africa and India petitioned and agitated for freedom. Nearer home Irish nationalists stepped up their campaign for 'Home Rule' and the end of the union, with Britain bringing Ireland to the brink of civil war in 1913, which only the outbreak of World War I averted. In Britain the working classes and women's suffragists campaigned for political franchise, welfare and employment. World War I took precedence over social welfare and politics, but in 1918 all working-class men over the age of eighteen and women over the age of thirty received the vote. Although the pre-war British government had changed from outright imperialism to a more liberal and paternalistic imperialism, it still maintained the Empire was the sine qua non of Britain's power and prestige, and tried unavailingly to hold onto it after World War I.

The human and financial cost of World War I changed the perception of the Empire in the eyes of the British public, the colonies and the dominions. Soldiers from the colonies and dominions suffered racism and class snobbery in the British army, and in consequence socialism and separatist nationalism spread throughout the army. The various dominions brought socialist and nationalist ideologies back to their home countries. The concept of the Empire as one family

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1914-1991 (London: Abacus, 1995).

was being replaced in the minds of some of its overseas subjects with the US President Woodrow Wilson's 'fourteen points' and the concept of self-determination, which inspired and gave political credence to the struggle for independence of Irish Nationalists. Between 1919 and 1921 the Irish Republican Army waged guerrilla warfare against the British government for self-determination. The British government could not uphold the role of an oppressor in the eyes of public opinion both at home and on the world stage. On the 6th December 1921 the British government conceded independence with dominion status to twenty-six counties in southern Ireland. Northern Ireland stayed within the United Kingdom. The partition resulted in a civil war in Ireland from 1922-23 that ended in stalemate and the partition of the island established as a political reality.

Irish independence dealt the first serious blow to the Empire and heralded the beginning of the end, although the British government and public did not realise this at the time. World War I had galvanised imperial decline by ending Britain's naval supremacy and the myth that England was impregnable. From 1921 Ireland owned the Treaty Ports, Lough Swilly, Berehaven and Cobh, that had been fundamental to England's naval defence policy during World War I.[13] Britain was now vulnerable and reliant on American battleships to defend British shipping in the Atlantic. The loss of the Treaty Ports poisoned Irish and English relations during the 1930s and cost the Royal Navy dear during World War II.[14] Yet World War I had proved that airpower was now the first line of defence and the new broker of superpower status in the twentieth century. Again America had the greater airforce. In addition, from 1919 Britain could not act unilaterally, but was obliged to agree its international policies through the League of Nations.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s Britain seemed stable and immune from the political and economic turbulence and the ensuing communist and fascist governments afflicting Europe. Britain survived the aftermath of the 1929 Wall Street crash relatively unscathed compared to the rest of the world, but at the cost of devaluing sterling, which had a profound negative effect on the British mindset. British self-confidence at the levels of the government and every day citizens was shaken. World War I veterans, the war widowed and the younger generation felt cheated by the old Victorian and Edwardian axiomatic belief in British destiny to rule the world and the concomitant sacrificial duty to imperialism. Instead, British citizens and the government turned from thinking of the Empire to focusing on Britain and social welfare issues. Whitehall pursued a

[13] Fisk 288, 409, 411-413, 417, 422-424, 423*n*., 425, 427*n*., 430, 438, 439-440, 548.
[14] Fisk 1-45 and Foster 554, 563-568.

policy of appeasement in Europe, trying to safeguard the Empire, which from 1924 was increasingly referred to by its euphemistic title 'the Commonwealth' – drawing upon the concept of the British Commonwealth established in 1649, to identify in the words of George V "the spirit of free and tolerant cooperation which had inspired peoples of different races, creeds, institutions and ways of thought to unite in a single Commonwealth."[15] In 1931 a Statute of Westminster brought the British Commonwealth of Nations into existence, as, in Norman Davies' words "a distinct grouping of states within the Empire."[16] But from 1934 as Hitler, supported by Mussolini, increasingly threatened Britain, the government retreated from defence of the Empire to self-protection and inveigled the now recalcitrant dominions to not only safeguard the Empire but also defend Britain in the impending World War II. Importantly appeasement gave Britain time to out-pace German aircraft manufacture, until Hitler invaded Poland and Britain was forced to declare war on Germany on the 3rd September 1939.

World War II (1939-1945) did bankrupt Britain and irrevocably demoted her from a world power to third place behind America and the USSR, with an inferior international role as America's right hand. For the first year of the 'Phoney War' between 1940 to 1941 Britain fought Germany alone and saved western Europe until the Soviet Union and America were forced to enter the war and ensured the Allies defeated Hitler in 1945. World War II changed the map of the world and the balance of global power. It ended with the beginning of the Cold War (1945-1989) between America and the USSR, the two new super-powers, and their respective allies. The Cold War divided Europe and the world between the capitalist West and the communist East.

The progress of World War II and the Cold War dictated post-war British policy and accelerated the final fragmentation of the Empire. Once Britain became a member of the UN Security Council in 1945, and NATO in 1949, British policy and armament was dictated by the USA who exerted pressure on Britain into giving self-government to its former colonies from 1948 to 1963.[17] The British government inevitably faced up to and managed dismemberment under the official strategy euphemistically titled 'decolonisation'. Britain gave self-government to their former colonies but pressured them to remain within the Commonwealth. In 1948 Ireland became the Republic of Ireland and exited the Commonwealth. In 1969 the conflict in Northern

[15] George V used these words to describe the purpose of the British Empire Exhibitions held at Wembley during 1924 and 1925 at which the idea of the Empire was "sold to the public". James 28 and 445.
[16]The Commonwealth first consisted of six self-governing 'white' dominions, Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the Irish Free State. But it was designed as model for future developments. Davies 761.

Ireland erupted and by the time Elizabeth Bowen died in 1973, Ireland and Britain had entered the European Economic Community separately as equal member states. The various worlds that she knew – Ireland, Britain, Europe and, latterly America – had all undergone profound, and irrevocable seachange.

II

At the turn of the twentieth century the 'Woman Question' became prominent in society and a matter of concern for the future of the Empire.[18] British imperialism was grounded in the bourgeois family in which the father actively served the Empire in the public sphere and the mother passively served the Empire in the domestic sphere by upholding its spiritual values, supporting her husband and family and reproducing its members.[19] Their children, indoctrinated into imperialism either in their bourgeois home or public school, ensured the Empire's future. Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) gave authority to and provided a hierarchical social model for the abstract concept of the Empire as a patriarchal family tree with Britain as the paternal ruler of its 'family' territories.[20] But as Lyn Pykett points out in *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*, Darwin's publications, while endorsing patriarchy and imperialism, also questioned the ground upon which patriarchy operated by leading to the exploration of the nature of 'woman' and 'sex', laying the ground for debates about the identity and social purpose of women in the 1890s. Instead of having an essential and inferior nature, women were proving to have complex and culturally conferred 'natures' - as Simone de Beauvoir later described the problem in 1949, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman."[21] The 'Woman question' undermined the traditional belief in an essential and superior masculine identity.

Medical doctors and psychologists such as Havelock Ellis[22] and Sigmund Freud[23],

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[17] For an in-depth analysis of British 'decolonisation' see Davies 752-756 and James 500-679.
[18] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century*, 3 vols. (London: Yale, 1988; 1989; and 1994).
[19] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1 An Introduction.* transl. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1990); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979; London: Yale University Press, 2000); and Judy Wajcman, *Feminism Confronts Technology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).
[20] Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995) 21-181.
[21] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex.* (1949; London: Everyman 2000) 295.
[22] Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol 6 Sex in Relation to Society* (1910; Philadelphia: F Davis Company, 1929) and *Man and woman: a study of human secondary and tertiary sexual characters*

educationists, politicians and feminists such as Dora Marsden[24] and Rebecca West[25], published contradictory and inter-related articles on the nature and function of women in society and marriage.[26] From a different Anglo-Irish background to Bowen, Rebecca West wrote against bourgeois gender roles and marriage in favour of independent careers for women both outside marriage and within.[27] Lyn Pykett identifies two types of 'New Woman' emerging before World War I. One was the "social-purity feminist" who still saw marriage as a woman's purpose but fought for equality in marriage by asserting the social value of motherhood and women's aptitude at civilising "the brute" in man. The other type was the "liberal reforming or socialist feminist" who fought for enfranchisement and professional careers for unmarried and married women.[28] There was some crossover between the two camps. Female enfranchisement and sexuality became an important issue for the Empire because of *fin de siécle* fears of degeneracy if middle-class women married outside their sphere, or had sex outside marriage, or worse, did not marry and procreate. Indeed many middle-class women lambasted the suffragettes for unwomanly behaviour.[29] World War I disrupted the gender debate as every woman did her patriotic duty.[30] In October 1915 the *Suffragette* changed its name to *Britannia* and changed its rhetoric from 'civilising maternal mission' to 'patriotic mothers of the Empire' rhetoric.[31]

World War I intensified the gender debate as women had worked and assumed traditional male roles in the war effort. The after-shock of trench warfare seemed to emasculate men. War

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(1913; London: W. Heinemann ltd.,1934).

[23] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900; London: Wordsworth Classics, 1997)

[24] Dora Marsden founded the feminist publication *Freewoman* (1911) which was renamed *New Freewoman* (1913). Under Ezra Pound's influence the *New Freewoman* prioritised the revolution of the word over the sexual revolution and on 15 December 1913 it announced its modernist aesthetic mission through its new name *The Egoist: An Individualist Review*. Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995) 44-47.

[25] Rebecca West (1892 - 1983) was born Cicely Isabel Fairfield in London, and like Bowen was Anglo-Irish. A novelist, historian, essayist and feminist, she wrote for the *Freewoman* and joined as Editor of the *New Freewoman*. She was a suffragette but not a militant one like Emilie Pankhurst.

[26] Pykett 20-53.

[27] Bonnie Kime Scott's edited *Selected Letters of Rebecca West* (2000) places West as an influential voice in British modernism, as West's writing reveals the intercourse between New Woman writers and the emerging modernist aesthetics. Rebecca West, *Selected Letters of Rebecca West*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

[28] Rebecca West's editorials in the *Freewoman* chart the fierce confrontations between the suffragettes, the British public, police and the government. Because of their unfeminine behaviour in politicking and breaking the peace suffragettes were not distinguished as females and were often brutally manhandled.

[29] Rebecca West, 'Feminism' in *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West 1911-1917*, ed. Jane Marcus (London: Virago Press, 1982) 365-368; Pykett 14-37; Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, (1938; London: Harcourt Inc, 1966), 148-149 and 162-163.

[30] Pykett 4-17, 38-43 and 54-67.

[31] Pykett 47-48.

veterans displayed nervous hysteria usually associated with women and this again called into the question the 'essential natures' and social roles attributed to women. In the 1920s and 1930s Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf published essays and novels arguing for women's equality in Britain's professional and intellectual life and constructed a new feminine literary aesthetic, which became a foundational strand in modernism. Richardson's thirteen-volume *Pilgrimage* developed the fluid 'stream-of-consciousness' feminine narrative and 'interior realism' in opposition to the Edwardian-masculine external realism of Galsworthy, Bennett and Wells.[32] Woolf admired *Pilgrimage.* In her essays 'Modern Novels' (1919) and 'Character In Fiction' (1924) and in her novels, in particular *Orlando* (1928), *The Waves* (1931) and *Between the Acts* (1941), Woolf reveals the inter-relation between new modernist aesthetics and women's position, and touches upon travel and transport as literary metaphors to signal aesthetic and social change – going a step further than Richardson to create an androgynous aesthetics. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938) Virginia Woolf argues that gender and national identities are culturally constructed and not innate; they can be worn or discarded like official costumes. Woolf herself proved this in her 1910 "Dreadnought hoax" when she inspected a Royal Navy man o' war dressed as a male attendant to her brother Adrian's impersonation of the Emperor of Abyssinia.[33] Woolf argues that Englishwomen are only "stepdaughters" of England and never full citizens because, once married, women assume their husbands' nationality over their own - proving the fluidity of national identities.[34]

The post-war generation during the 1920s and 30s shelved some imperial dictums and transformed their dress, while unmarried women entered professions and risked 'unfeminine' behaviour and a more active, public sexuality.[35] The loosening of social norms accompanying the decline of the Empire was both frightening and freeing for the post-war women, cut off from pre-war certainties and trying to experiment with the new styles of becoming a woman and being

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[32] Gillian Hanscombe & Virginia L. Smyers, *Writing for their Lives: The Modernist Woman 1910-1940* (London: The Women's Press Ltd, 1987) 47-63.

[33] Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 1 *Letters from the Front* 8-9.

[34] In a footnote to chapter 1 Virginia Woolf writes, 'Stepdaughters, not full daughters, of England is shown by the fact they change nationality on marriage. A woman, whether or not she helped to beat the Germans, became a German if she married a German. Her political views must then be entirely reversed, and her filial piety transferred.' Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* 14 and 148.

[35] Jane Lewis, *Women and social action in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Aldershot: Edward Elger, 1991), *Women in Britain since 1945: women, family, work and the State in the Post-War years* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991); Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: 20th Century Women's Travel Writing* (London: Minneapolis University Press, 2001); Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being: autobiographical writings*, ed by Jeanne Schulkind; introduced and revised by Hermione Lee. (London: Pimlico, 2002).

British.[36] Although married women were not allowed a professional career the role of the mother received higher value than before. But this new valuation was based upon a mother's social purpose to produce future British soldiers.[37]

World War II, like World War I, both reversed and advanced women's positions in society. While the war effort in some ways enforced traditional gender roles and the cult of male heroism, women served in the forces and in the land army at home and took on work in many spheres previously only open to men. In the aftermath of World War II, British society needed to replace the war-dead and reassert family values and security with the onset of the Cold War, decolonisation and Britain's demoted world position. This meant a return to lost traditional imperial gender roles, but without the underlying belief that had structured pre-war Britain. Instead, imperialism was replaced with American consumerism and advertising, which inducted men and women into modern developments of patriarchal domesticity and separate spheres for the sexes.[38] During the 1960s and 1970s, by the time of Bowen's death, there was a feminist backlash in France, America and Britain spearheaded by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1971), against the Cold War return to traditional gender roles in favour of professional and sexual equality for women.

III

'Elizabeth Bowen: Empire, Gender and Travel in the Twentieth Century' is the first study to identify Bowen as a pre-eminent British and Irish modernist and innovator of the twentieth-century English novel, through a critical focus, at both a thematic and formal, level on her fiction and memoirs; in particular on her metaphorical treatment of travel and vehicles. In her personal life and in her writing style, Bowen moved from the edge of British society (as a seven-year-old immigrant)[39] and a traditional style of realist fiction, into the centre of British modernism. Living

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[36] Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2 *Sex Changes* 324-377; Bonnie Kime Scott, *The Gender of Modernism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and Pykett, 54-67.

[37] Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 3 Letters From the Front 211-266.

[38] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1963)

[39] In 'Pictures and Conversations' Bowen describes herself and her mother Florence as immigrants in England, and importantly asserts her early transplantation made her a novelist, 'Possibly, it was England made me a novelist. At an early though conscious age, I was transplanted…From now on there was to be (as for any immigrant) a cleft between my heredity and my environment – the former remaining, in my

and writing in Oxford from 1925 to 1935, Bowen became intimate with Maurice Bowra, David Cecil and John and Susan Buchan, Cecil Day Lewis, Henry Yorke (Henry Green) who were all up-and-coming British novelists and literary critics. From the 1930s Bowen began visiting London's 'modern' literary scene and following her move to 2 Clarence Terrace, Regent's Park, London, Bowen became a central figure in British literature and modernism through her friendships with Cyril Connolly, Hilda Doolittle, Graham Greene, the Lehmanns, Lady Ottoline Morrell, William Plomer, Ezra Pound, Edith Sitwell and especially Virginia Woolf.[40] Woolf's influence upon the younger Bowen has been well documented by Bowen critics, in particular Hermione Lee.[41] The two writers slowly became intimates during the 1930s and Bowen admired Woolf's work and was attracted to Woolf personally, indeed Bowen's letters verge on hero worship of Woolf. As Lee dryly notes, Woolf slowly appreciated Bowen's fiction.[42] Bowen also praised Richardson's narrative style.[43] Although Bowen did not meet her countryman James Joyce, she admired his innovative work and critical perspectives on the modern world from outside the Empire.[44] Unlike Woolf, Bowen admired another hyphenated British modernist, the New Zealander, Katherine Mansfield and regretted not meeting her.[45]

The term 'modernism' identifies criteria of styles and disruptive techniques chosen by some writers in the twentieth century, but not all. Stephen Spender identified two strands in the twentieth century novel, the 'traditionalists' and the 'moderns'.[46] Bowen balances the two, for she shares some of the new literary techniques and aesthetic self-consciousness of her fellow British and Irish modernists who changed the novel form, in particular E M Forster, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, D H Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield. My thesis will focus on Bowen's manipulation of the techniques of rupture, narrative discontinuity, formal crises, introversion, levels of consciousness, defamiliarisation, complex handling of time, repetition-with-variation of motifs, and above all innovative metaphorical language. All these

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case, the more powerful.' *Pictures and Conversations* 23.

[40] Glendinning and Lee, 103-126. Bowen moved in the literary circles of the Imagist poets such as Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle and Amy Lowell. Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and her World.* (New York: Quill, 1984) 236-239, 246, 255,260 and 326-327.

[41] Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf.* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) 110, 587, 606, 629 and 652-3; and *Elizabeth Bowen* 1, 2, 3, 10, 16, 21, 37, 64, 211, 217, 222 and 226.

[42] Lee, *Virginia Woolf* 652-3 and *Elizabeth Bowen* 64.

[43] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 214

[44] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 214.

[45] Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen,* ed. Hermione Lee, (London: Vintage, 1999), 69-85; and Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 214.

[46] Stephen Spender, *The Struggle of the Modern*, (London: Methuen, 1963) quoted in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (ed.), *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, (London: Penguin, 1976) 24.

techniques are crucial elements in the style and purpose of modernist writing, which aimed to radically re-imagine traditional cultural assumptions and take the reader behind twentieth-century reality by undermining the old rules of language and the conventions of form, and to show the plurality of human consciousness and to offer new interrogative perspectives on contemporary life.[47] What connects the above-mentioned modernists is their heightened awareness of the specific historical evolution and crisis characterising the twentieth century, which their fiction interrogates "in a form deeply congenial to the thought, science, and technology which are part of that experience."[48] What distinguishes Bowen as an important modernist is, firstly, her themes of the end of the Empire and the concomitant crises in gender, and, secondly, how she articulates these themes through her travel metaphors which are drawn from the latest technological changes in the twentieth century. Thirdly, her style, which combines a metaphorical structure, integral to the modernist novel, and metonymic narrative, integral to the realist novel, places her in the ranks of modernists like Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway.[49]

As a result of her personal history as an Anglo-Irishwoman (from two different parts of the Anglo-Irish community) who had spent her childhood between Ireland and England, Bowen is fine-tuned to the intersections between historical changes and modernist aesthetics. Her travel metaphors represent not only the dislocations in reality, but also the contradictory intersections between life and art.[50] Bowen viewed nineteenth- and twentieth-century modes of transport as her personal means to enter the modern world and escape Anglo-Irish history. She was aware, however, that technology and the modern world heralded both liberty *and* destruction. In bringing to bear on Bowen's writing the scholarship of cultural critics such as Gillian Beer, Eric J Leed, Laurence Goldstein, Stephen Kern, Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Sidonie Smith, Judy Wajcman and Robert Wolf, I will explore the impact of evolving transport technologies upon modern culture and literature and Bowen's encoding of these changes in her writing.[51]

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[47] Bradbury and McFarlane 24-28.

[48] Wylie Sypher, *From Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature* (New York, 1960); quoted in Bradbury and McFarlane 24, also see 36.

[49] David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London, Edward Arnold, 1977).

[50] Bowen, *Pictures & Conversations* 41-44.

[51] Gillian Beer, 'The island and the aeroplane: the case of Virginia Woolf' in ed. Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990); Eric J Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: from Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (London: Routledge, 1991); Laurence Goldstein, *The Flying Machine and Modern Literature* (London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1986); Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880 – 1918* (Camb, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the Nineteenth century.* (Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1986); Sidonie Smith, *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century women's travel writing*; (London: University of Minnesota Press) Judy Wajcman, *Feminism Confronts Technology*; and Robert

Nineteenth-century steamships and railways enabled the advance of imperialism and endorsed bourgeois class structures and gender codes. Twentieth-century bicycles, motorcars and aeroplanes heralded social emancipation for women and the loosening of class structures and sexual behaviour. But motorcars and aeroplanes negatively brought about the bloodshed of modern warfare, as predicted by writers such as Walter Benjamin, "This immense wooing of the cosmos was enacted for the first time on a planetary scale, that is, the spirit of technology...the bridal bed became a blood bath."[52] Paradoxically, despite the emancipating and destructive qualities of the new technologies, motorcars and aeroplanes were used by governments and advertising in the post-World War II world to reassert traditional family values, social structures and gender roles.

Bowen is not the first modernist to combine both a 'traditional' and a 'modern' narrative style or introduce the influence of new modes of transport on British life. But she is more conscious than other writers of establishing the necessary tension between 'traditional' and 'modern' styles to prevent the novel disintegrating into formlessness, and the fact that being human in the twentieth century means being moved along various transport networks like pieces of luggage. For Bowen, formal tension parallels the real-life tension between pre-war certainty and post-war fragmentation. While Virginia Woolf acknowledges the influence of new transport technologies on gender and literature, Bowen pushes further through her travel metaphors to experiment fundamentally with the modern novel and its trademark interrogation of twentieth-century existential doubt. Bowen fictionally interprets her moment by aligning in her travel and vehicular metaphors her two interlocking historical themes: contemporary gender debates and the end of imperialism, and interrogating their impact upon Irish and British identities. Indeed, her vehicular metaphors mark the twentieth century tension between individuals as historical automatons or self-authorising individuals. At all times she has a dual perspective in her work which can be traced to her hyphenated Irish origins and childhood. At one moment her metaphors stress her theme of historical change and warfare, foregrounding the way history orders personal identity, but at a narrative twist, the metaphors can favour the individual attempting to construct their own gendered, if fragmented, identity in opposition to historical forces.

Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination* (Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994).

IV

Previous Bowen critics have focused on the symbol of fragmented and threatened homes in her fiction, as central to her representations of the crises in an Anglo-Irish identity and in modern British life. Bowen's earliest critics read her work through the theme of mother/daughter relations or of love and betrayal. Victoria Glendinning published the first Bowen biography *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (1977) and introduced her as a side player in the English novel tradition running from Henry James through Virginia Woolf to Muriel Spark. Hermione Lee in *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (1981) is one of the first critics to give Elizabeth Bowen due recognition as an important British writer and locate her amongst a number of 'Moderns' such as Flaubert and James, E M Forster and Virginia Woolf, whose novels reveal the psychology of their characters "in tension against the political pressures of a changing world"; showing Bowen's 'mannered style' is essential to her criticism of contemporary society.[53] In her revised *Elizabeth Bowen* (1999) Lee introduces Bowen's Anglo-Irish themes and gender concerns as well as drawing attention to Bowen's tropes of orphaned children, alienation and broken homes, and agrees with critics of the 1990s, in particular those Anglo-Irish and feminist studies that see Bowen as an historical and a women's writer. Heather Bryant Jordan's *How Will the Heart Endure: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of War* (1992) explores the political and historical nature of Bowen's fiction, putting forward war and broken homes as Bowen's central themes. W J McCormack, *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen* (1993), Julian Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination of a Hyphenated Culture* (1994), Declan Kiberd, 'The Dandy in Revolt' in *Inventing Ireland* (1995), Eibhear Walshe, *Sex Nation and Dissent in Irish Writing* (1997) and Roy Foster, 'Prints on the Scene: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of Childhood' in *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it up in Ireland* (2001), all source Bowen's fictional concern for fragmented identities and broken homes in the Anglo-Irish community's hyphenated existence and history, resulting in an Anglo-Irish "ambivalence", "self-alienation" and "self-invention". McCormack and Moynahan place Bowen's work in the Anglo-Irish gothic and comic tradition while Kiberd, Foster and Walshe explore counterpoints in her work between Anglo-Irish 'planter' history, Oscar Wilde's and W B Yeats' "Dandy" figure and the transgressive gender and sexuality of British *fin de*

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[52] Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street* (London: NLB, 1979) 103.
[53] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 2-3.

siécle. Renée Hoogland's *Elizabeth Bowen: A Reputation in Writing* (New York: New York University Press, 1994) analyses gender and lesbian sexuality in three of Bowen's novels.

Lis Christensen, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Later Fiction* (2001) interrogates Bowen's four last novels, exploring her mature style and identifying Bowen's later themes as fluctuating identities, communication, and time in the context of a post-World War II world and Bowen's Anglo-Irish history. She detects a unique literary style in Bowen that she calls "word clusters". Christensen touches upon Bowen's metaphoric and poetic language, and her play with history, but she does not discuss Bowen in the context of Irish and British modernism. Two recent publications, Maud Ellmann *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (2003) and Neil Corcoran *The Enforced Return* (2004) read Bowen as a player in British modernism, feminism and developments in the English novel, whose importance lies in the way her work is shaped by her time. From different perspectives they highlight the themes of paralysis, mobility, fragmentation, and the return of the repressed by drawing upon psychoanalysis to show Bowen's work echoing the broader social and literary concerns of other twentieth-century British modernists such as Virginia Woolf. Ellmann explores motorcars and luggage in *To the North* and *The House in Paris*, while Corcoran touches upon Bowen's "luggage" analogy for plotting a novel and discusses her style as a mixture of Irish gothic and modernism. However neither critic gives a focused literary analysis of Bowen as a major modernist in her own right or gives due weight to the importance of her travel metaphors. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives* (1992) begin a new turn in Bowen criticism by using deconstruction theory to reveal Bowen as a fundamental innovator in the novel form. Despite her "apparent conventionality and stability" they claim that her oeuvre displays modernist and post-modernist experimentalism, and Bennett and Royle go one step further in their criticism, using Bowen's writing to deconstruct the British canon and academic criticism itself.[54]

The following study does not go as far as Bennett and Royle in identifying Bowen as a complete literary anarchist, because it will be argued that a central part of Bowen's modernism is her formal tension between tradition and modernity. However, I do prioritise Bowen's modernist and post-modernist experimentation. She engages with historical dislocation but still attempts to actively interpret and understand a chaotic universe. Her writing does not dissolve into formlessness or her characters into non-being, though Bowen does articulate the post-war

[54] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives*. (London: MacMillan Press Ltd. 1995) xiii-xix.

epistemological and ontological crises in the Fifties and Sixties. I have also extended the thematic and formal analyses of Bowen's hyphenated Anglo-Irish cultural background, twentieth-century warfare, history, gender debates and modernism, by interrogating the relationship between Bowen's overarching theme of historical change and her metaphors drawn from contemporaneous fast-paced transport technologies.

The focus of this thesis is then on the inter-relation between Bowen's themes and her travel metaphors; on how her themes, and the metaphors she chooses to express them, influence her formal development. Because I am drawing the reader's attention to Bowen's modernist 'kaleidoscopic'[55] formal technique, which disrupts masculinist and traditional linear narratives, the overarching structure of this thesis is not chronological. Instead my thesis is structured into four thematic chapters according to the type of travel and date of invention of the vehicles: chapter 1 focuses on walking metaphors, chapters 2 and 3 focus on walking, ship and train travel and metaphors, while chapter 4 focuses on bicycle, motorcar and aeroplane travel and metaphors. In this manner my structure emphasises the centrality of Bowen's travel and transport metaphors in figuratively encoding, in her fiction, changing gender roles and the decline of the British Empire during her lifetime. There is some historical overlap between each chapter, because each type of travel or vehicular metaphor used by Bowen registers a nuanced perspective on historical change and her formal experimentation. Hence, my metaphorical chapter titles indicate the nuanced Bowen perspective that I investigate. Chapters 1, 3 and 4 discuss the stories and novels that chronicle Bowen's contemporary moment and each chapter is based upon three subsections, which are in turn categorised by either a particular travel metaphor or by a novel. Since chapter 2 concentrates on her historical writing, it is structured separately from the other chapters. By structuring my thesis according to Bowen's themes and the metaphors she uses to encode them, and bringing together aspects of different existing readings on Bowen, I introduce an original angle on Bowen's oeuvre that mirrors her own modernist strategies. This thesis does reveal a formal development in Bowen's style, but her experimentation is always in tension with her adherence to tradition.

In conclusion, Bowen's thematic and formal investigation of the modern dilemma (that individuals are either trapped in history and traditional gender roles and cannot live freely in their

[55] Kaleidoscopes held a special fascination for Bowen. Hermione Lee notes that Bowen asked Roy Plomley on the BBC's *Desert Island Discs*, 11 March 1957, if she could "take two packs of playing cards, a kaleidoscope and a copy of *Emma*" with her onto her island. Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 233.

present moment, or that these historical changes can be experienced as liberating) introduces new identities and perspectives. One life-style places individuals in an historical box, but the other emancipated life-style is a groundless existence in a chaotic universe, which places constantly at risk a personal sense of an integrated identity. Her travel metaphors mark her as a paramount British and Irish modernist. They structure her writing, propelling her complex and inter-related story lines, as Bowen interweaves them with metonymic language. By pushing the novel's language to newly register in her own words "the non-poetic statement of a poetic truth" and maintaining the balance within the novel form, she ensures the modern novel's aesthetic engagement with twentieth-century historical and existential crises.[56]

[56] In 'Notes on Writing a Novel' (first published in John Lehmann's *Orion II* in 1945) Bowen asserts, "The presence, and action, of the poetic truth is the motive (or motor) morality of the novel"; pertinently, an aesthetic loyalty to poetic truth leads the writer to experiment with the novel form and 'values' of her society, instead of being limited by 'tradition': "Great novelists write without pre-assumption. They write from outside their own nationality, class or sex. To write thus should be the ambition of any novelist who wishes to state poetic truth." Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 44. In her statement on poetic truth Bowen cuts to the heart of the modernist formal project.

Chapter 1

IF THE SHOE FITS:
British Travellers Between The Wars

I Headless chickens and Continental walking tours

British and Irish modernists each have their own particular year, either just before or just after World War I, to temporally locate the change in human nature at the start of the twentieth century, and they each have their own set of metaphors, which they rework throughout their writing to fictionally register this change.[1] For instance, James Joyce, from an Irish masculine, Catholic middle-class perspective and émigré position artistically returns to Dublin in 1904 and its citizens wandering the city as metaphors for an Ireland caught within British imperialism. His modernist reinterpretation of Homer's *Odyssey* through his circular narratives and repeated 'wandering' metaphors transforms both Dublin and the traditional novel form into a creative space which challenges British hegemony and teleological historical narratives. Virginia Woolf, from a feminine perspective and with her Protestant English upper-class background at the centre of the British Empire, identifies 1910 as the year human nature changed. Her wandering Londoners, with their myriad thoughts and memories, signify this change arising from the loosening class and gender barriers, allied to evolving technologies.

Elizabeth Bowen combines both Joyce's outsider and Woolf's insider perspective on the end of the Empire. But her travel metaphors and formal style are even more saturated with her historical moment and its tensions than is the case with the other two writers. Bowen locates a specific time, twelve-noon on a spring morning in 1905, as the break between the old and new world order - both in her personal life and for the rest of the world. A memoir of her Anglo-Irish childhood in Dublin, 'Horse Show' is crucial to an understanding of not only Bowen's modernism but the greater project of literary modernism and its interrogation of historical change. Bowen opens the memoir with her morning walks with her governess around her Anglo-Irish neighbourhood; the pair do not venture into the mainstream Catholic areas in Dublin, "I connect the Ballsbridge grandstands with the Russo-Japanese war. It had been made known to me that war had, that year, escaped from the locked strong-room of

[1] The Imagist poet Ezra Pound cites 1908 as the break between the old and new world order, and the starting point for a new aesthetic revolution to express the break. The magazine *Blast,* which he co-edited with Wyndham Lewis, articulates their intentions in relation to traditional forms of literary invention. T S Eliot cites 1914 as the change in human nature. For a list of the various modernist artists and their particular year for the rupture between old and new literary forms see Malcolm

history into the present - though this was happening as it *could* only happen, at the unsafe side of the world...Hearing a clock strike, one morning, with more meaning than usual, I stopped half-way up a grandstand to realize that time held war."[2] In 1905 her father first showed signs of mental instability and the Russo-Japanese war erupted - although Russia recovered from losing to Japan, the war marked the first chink in European imperialism. 'Horse Show' draws analogies between the end of Bowen's Anglo-Irish life-style in Dublin and the approaching end of nineteenth century imperialism in general and the British Empire in particular. Bowen's arrested walks around Dublin, her forced rests, and the exterior sound of Dublin traffic metaphorically calibrate historical change.

Significantly Bowen is standing in the eerie emptiness of the Royal Dublin Society's Ballsbridge grandstands when she realises that personal time is a myth and that she shares her moment with the rest of the world. From her Anglo-Irish perspective inside the former monument of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, which she likens to an empty Roman amphitheatre, Bowen becomes conscious of simultaneity, of history and warfare and of a changing exterior world separate from herself, her family and the Anglo-Irish community. It is a world which will affect her personally, "The hour was more than my hour; within it people were fighting; the fur and the paper people grimaced with hate at each other and let off guns. This was happening - happening as surely as I raised my right foot to put it on a new tier. This was my first vision - I mean, the first moment in which I conceived of reality as being elsewhere than in me...Twelve having struck, my governess looked round. It was time for me (again) to go home and rest."[3] Bowen's complex association of the striking clock, the empty grandstand, the fact of war, and the act of taking a step, introduces the importance for Bowen of walking and travel metaphors in registering historical change. This is the first instance of Bowen's dual perspective which marks her life and writing: balancing between Anglo-Irish and Irish and English identities, between pre-war security and post-war anxious liberty, between 'feminine' passivity resting outside history and 'masculine' mobility within current affairs. In this moment she moves from a purely childish, insular Anglo-Irish perspective to a plural perspective cutting across Irish and British and international identities.

Bowen's consciousness of simultaneity in conjunction with her own movement is both freeing and terrifying. A dual movement accompanies her dual perspective; from this moment Bowen both desires to escape her Anglo-Irish origins but also fears a reverse movement. Her italicised "though this was happening as it *could* only happen, at the unsafe

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Bradbury and James McFarlane 19-55.

[2] Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters*, (1942 and 43; London: Vintage, 1999) 485-486.

[3] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 485-486.

side of the world" ironically notes that in 1905 war is not only escaping from the history books, but speedier technologies are bringing war back home from the colonies and distant lands to Europe, Britain and Ireland; "*could*" ironically marks the break between pre-war British confidence and the post-war reality of bloodshed and invasions. The Ballsbridge grandstand marks the arena of land and sectarian politics in Ireland, and the decline of the Anglo-Irish. It presages the coming World War I and post-war fate of the British Empire. At this moment Bowen became conscious of herself as an individual vulnerable to historical change, but powerlessly confined and historicized by British history and coming events: firstly, because she is Anglo-Irish and secondly, because she is a female child – giving her a doubly peripheral perspective. Bowen's bracketed 'again' and daily 'rests' mark her angry resignation at being withdrawn from the active public world into the still feminine interior of her Anglo-Irish Georgian home. Outside the city traffic, "at this hour, rose to a climax - a climax from which I was withheld."[4] Memories of her forced rests contrast with her daily walks and Dublin's transport systems. Walking and transport metaphors signify liberty and unconventional or plural identities, but they also signify danger, warfare and the end of the Empire. This paradox underlies Bowen's understanding of her time, her modernist style and her interlocking themes of gender and the end of the Empire.

In her early short story 'The Contessina' (1924)[5] Bowen crystallises her dual perspective and interlocking themes within 'walking' and travel metaphors. In her first collection of short stories *Encounters* (1923) Bowen began tentatively experimenting with her style of using her travel metaphors to link her narrative forms and themes, that in turn linked her writing with her present moment. In 'The Contessina' Bowen's new technique is a central part of the story's plot and meaning. Her success in publishing 'The Contessina', first in the *Queen* in November 1924 and again as part of her second collection of short stories, *Ann Lee's and Other Stories* (1926), gave Bowen a belief in her new style of using her travel metaphors not only to encode her themes, but also to experiment with narrative form. Glendinning notes that following the success of *Encounters*, Bowen had difficulty publishing her new stories, because, in Bowen's own opinion, they fell between the "first bright stage of experimentation and the required next degree of command."[6] Therefore 'The Contessina' gave her the confidence that she could become a modern novelist, because in her own words,

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[4] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 486.

[5] 'The Contessina' was first published in the *Queen*, Nov. 1924 and then as part of Bowen's second collection of short stories *Ann Lee's and Other Stories* (1926). Throughout this thesis I use Bowen's collected short stories, published as Elizabeth Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* (1981; London: Vintage, 1999) 783.

[6] Bowen, preface to *Early Stories* (New York: Knopf, 1951) qtd in Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen* 52.

"There could be one test of validity: publication."[7] Bowen used 'The Contessina' as a miniature template for her first novel *The Hotel* (1927), which like the earlier short story is also set in Lake Como, in Italy, and features upper-class English tourists in an Italian hotel. Bowen wrote that plotting and structuring *The Hotel* not only persuaded her that she could be a novelist, but in turn it provided the template for *The Last September* (1929) and her subsequent novels:

> So far the constituents of my fiction had been encounters, impressions, impacts, shocks. One can see that, generally, in the novel the characters are maintained in the same orbit by some situation which sets a trap for them...in *The Last September*, as in *The Hotel*, I used the device of having my men and women actually under the same roof - to remain there, whether by choice or chance, for such time as the story should need to complete its course. To the Italian Riviera hotel of my first novel succeeded the large, lonely Irish house. I am, and am bound to be, a writer involved closely with place and time;[8]

Following the increasingly successful reception of her fiction throughout the Thirties, Forties, and Fifties in England, and throughout the Sixties in America, Bowen built upon her technique first confidently evidenced in 'The Contessina'.

In her short story, Bowen writes an intuitive comedy, cross-examining the clash between pre-war British gender politics and superiority complex and post-war British uncertainty. A group of British tourists form an enclave in an Italian hotel. The arrival of a sexually precocious yet innocent, sixteen-year old Italian Contessina, with her parents, disrupts the British bastion, laying bare their prejudices and insecurities. Bowen introduces her metaphorical style using female footwear and walking along with the Contessina's Italian perspective to interrogate imperial cultural assumptions underpinning British superiority, which are now floundering in the post-war climate. The Contessina puts first British girls and then men in their unaccustomed place.

The story plays with the fact that the English visitors to the Italian hotel take as the norm an English perspective and English female shapes and assert these English norms in Italy; two English girls use their English education to negatively appraise an Italian girl, the Contessina, who is verging on womanhood. The English girls are the same age as the Contessina but she is perceived as a woman and sexually available (kittenish) because she is a Mediterranean with a more fully developed figure than her asexual English counterparts, 'She was about sixteen evidently, and this was odd, because no English girls of sixteen had figures

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[7] Bowen, '*Encounters*, preface to the second edition.' (1949) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 119.

[8] Bowen, '*The Last September,* preface to second U.S. edition' (1952) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 123.

like that. She revealed herself against the sunny water a thing of neat assured little curves.'[9] Because of her nationality the Contessina is outside the girls' idea of female types. The ideal English woman is curvaceous but maternal or else cerebral and androgynous, and definitely not sexually provocative. The four English girls are dressed demurely in white and seated swinging beautifully shod feet over the parapet; any stirring of sexuality is displaced onto the reflective motion of the lake, "...over the reflecting water that rose and fell in the shadow of the parapet as evenly and gently as a bosom."[10] In contrast the Contessina's clothes reveal that she is a mixture of innocence and sexuality, "She had on a dress of heliotrope organdie, with fichu folded across the bosom with that best discretion for the display of pretty curves. Her skin was very dark against the heliotrope, as fresh as a young petal, as brown as old, old, ivory. Her white Tuscan hat enhanced this peculiar deliciousness..."[11] As the story develops her walking, her self-command and her speech reveal she is a complex mix of modern and old style woman, and this balance and her nationality gives her the edge on the British tourists.

In opposition to the Contessina, Jenny and Ursula are described in abstract, cerebral terms and their physical asexuality and lack of movement parallels their English insularity and cultural snobbishness, "Jenny and Ursula hated to seem rude and – well – *English*, but she really would be very difficult to talk to...'Have you been to *England*?' Ursula inquired. 'Oh, no-o!' tittered the Contessina, and tittered again in scorn. *England* - the very idea!"[12] Bowen satirises the fact that though the English are abroad in Italy, they regard the Contessina in her own country as the foreigner with "[a] queer little face, so foreign" and therefore inferior to themselves and do not try to engage with or understand her. [13] In fact, Bowen gives a fictional parody of male Victorian and Edwardian scientific explorers who put the rest of the world under the microscope; it is the Contessina who observes and criticises the behaviour and sensibilities of the English aboard: "The Contessina, now their vis-à-vis, eyed the couple unabashedly with the naked curiosity of childhood. She studied their dresses and their attitudes."[14] Bowen initially positions the Italian on the same footing as the English girls, but as the story develops she makes the Contessina the superior of the English visitors.

Bowen highlights the Contessina's availability, from the English tourists' perspective, through subtly revealing that mobility and self-agency identify gradations of gendered 'subjectivity', from self-assertive 'New Woman', to demure but sensible English schoolgirl,

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[9] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 137.
[10] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 136.
[11] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 142.
[12] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 137.
[13] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 137.
[14] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 137.

to a sexual femininity that is dependent upon male escort and support. She juxtaposes the Contessina's footwear with the English schoolgirls': "The others fell away from them. Her ridiculous little feet were useless to her; the high heels flung her whole weight forward on to the blunt little toes, and these scrabbled unavailingly upon the baked, bald earth of the hill. Sometime she missed her footing altogether, and her whole weight would swing from Barlow's arm."[15] The doomed comic sexual flirtation between the married Englishman Mr Barlow and the Contessina reduces the British male from the rugged conqueror of the nineteenth century to a failed 'Casanova'. Mr Barlow views the Contessina as more erotically alluring than her English counterparts. Bowen plays with nineteenth-century imperial definitions of English masculinity depicting Mr Barlow as performing the handsome, virile and active male at tennis, "Mr Barlow, down the Contessina's end of the court, walked springily about on the balls of his feet, while his opponents took their places; hacking, slashing, and under-cutting with his racquet at the air with science and ferocity. He bit his lip, the air whistled through his teeth, his head, as he recovered from a lunge."[16] Bowen's descriptions of hacking, slashing, under-cutting, science and ferocity parodies British guises of mobile masculinity, such as the adventurers and scientific explorers who infiltrated interiors in Africa and brokered British imperialism.

Here the British scientific adventurer and tennis player is reduced to sexual games. Mr Barlow views the Contessina's skin as old ivory; she is a trophy to be notched up and through her Barlow attempts to prove his masculinity. The story compares Mr Barlow's pursuit of the Contessina with big game hunting. Giving Mr Barlow's perspective, the narrative identifies the shifting versions of British masculinity from a single gentleman in pursuit of marriage, to a married man believing that other women and wives are fair game, "Married couples, family parties - even the honeymoon couples looked bloodless; besides once a woman was one man's wife one ceased, as it were, to be a Gentleman and became a Player. The Contessina's table was in view, if one leant a little sideways..."[17] Here marriage becomes a base for planning further sexual conquests.

Bowen uses the Contessina's footwear to subvert traditional representations of females as the passive object of the male gaze and sexually available, hunted game. The Contessina's high heels initially infantilise her and make her dependent upon male escort, but they also sabotage Mr Barlow's sexual campaign. Eroticised by chasing the Contessina in her small shoes, Mr Barlow oversteps polite boundaries and mistreats her. She falls over in her

[15] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 142.
[16] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 138.
[17] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 140.

high heels, while teasingly trying to evade him, and as he clutches for her, he tears her dress. The scene ends in histrionics as the Contessina denounces Barlow. Because she is Italian, and is not tied by British conventions on female deportment, the Contessina can play the ideal feminine coquette yet assert her self. Indeed her shoes are part of her performance of a female role, which she can put on and take off. She unmans and rejects Mr Barlow, the representative of the virile British male, making his sexual play ridiculous, "her eyes, now merely amber, studied with mild inquiry the foolishness of Mr. Barlow."[18] As Mr. Barlow makes love to her she inserts questions about Mr. Barlow's wife, turning the tables and asking "I wonder how she does like you?"[19] The question, transposing Italian grammar into English, changes the slant from a polite inquiry into an exclamation of amazement that Mrs Barlow could be attracted to her husband. Bowen further plays with the slipperiness of language and sexual identities between travellers abroad, by adeptly transforming the Contessina from a kittenish child, in Mr Barlow's eyes, into a bear receiving, as her due, his attentions without needing to exert herself or respond, "And this necessity for direct, unidiomatic English embarrassed Mr Barlow, master of innuendo and *double entendres*; this was more than throwing lollipops, it was spiking buns to an insatiable little eager bear at the end of a stick."[20] This image decries Mr Barlow's pejorative that the Contessina is his "little humming-bird" and asserts the strangeness of her womanliness as un-English, as well as showing the way sexual politics at the start of the twentieth century position women as game to be acquired and sedated with re-cycled compliments, restricted and shackled to men. The two positions demean both men and women, and society as a whole.[21]

The bear imagery turns the tables on Mr Barlow as the hunter and the Contessina his game. Once he arouses the Contessina's wrath she boxes him on the chin and rips apart his masculine persona: "Above the intimidating cavern of her mouth, between the smears and crumples of her face, two slits of eyes blazed out upon him icily...you are not young, and you are not funny, and you have a hot face...Let me go to the boat!...The Contessina could no longer see him; it was as though he had slipped out of her vision down a crack, and the crack had closed above him for ever."[22] On the turn of a pair of high-heeled shoes the Contessina has become the active party and the authoritative subject whose gaze verifies, or denies, existence. Barlow is obliterated as she turns to his compatriot Mr Harrison, positioning him

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[18] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 137.
[19] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 142.
[20] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 143.
[21] Rebecca West argued that traditional styles of Edwardian femininity retarded marriage and social development by producing infantile wives instead of intellectual equals – to the detriment of both men and women. 'Mr Wells on Marriage', *The Young Rebecca West: Writings of Rebecca West 1911-1917*, ed. Jane Marcus. (London: Virago Press, 1982) 365-368.
[22] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 146.

opposite her in the boat, asking him to row, with Barlow demoted to a lesser pew. She is in charge of the boat, directing it back to the hotel, away from the place and memory of her encounter with Barlow. 'The Contessina' introduces the way Bowen uses walking and travel metaphorically to defamiliarise old concepts of British 'male' and 'female' identity during encounters with Europeans abroad in the 1920s.

In 'Shoes: An International Episode', published in her third collection *Joining Charles and other Stories* (1929), Bowen develops her travel and footwear metaphors as signifiers for changes in British society and reveals identity is a fictional and social construction. Set in Paris, the story uses female footwear to symbolise cultural prejudice, sexual stereotypes and rivalry between the British and the French - historical enemies who have been influential in constructing each other's national traits and customs since the eleventh century. Bowen interrogates the manner in which a recently wedded English couple, Edward and Dillie Aherne construct themselves in opposition to each other, to their fellow Parisians, and to conventional Edwardian femininity and masculinity. Bowen comically roots an English and a French identity in different shoe styles and walking habits. During the holiday, the Parisians accidentally tamper with Dillie's shoes, when a hotel boot boy mistakenly replaces Dillie's 'butch' English walking shoes for a 'femme' pair of French high heels, hindering her ability to walk. By interfering with Dillie's footwear the Parisians not only put Dillie's gendered English identity (her sense of her self as a modern woman) and her marriage at risk, but also undermine her and Edward's sense of reality. 'Shoes: An International Episode' is Bowen's witty dramatisation of just how vulnerable British identities were in 1926.

Dillie Aherne's English brogues assert she is a 'modern' English woman and the opposite of Victorian or Edwardian womanhood: "Dillie was an advanced, intelligent girl who had married Edward two years ago. Since then she had travelled a good deal. She had been constant to the good resolutions made on her honeymoon: not to be insular, not to behave like a 'dear little thing'...She walked about France in good brogues and didn't mind if her feet looked a shade powerful."[23] She can walk about independently in public because her sensible pair of shoes safeguards her Englishness and femininity. While in the privacy of her hotel room Dillie can experiment with her no-nonsense Englishness by lightly covering it in a Frenchwoman's sexuality: "Mrs Aherne, feeling French and sophisticated, wandered round in her dressing-gown smoking a cigarette...Her chemise, back from a French laundress, was

[23] Bowen, 'Shoes An International Episode' in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 243.

delicate on her skin."[24] The story's central themes, concerning the fact that cultural and gender identities are not only as changeable as footwear but are also shaped by the ability to walk and travel independently, come together when the hotel boot boy takes it for granted that Dillie's powerful English brogues must belong to a man and replaces them in the night with a feminine, sexy, high heeled pair of shoes three sizes too small for Dillie, "The female shoes, uncertainly balanced because of their high heels, listed towards the strong shoes of Edward timidly and lackadaisically...They were tiny (size three-and-a-half) and looked capable solely of an ineffectual, somehow alluring totter."[25] Edward and Dillie's brogues ensure that their marriage is a modern one of independent equals. As soon as Dillie loses her brogues her personality and the power dynamics between her and Edward begin to change, as Dillie starts reverting to nineteenth century female stereotypes.

In 'Shoes: An International Episode' styles of shoes, and the degrees of self-mobility that different styles permit, impact upon not only the Ahernes' marriage, affecting their intimacy with each other, but also the Ahernes' public relations with their fellow tourists and the rest of Paris. Lacking her brogues Dillie finds it increasingly difficult to maintain her habitual holiday style of touring monuments and cathedrals in cities. She languishes behind Edward, reverts to baby speak, and becomes irritable with him as their harmonious marriage falls out of step. Under the influence of French wine, sun, and the continued loss of the brogues they argue with each other about national stereotypes, using footwear as a barometer for personal types, international relations and sex, "They discussed Edward and Dillie, Dillie in relation to Edward, Edward to Dillie, Edward and Dillie to Dillie's shoes, and Dillie's shoes to the Latin attitude. They discussed sex."[26] The longer Dillie is separated from her brogues the quicker her sense of herself as a rational 'modern' Englishwoman and the superior to her French counterparts disintegrates. Following their after-lunch debate Dillie becomes increasingly emotional, displaying the histrionics that English fiction and travel narratives associate with the Latin temperament. She throws the feminine French shoes out of the window - one ends up in a tree. At the same moment Dillie's brogues are returned to her with apologies over their mistaken identity. In this short instant, after throwing away the French shoes and regaining her English brogues and identity, Dillie questions her sense of herself and place in the world as a 1920s Englishwoman vis-à-vis Edward and the Parisian woman who owned the 'sexy' shoes and showed herself a 'good sport' over the mistake and Dillie's behaviour. In retrieving the shoe and explaining his wife's actions Edward strikes up cordial relations with the Parisians and moves beyond his English insularity. Uncertain Dillie

[24] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 242.
[25] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 243.
[26] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 247.

briefly wonders if the type of companion Edward wants is 'sensible shoes' or if he would prefer the exoticness of 'French shoes'. Worse, Dillie fears he is negatively reassessing their marriage because of her emotional display: "Dillie felt quite hollow. What was Edward thinking? How dare he!...'Edward, kiss me...You *do* believe in me? Edward! Kiss me!'"[27] But as soon as the brogues are back on her feet Dillie is reaffirmed in her English identity, her marriage and her place in the world. In step with each other, Dillie and Edward are once more enclosed in their marriage, their British perspective and newly emerging British gender codes; they are oblivious to and out of step with their Latin counterparts and hotel guests as they clatter out on their afternoon walk, disturbing everyone else's siestas.

II The flâneuse and The Death of the Heart (1938)

Set in London and 'Seale-on-Sea', a fictional English seaside resort, in 1937, *The Death of the Heart* (1938) exposes the sterility and uncertainty in the English upper-middle classes still suffering from World War I and now facing into a second European war.[28] Portia Quayne is the novel's sixteen-year-old heroine. A 'love child', Portia moved around the Continent with her parents as outcasts from 1930s British society. Now a homeless orphan Portia arrives in England for the first time to live with her wealthy stepbrother Thomas Quayne and his wife Anna in London. Elizabeth Bowen uses the viewpoint of Portia Quayne, as she wanders around London and Seale-on-Sea (and writes her experiences in her diary) to record the swansong of British imperialism. At a formal level Bowen's 'walking' metaphor connects three locations Thomas and Anna's upper-class London residence, 2 Windsor Terrace of Regents Park; Miss Paullie's school for upper-class English girls; and a cemetery near Paddington station. These three locations encode the Victorian and Edwardian values underpinning the British Empire. Bowen uses Portia's daily walks in-between these locations, and Portia's travel memories, to evaluate pre-World War I values in 1937. In addition Bowen's 'walking' metaphor shapes her modernist aesthetic in a similar style to Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) and *Ulysses* (1922), or Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1923), whose strolling characters structure the narratives, and also to Walter Benjamin's figure of the flâneur. Portia personifies Bowen's concept of the writer as the 'roving eye': "Inattentive learner in the schoolroom of life, he keeps some faculty free to veer and wander. He is the

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[27] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 251.

[28] As with many of the locations in Bowen's fiction, Windsor Terrace and Seale-on-Sea are based upon Bowen's London home 2 Clarence Terrace, Regent's Park where she lived between 1935 and 1952 and Folkestone and Hythe in Kent where she lived with her mother from 1906-1912. Most of the big houses in her fiction are based upon her family home Bowen's Court.

roving eye."[29] Stylistically Portia's walks and observations weave a circular, feminine, web-like narrative in opposition to a masculine teleological historical narrative; her questions reveal the groundless uncertainty replacing traditional values and thereby interrogate the validity of the traditional novel form to comprehend the interwar reality.

Walter Benjamin describes the male figure of the flâneur as a fugitive stroller who goes "botanizing on the asphalt".[30] The flâneur blends into the urban crowd on the pavements and in cafes in imperial capitals. For Benjamin the flâneur is the consummate observer and recorder of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century modernity, as personified by the urbane Parisian poet Charles Baudelaire. By identifying the flâneur as the botaniser of modernity Benjamin draws correlations between urban exploration and botanical and colonial exploration.[31] Ann McClintock and Janet Wolff argue that the strolling flâneur, at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century could only be a male figure, never a female flâneuse, because it was impossible for respectable women to walk the streets without being taken for prostitutes, literal 'street walkers'.[32]

In the homeless Portia Quayne, Bowen creates a new modernist female counterpart of the flâneur: the flâneuse. Portia critically explores the two locations that generate the modern stereotype for British society: an upper-class London establishment and the middle-class English seaside. In keeping with the new modernist technique, Bowen plunges the reader into the middle of Portia Quayne's one-year experimental visit to her wealthy step-brother at 2 Windsor Terrace, Regent's Park, London. Through Portia's interior monologue, her diary and repeated travel motifs the reader pieces together not only Portia's story, but also her parents' and Thomas and Anna Quayne's stories, which all combine towards the novel's central themes of imperial decline, gender and resistance to historical change. Thomas and Anna are both in their mid-thirties and childless, but instead of becoming their surrogate child, Portia is viewed as an unwelcome intruder who has been forced upon them by Thomas' dead father. Thomas and Portia's father, Mr Quayne Senior, was a respectable English gentleman who had a late, uncharacteristic love affair with a 'plucky' young widow Irene, recently returned to England from China. However, once Irene became expectant with Portia, the frightened Mr Quayne felt morally impelled to tell all to Mrs Quayne and ask her advice.

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[29] Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Roving Eye' (1952) *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 63.
[30] Walter Benjamin, 'M The Flâneur' in *The Arcades Project*, Transl. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (London: Harvard University Press, 2003) 372.
[31] Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992) illustrates the connection between scientific explorations, in particular botany, and the spread of imperialism, 15-69.
[32] McClintock 132-181; Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flaneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Feminine Sentences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990) 34-50.

Mrs Quayne Senior, a late-Victorian matriarch, nobly divorced Mr Quayne Senior and packed him off on a train to marry the pregnant Irene, deeming this 'the right thing to do' in accordance with English social mores. Bowen satirises Mrs Quayne's willingness to sacrifice her husband, his lover and their unborn child so that she can perform the part of the 'noble martyr' - a role she enjoys and one that increases her social standing. Mr Quayne and Irene are ostracised from polite English society and forced to have Portia abroad. The homeless trio wander around France and Switzerland, and along the Riviera. Exile drives Mr Quayne and Irene into an early grave.

Bowen uses travel and map motifs to represent Mr Quayne's demotion from respectable English gentleman to exiled nobody. His daughter-in-law, Anna Quayne describes him after their first meeting as someone who is outside of England's social radar, "When we met - which I must confess was only two or three times - he did not behave at all like Thomas's father, but like an off-the-map, seedy old family friend who doubts if he has done the right thing in showing up."[33] From her secure position at the centre of polite society, Anna laconically pities her father-in-law's expulsion from Edenic London. Because of his social fall Mr Quayne feels he is the diseased ghost of his former self, who has blighted his children's existence. Forced to look in upon England from the outside, Mr Quayne determines that Portia will get a foothold in English society by stating in his will that Portia must live with Thomas and Anna, for at least one year. Portia's mother Irene ignores Mr Quayne's dying request, and continues travelling around Europe with her daughter. Following Irene's death from cancer in a Swiss *pension* in June 1937 Portia is sent to her brother's and begins the experiment to turn her into an English schoolgirl.

The Death of the Heart's mid-winter opening in the frozen dusk of a January evening, halfway through Portia's failing visit, immediately introduces the novel's central theme and Bowen's modernist project. Firstly its metaphorical title signals the slow death of the British Empire and England's pre-war life-style in a fragmenting and changing world. Secondly Bowen's opening paragraphs invert the realist novel's portrayal of middle-class-women domesticated into the private sphere while their husbands are active in the public sphere of business and politics. Instead Bowen opens with Anna Quayne walking outside in Regent's Park, with her friend the novelist St Quentin, telling him about Portia's fugitive pre-history. Anna is avoiding both Windsor Terrace and her sister-in-law Portia. Coincidentally Portia is also walking around Regent's Park after school avoiding Windsor Terrace and Anna. In fact it is Thomas Quayne who returns from work and goes to ground in his study in the basement

[33] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* (1938; London: Vintage, 1999) 14-15.

of Windsor Terrace. He shuts himself in from work, the world and politics, awaiting Anna and not so much avoiding as forgetting his sister's existence. He focuses only on his wife Anna and forgets about his stepsister Portia. Portia follows Thomas into his study, bringing him news of the London street life she encountered on her walks home from school. These school walks identify Portia as an outsider, because in 1937 respectable English schoolgirls do not walk to and from school.

Portia's excitement and curiosity about the outside world deepens the claustrophobia of Windsor Terrace, which represents an iconic English establishment. The name reflects the British Royal family, the House of Windsor, and in *The Death of the Heart* Windsor Terrace represents the ruling class at the core of the Empire, symbolising the death of both. Portia's visit shows Windsor Terrace is a mausoleum of imperialism, diminished and caught in the political uncertainty of the interwar years. London traffic and world affairs only reach the interior of the house as muffled vibrations. As a representative of London patriarchs Thomas is incomplete and unsure.[34] Bowen expresses the general sense of frustration and imperial decline by likening Thomas to one of the lesser Roman Emperors "conscious of fulfilling his destiny imperfectly".[35] He tries to communicate to Portia his loss of direction and sense of futility since World War I disrupted the grand narrative of British history, leaving Britain at an impasse. He derides Portia's ersatz education at Miss Paullie's establishment for girls, referring to English and French history as "shady", "Bunk, misfires and graft from the very start. I can't think why we make such a fuss now: we've got no reason to expect anything better...And also there was a future then. You can't get up any pace when you feel you're right at the edge."[36] Thomas appears a successfully married English businessman, but instead of manufacturing along the lines of nineteenth century English industrialists, Thomas owns an advertising agency. He brands a new 1930s consumer style of Englishman and woman driven by American trends, which are replacing the older Edwardian gentleman and lady. Twentieth-century consumerism began to replace imperialism, reworking sexuality, class and racial discourses but occluding the fact that like imperialism it was supported by the exploitation of working classes and colonised peoples.[37] The approach of a second world war compounds Thomas's sense of futility and 'feminised' imprisonment.

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[34] Neil Corcoran identifies Thomas Quayne as a Greek 'chorus' in the novel striking the note of post-war British decline, "he is the upper-middle-class Englishman, whose money nevertheless comes from the new industry of advertising, profoundly conscious of social discontinuity, keeping up the game even as he realises the game is up." *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004) 102.
[35] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 32.
[36] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 31.
[37] McClintock 21-181.

Portia tries to understand her brother's despair and bring him out of himself by telling him about her travels with her mother around the Continent. The narrative juxtaposes a fragmentary but colourful and liberating existence in hotels and *pensions* with rule-bound life in Windsor terrace. Clumsily Thomas denigrates Portia's alternative life as 'Pretty awful'. Bowen uses Portia's travel memories to disrupt the narrative and criticise Thomas and his British insularity. Thomas cannot recognise the charm of Portia's nomadic, if penurious, lifestyle or her close bond with Irene, because it is outside his upper-class English world. Indeed Thomas dismisses anyone, the lower classes in England and other nationalities, outside of his marriage; he welcomes Anna's friend St Quentin on sufferance. Portia's dual perspective favours the uncertainty but liberty of exile. From the barrenness of Thomas's study and Windsor Terrace Portia recalls the last Swiss *pension* she stayed in with her mother. Even in exile Irene and Portia are ostracised from their fellow English tourists and live a "shady" existence, "They always stayed in places before the season, when the funicular was not working yet."[38] However their exclusion from 'respectable' circles is out-weighed by the freedom and openness of travel. Cosmopolites, Irene and Portia are free to make their flats and *pensions* into homely spaces and to integrate with different cultures:

> That night they came back from Lucerne on the late steamer, they had looked up, seen the village lights at star-level through the rain, and felt that that was their dear home. They went up, arm-in-arm in the dark, up the steep zigzag, pressing each others' elbows, hearing the night rain sough down through the pines: they were not frightened at all.[39]

Their familiarity with the precarious terrain, evident by the way they climb the mountain instead of using the funicular, marks them off from the seasonal English tourists. By wandering off the beaten track, Irene and Portia choose to sample a different reality of Switzerland to that experienced in the transplanted English setting of hotels. Similarly, their domestic arrangements show disregard for British, female deportment - they slouch on their beds during long afternoons, leave windows open to hear the rain soughing down the gutters and leave out their undergarments. Their afternoon tea is a bacchanalian festival laced with Swiss food and novels, a ritual that the story contrasts strongly with its account of Anna's oppressive, mannered tea in Windsor Terrace.

Portia's free movement while travelling, which both enables and symbolises her intellectual curiosity, is curtailed by her attendance at Miss Paullie's finishing school for ladies. Through the finishing school, which is tellingly situated in an annex of the house of Miss Paullie's father who is a doctor, Bowen interrogates the influence on the education of females of two patriarchal Edwardian discourses - Protestantism and medicine. Protestantism

[38] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 35.

and medicine supported each other in codifying 'proper' middle-class female behaviour, safeguarding a sense of English moral behaviour. The same year that Bowen published *The Death of the Heart*, Virginia Woolf published *Three Guineas* (1938) in which she asserts that "The Victorian, Edwardian and much of the Fifth Georgian conception of chastity was based, to go no further back, upon the words of St. Paul."[40] Woolf proceeds to undermine the Pauline construction of female chastity as one of patriarchal subservience.[41]

Miss Paullie's name calls to mind Pauline Christian doctrines which sought to regulate female behaviour, and which were given prominence by Protestantism. Bowen describes Portia's entrance into the bastion of patriarchal authority thus:

> For a moment Portia felt herself stand with her mother in the doorway, looking at all this in here with a wild askance shrinking eye. The gilt-scrolled paper, the dome, the bishop's chair, the girls' smooth heads must have been fixed here always, where they safely belonged - while she and Irene, shady, had been skidding in an out-of-season nowhere of railway stations and rocks, filing off wet third-class decks of lake steamers, choking over the bones of *loups de mer*, giggling into eiderdowns that smelled of the person before last. Untaught, they had walked arm-in-arm along city pavements...Seldom had they faced up to society - when they did, Irene did the wrong thing, then cried. How sweet, how sweetly exalted by her wrong act was Irene, when stopping crying, she blew her nose and asked for a cup of tea...Portia, relaxing a very little moved on her chair.[42]

The gilt-scrolled paper, the domed skylight and Miss Paullie's bishop's chair give the school an ecclesiastical quality and enshrine it as a place where English imperialism is worshipped and indoctrinated. The girls, with their uniform 'smooth heads', are shown as transfixed - their silent deportment contrasting with Portia's "wild askance" eye. The way in which Portia remembers her exciting travels with her mother conform to Walter Benjamin's identification of the flânuer's susceptibility to the phenomenon of historical colportage, "We know that in the course of flânerie, far-off times and places interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment."[43] It is Portia's flights of memory which enable her to face approbation from Miss Paullie and the social structures she supports and inhabits.

Miss Paullie patrols her girls for signs of social deviancy, which come to light in 'un-English' vulgar habits. Portia sins against propriety by carrying her bag to her school desk

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[39] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 35.
[40] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* 166.
[41] Woolf writes, "Chastity then as defined by St. Paul is seen to be a complex conception, based upon the love of long hair; the love of subjection; the love of an audience; the love of laying down the law, and, subconsciously, upon a very strong and natural desire that the woman's mind and body shall be reserved for the use of one man." *Three Guineas* 167.
[42] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 56.
[43] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 418.

and reading during class, a personal letter from a rakish young man – the placeless and unbalanced genius Eddie (Bowen does not give him a surname) who works in Thomas' advertising firm. Both sins define Portia as an unidentifiable vagrant and Miss Paullie reprimands Portia for hotel habits, inadvertently hitting the nail on the head, "Surely that is not a letter? This is not the place or the time to read your letters, is it? I think you must notice that the other girls don't do that...To carry your bag about with you indoors is a hotel habit you know."[44] By placing her bag in the lobby but quickly slipping Eddie's letter up inside her woollen 'directoire knickers' at the knee band, Portia unwittingly confirms English medical and religious fears that female independence ends in illicit sexual encounters.

Miss Paullie blames Portia's school walks and her friendship with the dubious Lillian for Portia's regrettable habits. She correctly suspects the school friends loiter in unconventional spots, yet is unable to curtail their freedom outside of school. In fact Portia and Lilian meet each other every morning in a cemetery off Paddington Street that they use as a short cut to school. In contrast Portia's school colleagues are delivered like protected species, cut off from the greater world, "Passers-by were surprised to see the trim little creatures, some of whom hopped out of limousines, disappear down the basement like so many cats." "Cats" identifies the way nascent feline sexuality is domesticated, but it also identifies the schoolgirls' dangerous potential to move between domestic interiors and the streets, as they will, therefore their wanderings must be restricted. Portia escapes bourgeois controls because of Thomas and Anna's indifference to both Portia and to upper-class familial conventions.

Cemeteries are important locations in Bowen's fiction. She views them as Walter Benjamin does in his *Arcades Project*[45] as modern simulacrums of the Roman's Necropolis – replicating real-life cities in the after-life. In *The Death of the Heart* the Paddington cemetery is a simulacrum of London and operates as a monument to British history. Displaying the modernist technique of defamiliarisation Bowen describes the cemetery as an expectant ballroom or in terms of Victorian, Edwardian and Georgian public exhibitions. These exhibitions with their bandstands and pavilions, often set-up in Hyde Park or Wembley, celebrated the Empire:

> The cemetery, overlooked by windows, has been out of touch with death for some time: it is at once a retreat and a thoroughfare not yet too well known. One or two weeping willows and tombs like stone pavilions give it a prettily solemn character but the gravestones are all ranged round the walls like chairs before a dance, and half way across the lawn a circular shelter looks

[44] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 57.
[45] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 415.

> like a bandstand. Paths run from gate to gate, and shrubs inside the paling seclude the place from the street - it is not sad, just cosily melancholic.[46]

As with 2 Windsor Terrace, in *The Death of the Heart,* the cemetery is both a celebration and a mausoleum of nineteenth century British imperialism. By 1938 when the novel was published the cemetery acts as an historical "short cut" for modern Londoners to walk through - reminding them of a time of former imperial grandeur.

By wandering London pavements and cemeteries, and riding on buses, Portia becomes a flâneuse. She performs the female counterpart of Benjamin's flâneur, offering a London perspective on Victor Hugo's "Ecce Paris, Ecce Homo". For Benjamin, the flâneur leaves history and great monuments to the package tourists, who delude themselves that historical knowledge gives the "military" password to the heart of places; Benjamin negatively likens tourists to invaders. By focusing on historical monuments as their prize, tourists miss the real and diverse, because living, character of the city and its people.[47] The flâneur eschews historical narratives for the silent, sensual knowledge of cities, in the streets, travelling on transport systems and walking among its citizens. She or he then orders the data into his or her personal pattern, guided by the city itself whose streets reveal alternative narratives. In 'The Roving Eye' Bowen writes, "the reverberation after a street accident or tiny subjective echo of a huge world event, the flare-up of visual or of sensuous memory" guide the writer to their subject. [48] Her aesthetic, with its sensual ordering of everyday and world events into her own pattern, parallels the relationship between the flâneur and the city.

In *The Death of the Heart* Portia the flâneuse ignores the monuments to British imperialism and its social constructions. She walks London in a sensory daydream, recording in her mind's eye the parts of London life overshadowed within imperialism's discursive frame, which she then writes down in her diary. Street-life counters the ethos enshrined in Windsor Terrace and Miss Paullie's school:

> Portia could see it going on everywhere. She had watched life, since she came to London, with a sort of despair - motivated and always, always progressing: even people pausing on bridges seemed to pause with a purpose; no bird seemed to pursue a quite aimless flight. The spring of the works seemed unfound only by her: she could not doubt people knew what they

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[46] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 50.

[47] "But the great reminiscences, the historical shudder - these are a trumpery which he (the flâneur) leaves to tourists, who think thereby to gain access to the genius loci with a military password. Our friend may well keep silent. At the approach of his footsteps, the place has roused; speechlessly, mindlessly, its mere intimate nearness gives him hints and instructions. He stands before Notre Dame de Lorette, and his soles remember: here is the spot where in former times the *cheval de renfort* - the spare horse - was harnessed to the omnibus that climbed the Rue des Martyrs toward Montmartre." Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 416.

[48] Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 63.

> were doing - everywhere she met alert cognisant eyes. She could not believe there was not a plan of the whole set-up in every head but her own. Accordingly, so anxious was her research that every look, every moment, every object had a quite political seriousness for her: nothing was not weighed down by significance. In her home (her new home life) with its puzzles, she saw dissimulation always on guard; she asked herself humbly for what reason people said what they did not mean, and did not say what they meant? She felt most certain to find the clue when she felt the frenzy behind the clever remark.
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> Outdoors the pattern was less involuted, very much simplified. She enjoyed being in the streets - unguarded smiles from strangers, the permitted frown of someone walking alone, lovers' looks, as though they had solved something, and the unsolitary air with which the old or the wretched seemed to carry sorrow made her feel that people at least knew each other, if they did not yet know her, if she did not yet know them. The closeness she felt to Eddie, since this morning (that closeness one most often feels in a dream) was a closeness to life she had only felt, so far, when she got a smile from a stranger across a bus.[49]

Watching everyday London life reprieves Portia from the claustrophobia of 2 Windsor Terrace and Miss Paullie's school. Walking and mingling with the crowd compensates for her alienation from upper class English society. The crowd affirms for Portia that employed working-class or lower-middle-class Londoners are happy. En-masse they constitute a sense of an English community. On the other hand the upper-middle classes and their involuted personal lives are damned. Bowen's adjective, "'involuted", identifies the mannered performance of an English identity, and the *death* of the imperial identity, since it also means the shrinkage of an organ in old age or when inactive, such as the womb during the menopause.

Bowen probes not only the failing imperial heart of London and the upper classes but an English seaside resort and its middle-class society which pose as potential replacements for London and the upper-classes with a new post-war style of twentieth century Britishness. The contrast between the Quaynes of Windsor Terrace and the Heccombs of "Waikiki" villa in Seale-on-Sea forces Portia (and the reader) to re-evaluate Britain's sense of a cultural identity and position in world politics in 1938. Anna Quayne sends Portia to stay with Anna's former governess Miss Yarde, now the widowed Mrs Heccomb who lives with her stepchildren, Dickie and Daphne, in Seale-on-Sea. Bowen uses Dickie and Daphne Heccomb and their set to represent England of the 1930s. Whereas the Quaynes and their generation and class feel disillusioned, placeless and willing to 'jump ship' regarding Britain and her future, the Heccombs display the patriotism and self-confidence formerly associated with the ruling classes. They focus upon their own society and England, holidaying at home instead of abroad like the Quaynes. Their self-regard and cultural prejudices fictionally parallel the

political reality of Thirties Britain, contracting and focusing upon its own defence rather than the Empire. Portia's roving eye evaluates the pros and cons between pre-war and post-war British attitudes and the impact of historical change on British society.

In the Seale-on-Sea section Bowen develops her portrayal of Portia in the guise of a flâneuse. Portia accompanies Mrs Heccomb on jaunts up and down the High Street. While Mrs Heccomb chats, makes purchases and catches a taxi home with her bundles, Portia observes and delights in Mrs Heccomb and Seale-on-Sea society. Mrs Heccomb is viewed as a ferrywoman, punting Portia safely through Seale-on-Sea's social conventions and sexual mores, "With her hive-shaped basket under her elbow, Portia in her wake, she punted happily, slowly up and down the High Street, crossing at random, quite often going back on her tracks."[50] The imagery represents Mrs Heccomb in the role of duenna and adventurer, charting old and new trade routes, with her human cargo, in recently civilised but still potentially hostile territory. The inference that Seale-on-Sea is frontier territory between traditional values and modernity is supported by the frequent references to capitalism and economics and by Portia's comparisons between the Quaynes and the Heccombs. Mrs Heccomb takes in paying guests, such as Portia, and rents Waikiki during the summer months, forcing her stepchildren into rented accommodation. Although Dickie and Daphne both work they continue living at Waikiki for comfort and financial reasons. In contrast to Anna who leaves the domestics to her servant Matchett, Mrs Heccomb personally accounts for all her daily expenditures with cash and Portia delights in the frequent appearance of Mrs Heccomb's much-used "morocco purse" and "roving disposition" regarding Seale's shops. Mrs Heccomb shows how the spending power of the middle classes keeps British industry ticking along.

In a descriptive paragraph in the middle of the novel Portia views the frank energy of the middle-classes in Seale-on-Sea as a more evolutionary state of society than Windsor Terrace. The two social locations mirror each other. Windsor Terrace is a mausoleum of Empire slowly facing post-war decline, "The telephone, the door bell, the postman's knock were threatening intimations, though still far off. Crossing that springy door-mat, the outside person suffered a sea change. In fact something edited life in the Quayne's."[51] In contrast Waikiki is a noise box vibrating English vitality and purpose, embodied by the youthful and sexual Dickie and Daphne Heccomb:

The uneditedness of life here at Waikiki made for behaviour that was pushing

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[49] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 59-60.
[50] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 153.
[51] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 171.

> and frank. Nothing set itself up here but the naïvest propriety - that made Daphne shout but not swear, that kept Dickie so stern and modest, that had kept even Mr Bursely's hand, at yesterday evening's party, some inches above the bow on Daphne's behind. Propriety is no serious check to nature – in fact, nature banks itself up behind it – thus eyes constantly bulged and skins changed colour with immediate unsubtle impulses. Coming from Windsor Terrace, Portia found at Waikiki the upright rudeness of the primitive state - than which nothing is more rigidly ruled. The tremble felt through the house when a door banged or someone came hurriedly downstairs, the noises made by plumbing, Mrs Heccomb's prodigality with half-crowns and shillings, the many sensory hints that Doris [the domestic] was human and did not function in a void of her own - all these made Waikiki the fount of spontaneous living. Life seemed to be at its highest voltage, and Portia stood to marvel at Daphne and Dickie as she might have marvelled at dynamos. At nights, she thought of all that force contained in those single beds in the other rooms.
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> In terms of this free living, she now saw, or resaw, not only the people she met at Waikiki, but everyone she had known. The few large figures she saw here represented society with an alarming fairness, an adequacy she could not deny. In them she was forced to see every motive and passion – for motives and passion are alarmingly few.[52]

In her description of Portia's visit to Seale-on-Sea Bowen writes a comic-satirical echo of Marlow's journey in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Bowen compares the soldier Bursley, who has amorous designs on Portia, with an animal or predatory colonialist, and links Bursley with Eddie in London: 'all the same something asked her [Portia], or forced her to ask herself, whether, last night on the settee, it had not been Eddie that emerged from the bush?'[53] But in 1937 the heart of darkness is the 'primitive', industrious, middle classes who openly display the contradictions between bourgeois morality and the post-war consumer values and the loosening of the conduct codes patrolling sexuality. In contrast to Thomas Quayne, Dickie is virile masculinity. Although he does not own Waikiki he establishes him self as 'the Patriarch' and is full of business and his own sense of order – his presence is heard and felt, stamping the house. Neil Corcoran compares *The Death of the Heart* to Katherine Mansfield's short story 'At the Bay', and there are parallels between the two writers' satire of the male 'bread winner', in Mansfield's Stanley Burnell and Bowen's Dickie Heccomb, and the daily breakfast ritual.[54] Whereas Anna Quayne swears, is cool and sterile, Daphne refuses to swear but her body emits sexuality and the "life-force", to echo a phrase which the Anglo-Irish 'intellectual aesthete' Laurence Naylor uses to describe the Protestant middle-class Olivia Thompson in *The Last September*.

Bowen formally mixes her vehicular metaphors with metonymy and parodies medical

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[52] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 171.
[53] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 172.
[54] Corcoran,112. and Katherine Mansfield, *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922; London:

and early modernist anxieties over middle- and lower-class sexuality. [55] The single beds function as a synecdoche not only for Dickie and Daphne but middle-class England. Drawing upon science and technology for metaphors Bowen identifies how Dickie and Daphne's reproductive ability and energy makes them 'dynamos'. In *The Culture of Time and Space 1880 – 1918,* Stephen Kern notes the revolutionary impact of the new 'dynamo' on the British public in 1900.[56] The middle classes, with their reproductive potential and capitalist mindset, are the batteries energizing the Empire in the 1930s and transforming British society. Elizabeth Bowen says as much in her autobiographical fragment *Pictures and Conversations* where she connects the spawning of the English middle classes with assembly line motorcar production: "Motor-cars, which spawned at a greater rate, looked at once Martian and caddish. Their colour spectrum and flashing fittings of brass were themselves offensive."[57]

So, too, in *The Death of the Heart,* Bowen reads middle-class productivity and sexuality in terms of the twentieth century phenomenon of the motorcar industry, drawing upon advertising's new associations between sexuality and spark plugs or car batteries. Bowen describes the Saturday night party at Waikiki using a mixture of primitive animalistic and modern motorcar metaphors. It is Portia's first adult party and she is depicted as an Egyptian, signifying both her outsider status at Waikiki, coming from Europe and the Quaynes' upper-class home, and her neophyte priestess quality, trying to enter into and understand 'England'. However, her burgeoning sexuality makes her out as fair game at the party and includes her in Waikiki's social dynamics. Daphne's partner, the British soldier Mr Bursely, arrives at the party in a modern two-seater motorcar, already drunk; no one else at the party becomes intoxicated. Bowen uses the motorcar to identify Bursely's predatory masculinity. It is designed for fast living and denotes fluid sexual encounters rather than family or business purposes associated with larger cars. As mentioned, Portia views him as a carnivore in 'the bush': her perspective turns Seale-on-Sea into the African jungle. Bursely is aroused by Portia's strangeness and innocence. In his intoxicated sentimental state Portia represents the Empire, purity and sacrificial duty "Honestly when you first keeked round that door, I wanted to cry and tell you about my wicked life. And I bet you take a lot of chaps that

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Penguin, 1997) 9-11.

[55] At the start of the twentieth century medical authorities such as Havelock Ellis, educationists and the government were anxious about signs of British degeneracy among the working class. The government looked to the healthy middle classes to inter-marry, reproduce and ensure the Empire's future. But accompanying this desire was the fear that the lower-middle classes with their vulgar taste and capitalist mindsets (or worse the working classes) would overwhelm the upper classes and English culture – this concern was particularly evidenced in the writings of early modernists, for instance T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf. John Carey, *The Intellectual and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

[56] Kerns 93.

[57] Bowen, *Pictures & Conversations* 43.

way?... 'Just tell me', said Bursely, 'that you'd be a bit sorry if I was dead.'"[58] In Bursely's question Bowen voices her concern that the energy and productivity of the middle classes could be spent if Britain is drawn into war with an increasingly aggressive Germany. Daphne, the usual passenger in Bursely's motorcar, intervenes. Dickie and the other men at the party shield Portia, but treat her as if she were a motorcar, "Looking up, she saw Dickie wear the expression many people wear when they drive a car."[59] Dickie displays narrow-minded English prejudices about the position of men and women and other cultures "Dickie looked full at Portia with his commanding stag's eyes". He only sees Portia according to his conventional assumptions regarding English girls, he tells her that she should not wear lipstick and identifies Cecil as womanly "You will find Cecil a bit cissie" because Cecil dresses differently to the Seale-on-Sea crowd and motors to France for weekend trips seeking cultural experiences beyond England. However Dickie permits himself to first be supported by Mrs Heccomb and then driven about by the rich Clara. Although Cecil attempts to be more open-minded "Everyone here behaves as though France did not exist. "What is that you see over there?" I sometimes say to them, when it's a clear day' he only touches the tip of France, Boulogne, thinking it French enough and afraid Paris might disappoint."[60]

At the end of Portia's visit to Seale-on-Sea Bowen introduces the threat of European politics endangering Britain and further fragmenting the Empire. The introduction of France and ship imagery points towards warfare as British homes become threatened liners or battleships, signalling the declining power of the Royal Navy to defend its far-flung territories in reality. Wounded in World War I, the Quaynes of Windsor Terrace impotently await the sea change of modernity at their door. Waikiki villa, facing the English Channel, is imaged on the night of the party as a ship (bearing into the brewing political European threat), "A black night wind was up, and Waikiki breasted it steadily, straining like a liner: every fixture rattled."[61] The spawning mobile, lower-middle and working classes confirm the end of the Edwardian order in the twentieth century but here they are also Britain's only hope facing into war.[62]

By developing her motorcar metaphors to represent social change and restructured sexual relations in Britain, which she introduces in *The Death of the Heart*, Bowen highlights the fact that by the 1940s American-driven consumer politics are replacing imperialism – as the motorcar was the icon of American industry and its growing authority – and shaping

[58] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 168.
[59] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 166.
[60] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 163.
[61] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 161.
[62] Pykett 48-53; and McClintock 46-51.

British values.[63] Dialectically moving between walking and motorcar metaphors Bowen begins formally engaging in *The Heat of the Day* with the social transitions, relative liberty and modern existential crises brought about by twentieth century transport.

III 'A Walk in the Woods' (1941): consumerism succeeds imperialism

In *Look at All Those Roses* (1941), 'A Walk in the Woods' on the suburban outskirts supposedly offers Londoners a Sunday retreat from the exigencies of modern life. In fact the woods are a continuation of urban modernity and English social hierarchies, as they have been colonised and tamed by new transport systems. The main story line is the tired, illicit affair between a married, middle-aged woman Carlotta and her next-door neighbour's lodger Henry, ten years her junior. The lovers represent the lower-middle classes and the story uses their first names only as they struggle to find a space or time for their passion in the woods, but are unable to escape the nets of middle-class propriety. Carlotta strikes out for the heart of the woods, evading upper-class families picnicking near their motorcars. She hopes to find romance in the wilderness of nature, and escape from her humdrum married life. Carlotta's hopes echo D H Lawrence's ideas on nature and sexuality, and escape from industrialised urban life, expressed in his *Lady Chatterly's Lover* (1928). But Carlotta's search is futile; the story closes with Carlotta and Henry reaching the heart of the woods at the end of the day, only to discover it has been used for a commercial fashion shoot. The weary couple depart and Carlotta visualises the end of her affair in terms of Henry travelling away from her on a curving railway line. At the story's climax Bowen does not depict the centre of the woods as a liberating personal and imaginative space, free from modernity and bourgeois cultural mores. Instead she shows that the heartland has been over-run by advertising and consumerism. Indeed by the end of the story she proves the woods have no heart.

The woods are in fact crowded with Londoners and suburbanites, refugees from family life and bourgeois convention:

> The mysterious thing was that the woods were full of people - But what was likely to be the last fine Sunday of autumn had brought Londoners, or people from suburbs on this side of the city, in hundreds into these woods, which lay open, the People's property - criss-crossed by tarmac roads on which yellow leaves stuck. The people who came here were mainly well-to-do, for you needed a car to get here without effort. So saloon cars, run off the roads between the wide-apart birch-trees, were packed flank to flank, like shining

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[63] James Flink, *The Car Culture* (Cambridge:MIT Press,1975) 67-113 and 140-234, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988) 27-40, 112-129 and 158-169; and Smith 167-179.

square-rumped tin pigs, in nearby glades.[64]

Bowen transforms the saloon cars into an extension of English middle class homes, bringing imperial sexual politics and gendered domestic roles into the exotic spaces of the woods. Instead of an arcadia beyond English marriage and social laws, such as Shakespeare's wood beyond the Athenian Law in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, Bowen's woods enforce patriarchal law. These woods are not open to all sectors of the populace, but have been ordered by the tarmac roads for the middle classes whose motorcars give them privileged access. While some occupants remain in the private spaces of their vehicles, other families, with the males leading, adventure forth and conquer the woods, mocking European voyages of discovery and colonialism: "Walking between the pillars of the trees, the men squared their shoulders - as though they inhabited savage dignity."[65] The imagery is of conquest in a primitive, unknown land; unsure of directions or where to plant themselves, the males and their families walk in circles, staying close to the lifeline back to their bourgeois London existence – their cars.

Bowen satirises the English matrons who, dressed in last winter's fur coats and high heels, unsteadily totter after their husbands. She uses the fur coats to identify the wives as yesterday's hunted kill that their husbands have pursued and captured. The story correlates imagery of fox hunting with middle-class marriage:

> there is no poetry for the middle-class woman in her middle years. Nature's disturbing music is silent for her; her short phase of instinctive life is over. She is raising, forcing upward the children she has, and driving her man on. Features become bleak with intention: she is riveted into society...The still, damp, glittering woods, the majestic death of the year were reflected in the opaque eyes of these women - hardly more human, very much less pathetic, than the glass eyes of the foxes some of them wore. In family parties the women and men parted; they did not speak to each other. The women walked more slowly to act as a brake. Where tracks narrowed between thickets or bracken the families went in files. The children escaped and kept chasing each other, cat-calling, round the trees. They were not allowed to run down the wet green rides.[66]

Bowen de-sexes these women by referring to them using the third-person pronoun, "their faces unrelaxed...Features become bleak". Once married these wives discard their sexuality and individuality. Up until the end of the nineteenth century wives were regarded under English Common Law as their husband's property.[67] Although under English Equity Law a

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[64] Bowen, 'A Walk in the Woods' in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 488.
[65] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 488.
[66] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 489.
[67] Jan Pahl, *Money and Marriage*. (London: MacMillan Eductioin Ltd., 1989) 12-16; and Jane Simpson, 'The Changing Legal Context' in *Women Men and Marriage: Talks from the Tavistock Marital Studies Institute*. ed. Christopher Clulow, (London: Sheldon Press, 1995) 29-38.

wife's economic-property was held separate from the husband, the wife's male relatives and not the wife controlled it.[68] Despite changes in English marriage laws, with the two revolutionary Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 (which gave married women the same rights over property as men and unmarried women) wives in England in 1941 were still economically dependent upon their husbands.[69] In 'A Walk in the Woods' threatening female sexuality, because it is independent, has been caught and tamed by marriage. Indeed, husbands neuter and channel their wife's sexual power and energy into the family.

As her husband's possession, a wife becomes part of the function of a motorcar; she supports his forays into the public world of commerce. 'A Walk in the Woods' represents marriage and vehicles as functions of capitalism and British imperialism, either the colonial conquest of primitive territories or exploitation of English lower classes and common ground. The middle-class wife is the force that shapes and drives her children, perpetuating British society and industry. While Bowen criticises women for accepting their position as male possessions or part of the internal workings of a bourgeois marriage, figured in the story as car components, she also considers their plight is worse than hunted kill, "very much less pathetic" than the foxes' opaque eyes. But is this because the wives are conscious or unconscious of their married fate, and acquiescence in their own subjection? Sensitively, Bowen's complex association of automobiles and hunting articulates not only the silence between a husband and wife, but also the wife's role as the steady handbrake in marriage - a brake from which the children escape for moments because they are not yet captured within the institutionalisation of marriage and its male and female social roles.

Instead of directing marriage in the driver's seat, or even driving themselves, as independent women, middle-class wives are back-seat passengers. But the story complicates women's value as back-seat passengers/drivers. While they slow down their husbands, being economically dependent on them, they also protect their families from careering out of control (and sliding "down wet green rides" in the story). They ensure a secure base for their men to go out and conquer the world. Married men do not like to stray far from their cars or marriages. A strong family base gives males the mobility to pursue adventures. The narrative also implies the titillation of whether husbands could leave their married security, exchange

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[68] Pahl 16-18.

[69] Pahl argues that "[t]hough the 1882 Act can be seen as a great victory for feminists, and for women, it did not, of course, achieve anything like equality. Most importantly, perhaps, it did little to alter the financial dependence of wives on their husbands." 22. In fact, it was not until the Married Women's Property Act 1964 that English legislation dealt directly with the allocation of money within marriage, and Pahl goes on to argue that this later Act discriminates against women. Pahl 22-23.

their family 'car' for a new one: exploring exotic women outside their marriage. 'A Walk in the Woods' damns the situation of middle class wives and mothers, denying them self-determination and self-mobility:

> Willingly or unwillingly they walked in circles, coming back again and again to make certain they had not lost their cars - in which had been left a tea-basket, an over coat of some value, or an old lady, an aunt or a grandmother. Not to be sure of where one is induces panic - and yet the sensation of being lost was what they unconsciously looked for on this holiday - they had come to the woods.[70]

For Bowen, in middle- and upper-class English marriages, women are not only hunted kill, to be worn and discarded like old trophies, but also commodities with decreasing value. Once their families have grown and they are no longer needed, they will be discarded like furs in the back of a motorcar, symbolised in the story by an old lady - of less service value than a tea-basket or an over coat. Recalling Major Brutt in *The Death of the Heart*, women in their late sixties date like old makes of cars, to be replaced by new models.[71] Bowen shows these wives are culpable for their situation as chauffeured trophies. They stay behind their husbands; the wives' main expectation from marriage is a fur coat; and these expectations progress to art objects for their home. But their entire focus is on commodities and self-adornment, showing the influence of consumerism as the new arbiter of social values and status. Instead of seeking an independent life, a mind of their own, or an interest in politics and business the matrons despise the woods because they are public: "They looked about them, dissatisfied, acquisitive, despising the woods because they belonged to everyone."[72] Revealing inbred snobbery, and the extent to which Elizabeth, herself, looks down upon them, the wives would prefer a Duke's garden, if it were accessible.

'A Walk in the Woods' extends its appraisal of marriage by using its motifs of woods, cars, colonial conquest and hunted kill, to explore the position of lower-working-class women in England. Carlotta, a working-class married woman in her thirties, escapes into the woods with her lover Henry to stop marriage and class shaping her identity in 1930s England. Focusing on the plight of two people having an extra-marital affair, Bowen shows how the influences of imperialism, class and sexuality regulate British life. Unlike the furred middle-class wives, automatons who arrive in their husbands' cars and walk distractedly and disdainfully around the woods, Carlotta, Bowen's heroine, exists on the cusp of the lower middle and working classes.

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[70] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 488.
[71] Bowen, *The Death of the Heart* 90.
[72] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 489.

By naming her protagonist Carlotta, a defiantly exotic appellation, Bowen associates her with Shakespeare's heroines. Also, locating the lovers in the woods (encompassed by walking middle-class and suburbanite Londoners, roadways and cars) Bowen accentuates the sense of Carlotta as a Shakespearean heroine. Henry feels their love affair transports him into a magical Shakespearean world running alongside his mundane life as a London clerk. He dreamed this as a child; work cancels it, Carlotta revives it for him, "When I was young I used to believe that there was really some tremendous world, and that one would get to it. A sort of Shakespeare world. And I heard it in music, too. And I lived there for three days after I first met you."[73] From the crescendo of romance the narrative drops to mundane fact, "She was a married woman out with her neighbour's lodger. They both came from a newly developed suburb, and had met at the local debating society."[74]

Carlotta and Henry travel to the woods on public transport. The type of bus, a Green Line used for the counties skirting London rather than a metropolitan red bus, marks the weary distance and bus changes they make in travelling from their inner-city houses. Unlike the motorcars which penetrate deep into the woods, the Green Line only deposits Carlotta and Henry at the edge of the woods, forcing them to walk the whole day in search of the centre, "They had come to the edge of the woods in a Green Line bus, struck in and wandered for a long time now, looking for the place their fancy wanted. The woman, a city woman, refused to believe the woods had no undiscovered heart."[75] The heart of the woods is not only surrounded by people, it has been colonised by an advancing consumer culture and their hopes of a place of escape prove illusory.

However, in opposition to the luxury of motorcars, public transport gives Carlotta some independence and liberty over the other wives. She travels on an equal footing with her lover in the Green line. Whereas middle-class wives resemble their fox furs strung around their necks, Carlotta, red headed like a fox, is still fighting for her own life and freedom. Her love affair with Henry, and their precarious existence in the woods, is her escape bid from domesticity with her husband, the unremarkable Joe, "It's my only life. You're my only life. My only way out. Before you came, I was walled in alive. I didn't know where to turn. I was burning myself out...I don't mind where to go, so long as we get away from them."[76] Carlotta's passionate cry recalls the muted appeal of Eveline or Mrs Emily Sinico in Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914). Carlotta's "them" refers to the eyes of society and British behaviour and

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[73] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 492.
[74] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 492.
[75] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 489.
[76] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 491.

marriage codes that govern men and women according to their class and keep them in their place. In 'A Walk in the Woods' Bowen uses transport and hunting metaphors to represent British morality routeing out and punishing the lovers, "Each time she had sighted the black of another tarmac road she had let out a persecuted sigh."[77] The roadways, cars and families cut into the woods, and move-in like hunters and pack animals on the two fugitives.

Henry is attracted to Carlotta because she is a married woman with a place of her own. Astutely she notes Henry wants mothering and she spoils him like a boy. But Carlotta has never lived independently; she moved from her parents' home straight into married life with Joe "And her girlhood had been brief: she had married young."[78] Countering historical and literary stereotypes, 'A Walk in the Woods' reverses 1930s and 40s gender politics. Carlotta is adventurous, seeking space outside the home; in contrast Henry, like other husbands, seeks a stable home and is afraid of adventure or straying outside conventions "'I used to like you to have a place of your own - that was why I'd rather go with you than a girl...And now - it's awful...*This* isn't what I imagined the first time I saw you. Hiding in woods like this - it isn't fit for you...really.'"[79] The italics and ellipses show that Henry thinks his affair with Carlotta is becoming pitiful or sordid. Scrambling and hiding from the public undermines his schoolboy ideals regarding love and womanhood; his romantic notions of Shakespearean love misread the adventuresses of the 'Comedies' and 'Tragedies'.

In the story, two vacuous fifteen-year-old schoolgirls, whom Bowen comically names Muffet and Isabella, symbolise the eyes and ears of moralising society. Their accusing looks heighten the narrative's implication that Carlotta is a renegade 'fox', "Her look attracted the notice of Muffet and Isabella...They saw a haggard woman with dark red hair and a white face: something in her expression set them off giggling all the more."[80] The fictional implication that Carlotta is struggling against gender specifications, is enforced by Bowen's characterisation of the schoolgirls as empty imprints thoughtlessly accepting conventions, "Their lovely faces showed no particular character."[81] So far their minds have been filled with cautionary horror tales that restrict their movements. Their mothers only let them walk after first warning them against men. But their girlish solidarity will end as soon as they have boyfriends. Unlike Carlotta who flees her marriage and gender codes with Henry in tow, the girls are fascinated by the spectacle of modern living: inspecting the cars "squinting at grandmothers", but "running away in alarm from pairs of well-got-up women, upright in

[77] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 489.
[78] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 490.
[79] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 491.
[80] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 492.
[81] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 493.

backs of cars like idols under glass cases discontentedly waiting for their men to return."[82] This image turns the woods into some kind of 'Bluebeard's chamber', with the fated wives transfixed after marriage, or else like mannequins waiting for their men to activate them and request service. In the context of Bowen's complex association of motorcar, hunting and trophy motifs to indicate British sexual politics and women's devalued position, the schoolgirls are like endangered babes-in-the-wood "walking arm-in-arm" deeper into the gendering social conventions that will determine their married future and second class status.

Muffet and Isabella's conversation while walking amplifies Bowen's complex travel metaphor. Bowen not only uses motorcars to encode gendered (and gendering) domestic power politics, but also to show that these supposedly liberating technologies of motion are in fact reinforcing traditional gender values and killing off any marriage gains or social equality achieved by the Women's Movement at the turn of the century. Indeed the motorcar industry and advertising reinforced each other in replacing imperialism as the arbiters of gendered, social behaviour codes. Firstly, Bowen indicates that Isabella and Muffet are actively, if innocently, seeking their dead-end fate as married wives or letting themselves become brainwashed and lured into marriage. The schoolgirls debate the fashionable style of fur coat they would like once they are married "...mistra or kolinsky?"[83] Secondly, Isabella's throw-away questions, while innocently sucking sweets, alert the reader to the fact that while offering the illusion of change and emancipation, the motorcar industry and Thirties consumer culture are modern versions of old-style patriarchal structures, "...If a boy that always went racing but that you were sweet on asked you to marry him, would you?...Supposing you were going with a boy, then found out he was a trunk murderer...?"[84] Bowen uses Isabella's questions to articulate the social connections between motorcars, speed and threatening male sexuality, which by 1941 is increasingly dangerous for women's independence. In *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century*: vol. 3, *Letters From the Front*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar bring to light male and female modernists' critical and contradictory commentary on "[t]he confusion of love and death, sex and murder, girl and canon" which was increasingly pervasive in British society and the forces during World War II.[85] Gilbert and Gubar briefly refer to Bowen's short story 'The Demon Lover' (1945), with its demonic taxi-driver, and her novel *The Heat of the Day* (1949), to illustrate their point. In

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[82] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 493.
[83] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 494.
[84] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 494.
[85] Gilbert and Gubar assert that "Many photographs of "our boys over there" reinforced the fused images of sex and death that so disturbed men and women of letters. Pinups, barely clothed or naked, adorned bunks and tanks named after women...Perhaps in consequence of all this, World War II marked an increase in the word *fuck* to mean not only intercourse but also assault or exploitation." *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 3 225-237.

'A Walk in the Woods' Bowen interweaves metonymic and metaphoric uses of her walking, motorcar and hunting motifs to turn the story itself into a complex metaphor. Her formal experimentation enables her to articulate not only the modernists' aesthetic concerns regarding the 1940s 'sexual battle', but also her society's worrying reading of male sexuality in terms of powerful and destructive technologies, sex and killing women. Bowen leaves Isabella's questions open with ellipses, but the girls' walk through the woods answers them for the reader.

The schoolgirls' outraged Thirties propriety is misdirected. Instead of empathising with Carlotta, the schoolgirls censure Carlotta's struggle against class, gender and imperial discourses that proscribe female mobility, and condemn her behaviour under patriarchal law "'My goodness,' said Isabella, '*She* looked silly!' 'Breaking trees too,' said Muffet. 'That's against the laws. 'Besides being old enough to be his mother.'"[86] They become the critical eyes, ears and mouthpieces of British moral probity. The schoolgirls' misconception of Carlotta makes Henry perceive her greatness, but also he pities her, and their love. He pictures her as a wrecked ship while Isabelle and Muffet personify the wreckers who have doomed her:

> As he saw the girls' pink faces struck open with laughter he saw why Carlotta hated her life. He saw why she towered like a statue out of place. She was like something wrecked and cast up on the wrong shore. When they met she had been one of those women going through life dutifully, and at the same time burning themselves up.[87]

There is no room for independent women from Carlotta's social class who thirst for debate, politics and a life in the public world. Henry fears Carlotta's passion and fighting spirit. He fears stepping outside social conventions, unlike Carlotta, and he is unable to support her. As night draws in and the cars depart the woods, carrying their imperially stamped English families, Carlotta and Henry come across the magic space they were searching for all day: the still water of a lake in twilight "And still water in woods, in any part of the world, continues an everlasting terrible fairy tale, in which you are always lost, in which giants oppress."[88] It is too late; Carlotta is defeated and her day-trip from deadening marriage is over.

A fashion shoot has despoiled the secret glade in the heart of the woods. By the time Carlotta and Henry enter the glade they see a photographer finish photographing a "not young girl" in a fur coat, who is both the photographer's girlfriend and model.[89] The fashion

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[86] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 493.
[87] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 492.
[88] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 496.
[89] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 496.

industry dehumanises both of them and continues the unequal sexual dynamic of men as predators and women as hunted game. Consumerism is worse than traditional bourgeois marriages since it replaces any concept of love or family value with profit, "...she coughed, and shook under her fur coat. Cecil said cautiously: 'She's getting a bit cold, Bob.' '*Tssssss!*' said Bob sharply. He had become his camera. His whole temperament crouched over his subject, like a lion over a bit of meat."[90] Love in a capitalist society not only positions women as trophies, but turns them into commodities and uses them to entrap other women, transforming marriage into a commercial chain. Women will buy into accessories and turn themselves into 'foxy ladies' worthy of capture and marriage. In the twentieth century fashion photography, like the motorcars, becomes the agent of patriarchy.

Carlotta surrenders. She desires to be shot and wishes for a photograph of herself and Henry, as a traveller's memento of their love, like a picture postcard. She sees Henry now as a traveller passing through her life. He picks a thermos flask from the lake which reflects an England lost. It is a boy's treasure for Henry, but a sign of travel and departure for the more mature Carlotta. The inside glass is broken making it resemble a kaleidoscope. For Bowen kaleidoscopes are akin to telescopes, as their shifting patterns invoke new places and patterns of being. The shattered thermos flask crystallises for Carlotta the end of the affair and their separating lives: "Carlotta smiled, but she felt her throat tighten. She saw Henry's life curve off from hers, like one railway line from another, curve off to an utterly different and far-off destination. When she trusted herself to speak, she said as gently as possible: 'We'll have to be starting back soon. You know it's some way. The bus -' 'No, we won't miss that,' said Henry, rattling his flask and smiling."[91]

From 'The Contessina' (1924) to 'A Walk in the Woods' (1941) Bowen cuts a literary path that charts the first crack in British cultural superiority in the immediate aftermath of World War I, through to the steady disintegration of British certainty and imperial values. Her fiction moves from hotels in Lake Como and then Paris, to two troubled and threatened British establishments in England, and finally to the motorcar as a fragile representative of an 'Englishman's home', overtaken by American consumer power. In the nineteenth century the Empire was an agglomeration of colonies and dominions linked by trade routes and mythologized as a 'family tree' strongly rooted in English soil. In these short stories and in *The Death of the Heart,* Bowen introduces her re-interpretation of the Empire in the twentieth century, as a tenuous association of British travellers, not colonisers. Britain itself becomes a final asylum from European politics with its homes transformed into refugee

[90] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 494-5.

ships and errant motorcars.

Bowen's writing concurs with Joyce and Woolf's claim that the human subject had changed in the first decades of the century. Like her literary forebears, Bowen sought to find a suitable literary form to chart these changes. Through blending metaphor and metonymy her fiction replicates the precarious cohesion of British society itself. Her abrupt shifts of tone and tempo echo the cracks and fissures in British identity. As her writing progresses Bowen develops her modernist technique first seen in 'The Contessina'. She introduces technological metaphors, employs interior consciousness, and the figure of the flâneuse with the variation of her travel motifs. Bowen's formal dialectic, between traditional and modernist prose strategies, a dialectical tension where neither wholly wins out, marks Bowen's writing of this period. The balance enables her to register the social strains and transitions in 1920s and 30s British Society.

Bowen's geographical movement in her fiction parallels the journeys in her personal life. Bowen moved from her Anglo-Irish feeling that she was outside history, first realised that mid-day in 1905 when standing as a child in Ballsbridge grandstand, into the periphery of British literary society in 1924, when married and living in Oxford, and then in 1935 to London and the centre of British literature and friendship with Virginia Woolf. By 1940 she had begun working for the Ministry of Information. Her Anglo-Irish history and childhood in Kent give Bowen the dual perspective and concern with the end of the Empire and contested contemporaneous opinions about the social function of women. As already stated, 'The Contessina' is set in Lake Como in Italy, where Bowen in real life had stayed during the most violent stage of the Anglo-Irish war. The themes of historical change and gender politics, and her ship and motorcar metaphors, are repeated in a varied pattern in both family memoirs and in the historical novel set in Ireland, *The Last September* (1929).

In the next chapter I explore the way Bowen uses her family motif of a 'hawk-in-flight' to represent her writing style, combining a masculine and feminine literary perspective. Once Bowen has defined her hawk-like writing motif she interrogates Anglo-Irish and British history to ascertain the causes behind World Wars I and II. She develops her ship imagery to define the circular narrative of Anglo-Irish history, from colonisers to refugees, and presage the fate of Britain and its Empire following World War II. In addition she uses her hawk-in-flight motif and makes comparisons between female immobility and mobility to evaluate late nineteenth and turn-of-the-century bourgeois gender politics in Dublin and Kent.

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[91] Bowen, *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 496.

Chapter 2

ANGLO-IRISH NOMADS: From Big House To Big Ship

I The 'hawk-in-flight' and the Bowens' arrival in Ireland

A self-consciously modern writer Elizabeth Bowen repeatedly asserted that "My books *are* my relation to society" and that all of her writing is concentrated in her present moment – except her two family memoirs, *Bowen's Court* (1942) and *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* (1942) and her one historical novel *The Last September* (1929), written in Oxford in 1928 and set back in a lost time in Ireland during the Anglo-Irish war (1919-21).[1] While interrogating the contemporary changes in British society and the position of women, Bowen simultaneously kept her eye on Irish and British history to ascertain the causes behind the British decline and the approach of a second war. Halfway through her family history *Bowen's Court,* Bowen sources World War II in the complex mix of Anglo-Irish, Irish and British political self-interest and cultural idealism since the seventeenth century, "And to what did our fine feelings, our regard for the arts, our intimacies, our inspiring conversations, our wish to be clear of the bonds of sex, and class and nationality, our wish to try to be fair to everyone lead us? To 1939."[2] Bowen viewed her Anglo-Irish and Irish history as a prequel to the end of the Empire, and to changing gender roles, European warfare, threatened homes and existential uncertainty throughout the twentieth century.

Like many of her fellow modernists during World War II, Bowen turned from the contemporary novel to history, memoir and myth (although she continued her experimentation with the short story form, finding it better suited than the novel to represent the world at war).[3] Heather Bryant Jordan writes that "as the world sped towards the nightmare of war she [Bowen] began to take refuge in her private and her public past", like Virginia Woolf, John Lehmann, J. B. Priestley and Henry Green.[4] Bowen's friend Hilda Doolittle, the Imagist poet, adopted a "mythic

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[1] Bowen, 'Why do I write' (1948) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 223.
[2] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 125.
[3] During World War II Bowen wrote and published her two most critically acclaimed collections of short stories, *Look At All Those Roses* (1941) and *The Demon Lover* (1945). All the stories in these two collections show Bowen is confidently in command of her experiments with the short story form and themes, in representing the everyday struggle to exist in a war-torn world.
[4] Heather Bryant Jordan, *How Will the Heart Endure* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1992) 108.

mask" and combined psychoanalysis with her feminist revision of Greek mythology, in particular the "Eleusinian mysteries" and the *Odyssey*, to textually "psychoanalyse" her self and history in her semi-autobiographical *The Gift* (1941-43), so as to ensure her survival and mental well-being during World War II.[5] In *Trilogy* (1941-44) H. D. assumes the guise of "Circe", becoming a depersonalised bard and prophetess in the wilderness, retreating from the present.[6] Barbara Guest notes that Bowen and H.D. were part of a supportive network of modernist female writers who renovated mythology.[7] However, Bowen does not turn to Greek and Eastern mythology, or psychoanalysis and memoir per se. Jordan differentiates Bowen's treatment of her family history and the past from those of her fellow modernists "Bowen hoped that the past would buttress her identity by recalling to her the places where she had felt secure, but at the same time she deeply feared simply escaping into those former days."[8] I believe Bowen turns to Irish history and mythology and her Anglo-Irish family history as a means not so much to escape the excoriations of World War II, but significantly to understand the reasons behind war and to convince her self that civilisation will survive. Above all she seeks to reaffirm the validity of her aesthetic project to both comprehend and transcend historical change in a world at war. Bowen achieves these aims by drawing upon Anglo-Irish history, the Gaelic bardic tradition, and her own childhood, to develop three related travel metaphors, the hawk-in-flight, nomads and ships that link her writing with history, with gender and with her present moment. I will argue in this chapter that her deployment of these three travel metaphors establishes her status as a pivotal Irish and British modernist. Bowen's writing, drawn from her conflictual feelings about her family's colonial origins, her mother's late Victorian girlhood, and Bowen's experience of World War II, expresses the dialectical tension between history and the present moment which Woolf, Joyce and H. D. focused upon.

As highlighted in my introduction, this thesis focuses on the inter-relation between Bowen's themes and travel metaphors, and how her travel metaphors influence her formal development as a modernist. Therefore I draw attention to Bowen's kaleidoscopic style, rather than charting a chronology of her work, and how she uses each type of travel metaphor to express a distinct view of historical change. Due to this, there is some historical overlap between my thesis chapters, whose structure mirrors the temporal and geographical dislocations in Bowen's

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[5] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 86-99.
[6] Friedman 66, 99, 101, 282.
[7] Guest 236-239, 246, 255, 260 and 326-327.
[8] Jordan 111.

oeuvre. 'Anglo-Irish nomads (from big house to big ship)', my title for chapter two, indicates Bowen's acknowledgement that the Anglo-Irish were colonialists. In her own words many of the soldiers who sailed to Ireland with Oliver Cromwell in 1649, and became the Anglo-Irish were on the whole "natural *condottieri* – temperamental fighters, malcontents, firebrands, actuated by love of movement, desire to leave home or hopes of gain" – Bowen includes her founding ancestor in this group.[9] I have drawn the idea that in her opinion the majority of Anglo-Irish colonialists were akin to nomadic adventurers from her previous statement and her later assertion that "for some time many Cromwellians remained squatters, busied with the accumulation of wealth...They had still no *idea* of living to integrate them."[10] Despite the spate of Anglo-Irish 'big house' building throughout the eighteenth century, which was meant to symbolise Anglo-Irish domination and integration with each other and the Irish soil, Bowen realises, from her 1941 perspective, that her community was always a "settler society".[11] Failing to secure a foothold they were eventually forced out of Ireland by the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century: "After 1918 came the war in Ireland, with the burning down of many of the big houses – some already futureless, for they had lost their heirs."[12] Bowen uses the circular history of the Anglo-Irish, and her hawk-in-flight, nomads and ship metaphors, to interpret changes in both British and European politics and in the position of women following World War I, and to develop her (en)gendering of modernist aesthetics. Hence this chapter discusses Bowen's three historical pieces set in Ireland according to their inner chronology as follows: *Bowen's Court* which cover the years from 1649 when Oliver Cromwell and the Bowens first arrived in Ireland until World War I in 1914; then *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* which covers Elizabeth Bowen's childhood in Ireland from 1899 to 1906; and finally *The Last September,* which is set in the year 1920-21 when the twenty-six counties, comprising southern Ireland, gained independence from Britain, signalling the first break in the British Empire.

Bowen inherited her Anglo-Irish family home Bowen's Court in May 1930, upon the death of her father Henry Cole Bowen VI. Looking back from her twentieth-century perspective, the house, which was completed in 1776 (it took ten years to build), should have symbolised the union of a Gaelic and a modern Ireland, which would take its equal place amongst the other modern European nations in the eighteenth century. The novel of another Anglo-Irish author whom Bowen admired, Maria Edgeworth's *Ormond* (1817), fictionalises this ideal. Instead

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[9] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 39.
[10] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 87.
[11] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 437.
[12] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 437.

Anglo-Irish big houses came to symbolise colonial rule, sectarian politics and eventually the infamous political union (1801) between Britain and Ireland. After the Union Ireland became subordinate to England's imperial policy. By 1930, following the nineteenth-century Land Acts and twentieth-century Anglo-Irish war and Irish independence, Bowen's family home symbolised a fading cultural idea of an Anglo-Irish community and unwelcome memory of British colonialism instead of a politically integrated Irish citizenry.[13] The house and its history drove previous Bowens into early graves.[14] Although Bowen loved her home its abstract ideals and landlord tradition hurt her personally, estranging her grandfather from her father, making her father ill and forcing her and her mother to leave Ireland.

The majority of Bowen critics focus on the symbolic importance of the house 'Bowen's Court', not only for Anglo-Irish culture, but also for homes threatened during the twentieth century. Bowen wrote *Bowen's Court* when living in London during the first year of the 'Phoney War' (1939-41) when Britain stood alone against Nazi Germany. She published it in 1942. In an 'Afterword' for the second edition published in 1963, three years after Bowen's Court had been demolished, Bowen recalled the importance of her home and the reason she wrote the Bowens' and Ireland's turbulent history during World War II, "Yes, there was the picture of peace - in the house, in the country round. Like all pictures it did not quite correspond with any reality. Or, you might have called the country a magic mirror, reflecting something that could not really exist...War made me that image out of anxious history. And so great and calming was the authority of the light and quiet around Bowen's Court that it survived war-time. And it did more than that, it survived the house."[15] Instead of focusing on the house itself and the history of the Bowens in relation to the house, I want to focus on Bowen's writing style, and narrative retelling of Irish and Anglo-Irish history, to reveal the connections between Bowen's 'big house' voice and both the Gaelic bardic and modernist literary traditions.

Bowen's complex opening paragraph to *Bowen's Court* immediately asserts her focus on broader Irish history and her aesthetic project to replace a masculinist linear account with a

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[13] In her autobiographical fragment 'Origins' in *Pictures and Conversations*, Bowen refers to the Anglo-Irish as "my more or less synonymous race and family: the Anglo-Irish." 14. Heather Jordan draws attention to the fact that Bowen considered herself to be part of an Anglo-Irish "race" as the essence of Bowen's sense of Irishness; Jordan foregrounds the cultural dimension of the word. She points out that Seamus Deane believes Bowen's identification of "race" is derived from Edmund Burke's belief that "the character of a race was formed by the conditions in which it had developed, the customs to which it had adhered, the mentality which it had inherited." qtd. Jordan xii.

[14] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 446.

feminised one. She employs a feminised circulatory narrative with her literary mimesis of the hawk-in-flight, taken from her family myth, which dates from 1649 when the Bowens first arrived in Ireland. Bowen locates her home and family geographically and historically within North Cork, but also within a broader Irish, British and European historical context. She identifies Bowen's Court through its relations with surrounding farmlands and tributaries, its neighbouring Anglo-Irish big houses, the three main towns Mallow, Fermoy and Mitchelstown, and the two mountain ranges: the Ballyhouras overshadowing Bowen's Court, and the Galtees bordering on Limerick. The narrative perspective is a bird's eye view, surveying Bowen's Court and the other landmarks in an organic unity with the entire setting. Bowen moves in to explore the particulars of her Munster region and lead the reader into her home and *terra firma*. This is a significant narrative ploy and has complex political and artistic reverberations for Bowen, as her 1939 opening re-enacts the mythical hawk flight that brought the Bowen lands into being c.1649.

Bowen's favourite story was her family myth that the Welsh Colonel Bowen's two hawks brought him to Ireland and guided him towards the pre-destined Bowen lands in Cork. She takes control and reshapes the original tale:

> The tale - it is more than a legend - of the Bowen Hawk has been handed down in our family, always by word of mouth...it has a psychological, if not strictly historical, likeness. Like all stories retold with gusto, it has its variations: every Bowen tells it as seems to him or her best. I will give the version that most appeals to me[16]

Breaking with teleological historical narratives Bowen returns to story telling. This literary coupling integrates two Irish cultures: Anglo-Irish narratives and Gaelic balladry.[17] In *The Isles: A History* Norman Davies writes that the Irish 'Book of Invasions', written by medieval monks, is 'the Green Islanders' Foundation Myth'.[18] The 'Book of Invasions' records the waves of immigrants to Ireland from the first mythological ship arriving in Celtic Ireland following the 'Great Flood' until medieval times. The sole survivor of the first ship was the helmsman Fintan mac Bochra, the son of the Ocean, who can turn himself into a fish or bird and is therefore the only one of his people to make it to Erin's shore. During the flood he transformed himself into a leaping salmon but lost one eye to the Hawk of Achill. After landing in Erin Fintan tells the Hawk of Achill his life story before the flood. Fintan's telling of his tale to the Hawk of Achill inaugurates the Irish bardic culture. Bowen's modernist reinterpretation of her family's planter

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[15] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 457.
[16] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 67.
[17] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 54.
[18] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 54.

narrative connects her Anglo-Irish origins and her modernist aesthetics with the Hawk of Achill and the Irish bardic tradition. Declan Kiberd likens Bowen to the "wandering spailpíní" and identifies her as "the Aogán Ó Rathaille of her time and class" who is stranded between the old order and the new that "offered her no place".[19] As a part of oral culture Bowen's family myth gathers force in the telling and most importantly it bears a psychological, rather than historical, likeness to reality. Bowen gives the version that appeals most to her needs throughout her life. For Bowen the psychological validation for her family's connection with Ireland is the most important thing - especially following the Anglo-Irish War when the house Bowen's Court was threatened, and now even more during World War II.[20] Decrying historical documentation Bowen positions a different but for her equally valid discourse.

Bowen encodes the two hawks as Colonel Henry Bowen's daemons, which drive him to Ireland instead of America, where his brothers went. Bowen is purposefully vague about the exact date of Colonel Bowen's arrival in Ireland, but she depicts him travelling independently from Cromwell's main army, emulating his hawks' aloof manner of hunting, "Pressure of natural affections in Colonel Bowen was said by his enemies to be very low. He loved his hawks and hawking, doubted God and cared almost nothing for man."[21] She further differentiates him from the body of rootless English adventurers and settlers, "Henry Cole Bowen was low, godless but not landless, owning property, money and a third wife (he was married three times) in Glamorganshire, Wales."[22] In Bowen's estimation Henry is attracted by liberty, symbolized by his love of hawking, rather than militarism, profit or sectarianism, in fact she draws the disaffected and "godless" Colonel as a victim of religious persecution at home in Glamorganshire, with its 'theology, bargaining and censorious gossip'.[23] Bowen sees the Colonel's fighting spirit as a continuation of his hawking and an opportunity to escape the political and religious oppression of his Welsh home, "Such men live in a heat of ferment of inner anger; they feel freed and eased by action, but their haughty subjectivity makes for contempt for

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[19] Declan Kiberd, 'Elizabeth Bowen – The Dandy in Revolt' in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation.* (1995; London: Vintage, 1996) 378.

[20] Bowen argues that the Bowens' relationship to Ireland is with their land, following her family's blood investment in the house and its environs during 1798 defenderism, the Famine, and the three Land Acts.

[21] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 36.

[22] Her family name 'Bowen' derived from 'ab Owens' meaning 'son of Owen' - a common patronym in Glamorganshire. In 1582 Henry Cole Bowen I's father changed the 'ab Owen' to 'Bowen' under Elizabethan testate, signalling a transition from Welsh identity to changing with the times and accepting his place in the United Kingdom of England and Wales, existent since 1536. Bowen infers the Anglicization of Glamorganshire is one of the reasons for Colonel Bowen's disaffected spirit. Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 34-35.

[23] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 39.

"ideas" from the outside. Fighting had this over hawking: it took him further from home."[24] Although the Colonel becomes the Irish Bowens' founding patriarch (as Hermione Lee notes Bowen gives her family heads monarchical numerals beginning Henry I) she portrays him as limited by patriarchy.[25]

Bowen does not ignore her Welsh ancestor's colonialism, but she builds a special plea for it by placing him in the context of colonial politics in Europe and the British Isles since the eleventh century, thereby explaining the complex circumstances behind Colonel Bowen's arrival in Ireland and appropriation of land belonging to the Irish Catholic Garrett Cushin, "Gowersland, Gower or the Gower Peninsula is the Western extremity of Glamorganshire. Like Ireland it is notable for its ruins, and like Ireland made complex by an imposed race. The British, Romans and Normans all left remains behind them."[26] Bowen asserts that the Bowens' claim in Ireland is not an isolated act but part of the human history of migration, invasion and settlement; the situation in Ireland has happened in Wales, England and elsewhere in Europe. Here there is amid Bowen's tactful if euphemistic presentation of colonialism the unspoken question: if other countries have accommodated raiding visitors, why cannot the Catholic Irish in the twentieth century accept the Anglo-Irish as Irish?

Bowen retells the vignette (recorded in *Baxter's World of Spirits* (1691))[27] of Colonel Henry Bowen's doppelganger. While Henry was fighting in Ireland a disembodied spiritual apparition of him haunted his pious third wife and home in Glamorganshire. It is a story that parallels the position of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland.[28] Colonel Bowen is a damned and godforsaken soul and enacts a schizophrenic duality, as a spiritual possessor in Wales and Ireland he is unable to cut the psychic ties between both states. Bowen portrays his restless wanderings

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[24] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 39.
[25] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 34.
[26] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 36. Elizabeth visited her ancestral origins and noted the confluence between the Irish and Welsh cultural and historical landscape.
[27] Bowen draws upon Richard Baxter's *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London, 1691) for her vignette about Colonel Bowen's doppelganger. She describes Richard Baxter as a contemporary of Colonel Bowen, and a scholar of psychic research who compiled a didactic casebook on witchcraft and possession. In a tongue-in-cheek manner Bowen refers to Baxter's promising title and sub-title: '*Fully evinced by the Unquestionable Histories of Apparitions, Operations, Witchcrafts, Voices, etc. Proving the Immortality of Souls, the Malice and Miseries of the Devils and the Damned, and the Blessedness of the Justified. Written for the Conviction of Sadducees and Infidels, By Richard Baxter.*' *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 40. Lieutenant-Colonel Bowen and his apparition in Glamorgan became 'Case 2' in Baxter's book of cautionary tales.
[28] Neil Corcoran explores the significance of Bowen's ancestral ghost story within her memoir *Bowen's Court* in representing the hybrid status of the Anglo-Irish throughout Irish and British history, 26-31.

in the ruined wilderness of North Munster, as the price for his independent life-style and free-thinking.[29] Again she uses his Welsh background, with its constricting religious dogma, to vindicate his colonialism in Ireland. His ghostly double, like Hamlet's father, returns to the source of his trouble but cannot undo his origins, as the Anglo-Irish in the twentieth century cannot undo their first act of dispossession. Colonel Bowen is a self-aware damned figure, like the forsaken Anglo-Irish Melmoth in Maturin's gothic *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) (another travelling soul who, like the Bowen family narrative, cuts across centuries, continents and religious persecution). Henry's ghostly double pre-empts the situation of the Anglo-Irish in the nineteenth and twentieth century: isolated and dying out in Ireland, yet haunting English politics. Bowen's Henry prefigures the 'Victorian double', the conscience of British colonialism.

In *Bowen's Court*, Bowen formally emulates the movement of her ancestor's hawk; she flits back and forwards geographically and temporally between Ireland, Wales, England and Europe. Her narrative perspective flies upwards from Colonel Bowen's Welsh family only to swoop back down on the Bowens in Ireland, "This makes a point at which it is convenient to leave history and return to the Bowens. The events of two decades in Ireland, up to 1650, have been briefly and superficially traced. They make a story that seems to have no moral, and that one cannot believe will have any end."[30] Bowen reads seventeenth-century history mirroring twentieth-century politics; it anticipates the one of internecine revolutions, nationalism, fascism and communism overwhelming the Europe of her own time. Bowen claims a superficial rendering of seventeenth-century British and Irish politics, then, like the movement of a hawk, she swoops down, focusing on North Cork and the manoeuvres of Lord Broghill, the Confederates, Monmouth and Cromwell. She swoops back up, departing broader history at the point of Cromwell's victory and the brutal transplantation of the defeated Catholic Irish, only to return to her family history. In her mythical re-telling of how the Bowens got their land, she tries to combine a dual perspective of coloniser and native along with her far-sighted bifocal historical perspective, attempting to palliate her family's territorialism. She must render an act of conquest into a 'natural' tie with the land by avoiding the language of patriarchal conquest, rape, plunder and the imposition of foreign law.

In Bowen's account, Colonel Bowen's love of hawking not only takes him to Ireland for

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[29]Bowen's description of the Bowen lands in Farahy in the aftermath of the Cromwellian wars is redolent of John Milton's hellish wilderness and interpretation of Cimmeria in *Il Penseroso*.
[30] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 67.

different reasons from his English confederates, but it leads him into a meeting of minds with the Irish countryside and peoples, stopping him from acquiring a colonial mindset:

> The Cromwellians did not look kindly on Bowen's hawking – for one thing, it was ungodly and frivolous, more fitting for Royalists or Confederates; for another, it might, like all kinds of sport in Ireland, lead to fraternization with the country people. Colonel Bowen both as a Celt and an atheist, was already, although a useful fighter, being sufficiently difficult: the Cromwellian team-spirit meant little to him. In fact, he was like a bad boy at a "good" school. One could not wish to have him hawking over the country, picking up all sorts of Irish friends.[31]

In 'The Visitor' (1926) Bowen interrogates the cult of the English public schoolboy and the myth behind the heroic imperial male. But in *Bowen's Court* she goes a step further and shows the direct relationship between the English public school ethos, the myth of British 'Anglo-Saxon' supremacy and aggressive imperialism. In *The Rise & Fall of the British Empire*, Lawrence James writes that the complex concept of "Anglo-Saxon manhood"[32] lay at the heart of Britain's new phase of imperialism, and that English public schools, remodelled on Dr Thomas Arnold's Rugby[33], used sport and their playing fields to inculcate in their boys an imperial team spirit, and a sense of superiority and self-sacrifice. James quotes J. E. C. Welldon, headmaster of Harrow (1881-95), "If there is in the British race, as I think there is, a special aptitude for "taking up the white man's burden"...it may be ascribed, above all other causes to the spirit of organised games."[34] In her essay 'The Mulberry Tree' about her school life at Downe House, Bowen remembers being brought to book by a school colleague, because "I had done something that was not cricket."[35] In *Bowen's Court* Bowen distinguishes Colonel Bowen from the other English settlers, as he and his hawking turn the tables on Cromwell's *esprit de corps* and sense of playing to English rules. Even worse, he is in danger of 'going native' as hawking leads him away from the settler community to mix with the native Catholic Irish - the British administration's greatest fear.

Bowen not only re-writes Colonel Bowen as a hybrid pagan-patriarch, but her historical

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[31] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 67.

[32] Lawrence James quotes Joseph Chamberlain's belief that the English race, an organic growth from the Anglo-Saxons, were historically predestined to become an Empire and rule the world, "that spirit...of adventure and enterprise distinguishing the Anglo-Saxon race [which] has made us peculiarly fit to carry out the working of colonisation." 206.

[33] James writes, "The public schoolboy, educated according to the Arnoldian code, also learned how to control himself and control others through the prefectorial system, a perfect preparation for ruling and chastising the empire's 'lesser breeds'...the end product was a Christian gentleman with a stunted imagination, who played by the rules and whose highest aim was to serve others." 206-7.

[34] James 207.

[35] Bowen, 'The Mulberry Tree' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 13.

perspective identifies him, and thereby the Bowens, as conjoining Celtic and Anglo-Irish cultures. Although Bowen asserts Bowen's Court is the "negation of mystical Ireland", in her writing it becomes the fusion of old and modern Ireland, of Celtic and Enlightenment thinking. The mystical Ireland she writes against is the 'Celtic twilight' narratives that render a teleological history of Irish nationalism, which like the grand narrative of English history misrepresents reality. Irish nationalism is in danger of erasing alternative Irish identities such as the Anglo-Irish. The hawk symbolises not only the Bowen family inheritance, but personally for Bowen, the hawk symbolises her life and writing style. Bowen's friend, and one-time lover, Sean O'Faoláin, the Irish writer and co-editor of *The Bell*, perceptibly identified her hawk-like style in her 'gift of emotional combustibility, a great gift of words, an eye of a hawk.'[36]

By casting Colonel Bowen as an unschooled prototype of the eighteenth century 'Patriot' Anglo-Irish, Bowen writes the Bowens into the Irish nationalist tradition. In Bowen's account Colonel Bowen refuses to curry favours from Cromwell but instead pays more attention to his hawks than his orders from his General – signalling his independence: "Bowen strolled into the tent with his hawk on his wrist, and Cromwell cast a bilious glance at the bird. Cromwell gave Bowen his orders, but Bowen gave little attention to what Cromwell was saying, because he was busy toying with his hawk. "Leave that damned bird alone, sir, and listen to what I'm saying!" yelled the Protector – or words to that effect."[37] In Bowen's retelling, her ancestor persists in disregarding Cromwell. At being overlooked for a bird, Cromwell wrings the hawk's neck and Colonel Bowen departs Cromwell's presence in rage. His disobedience is the equivalent of a soldier disregarding his conquering king, as Oliver Cromwell replaced the executed Charles I, becoming the self-titled 'Lord Protector' of the United Kingdoms of England and Wales, and Ireland. Cromwell apologises for the hawk's death, due to his heated battle temper, and 'proposed to give Bowen as much land as the second hawk could fly over before it came down, Bowen to choose the spot from which to let off the bird.'[38] In her tableaux Bowen demarcates the Anglo-Irish and Catholic Irish who held themselves independent co-equals with England. She signals the Bowen family will be patriots along Grattan's party lines. They will not be like Anglo-Irish Unionists who sold Ireland to English parliamentary authority in 1800 and sought advancement in Dublin Castle through sophistry rather than by merit, accepting bribes from the English government.

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[36] Sean O'Faolain, qtd. in Jordan 141. Bowen met O'Faolain in 1937, but the two had been in correspondence since 1932. Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* 119-120

[37] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 67-68.

[38] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 68.

In her narrative retelling Colonel Bowen does not usurp the previous Catholic landowner Garrett Cushin, but enters into spiritual possession of the Bowen land guided by his familiar the hawk-in-flight. Bowen transfers Henry's restless spirit into his hawk and drawing on Irish mythology, she fictionally over-rules a hawk's natural flight pattern[39]:

> I can only suggest that *his* hawk was a mythological bird, made free of every power and property; or else, that his hawk was his familiar (which Mr. Baxter probably might bear out) and that he murmured something close to its sleek head; upon which the released hawk, loyal, broke with its usual motion and made off in a long cross-country flight with the hum-drum, unflagging patience of a carrier pigeon...At all events we Bowens are left with this - standing near the foot of the Ballyhouras, Colonel Bowen released his hawk, which flew south.[40]

By blending historical fact with her family myth and Gaelic mythology, Bowen redresses usual Anglo-Irish planter narratives. Upon possession of his Farahy lands, Colonel Bowen takes the hawk-in-flight as the Bowen crest (but uses the English stag for his coat of arms). Her literary retelling palliates the hawk from a bird of prey into a homing pigeon and its flight-path echoes the biblical dove released by Noah from the ark, in search of Promised Land.[41] Elizabeth Bowen re-imagines seventeenth-century Farahy as an apocalyptic ruin after the great flood, following the decades of warring.[42] Through her bird-flight metaphors Bowen recasts her ancestor and the Anglo-Irish from aggressors into the faithful guardians of an Ireland that is their God-given homeland.

Bowen avoids legal particulars in this part of her memoir such as the actual size of land made over to the Bowens under the English Acts of Settlement (1652) and Satisfaction (1653). She defers such details for the following chapters, when she briefly discusses the re-mapping and re-ordering of Ireland: Anglicising and making it intelligible according to colonial greed and English law, resulting in new plantations and brutal transplantations of Catholics into Connaught

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[39] Bowen writes that her story "has been a little upset by what I have, later, learned from the Buchan family about hawks and hawking. Apparently, a hawk rockets straight up through the air and hangs where it is until it drops on its prey. In which case, Cromwell was smart in his proposition, for Colonel Bowen would not have got much land. But we know he did get a very solid amount." Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 68. Bowen's "apparently" undermines fact and reaffirms her own interpretation of history and myths.

[40] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 68.

[41] Davies shows in the mythological cycles and royal genealogies, sourced in Celtic Éire, and recited by later bards, medieval Irish chieftains desired to be represented as descended from Celtic gods, Noah or the pharaohs. 53.

[42] 'The country round him was desolate after war; its only smile came from the sun and changing colours...Farahy castle was crabbed, draughty, rough and built on a ridge of limestone; cold exhalations travelled up through its walls.' Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 75.

- which was (and is) not forgotten in modern Ireland. Bowen argues at the end of her chapter 'Colonel Bowen and the Hawk', "Had the Bowens continued the sport of hawking they might have moulded the story truer to life, and I should not, as the family story-teller, have been placed in my present predicament."[43] But, instead of integrating with Ireland, the Cromwellian settlers, who by the eighteenth century were the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, imposed English law and erected walls between themselves and the Catholics. Afraid of a Catholic backlash, the Anglo-Irish fenced off their new land and built ostentatious big houses to prove their lordship.

In *Pictures and Conversations* Bowen represents the men in her family, and the Anglo-Irish in general, as intent upon land and settlement, "...habit, fatalism or piety bound my people either to inherited homes or homes they had inherited ideas about."[44] From her bird's-eye historical perspective Bowen ironically records in *Bowen's Court* that Anglo-Irish obsession with property and big houses far from anchoring them in their new land was the cause of their colonial 'visitors' status and eventual departure. Bowen quotes from Lord Clare's (Fitzgibbon's) speech to the Irish Parliament in 1800, in which he clinically outlined the Anglo-Irish position, "The whole power and property of the country has been conferred by successive monarchs of England upon an English colony...confiscation is their common title; and from their first settlement they have been hemmed in on every side by the old inhabitants of the island, brooding over their discontents..."[45] The Act of Union was passed in 1801 as a bid to save Anglo-Irish property, but paradoxically the Act enabled the British government to enfranchise Irish Catholics in 1829 and undermine Anglo-Irish authority and property throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, placing the Anglo-Irish in a passive, feminised political and economic position in Ireland. For Bowen, the big houses symbolised over the course of two-hundred-and-fifty years the tenuous position of her Anglo-Irish settler community, recalling the ships they had arrived on, and by the 1900s, the houses represented the ships on which they were forced to depart. But while Bowen concedes that her family were also prone to the Anglo-Irish obsession with property and litigation, she attempts to draw her Bowen patriarchs as moral landlords and mediators between the Anglo-Irish community and the Catholic Irish community in North Cork.

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[43] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 69.
[44] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 28.
[45] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 220.

II Anglo-Irish nomads, male territorialization, big houses to big ships

Bowen's 'hawk myth' attempts yet fails to redress Colonel Bowen's territorialism. As soon as her family narrative moves from legend to legally documented reality she portrays Colonel Bowen losing his reason, as an excuse for his imposition of English law to secure his land. Fear of land-loss turns Colonel Bowen to English law and a will barring his son John from marrying Elizabeth Cushin, the daughter of the dispossessed Garrett Cushin.[46] John evidently obeys and makes a successful marriage to the heiress of a rich Cromwellian, John Nicholls of Kilbolane Castle, Co Cork.[47] The union sets up the Bowens as Anglo-Irish gentry rather than as Anglo-Irish aristocracy. Bowen blames the Nicholls strain for the Anglo-Irish obsession with property-rights and litigation that embroils her family from the seventeenth through to the nineteenth century. She excuses John Bowen for absenting himself after the birth of his children, "mobility being his object - and can one wonder?"[48] But she accuses the rest of the itinerant land grabbing Cromwellians of remaining "townee investors from England or Cromwell's hired toughs", unless they work with the defeated Irish to build a New Ireland.[49] Unlike the Welsh-born, deracinated Henry and John, the first Irish-born Bowen, John Cole Bowen II, perceives his responsibility to build an emblem of New Ireland. But influenced by the Nicholls' property mania he seeks aggrandisement, building an ostentatious house at Kilbolane, and forces his son Henry II to try and reclaim the Bowen Llanellan lands. Bowen criticises the "Versailles" ostentation, which bankrupts Anglo-Irish families and reveals a psychological unease with their hostile landscape. Both John II and Henry II die prematurely at Kilbolane. Instead she favours genteel conservatism, living with the land, rather than glorifying a victory over previous Irish owners. Elizabeth Bowen counters John II's aggrandisement with his tenants, the Nashes at Farahy. The Nashes construct a house that gently negotiates a period of transition. Its stones lay the foundation for the grander Bowen's Court envisaged and built by Henry III at a time when Ireland needed to assert its cultural and political independence against Britain.

The Anglo-Irish had two chances to work with and self-govern the whole of Ireland: firstly in the spate of big houses built in the 1770s, and secondly with Grattan's 1782 Patriot Party parliament. In Bowen's estimation the majority of Anglo-Irish landowners failed both: "We could envisage reform, but not face the details of sacrifice. We were already committed to a way

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[46] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 76.
[47] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 78.
[48] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 86.

of living that the old order (whether we or not faced this) did much to support. Had we truly come up to scratch, perhaps Grattan might not have failed."[50] Personally she believes her ancestor Henry III, in his small way, attempted to live the dream. In Bowen's literary retelling Henry III symbolises not only the Anglo-Irish promise in the eighteenth century, but also the promise of Ireland. Despite his lack of a formal education she puts him on a par with the artists of the European Renaissance. In her estimation Henry III's Irish birth gives him an innate stylishness and vision that supersedes any formal schooling: "He was more than building a home, he was setting a pattern."[51] In Bowen's opinion the 1770s should have been the Irish Renaissance not the 1890s.[52] Henry III moves from Kilbolane back to the Bowen lands at Farahy and constructs his Anglo-Irish big house as a conduit of Gaelic, Old English, and the Anglo-Irish racial mix: "Perhaps symbols are dangerous: they tempt one to deflect narrative or misrepresent facts. But all thought starts in feeling and all thought is dominated by the symbolism of the dream."[53] The big house is the dream of an Irish nation; instead of a mausoleum of conquest it should have been a passageway to this end.

Bowen frames the pre-Union Ascendancy within the British imperial system, but shows how they only symbolically identify with the British crown, as head of their church, and not with Britain's parliament.[54] The Anglo-Irish retain virtual self-autonomy "So the Ascendancy settled down to their King. He was part of the system that was their frame, and they could forget him, except when drinking the toast."[55] The English monarch's power over his Irish subjects is an after dinner afterthought. She describes Henry III as an independent squireen: unlike the English

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[49] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 86.
[50] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 208.
[51] "Henry was, at the same time, a man of his time's Renaissance: his sense of what was august in humanity made him make his house an ideal mould for life." Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 169.
[52] When living in England Elizabeth comically resists the Irish Renaissance, despite her Trench cousin's delight in it, but importantly, both Bowen and her mother respect and sing nationalist Irish songs by Thomas Moore because Bowen views herself as integral to the Irish nation that connects with Gaelic and Anglo-Irish cultural references, "...alone with my mother I sang *Let Erin Remember, The Harp that Once, The Wearing of the Green,* and *Come Back to Erin* most often of all." Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters*. Bowen presents a traditional picture of an exiled Irish mother and daughter mourning their homeland.
[53] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 160.
[54] During 1706 England coerced the Union upon Scotland: on 16 January 1707 the Scottish parliament ratified an incorporating union with England. On the 1st May 1707 the union with Scotland which passed through the English parliament had become a legal fact. From this date the three united kingdoms of England, Wales and Scotland could be categorised as the political and geographical entity Great Britain. 'Great Britain' became an imperial state whose disparate nationalities were joined dynastically, in the English crown, for the purpose of colonialism. Davies 699.
[55] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 130.

who are bound in a hereditary system, obsessed with land and status, he is freely his own landlord. Mischievously, Bowen writes that the Anglo-Irish are aghast with the arrival of the Hanoverian George I (1714-27)[56] on the British throne, 'uncomely, dull, fiddling and middle class'[57]. Turning the tables on English arrogance, she places the Anglo-Irish as superior to the burgess British monarchy and aristocracy. By pointing to the arrival of the German George I, she shows the 'system' framing the Ascendancy is not governed by Britain and the English, but in turn the English are framed by the broader system of European politics and dynastic families.

Bowen's style throughout *Bowen's Court* (and her fiction) de-bunks the myth of a teleological English history, which places England as the natural, pre-destined, centre of European and world politics.[58] Highlighting the German nature of the English monarchy in 1941 she points to Britain's dynastic relationship with her enemy, and reminds her readers of the Germanic cult of nineteenth-century English historians who rooted Englishness in the Anglo-Saxon Alfred the Great, eliding England's Celtic past, which climaxed in Queen Victoria's consort Prince Albert of Saxen-Coburg, whom many saw as the personification of Alfred, the founding Englishman. The Germanic origins cult was quickly dropped during World War I and King George V changed the monarchy to Windsor.[59] If the German George can become the heart and figurehead of the British nation, can the Anglo-Irish over time not become the heart and figureheads of the Irish nation?

However, the big houses and Grattan's parliament symbolised the rule of a Protestant oligarchy over a disenfranchised Catholic majority. The construction of Bowen's Court reads like a teleological, imperial narrative, moving from an uncivilised state of nature to enlightened civility, as Bowen focuses on Grattan's Protestant nation. Bowen counters sectarianism by envisaging the big houses and Grattan's Protestant parliament as the first stage towards a self-governing, wholly franchised Ireland, quoting Grattan's speech which was applauded by College

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[56] The German Hanoverians sat on the English throne from 1714 until the reign of Queen Victoria I: George I (1714-27); George II (1727-60); George III (1760-1820); George IV (1820-30); and William IV (1830-37). Davies, Appendix 42, 977.

[57] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 130.

[58] The Scottish enlightenment thinker David Hume's *The History of England* (1754-62) confirmed the historical assumptions of his Protestant contemporaries. Hume was a sceptic, neither Whig nor Tory, against sectarianism or English nationalism. But he was an historian of progress, which his readers latched onto the growth of Britain's economic power. His history gave confidence to the 'Whig Interpretation', unintentionally confirming their political message, "Protestantism, the Union [between England and Scotland], and the Empire were all moving serenely in the right general direction", charting English self-interest. Davies 698. Whig politics directed the 1801 Union between England and Ireland.

[59] Davies 631.

Green: "As Irishmen, Christians and Protestants, we rejoice at the relaxation of the penal laws against our Roman Catholic fellow subjects."[60] Bowen blames British politics and Anglo-Irish self-interest for the 1801 Union, which ended the dream of a 'United Ireland'.

1775 marks the date cut under the stone of Bowen's Court's completed parapet, Grattan's first year in parliament, and the beginning of America's War of Independence. This outlines the path Bowen wishes the Anglo-Irish had taken, to emulate the American colonists and direct the whole of their country. The construction of her home coincides with the birth of the Anglo-Irish awareness of their political power, but it also marks England's awareness of their threat.[61] Throughout the 1790s the English government bribed numbers of Anglo-Irish landowners (Unionist Peers) forcing the 1801 Union between Great Britain and Ireland, destroying Grattan's 1782 dream of an Irish nation.[62] Bowen mocks Anglo-Irish sensibility following the Union, and fires a narrative broadside at the educational ideals of British imperialism. She reads World War I and II in terms of British and Anglo-Irish political self-interest and the shenanigans of the 1780s and 90s. A development of British imperialism, the Union set in motion political events in Ireland which ultimately led to the Anglo-Irish war. The situation in Ireland mirrors and should be seen in the context of aggressive politics and agitation underlying 'enlightened' imperialism across Europe and the world.[63]

Bowen negatively contrasts the position of Anglo-Irish landlords after the Union with Henry III's pre-Union independence. Instead of being their own masters, the Anglo-Irish were now governed by Westminster. Bowen reads Henry IV as aberrant because he was educated in Oxford, was childless and preferred England to Ireland. Poisoned by the political turmoil of the 1790s, he leaves Ireland for Bath, the popular watering spot for the English *beau monde.* Henry IV's brother Robert Bowen unwillingly but dutifully inherits Bowen's Court. Henry IV's departure and Robert's ownership mark an important psychological rebirth for her family in relation to their land and the broader significance of Irish history. In *Bowen's Court* the betrayers of Grattan's dream leave the narrative with Henry IV. From this point forwards, Bowen depicts

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[60] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 165.

[61] "And England, shaken by one defection, to be repeatedly shaken by colonist victories, noted the power, felt the unstated threat." Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 161.

[62] Bowen charges that the English government with scuppering the Irish nation, "It would be too grave a charge to bring against Pitt's government to say that, like the English Parliamentarians before 1641, they fomented trouble in Ireland for their own ends. But certainly, through his agents Fitzgibbon and Beresford, Pitt did check every reform that could make for Irish peace, or that could make Grattan's position more tenable." Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 211.

Robert Bowen I, his son Henry V and grandson Robert Cole Bowen II and great-grandson Henry VI (Bowen's father) struggling to hold onto their Anglo-Irish values in unionist Ireland. Unlike the absent Anglo-Irish landlords, the Bowens continue to work their land for the benefit of themselves and their tenants, in particular during the Irish Famine, despite Westminster's mishandling of Irish politics and economics; indeed she portrays Henry V driving himself into an early grave because of his commitment.

Bowen uses her grandfather Robert Cole Bowen to represent the uncertainty of the Anglo-Irish caught in a political limbo following the Union once their parliament at College Green had been closed down. From 1801 onwards all political and administrative power was in the hands of the British government and parliament in Westminster. Over the course of the nineteenth century the Anglo-Irish landlords found themselves increasingly historicized. Their political clout was over taken by a rising Catholic influence in Westminster, following the 1829 Act of Catholic Emancipation, and agrarian un-constitutional politics with the Catholic Tenant League, Fenianism and the land war in the 1850s and 60s which lead to the Liberal Governments three Land Acts against the power of the Landlords.[64] Bowen's literary portrait is an interpretation of two actual portraits of Robert Cole Bowen: one a photograph from 1860 when he was thirty, the other a painting from 1881 when he was fifty-one in the year of Gladstone's second Land Act. The two portraits hung in the dining room of Bowen's Court. Bringing to bear her hawk-like historical perspective on the two portraits, Bowen reveals the cost of the unofficial nineteenth-century land war on the Anglo-Irish, caught between unorthodox Fenianism and the self-interest of Westminster. She presents Robert as both a Moses-style Victorian patriarch but also a feminised victim. In the 1881 portrait "Robert confronts all time, and the special threat of that year, with a glass stare that shows pressure behind; any touch of accessibility in the 1860 photograph has gone: the thin-lipped, brow-jutting energy of the young man of thirty had disappeared behind beard and full ruddy flesh. Below his great father-beard, a beard forked like that of Moses, glints a seal hung from a fob...The pear shaped outline – head sunk in beard and collar, elbows without angle – shows heavy ripeness."[65] Bowen encodes Robert's attempts to assert himself as a landlord as a reaction to growing Fenianism, Gladstone's Land Acts and Robert's sense that the Anglo-Irish are being victimised: "landlordism for landlords was now a cause. By English reform as well as by Irish feeling hereditary position had been assailed."[66] She

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[63] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 125.
[64] R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1988) 289-344 and 373-428.
[65] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 362-3.
[66] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 375. Also see R. F. Foster 396-397, 381, 405, 412-414, 422,

interprets the fact that Robert replaces his earlier photograph with a portrait by a Royal Academy artist as a rebuff to the 1881 Land Act; a reassertion of his ascendancy position. The commission, however, actually confirms the Anglo-Irish political *decline*: artistic self-assertion is replacing political and military defiance or property rights. Bowen figuratively describes Robert degenerating from a biblical patriarch to a feminised over-ripe pear shape. Her complex of metaphors points towards the political reality of the Anglo-Irish at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century: Robert Cole Bowen and the Anglo-Irish are a related family branch of the British Empire. English policy is hacking at the branch and like over-ripe fruit the Anglo-Irish are about to fall from the imperial tree at the same time that Irish nationalism is extirpating them from Irish soil.

The feminised perspective undercuts the impression that Robert is the master of his Bowen tribe. As the head of the family sits for his portrait the farm runs like a well-oiled industry:

> Bowen's Court functions; while he sits without budging he has an ear for it. He has installed machinery; in the yard it is almost uninterruptedly humming...Carts and wains and wagons strain and lurch and rattle under the back avenue trees; iron field-gates swing open, oiled, between mortared posts...Four times a day, the imperious yard bell penetrates the demesne, ringing Robert's men to and from work...The place now runs like a belt over a wheel; the driving power is being generated inside the Master's, at this moment, slumped and quiescent form.[67]

Bowen's description echoes English mandarins at Whitehall administering the Empire, and positions Robert as the ruler of a city-state. As an outpost of capitalist British modernity, the farm is an engine of Empire. Robert, his machinery and his estate hands are all driven within the capitalist frame of British imperialism (the yard bell is "imperious"), maintaining their place by maintaining the system and transporting goods to other parts of Ireland and overseas. The carts, wains and wagons, entering and departing, mark Bowen's Court as a thoroughfare within the imperial system; the iron field-gates signify the goods must travel through hostile territory. The traffic of goods simulates the idea of caravans and the tribal nature of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland. By referring to Robert as Moses, Bowen signals the fact that her grandfather is like the biblical prophet herding together the remaining tribes of his people, preparing them to journey forth and enter their Promised Land. However, Robert Cole Bowen is trying to hold onto Ireland as the Promised Land for his community, trying to keep them together despite the rising hostility of Catholic nationalism and betrayal by the English government. In the imagery of her patriarchal grandfather and his city-state farm, Bowen draws a strong character in denial of the truth that his

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425, 434-435, 608-611.

hold on his land and his family place are unravelling as the broader Anglo-Irish community is increasingly dissolving into disparate units, signified in the loss of their land.

Henry VI, Robert's son and Elizabeth's father, rejects Robert's Victorian patriarchy, "[It] gave him a lasting bent against horses, men servants, social discrimination, ideas about farming, display in any form."[68] He accepts the end of the former Anglo-Irish life-style as landlords but not the end of the Anglo-Irish big house cultural ethics; instead he tries to work towards a new political and business role for the Anglo-Irish, sharing power with the Catholic Irish in an Ireland purged of land grievances. Elizabeth Bowen describes her father as a patriotic Irishman and ethical Unionist at the turn of the twentieth century, responding to the English Conservatives' new policy of treating the Irish as equals, not inferior subjects. She favours twentieth-century Unionism, while vilifying the 1801 Union, because looking backwards from her 1939 perspective she reads the 'Home Rule' movement as the cause behind Ireland's partition into two states in 1921. In contrast benevolent Unionism within the British Empire could have been the first stage in a well-managed transference of power from Westminster to Dublin giving Ireland self-government and eventual independence, "...one foresaw an Ireland adult and stabilized, and Union showed its ideal aspect, strength. And, for the ethical Irish Unionist, the divorce of Unionism from landlord interest made for clearness of conscience. Unionism, now, became rational: if one felt the shadowy presence of class-tradition, there was no thought of class-interest. Alike to Aubrey de Vere in his conception of duty, Henry VI differed on the question of (almost) divine right. The Ascendancy, if it were to remain an ascendancy, must now take its stand on morals and discipline."[69] Bowen's form of ideal Unionism is conflictual; although she disposes of class-interest she still holds onto the idea of an 'Ascendancy' and it is unclear whether she reads the Ascendancy as a political meritocracy, a mixture of classes and religions, or a specifically Anglo-Irish one.

In Bowen's re-telling Henry tries to ameliorate Anglo-Irish relations with Catholics in the nineteenth century following the Union, the Famine and the land war, by entering the legal profession and working for the Land Commission. Henry tried to ensure an ethical redistribution of Anglo-Irish land to the Catholic tenant farmers. He devoted sixteen years to his opus *Statutory Land Purchase in Ireland,* writing it while the Anglo-Irish and civil war raged around Bowen's

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[67] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 363.
[68] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 365-366.
[69] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 398.

Court. In his book Henry VI worked out the fairest way to share land between the Anglo-Irish and Catholic Irish, without acrimony, laying the legal foundation for a peacefully united Irish nation. Although the Anglo-Irish treaty made the book redundant before its publication, in writing it Henry VI foresaw and attempted to halt or ease the fission of the Anglo-Irish community into a landless, dispossessed people.[70] In telling the life and death of Henry VI Elizabeth Bowen comes full circle in her hawk-like historical narrative of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland. She represents Henry VI's funeral cortege in terms of a Viking ship and marks the nomadic nature of the Anglo-Irish since their arrival on Irish shores in the eleventh century.

Bowen's modernist hawk-eye technique combines in her funeral-ship metaphor, her personal loss and the broader Irish historical perspective. She describes the burial of her father in May 1930 in the style of a great King or Chieftain being ceremoniously laid to rest and mourned by all of North Cork:

> The day of the funeral was as fine as all the other days of that week: in fact, it seemed to blaze even more brightly...Then we, with Henry VI, moved out onto the steps, and David Barry asked me to give the sign. A great sea of people, so many hundreds of people that it looked like a dream, people from all over the country, from the most remote mountainy places, stood on the gravel and on the lower avenue, their eyes fixed on the house. When I gave the sign and the coffin went down the steps, the sea moved, at first in silence, ahead of, around, behind us. Henry VI was to be carried all the way to the church: the coffin soon left the original bearers' shoulders for other shoulders, then other shoulders again. I saw it move ahead of me like a boat, in those perpetual transits that were made without a jolt or a jar...When we came to the churchyard, the service was read there, so that the friends who were Catholics should not be left waiting outside the doors – an inhospitality that would have been Henry VI's first.'[71]

The depiction conflates the image of a royal funeral with a heroic departure. Henry VI is departing for, and returning to, the soil of Ireland. It also represents Henry VI as a Viking leader or Nordic King. His coffin becomes a King's burial ship given up to the sea to continue an after-life of ocean wandering. Bowen's ship metaphor conjoins complex associations about the past, present and future – it disrupts the linear narrative by corresponding to Ezra Pound's definition of

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[70] "Briefly, the changes brought about in our Irish constitution, after the Treaty, put the former system of Land Purchase out of effect. So, before Henry VI's long book, carried out on the scale of a standard work of reference, had so much as gone to the publishers, it had become, in the phrase he preferred to use, "a work of historic interest only."...It was worth that: it is a monument - not only to him but to the wills and the intellects of two countries that gave their best to the settlement of a bitter question - a question that had a moral issue behind.' Shortly after discussing her father's work, Bowen proceeds to argue her apology for Anglo-Irish landlordism by contrasting its social idealism with twentieth century totalitarian ideologies. 'We have everything to dread from the dispossessed. In the area of ideas we see more menacing dominations than the landlord exercised over land." *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 444 and 455.

[71] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 446-7.

the modernist image that "presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."[72] Her metaphor turns her father's funeral into both an entombment (of Henry and the Anglo-Irish) but also a life-giving monument to the Bowens and the Anglo-Irish. Henry VI's burial becomes a social extension of his identity, firstly in his marked grave in Farahy churchyard, secondly in Bowen's narrative retelling and her therapeutic imagery of her father's coffin as a ship departing Bowen's Court upon a sea of Catholic and Anglo-Irish shoulders. In her representation of the final moments of the last Bowen patriarch in Ireland, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century tidal sea of Catholic-nationalist power finally accepts her father and the Bowen heredity.

Transforming Henry VI's coffin into a ship and the Irish people into a sea Bowen shows that the Anglo-Irish do not invade and territorialise Irish soil, but sail in symbiosis and free movement with all the peoples of Ireland. The travel historian Eric J Leed writes that historically, mythical dismemberment of patriarchs or gods laid the grounds for territorialism and city-states.[73] But in *Bowen's Court* Bowen transforms her male ancestors, beginning with Colonel Bowen and ending with Henry VI, from colonialists into natives and a non-possessive integration with Ireland. However there is a personal undertow of regret in her coffin-ship-sea imagery. As mentioned, the cost of maintaining Bowen's Court, in the changing tides of Irish politics, told heavily on the Bowen men. Henry VI gave his life to ameliorate landlordism. He died prematurely in 1930 because of a resurgence in 1928 of his earlier illness "anaemia of the brain", which had been triggered in 1905 by an accumulation of events linked directly to Irish politics: his adolescent break with his father's landlordism; Home Rule; and the financial strain of holding onto his property and cultural identity. These problems returned to haunt his last days and killed him: "But then his stream of anxious, tormented, lonely and self-upbraiding talk, that checked for only a moment, would go on...One afternoon, about five o'clock, his talk weakened out; his look of trouble dissipated a little, and some minutes after he died."[74] Henry VI only escapes the political anxieties and guilt of his Anglo-Irish inheritance in death. Throughout *Bowen's Court* Bowen poses an unspoken question. Although some of the Anglo-Irish may have sinned, not all of them were bad. Why could the Catholic Irish not accept and work with the Anglo-Irish in the twentieth century? If they had, noble men like her father would not have lived a wasted and uncertain life.

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[72] Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* ed. T. S. Eliot, (London: Faber & Faber, 1954) 4.
[73] Leed 27, 137, 225.
[74] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 446.

In the context of her preceding family chronicle, Bowen's representation of the sea of local Irish people mourning Henry VI at his funeral ceremony, which symbolises the acceptance and mourning of the Anglo-Irish by the Catholic Irish, comes too late for the Anglo-Irish, for Henry VI and for Elizabeth. In 1931 Catholic Irish acceptance is contingent upon the Anglo-Irish departing Ireland - in death or travel abroad. Ironically, Bowen does not explicitly point out the important symbolism of emigration ships, in particular the mid-nineteenth century famine ships as 'coffin ships' in Catholic Irish balladry and literary tradition. Nevertheless her literary rendering of her father's 'coffin ship' at the end of *Bowen's Court* mirrors her literary retelling of the 'hawk-in-flight' family myth at the start. She connects the first and last Bowen patriarch with Celtic and Protestant Ireland, using her family history and her pen to create an Irish modernist literary tradition that brings together Gaelic and Anglo-Irish traditions. Bowen's unique style of modernism is able to invigorate the old Gaelic and Anglo-Irish forms, in keeping with twentieth-century modernity, because her artistic vision combines her feminine perspective with her hawk-in-flight historical and literary perspective. Bowen does not rest with a mythical or historical account of the Bowen males and the slow end of the Anglo-Irish big house. In addition she weaves her father's narrative with her mother Florence Colley's modern urban Anglo-Irish narrative. She represents her mother in 'Mount Temple' as a bird caught in a gilded cage. Interrogating turn-of-the-century gender debates in Victorian and Edwardian society, Bowen retells her mother's frustrated desire for adventure or a literary career in Dublin and her travel to England and newfound freedom with her daughter in Hythe. Bowen fictionalises her mother and the urbane Colley relations in England as twentieth-century migratory birds who provide a safe passage for Bowen, away from the feminised Anglo-Irish history, into the modern world.

III Matriarchal networks and life-styles

Bowen draws the Colley family tree from 1537 through to her grandmother Mrs Elizabeth Colley of Mount Temple in the 1890s.[75] The Colleys are an older Anglo-Irish dynasty than the Bowens of Bowen's Court, with more illustrious members: Hamiltons, Pomeroys, John Wesley, the evangelical preacher, and Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington. Bowen's focus on the illustrious members offsets the fact Carbery Castle declines into a ruin. Although still receiving rents from the Carbery lands the Colleys lose their big house status from the 1850s, moving downwards from Carbery Castle to two smaller 'big houses', Lucan Lodge and Ferne

House before finally Bowen's grandparents purchase the newly built Victorian villa Mount Temple in Clontarf. It becomes a modern home for their Anglo-Irish heirlooms and relations, "...having absorbed into their household not only heirlooms due to the eldest son but Henry Fitz-George's unmarried sister Lily..."[76] Bowen draws Carbery Castle, Lucan Lodge and Ferne House as sunless and darkened by Irish history. In contrast Mount Temple is spacious with views of the sea and a convenient nearness to Dublin's city life. Its newness emancipates Bowen's mother and sisters, the new generation of Anglo-Irish females who resist the bonds of their Anglo-Irish and imperial past.

Bowen represents Mount Temple as the matriarchal antipode to patriarchal Bowen's Court, in particular Robert Cole Bowen's Victorian landlordism, "Mount Temple was, as may be inferred, a matriarchy. From the start I imagine that Elizabeth Isabella had shown more go than Henry Fitz-George. (In fact, I can form almost no view of my Colley grandfather's character)."[77] She presents her maternal grandmother Elizabeth Colley as the family head by disposing of her maternal grandfather as a feminised afterthought in brackets. The Bowen and Colley family narratives become a dialectical interchange of masculine territorialization versus urban professions and female mobility, contrasting two styles of being Anglo-Irish. Bowen draws upon terminology from turn-of-the-century gender debates to evaluate the two styles.[78] In retelling her mother's life Bowen disrupts the narrative that big house property provides the only mould for future Anglo-Irish generations:

> The desertion and decay of Carbery Castle worked out - at least for this generation - well: the Colleys were unlike most Anglo-Irish families in not being tied to or conditioned by any place. They combined to make Mount Temple their present idyllic world. The Colleys were not, like the young Bowens, inhibited by proud fine-strung place-bound nervousness. In the Bowen sense, they were not nervous at all, and the past to them was no more than a friendly myth. [79]

Unlike Robert Bowen's tribe who lived a keyed up "Personal Life", especially the girls, confined in Bowen's Court and its traditions, the Colleys have a "sensual relationship" with their present moment, Dublin in the 1880s and '90s. They are not haunted by Anglo-Irish politics. Bowen accentuates the Colleys' Irishness, spontaneity and wit that enable them to evolve. They are protean because they have thrown off the shackles of the patriarchal big house and replaced it

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[75] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 380-383.
[76] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 384.
[77] Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 387.
[78] See Pykett for an exploration of gender debates in Victorian and Edwardian England, and the way these debates influenced British modernism and the novel form. 14-76.
[79] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 385.

with social rituals and style – indeed style rather than land becomes the hallmark of *fin-de-siécle* Anglo-Irishness. Yet, although the Colleys move from estate ownership to upper-middle-class mercantile life, Mrs Colley maintains standards. She is still imperial and bound within the "class obsession" and protocol, "The Church, the Army, and (I suppose) the Navy were the only professions regarded as natural" along with the bar and wine merchant, for her sons to follow or her daughters to marry into.[80] Mrs Colley's policing of marriage and manners ensures racial survival.

Despite Mrs Colley's authority Bowen presents her grandmother as a woman limited by patriarchy and subscribing to petty bourgeois conventions. Although she is "more accomplished in worldliness" than Robert Cole Bowen and able to run "circles round him, had the two ever met" Mrs Colley does not have the opportunity or the inclination to test her skills in the public sphere.[81] Bowen's seemingly nonchalant aside registers the fact that Mrs Colley and Robert Cole Bowen would never have met as professional equals in the 1880s. Rather fearfully Bowen writes that her grandmother was "*possessing* – instinctively and almost without check."[82] Lacking a practical outlet for her energies she focuses a smothering love on her daughters and reproduces the stifling interior environment, which had curtailed her own potential. She immures her daughters like the heroines of medieval romances within castles, forcing male hopefuls into the role of adventuring chevaliers, "A young man wishing to marry a Miss Colley - or, in fact, even wishing to look at one - must be prepared to travel the whole way."[83] Mount Temple's idyllic bourgeois conventions force the misfit Florence to rebel.

Mount Temple's proximity to Dublin and new educational opportunities for girls affords the Colley daughters some release. On their journey to Alexandra College Florence and her younger sister Laura saunter through turn-of-the-twentieth-century Dublin in the guise of flâneuses. Led by their love of poetry and literature they travel across the city to school (almost emulating the path of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)) using public transport and walking:

> ...rattling along the coast road on a horse 'bus. Throughout these expeditions Florence insisted on the strictest economy, so for lunch they bought some kind of marine biscuit...Crossing St. Stephen's Green, the sisters proceeded to Alexandra

[80] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 386.
[81] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 386.
[82] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 386.
[83] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 385.

College with these biscuits inside their muffs...[84]

Bowen re-imagines her mother as the expedition leader. The sisters become explorers travelling across classes and communities in Dublin, voiced in the sea-voyage imagery and levelling economy of the marine biscuits, which they carry within their class-gendering "muffs". Beneath the covering of Anglo-Irish bourgeois femininity is a desire for sea voyages and exploration: showing that gender, class and race are performances as well as economic realities, but not essentialising constructs.

Bowen's experience, living through World War I and the Anglo-Irish and Irish civil wars, made her a social conservative. In retrospect, writing in 1942 about her mother in the 1880s and '90s, Bowen does not wish her mother had been a militant Feminist who over-ruled her class. Yet Bowen applauds Florence's personal rebellion. She blames petty-bourgeois Anglo-Irish society in Dublin for imprisoning women, "My own feeling is that Florence, in the heart of her family, suffered from some sort of claustrophobia...by the sacrifices she asked of herself could be seen the strength with which she desired things."[85] Bowen describes a colourful character, self-muted and mutilated. Florence Colley shapes herself in opposition to Bowen's grandmother and great-Aunt Lily. A woman of independent means, Lily chose to live with the Colleys "in the protracted hope that she might "help.""[86] Aunt Lily is a spectre from the nineteenth century and casts a damper over the younger generation by holding onto the middle-class feminine role of self-sacrifice and interfering piety. The younger generation break the Sunday repose and rebel against Lily's conventional piety, "Her presence acted as a restraint...", with music and girlish spirits.[87] Bowen's ellipses mark the break between Victorian and evolving female conduct codes. Although the younger Colleys rebel against her, Aunt Lily provides restricted travel abroad for five of the six spirited Colley sisters. Bessie (Elizabeth) marries and thereby disappears into her husband's household. The remaining five daughters depart Ireland with Aunt Lily, but cause trouble, especially Florence, by kicking against Lily's chaperonage, "Florence, I am sorry to say, behaved like a fiend."[88] However Bowen is delighted with stories of her mother's un-angelic behaviour.

Bowen's literary portrayal of Florence echoes her literary portrayal of Colonel Bowen's

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[84] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 390.
[85] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 389.
[86] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 387.
[87] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 388.
[88] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 388.

disaffected spirit and hawkish nature, but without the Colonel's aggression or his opportunities to escape. Bowen accuses bourgeois households of damaging spirited, sensitive and intelligent British middle-class women. Florence is misunderstood at Mount Temple, "...She found herself difficult...She locked herself up and wept...she may have had the complex make-up of a saint. It took her years to acquire calmness, or to be on the plane of ordinary life."[89] Female persecution is invidious because it is short-sighted and carried out with love. Thus Florence has to rebel against her mother, "Not only Aunt Lily found Florence difficult. There were clashes between Florence and her mother."[90] In Bowen's syntax, Florence "found herself difficult" and "locked herself up". Bowen's narrative style underscores the fact that under patriarchy female agency is interiorised – so that women hurt themselves. In Bowen's encoding of conventions Florence is unable to find herself as a dutiful daughter, wife or angel in the house. She can only identify with or be identified as a non-gendered "difficult", something monstrous to be locked up, like the child Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* (1847). Judged by her elders Florence must isolate herself, like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's "madwoman in the attic".[91] Bowen draws two Florences at war with each other: the spirited human being and the 'Victorian lady'. Gilbert and Gubar call the late nineteenth-century discourse on femininity "the Angel in the House" - a label taken from the title and subject of Coventry Patmore's poem *The Angel in The House* whose heroine displays "unselfish grace, gentleness, simplicity and nobility."[92] Bowen undermines Victorian femininity by calling her mother's naughtiness "spiritual". Bowen rectifies the cultural assumptions of saints and women; she shows they are complex, troubled human beings.

Florence's sister Constance is able to leave home and enter the professional world as a doctor. However Florence cannot find a creative outlet. She is thwarted in her desire for a literary career in London. Bowen directly criticises Mrs Colley for destroying Florence's one chance to begin a literary or active professional career in London, "Had she, for instance, been told of and allowed to accept her Aunt Edith's invitation to London she might have been both chastened and understood" by Aunt Edith's circle which included Henry James.[93] Mrs Colley

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[89] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 389.
[90] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 388.
[91] Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* 43. 56, 83-89 and 338-371.
[92] Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* 22.
[93] Aunt Edith was the widow of General Sir George Colley who had died for the imperial cause at Majuba Hill, India. An independent Anglo-Irish lady who refused Queen Victoria's apartments in Hampton Court, "- to, I am told, the annoyance of Queen Victoria", she was actively involved in London's early modernist literary circles. Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 389.

infantilises her daughter and douses her "flame like quality" by keeping Florence in ignorance, suppressing the invitation so that, "Aunt Edith, comprehensibly, lost all interest."[94] Bowen partly ameliorates her mother's disappointments by living with Aunt Edith in London in 1922, entering London literary circles and becoming a successful writer.

Denied her literary career or a life in London Florence is forced back into marriage. Locking herself up like a flagellating penitent she subdues her spirit over time and attains the 'feminine'. She becomes marriageable, a dreamy lady of romance whom Bowen's father courts and wins:

> the dexterous Colley brothers were accustomed, for any lady, to throw the plank crosswise so as to form a bridge. So Florence paused by the stream and, eyes upon the horizon, went into a sort of trance...- Oh, Mr. Bowen," she said, "you just throw the plank across the stream." We know that Henry was clumsy: not without anxiety did he even put a book down on a desk. He told me that he had never prayed so hard as when he picked up that plank, with Florence there. God guiding it, the plank fell in position and Florence, unconscious, passed across.[95]

In the passages describing her mother's girlhood and transition into married womanhood Bowen moves from the literary style of social commentary to romance. Florence accepts Henry Cole Bowen because she finds him noble, as does their daughter. Florence retreats into marriage, and Henry becomes her drawbridge and passport from Mount Temple to the outside world. In this instance Florence retreats from a bourgeois Anglo-Irish Dublin villa to an islanded Anglo-Irish big house in North Cork. In *The Last September* and throughout her fiction Bowen explores marriage as a drawbridge or isthmus between homes and states of being for women. But Bowen draws her parents' marriage as a meeting of minds by modernising Anglo-Irish. Henry and Florence live an urban professional and landed style of Anglo-Irish life; they are sexual equals, and Bowen presents her birth in 1899 as the long awaited fruit of 'ethical unionism' within a 'modern' marriage. Her parents had hoped for a boy but are equally glad she is a girl. Although Bowen is christened Elizabeth, "The name had Henry's mother and Florence's mother and the whole range of Bowen tradition behind it", Bowen does not call herself Elizabeth but renames her self "my tongue could not get round that, so I became Bitha" and thereby creates a new Anglo-Irish identity for herself.[96] In adult life Bowen signed her personal letters Bitha. Bowen's attempt to detach herself and her parents from the Anglo-Irish property and landlord obsession is reflected in her (at times) objective narrative voice and in her euphemisms throughout *Bowen's*

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[94] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 389.
[95] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 391.
[96] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 404.

Court – her hawk like perspective that glosses colonial atrocities. In her unfinished memoirs *Pictures and Conversations* (written in 1972 and published posthumously in 1975), which is a mix of recall and myth making, Bowen tries to represent herself as the future of the Anglo-Irish who will be free of gender, property or bourgeois conventions in the twentieth century: firstly when she is living with her mother in Hythe in Kent, then aged thirteen, alone, cycling around Kent and finally as a writer – as I shall explore in chapter four. Yet Bowen's anxiety that she is also caught up in Anglo-Irish property politics (her genuine attachment to her big house Bowen's Court) and thereby Anglo-Irish colonial history is an undertone structuring the narrative of *Bowen's Court*. She is not certain why Bowen's Court is spared between 1919 and 1921 "I cannot go into this – many men who had been liked as well as my father lost their houses by fire."[97] The historical reality of her family origins counters her myth making and creative attempts to escape the consequences and conventions of property and gender.

In 1899 Bowen and her parents are still framed by Anglo-Irish property and gender; they are oppressed by 'Ascendancy' history and the contemporary Home Rule crisis. Bowen describes her mother as "suffering" her Anglo-Irish existence. As Bowen's father breaks down, suffering a feminine illness due to land politics, Florence and her daughter are forced to leave Henry and Ireland for Kent in England in 1906. In retelling her father's illness and her own life in England with her mother, Bowen draws literary analogues between Colonel Bowen and his two hawks and Bowen and her mother. Yet Bowen presents a paradox in her and her mother's dispossession – their loss frees them both from Anglo-Irish history and social conventions to live in the more modern and bohemian English seaside town of Hythe. Henry's illness and Hythe give Florence the self-determination she craved as a young woman, away from her family. Bowen sees the decline of Anglo-Irish big houses in both its positive and negative connotations. The Colleys' loss of Carbery Castle is the first step in their disintegration; by 1903 following the death of Bowen's grandmother Mount Temple is sold and the Colleys diffused along the south coast of England. The Colley's dismemberment is the first fragmentation in Bowen's world, before she leaves for England. But in her autobiographical fragment *Pictures and Conversations* Bowen supplements the *Bowen's Court* section about her childhood in Dublin and Kent. Bowen uses feminine "grapevine" and migratory bird metaphors to link her English based Colley relatives. Bowen's modernist writing style represents a style of femininity - a mobile matriarchal network - in opposition to both traditional presentations of feminine domesticity and a masculine "fatal attachment" to property:

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[97] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 440.

> A grapevine of powerful Anglo-Irish relatives instantly took us into their keeping...under the aegis of Cousin Isabel Chenevix Trench, widowed daughter-in-law of the late Archbishop of Dublin...and Cousin Lilla Chichester, a childless dowager who commanded Sandgate... proof of the dominance of my more or less synonymous race and family; the Anglo-Irish — with their manner of instantly striking root into the interstices of any society in which they happened to find themselves, and in their own way proceeding to rule the roost. One could be perpetually vouchsafed for.[98]

Importantly the female Colleys' kinship and style supports their authority – not an Anglo-Irish big house tradition. The end of Mount Temple and Henry's illness signals emancipation for Florence, who similar to a mewed hawk, was confined firstly within her mother's domesticity and then in marriage. But in a reverse literary parallel with Colonel Bowen and his hawks at the start of *Bowen's Court*, Bowen now presents her mother and herself like Colonel Bowen and his hawks flying independently of the Colley clan to mingle with their new country, "My mother and I now left the sheltered orbit of our relatives' houses and adventured in English friends of our own."[99] England's *newness* dispels Anglo-Irish introversion and gendering respectability for both mother and daughter as Florence moves from the "right-and-tightness of Folkestone" to a more bohemian and freer life-style in Hythe: "Nothing so much as whim directed my mother's movements, but series of inspirations did dominate her."[100]

By combining her hawk-eye narrative perspective with a modernist technique of simultaneity, encompassing different times and locations in one glance and representing them in the one complex image, Bowen weaves a circular narrative connecting her English villa life with Bowen's Court's history. Pieces of Bowen's Court furniture, dating significantly from Henry III's pre-Union reign, travel by boat-train with the mother and daughter to Folkestone and Hythe, re-asserting in Elizabeth pride in her Anglo-Irish nature. This narrative ploy underlines Bowen's retrospective belief, in 1942 and 1972, that in her personal life and her writing she brings together the spirit of Colonel Bowen's hawk and her mother's explorative spirit. After her mother's death from cancer in 1912, Bowen, like the mythical hawk who brought the Bowens' Irish lands into being in Bowen's retelling of her family tale, will fly into the heartland of England and map out a literary territory for herself by bringing together Anglo-Irish and Gaelic literary origins with the new modernism. Bowen's mythical-literary re-telling of the Bowen and Colley family narratives has been the mythical narrative of the birth of the writer – (en)gendering a female modernism. In

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[98] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 14.
[99] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 418.
[100] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 419.

this literary context, *Bowen's Court* has parallels with James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. But Bowen's hawk-in-flight, nomad and ship metaphors are more than a new aesthetics; they arise from Irish and British historical reality and turn-of-the-century gender debates. She uses them to develop her own unique modernist style to calibrate the historical dislocations caused by debates about gender and the twentieth-century flood of warfare and uncertainty.

Bowen's second and only historical novel *The Last September* (1929) is the first work of fiction in which she explicitly brings to bear her hawk-eye perspective and her nomad and ship metaphors. Other critics have focused solely on Danielstown as symbolising the Anglo-Irish war and the end of the Anglo-Irish or else as part of the Anglo-Irish gothic tradition.[101] I want to focus on Bowen's portrayal of the Anglo-Irish war and the big house as a precursor to the dismemberment of the Empire and also as a site for gender tensions between pre-war and post-war femininity, between traditional landed Anglo-Irish roles for women and modern property-less life-styles, with the latter combining both liberty and uncertainty. However, before examining *The Last September*, I will discuss the deeper significance of ships and floodwater in Bowen's literary imagination, by exploring her recollection in *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* of two pictures from her nursery. Published by Cuala Press in Dublin in 1942, *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* supplements Bowen's mythical-historical retelling of her family history in *Bowen's Court* and enforces the significance of Bowen's hawk-in-flight narrative style and her perception of the Anglo-Irish as ship-bound nomads.

IV The flood of war

In *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* Bowen reveals her two deepest psychological fears: that she was the only conscious person left on a burning ship about to explode and that she was cast adrift on her own on a boat in a flooded world. Two pictures hanging on the nursery wall in 15 Herbert Place, Dublin first encapsulated Bowen's fears regarding her status as an Anglo-Irish female in a politically hostile Ireland, while the rest of the world is on the brink of world war at the start of the twentieth century. These childhood images haunt her memories but they also laid the foundation for her modernist aesthetics and themes of gender and the end of Empire. In her fiction burning ships become metaphors for burning homes

throughout the war-torn twentieth century.

The first picture illustrated the popular poem 'Casabianca', by Felicia Hemans (1790 - 1835).[102] The poem of filial duty and sacrifice is based on a real event.[103] The illustration shows Casabianca alone upon a bloody deck with exploding battleships in the hinterland. The first two lines of the poem "The boy stood on the burning deck/Whence all but he had fled" are printed as a caption.[104] In Hemans' poem Casabianca is unaware his father is dead and begs his permission to abandon ship:

> And shouted but once more aloud,
> 'My father! Must I stay?'
> While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,
> The wreathing fires made way[105]

Casabianca remains at his post until the ship explodes, dispersing him in fragments over the sea. Bowen knew Hemans' poem. She was the same age as Casabianca, twelve years old, when her mother died in September 1912. Earlier in April of that same year Bowen's favourite uncle Eddy Colley went down with the *Titanic*, "...when the *Titanic* news came I could only remember him balancing the brim of his bowler hat on the tip of his crooked nose with the upward expression of a performing seal. So, the *Titanic* disaster was the first black crack across the surface of *exterior* things."[106] Bowen viewed the *Titanic* disaster as the first crack in the British Empire, preceding World War I and the Anglo-Irish war. As Stephen Kerns notes, the Titanic symbolised the power of modernity as much as it dramatised the Empire's collapse and the tragic potential, on a giant scale, of technological modernity.[107] Bowen astutely perceives the Empire's strength and Achilles heel in its naval convoys, its patrolling man-o-wars and merchant-ships, serving its domestic and overseas territories. The sinking of the *Titanic* heralded the fallibility of British supremacy and the first psychological blow in English self-confidence.

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[101] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 45-56 and Corcoran 39-60.

[102] The Victorians admired Hemans' poetry, and her verse only went out of print after World War I. Frances Wilson writes, "Her importance in dictating the taste for patriotism, obedience and sacrifice in generations of readers cannot be underestimated." Felicia Hemans, 'Casabianca', *The Forest Sanctuary: with other Poems* (1829) in *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials* ed. Susan J Wolfson. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 428-430; and Frances Wilson, in a rev. of *Felicia Hemans: 'Records of Woman' and other Poems,* by Felicia Hemans, ed. Paula Feldman, *London Review of Books* 23 September 2003 <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v22/n22/wils02_html>

[103] Giocante Casabianca was the twelve-year-old son of Luce Julien Joseph Casabianca, commander of Admiral de Bruey's flagship *L'Orient* that went down at the Battle of the Nile. Hemans, *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials* 428-430

[104] Hemans, *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials* 428-430.

[105] Hemans, *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials* 428-430.

[106] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 423.

[107] Kerns 65-67.

The second picture showed a baby in a wooden cradle floating on a flooded world with its hand stretched out towards a guardian cat at the foot of the cradle. The only other sign of life are the gables of a submerged city. The fear of the floating wooden cradle becoming a burning ship is compelling and an apt metaphor for Bowen's sense of helplessness:

> These two pictures induced in me a secret fear of disasters - fires and floods. I feared to be cut off in high buildings, and the beautiful sound of rain was ruined for me by a certainty that the waters must rise soon. Watching my moment, I used to creep to a window to make sure that nothing was happening *yet*.'[108]

This passage was written in 1942 during World War II. The adult Bowen remembers herself as a child in Herbert Place watching for the flood. Bowen's "moment" (1905) is a time of unravelling social order and war. Bowen italicises the word '*yet*' as she moves to the window. Built looking onto a canal, the rooms of the house in Herbert Place appeared to be cast in an underwater gloom. Elizabeth and her mother associated her father's illness with Herbert Place but also with Bowen's Court.

In her complex opening paragraph to *Bowen's Court,* in which Bowen uses the techniques of simultaneity, multiple-perspective and a circular narrative to disrupt a teleological one, she asserts that the light and countryside of North Munster create the effect of a watery landscape surrounding Bowen's Court:

> This is a part of Ireland with no lakes, but the sky's movement of clouds reflects itself everywhere as it might on water, surrounding the trees with bloom and giving the grass a sheen. In the airy silence, any sound travels a long way[109].

Throughout *Bowen's Court* Bowen weaves the symbolism of Colonel Bowen's hawk flying across North Cork with the biblical dove flying across God's genocidal flood in search of dry land. Later in her family narrative she uses a modernist sea trope to represent the evolving political consciousness of the Catholic Irish, in the course of the nineteenth century, as a tidal wave momentarily halted at the walls of the Anglo-Irish big houses: "An altered Ireland came, in the course of the eighteen-twenties, to lie at the big house gates."[110] During the Anglo-Irish war the 'wave' swept through the big houses, flushing out the Anglo-Irish. Bowen returned to Bowen's Court at the end of World War I but was sent to her Aunt Edith in Lake Como, Italy in 1920, officially to avoid an unwise engagement with John Anderson, a British officer;

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[108] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 472.
[109] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 3.

unofficially for fear Bowen's Court would burn in the escalating guerrilla warfare. Bowen's father kept her informed of the bloodiness of the Anglo-Irish war and the burning of neighbouring homes to theirs, "Henry VI had watched this pointless campaigning, more with moral distress than fear of loss. He now wrote to me - I was in Italy - telling me what was latest...I read his letter beside Lake Como, and looking at the blue water, taught myself to imagine Bowen's Court in flames. Perhaps that moment disinfected the future: realities of war I have seen since have been frightful; none of them have taken me by surprise."[111] Bowen's Court survived the Anglo-Irish and civil wars, but was changed physically, and psychologically in Bowen's mind.

Imagery of burning big houses becoming sunken battle-wrecks lies in the narrative hinterland of many of Bowen's short stories and novels, in particular 'The Contessina' (1924), *The Hotel* (1927), *Friends & Relations* (1931), *To the North* (1932), *The House in Paris* (1935), *The Death of the Heart* (1938), *A World of Love* (1955) and *Eva Trout* (1968). In *The Last September* imagery of an Anglo-Irish big house as a battleship is foregrounded because although this historical novel is in Bowen's words 'many, many, removes from autobiography', it is still 'writing textured with history.'[112] Bowen's biographers and critics believe 'Danielstown', the big house in the novel, is modelled on Bowen's Court.[113] In her elegiac preface to the second US edition of *The Last September* Bowen links the novel with her personal experiences both living at Bowen's Court in 1920 and staring into the waters at Lake Como, "Bowen's Court survived – nevertheless, so often in my mind's eye did I see it burning that the terrible last event in *The Last September* is more real to me than anything I have lived through."[114] Bowen wrote the novel in 1928, when she was living in Oxford and had established herself as a new 'English' voice, following the publication of two short story collections and her novel *The Hotel* (1927). I believe, that after testing her modernist technique in stories and a novel describing English travellers in her present moment, she returns to her own personal story and the position of the Anglo-Irish in 1920. Her Anglo-Irish origins, dislocated childhood in Dublin, Cork and Kent, and the potential burning of her family home in 1920, all fired her literary imagination and her technique of using travel metaphors to not only investigate her interlocking themes of women's

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[110] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 266.
[111] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 440.
[112] Bowen, '*The Last September*, preface to the second U.S. edition' (1952) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 126.
[113] Lee believes that *The Last September* (1929), like the semi-autobiographical *Bowen's Court* (1942), is based upon the real life Bowen's Court, "Both her books about Bowen's Court were written from a distance." *Elizabeth Bowen* 17
[114] Bowen, '*The Last September*, preface to the second U.S. edition' (1952) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings*

position in society and the end of the Empire, but also link her writing with her present moment. Although *The Last September* is set back in time, Bowen writes it to accentuate the modernity of her present moment, 1928, and the historical dislocation, in the passage of only eight years, between Ireland before and Ireland following independence. Other modernists focus on World War I as the dividing line between a Victorian and Edwardian imperial mindset and twentieth-century uncertainty. Bowen also perceived the Great War as a significant historical dividing line. But in *The Last September* she introduces her own nuanced modernist perspective on historical dislocation, by representing the Anglo-Irish war as the decisive event, which brought about the end of the British Empire. She uses her travel tropes and vehicular metaphors to probe the political and cultural fall-out from the Anglo-Irish war, which despite its negative factors (the end of the Anglo-Irish community and big house life-style) has positive connotations for women and their position in society.

The Last September spans September 1920 to September 1921, covering the last fictional September for Danielstown and for the Anglo-Irish in reality. By interweaving three temporal perspectives Bowen disrupts linear narratives and re-structures sequential time. The first time-frame is an easily identifiable exterior one of a narrator in a dateless present, telling the story of Lois Farquar and past events, "In those days, girls wore crisp white skirts and transparent blouses clotted with white flowers."[115] The other two perspectives of time are located within the interior of the novel and are more difficult to discern. Initially, the reader believes the novel is structured as a chronology of events culminating in the burning of Danielstown in February 1921 and it standing as an empty ruin in September of the same year. But slowly, through a repeated variation of burning motifs, Bowen reveals the novel's interior perspective is the actual burning of Danielstown:

> Exhausted by sunshine, the backs of the crimson chairs were a thin light orange...Behind the trees, pressing in from the open and empty country like an invasion, the orange bright sky crept and smouldered...She [Lois] could not forgo that intensification, that kindling of her personality...dulling the borders like a rain of ashes.[116]

The fiery timber and masonry of Danielstown form the framework upon which the events of September 1920 are re-played. But Bowen is stylistically presenting more than a burning big house. As she develops her narrative Bowen accumulates modernist motifs of sea, ships and

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of Elizabeth Bowen 126.
[115] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September.* (1929; London: Vintage, 1999) 6.
[116] Bowen, *The Last September* 10, 22 and 67.

technological warfare, which she combines with her personal imagery of being isolated on a exploding battleship or visualising in Lake Como the burning of Bowen's Court. She creates a complex metaphor in *The Last September*, presenting Danielstown beset by both the IRA and the Black and Tans, and as a besieged battleship about to explode. In her essay 'The Big House' (1940) Bowen describes existence in declining big houses in the twentieth century in terms of a colony ship or out-dated battleship, "To the keeping afloat of the household not only the family but the servants contribute ingenuity and goodwill. As on a ship out at sea, there is a sense of community."[117] On her metaphorically reconfigured Danielstown Bowen presents four types of Anglo-Irish women and uses travel and luggage figuratively to interrogate the pros and cons in relation to the position of women both before and after World War I, and during the Anglo-Irish war.

The story focuses upon the passage from adolescence to womanhood of the nineteen-year-old Anglo-Irish Lois Farquar at an intense historical moment in the middle of the Anglo-Irish war. The orphaned niece of Sir Richard Naylor, Lois has recently finished boarding school in England and returned to Sir Richard and his wife Lady Myra at Danielstown. Feeling trapped by Danielstown's traditions and war, Lois wonders what to do with her life, whether to marry (she forms an unsuitable engagement with a British subaltern Gerald Lesworth), travel or pursue an art career. Two types of rootless Anglo-Irish visitors, the Montmorencys and Marda Norton, make Lois evaluate her Anglo-Irish inheritance, her gender and her doubtful future in a post-World War I Ireland which is now caught up in the Anglo-Irish war and seems to have been left behind by the twentieth century. Myra Naylor and Marda Norton oppose each other as an Edwardian big house Anglo-Irishwoman and supposedly emancipated post-World War I modern woman. Francie Montmorency is styled as an Edwardian big house figure of femininity but her life on the road with Hugo in their motorcar marks a transitional space between an old and new Anglo-Irish order and gender. Lois rejects the Myra Naylor and Francie Montmorency style of femininity and is drawn instead towards the twenty-nine-year-old Marda Norton's cosmopolitan Anglo-Irishness and post-World War I female identity. But Bowen's travel and luggage metaphors decode both 'old' and 'new' gender constructs as artificial, as her four women circulate throughout the novel as complex types of Anglo-Irish women.

In *The Last September,* Lady Myra Naylor stands for more than the lady of a declining big house. Although Victorian she holds some liberating social beliefs on women and society,

[117] Bowen, 'The Big House' (1940) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 28.

shown by her girlhood travels around Europe:

> Myra was 'interesting', cultivated, sketched beautifully, knew about books and music. She had been to Germany, Italy, everywhere that one visits acquisitively. It had been a bond to discover that Francie and Myra must have been in Germany at the same time, the summer of '92, though without meeting. Myra was the same age as Francie - they had been presented the same year, though not at the same Drawing-room - and thought of Hugo as quite a boy: she could not help showing it. Sometimes, guessing what she had shown, she would laugh and say something clever and quite irrelevant to cover the awkwardness. For Hugo was ten years younger than both of them, Francie's husband.
>
> Francie and Myra had had long remarkable talks about almost everything, confidential if not alarmingly intimate - walking, driving, on the seat by the caroline allspice tree, and at the head of the stairs at night...[118]

The introduction to Myra is complex, it takes the reader through three time frames, Victorian, Edwardian and post-World War I, revealing cultural and political changes expressed through Myra and Francie's mobility and cultural debates. The sketch of Myra is mediated through the travelling Francie Montmorency who having just arrived at Danielstown in September 1920, recalls her honeymoon visit in 1908 when she first met Myra and discussed their European travels in 1892. Bowen's characterization of Myra integrates some positive ideas regarding female education and travel, she informs Lois that marriage was the last thing on her mind when she was nineteen – but now the lady of a big house she holds conservative views about property and marriage.[119] Bowen's portrayal of Myra Naylor has parallels with Gudrun and Ursula Brangwen in D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920).

Myra's girlhood activity is framed within Victorian and Edwardian protocols for upper-class British females. Myra (like Francie) has been officially presented to 'society'. Although Myra is more adventurous than mid-Victorian Anglo-Irish women (or some of her fellow debutantes), who moved straight from girlhood into marriage and big-house domesticity, her travelling is circumscribed within Victorian conduct codes. Myra only journeys along the 'civilised' European route mapped out for genteel British girls. The three older women's style of travel and luggage identifies the type of female they are, according to the contradictory debates about the 'Woman' question and female emancipation, circulating in British society at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century.[120] Myra's Victorian travel trunk symbolises the luxury and security of Myra's travels, chaperoned and cushioned by her class codes. Trunks imply safe travel and maintenance of British order and class hierarchy. The younger Marda

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[118] Bowen, *The Last September* 14-15.
[119] Bowen, *The Last September* 167

Norton travels with compact suitcases, one of which has been lost on her train journey from Kent, England to Danielstown, triggering the following exchange between Myra and Francie in 1920:

> 'She says she would swear it was put in with her at Kingsbridge and that she saw it after leaving Darramore. I do not believe myself in travelling with suitcases, one is always counting - I believe in one good trunk.'
> 'Looking at it from the porters' point of view - ' said Mrs Montmorency.'[121]

The trunk identifies Myra with her big house status and a previous era of luxurious travel for the upper classes supported by transport workers, porters and hotel domestics. The "trunk" reveals Myra's perspective is a late Victorian/Edwardian worldview and by 1920 it identifies her with obsolete social systems, both the Anglo-Irish and British imperialism. Lois' school trunks and the trunks belonging to Lois' deceased mother Laura have been stowed in one of Danielstown's spare rooms. Bowen's modernist repetition with variation of her trunk motif formally and thematically implies that Lady Myra is a living relic stowed in Danielstown.

Bowen develops her modernist interrogation of gender and Irish-British politics by adopting plural perspectives. She swoops like a hawk, constantly flitting between her characters' interior consciousness. From Francie's rootless position in 1920, Myra's youthful free-thinking vitality has been curtailed by marriage and ownership of Danielstown: "Yes, she felt something set now in Myra; she was happier, harder. Myra receded now the kiss was over. There was life to go on with, the duty of love and pleasure fully discharged."[122] Since marriage Myra has stopped travelling and instead receives visitors to Danielstown. Her free-thinking has been checked and dampened by the big house but also by World War I and the current Anglo-Irish war. Following World War I the concept of British imperialism changed for all people, from the colonies, the dominions, and Britain itself. At the end of the war the British command and public suspected the army was riddled with socialism. As Sir Richard complains, "...the Army isn't at all what it used to be...They tell me there's a great deal of socialism in the British Army now."[123] Bowen purposefully lets Myra represent the changing attitude towards interwar Britain in favour of their "own temperamental Irishness."[124] Throughout *The Last September* Lady Naylor suppresses the pretensions of the English soldiers and their middle-class wives. But in Bowen's own words "...the Troubles troubled everything, even friendliness..."[125] The Naylors are caught

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[120] Pykett, 28.
[121] Bowen, *The Last September* 76.
[122] Bowen, *The Last September* 16-17.
[123] Bowen, *The Last September* 25-26.
[124] Bowen, *The Last September* 125-126.
[125] Bowen, '*The Last September*, preface to the second U.S. edition' (1952) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings*

in a complex situation, a traditional adherence to the old style of British Empire, that in 1920 exists no longer, and a contradictory sense of themselves as Irish. The tension is further complicated by their dawning awareness that the Anglo-Irish war is positioning them against their will with British imperialism. They are seen as a colonial imposition in a modern twentieth-century Ireland that is fighting for self-determination along the lines of Woodrow Wilson's 'fourteen points'.

Bowen uses the tropes of nineteenth-century travelling trunks and twentieth-century motorcars to depict Francie Montmorency as the literary transition between old and new gender roles and old and new Anglo-Irish life-styles. Francie is of the same generation as Lady Naylor and seems to fit the Victorian and Edwardian stereotype of the fragile upper-class-woman who is like an invalid, quickly tired by travel and suited to domesticity, "Then - she was so very tired from motoring, everything seemed to rush past - she sat down on the sofa and put her hands over her eyes."[126] Travelling with "Cologne" marks Francie as a pre-war style of woman in contrast to her fellow visitor Marda Norton, who "being so modern, would not care for the eau-de-Cologne."[127] But Francie is a perpetual traveller and her nomadic life-style cuts her off from the domestic life-style for which she was educated. Instead the Montmorencys' motorcar and the open road is her marriage home, yet Francie is still pulled between a traditional Anglo-Irish marriage and modern marriage. Her portable belongings and succession of visits around Ireland and Europe wear away at her attempts to hold onto the daily rituals, cleanliness and clothes, of an Edwardian lady.

The motorcar not only replaces 'Rockriver', the Montmorencys' big house (which Hugo sold shortly after their marriage), it also signifies the social and political changes in the Empire and Ireland, that occur between the Montmorencys' honeymoon visit to Danielstown in 1908 and their second visit in 1920. In 1908 the Montmorencys arrived in a horse-carriage and Francie mistakenly believed she had found her place in life "Rooms, doorways had framed a kind of expectancy of her" which she will fulfil in Rockriver.[128] In 1920 they arrive in an automobile 'Between their smart turning out, with a roll of carriage wheels, through the gates with their clipped laurels, and their swerving in with a grind of motor brakes twelve years afterwards,

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of Elizabeth Bowen 125.
[126] Bowen, *The Last September* 17.
[127] Bowen, *The Last September* 135.
[128] Bowen, *The Last September* 15.

nothing large was to intervene."[129] But in fact the personal accumulation of "indecisions", "minor relinquishments" and winters abroad adds up to the bigger political ruptures at the turn-of-the-century. The novel's opening line registers the change: "About six o'clock the sound of a motor, collected out of the wide country and narrowed under the trees of the avenue, brought the household out in excitement on to the steps."[130] The motorcar signals the post-World War I world of modern living, the flood of warfare and new international relations. Bowen represents the Montmorencys' arrival in terms of a motor-crash, meeting Danielstown in a head on collision, "They had motored over from Carlow. Two toppling waves of excitement crashed and mingled."[131] The imagery implies a collision between the transitional Anglo-Irish in the modern world, and the older traditional style of Anglo-Irish.

Although travel places Francie ambiguously between the old and new, it also gives her liberty and multiple perspectives on class, nationality and marriage. The "blanks" and "rifts" in her life can be read positively as chances for self-creative life-styles outside big house conventions, moving with the twentieth century. Throughout the novel she sounds the antiphon to Myra Naylor's big house opinions. As already mentioned she argues for the porter's point of view; Francie's train travels around England give her a more balanced appreciation of English villas than Myra's political dismissal. Arguing about Lois' behaviour, she refuses to generalise about class, nationality or gender types and sees Gerald Lesworth as an individual rather than an abstract English soldier. Yet she has no authority or life-purpose and is caught between an Edwardian world frame (signified by Lady Naylor) and a modern independent life-style for women (signified by Marda Norton). Francie is trapped in her automobile, a remnant from an older age, without a place in the new order.

Marda Norton represents the post-World War I Anglo-Irishwoman. Marda's androgynous figure, compact suitcases and travelling life-style prefigure the historical and gender changes in identity. As a twentieth-century 'New Woman' she is both the opposite of and development of Francie Montmorency's Anglo-Irish femininity. Her aerodynamic lean figure – "She was tall; her back, vigorous slightness. She escaped the feminine pear-shape" - is shorn of Francie's soft curves, Edwardian clothes and invalid dependency on Hugo: "Sophistication opened further horizons to Lois... They remained sitting behind her with a vague sensation of

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[129] Bowen, *The Last September* 15.
[130] Bowen, *The Last September* 7.
[131] Bowen, *The Last September* 7.

having been abandoned."[132] Marda Norton bears the hallmarks of the gender-bending new female figure that Sidonie Smith refers to as the modern aviatrix, which was circulating the public consciousness in the 1920s and '30s. The aviatrix was a mobile, androgynous and athletic woman, identified with fast technologies of speed, such as motorcars and aeroplanes, dangerous sexuality and self-empowering social roles. From Sir Richard's perspective Marda's lost luggage and assumption that Danielstown is on the telephone place her as an alien in Ireland and he associates her with America, the post-war dynamo of twentieth- century technological modernity "...as Sir Richard said, one would think she had come from America. From all their angles she seemed to them very modern."[133]

Marda's body radiates movement *away from* Danielstown and 'the Troubles'. Bowen presents her looking away from the house or walking its environs. Not tied to an Anglo-Irish family home she travels around Ireland, lives in England and is about to contract, in Lady Naylor's suggestive phrase 'an international marriage' to the Englishman Leslie Lawe. Although depicted as androgynous, Marda is more sexual than the cerebral Lady Naylor or the feminine Francie, who are both barren. Marda eroticises Hugo Montmorency and Lady Naylor's "intellectual" nephew Laurence. She transmits her "life-force" - to use Havelock Ellis's term for female sexuality which is echoed by Laurence in the novel - to the fading Danielstown, which Bowen represents as a passive female "...the very room with its level stare on the tree-tops, took on awareness, smiled with secrecy, had the polish and depth of experience. The very birds on the frieze flew round in cognizant agitation."[134] But in the context of Bowen's hawk and bird metaphors, Marda's modern peripatetic life and suitcases symbolically oppose the big house tradition. They free a feminine consciousness restricted in the big house routine at the level of the story line, in historical reality, but also restricted *textually* in the masculinist plot of the traditional novel form. Marda and Danielstown are fatal for each other. Marda prophetically informs Hugo, "I feel that suitcase won't be the end of me here. There will be a raid and I shall be shot on the avenue, not even fatally, or Laurence will take me out and upset that car."[135] Marda is shot, her hand is grazed in the old mill, and she unwittingly upsets the Montmorencys' marriage, living up to the cultural stereotype of the inconstant 1920s sophisticate. In fact Marda could be identified as raiding the house by innocently upsetting the status quo and persuading Lois to travel and write, but in this she echoes the sentiments of Lady Naylor who is also trying to dissuade Lois

[132] Bowen, *The Last September* 79-80.
[133] Bowen, *The Last September* 78.
[134] Bowen, *The Last September* 96.
[135] Bowen, *The Last September* 81.

from marriage and turn her thoughts to travel and a career.

Marda Norton is an ambiguous portrayal of a modern Anglo-Irishwoman. Bowen uses Marda's 'interiority' to interrogate the position of Anglo-Irish females in 1920. On the one hand Marda enjoys travelling. She understands Lois' desperation to leave Danielstown and enter the "stream of things", in terms of modern transport. Marda comments on Lois: "She is like someone being driven against time in a taxi to catch a train, jerking and jerking to help the taxi and looking widely out of the window at things going slowly past. She keeps hearing that final train go without her."[136] As Hermione Lee asserts, Marda and Lois also represent some of Bowen's personal feelings about her Anglo-Irish origins and future as a writer; Marda voices Bowen's own sense of loss and desperation, in 1920, to leave Bowen's Court and enter the "stream of things" as an artist or writer in London.[137] On the other hand, Marda's nomadic life-style is wearing her out and she has settled for an English marriage. Worse, her fiancé has renounced Ireland and his Anglo-Irish parentage for an English identity and modern profession as a stockbroker, replacing familial ties and traditions encapsulated in the Anglo-Irish community with financial and legal relations. Before departing Danielstown Marda reflects on the price of her engagement for the last time:

> She expected, some forty-eight hours ahead, to be walking with him in a clipped and traditional garden, in Kentish light. Under these influences, she would be giving account of herself. Leslie's attention, his straight grey gaze, were to modify these wandering weeks of her own incalculably, not a value could fail to be affected by his idea of her. Essentials were fixed and localized by their being together - to become as the bricks and mortar of a home.[138]

"Leslie Lawe" signifies the patriarchal law in the narrative that will contain Marda. Anglo-Irish decline is signposted in their engagement as after marriage Marda will lose not only her name but also her nationality and identity. Marda describes engaged life to Lois: "Dinner services come crashing through the air like in a harlequinade. You feel you have been kissed in a shop. I cannot be adequate...If you never need anyone as much you will be fortunate. I don't know what is worth while. I'm sick of all this trial and error."[139] *The Last September* describes home and domestic-life in twentieth-century England as pre-packaged, signifying the new consumer base of

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[136] Bowen, *The Last September* 82.

[137] Lee, Elizabeth Bowen 47-48; Bowen writes that some of her own feelings as a young girl at Bowen's Court resonate with Lois' lassitude and uncertainty, "In 'real' life, my girlhood summers in County Cork, in the house called Danielstown in the story, had been, though touched by romantic pleasure, mainly times of impatience, frivolity, or lassitude." '*The Last September*, preface to the second U.S. edition' (1952) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 123.

[138] Bowen, *The Last September* 129.

post-war middle-class marriages that are replacing the traditional dynastic English home. In the uncertain flood of modernity Marda Norton cannot differentiate between old and new values, but opts for a modern simulacrum of conventional domesticity.

Lois, the newest generation of 'Anglo-Irish womanhood', is trying to choose a career path and travel. World War I and now the Anglo-Irish war have frustrated her attempts. Bowen transfers some of her own existential uncertainty, at the age of twenty, onto the fictional Lois, "I asked myself *what* I should be, and when? The young, (ironically so much envied) all face those patches of barren worry."[140] Lois evaluates the life choices of the three older women Myra Naylor, Francie Montmorency and Marda Norton. She compares Myra and Francie's pre-war values with Marda Norton's modern perspective and marriage. The historical circumstances driving the plot force a life-path on Lois. 'The Troubles' end her romance of marriage (Gerald is killed in an IRA ambush), force her to leave Ireland in search of a career, and cut off her return by burning Danielstown at the novel's end. Bowen uses luggage and ship metaphors to signify Lois' gendered identity crises and to criticise inherited Anglo-Irish values. Bowen's representation of Lois at Danielstown as the war closes in is Bowen's closest literary portrayal of Hemans' *Casabianca* hanging in her nursery – the illustration that encapsulated her real-life terror about her Anglo-Irish community in particular and homes in general in the twentieth century.

In her essay 'Notes on Writing a Novel' Bowen uses travel and luggage analogies to describe her plot and characters. For Bowen plot is the pre-essential, it is not a matter of choice but something that her characters and "what needs to be said" drive the novelist to. Bowen reads the substance of novels as "extra matter", "superfluous to the non-writing life of the writer. It is luggage left in the hall between journeys, as opposed to the perpetual furniture of rooms. It is destined to be elsewhere. It cannot move till its destination is known. Plot is the knowing of destination."[141] Neil Corcoran draws attention to a restless mobility behind her aesthetic and her ethical demands, referring to the above lines quoted. But he reads Bowen's aesthetic as being "pledged to the adventure of the journey itself" rather than representing the decline of the Anglo-Irish, the onset of the end of the Empire, and changes in women's position.[142] In *The Last September* all the characters, but in particular Lois, are represented as placeless pieces of luggage rather than big house dwellers. Irish history and politics (acted upon by wider history) ensure

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[139] Bowen, *The Last September* 101.
[140] Bowen, 'Preface to *The Last September*' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 123.
[141] Bowen, 'Notes on Writing a Novel' (1946) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 35.
[142] Corcoran 6-7.

they can only visit Danielstown for a short while.

Bowen's luggage and travel analogy not only registers the modern novel's difficulty in representing reality, it also aptly characterises Lois in *The Last September* and represents the existential crises confronting individuals after World War I. An Anglo-Irishwoman, Lois appears in the narrative as an immobilised verb with no direct object in the plot to move towards. Declan Kiberd focuses upon Lois' plea to Marda, when equivocating about her gendered position caught between two world-orders and nationalities, that she wants to be part of a pattern: "just to *be* is so intransitive."[143] Lois homes in on the hyphenated Anglo-Irish experience of being without becoming anything, of not having any direct object in the present tense to associate with or create an identity in opposition to. In 1920 the big-house tradition and imperialism no longer offer the Anglo-Irish an authoritative identity; and the new Irish nationalism refuses them one. Kiberd reads Lois as immobilised by the big house yet still seeking to be part of its pattern, while trying to find an alternative one.

Still unformed, Lois refuses to be identified within the adjectives and pre-war perspectives of Myra Naylor and Francie Montmorency. Forced to eavesdrop upon the older women's discussion of her behaviour with Gerald Lesworth, Lois violently stops them defining her:

> Aunt Myra knew she was in here, having just left her. But soon their tones changed, a keen hunting note came into them; they were on a topic...The voices spoke of love; they were full of protest...Was she now to be clapped down under an adjective, to crawl round lifelong inside some quality like a fly in a tumbler? Mrs Montmorency should not!
> She lifted her water jug and banged it down in the basin.[144]

Kiberd reads Lois' refusal as an Anglo-Irish fault, their history of evasions and sense of lack. The Anglo-Irish resist accepting they were colonists. In Lois Bowen fictionalises Anglo-Irish qualms about being part of a pattern issuing from big house values, and their nervous reliance on the mercy of rebels and efficiency of the British army in 1920.[145] In my view, Lois is hunted game, caught within early twentieth-century gendered assumptions on marriage and female careers, in the aftermath of the Great War, which overshadows the present Troubles. Being dependent on Danielstown exacerbates her quandary. *The Last September* pre-empts the themes of English marriage politics, women's positions as hunted game and modern travel that Bowen

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[143] Bowen, *The Last September* 98; Kiberd 368.
[144] Bowen, *The Last September* 60.

explored in 'A Walk in the Woods' (1941). In the heat of debating Lois' confused conduct with Gerald, Francie forces Myra into open territory. Both women conversationally pursue Lois as if she were a fox which they hunt down by using definitions of love, based on their generation's values. Myra's judgement, that Gerald and the English subalterns are unsuitable, politicises Lois and Gerald's courtship in the light of the Anglo-Irish War and unfolding modernity. Myra's and Francie's debate about love and marriage *textually* reinforces Bowen's gendered encoding of Lois' internal marriage debate and desire to escape from Danielstown, through trying on Marda's fur coat and envying Marda her suitcases, "'Oh, the escape in other people's clothes!'...She would not need anyone, she would be like an orchestra playing all to itself."[146] However, in mimicking Marda, Lois is mimicking an illusion of an independent woman. Marda's travels and modern clothes are themselves merely a mask covering pre-war feminine uncertainty and gender roles. Her fur coat and sophisticated suitcases, indeed her visit to Danielstown, is paid for by her stockbroker English fiancé. In the 1920s single middle-class girls can only travel for a limited time, to certain places, before settling in marriage.

Lois must still choose between an Anglo-Irish tradition and a modern English marriage; she cannot travel forever. But she fails to love and feel anything for Gerald Lesworth, or for Danielstown and Ireland (and Bowen reads Lois' failure to love, and realise a home and identity, and not Gerald's death, as Lois' tragedy)[147]; her failure makes her a placeless nonentity. She equates her inner void with feeling seasick on the Irish mail in the middle of the Irish Sea, "...and she saw there was no future. She shut her eyes and tried - as sometimes when she was seasick, locked in misery between Holyhead and Kingstown - to be enclosed in nonentity, in some ideal no-place, perfect and clear as a bubble."[148] The ship symbolism voices Bowen's own childhood experience travelling back and forth between Cork and Kent, and her existential dilemma, caught not only between an Irish and English identity, but also between the debates about 'old' and 'new' women's roles in society.

Lois voices the plaint of post-World War I young women who reject pre-war gender distinctions and the cult of heroic masculinity, in which women are defined as victims or abstract

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[145] Kiberd 368.
[146] Bowen, *The Last September* 76-77.
[147] Bowen, "Tragedy, she could only touch at the margin - not Gerald's death, but her failure to love. Was it sorrow to her, Danielstown burning? She was niece always, never child of that house." *The Last September*, preface to the second U.S. edition (1952) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 126.
[148] Bowen, *The Last September* 138.

ideals, in need of rescue and protection. Declan Kiberd pertinently links Lois' request that Gerald stop acting like a conventional Sir Galahad and treat women as equals, with a rejection of patriotism, whether imperial Britannia or Catholic-nationalist Cathleen ní Houlihan, and with Bowen's awareness that the Anglo-Irish in 1920 only have a toe-hold on Ireland: "It's all this dreadful idea about self-control. When we do nothing it is out of politeness, but England is so moral, so dreadfully keen on not losing her temper...Can you wonder this country gets irritated? It's as bad for it as being a woman. I never can see why women shouldn't be hit, or should be saved from wrecks when everybody claims they're superfluous."[149] Kiberd connects Bowen's representation of Danielstown with the Anglo-Irish fear that, despite their big houses, they would be forced to depart on the next ship. Building upon Kiberd's reading, I believe that Bowen is stating more than the Anglo-Irish predicament in the twentieth century. Through her ship metaphors (inspired by the two illustrations in her Herbert Place nursery), and drawing upon turn-of-the-century gender debates, Bowen uses Lois to articulate her own complex doubts about her origins and Anglo-Irish culpability in colonialism. Lois voices Bowen's contradictory desire to save her family home Bowen's Court and escape it forever. But by aligning the feminised political position of the Anglo-Irish with the 'Woman Question' in the 1920s, Bowen is asserting that both the British government and the Irish nationalists should treat the Anglo-Irish as political subjects.

Lois also voices Bowen's impression that big houses are like refugee ships, adrift between Ireland and England. Lois bears witness to Danielstown's embattled relationship with Ireland. After the evening dinner Lois walks alone through the demesne and experiences a preternatural fear of and even threat from the vegetation of her home:

> ...on her bare arms the tips of leaves were timid and dank, like tongues of dead animals. Her fear of the shrubberies tugged at its chain; fear behind reason, fear before birth; fear like the earliest germ of her life that had stirred in Laura...High up a bird shrieked and stumbled down through dark, tearing the leaves. Silence healed, but kept a scar of horror.[150]

The imagery resembles nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial travel into the African interior. Lois' fear of Irish soil is depicted as an Anglo-Irish gene, part of her big house inheritance. The stumbling bird parodies the flight of Colonel Bowen's hawk, three centuries earlier, in Bowen's retelling of her family myth. But in the novel's political climate the Naylors cannot hold onto a spiritual kinship with their land. Silence covers the "scar of horror" marking

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[149] Bowen, *The Last September* 164.
[150] Bowen, *The Last September* 33.

the big house's contested relationship with Munster, down the centuries. Lois echoes the bird as she blindly stumbles through the demesne and the narrative.

Walking back to the house, Lois perceives Danielstown, and thereby herself, are not rooted in the shifting Irish soil:

> Inside, they would all be drawing up closer to one another, tricked by the half-revelation of lamplight. 'Compassed about,' thought Lois, 'by so great a cloud of witnesses…' Chairs standing round dejectedly; upstairs, the confidently waiting beds; mirrors vacant and startling; books read and forgotten, contributing no more to life; dinner-table certain of its regular compulsion; the procession of elephants that throughout uncertain years had not broken file.

"Compassed about" represents Lois and her family's position as dependent upon Danielstown, its colonial past and its relationship to Irish soil. The procession of elephants recalls hunting parties in India. When the house is removed by Irish politics, so too are they. From this point onwards rain steadily falls until the final inferno. Bowen transforms the Irish landscape in *The Last September* into a flooded land, and represents Anglo-Irish and Catholic Irish homes as battleships or submarines. At Danielstown's tennis party Laurence imagines a small resurrection day for personal Anglo-Irish belongings, and a "Day of Judgement" for family heirlooms in terms of the rivers and seas "the beaches all their engagement rings and the rivers their cigarette cases and some watches. The sea's too general, an affair of furniture and large boilers, it could wait with the graves for the big day…"[151] Bowen's imagery recalls the sinking of the *Titanic*, which as mentioned, she perceived as the first crack in the great world order of British imperialism.

Returning from a visit to the neighbouring Mount Isabel, driving past Michael Connor's Irish farm, Lois perceives Danielstown with new eyes, as nestling on a hostile sea:

> Coming up out from the lanes they bathed an hour or so in the glare of space. Height had the quality of depth: as they mounted they seemed to be striking deeper into the large mild crystal of an inverted sea. Out of the distance everywhere, pointless and unrelated, space came like water between them, slipping and widening. They receded from one another into the vacancy…Michael O'Connor's farm first announced itself by some pink little silky pigs running along the roadside. A sow got up, like a very maternal battleship…Michael stood at the gate till they turned the corner. The mountain farm, its wind-bitten firs dragged east, its furze-thatched byres, sank slowly under the carve of a hill. Looking longest after them, like an eye, a window glittered. Some grey geese that had gaped and straggled behind the trap relinquished the chase abruptly…And indeed Lois and Hugo both felt their pause, their talk, their passing had been less than a shadow…Danielstown made a dark formal square like a rug on the green country…Far from here too their isolation

[151] Bowen, *The Last September* 42.

> became apparent. The house seemed to be pressing down low in apprehension, hiding its face as though it had her vision of where it was. It seemed to gather its trees close in fright and amazement at the wide, light, lovely, unloving country, the unwilling bosom on whereon it was set. From the slope's foot, where the Danielstown trees began, the land stretched out in a plain flat as water, basin of the Madder and Darra and their fine wandering tributaries, till the far hills, faint and brittle, straining against the inrush of vaster distance, cut the droop of the sky like a glass blade. Fields gave back light to the sky - the hedges netting them over thinly and penetrably - as though the sheen of grass were a shadow on water.[152]

The inrush of water can be read as the tide of Catholic Irish nationalism. Over five pages the narrative crystallises Irish history, the political and technological consequences of World War I, and Bowen's sense of the Anglo-Irish as seafaring nomads, forced to depart Ireland in their battleships-cum-arks.

Michael Connor's sow, rising like a maternal battleship, recalls James Joyce's accusation in *A Portrait of the Artist*, that Ireland is a sow who eats her own. In *The Last September* Ireland *is* killing her own, in the sacrifice of her guerrilla fighters and the burning-out of her Anglo-Irish. Earlier, in the grounds of Danielstown Lois witnesses a Sinn Feiner passing through her grounds. In the imagery the soldier is consumed by the Irish soil, as if Ireland asks for the blood-sacrifice of her children, to gain her freedom, "Quite still, she let him go past in contemptuous unawareness. His intentions burnt on the dark an almost invisible trail; he might well have been a murderer he seemed so inspired. The crowd of trees, straining up from passive disputed earth, each sucking up and exhaling the country's essence - swallowed him finally. She thought: 'Has he come for the guns?'"[153]

Michael Connor discusses the Anglo-Irish war, in the context of World War I. Inside the farm his proscribed son Peter is hiding.[154] The farm and its windows take on the aspect of a submarine and periscope. In 1607, defeated by Elizabeth I, the Gaelic Chieftains departed Ireland, 'the Flight of the Earls', for a dispersed, nomadic existence in Europe. In 1691 following the defeat of the Catholic Irish who supported the Jacobite cause, the remaining Gaelic Chieftains and many Old English either left Ireland or remained with their power finally broken – lamented by Daibhi Ó Bruadair in his poem 'An Longbhriseadh' ('The Shipwreck').[155] R. F. Foster writes: "But the defeat of Ó Bruadair's culture was the victory of triumphalist Protestantism and the

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[152] Bowen, *The Last September* 62-67.
[153] Bowen, *The Last September* 34.
[154] Bowen, *The Last September* 91.
[155] R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* 36-45 and 146-153.

governing caste that took as its watchword Protestant 'Ascendancy'."[156] In *The Last September* history is circular, not teleological, and the Connors' geese chase and erase the Anglo-Irish from their farm, as the nationalists will chase the Anglo-Irish from Ireland, dispersing them into migratory life-ways, so that their passing is a dream. The imagery of migratory birds is supported by the inrush of watery space, separating Lois and Hugo. As they drive over the mountain they drop into solipsistic voids, like birds attempting to hold onto their flight patterns. Lois' perspective of height echoes Bowen's narrative ploy, in both *Bowen's Court* and throughout *The Last September,* of hovering over her text like a bird, swooping from the historical panoramic to private lives, emulating the flight of Colonel Bowen's hawk (or the dove released from Noah's ark) as it surveys the land.

Lois infuses Danielstown with her own vulnerability. The house withdraws from camp into battleship mode, as the unwilling Irish 'bosom' changes from soil to water, and the hedgerows become sinister surveillance nets. The big house is depicted as a solitary remnant of a colonial or naval flotilla. Suddenly aware of its vulnerability, Danielstown helplessly watches enemy ships moving in for the final sea-battle. Danielstown does not survive as an ark; when it sinks it takes the Anglo-Irish (and the British Empire) with it. At the ball held at the British barracks, the World War I veteran Daventry describes Lois as a "water-lily"; she floats instead of walks. The ball ends in a chaotic smash of noise and sudden silence. The overturning of the gramophone is described as a waterfall, "But the roar of merriment, solid and swerving evenly as a waterfall past the door, splintered off in a crash. Silence came, with hard impact."[157] Daventry draws life from the end of the music. When he brings news of Gerald's death in action to Lois, Danielstown and the Anglo-Irish are described as vulnerably poised atop a fountain spout on the verge of sinking, "they came out one by one, each on the threshold, balanced momentarily like a ball on a fountain by the shock of seeing him."[158]

The Last September's final scene mirrors the opening. Read through the accumulating water imagery, its closing inferno is more like the final torpedoes in a sea battle, a coup dè grâce finishing off Danielstown. The narrative draws away from Lois' perspective in 1920, and moves forward to Bowen's perspective in 1928, when she sat writing the novel and remembered staring into Lake Como in 1921, imagining the end of Bowen's Court. The hedges and fields have a

[156] R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* 153.
[157] Bowen, *The Last September* 157.
[158] Bowen, *The Last September* 202.

watery sheen, making the unlit cars sliding under the beeches, after accomplished duty, read like submarines sailing back into the deepwater of Irish nationalism, "The sound of the last car widened, gave itself to the open and empty country and was demolished. Then the first wave of a silence that was to be ultimate flowed back, confident, to the steps. Above the steps, the door stood open hospitably upon a furnace."[159] The departing motorcars echo the arrival of the Montmorencys at the novel's opening. After the demise of the big house, the Anglo-Irish in their cars are like small life-boats sailing away from the sinking wreck, across the embattled waters of a flooded world. The ending of *The Last September* recalls the picture of a baby and cat in a cradle upon floodwater, hanging in Bowen's Herbert Place nursery, that symbolised for Bowen a threatening, new world.

A number of Bowen critics note her 'Janus faced' perspective.[160] I prefer to see her hawk-in-flight style and concern with nomadic, ship and floodwater metaphors as a cross between Walter Benjamin's "angel of history" and Cassandra.[161] With her eye on past events, Bowen understands her present moment and predicts coming events but feels frustrated in attempts to rectify wrongs; like Benjamin's angel the storm of progress propels her into the future while the historical debris grows. Bowen reads Anglo-Irish history and the Anglo-Irish war as a prequel to the end of the British Empire after World War I. She draws a literary analogy between the position of women at the turn of the century ensnared within bourgeois conventions and the Anglo-Irish trapped within British and Irish history. Her modernist project frees the Anglo-Irish from history and women from domesticity and entrapment within masculinist narratives both in the traditional novel form and in the new modernist aesthetics propounded by Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis or T S Eliot. She (en)genders her female modernism, sharing some of the tropes, such as sea imagery and strategies, such as interior consciousness, with Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson.[162] In keeping her literary hawk-eye on history and political reality, Bowen's historical focus in *The Last September,* and her ship and luggage metaphors, prepare the ground for the historical themes and travel metaphors which will dominate her writing from this point on.

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[159] Bowen, *The Last September* 206.
[160] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 7, Jordan 99, Ellmann 9-10, Corcoran, 6.
[161] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', *Illuminations*. (1955; London: Pimlico, 1999) 249.
[162] Scott, *The Gender of Modernism* 393-432 and 622-642.

Chapter 3

BOAT-TRAINS

I An Englishman's home: Friends & Relations (1931)

As we have seen, in her modernist retelling of her family history and her historical novel, Bowen narrates a reversal of colonialism with the Anglo-Irish community forced from their big houses and back onto the ships in which they had arrived. Lacking a secure destination, Bowen's metaphorical house-ships signify a perilous cultural space for the Anglo-Irish in the 1920s. Bowen reads this political reversal as a factor of British self-interest and imperialism, which she associates with nineteenth-century steam technologies: the railways and steamships. After *The Last September* (1929) Bowen returns to fictionalising her present moment. Her hawk-eye literary style cross-examines British society in the 1930s and the build-up to World War II in *Friends & Relations* (1931), *To the North* (1932) and *The House in Paris* (1935). Throughout these three novels she uses train and steamship metaphors, with their imperial connotations, to track the tensions and uncertainty in British policy and concomitant changes in gender and class structure during the interwar crises years.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century British steamships and railways worked symbiotically, transporting the military, colonialists, businessmen, missionaries, tourists and commodities from London to outposts in Britain's overseas Empire. The railways galvanised trade with its colonies. Ships and trains also created a progressive communications network. They related British citizens across the Empire and ensured a cordon of defence for British trade routes and territories.[1] However, British naval self-confidence had been shaken both by the *Titanic* disaster and Germany's *Weltpolitik* policy, which resulted in the naval arms race between the two powers to build destroyers. Bowen viewed the *Titanic* and the naval arms race as the prelude to the technological bloodbath of World War I and the Anglo-Irish war. Following World War I ships and trains became synonymous in the public's eye and in British literature, particularly modern novels, with transporting soldiers to the Front instead of the 'Promised Land' vouched under colonialism. Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1923) and Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay* (1923)

[1] Schivelbusch 16-45.

are just three modern novels registering the post-war literary perspective on technological warfare. Bowen's tropes of steamships and trains as jeopardised cultural homes characterise not only the Anglo-Irish community and post World War I uncertainty, but also the position of the British Empire in 1919, which she reads as similar to the Anglo-Irish in Ireland following the 1801 Union. From a position of world hegemony Britain is drawing its resources in upon itself. On the eve of World War II Britain was like an islanded fortress or battleship, confronting a Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. By 1939 Britain viewed itself as civilization's cultural ark and last hope - as did most of Western Europe.

In *Friends & Relations*, *To the North* and *The House in Paris*, Bowen fictionally expands outwards from England to Ireland and France, making references to European trouble spots such as Silesia in Poland. Her geographical movement in these novels reverses her geographical movement inwards, from Lake Como in Italy to London, in 'The Contessina', 'Shoes: An International Episode', *The Death of the Heart* and 'A Walk in the Woods', which I examined in chapter one of this thesis. I want to show in this chapter that her disruptive narrative strategies, flitting across countries and jumping back and forwards in time, emphasise that by 1935 the problems in the Empire and across Europe are coming home to Britain. Her train and steamship metaphors further disrupt the narrative of the traditional novel form and reveal that since World War I the Empire is unravelling. Not only do Bowen's metaphors signify political crises, but they also signify interwar gender debates and the modernist epistemological crisis of how to represent women in fiction in accordance with pre- and post-war changes in reality. Her metaphors bear witness to the individual's dialectical struggle with history to assert his or her own gendered British identity which may be at odds with conventional ideas of Britishness. However, the struggle becomes a Sisyphean one in the uncertainty of the 1930s because history and Britain's imperial past overwhelms her characters.

Friends & Relations is set in 1920 and in Bowen's present tense in 1930. She uses her hawk-eye dual perspective as an insider and outsider in British society to recast British homes as railway stations or train-carriages, implying that by 1930 the Empire is a vulnerable railway network rather than the stereotypical family tree of "friends and relations" all governed from England. Further she uses the to-and-froing railway journeys of her three main female characters, two middle-class sisters Laurel and Janet Studdart and their cousin Theodora Thirdman, to disrupt the linear train-track narrative of the nineteenth century novel and encode the crises in women's social function. Bowen sets her novel in three types of English homes: a middle-class villa

"Corunna Lodge" in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire; the aristocratic country house Batts Abbey set in an adjacent shire; and a 'new' London address, "Royal Avenue", which is the married home of the middle-class Laurel and upper-class Edward Tilney. Bowen parodies Victorian pride in British railways by fictionally representing English homes - an Englishman's castle - as railway stations or train carriages. The three houses are valued and located in terms of their nearness to London, which in turn is measured in the length of train journeys. Bowen comprehends the way British railways structure the Empire and the rest of the world according to British Standard Railway Time. The railways with their telegraph poles, tracks, timetables, and mechanised reliable speed, provided the Empire's nervous system.[2] But over the course of *Friends & Relations*, and her next two novels, Bowen reveals the weak links in the imperial system which is beginning to fracture under the pressure of European politics.

Like the railways, the middle-class Corunna Lodge is a Victorian construct marking the English landscape, rather than a family home historically rooted in the land. Bowen opens *Friends & Relations* with Colonel Studdart and his daughter Laurel passing time on the morning of Laurel's wedding to the upper-class Edward Tilney. But Bowen uses train-travel motifs to defamiliarise a 'traditional' family scene and the conventional opening to a realist novel. Father and daughter are both nervous with waiting and "embarrassed by idleness".[3] Laurel views her family home as a backwater station, "these hours before her wedding were like a too long wait on the platform of some familiar station from which, virtually, one has already departed, where the very associations become irksome."[4] Marriage to Edward is her ticket to London and a new life. Bowen's complex identification of Corunna Lodge registers a number of significant social characteristics and incipient changes in early twentieth-century England. The railways were a middle-class system powering British industry through the exploitation of Britain's colonies. The ensuing expansion of the railways, and profit they generated, brought about an expansion of the middle classes. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century train networks created commuter belts for the new professional middle classes, in the home counties such as Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, making daily return journeys to London possible.[5] Professionals and officers in the Services purchased and built Victorian and Edwardian villas along these commuter belts in

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[2] The Railway Clearing House coordinated a national railway network, and the Royal Observatory's 'Greenwich Time' was introduced on all lines as standard time. In 1880 railroad time became standard time in England, and in 1884 an international conference on time standards divided the world into time zones. Schivelbusch 10-12, 22-33, and 33-44.

[3] Elizabeth Bowen, *Friends & Relations* (1931; London: Vintage, 1999, 7.

[4] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 7.

[5] Alan Trachtenberg, 'Forword' to Schivelbusch xiii-xvi; and Smith 121-166.

the home counties. Bowen's railway trope identifies Corunna Lodge and the Studdarts' middle-class connections in English society. Together they represent middle-class England, the Empire and social changes during the interwar years. But Bowen's railway motifs not only register the social changes which railways brought about in reality; more than that, they help Bowen construct her modernist aesthetics and writing style itself.

In 'Notes on Writing a Novel' (1945) Bowen draws an analogue between her creative writing process and train travel: "Characters pre-exist. They are found. They reveal themselves slowly to the novelist's perception – as might fellow-travellers seated opposite one in a very dimly-lit railway carriage."[6] Bowen's first published short story 'Breakfast' (1923) parodies the way changes in gender and courtship among the middle classes during the 1920s are driven by the dynamics of suburban train timetables which make a mockery of slower Edwardian customs.[7] Bowen is not the only modernist to relate post-war commuter travel with the modern novel. In 'Character in Fiction' (1924) Virginia Woolf draws upon travel in an everyday commuter train to describe the ideal relation between the modern writer and their characters: "...here is character imposing itself upon another person. Here is Mrs Brown making someone begin almost automatically to write a novel about her."[8] Bowen's modernist aesthetics may seem to echo Woolf's, but Bowen's commuter metaphors register more than the psychological interiority of her characters. In *Friends & Relations* they interrogate the cohesion of English society based on marriage and class position, pushed to straining point by World War I and the growing political instability in Europe. In relation to her female characters, her train metaphors challenge the traditional form of the novel, with its linear narrative of birth, marriage and death, and register the difficulty in representing women in twentieth-century fiction.

Bowen's opening to *Friends & Relations* and the rest of its plot is a modernist parody of an English societal 'comedy of manners' novel in the style of Jane Austen, in particular *Emma*

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[6] Bowen, 'Notes on writing a novel' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 37.

[7] Bowen, 'Breakfast' in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 15-20. 'Breakfast' was the first story that Bowen completed, and it became the opening story to her first published collection *Encounters* (1923). In her preface to the second edition of *Encounters* (1949) Bowen remembers writing the story in her Aunt Laura's villa in Harpenden, while listening to the passing trains of the Midland Railways, "from time to time an express roared by, or, more intrusively, a slower train rattled towards the Harpenden stop." '*Encounters*, preface to the second edition' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 119. The passing commuter trains played a seminal part in the setting and motivation of her first story, as they would in her later novels in the Thirties and Forties, such as *Friends & Relations*, *To the North* and *The House in Paris* which I examine in this chapter.

[8] Virginia Woolf, 'Character in Fiction' Appendix III in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf Vol. III. 1919- 1924.* (ed.) Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1988), 507-9.

(1816) which was Bowen's favourite novel.[9] Marriage should be the platform for the two Studdart sisters, Laurel and Janet, and their cousin Theodora Thirdman, to depart their old family homes and enter into their new home which will either be the equal or better of their old position. Both Laurel and Janet marry within a year of each other, despite the post-war lack of eligible men; in addition they both marry into the upper classes, signalling their success as women and the harmonious continuity of England's social fabric. But the railway imagery running throughout the narrative destroys the pre-war faith in the security of English marriages and homes that was taken for granted; and it registers Theodora's placeless position as a lesbian. Although Laurel is prepared for departure on the morning of her wedding "she did not look like today's bride."[10] Passively "Buttoned into an old blazer of Janet's", sitting with her packed cases ready but playing "demon patience", Laurel resembles a refugee, lacking a destination. She is like a woman lacking a professional outlet and resignedly opting for marriage. Ominously, the railway motifs anticipate Laurel's unsettled life after marriage. Instead of a linear progression from Corunna Lodge to domestic fulfilment in her own establishment, Royal Avenue in London, Laurel finds marriage unsettling. Instead of perceiving London from the viewpoint of Royal Avenue as Mrs Edward Tilney, she views it and her new life from the perspective of Corunna Lodge and her middle-class girlhood, "It was still odd to think of a London day not in terms of shopping, and of districts out of relation to Paddington station."[11] Laurel's married life consists in shuttling around London, mingling with her mother's social circle in their ladies' clubs, meeting Janet, socialising with Edward and his friends, or visiting his mother Lady Elfrida at Trevor Square. Her life-style reads like journeys on the London Underground. At the end of the novel, after ten years of married life, Laurel still returns 'home' regularly to Corunna Lodge – as does Janet – causing Mrs Studdart to reflect "They had married her well, properly, formally, with a marquee; but they had not, somehow, married her *off*. She remained."[12]

Bowen's presentation of the Tilney-Studdart wedding develops her literary interrogation of the way the Empire is supported by a global rail network. As the Empire is threatened by post-war politics the railways carry the problems home to England, unsettling English society. Bowen draws parallels between Corunna Lodge, an imperial reception or review and a train in one of the

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[9] Bowen remembered her father Henry VI reading *Emma* to her and her mother, in their villa in Hythe in the summer of 1912, following his recovery in 1911 from his mental illness. Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 423. Elizabeth Bowen told Roy Plomley on BBC's *Desert Island Discs* that she would take a copy of *Emma* with her onto her island. *Desert Island Discs*, BBC, 11 March 1957. Lee, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 233.

[10] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 7.

[11] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 22.

colonies:

> The position of the morning-room was admirable; it had two doors so that guests could circulate through a chain of rooms. Each, having saluted the bridal pair was to pass on through the dining-room;...Cousin Richard was to be posted to head the guests off through the window. He would be shot, he said, if he let one past him into the hall. 'I shall depend upon you, Richard,' said Mrs Studdart. (He had been in the Colonies.)...Janet, the bride's younger sister, knew that Cousin Richard would be certain, sooner or later, to say 'Pass along the car, please?'[13]

Edward and Laurel are depicted as a Viceroy and Vicereine greeting local dignitaries. Through subtle comedy Bowen's tableau introduces British colonial policy, with Cousin Richard "who had been so much in New Zealand", policing the guests.[14] Finally Bowen transforms the villa and marquee into a train and the guests into human traffic directed by British authority. Bowen's symbolism recalls Virginia Woolf's police Constable directing the traffic at Piccadilly Circus – a feature in Woolf's early novels. Woolf's Constable registers Britain's authority in directing world trade. In Woolf's penultimate novel *The Years* (1937) the Constable is replaced by traffic lights showing the way consumerism and American power, symbolised in the motorcar, are replacing Britain's old style imperialism. In *Friends & Relations* Bowen's complex association of metaphors recalls British subjects shunted across the Empire on trains. Despite Mrs Studdart's assertion that "one did not want friends to feel like traffic, in any way directed", this is exactly what they are: imperial traffic identified and connected by train travel.

Bowen's railway trope reveals the anxiety permeating English society under pressure from social mobility in the 1920s. Her motifs describe the weaving but maintaining of class distinctions between the aristocratic Tilney and middle-class Studdart guests, transforming Edward and Laurel's marriage into a synecdoche of England: "The Tilney connection (here to shower on Edward for his marriage as well as his mother a loving depreciation), bright woof to sober warp, shuttled their way to and fro through the Studdart connection. Impervious to strangers."[15] The movement signifies the nineteenth-century cohesion of the English upper and middle classes. It also introduces the changes between pre-war class-bound social relations in England and new porous ones. Bowen cleverly draws upon Anglo-Saxon and medieval weaving materials to describe the guests' social interaction, nicely symbolising historical class distinctions and the myth of England's long established, organic nationhood. Grounded in the English home,

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[12] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 157.
[13] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 8-9.
[14] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 9.
[15] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 10.

which is comprised of English domestic materials and soil, England and her Empire are a natural and secure family house for her citizens. Rooted in the concept of England, as a family home, is the concept of England and the Empire as an organic family tree. By the end of the nineteenth century, under the impress of social Darwinism, British intellectuals and administrators used the trope of the family "Tree of Man" to popularise the Empire's racial progress as natural, disseminating progress from the enlightened centre London to the atavistic peripheries.[16]

But Bowen dismantles the myth of an organic, historically impregnable England, by showing that the English home, the symbol of its nationhood, is really a train depôt. The "shuttling" of the Tilney-woof through the Studdart-warp changes from a method of weaving into one of travelling: the Tilneys shuttle through the Studdarts like trains transiting across London and England. The linked isolation of the Tilney-Studdart guests reflects the train ensemble. Trains with their carriages carried British citizens, linked together, but in separate compartments according to class. The bonds between the Studdarts and their friends and relations are measured in terms of railway journeys as "cousins receding in distance almost to vanishing-point" are recalled to the family fold for the wedding.[17] The Studdarts' cousins, Alex and Willa Thirdman, are newly returned to England with their fifteen-year-old daughter Theodora, after ten years in Switzerland. Extending her railway imagery from Cheltenham to New Zealand, Bowen shows that railways and transport networks, not solid homes or patriotic respect for English soil, bind the fabric of modern English life. Bowen's reference to Switzerland is a reminder that trains connect England with European transport and communications systems, and troubling politics.

After ironically revealing the social tensions between the middle classes and professional upper classes, Bowen uses her railway motifs to cross-examine the social changes affecting the landed aristocracy – the heart and root of the mythological English tree – in the fictional country house Batts Abbey. Her analysis reveals the tensions and threats to English stately homes through cross-examining the position of Janet Studdart following her marriage to the aristocratic Rodney Meggatt. Part II of *Friends & Relations* opens on Whitsunday in 1930, ten years into Laurel's and Janet's marriages. Unlike Corunna Lodge, Batts Abbey (and its village Batts Monachorum) is a rural junction far from the main London line. Bowen depicts Janet before marriage as a 'New Woman' with her "secretary ships", "Girl guides", "Wolf Cubs" and "bicycle". Marriage transforms her into a Victorian style of 'womanly woman'. Bowen presents

[16] McClintock 36-61.
[17] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 11.

Janet walking around Batts like a somnambulist, sharply contrasting this with Janet's former activity. A London friend, Lewis Gibbon, visiting Janet at Batts notes her "absence" and distance from everyone in terms of travel motifs "In the dark shade of the beech she remained upright, oblivious sentinel of oblivion...Some telescope brought her up to Lewis's eye, distinct but unforgettably distant."[18] The length of the train journey from London with its numerous connections registers Janet's feminised seclusion from the public world and her former active unmarried life, which is identified with London, "'I wish' she said, 'we lived on the main line.'"[19] Janet displaces anxieties about her empty marriage and misdirected life-course onto tracing a missing parcel at Doddington Junction.[20]

Bowen uses the train journey between Batts and London to register the internal debate within Janet between her conservative life at Batts and beginning an affair with her brother-in-law Edward, who works in Whitehall in the heart of British administration. As Janet travels on the train, the amorphous dual figure of a fallen and injured woman, drawn from newspaper scandals and divorce cases, materialises in her mind. Janet sees that, if she pursues her present course, both she and Laurel could become the figure of the defamed woman, ostracised from polite society. The train compartment locks Janet in with the apparition, forcing her to choose between becoming the 'other woman' and no longer Janet, or to return to her marriage on the Batts train. By presenting the fallen/injured woman as the one woman with two faces Bowen asserts that in British society in the 1930s women are the victims in marriage and divorce laws: "Laurel once said, 'Do you notice, it's always the same woman whose letters are read in court?'"[21] Once they sin, declassified women are thrown into the same damned category, irrespective of circumstances. Janet's betrayal will socially mark Laurel as well as herself.

Janet cannot betray Laurel, and the London railway time-schedule signals her collapse and return to her conventional marriage. Firstly the London-Batts train saves Janet's and Edward's respective marriages, ensuring the status quo "There's a one-o'clock train,' she said, her face held up, agonized to the light, finding words with difficulty. 'I shall be home sometime.'"[22] The "one-o'clock" becomes her duenna carrying her from temptation back to respectability, but it also marks the closeness of the averted disaster. Janet's irregular return at

[18] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 58.
[19] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 58.
[20] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 58-65.
[21] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 122.
[22] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 135.

dawn disrupts Batts's steady rhythm, showing her abdication would have been cataclysmic to the order of the house, her family and England's social fabric. Bowen equates the earth criss-crossed with rail networks with Janet entrapped in a stately home with family responsibilities "She was the earth hooped around with roads and netted with railways, intolerable to itself, afflicted by movement, nightless. From the train, sleepless, not yet delivered from yesterday, she had watched this irresistible new day dawn."[23] The personification of Janet, as the earth, markedly contrasts with the unmarried Janet at the start of the novel, who was associated with "Diana". As the huntress and the moon she commanded her "Wolf Cubs" and controlled the earth's seas and floodtides. Now Janet rises from her bed to oversee the local Mothers' Union hosted at Batts.

Bowen does more than simply use trains to interrogate marriage and depict the problematic position of women in post-war British society. In relation to the Studdarts' fifteen-year-old lesbian cousin Theodora Thirdman, Bowen's train tropes register the epistemological crisis in representing unconventional women in traditional and even modernist fiction in the 1920s and 30s. Bowen develops her parody of middle-class marriage and the realist novel form through Theodora who "had hoped great things of [Laurel's] wedding."[24] But unlike the Studdart sisters, Theodora quickly realises marriage is for her a false start into society. After delusively admiring Edward the groom for a second, she quickly discovers she is in love with her cousin Janet "She felt an attraction to Janet and longed to find her."[25] Theodora's age, sexuality and modern disposition debar her from entering British 'Society' via marriage therefore she must discover a different route under her own agency. In *Friends & Relations*, Bowen's railway metaphors in relation to Theodora carry the greatest resonance. She repeats them with variations throughout Part I to illustrate the difficulty in representing Theodora according to conventional depictions of middle-class British schoolgirls. At first, Theodora comprehends her family's peripheral position in English society in terms of unclaimed luggage, recently deposited off a 'boat-train' at one of London's central stations such as Victoria or Paddington, "'Mother, are we absolutely *superfluous*?'...'But don't we want to *matter* in this place? Aren't we ever going to begin? Mother, you're like someone sitting for always on a suitcase in a railway station. Such a comfortable suitcase, such a magnificent station! *Eeooch!*' She emitted an indescribable sound."[26] Recently returned to England the Thirdmans are like placeless immigrants or refugees in post-war England. Their choices about whom to resume contact with and where to live will have

[23] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 136.
[24] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 27.
[25] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 13.
[26] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 28.

reverberations on their social position and Bowen significantly figures these choices in terms of departing trains – the right one will take them to the centre rather than the margins of English life.

In the third-class carriage of the train travelling from Corunna Lodge to the Thirdmans' rented London apartment, Theodora ruminates on her family's failure to establish themselves at the Studdart-Tilney wedding, which is proven by the very fact they are travelling back to London in third class with the lower-middle-class Bowleses:

> Theodora had a very clear view of her family's situation; it was important that the Thirdmans, after long exile, should establish themselves in England. During the train journey to Cheltenham, she had implored her parents to make full use of this opportunity...Returning, third class, knee-to-knee with the Bowleses, she glowered a general disparagement from under her bright hat. Alex and Willa could never be made to see life was one's affair and, at that, desperate. At their most positive, they put up a little mild fortitude. Because of this, perhaps, their daughter had armed herself like a bandit, to hold up anything, anyone, and wreak pillage upon the years...Apart from anything else, Theodora thought the Bowleses were certainly damned, for they talked in trains.[27]

Bowen parodies English class snobbery and social mores as the train represents and regulates English class divisions.[28] Despite their kinship with the Studdarts, the Thirdmans' middle-class status is tenuous, signified by their third-class tickets and condescension from the kind but socially damned Bowleses. Comically, Theodora's snobbish assessment of the Bowleses is confirmed by the fact they openly talk on trains, a working class habit contrasting with the private spaces and silence of the second- and first-class carriages.[29] At the wedding Theodora crushes overtures from the Bowleses by rejecting their offer of the Bayswater flat, asserting the Thirdmans' social foothold in England through their own London flat. Although returned exiles, they are not refugees, non-plussed at a train depot.

Theodora functions as more than a social misfit in *Friends & Relations*. Bowen uses her to self-consciously parody and cross-examine the aesthetics and en-gendering of British modernity itself in the 1920s and 30s. Theodora, like the 'revolting daughter' heroine of 'New Woman' fiction in the 1890s, is disruptive and ironically questions the conventional institutions such as schooling, filial duty, marriage and domesticity that structure British society. As an outsider in British society with her radical desire and sardonic intelligence, she evinces a modern 'feminine-masculine' perspective on English life at the level of plot. At a formal level

[27] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 27.
[28] Schivelbusch 70-88.
[29] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 70-88.

Theodora's analogy that she and her mother are pieces of left-luggage waiting to be moved, self-consciously registers Bowen's own modernist aesthetics in 'Notes on Writing a Novel', as discussed above in relation to Lois in *The Last September*. In *Friends & Relations* Bowen inverts the realist novel's marriage plot but she cannot fictionally represent an alternative life-style for Theodora without breaking with the realist form completely and writing fantasy or symbolic allegory. Bowen's modernism can challenge but must work within her contemporary social conventions, therefore Theodora is at a "standstill" at the novel's opening. Bowen depicts Theodora immured in the Thirdmans' rented London apartment (only her consciousness escapes through the telephone "Passionately passing along the wire she became for those moments the very nerve of some unseen house. But it was bitterness"), representing the way females are trapped and silenced or misrepresented in both traditional novels and masculinist modern ones such as those of Wyndham Lewis or D. H. Lawrence.[30] Bowen draws upon the motif of train robbery "their daughter had armed herself like a bandit to hold up anyone, anything" to indicate Theodora taking control of her social life in the novel's story line and to register a female consciousness disrupting masculinist linear narratives and making itself felt.[31] In the formal context of Bowen's self-consciously gendering modernism Theodora's third-class train ride back to London, and the variation of train motifs in relation to this character, become a parody of Virginia Woolf's modernist aesthetics in 'Character in Fiction' "here is character imposing itself upon another person" and a self-parody of Bowen's own modernist aesthetics in 'Notes on Writing a Novel' where she argues that characters impose themselves on authors like fellow-travellers in a railway carriage.[32]

The Thirdmans' journey in the third-class carriage of the Victorian train becomes the first location in the novel for an explicit confrontation between pre-war gendered behaviour codes and post-war challenges to those codes and certainty. Willa passively admires the English scenery and her position in the world while Theodora rants and fumes. From this point forwards Willa compares Theodora with her own adolescence, finding her daughter incomprehensible "...Had one been *difficile*? Willa could hardly think so. She clearly remembered saying: 'I'd really much rather not, thank you,' 'Just as you like, really,' and 'Indeed, Mrs X, I have no idea.'"[33] The very idea that Willa might question English authority is phrased in French, signifying revolt as un-feminine and un-English. The French word registers the fact that middle-class women were

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[30] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 28 and Pykett 56.
[31] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 27.
[32] Bowen, 'Notes on Writing a Novel' *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 35-47.
[33] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 129.

thought of as empty ciphers, lacking any intellectual value or opinions. It belittles Theodora's position as a lesbian and her battle to make herself count in society, "Theodora improvised but did not practice; she did not seem likely to have a figure at all, so perhaps the soul was delayed also."[34] Worse, imperialist gender assumptions dehumanise Theodora because she figures as the antithesis of the feminine ideal. Through Theodora and her schooling Bowen presents a modernist rethinking of the Victorian concept of the 'unified character', especially a female, who embodies a stable, essential identity. Instead Theodora shows identities are fluid and can be self-determined. In a comic reaction to Theodora's revolution the Thirdmans pack her off to one of the new girls' educational establishment, in Surrey in the hope of shaping her into a socially acceptable female. But Theodora, like her freethinking school friends, will use schooling to invent herself as a modern woman and prepare for her independent entry into society.

The London bus becomes a continuation of the train and the Thirdmans' flat, but with the difference that Theodora takes control of her mobility through an ironic immobility, which is the first stage in her campaign to overturn patriarchal authorities. "Ironically passive" she permits herself to be evaluated, "...her teeth looked at, her eyes tested, was measured, revolved before the dispassionate mirrors of less expensive shops."[35] Bowen parodies the school equipment that is essential to educate middle-class English girls into their supposedly natural identity: of being capable but decorous women who are a credit to the Empire, "By teatime she had acquired the boots, the ties, the tasselled cap, the knee-length tunic, the blazer, the 'rational' bodices and the dancing-sandals without which it was impossible for her personality to develop at Mellyfield" - the paraphernalia that will transform her from a "*difficile*" public nuisance into a model middle-class Englishwoman.[36] Silently lending herself to the charade "She sucked a lip", Theodora refuses to become immersed in the English schoolgirl ethos, but "looking elsewhere" out the bus window, she critiques British post-World-War-I culture. A child of the new technological developments in transport and speed, she conversely pin-points the fact that for all this speed, no one seems to be going anywhere: "'For nothing,' as she said to her mother, disparaging through a window of their arrested bus the portentous delay of Oxford Street, "nothing could be worse than this.'"[37] Upon the bus she looks at the school prospectus, as an alternative to the London consumer-driven congestion, but is horrified by its packaged idyll:

'Oh my god!' Several people turned round in the bus. Illustrations: the girls

[34] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 129.
[35] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 31.
[36] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 31.
[37] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 31.

> running, at hockey, lacrosse and tennis, the girls preparing to dive, preparing to eat; the bathrooms, empty; the bedrooms, empty; the chapel, full; the swimming pool and the library. 'Really, Mother, you're touching…'
> The bus ground on. It trembled past Evans' where bright-coloured handkerchiefs darted across the glass like humming-birds and a grand wheel of stockings turned ceaselessly. Three-and-eleven: Willa looked back to admire.[38]

The illustrations in the prospectus parody English male public schools. They depict girls in moments of deferred action, in a sanitised institutional forerunner to the ideal England: healthy females will produce fitting offspring for the Empire.[39] Dangerous sexual spaces, the bathroom and bedroom, are empty, but all the girls dutifully celebrate the glory of God and King in the chapel. Theodora rejects it with blasphemous sarcasm. All action is freeze-framed, firstly by the border of the illustration in the school prospectus, secondly by the arrested bus, but overall it is bounded by economic and political crises in Europe and across the world following post-war economic depression; the Wall Street Crash in 1929; Europe splitting between Communism and right wing politics; unrest and rising Arab nationalism in the Middle East; and an aggressive Japan.[40] In reality, schoolgirls' movements are restricted; they have less independence than boys. At Mellyfield, the girls are supposed to run about during their break. Interrogated by Theodora, they admit they go nowhere, "'Where do you all *run* to?' 'We sit in the potting-shed mostly, but sometimes we let the guinea-pigs out and chase them.'"[41] The exchange reads like the Madhatter's tea party in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). In Theodora and Willa's bus journey Bowen explores the caged sensations that humans, especially women, feel they have been born into, as an age of speed paradoxically accentuates social stasis. There are limited career opportunities for women while the map of Europe and the world, with its threat of war, closes in on Great Britain.

In *Friends & Relations* (as with *To the North* and *The House in Paris*) rainfall, bodies of water and ship metaphors are synonymous with warfare and threatened homes. Bowen brings her Anglo-Irish hawk-eye narrative style, with its historical perspective, and childhood fear of ships and floodwater, to bear on England at the start of the 1930s. Fears of a second European war gained momentum with the British public. Bowen opens part I with rain falling on the Studdart-Tilney wedding in 1920, proving an unpropitious augury for family networks throughout Britain and the Empire. She opens Part II with the motif of a hawk flying above the family scene at Batts

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[38] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 31.
[39] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. 6 Sex in Relation to Society* 1-5.
[40] Hobsbawm 21, 32-38 and 85-97. Lawrence 395-405.
[41] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 42.

Abbey, "...[Considine's] one eye was closed, one glassy with light reflected the sky where a hawk swung and dropped a little."[42] In 'Part I' Bowen's narrative eye swooped down on her characters, closely rendering the family relations and politics. In 'Part II' her hawk-like narrative style flits between the high perspective and the interiority of her characters as she fictionalises Britain's imperial past and unsettled future rolling in on her characters. Contrary to the title, 'One Fine Week', rainfall, water and ship metaphors accumulate from this point on, signalling the disruption of wars and revolutions in Europe and elsewhere. These overseas crises will overwhelm her characters and their struggles to construct an honest gendered identity.

The downpour on Whitsun Tuesday affects Janet, making her break the taboo, which held the Tilney and Meggatt family in equilibrium for the past ten years. For the first time she invites Lady Elfrida to Batts at the same time as Elfrida's former lover Considine Meggatt is there with the Tilney children. Considine is the reason why Edward Tilney's father divorced Lady Elfrida. The equilibrium is described in terms of ships manoeuvring dangerous straits, "Between these whirlpools of sensibility, these reefs of umbrage, the two families had, however, steered for ten years an uneventful course."[43] Bowen fictionally draws comparisons between family politics in *Friends & Relations* and Britain's post-World-War-I appeasement policy in reality. In addition her ship metaphors fictionally link the current European aggression with English land politics and colonialism since Tudor times. Hermione has a preoccupation with the lake at Batts Abbey and constantly frets to dredge its depths and know what memories it holds:

> But the lake, banked steeply round and the banks shadily planted, had a scene of its own; it was not exposed to the countryside. Pre-Tudor in origin, at one time the Abbey fish pond, it had now the charm, the gloom, the disassociation from use of a more recent polite century that had rebuilt the house and isolated a belvedere in Rodney's orchards. Here Hermione fished, but though a few carp still moved darkly they were unaware of Hermione's dangling pin. In despair, she had here abandoned the punt, adrift.[44]

Bowen depicts the Abbey lake as a deep memory store. It witnesses the fact the Meggatt family obtained Batts Abbey from Henry VIII, making them accomplices in Henry VIII's brutal Acts of Suppression (1536) and Dissolution (1538) of the monasteries. The first Act coincided with the formation of the United Kingdom of England and Wales (1536), the first stage in England's internal empire and historically a necessary forerunner to the British Empire. Laurel summarises Rodney Meggatt as a commandeering British male, "Meggatt men, she thought, get what they

[42] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 52.
[43] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 57.
[44] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 72.

wanted calmly, in the course of their day. They had got Batts Abbey and abbey-lands out of Henry VIII."[45] The Meggatt family's foundation story equals the Cromwellian Act of Settlement in acrimony and is more brutal than Bowen's version of her foundational family myth, the 'hawk-in-flight'. The Abbey's carp point towards a fault in the watery foundations to the novel, that in turn points to a broader fault in the foundations of British and European civilisation, reiterating Bowen's acknowledgement that the Anglo-Irish were seventeenth-century colonialists who dispossessed the Catholic Irish gentry.

Hermione's fixation with the carp and lake represents a belief, aired amongst writers and intellectuals between the wars, that civilisation brought World War I and the approach of World War II upon itself. Hermione impotently attempts to exorcise the lake of its dark history and memory. In the final part of the novel Hermione moves from passively fishing to play-acting a huntress on her raft, patrolling the lake waters of Batts "buffalo":

> At Batts, Hermione paddled down the lake at terrific speed, shrieked and leaped from the boat to the bank to take aim. 'Bang! Bang!' she exclaimed. She was pursued by a mad swimming buffalo. 'Now then, Hermione,' said her father from the top of the bank. 'I'm perfectly calm.'...Hermione could not take her eyes from a spot in the lake where the buffalo sank in fury, in red ripples.[46]

Rodney Meggatt cannot see his daughter's imaginary buffalo, but in the context of Bowen's appraisal of European politics, Hermione's imaginary dangers signal the fact that in previous centuries Britain has secured and protected its colonies, and defended its homeland in sea battles and by policing international waters.[47] In 1931 there is the threat that warfare and aggressive politics can travel across water to England: whether the Irish Sea, the English Channel, the Atlantic or the Pacific. She is fixated with the flags of different nations, in particular Japan and America who are two growing world powers, and she touches upon the decline in prestige of Great Britain to direct world politics, "'But I hope there'll be wind enough for the flags. I hope there'll be Japanese flags and heaps of suns, and American flags too. I do think the Union Jack is boring, don't you, Mother.'"[48] She lines her punt with flags in preparation for the League of Nations, hosted at Batts Abbey at the Friday fete. Janet watches her. In Janet's eyes the trailing French flag writhes in a death throe upon the grass behind Hermione. The perspective contemplates a passing world order, headed by Britain and France, which is now becoming a closed chapter. Political change and the rising powers of Japan and America will envelop and

[45] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 35.
[46] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 135.
[47] Davies 699.

carry the plots of Bowen's novels, rocking the marriages and everyday existence of couples like the Tilneys. The rising floodwater has moved from outside the gates of Irish big houses to threaten and transform the world order everywhere. The hostilities between the native Irish and Anglo-Irish, following the waves of settlement of Irish land, flared and quieted, but never went away and culminated in the Anglo-Irish War and Irish civil war. Similarly, hostilities behind World War I have only paused, as social unrest throughout Europe re-aligns around communist or fascist politics. The power bases that structure world politics and human society are shifting in the twentieth century from the old European authorities who drew up the Treaty of Versailles, to central Europe and across the Atlantic and Pacific, as speedier travel means individuals share the same present tense.

II Derailed peace settlement and a threatened shipping agency: To the North (1932)

In her next novel *To the North* (1932), set wholly in the present tense, Bowen intensifies her theme of European politics and British history closing in upon individuals: in particular, two upper-class English women in their late twenties. The novel's plot spans a summer-time in London, from April to early September 1931. References to World War I and an increasingly unstable political map, with the ineffectuality of the Versailles Peace Treaty and the rise of Fascism in Italy, the Nazis in Germany and other right wing nationalists in Poland and central Europe, register England's vulnerability vis-à-vis Europe.[49] The war widow Cecilia Summers, aged twenty-nine, lives with her younger sister-in-law Emmeline Summers, aged twenty-five, in their house in Oudenarde Road, St John's Wood.

Emmeline Summers is a development of the turn-of-the-century 'New Woman'. Financially independent, Emmeline has started a travel agency in Woburn (around the corner from Bloomsbury) with her business partner, the Cambridge graduate Peter Lewis.[50] Bowen's complex boat-train metaphors in relation to Cecilia and Emmeline, give evidence of the death

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[48] Bowen, *Friends & Relations* 110.
[49] Hobsbawm, 85-106, 124-141.
[50] Maud Ellmann discusses the fact that Emmeline is one of the first of Bowen's heroines to "embark on a career", and, "has been shrewd enough to join an industry that burgeoned during the interwar years", following the mass-production of motorcars, the post-war increase in aviators, the expansion of commercial airlines, the establishment of the annual holiday, "as a right for most working people in Britain." 101. Ellmann observes that although Emmeline's travel agency provides an imaginative escape from Britain, Emmeline herself is entrapped. However, Ellmann does not develop a focused analysis of Emmeline and modern transport in relation to changes in gender and the fragmentation of the Empire.

tracks along which politicians are driving Europe following the short-sighted Versailles Peace Treaty, and the ensuing rise of nationalism and fascism across central Europe.[51] In a literary context *To the North* parodies the desire of aspiring intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s to write the political thriller, mixing espionage and travel narratives, of the day. "Miss Tripp", Emmeline and Peter's secretary, who is recently graduated from Lady Margaret's Hall, Oxford, has a passion to "write a great, *the* really great, political novel."[52] Bowen's ironic portrait of Miss Tripp, and the travel agency's closeness to Bloomsbury, emphasise the fact that in *To the North* Bowen probes important political concerns about Britain and Europe through satire, travel and her depiction of the Woburn agency.

The opening paragraph draws attention to the novel's political context and Bowen's correlation between trains, British imperialism and the impending crises:

> Towards the end of April a breath from the north blew cold down Milan platforms to meet the returning traveller. Uncertain thoughts of home filled the station restaurant where the English sat lunching uneasily, facing the clock. The Anglo-Italian express - Chiasso, Lucerne, Basle and Boulogne - leaves at 2.14: it is not a *train de luxe*. To the north there were still the plains, the lakes, the gorges of the Ticino, but, as the glass-barred doors of the restaurant flashed and swung, that bright circular park outside with its rushing girdle of trams was the last of Italy.[53]

The unsettling Anglo-Italian express transports passengers between places at high velocity; contrasting with slower nineteenth-century leisured and educational train travel, it registers the disjunction between pre-war security and the current uncertainty. In 1931 travel is prey to time, and time is clocking the historical distance between World-War-I atrocities and the present, but time is also clocking the accumulation and spread of right wing politics in Europe.[54] The English passengers uneasily face the clock, metaphorically calculating the end of peace and the express's ability to out-run warfare. But by starting her novel in 'Milan Central' station, which was built on the orders of Benito Mussolini, Bowen adroitly undermines any false security for which the English passengers or her main characters may hope. Mussolini is infamously renowned for making the Italian trains run on time, ensuring an efficient transport and communications network for his fascist 'black shirts'. The express passengers' last glance of Italy is the threatening,

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[51] See Oliver Zimmer, *Nationalism in Europe, 1890-1940* (London: Palgrave, 2003).
[52] Elizabeth Bowen *To the North* (1932; London: Vintage, 199) 122.
[53] Bowen *To the North* 5.
[54] For further details of changes in travel between the years see Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travel Between the War Years* (Oxford: OUP, 1982). For the build-up of right wing politics see Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History*; Lawrence James, *The Rise & Fall of the British Empire* and Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991.*

rushing girdle of Mussolini's militarily efficient transport system. Within hours the train will take the English passengers across Europe and the Channel, proving how quickly Fascist ideologies could spread across Europe. Bowen names Emmeline's cat "Benito", bringing home the fact that Mussolini's politics are troubling the mind of British politicians and the public in 1931.

Bowen's description of the Anglo-Italian express's passage across Europe introduces her modernist project in *To the North*, in using technology associated with imperialism to metaphorically interrogate post-war British policy and the causes behind the impending crises. The European landscape and climate attack the train as it journeys home across territory which had been the Western Front in World War I, and still bears the marks of battle. In *Friends & Relations* Theodora registered a horror of the Swiss Lakes. In *To the North,* as rain darkly falls, the Swiss Lakes and the St Gothard tunnels are viewed as catastrophes from the passengers' perspectives, petrifying them with the historical spectacle:

> Unwilling, Cecilia could not avert her eyes from all that magnificence in wet cardboard: ravines, profuse torrent, crag, pine and snow-smeared precipice, chalets upon their brackets of hanging meadow...Woolly white mists covered the lake; through rifts in the mist the dark inky water appeared, forbidding: they ran along an embankment...she looked sideways; torn darkening mists streamed past her eyes; above, on the toppling rocks where the hotels were still empty showed a few faint lights. It all looked distraught but perpetual, like an after-world...And in an after-world, she might deserve just such a companion: too close, glancing at her - if any shreds of form still clung to the spirit - without sympathy...Mr Linkwater bumped at the far end of a carriage, on a flying background of battle-fields under new culture, unsuccessfully shaved.[55]

The Anglo-Italian express registers at the level of plot and form the complete break with a nineteenth-century world-view, the cost of World War I on all combatants, and the acrimonious peace whereby post-war stability was bought at the expense of Central Europe and Germany. An increasingly unsettled Europe is now turning on the old policy makers. As a twentieth-century development of a nineteenth-century invention, the express shows that the current nationalist aggression is a development of imperial rivalry. Bowen metonymically refers to the train as a "dragon tail" lashing Europe in turn and holding its passengers captive. The train's accelerating passage transforms geography into fragile wet cardboard, showing that homes and frontiers are verified by paper and ink (such as the Versailles Treaty) and easily torn and demolished by the speed of political change. The politicians who signed the Settlement have ink and blood on their

[55] Bowen *To the North* 7.

hands. Later in the novel, at mid-summer, England suffers under lashing rain. The narrative links the downpour with blood, ink and the treaties re-writing frontiers, which will eventually trigger ethnic cleansing "Across the mind's surface - on which a world's apprehension, strain at home and in Europe, were gravely written - the sense of a spoilt summer, so much prettiness wasted, darkly spread like ink."[56] Rising nationalism will leave the various ethnicities in Germany, Poland and Central Europe placeless.[57] Bowen herself felt the gassy emptiness of being in "no-place" on the boat-train between Dublin and Holyhead. Cecilia escapes the torrid hellscape and "gassy" vacancy in her stomach, seeking refuge in the first dinner service.

The train's motion forces an encounter in the buffet car between Cecilia and the ex-Harrovian barrister Markie Linkwater who is described as a new 1930s breed of upwardly mobile middle-class Englishman. Neither she nor Markie can escape Europe's brutal past and present, in which they as English people are culpable. Cecilia's inner vacuum, which she tries assuaging with food, is her sense of placelessness. There is nothing substantial to claim her in England, except her sister-in-law Emmeline, a round of spurious social engagements and a luke-warm relationship with the upper-class Julian Tower. Umbria and other places however are an ideal traveller's bubble, suspended above political reality. The train's route along the war-savaged terrain exacerbates Cecilia's contradictory feeling of uncertainty and claustrophobia, of being placeless in the present yet circumscribed by history. As the cross-Channel ferry docks at Folkestone, Markie encounters Cecilia again. Referring to England as a traveller's stop rather than a home, he asks if she will stay long. Cecilia cannot say, registering the indecision and anxiety of Bowen (the Anglo-Irish) and refugees arriving into England in the interwar years.[58]

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[56] Bowen *To the North* 177.

[57] See Hobsbawm 54-85 and 109-142.

[58] In her book *The Refugee Problem in Interwar Europe*, Claudena Skran discusses the numbers of Russian, Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian and German refugees in the political turmoil of the inter-war years. (Oxford: OUP, 1995) 13-30. She quotes, from Sir John Hope Simpson's *The Refugee Problem: Report of A Survey* (1939), the estimated distribution of Russian refugees. In 1922 approximately 252,000 Russians entered Central Europe and approximately 98,000 Western Europe; in 1930 approximately 113,000 Russians entered Central Europe and approximately 195,000 Western Europe. Of these figures, 9,000 entered Britain in 1922 and 4,000 in 1930. Skran 37. A. J. Sherman estimates the numbers of refugees from Germany and Austria, entering Britain, between 1933 and 1939, was 49,500, including 9,000 children. Some 6,000 refugees from Czechoslovakia found asylum in Great Britain from 1933 onwards *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939* (London: Elek Books Ltd., 1973) 271.
In *To the North*, travelling on the Anglo-Italian express, Cecilia complains to Markie that many people mistake her for a Russian, and Bowen likens her to one, "'Last time I came back from Italy someone thought I was a Russian...A Russian,' she said, and looked sideways into the window – for they now ran through a cutting – where a reflected shadow under the cheek bones, with a sparkling petulant vagueness accounted for the mistake." Bowen, *To the North* 8.

The train journey with its "background of battle-fields under new culture" affects the ferry.[59] Bowen presents it slipping rather than sailing across the Channel "like a pat of butter over a hot plate."[60] Instead of being propelled by British administration, signified in the steam engine, the ship covertly slips across on a windless day, signifying the interwar calm in the eye of the storm.

Bowen's sea and ship symbolism registers England's vulnerability; it is only a matter of time before it falls victim to European madness. The heat registers the heat of politics which threaten to travel across the Channel to Britain. Worryingly, the British government in the 1930s was unsure about how to direct its policies in relation to European developments. Britain's Channel ports blankly regard the Continent: "Folkestone appeared, the flags on the Leas lifeless, hotels staring out at nothing: England showed a blank face."[61] It is at this point that Markie questions Cecilia on her intentions of staying. Her comment "I have no idea" closes the first chapter, but leaves the rest of the novel (and England's status) open to investigation because Cecilia's stay depends on England's response to its declining naval power, the threat from the air, and its policy towards Mussolini in Italy and the ascendant Hitler in Germany.

Emmeline's Woburn travel agency fictionally signifies the vulnerability of the British Empire in the interwar years, registered in reality in the demotion of the Royal Navy from first to third in the world and the fact that aviation was replacing naval power. Bowen parodies the administrative reach of the British Empire. Emmeline introduces herself to Cecilia's latest love interest, Julian Tower, at a London party on the night that Cecilia and Markie travel homewards, "'I am a shipping agent: I run a travel agency.'"[62] Her self-description characterises the British Empire since its inception in 1707. Progressively, over the centuries, the Empire expanded through the might of its Royal Navy and merchant ships. It constructed a global trade and administrative network with the furthest reach of any other nation or empire, securing Australia and the Pacific trade routes.[63] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, British tourism

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[59] Bowen, *To the North* 11.
[60] Bowen *To the North* 11.
[61] Bowen, *To the North* 11.
[62] Bowen *To the North* 23.
[63] For Davies the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht was decisive for the beginning of the British Empire. France conceded her hold of Spain's *asiento de negros* (Spanish monopoly of the slave trade) to the United Kingdom. Britain now controlled all intercontinental commercial networks developed by Spain. This enabled Britain to build a worldwide chain of navel bases. Between 1783 and 1920 Britain amassed a worldwide catalogue of 200 colonies; from 1914 Britain's uncontested sea rule was challenged and broken. 699.

developed along imperial trade routes.[64] "An affair of passion", Emmeline's travelling fervour matches imperial fervour, from Whitehall mandarins, to Viceroys, rampant colonialists such as Cecil Rhodes or Joseph Chamberlain, and the Army and Navy. In 1841, a decade after the coming of the first commercial railway line in England between Manchester and London, Thomas Cook organised the first train excursion from Derby to Rugby. Thomas Cook built up a vast travel network on the back of the rapid progression of British railway systems across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Britain's overseas territories, and Europe and America, in tandem with industrialisation, and its creation of world standardised railway time.[65] Emmeline outlines for Julian the compass of her agency, "- she began to talk rapidly, fully alive. 'Our organization is really far-reaching,' she said. 'We can tell anyone almost everything: what to avoid, what to do in the afternoons anywhere – Turkestan, Cracow – what to do about mules, where it's not safe to walk after dark, how little to tip.'"[66] Her information networks emulate British colonial policy, 'The Great Game' in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, outrunning other imperial powers, especially Russia, in colonising Asia and the African interior, and maintaining British rule in India.[67]

The government ruled its vast territory through a network of British civil servants, drawn from the upper and middle classes, who in turn managed a network of local spies and agents throughout the colonies. These agents infiltrated the trading expeditions of competitive powers. Emmeline and her business partner Peter do not leave their agency or visit their travel spots, instead they brief their clients before departure and rely on information sent back to the Woburn agency for future business and shipping policy: "They come when they're back and give us their impressions: we get them tabulated. It keeps us in wider touch."[68] The clients are the eyes and ears of the travel organization; they not only observe and retrieve information, but infiltrate, contest and overrule alien officialdom, proving British superiority: "Markie swore he had met a client who having bribed and fought her way to Belgrade on the wrong ticket found her hotel

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[64] See Leed 184-192 and 265-268; and Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An analysis of women's travel writing and colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991).

[65] Smith 123. In the 1920s and 30s Imperial Airways organised its flights and expanded along imperial trade routes and territories, primarily flying to states within the Empire, as well as European and American destinations. Personal visit to Croydon Airport Museum, August 2004. Ellmann underlines the difference between Emmeline and Peter's agency and Thomas Cook's 'tour operator'. 102.

[66] Bowen, *To the North* 23.

[67] In the nineteenth century the emphasis of imperial travel changed focus from the oceans and Britain's communication and defences, to the interior and acquisition of land in the Near East and Central Africa. The new policy was referred to as 'The Great Game', and played against Russia. Davies 708.

[68] Bowen *To the North* 24.

room full of roses ordered by Emmeline."[69] Emmeline compensates her client's heroism with roses, parodying honours, such as the Victoria Cross for service to the Empire. In the intrepid female fighting her way to Belgrade, Bowen plays with 1930s assumptions about female vulnerability and inability to face the challenges of travel or the rigours of business or colonial administration. Ironically, Emmeline's shipping organization grounded on her clients' reports, filed as "testimonials", anticipates Bowen's role during World War II reporting on the local situation in Ireland for the Ministry of Information between 1940-42.[70]

Emmeline's detailed knowledge of European meal times and attractions mimics the British Ministry of Information's intelligence networks throughout Europe in the 1920s and 30s, observing communism, fascism and civil unrest. "'We have made out a chart of comparative dinner times all over Europe, so's people need not waste their evenings; we are just bringing out a starred list of places good out of season and manufacturing towns that sound awful where there is really something to see. We keep very much up to date. My partner is doing a rather interesting graph of civic intelligence.'"[71] Even innocuous places, sounding awful or irrelevant, need investigating and placing on the government's radar. Due to pogroms and political purges across Central Europe, the names of cities and districts mark new atrocities, continuing the horror associated with places such as the Somme following World War I. Emmeline sends a client to Silesia, a brewing site of Polish nationalism and anti-Semitism, instead of Sicily.[72] In 1931 Europe's liberal governments must become politically conscious of these outlandish places, "The map of Europe was never far from her mind, crowds rushing from platform to platform under the great lit arches."[73] Emmeline is eager to send Julian Tower to Central Europe which was an area of rightwing and communist unrest in the 1930s.[74] She is negotiating a partner operation with Serbian counterparts in Paris, referred to as "entente", signalling the trigger behind World War I and England's special relationship with the French, where both countries promised a united front if one or the other was threatened.

The shipping agency and its client networks also call to mind the spy networks and cabals fermenting throughout Europe since the end of the nineteenth century, shaping into rightwing and

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[69] Bowen *To the North* 92.
[70] W J McCormack in *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen* investigates Bowen's reports 'Notes on Éire' for the British Ministry of Information during World War II.(London: Manchester University Press, 1993).
[71] Bowen, *To the North* 23.
[72] Zimmer 53-65.
[73] Bowen, *To the North*, 26.

leftwing militias in the 1930s. These networks became the intelligence and resistance networks in operation throughout World War II. Emmeline informs Julian that their agency is not like Thomas Cook[75] who charter railway excursions. Their association offers more reach and life changing exploration than everyday package tours. Instead their shipping slogan is "'Move dangerously' – a variant of 'live dangerously', you see.'"[76] In a shrinking twentieth-century world of mapped places and progressively speedier technologies of motion, life and travel are becoming mundane, predictably run to train and shipping schedules, "'[b]ut what everyone feels is that life, even travel, is losing its element of uncertainty; we try to supply that.'"[77] However, in 1931 life is anything but secure. In Europe, the former Austro-Hungarian, German and Russian empires are breaking down into aggressive, extreme nationalist states. In South East Asia, an aggressive Japan is invading China. Transport technologies, trains, battleships, tanks and aeroplanes abet hostilities. Julian and Emmeline's discussion about trains and the shipping agency occurs while Cecilia and Markie are upon the Anglo-Italian express "dragon-tailing" across a background of World War I battlefields, "Cecilia's face sleeping against the cushions as the Anglo-Italian express tore into France from Switzerland on the return journey."[78] Bowen's verb "tore" reaffirms the train as a political engine tearing up the map of peace once more. It recalls the fact that across Europe, since World War I and in increasing momentum, refugees are fleeing persecution aboard trains, but lack papers to ensure residence in 'civilised' Western Europe.[79] By 1931 humans do not have to go out of their way to travel dangerously, political circumstances are forcing this upon them; safe havens such as France or England are now threatened.

Bowen's battleship metaphors accentuate her literary correlation between Emmeline Summer's shipping agency and the British Empire's transition from expansion to fragmentation in the interwar years. In *The Last September* Bowen charts the last September for the Anglo-Irish and the British in Ireland, and the first crack in the Empire as a fall-out from Irish independence. In *To the North* Bowen charts the last summer for the Empire in Emmeline Summers, whose shipping business and violent end (Emmeline kills herself and Markie in a car crash, which Bowen dramatises in terms of an aeroplane taking off) represents the threats to Britain's naval prowess from Europe and the new aviation. During her first social encounter with Julian,

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[74] Hobsbawn 71-84.
[75] See footnote 62 above.
[76] Bowen, *To the North*, 23.
[77] Bowen, *To the North*, 23.
[78] Bowen, *To the North* 26.

Emmeline recalls another London party a few years earlier upon a British battleship. The distance in time between the two parties registers Emmeline's increasing social uncertainty and indecision. It fictionally represents the British government's increasing irresolution. Wishing Julian Tower were a clock, she reverts backwards through her imagery of train timetables to the earlier memory aboard the battleship, as if by travelling backwards she can regain certainty:

> She gazed at Julian, wishing he were a clock. Had she wished, she could not have seen into him very far; she was short-sighted in every sense. Watching slip past her a blurred, repetitive pattern she took to be life, she adored fact – the exact departure of trains – and had taught herself to respect feeling. At a dance on a battleship she had been kissed by a sailor while searching the stars for Orion through a pair of opera glasses he lent her. He had breathed hard, knocking the opera glasses out of her hand – but now she remembered more clearly how the launch with her laughing companions ran under the bulk of the ship, and the stars at one startling moment...Since the sailor, she seemed to have been surrounded by shadowy people, acting without impetus, with no spring of passion to their behaviour, not throwing cracked opera glasses, as he did, into the sea.[80]

As discussed in chapter two, in *The Last September* Bowen figures the demise of the Anglo-Irish and British as a frenetic dance of death in the Clonmore army barracks; the music's end is imaged as a crash over a waterfall. In *To the North* Bowen moves the dance, and the British Empire's frontier, from an Anglo-Irish big house and British barracks to a British battleship. The Admiralty's primary job is defending Britain's shipping lines and overseas territories. However by 1931 British policy began focusing on the defence of the home-land and airpower was surpassing naval power; at the same time the government tried to cover its new policy of appeasement with a 'business as usual' approach to its imperial responsibilities.

In *To the North* Emmeline discusses with Peter their agency's potential power of sending anyone - not just British clients but also Europeans (once their Serbian partner office in Paris is operational) - anywhere, if their agency resorts to credit, "'Of course,' she said thoughtfully, watching the kettle boil, 'if we did run this place on credit we could make anybody go anywhere. But I don't think it would do.' 'It would be madness,' said Peter firmly; she had to agree."[81] It is mischievous to see the boiling kettle watched by the shipping masterminds as a subtle and ironic image of the British Empire, run on the might of its steamships and railways, bursting pistons and reaching boiling point. Emmeline's hubris, making anybody go anywhere, mirrors the paternal despotism of imperialism, ruling peoples in their best interests. But by the 1930s British power is

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[79] See refugee statistics for footnote 54, above.
[80] Bowen, *To the North* 25-26.
[81] Bowen, *To the North* 92.

run on credit: her reputation for naval and military supremacy, which, following World War I, Britain was unable to fully substantiate.[82]

Emmeline peers through binoculars on the battleship's deck, searching for Orion, the constellation sailors navigate by because it never sets. The narrative juxtaposes the binoculars knocked from Emmeline's hands with her launch running under the bulk of the battleship and the stars. Emmeline's Woburn agency progresses on the back of the Empire; although she believes her company independently launches into new territories, the Navy shields it. Since her passionate encounter with the sailor Emmeline is passive in a world of shadowy movement. The battleship recalls Bowen's primal fear of her Anglo-Irish home as a burning battleship or vulnerable cradle. The launch and battleship gender Emmeline as a passive female, signifying the way British policy is feminised and immobilised by the 1930s. This contrasts with Britain's unquestioned belief at the start of the twentieth century in the Englishman's destiny to govern the world. Peter gets travelsick on trains, ships and even planes therefore he never leaves the Woburn Office. Now Britain is in the passive female position of being acted upon and shaken by Italy, Germany and Russia near to home, and by America and Japan.

British naval power is vicarious, if not redundant, because of the aeroplane. Significantly instead of looking at the sea's horizon Emmeline searches the sky, paralleling the reality that Britain must now defend itself against aerial attack. Peter is concerned their Woburn agency is overlooking the significance of aeroplane power in changing the world: "he also felt they were not doing enough with airways. Turning left they paced Theobold's Road for some time in an agitated discussion... Peter, who had this form of incipient mania, could not remember if he had remembered to lock up the office...so they went back quickly to find the office unlocked and a client there."[83] The first aeroplane flight across the Channel in 1909 showed the Navy could be bypassed, and Britain was breached for the first time since the Norman invasion. [84] In 1917 Britain launched the world's first purpose-built aircraft carrier HMS *Argus*, but the US production of aircraft carriers soon surpassed them. By the 1930s the British Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, recognised air power brought a new reality, transcending traditional geographical

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[82] Davies 747-755.

[83] Bowen, *To the North* 32.

[84] On 25 July 1909 the Frenchman Louis Blériot flew at dawn in a 25 h.p. monoplane from Les Boraques near Calais to a meadow behind Dover Castle. The flight lasted thirty-seven minutes. The monoplane was damaged. *The Times* reported that a lot of development was needed before aviation became a viable transport. *The Illustrated London News* more accurately perceived, 'the inauguration of a new era in the history of the world.' Davies 748.

borders, "Since the day of the air, the old frontiers are gone. When you think of the defence of England, you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover; you think of the Rhine. This is where our frontier lies."[85] Peter's mania about airpower and locking up the office parallels the public concern about Britain's increasing vulnerability, which she examines in her next novel *The House in Paris*.

III Inter-railing in Wonderland: The House in Paris (1935)

In *The House in Paris* (1935) Bowen moves the action from being mainly set in England to being primarily set in a house in contemporary Paris - on the frontier of the European crises. The narrative jumps between the present time of Paris in 1934, and a past set in London, Cork, and British and French sea-ports in 1924. The last section of the novel returns to the present in Paris. Her characters' chaotic cross-journeys further debunk the possibility of a straightforward plot or coherent identity. Indeed Bowen's 'boat-train' metaphor and her formal uncertainty brings to light the reality that British people in 1934 are caught between a geographically volatile Europe and their nostalgia for pre-war British security, which is itself proving to have been an illusion. The deadlock unhinges British identity because it leaves them placeless as the old systems and identities are falling apart and the ground ahead is uncertain.

In parts I and III of *The House in Paris* Bowen represents a Frenchwoman's house in Paris as a railway junction for two English children: an eleven-year-old schoolgirl named Henrietta on a journey from England to southern France, and a nine-year-old Anglo-French boy named Leopold who has never set foot in England, is in Paris to meet his English mother for the first time and who has hopes of living in England with her. As Maud Ellmann observes, the two children are depicted as misdirected letters, but more than that Bowen represents them in terms of misplaced pieces of luggage and uses the children's first encounter in Paris and train travel to cross-examine gender politics.[86] Through references to European politics and literary allusions to the English children's classic *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* Bowen shows how the concept of a stable British (or any identity) is illusory.[87]

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[85] Davies 750.
[86] Ellmann, 113 and 114.
[87] Ellmann identifies a correlation between Bowen's mobile characters and Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, "it takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place."103

The novel opens with Henrietta's first view of France in a taxi with a strange Frenchwoman, Naomi Fisher, after arriving from London on the overnight train:

> In a taxi skidding away from the Gare du Nord, one dark greasy February morning before the shutters were down, Henrietta sat beside Miss Fisher. She embraced with one arm a plush toy monkey with limp limbs; a paper-leather despatch case lay at her feet...There was just enough light to see. Henrietta though dazed after her night journey, sat up straight in the taxi, looking out of the window. She had not left England before. She said to herself: This is Paris.[88]

Paris still seems fictional to Henrietta. Motherless, she previously identified herself through comparisons with English females such as her older married sister Caroline and their grandmother Mrs Arbuthnot. Henrietta's father is a distant figure in the text; she creates a masculine substitute by giving her toy monkey "Charles" a male identity. Henrietta's gendered English identity is preserved and transported in her overnight dispatch case and her toy monkey, her familiar Charles. Both her monkey and dispatch case are tampered with during her stop in Paris – symbolising the way her British self comes under attack as her encounters with the Fishers, Leopold and Ray Forrestier drive her to re-evaluate herself and the world.

Bowen comically portrays the misunderstandings arising during these first encounters. During the taxi ride Naomi Fisher introduces the fact that Leopold is also visiting them. Henrietta mistakenly believes that Naomi has renamed her toy monkey and Bowen adroitly draws Henrietta's polite outrage at this imposition:

> *Leopold*? thought Henrietta. The thought that Miss Fisher might have taken the liberty of re-christening her monkey, whose name was Charles, made her look around askance. She said: 'Who is Leopold?'[89]

Bowen places Henrietta's thought "Leopold" as a question in italics; a stylistic touch that accentuates Henrietta's sense of invasion at a re-ordering of reality through a renaming of her toy. It calls into play the history of national politics: linguistic and identity shifts between the English and the French, and also the power relations between representatives of two different cultures. Bowen reveals Henrietta's thought processes first, demonstrating how a traveller meeting the unfamiliar contemplates and attempts to rationalise it. Bowen parodies the British historical sense of security in ordering the world. Henrietta's controlled response is that of a stereotypically well-educated British child who will observe and assess the unfamiliar before jumping to any conclusions. Secure in her world-view Henrietta cannot believe another person *could* re-order

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[88] Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris*, (1935; London: Vintage, 1999), 17.
[89] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 18.

reality; therefore she tentatively reflects that Miss Fisher "might have taken the liberty to re-christen." To re-christen is to re-conceive an identity; it is a transgression, a hostile act. These new and worrying thoughts are enough to make Henrietta look askance at the sudden thought that in a name her world and identity can be taken over and changed utterly. So she parries Miss Fisher's utterance with a direct question that is the first stage in her self-defence, "She said: 'Who is Leopold?'"

Henrietta's fear that Miss Fisher has renamed the toy monkey, who as the recipient of Henrietta's projected 'otherness' is instrumental in the construction of 'herself', triggers unease in the child that her 'self' is not something sacrosanct, but is malleable, shaped by journeys and encounters. Bowen's modernist aesthetic undermines the pre-war belief in a unified identity. Leaving England already unsettles Henrietta. Now in Paris her sense of strangeness and transitory subjectivities is accentuated when Naomi Fisher describes the house in Paris as a train depôt for the momentary stops and cross-cutting journeys of the other characters whose identity cannot be fixed. Henrietta has the following perplexing dialogue with Naomi:

> 'O hardly French; not really. You will see for yourself. You will think.' Miss Fisher said, with the anxious smile again, that we have a depôt for young people crossing Paris, but that is not so: this is quite a coincidence. Leopold is not crossing Paris, either; he came to us late last night by the train from Spezia, and will return, we expect, tomorrow or the day after. He is in Paris for family reasons; he has someone to meet.'
> 'Where's Spezia?'
> 'On the Italian coast'
> 'Oh! Then he's Italian?'
> 'No, he is not Italian...'[90]

Place cannot 'fix' an identity. In Leopold, and his father Max, Bowen explores the plight of Jews in the interwar years.[91] As an ethnic minority the Jews could not migrate to a state where they constituted a majority, so Max and Naomi's hybrid engagement is homeless, "As lovers Max and she were a couple of refugees, glad to find themselves anywhere...They both had the hybrid's undependable shyness that no-one else can gauge."[92] The reader discovers, as Henrietta does to a lesser extent, that Leopold's journey from Spezia to Paris is only one leg on a journey, not only for him, but for a number of people: his English mother Karen Michaelis; the Anglo-French Naomi Fisher and her French mother Madame Fisher; Leopold's natural father Max Ebhart, the son of a Frenchwoman and English Jew; Ray Forrestier, the stereotypical British upper middle-

[90] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 20.
[91] Zimmer 72-79.
[92] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 113.

class male; Karen's family in Chester Terrace, London; and Karen's aunt Violet and uncle Bill in Rushbrook, County Cork. *The House in Paris* becomes a network of journeys on which characters lose and gain identities – completely undermining the teleological narrative of the realist novel.

Leopold is interested in Henrietta's English travelling case, because England is the place where his mother is coming from, and Leopold hopes to receive his 'true' identity from England and his mother, instead of from his American foster parents and their expatriate life-style in Italy. Accidentally knocking open the dispatch case, Leopold spills the personal items encapsulating Henrietta's gendered Englishness upon the floor and thereby exposes Henrietta and England. The accident makes the two children evaluate each other:

> Its two clasps indignantly sprang open: two apples, a cake of soap and an ebony-backed hairbrush came bouncing and crashing out; the sponge-bag made a damp thud, *The Strand Magazine* and the pink *Malheurs de Sophie* fluttered face down on the floor. The pack of playing cards, happily, stayed in their box. 'There now!' said Henrietta. This confirmed her opinion that all little boys were rough... Oh, don't be such a baby! said Henrietta, unnerved but with her most Alice-ish air...You *are* pleased with yourself' said Leopold...Henrietta kneeling, looked angrily at his knees. She noticed a scar on one...well what else are you? She said. This produced such a silence that she got still more frightened and crawled off after the apple: 'You're *spoilt*,' she then added recklessly, reaching for it under the armchair.[93]

Bowen draws attention to the fact that the accident freezes Leopold's face into a mask; the dispersed (English) objects threaten his unfixed persona, as if they are an omen that his expected mother (and England) will reject him. The mask shows the contrast between capturing someone in a look and the mutable subjectivity beneath the surface. He flicks through *The Strand Magazine*, smelling it to get a sense of England. Henrietta's identity has so far come from her English family and popular stories in *The Strand Magazine* (1891-1950), a popular publication which features factual articles, short stories and serials with illustrations. Its selection of writers and illustrations, in particular the work of Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling, drew a quintessential British identity within imperial conventions; yet the magazine criticised this identity with the comedies of P.G. Wodehouse and science fiction of H.G. Wells.[94] In Bowen's novel *The Strand* is countered by the "pink bound" French children's classic *Les Malheurs des Sophie,* which offers a cultural alternative to British constructions of 'male' and 'female'. The French novel was written and published by Madame La Comtesse de Segur, neé Sophie

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[93] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 35.

[94] Chris Willis, "The Story of the Strand" *The Strand Magazine*, Dec. 1998 <http://www.strandmag.com/hist.htm>.

Rostopchine in 1864. Madame de Segur was born in Russia, before travelling to Paris and marrying into one of France's dynastic political families. She wrote about real children who experiment and discover the world for themselves, making mistakes; her heroine Sophie gets into scrapes.[95] *Les Malheurs de Sophie* is considered the French equivalent to Lewis Carroll's (the pseudonym for the Revd. Charles Dodgson) children's classics, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872), which were the most popular books for children and adults in the late Victorian and early Edwardian period.

Bowen places literary allusions to Carroll's two Alice books in her own novel to represent the disembodying nature of cultural encounters in Europe. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* Alice is ten years old, around the same age as Henrietta in *The House in Paris*. Carroll's novel is narrated from Alice's perspective; it chronicles her attempts to make sense and logic out of the nonsense of Wonderland. As Alice falls, with increasing velocity, down the white rabbit's tunnel, she falls back on her British education: the history and geography taught from a British perspective which no longer makes sense in Wonderland. "Presently she began again. 'I wonder if I shall fall right through the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downwards! The antipathies, I think – '''[96] Her identity dissolves with the sudden irrelevance of not only her education but also of her familiar past by which she had orientated herself. Proceeding through Wonderland Alice drinks or eats various substances that make her change shape and size, and with each shape-shift she is mistaken for something else, other than the English girl that she is, "'Well! What are you?' said the Pigeon. 'I can see that you're trying to invent something!' 'I – I'm a little girl,' said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through, that day."[97] In Alice, Carroll relays the child's perspective, attempting to comprehend the adult world and fit an identity into this world.

Bowen relates Henrietta with Alice throughout the narrative, "overriding good sense, like Alice's throughout Wonderland…pack of playing cards…Alice-ish air."[98] Henrietta, like Alice,

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[95] In 1930 Longmans Green & Co. published in London an abridged version of *Les Malheurs de Sophie* in French edited by Roberta Mansfield, a teacher at the Alexandra School in Dublin, with the aim of teaching English-speaking children the French language and customs through French children's literature - using it as a launch pad for understanding French and English cultural perspectives.

[96] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass* (1865; 1872; Oxford: OUP, 1982) 11.

[97] Carroll 48.

[98] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 28 - 35.

attempts to comprehend and fit herself into a new European consciousness, or force Paris to fit into her concept of a British-centred reality, which is now being challenged by the reality of Paris and Europe, "...objects did not wait to be seen but came crowding in on her, each with what amounted to its aggressive cry. Bumped all over the senses by these impressions, Henrietta thought: if *this* is being abroad..."[99] The household inhabitants, Paris and Europe seem to Henrietta an illogical Wonderland, because they pose a different logic to her familiar English one. Elizabeth Bowen named the fragment of her autobiography that she began shortly before she died, *Pictures and Conversations*, the title is taken from the opening paragraph of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* Alice's adventures in Wonderland come about because she finds her sister's book, which lacks pictures and conversations, boring, "'and what is the use of a book' thought Alice, 'without pictures and conversations?'"[100] Bowen agreed with Alice's opinion, and in real life, and fiction, places and conversations "fired" her imagination.[101] Bowen's first experience of England was the Kent coastline. England seemed to be a fictional canvas; it was only slowly, over time, that the reality of England made itself apparent to her. "Nothing was banal round here. Inland, the steep overhanging scenery took on the look of a painted backdrop:...And what was *behind* this canvas? — the rest of England."[102] Henrietta's perspective of a fictional two-dimensional France opening up into a three dimensional real world echoes Bowen's first experiences of England at the age of four, whizzing across London by the overnight train, and then her coastal and short forays into the interior of England. Slowly over her writing career Bowen moved first to Kent, followed by a detour to Nottingham, living for a while in Oxford, before settling for longer in London.

Bowen's intertextuality, linked with her train motifs, registers the gendering of Western epistemology and representation along cultural lines. Carroll's Alice is a rational child who relies on her own judgements through empirical observations, testing and contemplation. She travels down the tunnel and through the looking glass, thereby perceiving things from the other side: in other words, shifting subject positions. She empathises with the object's subject position and perceives that she herself is an object as well as a subject. Bowen as an author does the same. On the one hand, Bowen reverses the gender characteristics normally associated with male and female and the superior/inferior binary produced in colonial relations. Henrietta displays the calm rational characteristics that are normally associated with an English masculine identity while

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[99] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 24.
[100] Carroll 9.
[101] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 36.
[102] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 8.

Leopold exhibits the emotionalism and immobility usually associated with females, frozen behind a mask and unsure of his persona. On the other hand, Bowen probes the way the British imperial discourse asserts that an Englishwoman is superior to a male from elsewhere in Europe. The frozen mask indicates that Leopold is struggling to constitute an itinerant masculine identity from the cultural mix of his parents and upbringing. Henrietta and Leopold are both travelling through the fantastical world of an ideologically changing Europe in 1934, where each child reflects and represents their gender and national identity in the flux of Europe and throughout the world, in the approach to a second European war.

Bowen further undermines the two children's sense of a personal identity. Henrietta is forced to meet the invalid Madame Fisher, whose mockery further assails Henrietta's sense of Englishness and belief in her grandmother Mrs Arbuthnot's particular type of feminine British authority, 'Mrs Arbuthnot's whimsicality shattered by Mme Fisher's making one of her English jokes.'[103] Madame Fisher breaks the conventions of polite conversation; she informs Henrietta that Leopold's dead father broke her daughter Naomi Fisher's heart, bringing to light the past of ten years ago and the reasons behind Leopold's current visit to the house in Paris. Henrietta escapes her meeting with Madame Fisher, "[f]eeling like a kaleidoscope often and quickly shaken", with her world-view and sense of self fragmented and decentred.[104] Bowen continues the 'Alice in Wonderland' analogy: Leopold asks Henrietta to read her playing cards and predict his future with his mother Karen Forrestier, neé Michaelis. His request underlines the fact that reality is composed of chance encounters, between individuals and "'place and time" which historical narratives turn into a pre-destined pattern of events.[105] However, in the uncertainty of 1934, Henrietta cannot read Leopold's future, because they do not have knowledge of Leopold's origins (his parents' and the Fishers' past). In addition travel and their encounter with each other in the house in Paris has destroyed their sense of a secure past (Henrietta's past with her grandmother and Leopold's past with his American foster parents the Grant Moodys) or present tense, making the future seem an unpredictable fiction rather than an ordered progression.

As soon as Henrietta attempts to read the playing cards a telegram arrives, cancelling Karen Forrestier's visit to Leopold, leaving him placeless between his lost past and postponed future. At this point Bowen ends Part I and disrupts her linear narrative by reverting in time and

[103] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 51.
[104] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 54.
[105] Bowen, '*The Last September* preface' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 123.

place to London and Cork in 1924.[106] In Part II Bowen begins with Karen Forrestier's own voice, telling Leopold the story of his origins, before switching to the voice of an omniscient narrator. At the moment of Leopold's conception Bowen lets Karen's voice disrupt the omniscient narration and talk to the foetus that will become Leopold. In this way Bowen uncovers a circular, feminine narrative beneath the imperial teleological one. The story of Leopold becomes the story of the upper-class British Michaelis family, the Anglo-French Fishers, the Anglo-French Max Ebhart, and the Anglo-Irish Bents. Part II chronicles the tension between traditional and new British gender conventions, class status, and relations with other nationalities, immediately following World War I. Echoing her technique in *The Last September* Bowen uses ship metaphors and Anglo-Irish politics to probe imperial atrophy and the possibility of alternative British identities following World War I. In particular she brings to light changing gender politics between the nineteenth and twentieth century, represented by three Englishwomen from the upper-class Michaelis family.

Bowen opens Part II with the conservative class rebel Karen Michaelis waking on board an Irish ferry sailing from Fishguard to Cork. It is Karen's maiden voyage to Ireland to visit her mother's older sister Violet Bent. Crossing the Irish Sea, Karen reflects upon her engagement with Ray Forrestier, a cousin's cousin and member of the Michaelis' inner circle:

> She felt calm enough to have steadied a ship in a rough sea. A month ago, she had promised to marry Ray Forrestier. They had been friendly and watching each other for four years, ever since Karen was nineteen...Her mother had never asked questions about Ray, but when Karen told her of the engagement, her exclamations like so many fireworks, lit up what must have always been in her mind...She [Karen] saw this inherited world enough from the outside to see that it might not last, but, perhaps for this reason, obstinately stood by it. Her marriage to Ray would have that touch of inbreeding that makes a marriage so promising; he was a cousin's cousin; they had met first at her home.[107]

Their marriage will fix them within the kinship boundaries of the Michaelis' upper-class social circle. Marriage marks the end of Karen's girlish attempts at becoming a professional artist and shaping her own life. Instead her engagement places her as an Englishwoman who can now be given charge of her own domestic ship. In the context of *The House in Paris* Karen's metaphorical ship in rough weather is a synecdoche of England, the Empire and its history in which the Michaelis family are structurally central. Bowen astutely represents Mrs Michaelis as

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[106] Ellmann notes the importance of letters and telegrams in *The House in Paris*, above all Karen's telegram at this juncture in the novel, in disrupting the traditional novel's "logic of cause and effect" and its "unities of time and place." 115.

[107] Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris* 69.

a figurehead of pre-1914 English liberal imperialism and the quintessential upper-middle-class Michaelis family are represented as an imperial liner or battleship being piloted by her, "Karen had grown up in a world of grace and intelligence, in which the Boer War and the War and other fatigues and disasters had been so many opportunities to behave well...She had not been born Karen Michaelis for nothing...Watching her mother facing the outdoor air like a self-commanding figurehead..."[108] Having survived the wars at the start of the twentieth century, seemingly untouched, they sail across the 1920s holding onto their pre-war opinions and life-styles. Mrs Michaelis safeguards her family by patrolling breaches in English social laws and editing life.

Learning the ropes from her mother, Karen now departs the Michaelis home to pilot her own domestic ship, modelled upon her mother's, and falls into line with other upper-middle-class households. But inwardly Karen both serves and resists her class; her rebellious desire to escape her gendered, class destiny flares when shopping for furniture with her mother, an Empire sofa in Wigmore Street one morning suddenly sent the blood to Karen's head. Its unexaggerated sea-green silk curves made her want to exclaim: "Stop: we don't want that! I can't take it to Paris, to Naomi's young man! Which would be like whipping a pistol out of her kid bag and firing at the sofa through the glass..."[109] Mrs Michaelis brought Ray and Karen together to shore up her family and prevent a breach through Karen's fixation with art and the Anglo-French Jew Max Ebhart, in Paris. Karen has been aimless since her encounter with art, Max and Paris five years previously; her mother subtly pilots her, "There is more art in simply living, Mrs Michaelis said. Karen was glad to fall back on her mother's view of things."[110] Mrs Michaelis' class status and family home, one of the tall cream Chester Terrace houses in Regent's Park, shapes her world-view. Rooted in the same upper-class English soil they and their friends are unchanging.

Edwardian trains, photography and botany date and edit Mrs Michaelis' vision and values. Cataloguing the world from a British perspective, Edwardian botanists, exponents of Carl Linné's *Systema Naturae* (1735), validated the values of imperialism.[111] They treated foreigners like exotic specimens, observing them through a telescope, then down a microscope, typecasting and dehumanising people, by keeping them at a safe scientific distance. Mrs Michaelis focuses on

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[108] Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris* 77, 124 and 127.
[109] Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris* 124.
[110] Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris* 69.
[111] Linné's *Systema Naturae* had a lasting impact on travel and the way Europeans made sense of their place on earth, creating order out of chaos through the simplicity of Linnaeus' classification system. Pratt,

surfaces and outlines, and does not pry for depth or complex emotions:

> Being a very exact and sincere woman, she knew where a thing should stop. She did not make copy of people by drawing them out...But Naomi is odd - and from one's own point of view sometimes a little trying - in exactly the same way that would make him feel at ease. Yes, a wrong marriage, I think, would be fatal for him; he is a man who would quickly out law himself. And there is always that touch - Jewish perhaps - of womanishness about him...So Mrs Michaelis dismissed Max; he melted into thin air while still on his way to the bus. Should he ever come up again – which was unlikely, for no-one they knew in Paris had heard of him – she would have him at finger's ends to discuss once more with understanding and tact....How right mother had been, how right she always was. All the same, her well-lit explanations of people were like photographs taken when the camera could not lie, they stunned your imagination by *being* exact. Would those unmysterious views in a railway carriage make you visit a place, even in your dreams? You could not fall in love with the subject of an Edwardian-camera portrait...[112]

Mrs Michaelis does in fact draw people out, but views them according to her class prejudice - especially foreigners, whom she classifies as anyone outside her social group, be they working classes, middle-class socialists or, above all, any nationality apart from British. Her categorisation of Max and Naomi calls into play a long history of national antipathies between the French and English, according to her English-centred standard of behaviour and national types: issues which Max debates with Karen, who reproduces her mother's views. Mrs Michaelis is exact and sincere because she has not needed to question her values. Bowen's characterisation here has echoes of E. M. Forster, in particular his novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *A Room with a View* (1908) and *A Passage to India* (1924). As Max critically informs Karen, "Naturally, so much belongs to the English, they can afford to be moderate. But nowadays the world is in bad taste; it is no longer 'history in the making', or keeps rules or falls in with nice ideas."[113] Mrs Michaelis safeguards English rules. The Anglo-French Naomi is odd from Mrs Michaelis' point of view, and the sensitive, intellectual Max is 'womanish' because he is a French Jew, unlike the supposedly unemotional men in Mrs Michaelis' circle: her husband, her son, her brother-in-law, the Anglo-Irish Colonel Bent, or Karen's fiancé Ray Forrestier.[114] Max is eligible for Naomi, but not Karen. On a one-to-one Mrs Michaelis can stretch the distance and connect with Max, inferring she is the agent and Max the passive object of her understanding and tact. The contact is withdrawn in public; in a social situation he would flounder, Mrs Michaelis hits upon the important verb "mix", "social things matter so little, yet somehow one cannot be with

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[112] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 117-118.

[113] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 112-4.

[114] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 117.

people who do not 'mix' when they have to."[115] The rarefied upper-classes can inter-mix and breed, but infiltration dilutes and poisons English bloodlines.[116] However, it is equally the English with their prejudices who cannot mix with Max or other Europeans; it is Mrs Michaelis and her set, not Max, who will outlaw him if he marries a woman like Karen, because he has moved beyond Mrs Michaelis' classification of him. His French mother and religious ethnicity outweigh the genes of his English father. Mrs Michaelis highlights his exoticness, which strikes a wrong note in English society, as if Max were a rare plant: photographed, identified as a type of Frenchman, filed and dismissed, beyond her mental checklist.

Yet Max is not simply an abstract Anglo-French Jew. He contradicts Mrs Michaelis' categorisations and world-vision. Bowen uses post-war photography and transport metaphorically to undermine pre-war British values and represent the historical change between 1914 and 1924:

> Nowadays, a photograph is not more than an effort to apprehend. So Mrs Michaelis did not like modern photography, which she found exaggerated and woolly. Some recent studies of Karen by one of her friends had been regretfully put away in a drawer...what Mrs Michaelis said about Max and his reason for wanting to marry Naomi would be, no doubt, true - if you pressed him flat like a flower in a book. But he had a thickness you had to recognise and could not be pressed flat without losing form...Karen felt him nearer, as though he had moved - but he had not, he sat still. She glanced round...Everything that she knew of him disappeared at a point, like a road running into a dark tunnel.[117]

Modern photography and motor travel blurs scenery and outlines, exacerbating attempts to clearly comprehend and order the world, yet gives a truer complex picture of people in their changing contexts. Mrs Michaelis denies the modern world, in which it is increasingly difficult to identify a pattern or political order, by putting away Karen's unfamiliar portrait, preferring her own vision

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[115] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 117.

[116] Ellmann reads the trope of poison in *The House in Paris*, as a reference to Karen's type of man and sexual desire. On the ferry the Irish girl "Yellow Hat" asks Karen what her poison is. Ellmann argues: "Joking about taste in men, Yellow Hat says, 'Perhaps *your* poison's not mine,' to which Karen replies, 'I don't know what my poison is' (*HP* 92-3). Later Karen disclaims her love for Max by telling Naomi, 'Your poison's not mine' (*HP* 101)." 123. Ellmann rightly points out that Karen does desire Max and astutely reads Bowen's play on Karen's sexual betrayal of her family and Naomi for Max as a transgressive violation of boundaries, that will poison Karen and her family. Ellmann goes on to note "Yellow Hat's phrase comes up again when Karen is predicting her family's reaction to her pregnancy: 'They would have to see me as someone poisoned...some foreign thing.'" 123. But Ellmann does not place this in the political context of *The House in Paris*: the Jewish Anglo-French Max is "poisonous" as far as Mrs Michaelis' sense of preserving her upper-class bloodline goes. But a poison can produce an antidote. *The House in Paris* leaves it open whether Max is the antidote for England during the interwar years, or whether mixing his foreign blood with Karen's will produce the antidote in Leopold, the hope of England's future. 98, 123-125.

of Karen. She refuses to recognise social changes within English society, such as the Suffragettes. Suspicious of the post-war generation's iconoclasm, Mrs Michaelis decries romanticism or impressionism that cloud issues with emotions; instead she focuses on character. The narrative endorses the danger of cloudy ideas, but challenges Mrs Michaelis' black and white thinking, "But the exercise of any sense, sight most, starts up emotion. You cannot debunk everything. Karen's mother was so far right: no objection is mysterious. The mystery is your eye."[118] This statement is key to *The House in Paris*'s criticism of English prejudice and definitions of themselves, of Europeans and of others. It is key to Bowen's evolving modernist aesthetic. Perceiving triggers emotions and prejudices, and is filtered by them. If perception is in the eye of the seer, not in the camera or object studied, then modern photography and transport only reveal the uncertainty within the 1920s generation, their lack of focus and inability to emulate their parents' precise understanding of things as concrete exterior truths. There is no absolute ground on which to stand, only interpretation, in a world of mutual exchange figured by people on moving vehicles attempting to glimpse and momentarily apprehend each other. Mrs Michaelis' criticism accuses her own seeing: looking through her Edwardian camera-eye lens she defines characteristics against cloudy modern thinking according to her Victorian education. Karen mentally evaluates her mother's social order and cataloguing of Max while debating English and French traits with Max. Turning from her inherited camera angle, she is depicted as stationary, watching Max travel away from her and her preconceptions of him.

Only a figurehead, Mrs Michaelis lacks real power to save her family ship from exterior forces. Karen's desire to break with Ray and pursue Max threatens her home. But Mrs Michaelis' older sister Violet has already threatened the insular Michaelis family unit, and their traditions, by marrying the Anglo-Irish Colonel Bent and leaving England for Ireland. Now, Mrs Michaelis reads Violet's premature death as the first sign of the end, "Mother was right in saying worse could happen: once a board gives, the raft begins breaking up."[119] Mother and daughter perceive Violet's death as the "first crack across the crust of life" and the news of Violet's death makes Karen imagine for the first time her father and family dying in disasters and accidents.[120] She resembles Colonel Bent, who ever since his big house Montebello was burnt during the Anglo-Irish war, fears losing relatives in sea disasters. As argued, Bowen perceived *The Titanic* sinking as the beginning of the end of the British Empire and the Anglo-Irish War and Treaty as

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[117] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 117-119.
[118] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 119.
[119] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 128.
[120] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 127.

the first stage in its dissolution. Aunt Violet's death in Ireland not only signals the end of the Michaelis family's pre-war existence but more importantly it acts as a metaphor for Britain and Ireland in the 1920s, with Britain hoping her Empire will outlive the century, despite Ireland's exodus.

Colonel Bent bought the Victorian Gothic villa Mount Iris with compensation money from the Free State government for the burning of Montebello. He and Violet are part of the relocated Anglo-Irish community forming Rushbrook, built on a cliff face overlooking Cobh harbour, "But Rushbrook is full of Protestant gentry, living down the misfortunes they once had. None of them as a matter of fact, had done too badly, or they would not be here, for most of the villas are miniature 'places' that need some keeping up. The nineteenth-century calm hanging over the colony makes the rest of Ireland a frantic or lonely dream."[121] Colonel Bent is preoccupied with watching ships passing or entering the harbour, using his telescope and observation point in the cliff-side villa. After Karen's ferry arrives from England, Colonel Bent watches for the American liner, a more important event, showing the way American power is surpassing British. The narrative informs the reader that Cobh harbour used to be Queenstown, but was renamed two years earlier in 1922 following the Anglo-Irish treaty.

Mrs Michaelis and her set view Ireland as a dangerous anomaly in 1924; it is no longer part of the United Kingdom, but neither can they understand it as "abroad":

> It was hard for Aunt Violet's family to see why the Bents could not have chosen to settle - for instance - in Devonshire. Perhaps Uncle Bill clung to the edges of his own soil...Florence had seemed less distant; the Michaelis connection all knew Florence well. 'Abroad' was inside their compass. But the idea of Aunt Violet in Ireland made them uncomfortable; it seemed insecure and pointless, as though she had chosen to settle on a raft.'[122]

This is the conundrum for the Anglo-Irish themselves, as well as for the British comprehending them: are these Anglo-Irish villas flotillas belonging to the departing British Empire, life-rafts from the metaphorically sunken ship of the Anglo-Irish community, or are they Irish survivors on the cusp of Ireland, waiting for the country to settle so they can re-integrate? Karen's perspective on the docking ferry registers the duality, "Yet this unstrange place was never to lose for Karen a troubling strangeness, a disturbing repose."[123]

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[121] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 75.
[122] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 76.

Karen's engagement to Ray with its promise of security unsettles her: "She had firm ground under her feet, but the world shrank; perhaps she was missing the margin of uncertainty."[124] Paradoxically her unsettling maiden voyage across the Irish Sea settles her. The ferry gives her self-agency. The narrative reiterates Karen is steady enough to pilot her own ship, but shifts her foundation from her London circle to the Irish Sea, "Having since last night left London behind, she already felt calm enough to steady a ship."[125] Bowen replaces domesticity with ocean-going voyaging, and in a significant reversal to *The Last September,* Ireland offers women an alternative to being imprisoned within historicized upper-middle-class English conventions. Karen believes she is only momentarily escaping her engagement by her fortnight's visit to aunt Violet in the familiar context of Rushbrook, Cork. But Karen is mistaken on both counts. Aunt Violet and Ireland are not familiar. Bowen draws parallels between the ship docking at Cobh and Karen's state of mind arriving into new territory: "The ship, checking, balanced uncertainly up the narrowing river."[126] A resistance to arrival overwhelms Karen. She wants to continue her sea passage instead of re-entering her mother's world in her aunt's home. But, ironically her aunt and uncle are a world apart from Chester Terrace and the English assumptions Karen carries with her. In fact Karen never enters Cobh, and Rushbrook becomes a continuation of her passage aboard the Irish ferry. The Irish Sea proves the first leg in Karen's continuous sea passage from London to Ireland, back to London, across the English Channel to Boulogne, back to Folkestone, then London, before departing for Germany to give birth to Leopold – the son of her affair with Max. The sea crossing and Ireland transform Karen into a class rebel who sabotages the Michaelis household 'ship'. Karen obtains a new perception of herself and Britain's changed position in the world vis-à-vis Ireland and Europe.

Passage to Mount Iris (and across the Irish Sea, and at the seaports of Boulogne and Folkestone) is not just an interstitial space, but is its own space with its own time, structure, logic and consequences.[127] The philosopher Susanne Langer correlates a seafaring life with nomadic cultures, writing that while ships and camps are geographically unfixed places, they are still self-sufficient cultural spaces.[128] Mount Iris and Irish and French ferries reshape Karen and her

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[123] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 76.
[124] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 70.
[125] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 70.
[126] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 71.
[127] Leed 73-78.
[128] Susanne Langer writes, "Nomadic cultures, or a cultural phenomenon like the seafaring life, do not inscribe themselves on any fixed place on earth. Yet a ship, constantly changing its location, is none the less a self-contained place, and so is a Gypsy camp, an Indian camp, or a circus camp, however often it shifts its geodetic bearings. Literally we say the camp is *in* a place; culturally it *is* a place." qtd. Leed 17

worldview giving her an outsider's dual perspective in both Irish and English society. Uncle Bill and Aunt Violet's complex Irish context challenges Karen's English point of view, which is a mixture of her mother's Edwardian 'camera-vision' or her socialist artistic friends' blurred vision. During her visit Karen sees behind the stereotype of an Anglo-Irish landowner. She notes that Bill's punctuality and sensitive watchfulness arises from 'the Troubles' and the knowledge of his wife's cancer. Bowen depicts Mount Iris as a meeting point between imperial Britain and the nineteenth century and nationalist Ireland and the twentieth century. The Bents' relocation shows that they, and the other Anglo-Irish in Tivoli, have moved with modernity. Through the character of Aunt Violet, an Edwardian English lady married to a former Anglo-Irish landowner, Bowen represents the transition between the old and new world politics in terms of gender. In her discussions with Karen, Violet outlines the generational difference between pre- and post-war British females in terms of education and mobility, "You always seem to know what you want to do next. I mean, going off for walks by yourself and knowing where to go. I never did much until people suggested things."[129] In contrast to her younger sister, Mrs Michaelis, Violet does not try to shape Karen according to gendered class codes.

In her sentence structure Bowen uses the Irish Sea *textually*, as a neutral space, mediating Violet's appraisal of Karen: "Karen, looking across the harbour one saw from here, felt her Aunt Violet studying her profile, no more intrusively than if they had been standing yards apart. It was disarming this disembodied closeness. But then the middle-aged woman withdrew a little, glancing down at her own breast as though Karen's clear-cut outline made her suddenly shy" - thereby metaphorically and syntactically establishing a distance between Karen's old identity and fluid future ones.[130] Aunt Violet does not privilege her own opinions; instead she sets off a reciprocal reconstruction vis-à-vis herself and Karen. Neither woman defines the other, but each feels the way uncertainly, realising that all representations of 'Women' are questionable. Karen appears to tower over Aunt Violet with her height, youth and experience of independent travel. Initially Karen's modern gaze seems to idealise Violet according to nineteenth-century evaluations of middle- and upper-class women as beautiful objects, "But you being you is enough for anybody."[131] However, Bowen inverts the 'masculinist' narrative technique of representing women in fiction as silent portraits. Her narrative self-consciously draws attention to and ruptures this silencing technique as Violet asserts herself against Karen's objectifying gaze:

'I meant selfishly,' she said. 'I was thinking more of myself. This was like hearing a

[129] Bowen, *The House in Paris*. 82.
[130] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 83
[131] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 83

> picture you had always loved to look at, dearer than a 'great' picture, sigh inside its frame. That it should be less sustaining to be than to see Aunt Violet struck you with remorse...Could she have wished to be trodden down in a riot, be a mark for anger or go down on a helpless abandoned ship? Her life here was very much confined, for she must on no account walk uphill. Did she ever think, Well, what if I walk uphill?'[132]

Karen hears Violet's words as a female sigh from within the frame of history and patriarchy, calling out against its containment. In *No Man's Land: Vol I. The War of the Words*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar investigate the ongoing battle between women and men for self-representation in fiction following the fall of Victorian concepts of 'femininity' and the rise of modernism.[133] For the first time Karen consciously looks with a dual perspective: gazing at Violet and metaphorically walking in her shoes. Bowen criticises the evaluation of women as an anchor or orientation point for the British male and his family. *The House in Paris* undermines not only the ideal of the Angel in the house but attacks the concept of English women as the metaphorical figureheads of the upper middle-class house-ships which form, as I have shown, a synecdoche for the Empire. Bowen's representation of Aunt Violet echoes not only Virginia Woolf's Mrs Ramsay in *To The Lighthouse* (1927), but also Virginia Woolf's real-life memories of her mother, Julia Stephen, and more significantly Bowen's memories of her own mother Florence.[134] Female mobility signifies dangerous rebellion. Karen wonders what it is like to be a female figurehead as she tries to break her immobility, live and steer her own destiny, even if that means becoming a wreck and sinking, rather than being saved and embalmed in patriarchy. The narrative describes the Michaelis' social world as chloroformed. Aunt Violet's rejection of England for an insecure Anglo-Irish raft no longer seems foolhardy to Karen. Karen's epiphany triggers the comparison she later makes between Mrs Michaelis holding onto an identity as an English figurehead and the gentle Violet's wild refusal to remain one.

Violet interrupts Karen's critical reassessment of her family values with a direct broadside: "'*are* you going to marry Ray?' 'That's what he asked this morning,' said Karen, startled. 'Then it's not quite settled?'"[135] The nuanced question unravels the engagement,

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[132] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 83-84

[133] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century,* vol. 1 xii. Gilbert and Gubar's three-volume study of modernism, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century,* is intended as a sequel to their study of nineteenth century literary representations of women, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.*

[134] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings* ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Pimlico, 2002) 1-31.

[135] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 84.

turning it into a hypothetical excursion "Aunt Violet had spoken of Karen's marriage as, simply, a pleasant plan for tomorrow."[136] Violet's view of a valid life as a footloose experiment is a marked contrast to her sister's view, where marriage stabilises and completes women. Violet turns from questioning Karen's engagement and desire for a quiet rebellion, to view a ship departing the harbour, 'and the whole question of marriage went out of focus' as both of them follow the trawler:

> 'I just want to watch that ship'. They both watched the trawler with red funnels clear the Lee estuary and steam down Cobh harbour towards the open sea...Stepping down from the parapet, she [Karen] stood frowning at the green stain on the toe of her white shoe. Aunt Violet, still watching the trawler, said: 'Was there anyone else you liked?' 'Yes, there was. But he made me miserable.'[137]

But the question of marriage, and its obverse sexual emancipation for women, has been put in focus, not out of focus, by the motion of the outgoing trawler. The ship signifies aunt Violet's approaching death and her regrets; for Karen it signifies independence, steering her own life-passage rather than becoming the helmswoman or figurehead of a London establishment, navigated along imperial lines. For the reader the ship signifies the historical transition between Edwardian and post-war female identities and mobility.

Violet's second question, asked while watching the trawler, connects Karen with the Anglo-French Max Ebhart and her desire to reshape herself outside her English social circle by engaging with European influences: "She wanted to be with some gaunt, contemptuous person who twisted life his own way..."[138] Max is like a sculptor, outside the British system, questioning and shaping his life according to the present moment. As discussed in chapter one, Bowen portrays English purity, sexuality and marriage politics in terms of footwear: English girls wear white shoes, English matrons wear sensible brogues. Karen steps from the parapet, as if she is stepping down from the pedestal of iconic British femaleness. Her spoilt white shoes display her mobility as the first step from pure English girlhood into an illicit affair that will blend English and French bloodlines and give birth to Leopold, a new hyphenated-English child, as a possible hope for the future of England's upper middle class without its Empire.

Bowen ends *The House in Paris* in 1934 with Leopold being collected by the quintessential interwar Englishman Ray Forrestier, to meet his mother Karen in Versailles; and to

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[136] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 85.
[137] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 86.
[138] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 79.

discover whether the three are to return to England as a family. For the meeting of Karen and Leopold, Bowen purposefully chooses Versailles, the site of the 1919 Peace Settlement, which led to an upsurge in militant nationalism, right-wing politics and anti-Semitism. Leopold is dressed in a child's sailor suit and bobs in Ray's wake, "Ray strode like a robber with one babe through a wood. Their inappropriateness to each other made people stare. Leopold had in blazing gold round his cap the fierce name of a battleship. His silence fell in with Ray's as imperfectly as his step - he seemed to be buoyed along."[139] In the homeless, Jewish, Anglo-French Leopold, Bowen symbolises the contemporary plight of Jewish and ethnic minorities across Central Europe, and of hybrid British, such as the Anglo-Irish. Leopold represents the fact that these minorities will look to England for security, but he also represents the fact that England and Britain's future was precariously dependent upon her hybrid British citizens. Equally their future is dependent on Whitehall's policy towards them since the hybrid British must be given a home and parity with their fellow citizens. Bowen prophetically foresees the crucial position of hybrid British: the Indians, the other dominions, European refugees (and the Anglo-Irish) who will play a significant role in shaping British identity, not only in World War II but later, during the process of de-colonisation, in the 1950s and '60s.

[139] Bowen, *The House in Paris* 238.

Chapter 4

THE BOWEN 707 TAKE-OFF:
Bicycles, Motorcars And Aeroplanes

I Bicycles and birdlike liberty

Elizabeth Bowen's oeuvre engages thematically and formally with modernity and the central concerns of modernists. Virginia Woolf, T S Eliot and James Joyce explore in their writing the influence of history upon the present moment, in a world in which developments in communication and transport technologies are shrinking the distances between people. Like Woolf, Eliot and Joyce, Bowen realised that in the twentieth century individuals across the world increasingly shared the same the moment. In the previous three chapters I have identified the way Bowen's travel and vehicular metaphors incorporate into her writing the impact of history upon individual lives. This final chapter charts Bowen's literary evaluation of the individual (and art's) ability to break with the past throughout the seismic cultural shifts in the war-torn twentieth century.

The chapter title, from Sean O'Faolain, is an apt characterisation of Bowen's literary style, "the Bowen 707 or the Take-Off style, which lifts her into the skies of her poetic imagination."[1] O'Faolain astutely draws links between Bowen's style and the new aviation technology. His caption underpins the view expressed in this thesis that Bowen is a central British and Irish modernist and that it is her vehicular metaphors drawn from contemporary developments in technology that establish her literary engagement with modernity and the project of earlier modernists. Bowen's new metaphors not only represent but enact, at the level of plot and structure, both her society's attempts and her fellow modernists' (Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield) attempts to understand historical change and new gender roles.

In 1905 Bowen simultaneously became conscious for the first time of herself not only as a private individual but as a member of humankind, and that her private moment was shared by

[1] Sean O'Faolain, *London Review of Books* (4-17 March 1982), 16, qtd in Hugh Haughton, introduction to Elizabeth Bowen *To the North* xvii-xviii.

others across the world; that it was affected by history and, "that time held war."[2] Significantly the Dublin traffic symbolised the movement of history, time and warfare closing in on Bowen but Dublin traffic also represented the reverse, a movement away from Irish and British history and Anglo-Irish decline. The traffic signified for Bowen the chance to enter the modern world in twentieth-century England. In *Pictures and Conversations* Bowen separates herself and her playmates from Folkestone's petty bourgeois "*rentier*" community who trusted in imperial railways and steamships but were suspicious of twentieth-century vehicular technologies because they threatened the social fabric of England: "about motorcars and their offspring motor-bikes there continued, for longer than may be realised now, to be something mythical and phenomenal - even hostile? "Flying machines," at the start were less ill-seen: few and freakish, they constituted a threat only to aeronauts who took off in them."[3] Over time motorcars offered mobility to the lower middle and middle classes and as Virginia Woolf identifies in her essay 'The Cheapening of Motor-cars' (1924), and in her novel *Between the Acts* (1941), they transformed English landscape and culture.[4] However unlike the "*rentier*" parts of English society Bowen is liberated by the new bicycles, motorcars and aeroplanes which became the hall-marks of the cultural changes characterising the twentieth century and its new consciousness, "Propaganda against speed went out to children. One line of attack called it "against nature". Its intensifications, however, *we* were to discover, were good for art."[5] Bowen's wording, her syntax and italics formally describes and enacts the confrontation between nineteenth-century values and modernism. Unlike Virginia Woolf Bowen positively identifies the liberating potential of bicycles, motorcars and aeroplanes for the modern novel and the English language. She uses these vehicles as metaphors of change in her work, to represent the new complex reality. However, like Virginia Woolf and other modernists such as E. M. Forster, Bowen perceived the dual danger of these new vehicles to either destroy life and civilisation or to reinforce traditional gender roles, thereby entrapping individuals in history and nineteenth-century family values.

Bicycles were influential in Bowen's development as a writer. Bicycling as a child around Kent in 1912 liberated Bowen and her imagination from her past and her personal family tragedies: her father's illness, her flight from Ireland to England with her mother, and her mother's death in 1912. As a writer Bowen used her early memories of bicycling in Kent to

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[2] Bowen, 'Horse Show', *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 486

[3] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 43.

[4] Virginia Woolf's polemic 'The Cheapening of Motor-cars' was a paragraph contributed to the 'From Alpha to Omega' column in the *National & Athenaeum*, 27 September 1924. Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf Vol. III 1919-1924* 440.

evaluate the pull between both history and the traditional novel and new gender roles and literary styles. Early in *Pictures and Conversations* Bowen recalls the importance of her first bicycle, a Raleigh, which her aunt Laura gave to the grieving thirteen-year-old Bowen shortly after her mother Florence died. Florence had prevented Bowen cycling because of its dangerous speed but now in Bowen's words, "...Aunt Laura with whom I went to live at Harpenden was herself seldom off a bicycle, so was calmer: once she considered me competent, she procured for me a glittering brand-new Raleigh. "Now *this* is yours," she said."[6] Bowen's ellipsis marks her mother's fears - one of Bowen's childhood companions died when he was thrown off his bicycle - but it also marks her mother's death, the mother and daughter's flight from Dublin and Anglo-Irish history and Bowen's continued separation from her father in Cork. In a way, Bowen's Raleigh replaces her mother and becomes her confederate and means of escaping her troubled past. It is a brand-new machine, unchained to the past, "This, my first machine, had an intrinsic beauty."[7] It also gives Bowen independent mobility, whereas until this point she has been shunted on trains and ships between Dublin, Cork and Kent on the orders of her family. The newfound liberty of her wheels helps Bowen both mourn and escape her mother's death for periods of time, by exploring alone the interior of her new territory in Kent and Hertfordshire. The quality of escape is hinted at in the bicycle manufacturer's brand name "Raleigh", the freedom of cycling echoing Sir Walter Raleigh's 'Voyages of Discovery' of the sixteenth century.

Significantly in Bowen's mind her Raleigh both frees her from the 'strong box' of history and connects her with her family myth of Colonel Bowen's 'hawk-in-flight', and with her mother's birdlike spirit struggling to escape Mount Temple's petty bourgeois restrictions, "And it opened for me an era of all but flying, which roads emptily crossing the airy, gold-gorsy Common enhanced. Nothing since has equalled that birdlike freedom."[8] Her description of cycling around Kent echoes her opening to *Bowen's Court* (1942), "The country conceals its pattern of life, which can only wholly be seen from an aeroplane."[9] As previously argued, Bowen emulates her ancestral hawk in staking out an imaginative historical and geographical territory in England, Ireland and Europe, "From the air you discover unknown reaches of river, chapels, schools, bridges, forlorn graveyards, interknit by a complex of unravelled roads."[10] Cycling gives Bowen the travel metaphors and arial perspective which form the hallmark of her modernist style and

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[5] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 44.
[6] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 42.
[7] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 42.
[8] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 42.
[9] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 4-5.

method for evaluating the interlocking impact of history and gender roles on individual lives, and the possibility and cost of out-flying history. Bowen's sense that cycling is birdlike underpins her bird imagery throughout her fiction where females are represented as cuckoos, swallows, hummingbirds and kingfishers.

Bowen writes that bicycling is "a theme-song in *A World of Love* and part of *The Little Girls*."[11] In these two novels published in 1955 and 1963 respectively, Bowen uses bicycle metaphors and the different life-styles of Irish and English women born before and after World War I to cross-examine the false dawn and progressive social change promised by new bicycle technologies and the peace settlements following World War I and II but countered by the developing 'Cold War'. *A World of Love* is set in a fictional Anglo-Irish big house "Montefort" in North Cork in Bowen's present tense of 1954, but it is haunted by the past, in particular Montefort's last patriarch Guy Danby who was killed in 1917 on the Western Front. Bowen creates a complex metaphor out of Guy's twenty-year-old second cousin Jane Danby and her bicycle. Jane and her bicycle unchain Montefort and its residents from their past in the novel. Bowen uses her bicycle metaphors and Jane to create a circular and web-like narrative which, emulating her artistic style in *Bowen's Court*, develops her experiment with the modern novel form, by counter pointing a masculinist linear narrative with a feminine poetic and metaphorical one. Bowen wrote the novel after leaving London in 1952 to return to Bowen's Court and live there permanently in, in her view, the promising circumstances of post-World War II Ireland, and to escape the new socialist politics and consumerist culture in 1950s England.[12] Unfortunately Alan Cameron's death in August of that same year put Bowen's planned return to Bowen's Court at risk. Despite her assertion to May Sarton that *A World of Love* was a "joy to write", the novel evinces an elegiac, lyrical, pain-ridden aesthetics of wish-fulfilment.[13] Throughout the 1950s Bowen struggled to live and hold onto Bowen's Court. However, in a letter to William Plomer, written from Bowen's Court, dated 6th May 1958, Bowen celebrates the 1950s as the decade in which she is realising her childhood dreams of "grown-up" autonomy, "I wonder how you feel in

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[10] Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* 4-5.
[11] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 42.
[12] In a letter to William Plomer, written from Bowen's Court at the end of World War II, Bowen writes critically of the new winds of change in British politics, with Labour replacing the Conservatives, "Selfishly speaking I'd much rather live my life here. I've been coming gradually unstuck from England for a long time. I have adored England since 1940 because of the stylishness Mr Churchill gave it, but I've always felt, 'When Mr Churchill goes, I go'. I can't stick all these little middle-class Labour wets with their Old London School of Economics ties and their women." (Sep 24 1945.) Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 207.
[13] Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen* 200. In her introduction to the Vintage edition of *A World of Love* Selina

the 1950s? Personally I am enjoying this epoch - it is really the first one, it seems to me, in which I've enjoyed being 'grown up' as much as I expected to do when I was a child."[14] In *A World of Love* Bowen connects cycling as a thirteen-year-old girl around Hertfordshire and Kent with her current return to Bowen's Court in the 1950s and her attempts to exorcise herself and her Irish home of history.

Bowen deploys her modernist hawk-eye narrative perspective in the opening paragraphs and throughout the novel to circle birdlike, then move from the rising sun and cloudless sky to fly over the North Cork countryside and home in on the dilapidated big house Montefort with its sleeping occupants:

> The sun rose on a landscape still pale with the heat of the day before. There was no haze, but a sort of coppery burnish out of the air lit on flowing fields, rocks, the face of the one house and the cliff of limestone overhanging the river. The river gorge cut deep through the uplands. This light at this hour, so unfamiliar, brought into being a new world - painted, expectant, empty, intense. The month was June, of a summer almost unknown; for this was a country accustomed to late wakenings, to daybreaks humid and overcast. At all times open and great with distance the land this morning seemed to enlarge again, throwing the mountains back almost out of view in the south of Ireland's amazement at being cloudless.[15]

Bowen delineates Montefort's degeneration from its eighteenth-century inception: it is now an inferior annexe of the farmhouses that it once lorded it over. Her complex narrative technique echoes her opening to Bowen's Court and announces *A World of Love* will throw light on a number of Bowen's concerns: Anglo-Irish, Catholic-Irish and British history in the first part of the twentieth century; changing gender roles; and vehicular technologies as the agents of the cultural changes they symbolise. The first lines covertly refer to *The Heat of the Day* (1949), Bowen's preceding novel about both World Wars. For the only time Bowen opens a novel in June, the month of her birthday. The dawning sun marks a number of literary and historical births and deaths. The words "burning" and "water" are repeated as metonymic variations throughout the first paragraphs and the rest of the novel. The variations echo each other and link with burning and water motifs in Bowen's earlier writing, in particular *The Last September* and

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Hastings unquestioningly asserts the novel was a joy for Bowen (1955; London: Vintage, 1999) 3.

[14] Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 209. Tellingly, Bowen goes on to complain about the constant need to work, which is preventing her from writing letters to her friends, and the cost of living which is preventing her from visiting them in London: "The only sad thing is that, owing to the necessity to work so hard, I have altogether ceased to be able to write letters - as I used to do, if you remember, copiously in the 1930s...My reasons for not more often coming to London are of the most banal kind: it's all so expensive. In New York I earn money as well as spend it." 209-210.

[15] Elizabeth Bowen, *A World of Love* 9.

Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood. These metonymic repetitions create a complex metaphor so that the fields of southern Ireland become a cooling after-flow reflecting the destructive world wars and internecine wars of the previous forty years or so.

Despite the molten opening *A World of Love* is an optimistic novel reflecting the cooling down of warfare and international and interfamilial aggression in actuality. The novel's heroine Jane Danby averts her face from the past, which has consumed some of her identity and will. It is an impostor or cruel god that can only be retold through the perspective and bias of a teller, "she knew no one, apart from her own contemporaries, who did not speak of it either with falsifying piety or with bitterness."[16] At the opening, Jane cannot conceive of a future but only reflect on history and resolutely determine not to add more heat to her present:

> Like someone bidden to enter an already overcrowded and overcharged room, she paused for as long as possible on the threshold, waiting for something to subside, for the floor to empty or the air to clear. The passions and politics of her family so much resembled those of the outside world that she made little distinction between the two. It was her hope that this might all die down, from lack of recruits or fuel or, most of all, if more people were to take less notice. She did what she could by adding no further heat.[17]

Bowen juxtaposes new gender and Irish identities in the 1950s with pre-war social codes and historical fact. The contrasting values are personified respectively by the older Danbys: Guy Danby (who died in World War I), his cousin Antonia Danby, and their "by-blow" half-cousin Fred Danby and his wife Lilia; and by the younger generation: Fred and Lilia's two daughters, Jane and the younger twelve-year-old Maud. Antonia inherited Montefort and Lilia from Guy. The English Lilia, from "suburbia merging into the Thames Valley" was Guy's seventeen-year-old fiancé.[18] Transplanted from her middle-class English sphere, schooled for marriage instead of a career, Lilia is portrayed as a piece of shipwrecked flotsam that Antonia fails for ten years to place in any job. Finally Antonia arranges a marriage of convenience between Fred and Lilia, and settles them at Montefort: killing two birds with one stone. Except for a brief honeymoon period and reunion, producing two daughters, Fred and Lilia's marriage is unhappy, haunted by memories of Guy. The family and Antonia are in limbo in Montefort; it is unclear whether Antonia, the titular owner of Montefort, is actually its owner, as the house slips further from her financial control into Fred's practical control. Meanwhile Guy, the spiritual owner, must be laid to rest, releasing the dead and the living from the cycle of Irish history. The fictional situation at

[16] Bowen, *A World of Love* 35.
[17] Bowen, *A World of Love* 34-35.

Montefort illustrates the real situation of the Anglo-Irish in 1950 in relation to Irish politics, "One could only say, it has lasted for twenty-one years, owing perhaps partly to all parties' reluctance to sitting down and having anything out."[19] Like Antonia with Fred, the Anglo-Irish have lived uncertainly in their big houses for the past twenty-five years in post-independence Ireland, unsure whether or not they are Irish citizens.

Significantly, by leaving Montefort and walking outside Jane Danby breaks the novel's opening stasis and heralds the new dawn:

> A girl came out of the house, and let herself through the gate in the fence. Wearing a trailing Edwardian muslin dress, she stepped out slowly towards the obelisk, shading her eyes...Having come to a stand-still she drew a breath...Afterwards, refolding the letter, she took a long look round at all the country, as though following one deep draught up with one of another kind. Kindled by summer though cool in nature, she was a beauty. The cut of her easy golden hair was anachronistic over the dress she wore: this, her height and something half naïve half studied about her management of the sleeves and skirts made her like a boy actor in woman's clothes, while what was classical in her grace made her appear to belong to some other time...it was a face perfectly ready to be a woman's, but not yet so, even in its transcendency this morning.

Jane's awakening sexuality coincides with the multiple promise of a new dawn. The 1950s heralded not only a new decade but also a new world order, following the creation of the United Nations in 1945 and NATO in 1949, with America and the USSR as the centres of world power instead of Western Europe. It supposedly heralded a dawning era in sexual equality, spearheaded by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949).[20] Bowen's opening echoes her opening to *The Death of the Heart* (1938) with Anna and Portia Quayne separately walking in Regent's Park, London, avoiding each other and the feminised interior of their upper-class London residence in Windsor Terrace. Here Jane's movement outdoors contrasts with Antonia and Lilia, the older generation of women, who are immobilised within Montefort and consumed by the heat. Antonia sleeps like the dead in her bedchamber while Lilia is a melting "snow maiden".

Jane disinters an Edwardian dress from Montefort's attic and with the dress a bundle of Guy's love letters. They are assumed to be for Lilia, but the narrative hints that Guy betrayed Lilia and the letters are addressed to another woman. The Edwardian dress has "angel sleeves"

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[18] Bowen, *A World of Love* 15.
[19] Bowen, *A World of Love* 14.
[20] See Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945 : women, family, work and the State in the Post-War years* and Smith 174-179.

and throughout *A World of Love* Jane represents complex and contentious fears about gender and female sexuality in the twentieth century. Clothed in the Edwardian dress with her short 1950s haircut Jane signals a continuity and change from old Edwardian femininity, signified in Lilia, the womanly goddess figure whose promised blossoming was stunted first by Guy's premature death and then by her infantilising position at Montefort. Lyn Pykett argues that there were two types of New Woman. [21] The first was the late nineteenth-century "social-purity feminists" who appropriated Victorian conceptions of the ideal middle-class wife and mother figure, planted at the centre of the bourgeois domestic sphere, to combat patriarchy. In Pykett's words: "The social-purity feminists' version of the New Woman has some striking resemblances to the womanly woman of the anti-feminists. She is the magna mater, the Universal Mother, who will preside over the birth of a New Order in which both men and women will be regenerated...the New Woman must "banish the brute"."[22] The second type of New Woman, the "liberal reforming or socialist feminists" emerged at the turn of the century and she redefined "woman and the feminine by developing a philosophy of individual rights."[23] Bowen's construction of Jane Danby shows that the turn-of-the-century debate about defining woman and gender (the duality and contradictions in the figure of the New Woman and the trajectories that twentieth-century women and feminism would take) is on-going into the 1950s, affecting the post-World War II generation. Jane's 1950s style of mobile and independent femaleness is only a varnish, thanks to her education and professional qualification, which covers the same insecurities and lack of opportunities that Lilia and to a lesser extent Antonia suffer. Bowen depicts Jane as her mother's daughter. She shows the conflict young women in the 1950s face in trying to construct a gendered identity in opposition to and as a continuation of Edwardian and inter-war concepts of what it is to be a woman. In Bowen's opinion the difficulties facing young women in the 1950s parallels the difficulties facing young women at the turn of the century.

Antonia pays for Jane's education "first at [an] expensive boarding school, then abroad, lately at a select London secretarial college" so as to give Jane a spring-board for economic independence.[24] Unlike previous Bowen neophytes, except for Sydney Warren in *The Hotel* (1927), Jane has realistic career opportunities anywhere, free of Montefort or marriage.[25] Jane is

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[21] Pykett 14-17, 38-43 and 54-67.
[22] Pykett 39.
[23] Pykett 39.
[24] Bowen, *A World of Love* 14.
[25] In *The Hotel* Sydney Warren is training to be a doctor, but she is on holiday with her cousin because the fact of studying for exams has over taxed her brain and led to 'hyperaesthesia'. It is unclear in *The Hotel* whether or not Sydney will continue her medical studies.

visiting Montefort before beginning her professional life. However Jane has only been to a London secretarial college and not university. She cannot enter any of the male-dominated professions such as medicine, law, or business. She can only work in a supporting role for male bosses. Antonia determines a London career will resolve Jane's romantic infatuation with Guy and his letters, "Just when had you thought of beginning to earn your living?"[26] Lilia correctly notes education differentiates Jane from herself, but the narrative reveals Jane's European and English education is merely a varnish covering her inherited Anglo-Irish genes and mother's figure, " - in extremity she was her mother's daughter, baffled, unable to word thoughts [*sic*]. Her sunny outward 'finish', work of Antonia, had been but a certain grace - behind all lay misgiving and ineptitude."[27] Jane's free movements and future plans sharply contrasts with Lilia's agoraphobic terror of the modern world beyond Montefort. Entrapped in a stifling role, but lacking a profession and thereby an escape route, Lilia is panic-stricken at Antonia's suggestion that she also visit London. London's unfamiliar labyrinthine streets and anonymity terrify Lilia. By contrast they attract Jane, helping her escape her infatuation with Guy, and Montefort's unsettled history: "She had better get back to London...She pictured streets, and herself anonymous. Why not bolt now before Antonia could stop her...she recollected she had no money: hesitating halfway out of the woods she beheld the Daimler."[28] Jane's self-propelled futurity, signalled in the novel by her bicycle and career opportunities, differentiates her from Antonia and Lilia who are circumscribed by the past and traditional roles.

Maintaining her hawk-eye modernist style Bowen disrupts the linear narrative and weaves back and forwards in time, beginning chapter two the evening before the dawn opening in chapter one, and forcing the reader to put 'two and two' together and realise the significance of Jane's bicycle both in the plot and also for Bowen's modernist experimentation in freeing a feminine consciousness from masculinist formal conventions. It is the bicycle which propels the storyline and the rhythmical narrative style; it is the reason Jane walks out of Montefort in the novel's opening paragraphs wearing the Edwardian dress and reading Guy's World War I love letters:

> Jane, the evening before, had come home alone. The Fête when darkness began to fall reached its conclusion in outdoor dancing, on the lawn of the castle which had been the scene all day...She left on an impulse. Music followed her over the empty country as she bicycled home through the lanes between there and Montefort; dust wraithlike rose from under her wheels...The air through which she was swiftly

[26] Bowen, *A World of Love* 128.
[27] Bowen, *A World of Love* 54.
[28] Bowen, *A World of Love* 54.

> passing was mauve, and tense with suspended dew: her own beautiful restlessness was everywhere.[29]

The bicycle ensures Jane's independence, enabling her to leave the local annual "Hunt Fête" early in answer to an unspoken inner communion between herself and the countryside around her home Montefort. Bowen's description of Jane's flight home echoes her own retelling of Colonel Bowen and his hawk's mythical communion with Celtic Ireland. Unlike Antonia, Lilia and Maud, Jane is not reliant on Fred and the Ford motorcar or a chivalrous stranger to see her home, but significantly cycles home alone. Bowen turns Jane's homeward flight into a gender reversal of the 'Sleeping Beauty' fairytale. Astride her bicycle Jane is a twentieth-century, female, Anglo-Irish, avatar of the fairytale prince on his steed. In *A World of Love* Montefort is the cursed castle, and on a first reading the ghostly Guy seems the enchanted prince in need of reawakening; but in fact Jane's cycling and her exhumation of the Edwardian dress and of Guy's letters exorcise Guy who symbolises the influence of history upon the present. Instead Jane awakens and frees Antonia, Lilia and Fred from their limbo in Montefort. Comically, the local families at the Hunt Fête are surprised to see the Danbys; each year they forget the Danbys exist and believe Montefort is an empty ruin; in fact the farouche Danbys attend the Fête to prove to themselves and the county that they do exist – something that becomes more difficult each year: "*There* they were, still themselves, still alive; forgotten since this time last year they had gone on existing, inside those gates knotted shut with a chain."[30] The situation of the Danbys (and of Antonia in particular) at Montefort reflects Bowen's own situation at Bowen's Court in 1954. The period between 1952 and 1954 was the first time in Bowen's life that she had lived permanently at Bowen's Court, instead of staying there for short periods or holidays. Although Bowen was well known in Farahy and her locale, it would be the first time in living memory for many of the North Cork inhabitants that a Bowen had lived at Bowen's Court. There is a sense that Bowen has mischievously used her own experience, visiting her local towns such as the farmer's market at Mitchelstown, for her fictional representation of the Danbys' and Antonia's excursion to the Hunt Fête. As mentioned, following the premature death of Alan Cameron in 1952, Bowen found it increasingly difficult to maintain her big house. Equally Bowen found London too expensive. Cut off from the lifeline of her literary friends and publishing circles in London, Bowen, like Antonia, lived in isolated, economic uncertainty at Bowen's Court. Echoing the fairytale Prince, Jane "unchained the gates and rode up the avenue" to the house and its enchanted occupants:

> The house, nothing as she approached it but a black outline, was deserted – doors

[29] Bowen, *A World of Love* 26-27.
[30] Bowen, *A World of Love* 28.

> and windows open, but not a lamp lit. Neither glad nor sorry but mystified, and still with that inexplicable feeling of being summoned, she looked into all the rooms – remains of supper were on a table: having come in, had the others gone out again? She scarcely wondered. For her the house was great with something: she *had* been sent for, and in haste. Why? Only attics now remained to be searched; and how could they (she reflected, for she was practical) show anything?[31]

Bowen develops her twentieth-century retelling of the 'Sleeping Beauty' myth. Life in the big house is in abeyance under one hundred years of decline, marking time since the Anglo-Irish Union. In ghostly darkness the house appears suddenly deserted with the remains of habitation lingering on, as if sleep has suddenly fallen on the occupants, spiriting them away in the middle of their living - emulating the vanished household in Sleeping Beauty's castle. But the abandoned supper brings to mind refugees during the previous World Wars who departed their homes in haste upon endless travels. Finally, Montefort's black outline, its open doors, windows and unlit lamp spookily resemble a burnt ruin and recall Danielstown at the end of *The Last September*. The open door and unlit lamp signal the fire has already been, or alternatively they position the cycling Jane as a friend or foe - someone who will add the final spark to the festering tinder-box of the house or alternatively preserve it.

Jane's restless and burgeoning sexuality hunts throughout the house, leading her to the Edwardian dress and Guy's letters. Her raid shakes the precarious status quo and triggers personal anxieties in her family members. But as argued, Jane is not a firebrand; she seeks to redress the status quo and quench the bitter embers of her family's and country's history, "Yes, so far as she was against anything she was against the past; and she felt entitled to raid, despoil, rifle, balk or cheat it in any possible way. She gloried in having set free the dress."[32] Montefort is not deserted or cursed, only diseased. The inhabitants' reaction to Jane's youthful sexuality reveals anxieties about their positions regarding gender roles and identity both in Montefort and in the broader context of Ireland and the world in 1954. Initially Jane is unconcerned for her family members and the effects of her desires upon them. Lilia lies somnolent upon the couch, like 'Sleeping Beauty', suffering from over-exposure at the Fête and betrayal by Fred and the Ford. Jane does not see her as she swiftly glides through the house answering the mysterious summons. Strolling outdoors Fred and Antonia hear the reassuring "homecoming rattle of Jane's bicycle

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[31] Bowen, *A World of Love* 27.
[32] Bowen, *A World of Love* 35.

along the ruts of the avenue" but cannot discover Jane when they return in search of her.[33] But as the novel proceeds Jane feels culpable and bridges the gap between herself and her mother by returning the letters to Lilia and Antonia. Finally, en route to meet Richard Priam's aeroplane, Jane resolves to construct her own future, independent of Antonia's money, Montefort or Ireland; but her future (as I will show later in this chapter) is contingent upon a 1950s style traditional marriage and an American husband.

Bowen wrote *The Little Girls* (1963) in England and America shortly after Bowen's Court was demolished in 1960 by a local farmer to whom she had sold it in 1959.[34] The novel is split into three parts and echoes the structure of her earlier novel *The House in Paris* (1935). The first and final parts of *The Little Girls* are set in Bowen's present tense in 1962 but the middle section moves back in time to late summer in 1914. Bowen critics such as Hermione Lee and Maud Ellmann focus on the theme of "loss of the past" in *The Little Girls*, reading the empty treasure coffer as Bowen's personal lament for the end of Bowen's Court and the Anglo-Irish in the 1960s world.[35] The loss of Bowen's Irish home and the politics of decolonisation do indeed influence her writing of the novel, as citizens from Britain's former colonies and current Commonwealth states, such as India or Malta, appear in the storyline in the present tense. The middle section, set back in 1914, holds the crux of the story. The significance of a bicycle and bicycling metaphors in relation to the three schoolgirls and their project to bury some personal items, as archaeological artefacts, is central to Bowen's late modernist experimentation, with her interlocking themes of history and gender in the 1960s. While praising the "elegiac second section" for its parting picnic, Neil Corcoran discounts *The Little Girls* as a "deeply flawed book" suggesting that its "restless flurry of plotting...seems almost haplessly out of key with the haunting desolation of its theme."[36] In contrast, I do not see the novel as hurriedly or haplessly plotted, but rather as a continuation of Bowen's innovative restructuring of the modern novel form. She further disrupts the linear narrative of history and the traditional novel with her bicycle "theme song" that, while developed in the 1914 middle section, echoes throughout the text. Bowen carefully plotted the three sections so that the links between bicycle, chain and birdlike metaphors develop her formal experimentation and scrutiny of British history and contradictions in social attitudes to and treatment of female sexuality between 1914 and 1962.

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[33] Bowen, *A World of Love* 28.
[34] Alfred Knopf in America first published *The Little Girls* in 1963; it was published in England by Jonathan Cape in 1964.
[35] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 190-196; Ellmann 194-199.
[36] Corcoran 7-8.

The Little Girls focuses on the disrupted friendship between three girls/women who as thirteen-year-old school friends in 1914, were known to each other as Diana "Dicey" Piggett; Clare "Mumbo" Burkin-Jones; and Sheila "Sheikie" Beaker. The school friends do not see each other again until 1962, when they are the widowed Dinah Delacroix, the divorced Clare Burkin-Jones and the married Sheila Artworth. As the narrative jumps back and forwards between 1914 and 1962, Bowen obliquely reveals as the three females slowly tell their own stories, that Dinah and Clare have a lesbian desire for each other and that Sheila had a frustrated desire for a bohemian lifestyle. Following World War I Sheila had tried to become a dancer and lived with her lover. However post-war sexual politics and the resumption of traditional values force her to exchange liberty for a conventional marriage as Mrs Trevor Artworth. Sections I and III reveal the cost of the women's suppressed desires and the possibility of historical change freeing them from limiting gendered identities and past capitulations to the dictates of conventional society.

Section II interrogates the gender debates at the turn of the century which shaped the girls' characters and influenced their destinies. It is set in a fictional seaside town "Southstone" and girls' boarding school, "St Agatha's" in Kent, in July 1914. Southstone is based on the real seaside town of Folkestone where Bowen first lived with her mother in 1906 before moving down the road to Hythe. On the other hand, St Agatha's, apart from one link with Harpenden Hall - the school Bowen attended after her mother died - is an imaginary composite of a pre-war English girls' school.[37] The distinction is important because in this section Bowen criticises petty bourgeois Edwardian conventions symbolised by Southstone - the fictional parallel of Folkestone's "*rentier*" society - and St Agatha's which is negatively presented as an institution furthering patriarchal ideas about gender and women's education. Bowen draws upon and parodies the gendering language and imagery used by 'New Woman' writers who at the turn of the century challenged the conventions of the realist and naturalist novel.[38] Firstly, echoing Miss Paullie's establishment in *The Death of the Heart*, Bowen opens section II with the three schoolgirls and their classmates caught within a masculinist education system. The classroom is stifling, the girls are surrounded by bottled "specimens" that indicate the way females are labelled, gendered and circumscribed by an Edwardian education policy influenced by botany and

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[37] In *Pictures and Conversations* Bowen writes, "St Agatha's is imaginary, in that it has no physical origin...St Agatha's *has* one link with Harpenden Hall, for a school garden in Hertfordshire (not Kent) was the scene of an act that survives in *The Little Girls*." 46-47.
[38] Pykett 54-77.

medicine.[39] More than this Bowen asserts the need for a gender-balanced literary aesthetics by depicting the stifled Diana, Sheila and Clare listening to and recounting the works of three male British poets. The poets' works mean little to the girls directly. Sheila would prefer to dance than recite a segment of William Wordsworth's *Prelude,* Clare exchanges William Allingham's *Fairies* for Sir Francis Hasting Doyle's jingoistic "The Private of the Buffs" because she can relate it to her father Major Burkin-Jones whose Kent regiment is preparing to fight in the approaching World War I. The visions of Britishness recounted by these poets will be superseded by the aftermath of the War and the concomitant crises in gender and representation.

The narrative switches from the classroom to the lunch break, but the St. Agatha's girls are still framed within Edwardian beliefs regarding female behaviour. They are prevented from running around and forced to protect their femininity from the July sun by sitting in the shade or lying down in their school grounds, "The girls were not running about. Everywhere was dotted with butcher-blue, but it kept still."[40] Bowen focuses on the frustrated immobility of Diana, Sheila and Clare, "Yet they envied Miss Ardingfay her free gait. What would kill them if it continued was inactivity. With sharp, clean thumb-nails Sheila split blades of grass - she sat up. Diana lay on her back, now and then drumming with her heels. As Sheila bent frowning over her task, the immaculate shell-pink of her skull showed along the division of her hair...Cravingly, the addicted children thought about movement - when again could it start, how most could it be? Pure vision was Sheila's...Sheila was allowed a bike, on which she skimmed everywhere she liked."[41] Out of the three girls, Bowen sardonically makes the wealthy middle-class Sheila Beaker the owner of the bicycle. Bowen introduces Sheila as the quintessential English schoolgirl, "Southstone's wonder child" and a natural performer. But Bowen undercuts the idealised image of Sheila by showing she is the most conscious performer of Edwardian femininity which she simultaneously rebels against with her bicycle and exploits.

In the context of *The Little Girls* Sheila is encompassed by Edwardian views on education and female gentility, signified in her mother's choice of Wordsworth poem, clothes and hairstyle for her and the St Agatha's uniform: enclosing Sheila in the dress codes that define an

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[39] See Ellis, *Man and Woman: A Study of Secondary and Tertiary Sexual Characteristics*; and in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol 6 Sex in Relation to Society* Ellis quotes Miss H Ballantine, director of Vassar College Gymnasium in correspondence with Professor W Thomas "I do not believe women can ever, no matter what the training, approach men in their physical achievements" and Ellis commends her for 'wisely' adding, 'I see no reason why they ever should.' 75-76

[40] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Little Girls* 72.

[41] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 72-73.

elegant, Edwardian middle-class child. Sheila's hair, evenly constrained in tight plaits, and her "flawless pink skull", symbolise ideals of girlish purity. For Bowen a girl's hairstyle encodes bourgeois expectations on decorum for middle- and upper-class females, depending upon their age. The hairstyle denotes the tightening restrictions placed upon women. In *The Last September* Viola changes her hairstyle from a lively pigtail into a woman's chignon the day after leaving school, and the new hairstyle makes Lois realise her friend had only been acting a schoolgirl and had now come into her own as a finished woman.[42] Bowen uses violent words, "her head looked as though it had been slightly split. Should it fall apart, it would do so in two perfectly even halves..." to describe Sheila's pig-tails which leave a fragment of "shell pink" skull showing.[43] Bowen is not so much corroborating the Edwardian belief that girls are fragile but mimicking a "feminine toilette" to show the violence of Edwardian prescriptions on girls. Bowen uses ellipsis to make the reader pause and evaluate feminine constraints before she asserts that the three robust girls crave speed.

In fact the three girls, in particular Sheila, go swimming, skating and cycling after school with the older Aubrey Artworth and his gang. Sheila's vision and her bicycle, "which could stretch to two passengers (handlebar, back mudguard)" frees the three girls to take off on their own adventures outside of school and their uniform.[44] Without the bicycle their movements are curtailed as Diana and Clare do not have any money and can only travel on the buses using "tick" if dressed in their school uniform which constrains them within St Agatha's conduct codes. The adventures that Sheila's bicycle opens up for the girls, and the dangerous "scientific" experiments they carry out in the Beakers' bicycle shed, counter their official education at St. Agatha's. Individually the girls are introspective and subdued but together they create a boisterous force to be reckoned with, bullying Trevor Artworth and almost blowing up the Beakers' bike shed. Bowen's description of the schoolgirls' enforced inactivity and the constraining St Agatha's uniform and curriculum is juxtaposed with the girls' bicycling adventures and movement. More than that, the three girls' exploits belie their uniformed figures, showing that the cultural persona of a genteel Edwardian child is an illusion about to be cast off. Bowen draws upon literary and social connections between the bicycle and emancipating political change. Her central "buried treasure" storyline suggests the political debates for female freedom and the questioning of female dress codes raised by the Suffragists and the Rational Dress Society. In *The Little Girls*

[42] Bowen, *The Last September* 50.
[43] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 73.
[44] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 105.

Bowen establishes that female suffrage, new vehicular technologies and more importantly both world wars will blow apart old gendered British identities. As Southstone's child prodigy Sheila will perform the "Spirit of Winter", not summer, at the gala in October 1914, for the prevention of cruelty to animals or children; her impending dance reminds the reader of the cruelty of World War I (which will be under way by October) ending the Indian summer of Edwardian England.

Diana comes up with the idea that the three school friends must bury symbols of their social fetters, for future archaeologists and historians to puzzle over, when chatting with a suffragette who is visiting her niece at St. Agatha's. Bowen comically represents the suffragette according to 1914 stereotypes and fears about advanced female education and independence. The suffragette is a spinster, lean, ill dressed in black with a pince-nez, wearing a dyed hat with the wings of a dead magpie, "The effect was not of poverty or bravura but, far more, that of both hat's and wearer's having been chemically reconstituted...Lean, she was active looking. She cast around, then marked down her prey."[45] The dead magpie feathers and bird of prey imagery mimic early twentieth-century cultural opinions that suffragettes and 'New Women' were unfeminine and asexual. Bowen's inference that the hat and the wearer chemically reconstitute each other, parodies public and literary opinions that suffragettes were monstrous refigurings of Victorian and Edwardian ideas of femininity. Arabella Kenealy, a member of the Eugenic Society at the start of the twentieth century, derogated 'liberal feminists' as degenerate, "The result of women's competition with men was the development of "mixed type", more or less degenerate, structurally, functionally and mentally, which imperil the race."[46] The aunt drolly wafts poisonous fumes over Diana while cross-examining her about the future and the Roman landings in Kent. The suffragette's questions concerning the future and history give Diana the idea of burying, voodoo style, items of personal importance and one large totem of their social fetters, so as to silently revolt against authority. Bowen writes that the fictional burial is based on reality. Bowen and her school friends buried a coffer full of personal items in the grounds of Harpenden Hall because they felt they could not control their past and therefore wanted to take revenge on the future and dupe those to come.[47] Clare and Sheila's affirmation that the aunt is a militant suffragette who chained herself to railings gives the three girls the masterstroke to their burial project. They will purchase a large dog chain as a symbol of the Edwardian constraints restricting their movement and gendering their identity in 1914. The dog chain must be buried in

[45] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 88.
[46] Arabella Kenealy, *Feminism and Sex Extinction* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1920), qtd. in Pykett 37.
[47] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 57.

St Agatha's school grounds because the school's curriculum and uniform promotes patriarchy rather than female liberty.

Bowen's seemingly simple narration of the three girls' shopping trip along Southstone High Street on a Saturday afternoon, to buy the symbolic dog chain, is in fact a complex and experimental modernist disruption of the realist novel form and of conventional representations of women. Bowen contrasts the girls' free spirits outdoors not only with the interiors of two shops, "Mr Faggs goldfish petshop" and the antiques shop "Curios", but also with the maturer figure of the fifteen-year-old schoolgirl, Hermione, and a bronze figure of a dancer. A number of metonymic variations of "flight", "cycling", "walking", "chains" and "figurines" echo Bowen's earlier narrative juxtaposition of the girls subdued in school but freed by Sheila's bicycle. Together these metonymic variations weave two complex and contrasting metaphors: on the one hand, the emancipating liberty of bicycles as heralds of social change, and, on the other hand, imprisoning patriarchal values, symbolised by the two shops, the dog chain, and the figures of Hermione and the bronze statue. By choosing the name "Hermione" and linking it with the bronze statue, Bowen subtly introduces Shakespeare's "Hermione" from *A Winter's Tale* into the narrative of *The Little Girls*. It is this canonical representation of the female frozen into a male idealised form that Bowen seeks to challenge and undermine, with her emphasis on female movement in *The Little Girls*.

Bowen's description of Mr Fagg's interior echoes her description of St. Agatha's classroom and her earlier incarnations of English girls' schools such as Mellyfield in *Friends & Relations* and Miss Paullie's establishment in *The Death of the Heart*, "...cages stacked to the grubby ceiling and barricading the small paned window, animated the awesomely smelly gloom, in which how many hundreds of pairs of captive eyes watched?"[48] The girls select a large mastiff chain. Bowen draws attention to the weight of the chain, which cannot be carried in a paper bag but neither can it be openly carried down the High Street because this will draw public comment. Girls cannot be seen in public carrying chains or items associated with boys' play. Clare refers to Southstone strollers as spies who will inform on them to their parents or school.[49] Significantly

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[48] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 94.

[49] Bowen's reminiscences in her essay 'On Not Rising to the Occasion' (1956), closely parallel her fictional rendering of the three school friends' Saturday escapade to purchase the dog chain in *The Little Girls*. Bowen draws attention to the restrictions curtailing the movement of Edwardian children, in particular girls, which are enforced through dress codes, "An un-thrilling Saturday could cool off a friendship. Folkestone in 1910 was dressy, law-abiding, and well patrolled; the amount of things children could do – bring off without being shouted at – was limited. Bye-laws, prohibiting almost everything, were posted up

the girls are forced to resort to tying the chain around one of their waists, underneath their clothes, to camouflage it and only Sheila, the star performer of quintessential Edwardian girlhood, has enough clothes to properly hide the chain, "'Round their middle, under what they've got on. Me, it will have to be - Dicey's too fat, and *you* come apart in the middle' (Clare was never a frock wearer, and her scanty blouses were known for coming untucked from her skimpy skirts.)...The chain went easily more than once, not completely twice, round the dancer's middle.'"[50] Bowen's description makes a number of accusations against female clothes and the artificial construction of a feminine identity. Diana and Clare are too unfeminine, Diana is too fat and Clare too unkempt, to hide the chain. Only 'the blue baby-ribbon unthreaded from Sheikie's Saturday frilly knickers' can hold the dog leash in place and her excessive flounces cover it, emphasising the way masculinist viewpoints on feminine dress codes infantilise and hamper girls.[51] The restricting chain negatively contrasts with Sheila's freeing bicycle chain and her identity as a "dancer". The narrative transition from bicycling Sheila to chained Sheila encodes the heavy cost of Edwardian dress codes and the 'Womanly Woman' on female movement. As I shall show, Bowen's complex association between dress codes, chains, bicycles and female liberty echoes turn-of-the-century debates by the 'Rational Dress Society' in England.

The invention of the safety-bike in the 1880s and the British and European craze for cycling at the start of the twentieth century, ensured women increasingly took to bicycling. By 1887 a women's bicycle specifically designed for a "skirted rider" was produced.[52] Bicycles changed female movement and dress sense, bringing about a revival of the 1850s "bloomers" under the new twentieth-century guise of the "Rational Dress".[53] In 1887 in Westminster Town Hall, Mrs Oscar Wilde chaired a debate criticising the burdensome dress codes forced on English women; clothes showed the age and social position of the wearer. The older and richer the married woman, the weightier the clothing, and women viewed the extra garments as hobbles. They protested against, "the wearing of tightly fitting corsets, of high-heeled or narrow-toed

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and down the Leas and along the woodsy paths of the undercliff." *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 69.

[50] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 94.

[51] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 94.

[52] Dan Albone wrote in his 1896 catalogue that he had produced the Lady's Safety in 1886 in his Ivel factory. Derek Roberts, *Cycling History: Myths and Queries* (Birmingham: John Pinkerton, 1991) 42-43.

[53] Roberts, 76-77, and Charles Neilson Gattey, *The Bloomer Girls* (London: MacDonald, 1967), 173. Due to the beginning of the bicycle craze in the 1880s, bloomers were revived as an item of clothing along with the debate about female mobility and free movement, which occasioned the new National Dress Society, which became the Rational Dress Society. 173.

boots and shoes; of heavily weighted skirts, as rendering healthy exercise almost impossible."[54] Instead they used bicycling as an excuse to reduce the number of lady's undergarments and split skirts into two legs. The British 'Rational Dress Society' called for a dress reform on the back of the cycling craze, arguing for unrestricted leg movement for female cyclists. In April 1888 the society quarterly the *Gazette* sponsored the "Divided Skirt".[55] The development of the safety-bicycle and pneumatic tyres in the 1890s boosted the Rational Dress whose name, cut and usage signified female political and mental emancipation.

Bowen's sketch of the girls racing each other down Southstone High Street, despite the chain tied around Sheila's middle, when following the slower progress of the older schoolgirl Hermione whom they first encountered in "Mr Fagg's goldfish petshop", develops her narrative juxtaposition between bicycle metaphors (signalling female emancipation) and patriarchal symbolism. The fifteen-year-old Hermione has experimented with her Saturday clothes to style herself as an Edwardian lady, not a schoolgirl, "and reefed in her anatomy, halfway down, by tightening the belt of her nice pink dress...Every inch a lady – and as at present so many inches went to the making of this girl, she was a lady to a tremendous extent."[56] The belt reefing in Hermione's anatomy echoes the frilly ribbon and dog chain reefed around Sheila's waist. At fifteen Hermione cannot wander Southstone without a male escort, albeit her younger brother. The girls deride Hermione's style and hobbled gait, "Hoo, look at her! Wobbledy-wobbledy-wobble: she does look silly! She can't walk straight."[57] In contrast Sheila, Diana and Clare tear down the High Street, and significantly Bowen parallels their flight with cyclists "whizzing downhill" against the grain of the respectable Saturday shoppers:

> Though the Old High Street, steep and extremely cobbled, was shunned by the traffic of most of Southstone, it had traffic of its own, which did as it liked...On top of that, bicycles whizzing downhill so bounced and rebounded upon the cobbles that the bells on their handlebars rang whether rung or not...Off again they [Diana, Clare and Sheila] started, downhill, top speed. 'Look where you're going, can't you!' yelled someone, leaping out of their path. 'We are!' They were. Racing drivers of themselves, they matched speed to space. Darting birds in the air could not have been surer. Last-moment swerving, at high velocity, was their forte - to bump into

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[54] Neilson Gattey 173

[55] Neilson Gattey 173.

[56] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 95. In 'On Not Rising to the Occasion' Bowen remembers that with age came greater restrictions on female behaviour, once more enforced through Edwardian dress codes, "Would the strain become less as I grew older? No: on the contrary. When I was fourteen, fifteen, the dress-problem raised its ugly head. It was necessary to look nice, as well as be nice. Still more, it was necessary to look 'suitable'. But, my heavens, suitable to what? For life was to bristle, from now on, with unforeseeable occasions...So trial-and-error it was, for me." *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 68.

[57] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 99.

> anyone meant enormous loss of prestige for the bumper-in. So no one had anything to complain of. (Shove they did, but that was another matter.)[58]

The girls weave between the strollers on the pavement and join the cyclists racing down the cobbled centre of the High Street, merging with the forward moving traffic "which did as it liked". Bowen associates the trio with modern technology that is challenging the traditional social spaces of the High Street and old rhythm of life.[59] Like the bicyclists the girls control their own velocity and space. Like the suffragettes who threatened public stability, and effectively used bicycles in their campaigns, the girls threaten Southstone's cross-section of Edwardian gentility. But the fleet-footed trio pride themselves on their self-control, agilely steering themselves at accelerating speeds. Their ability suggests women's ability to control fast technologies and their own future, entering the public sphere and the professions. Comically, the girls condemn bumping but willingly shove, as this is calculated progress; through humour the narrative infers that self-mobility empowers women to push against social laws and force their own passage in life.

The tension between new female identities, characterised by cycling, and a limiting nineteenth-century female identity, is brought to a head when Sheila stands on the pavement and apes the pose of a "bronze nymph" displayed in the shop window of Curios. The hobbled progress of Hermione draws Diana and Clare inside Curios, whose interior is like an ark or museum for the curios of "genteel English society". Outside, "knowingly, calmly, from every angle, Sheikie studied the pose of the statuette. Poised on a toe on a green alabaster base, the nymph spiralled up to the topmost finger-tip of an arm flung upward over her head. Selecting a spot on the pavement outside the shop, Sheikie herself went into the pose. She held it."[60] Entwined in the dog chain Sheila performs Victorian and Edwardian assumptions about middle-class femininity and turns herself into a trophy female. By using the bicycling Sheila to parody the "nymph" placed in Curios Bowen shows that 1914 is the potential watershed between limiting and emancipating social values and exposes the fact that all gendering identities are artificial not organic. However Sheila's artistry has turned her into a pavement exhibit, "News of a pretty little living waxwork's being on exhibition somewhere at the bottom of the High Street was, from all

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[58] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 98-99.

[59] Stephen Kern highlights the title page to Maurice Leblanc's *Voici des ailes!* (1898), because it shows a woman cyclist with her chemise undone, her breasts bare to the wind and her hair blowing freely behind her in the wind. In the novel the two wives, becoming heated as they cycle, progressively undress first removing jackets, then corsets. Undressing socially and sexually frees them and their husbands as the couples exchange partners and end the trip paired with the opposite partner. 111-113.

signs, spreading like wildfire."[61] The child artist who knows her social worth will mature into the married but childless Mrs Trevor Artworth, continuing her public position in Southstone society as the estate agent's trophy wife rather than securing economic independence as a professional dancer.

At the end of Part III set in 1962, the three friends who are all now in their sixties, recount their lives since the promise of 1914. Sheila's childhood vision and movement was limited by pre-war gender attitudes influencing post-war English society. Her bourgeois parents opposed their daughter becoming a professional dancer; London schools rejected her when she auditioned as an adult, because her self-taught steps are considered lewd; English ballet in the 1920s preferred showcasing ideals of English femininity, not personality and sexuality. Contrasting with Sheila's sure-footed speed on Southstone High Street, the adult Sheila smashes up a large motorcar, spurred on by her lover who is a dying War veteran and failing car salesman. After this Sheila loses her nerve and ability to drive fast cars. Instead she falls back on the security of a bourgeois marriage with Trevor Artworth. However, the novel ends positively with Sheila ironically quizzing Diana's two married sons, and Clare and Diana leaving behind their history and heteronormative gender roles to connect as potential lovers in the last line of *The Little Girls*.

II Motor-flight

Bowen extends her endorsement of mobility and speed from bicycles to motorcars and aeroplanes, deeming the plural perspectives and formal experimentation they open up for the artist as being good for art. In her fiction she closely links the motion of motorcars with aeroplanes. Bowen uses bicycle metaphors to explore the interlocking impact of history and gender on her characters at a local level - whether in North Cork or in Kent. She uses motorcar and aeroplane metaphors in her fiction to represent the struggles between individuals, in particular women, trying to find themselves amid the broader background of international politics and social change between World War I and the Cold War. More than her other travel and vehicular metaphors motorcars and aeroplanes contain a dangerous duality. They are potential engines of female emancipation but also engines of destruction and warfare. Paradoxically,

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[60] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 100.

despite their destructive role in World War II, motorcars and aeroplanes became the cultural spaces and icons for a reaffirmation of traditional patriarchal family values. Sidonie Smith writes that after World War II women were used to advertise air travel as safe: "If the masses of people, formerly so many dots on the ground, were to rise up into the air, the sky had to be made "safe" for less heroic consumers. The women aviators, by affirming for the masses that flight was safe and comfortable and that it didn't require exceptional heroics, played their role in the transformation of aviation to big business."[62] Bowen's literary motorcar and aeroplane metaphors reflect and investigate, at the level of plot and form, the public's changing perceptions of motorcars and aeroplanes in reality and the existential uncertainty these new technologies suddenly posed. The narrative of Emmeline Summers and Markie Linkwater's aeroplane flight to France in *To the North* (1932) plays with the iconography of the aviatrix, and aviatrix narratives, circulating in magazines, novels and films in the 1920s and 30s. From 1911 women took to the skies, by the late 1920s and early 1930s the female pilots, Amelia Earhart in America and Amy Johnson in England, were international celebrities. Sidonie Smith explores the cultural impact of the new aviatrix: the androgynous but glamorous modern woman whose lean body, streamlined like her aeroplane, exemplified pared-down modernity.[63] Both aeroplane and aviatrix were designed for flight away from the earth and gender codes restricting female behaviour. Smith analyses how the 1932 film *Christopher Strong*, directed by Dorothea Arzner and introducing Katherine Hepburn, showcases the aviatrix in charge of the new powerful flying technology as a threatening gender mix of independent, asexual femalehood and seductive sexuality. In *To the North* Bowen subtly exhibits Emmeline Summers, with her travel agency, as a new type of liberated and sexual woman, by drawing upon contemporary cultural depictions of the threatening aviatrix.

Although Emmeline Summers does not pilot the London-Paris aircraft, she is a regular passenger in contrast to the nervous first time flyer Markie Linkwater. Bowen's description of Emmeline mixes 1930s fears of the airborne aviatrix with the androgynous modern woman who is designed for passing sexual encounters rather than marriage and motherhood. Bowen fictionally explores social anxieties surrounding the relationship between aeroplanes, unorthodox

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[61] Bowen, *The Little Girls* 101.
[62] Smith 118. Smith dates the period of the celebrated female aviators such as Amelia Eckhart and Amy Johnson as being between 1927 and 1940 only. After the war women were used for the domestication of flight. Smith 115-119.
[63] Smith 75-85.

femininity and illicit couplings among the middle and upper classes.[64] During the flight, free from English bourgeois morality upon the ground, Emmeline agrees to become Markie's lover in Paris. Emmeline threatens the newly recuperated, post-war British masculinity, that she personifies in the upwardly mobile, middle class, Markie Linkwater. But the narrative focuses on the way Emmeline's innocent but liberated sexuality and business acumen fall victims to inter-war social strictures on middle-class women. Bowen represents Emmeline and Markie's fatal car crash, ending the novel, in terms of new aeroplane technologies and unnatural female power and sexuality, figured in the aviatrix; Emmeline's motorcar is likened to an aeroplane taking off, with Emmeline its kamikaze pilot and Markie her doomed passenger.

Bowen's depiction of the aircraft complicates heteronormative gender roles that associate men with mobility, danger and the skies, and women with the earth, domesticity and reliance upon their man. In contrast *To the North* associates Emmeline with the aeroplane, hungry for flight and forced to wait for Markie, who arrives late. The aeroplane transforms Emmeline's waiting from the usually passive female position into a tension of potential energy. Instead, the novel positions Markie as ballast holding Emmeline back: *he* takes the stereotypical female role, in novels and magazines, of being late:

> Emmeline met Markie at Croydon: he was so very late she feared he would miss the plane...she heard a great hum from the waiting plane hungry for flight. Such an exalting idea of speed possessed Emmeline that she could hardly sit still and longed to pace to and fro but that would annoy Markie who did not like to be made to feel late. At about twenty to one he fell out of a taxi and hurried towards her with papers under his arm.
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> At the plane tilted up on its tail in a vast cement space like a dancing-floor, Markie who had not yet flown, glanced a trifle suspiciously: blown sideways by the propellers Emmeline gaily swung herself in ahead. Walking uphill into the front car they became encased in a roaring hum, a vibration that shook the eardrums and, for some minutes while he arranged himself grimly, curdled his every thought: that summer, planes were not silent. Emmeline, intimating by gestures that for purpose of discomfort she had no stomach, took the place opposite him, facing back to the wings...The roar intensified, there was an acceleration of movement about the aerodrome as though they were about to be shot out of a gun; blocks were pulled clear and they taxied forward at high speed apparently to the coast. For Markie the earth was good enough, he could have asked for no better; he observed, however, from Emmeline's face of delight that something had happened: earth had slipped from their wheels that, spinning, rushed up the air.[65]

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[64] In the first half of the century only the wealthy middle and upper classes could afford to travel in aeroplanes. The first female pilots were either from these classes, or else they worked as stunt pilots, such as the African American Bessie Coleman. Smith 81.

[65] Bowen, *To the North* 135.

Post-World War I journalists, writers and artists believed aeroplanes re-established the virility of modern man, who had been emasculated by trench warfare and female emancipation. Laurence Goldstein, Sidonie Smith and Gillian Beer evaluate the way aeroplane technologies, with their thrusting take-off and aerial danger, publicly reaffirmed masculine potency, "Unlike the machines that displaced man, controlled him, and dwarfed him, airplanes enhanced the reach of his mastery. A prosthetic extension of the male form, the airplane functioned as a symbolic object through which mastery could be restored."[66] Gillian Beer quotes Freud's parallel between aeroplanes and male potency, "the remarkable characteristic of the male organ which enables it to rise up in defiance of the laws of gravity."[67] Smith corroborates Beer arguing that the aviator (epitomised in Orville Wright[68]), "transcended the sexual anarchy on the ground, a product of the crisis in gender identity that was so pervasive in the first decades of the twentieth century. The aviator-hero was one potent answer to the crisis of masculinity below."[69] But, in contrast to the cultural iconography of flying aces and reaffirmed masculinity, Bowen's "rising" barrister, Markie Linkwater, is not at ease with technologies of motion; falling out of the taxi, nervous of the aircraft, feeling nauseous, he is unmanned by flight. Reversing gender assumptions, Markie is at home on the earth while Emmeline is associated with the air and danger. Once airborne Markie reduces the extraordinary aeroplane into a domestic space or gentleman's club, ordering brandy, bringing the *Tatler* for Emmeline, and reading a dull report. He ignores the new aerial subjectivity and vision from his window, which the Futurists celebrated.[70] In contrast, Emmeline transcends the earth and social conventions by giving in to the radically new subjectivity of flight.

On the ground Emmeline is dressed sparingly, ready for flight and radiating potential speed. However she is still constricted by 1930s codes regarding female submission. Emmeline must appear docile so as not to undermine Markie's self-perception. But once airborne Emmeline disassociates herself from the earth and gives herself entirely to the flight. Appositely, the airborne Emmeline has no stomach, the anatomy normally associated with nerves; devoid of physicality (and thereby the maternal) she personifies the cultural figure of the androgynous

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[66] Smith 76.
[67] Beer 265.
[68] On 7th October 1903, at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, Orville and Wilbur Wright took off alternately in *The Flyer*, a powered, heavier-than-air machine, achieving the first sustained human flight. Each brother completed two flights, the longest lasted 59 seconds. Roberth Wohl in Linda Johnson Dougherty and Huston Paschal, co-curators, *Defying Gravity: Contemporary Art and Flight*. (London: Prestel Publishing Ltd, 2003) 1. Wohl 5-32.
[69] Smith 73-77. Smith refers to the work of Laurence Goldstein and Robert Wohl in proving that aviation affirmed a new modernist masculinity, free from post-war neuroses and gender roles. Wohl 97-125 and 203-290.

aviatrix and pared-down modern woman. Her attitude rebuts Markie's mundane influence; transported in her airy element she is free of domesticity, "But to Emmeline some quite new plan of life, forgotten between flight and flight, seemed once more to reveal itself: she sat gazing down with intensity at the lay-out of gardens. No noise, no glass, no upholstery boxed her up from the extraordinary."[71] The narrative asserts the impossibility of boxing in Emmeline as she looks down at the unfolding new map of the world, to which Markie is indifferent. Her engagement with flight and a new aerial vision displays her competence in the public sphere of aerial business class; she is the reason behind Markie's flight. Markie accompanies Emmeline on her business trip to Paris; and as soon as the aeroplane reaches cruising altitude Emmeline's thoughts focus on her travel business, not Markie. Emmeline watches the landscape of Surrey and Kent, the Channel, and France unfold below her; she formulates future business plans in tandem with the implication that aviation technologies abet the proliferation of a new inter-war enfranchised female gender identity that combined masculine and feminine qualities.

However, Bowen compares Emmeline with the seductive but doomed Mary Queen of Scots; Markie, and her social circle, will betray and condemn her. Her challenging femininity is too outré for 1932 England. The aeroplane identifies Emmeline with dangerous, if innocent, sexuality and speed, which culminate in her social death and her and Markie's fictional death. Emmeline's cousin by marriage, the meddling Lady Waters, informs Cecelia that Emmeline is being talked about and criticised because of her conduct with Markie Linkwater; the two were seen having dinner in Devizes, and Devizes being a distance from London, this proves the two are having an affair.[72] During their flight Emmeline is described as a mixture of brave adventurer and juvenile girl. She is a complex representation of a both a pre-Raphaelite and domestic angel, yet her transcendent sexuality suggests a demonic seductress. She has these alternating faces for Markie and her love-making burns him out in their Paris hotel, "...an exaltation at all times latent in her regard and, so great a part of her passion, likely to spring out at any time, alarmed, irked and often fatigued him. He had still the sense, as after that first night in Paris, of having been overshot."[73] Emmeline's sexual drive is part of her business drive and also her idealistic ideas about pure love, beyond bourgeois conventions. She is identified with an aeroplane flight, outsoaring Markie's limited potency. Her élan contrasts the grave businessmen and disturbs Markie, "He began to discount hearing, to be aware of noise as sensible, visible, inimical only

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[70] Dougherty and Paschal 3.
[71] Bowen, *To the North* 136.
[72] Bowen, *To the North* 220.
[73] Bowen, *To the North* 182-183.

when one attempted speech, as vibration whenever the finger-tips touched an object, vibration of shadows and fringes of the silk curtains against the shining air."[74] The aeroplane releases the voluptuary in Emmeline; her presence combined with the sensation of flying (a heady cocktail) seduces Markie.

Bowen uncovers the aeroplane's transgressive potential; it constructs a new aerial space, free of bourgeois British conventions on sexual relations and marriage. The vibrating interior builds a new sensual space for non-verbal communication between Markie and Emmeline. In the new intimacies of the aeroplane, Markie the barrister writes on the margins of *Tatler*, the bible of polite society, asking Emmeline to become his lover but never his wife; he turns the aeroplane into the location for their crime of passion (consummated in their Paris hotel). Emmeline becomes the knowing sinner and the *Tatler* becomes the document for her social demise. Markie falls back on his law profession and this written exchange in the aeroplane to exonerate himself after betraying Emmeline for an ex-lover, Daisy: "[s]ome idea of disaster, injurious scandal, of her life taken, her brain going, had smoked out at him...She had undone herself; she was her own victim; he was unhappy in having touched her; she would not ever be warned. Justice, inscrutable under the bandage, remained Markie's cold ally."[75] He contemplates her new status as socially damaged goods.

The aeroplane departs Croydon aerodrome like a bullet from a gun. Its take-off anticipates Emmeline's final death-drive-flight in her motorcar, with Markie as her terrified passenger, at the end of the novel, "For this levitation a total loss of her faculties, of every sense of his presence, the car and herself driving were very little to pay. She was lost to her own identity, a confining husk. Calmly, exaltedly rising and balancing in ignorance she looked at her hands on the wheel, the silver hem of her dress and asked herself who she was."[76] Emmeline's silver evening dress turns her into a speeding aeroplane or bullet. In the motif of aeroplane, bullet and accelerating female sexuality, Bowen draws upon 1930s anxieties about the aviatrix and aviation's destructive potential. Analysing *Christopher Strong*, the 1932 female flight movie, Smith notes the film's "vestimentary code" for Katherine Hepburn acting as the aviatrix Cynthia Darrington. At the start of the movie Hepburn wears masculine jodhpurs, leather jacket and goggles, the uniform of flying aces, asserting the transgressive, gender-blurring identity of female

[74] Bowen, *To the North* 136.
[75] Bowen, *To the North* 234.
[76] Bowen, *To the North* 244.

pilots. The film's director Dorothea Arzner critically chooses the moment Cynthia Darrington, Hepburn's character, is about to attend a costume party, for the crucial moment when Darrington and the married Christopher Strong become illicitly involved. Arzner dresses Hepburn/Darrington as a fragile moth, in a long silver dress with a silk moth's headpiece. Smith notes the complex messages in the dress code, showing the public's fear of female pilots and independent sexuality, and reads the filmic "Moth" as a cross-reference to Amy Johnson's actual "moth" aeroplane, "The costume is obviously exaggerated. The campiness of Darrington's identification as insect seems to parody the conventional narrative logic that scripts females as fragile and masculinity as durable."[77] In *To the North* Bowen associates Emmeline with bullets and moth imagery, showing Emmeline's fragility but also her monstrosity; she is an eroticising angel and a moth: an insect rather than identifiable woman, as Bowen draws upon late nineteenth-century cultural representations of the 'New Woman' and suffragettes as unnatural hybrids. In her doctoral thesis "Unholy Images of Corruption: the beast-man in the nineteenth-century novel" Kate Hebblethwaite explores the published debates about the 'New Woman' as an atavistic ape or a hybrid insect.[78] Hebblethwaite points out that in 1871 *Harpers Bazar* published an article which quoted the French historian Hippolyte Taine's opinion that: "Woman, by modern education and dress, has become a sort of beetle, tightened around the midriff, mounted on a pair of dry and shiny feet, and covered with a glistening envelope...Her whole body has the restless activity of a buzzing fly."[79] The monstrous 'New Woman' now has her icon in the unwomanly (because aerial and therefore inhuman) aviatrix, who defies social gender classification and control. Female pilots were seen as erotic objects on public display, and autonomous subjects with their own sex drive, manifested publicly in their aircraft. They needed domesticating for the sake of public health and the future of England (and the race) facing into the threat of another war. Bowen draws Emmeline as a 'Mayfly' at her cousin's Victorian villa "Faraways", auguring Emmeline's short life-span and the novel's end. The aviatrix and emancipated 'New Woman' will be over-run by World War II, and the post-war reassertion of women as housewives and mothers.

The narrative interweaves the Paris flight, when Emmeline and Markie become ill-fated lovers, with their last car ride. Bowen describes Emmeline's motorcar in terms of a plane taking off. The final burst of speed and the crash imagery fictionally manifest the confrontation between new

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[77] Smith 83-86.

[78] Kate Hebblethwaite, "Unholy Images of Corruption: the beast-man in the nineteenth-century novel," diss., Trinity College Dublin, 2005, 144-145.

gender roles and social values and the old pre-war order still grounded in imperialism, "An immense idea of departure - expresses getting steam up and crashing from termini, liners clearing docks, the shadows of planes rising, caravans winding out into the first dip of the desert - possessed her spirit, now launched like the long arrow...Blind with new light she was like somebody suddenly not blind..."[80] New aviation and motoring technologies construct dangerous aerodynamic new woman in the 1930s, personified by Emmeline. As with the filmic aviatrix Cynthia Darrington of *Christopher Strong*, there is no place for an emancipated woman such as Emmeline Summers, nor her love for Markie, in 1930s imperial England. Unable to out-fly social approbation and gender roles in the fictional or imaginative aeroplane and motorcar, Emmeline must depart permanently in death:

> His fingers an inch from the wheel, wondering if he dared stun her, he said hopelessly: '*Emmeline...*' with the last calm of impotence...Head-on, magnetized up the heart of the fan of approaching brightness, the little car, strung on speed, held unswerving way...Emmeline saw what was past averting. She said: 'Sorry,' shutting her eyes.[81]

Bowen explores the fact that aeroplanes and motorcars aroused social fears and transgressed restrictions surrounding the figure of the independent, androgynous yet sexualised modernist women, ritualised in the 1920s and 30s aviatrix. But she also complicates her encoding of Emmeline and motorcars and aeroplanes. The new order cannot out-fly the old values; one or both must crash at a cost to each other. The modern Emmeline is also a construct of Edwardian femininity and social mores. She is pulled between new and old role models and values. The aeroplane encodes the dialectical tension between old and new values and social fears regarding progress in 1932. While aviation and liberating values promise a brave new world, they also, ambiguously, herald war and destruction. The novel's final imagery of Emmeline as a speeding bullet and pilot uncannily foreshadows the bombers in World War II.

Set in an Irish hotel and Anglo-Irish big house "Palm Lawn" in December 1939, on the eve of the 'Battle of Britain', Bowen's short story 'A Love Story 1939', was published in *Look At All Those Roses* (1941). The story interweaves modernist techniques, such as metonymic repetitions with variations, multiple perspectives, and circular narratives with Bowen's particular style of drawing upon the Anglo-Irish gothic tradition and Irish ghost stories. She creates a complex metaphor out of an "Alvis motorcar", in connection with the story's setting in neutral Ireland and the ghostly presence of a recently dead fighter-pilot, to interrogate the cost of warfare

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[79] "Dress, Ancient and Modern," *Harpers Bazar* 4 (February 25 1871) 14, quoted in Hebblethwaite 144.
[80] Bowen, *To the North*, 244.
[81] Bowen, *To the North* 244-245.

and imperial-style patriotism. The onset of World War II brought about a return to traditional roles of masculine sacrifice in defence of the 'womanly women' at home. Echoing *To the North,* Bowen draws strong connections between motorcars and aeroplane flights in 'A Love Story 1939'. As the storyline develops, the Alvis takes on the characteristics of a bomber aircraft. Depending upon who is looking at it, the motorcar becomes an engine of destruction or escape. In addition her interweaving of metonyms and motorcar-aeroplane metaphors along with her multiple narrative viewpoints, and the ghostly presence of the dead fighter pilot Teddy, disrupts any singular authoritative narrative but presents instead contradictory perspectives on historical circumstances.

Bowen uses metonymic variations of "sea" and "mist" throughout the story to represent World War II closing in on the hotel and its occupants. The opening narrative perspective tracks the passage of the encroaching sea-mist into the empty hotel lounge where the wireless blasts the latest war news, "Mist lay over the estuary, over the terrace, over the hollows of the gummy, sub-tropical garden of the hotel. Now and then a soft, sucking sigh came from the water...The mist's muffling silence could be everywhere felt...The temperate voice of the announcer paused for a moment, half-way through a disaster."[82] Bowen's complex of associations in this story echoes the floodtides of warfare in *The Last September* (1929), *Friends & Relations* (1931) and *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* (1942). Together they help turn the Alvis motorcar in the story into the complicated metaphor representing the twentieth-century marriage between technological progress and warfare. Bowen's opening strategy gives the hotel and Ireland the characteristic of a becalmed ship, or enchanted island on a tropical sea, which reflects the vulnerability of neutral Ireland amid the increasing heat of warfare. Into the empty hotel lounge walk the Anglo-Irish mother and daughter, Mrs Massey and Teresa, full of grief and shock from the sudden news that their young English friend Teddy has been shot down. The narrative then shifts to describe the English newly-wed Perry-Duntons who arrived at the hotel in August as honeymooners and have been cut off by the war; it is now December.

'A Love Story 1939' dramatizes various types of cultural and literary representations of women circulating in British and Irish society. Bowen brings to light late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anxieties about the British Empire as both a positive and negative ideology. The duality within imperialism was represented in fiction and popular culture as two female archetypes: either a divine Queen or evil Madam prostituting her men. 'A Love Story 1939'

draws upon the complex masculinities and femininities in for instance, H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887), one of Bowen's favourite novels. Bowen also drew upon *She* for one of her most critically celebrated wartime short stories 'Mysterious Kôr'.

On a first reading Polly Perry-Dunton seems the sole enchantress imprisoning her husband on her honeymoon island; she is depicted as a 1939 version of "Circe" or Haggard's "Ayesha/She". The Perry-Duntons' marriage is reflected in their claustrophobic hotel room:

> With elbows into his ribs in a trussed position, he now and then made a cramped dash at the keys...Polly Perry-Dunton's armchair was pushed up so that one arm made telepathic contact with Clifford's sofa...She sat back on her heels to adore his frown, his curls, his fresh skin - then she locked her arms tightly around his neck. The impulsive, light little-girlishness of the movement let him still say nothing, not even turn his head...Clifford waited a minute, then he unfastened Polly's arm from his neck with as little emotion as a woman undoing a boa. He then typed five or six lines in a sort of rush.[83]

Bowen reverses the traditional power dynamics in marriage, by posing the Perry-Duntons' marriage as a modern one with Polly the captor and Clifford her captive. Polly is a thirty-two-year-old bride who has bought her twenty-four-year-old husband with her father's wealth. Bowen overturns and parodies heroic epic narratives whereby Vikings pillaged and won women as war booty. Polly "rape[s]" and "bid[s]" for her "man", and Bowen feminises and dehumanises the "craggy Nordic" Clifford by silencing him and using animal or commercial adjectives to describe "his animal muteness."[84] The chairs comically become tactile extensions of their occupants. Bowen's metonymic technique increases the sense that Clifford is imprisoned, as Polly mentally and physically invades him. Polly owns the Alvis motorcar and the purse strings. The typewriter expresses Clifford's desperate thoughts of escape. Polly's walk, as she skips along beside Clifford's strides, her 'Pussy-cat gloves' and her childish figure, identify her with the 1930s type of dependent, kittenish style of femininity. While 1930s fashion magazines flirted with a new style of woman, the athletic and androgynous aviatrix or 'machine-aesthetic-goddess', they urged traditional marriage goals on real women.[85] Fashion promoted the eternally youthful and innocent 'kitten' as a femininely alluring plaything for her manly husband. Polly contrasts with the womanly curves of the older Mrs Massey and the androgynous independence of the

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[82] Elizabeth Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen* 497.
[83] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 499-500.
[84] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 501.
[85] See Christine Moneera Laennec's essay, "The Assembly-Line Goddess": Woman And the Machine Aesthetic in Fashion Photography, 1918-1940' in Laennec Moneera, Christine, Wilson, Deborah S., ed. *Bodily Discussions: Genders, Representations, Technologies*, (Albany: State University of New York

younger "tiger" Teresa. An aging "Pussy-cat", Polly is a victim to the cultural pressure to remain young, fresh and desirable, "Her trim little sexless figure, her kilted skirts, socks and little-girl snooded hair...Without the ring of technicians who got her up she could easily have looked faded and sluttish, like a little girl in Woolworth's wilting behind the goods. But she had a childish hard will, and by day never looked old."[86] The appearance of artless "kitten" requires sophistry and a strong, though negative, willpower. References to "Woolworth's shop girl" hints at the increasing commodification of men and women in modern marriages, and identifies consumerism and shopping as the only public sphere of influence for women. A poorer version of Polly, the "wilting" Woolworth's girl, identifies the limited career paths women can follow in the 1930s, either becoming domestics or shop girls, before hopefully marrying. Polly's father's wealth puts her in the position of purchaser; but female education and culture prize marriage as a girl's goal instead of business.

Polly's Alvis becomes the symbol of her control and feminisation (or dehumanisation) of Clifford. During the day Polly lets Clifford play with boats and her car; like a small boy or dog on a leash, Clifford can venture so far: "Some days they ran the motor-boat in and out of white inlets or to an island, some days they went out in Polly's big car."[87] But at night Polly reins both Clifford and the car in, locking Clifford in her hotel room and the Alvis in the Hotel "lock-up". Sidonie Smith and James Flink write that the invention of the motorcar reaffirmed men's position as the head of their family, by owning the family car, and reaffirmed their masculine identity as adventurers. Men took off on road trips and travelled greater distances independently.[88] Motor-travel made men, in Smith's words, "the privileged subject of modernity."[89] The Alvis mocks Clifford's manliness in Bowen's story. Its properties of escape and transcendent masculinity only affirm he is a kept man:

> Fumbling with the slimy lock in the mist, Clifford unlocked the lock-up. He reached into the Alvis, switched the dashboard lights on and got in and sat in the car to look for Polly's gloves. Mist came curdling into the lock-up after him. He put the wrist-length, fluffy gloves in one pocket. Then he checked up on the petrol: there were six gallons still. Then he plunged his hand slowly into another of his pockets, touched the pennies, thumbed the two half-crowns. In the dark his body recorded, not for the first time, yet another shock of the recurrent idea. The shock, as always, dulled out. He switched the lights off, folded his arms, slid forward and sat in the dark deflated - completely deflated, a dying pig that has

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Press, 1997) 81-101.
[86] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939'500.
[87] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 500.
[88]Smith, 170-171and Flink , *The Car Culture* 17-41.
[89] Smith, 170-171.

died.[90]

As his prolonged honeymoon continues Clifford's escape fantasy becomes a nightly ritual which is replayed during the daytime when he makes a "cramped dash" at his typewriter keys, in a futile attempt to finance his escape through writing. But each passing night that he fails to drive off in the Alvis, his manhood is reduced, symbolised in the amount of petrol left in the tank and the amount of small change Clifford owns. Clifford, "trussed" in the Perry-Duntons' hotel room and seen as a dead pig that goes through the cycle of dying again each night, continually being reminded of his depleted masculinity, recalls Odysseus in the Circe episode in the *Odyssey*. For Circe turned Odysseus's men into pigs and robbed Odysseus of his manhood by taking him as a lover and holding him captive.[91] It also recalls James Joyce's 'Circe' chapter in *Ulysses* (1922) where his brothel scene between madam Bello and Bloom inverts gender relations and mocks the social and economic conventions of marriage at the turn-of-the-century.[92] In 'A Love Story 1939' Clifford's feminisation is represented by his inability to ignite the Alvis.

But Bowen complicates her depictions of demonic femininity. She represents two additional enchantresses in the imperious mode of Haggard's "She" who are more threatening than Polly Perry-Dunton. The first is the Anglo-Irish Mrs Massey, a full-figure of Edwardian womanliness and an icon of home and patriotic duty, "...handsome, full chest...her manner was swaggering and excitable."[93] Mrs Massey is paradoxically thrilled by the death of her fighter pilot, yet also grieves for him. The second and more lethal female is the shadowy abstraction of the British Empire "Britannia" who needs her men to fight and die for her on the seas and now in the skies. The female ideal of Britannia seduces both men and women, asking them to renounce their personal lives and goals for the greater good of the Empire, even if this means servitude and death. As mentioned in my introduction, in 1915 the feminist journal the *Suffragette* significantly changed its name to *Britannia*, and renounced its project for female enfranchisement in favour of the war effort and a return to traditional domestic roles for women. In Haggard's *She*, the celibate Englishman Holly views "She" as both imperial and a satanic seductress. Haggard

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[90] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 504-505

[91] In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus begs Circe to return his men from pigs into human form and not sap his manhood in her bed, "'Circe,' I answered her, 'how can you order me to be gentle with you, you who have turned my friends into pigs here in your house, and now that you have me too in your clutches are inveigling me to your bedroom and inviting me into your bed, to strip me naked and rob me of my courage and manhood?'" Homer, *The Odyssey* trans. E. V. Rieu (London: Penguin, 1946), Ls 356-342.

[92] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922; London: Penguin, 2000), 642-647. Joyce's 'Circe' is connected with the circus, magic and transformation; the brothel parodies marriage; unspeakable sexualities and sexual positions are licensed in the brothel as women and men exchange roles.

naturalises the abstraction of British imperial power onto She's body, so that it enters Holly through his eyes as both a female and a divine idea to be worshipped, "It lay rather, if it can be said to have any fixed abiding place, in a visible majesty, in an imperial grace, in a godlike stamp of softened power, which shone upon that radiant countenance like a living halo. Never before had I guessed what beauty made sublime could be - and yet, the sublimity was a dark one - the glory was not all of heaven - though none the less was it glorious."[94] It is the monstrous female hydra of war and patriotism that Polly Perry-Dunton must fight for her man, "There had seemed no threat to Polly in Clifford's nature till the war came, with its masculine threat."[95] World War II is the reason why Polly holds Clifford captive in the Irish hotel by controlling the Alvis and withholding petrol money. Bowen contrasts Polly's boa-constrictor love for Clifford, which is "pure and unseen", with Mrs Massey's possession of the dead fighter pilot Teddy and designs on Clifford, and above all with Britannia.

Bowen's metonymic sea motifs that allude to warfare combine with her two female representations of imperialism, to give Polly Perry-Dunton's Alvis the cast of a World War II bomber. The invidious sea-mist, carrying the war threat, invades the Alvis and Clifford. In *The Last September* Bowen describes Danielstown invaded by a miasma, a toxic mist of past atrocities between the British, the Catholic-Irish and the Anglo-Irish, which overwhelms the present occupants. Here, the mist operates like the seductive scent of a woman, 'Britannia'. Polly fears Clifford will be lost in the sea-mist. When he does not return immediately, but drives the Masseys to their Anglo-Irish big house Palmlawn, she lies on their bed cradling his pyjamas as if he were dead. The Anglo-Irish Mrs Massey physically represents older Empire values. As mentioned, Mrs Massey is grief-stricken but also excited and proud that her young English friend was shot down; it makes her a part of the Allied war effort. A pseudo-war casualty, she is contemptuous of further news and is sickened by Irish neutrality, "'I wish I were proud of my country,' said Mrs Massey. 'But I'm ashamed of this country to tell you the truth.'"[96] Both her daughter and the World War I veteran Frank Mull, who knows the grim cost of war and respects Ireland's policy, upbraid her. Bowen wrote 'A Love Story 1939' shortly before beginning her work for the British Ministry of Information, reporting on Irish neutrality. Bowen supported the Irish government's reasons for neutrality, in relation to the delicate 'Partition' question and the 'Treaty Ports', as she reported on 9th November 1940: "It may be felt in England that Éire is

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[93] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 498.
[94] Rider H Haggard, *She* (1887; Oxford: OUP, 2002) 159.
[95] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 501.

making a fetish of her neutrality. But this assertion of her neutrality is Éire's first free self-assertion: as such alone it would mean a great deal to her. Éire (and I think rightly) sees her neutrality as positive, not merely negative."[97] Frank Mull refuses to fight in this war, having served in the previous one, and now lives in Ireland dealing in cars and love affairs.

Teresa Massey, the younger generation of Anglo-Irish, bitterly accuses her mother of wanting the pilot dead rather than lost to her in life. Death and war have reclaimed Teddy for Mrs Massey and reprieved her role as the grieving but stoical woman - an Edwardian persona which inter-war gender changes were making obsolete. Bowen uses Mrs Massey's inability to walk to criticise the imperial values she personifies, "Majestic and dazed between her escort, Mrs Massey stumbled along in a shackled way."[98] Unsteady from drink and grief, incapable of walking home, Mrs Massey falls back on Frank Mull's offer of a car lift home and reluctantly Teresa acquiesces. Mrs Massey's Edwardian femininity is indicted for continuing the imperial war ethos "Dulce est Decorum est", that sent hundreds of thousands of British and Irish men to the Front and their untimely deaths.[99] Befuddled and mistaking Polly's lock-up for Frank's, Mrs Massey raps the Alvis and requests Clifford's services.

Bowen uses the Alvis as a complex metaphor to highlight the way car manufacturers were drawn into the war effort. British car manufacturers, in collusion with imperial ideas of heroic masculinity, transformed cars and men into fighting machines. The Alvis presages the fighter pilots and death-toll in the on-coming 'Battle of Britain'. Bowen's choice of car manufacture is not a random one. The Welshman T G John, an expert naval architect and engineer, founded the Alvis Car & Engineering Co. Ltd., in 1919 (becoming Alvis Ltd. in 1936).[100] Building upon his naval and World War I experience, T G John developed the Alvis

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[96] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 509.
[97] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Notes on Éire' 9th November, 1940 'Mr Churchill and the Irish Ports', FO 800/310 205232, The National Archives, Kew Richmond, Surrey, United Kingdom.
[98] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939'506.
[99] Wilfred Owen originally wrote his bitter criticism of World War I 'Dulce et Decorum Est' (1917), as an attack against female enthusiasts and poets who praised the war effort and the sacrifice of their sons for the Empire. He first titled his poem 'To Jessie Pope' and then 'To A Certain Poetess', accusing her of inspiring the death-toll. But before publication he changed the title to the line from Horace's ode and accused the ideology of patriotism in general for the War. Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century* vol. 2 *Sexchanges* 284.
[100] Originally named after its founder, T. G. John Ltd. The company became The Alvis Car & Engineering Co. Ltd. in 1921. For a history of the Alvis and its role in World War II and aviation see Kenneth Day, *Alvis: The Story of the Red Triangle*, 3rd edn., (1981; Somerset: Haynes Publishing, 1991) 10-54 and 70-86; and Daniel Young, *Advertising Alvis: 1920-1966*. (London: P4 Spares, 1991). See also Flink, *The Automobile Age* 73-112.

into a leading British sporting and luxury car. Throughout the 1930s Alvis foresaw the coming war and diversified into aero engines, tanks and armoured cars, making a tremendous contribution to the war effort, mostly in sub-contract work on Rolls-Royce aero engines. Polly Perry-Dunton's luxury Alvis is either the 1937 Silver Crest Cross & Ellis DHC or (more likely) the famous aero engine 1939 'Leonides'. By using Alvis, Bowen outlines mutually supporting and complex inter-relations within British imperialism, linking World War I with developments in car manufacturing, the cult of heroic masculinity, and now World War II bombers.

Bowen uses the relationship between the four characters and the Alvis to construct a powerful modernist metaphor criticising jingoism. Mrs Massey, with her old-style cult of British heroism, becomes a medium that transmutes the dead fighter pilot Teddy and his aeroplane into Clifford Perry-Dunton and the Alvis:

> 'It's all right, Teresa, the car's in here,' she called with quite an approach to her usual gaiety.
>
> Clifford's reflex to the bump on the car was to blaze all his lights on. Inside, his lock-up became one curdled glare; his tail light spread a ruby stain on the mist. He turned his head sharply and stayed with his coinlike profile immobilized against the glaring wall. Mrs Massey came scrambling into view. Clifford put down one window. 'I beg your pardon?' he said.[101]

Clifford and the Alvis fuse; the car both imbues and projects Clifford's virile masculinity. Mrs Massey literally turns them both on. Clifford becomes a pseudo-pilot and the Alvis his plane. Both await their orders from Mrs Massey and Britannia. Again, Bowen's choice of car–make underpins her fictional correlation between imperialism, war, technology and the blood sacrifice. Alvis Ltd. viewed the Leonides test drive in 1939 as its first flight and its aero engine was adapted for aircrafts. In 'A Love Story 1939' the Alvis's headlights become a "curdled glare", and its tail light "a ruby stain on the mist", signifying the way motorcar technologies and aviation will both fuel and fight the war: crashing in burning tailspins and increasing the twentieth-century death toll. The future is shadowed in the faceless Teddy, who signifies all fighter pilots, and whose heroic masculinity haunts the story. Clifford symbolically embodies the dead pilot in the story and fighter pilots in reality. Bowen puts a human face on abstract heroism but also shows the way patriotism dehumanises individuals. She represents Clifford's "coinlike profile immobilized against the glaring end wall" turning him into a faceless icon of aerial masculinity and sacrifice, ready to defend his womenfolk and country. Bowen coldly draws literary connotations between her description of Clifford and celebratory effigies on postcards and

[101] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 506.

stamps, or projected onto cinema screens for newsreels and propaganda. The re-awakened spirit of Anglo-Saxon masculinity, called forth by Mrs Massey, possesses Clifford; at Mrs Massey's command Clifford ignites and reverses the Alvis, something he could not do for his own salvation. At Palmlawn Mrs Massey informs an unwilling Teresa that Clifford is uncannily like the dead pilot Teddy and kisses him, saluting her dead friend and symbolically giving Clifford the kiss of death. Bowen's almost vampiric representation of Mrs Massey sexually possessing Clifford and turning him into a ghostly fighter pilot, with her old style feminine demands has literary parallels with Martha Gellhorn's short story 'Portrait of a Lady' published in 1946. Gellhorn's story is set in 1936 in Finland at the start of the short war between Finland and Russia. A rich American reporter "Mrs Maynard", who is a complex mix of modern and old style predatory and needy woman, is aroused by the derring-do of the fighter-pilot "Lieutenant Lahti", a national hero. She seduces him against his will on the night before a decisive engagement. Lahti dies in the next day's air-battle, because his pre-battle celibacy has been broken and his manliness depleted by Mrs Maynard.[102]

Teresa Massey represents the independent modern woman. Identified by Frank Mull as "the Tiger cat", Teresa is the modern alternative of Polly Perry-Dunton's 'Pussy cat', and both women contrast with Mrs Massey's "plump, fine-wristed ringed hand" and fulsome Edwardian figure.[103] Bowen draws attention to Teresa's masculine figure and restless energy, "Teresa took off her trenchcoat and slung it over a chair, then crossed the lounge with her loose, cross walk, in her slacks."[104] She undermines social and literary assumptions that androgynous women are asexual and unnatural. Mrs Massey refers to Teresa's lack of visible emotions as monstrous, "'I'd rather see you suffer than have no feelings. You're not like a woman, Teresa. And he was your age, not my age.' 'Is that so?' Teresa said, in a voice too lifeless for irony."[105] But Teresa's lifeless irony denotes the fact that the older generation of Anglo-Irish (and the British upper classes outside Ireland, across the Empire) with their imperial ideals have sacrificed their young men in World War I, and are now taking the next generation in World War II. Teresa has not been allowed to love the young fighter pilot and is immune to Frank Mull's seduction, "Teresa stepped down off the chair into Frank's arms - but she stood inside them like steel. He let her

[102] Martha Gellhorn, 'Portrait of a Lady' in *The Heart of Another* (London: Morrison and Gibb Ltd., 1946), 49-107.
[103] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 498.
[104] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 498.
[105] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 498.

go." [106] Instead she turns to the Alvis, for the liberty and autonomy promised symbolically and literally in auto-mobility.

Bowen gives Teresa the full self-awareness of the threat war will have for everyone, even those who attempt to escape it. World War I veteran Frank Mull mistakenly labels Clifford Perry-Dunton a lunatic for taking the Alvis out in the mist. Teresa, "in her not encouraging way", pertinently informs Frank, 'Well, you'll be another lunatic, in a minute."[107] In the context of the narrative's encoding of the Alvis as a fighter-plane and the mist as the war-threat, Frank Mull's accusation and Teresa's counter-truth highlight the lunacy of war. Although Bowen understood the need for Britain to go to war with Germany in 1939, and returned to London for war duty, like the majority of her contemporaries, she realised the potential destructiveness of a second modern war, in stark contrast to the British public in 1914 who had cheered on their British soldiers and believed the war would be over by Christmas.[108] An engine of death for the men, the Alvis offers escape and life for Teresa Massey. She walks away from Palmlawn, from her mother's grief and befuddled possession of Clifford, and from her historicized position as an Anglo-Irishwoman, "Out there on the sweep above the lawn and the sea, Clifford's lights were still blazing into the mist. Teresa went out and examined, as much by touch as anything, the wonderful car. An idea of going away for ever lifted and moved her heart, like a tide coming in."[109] Bowen presents Teresa in the guise of 1920s and '30s aviatrixes, desiring the promise of motor-flight and aerial transcendence which drew men towards motor-racing and flight. In the story Teresa's imagination transcends her body and circumstances. But in the reality of 1939 women like men are circumscribed, and the life-enhancing motorcars and aeroplanes have been transformed by war into death-machines. 'A Love Story 1939' ends with uncertainty for Clifford and Frank as the crawling Alvis takes them back to the hotel through the deepening mist.

At the start of the twentieth century the motorcar and aeroplane denoted both a reaffirmation of heroic masculinity and a potential space for modernist woman with her transgressive sexuality. World War II changed this, proving the destructive quality of the new technology and although the war brought about emancipating advances for females, such as the Land Girls, the immediate post-war period reprised traditional gender roles. In Bowen's fiction

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[106] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 509.
[107] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 506.
[108] Bowen was in Bowen's Court when Britain entered the war. She returned to London and volunteered as an ARP warden for Marylebone. Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 149. James 347-349.
[109] Bowen, 'A Love Story 1939' 510.

aeroplanes and motor travel offer freer life-choices than an Anglo-Irish big house or pre-World War I and II social orders. But the freedom they offer is a dubious or false promise of flight and mobility - especially for young women. In *A World of Love* Bowen shows that motor- and air-travel now domesticates women in the second half of the century and reaffirms patriarchy, despite the new American-driven consumer culture, the revaluation of women's education and maternal roles and the second wave of feminism in France and America, heralded by Simone de Beauvoir's ground-breaking polemic, *The Second Sex* (1949).

In *A World of Love* Bowen uses the American Richard Priam's transatlantic flight as a narrative ploy to separate the younger Danbys, Jane and Maud, from the big house Montefort and the pre-war Danby generation. She depicts his aeroplane as a metaphor for the new world order. It cancels the past, flies over historical time, and carries the future to the girls and Ireland. However, Jane and Maud's differing perspectives, firstly during their van journey to meet the aeroplane, secondly at Shannon airport, and finally viewing the aeroplane's ungainly landing, indicate Bowen's hopes and doubts about aviation and the promise of the new post-war world.

The aeroplane arrives on the third day of the novel's action and coincides with rain falling and the end of the infernal June heat. It marks the end too of the Indian summer for the inhabitants of Montefort and, by implication, for the Anglo-Irish and British Empire. At this juncture in the novel Maud futilely tries to establish the patriarchal authority of her father Fred at Montefort, that in her mind is grounded in the Bible, the Protestant faith and the chimes of Big Ben all of which offer her some type of stability. Meanwhile Fred and Lilia commence a second flowering in their marriage and Antonia decides she and Jane must leave Montefort to begin Jane's secretarial career elsewhere. At this impasse in the novel, just before the plane's entrance, Jane exorcises Guy's ghost and the past.

Over the radio, which Maud has tuned, the dying chimes of Big Ben intimate that from this point forward the characters are free of their family past. It symbolises the hope that Ireland is now not only free of British history, but also its own obsession with the past, "Passionless Big Ben...while useless the fate of nations went on preparing; and for what culmination...But now came Now - the imperative, the dividing moment, the spell-breaker - all else was thrown behind, disappeared from reality, was over. Time swooped as it struck –"[110] Big Ben's nine strokes are described as shattering the silent room, like torpedoes or cannonade. Montefort and its Anglo-

Irish history, figured in the ghostly Guy and the characters' thoughts, splinter, capsize and sink into the sea of "Time". The metaphorical sinking leaves a blank present and irrevocably turns the characters from the past to meet the future. After this final exorcism, Jane announces she is leaving in Lady Vesta Latterly's van for Shannon airport, to meet a transatlantic flight.

The future arrives on the wings of Richard's plane and the narrative describes the aeroplane battling Ireland's historical climate, 'the obdurate cloud-ceiling' to land at Shannon: "...one could imagine with what effort anything larger than a bird must have to continue to forge its way; though at the altitude out of sight at which the airliner anxiously must be hastening in order to converge upon the van at the given time, at the given spot, all might be otherwise - one could not say."[111] But the aeroplane can only bring an uncertain future to the novel's plot, clouded by history and chance encounters. Here Bowen's literary style self-consciously parodies her own and other modernist writers' attempts to represent the fragmented world and self, and to free the novel form from history as well as engaging with historical change. By 1955 modernism's aesthetic rupture with chronology and realism produced unravelling and multi-threaded narratives which threatened to undermine any possibility of logical meaning or cohesion, threatening the novel form itself and pointing towards postmodernism. From now on Bowen's writing style, here and in her next two novels and short stories[112], displays a modernist/postmodernist duality and self-conscious experimentation not only with representation but also with the art of the novel itself. Any narrative certainty or attempt to represent even a fragmented 'self' is undercut by the impossibility of creating meaning and order in the post-war political and cultural 'free-fall'.[113] Her literary style parallels the existential tension in reality between those who experienced the questioning of all class structures, social institutions and values as freedom and those who experienced it as anarchy and sought a return to historical, gendered, singular identities - but without the imperial system to uphold them. Bowen's essay 'The Bend Back' (1950), published in the *Saturday Review* as 'Once Upon a Yesterday', probes

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[110] Bowen, *A World of Love* 129.
[111] Bowen, *A World of Love* 144.
[112] Her two novels *The Little Girls* (1963) and *Eva Trout* (1968), which I analyse in this chapter, display increasingly postmodernist techniques at the level of form and structure, in tension with Bowen's adherence to the conventions of the realist novel. Bowen wrote few short stories following her renovation and mastery of the form during World War II. However the few that she did write, 'I Hear You Say So', (published in *New Writing* and *Daylight*, Sept. 1945), 'Gone Away' (published in *The Listener*, Jan. 1946), in particular, 'Hand in Glove', (published in *Second Ghost Book* by Cynthia Asquith, Barrie & Rockliff, 1952), and 'A Day in the Dark' in *Botteghe Oscure*, 1956), all published in her collection *A Day in the Dark* (1965), reveal a self-reflexive, self-parodic aesthetic and pre-empt some of the central concerns of postmodernism.
[113] Davies, 840-870 and James, 588-607.

this post-war tension and celebrates the present, despite and indeed because of the new type of uncertainty, "We are more aware than our forefathers of dissatisfactions – may this not, however, mean that awareness, rather than dissatisfactions has increased…Let us examine the stuff of our own time to see if, through it also, there does not run some gold vein."[114]

Bowen mockingly pins Ireland and Jane's future on the expectant plane and Richard Priam who combine into a *deus ex machina*, supposedly carrying the novel's traditional marriage plot (and Anglo-Irish history) to a positive terminus that will reveal a new future direction. Bowen plays with pre-war and 1950s sexual politics. Lilia and Antonia insist Maud chaperone Jane in the van, protecting Jane's reputation from both the English chauffeur Harris, and the arriving American Richard. Before leaving for the plane, Jane regrets cutting the "angel sleeves" off the Edwardian dress because she appreciates, after the act, that the sleeves gave the dress its beauty. Jane's new perspective registers the fact that change and new gender identities come at a price - the ruined dress represents the loss of some of the positive values, which harmoniously structured Edwardian society. But more than this Bowen links the tropes of the dress and female flight with Richard's aeroplane to signal a dangerous return to the nineteenth-century 'Angel in the house' discourse and valuation of women for their beauty rather than their intellect or business acumen. Shorn of its wings the dress seemingly becomes a "musty" relic that Jane dumps into the oubliette of Montefort's wardrobes. Jane exchanges the dress for her brand new 1950s stripy woman's blazer, unworn, and departs for the plane - exchanging angel's wings and domesticity for technological travel. The substitution should represent Jane's rejection of the past and a narrative replacement of pre-war gender roles with the modern 1950s woman. However, the text undercuts the sense that 1950s woman is freer than her ancestor, the 'Angel in the house'. Instead of departing for a professional career Jane is dressed in white and described as today's bride; the van is presented as a wedding car. Jane's blazer first catches Richard's eye as he descends from the plane. The van and aeroplane carry Jane and Richard to an Irish-American union. But Bowen's delineation of Jane and Maud's airport journey; of Jane's impression of the airport control tower; and of the plane's unsteady descent from Maud's perspective, undermines the story's optimism that 1950s aviation and politics, in the shape of American investment, will benefit women, the Anglo-Irish or Ireland.

Initially the van takes on the characteristics of a small boat carrying the girls away from the sunken Montefort and its Irish history, across "the large lush lakelike County Limerick plain"

[114] Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Bend Back' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 59-60.

into the promise of an enfranchising future for the two girls.[115] As the van speeds towards Shannon and the incoming aircraft, the girls tour through relics of Irish and Anglo-Irish history: Georgian town houses, ruined big houses and Catholic farms and villas. *A World of Love* parallels Jane's escape from Irish history with escape from prescribed roles for women, whether Edwardian or modern 1950s assumptions. Bowen repeats her earlier ship and figurehead metaphors, which denote the position of women living in upper-class British and Irish households. As Harris speeds in the van towards Shannon, "Jane, as though to aid him by concentration, sat for some time leaning a little forward, brow to the road like a beautiful figurehead's", intent on escaping rather than salvaging Montefort.[116] Jammed in traffic in Limerick town centre, overshadowed by Georgian houses, Jane determines she cannot return to London and the soulless girls' residential club where Antonia often deposits her, like luggage. Indeed, she distances herself from her roommate, "who was the sort of bore who was not a virgin", rejecting the career path of the new type of sexually and economically independent women, who in her promiscuity is still placeless.[117] The sexual and economic emancipation for single office girls is illusory, limited to a mundane series of sexual encounters before marriage and domesticity.[118] The aeroplane promises Jane a third way out via an American romance.

Bowen reveals the aeroplane's impact before it actually enters the scene directly. Bowen's presentation of the van motoring across Limerick to Shannon airport mimics the flying aeroplane, which at this moment in the novel is invisible behind cloud cover:

> Out petered the villas with their stories...this was a marshy watershed, across which ran the highway bare as a dyke. What was amazing was that the world could change so fast - where they had been, where was it now? And still more, what was to come? Air as it tore by the open windows entered and lifted the speeding van, and this was in a sort of crescendo, making Jane's hands clasp and reclasp.[119]

Her narrative ploy links the van with the aeroplane, echoing early-twentieth-century artists and automobile manufacturers who connected motoring with flying: for example, Edith Wharton

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[115] Bowen, *A World of Love* 142.

[116] The girls' experience in the van demonstrates the perception of motoring as escape, for men and women. This perception of motoring has been documented in its cultural-history since its invention. Smith cites Wolfgang Sachs in her chapter 'On the Road', "This fusion of body and machine facilitates speedy escape – from the past, from the static routines of domesticity, and from an outmoded identity. Physical freedom translates into psychological freedom." 170. In *A World of Love* Bowen uses the liberating qualities of the motorcar, and its representation as a 'time-machine', to carry her characters from their Anglo-Irish past, and free up Ireland's present.

[117] Bowen, *A World of Love* 145.

[118] Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945 : women, family, work and the State in the Post-War years* 11-25.

[119] Bowen, *A World of Love* 145-146.

titled her collected motoring-travel articles, *A Motor-Flight Through France* (1908).[120] The Irish landscape opens out to make space for the airport, imbuing in Jane and Maud a sense of continuous change, embarkation and flight. The three travellers and Irish topography are reordered by Shannon airport and aviation, with its new political and industrial promise that will connect Ireland with America and elsewhere: "[w]ater skeined the landscape. The Shannon river, lost since Limerick city, was drawing nearer to name the airport, and a tributary quickened its way towards it."[121] Valerie Sweeney in *Shannon Airport: A Unique Story of Survival*, records that in the 1930s, Fianna Fáil quickly realised the economic and political importance of Ireland's "unique geographical position as a transatlantic connecting point by air from America."[122] Éamon de Valera ensured Ireland was represented in the World's first International Airline Convention in 1934 and commissioned Charles Lindbergh to examine the site near Rineanna at the mouth of the river Shannon, and ensure its suitability for non-stop trans-Atlantic flights.[123] In 1945 Rineanna Airport opened, and was later renamed 'Shannon International Airport'.

However, the 1950s promise of a new world of industrial and diplomatic relations, symbolised in international flight paths, is tarnished by the memories of World War II and civil unrest in the first half of the twentieth century, "The van whisked over the bridge, into a shaded swastika-angled section of the road due soon to go on without them to Galway for soon would be coming the Turn Off. Subdued by the trees and by the narrowed intensity of this all-but-last-phase, both girls said nothing-"[124] Bowen's description of the van-ride as a time machine travelling across early twentieth-century history mirrors Edith Wharton, who believed motoring revealed successive histories of localities to motorists at a glance, "of familiarity with the unnamed, unhistoried region stretching between successive centres of human history, and exerting, in deep unnoticed ways, so persistent an influence on the turn that history takes."[125] The

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[120] Smith 179.
[121] Bowen, *A World of Love* 146.
[122] Valerie Sweeney, *Shannon Airport: A Unique Story of Survival*. (Clare: Valerie Sweeney Ltd. edn., 2004) 25.
[123] Sweeney notes that Lindberg "was Pan-American Airlines' Aviation Consultant at the time. His brief was to travel the world, preparing routes for Pan-American flying-boats." His involvement in the Shannon project influenced Shannon's future importance as a stop-over for American flights to Britain and Europe. 28.
[124] Bowen, *A World of Love* 146.
[125] Edith Wharton's motorcar takes her from the main-line of railways, and their parallel associations with singular historical narratives, to unknown French localities that also play their part in determining French history. Smith highlights the power of motoring to access forgotten histories, and give the motorist a multiple historical perspective, "Because the automobile provides access to roads leading everywhere, it carries the traveller through successive histories inscribed in geography, demographics, economics, and cultural practices of specific locales. In her prosthetic vehicle, the traveller comprehends more clearly than

motorcar can access forgotten histories, off the track of the main teleological, national narrative. In *A World of Love* the van-ride gives its passengers, and the reader, an interpenetration of the various parts of Irish history and Ireland's involvement (despite neutrality) with twentieth-century politics and World War II.[126] The van motors past Anglo-Irish dwellings, a part of Ireland now blotted out of the official narrative. A sentinel castle stands guard over the hunchbacked bridge across the tributary, leading to the Turn Off, "like Shalott – willows whitened, aspens quivered; and how far did the top turrets see?"[127] By positioning the castle watching the "swastika-angled" road section and the Turn Off, the narrative constructs continuity between the reasons behind the Anglo-Irish war, World War II and future peace.

The castle's turret, like a baleful eye, surveys the girls' flight; and its nearness to the airport gives it the characteristic of an airport control tower, surveying incoming and outgoing international flights. But introducing Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* strikes an ominous note. Like the doomed Lady in her tower, the Anglo-Irish are doomed within their big houses, never to look upon the world or interact in the public sphere of Irish politics; instead they are interiorised and can only see the future in the reflection of their past lives. Once more Bowen parallels the Anglo-Irish interiorised in their big houses with changing gender roles. Jane and Maud speed from both their Anglo-Irish family and pre-war and post-war prescriptions for women. The cement 'Turn Off' is described as solidified water, offering a magical pathway from Ireland to the airport and elsewhere, 'all else stood back from it in awe, for it looked like the future and for some was.'[128] The future promise of the second half of the twentieth century, signified in aviation and American policy, will not carry everyone with it.

Although the airport arrivals lounge is described as an unearthly space, Jane is forced back into late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century behaviour codes. Sitting with her back to the wall of window, focusing on the interior, Jane passively awaits her man. Conscious of her enforced standstill Jane compares waiting for Richard arriving on his plane with her mother waiting for Guy and his departing train in 1917: "[h]er back was to space…Nothing is so simple as you hope; the girl did not know what to do now – oh yes, she thought, I *am* doing something, I am waiting; but reason told her that waiting is something being done to you. She thought of her

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the traveller on a train the relationship of place to the unfolding of historical time." Smith 178-182.

[126] During World War II Winston Churchill used Rineanna, before it was completed, to travel to America for crucial talks with President Roosevelt. Ten American Air Force ferry flights landed at Rineanna for refuelling during the war, under the authority of Mr. de Valera. Sweeney 45, 57 and 103.

[127] Bowen, *A World of Love* 146.

mother in the railway station, but in that case the train had gone: you do not wait for what has already happened."[129] For Jane, her choices are secretarial work in London or pinning her hopes on the American Richard, since Montefort is a now sunken relic. Neither future will be in Ireland. Her 'dead' limbo sharply contrasts with her cycling self-agency at the opening of the novel.[130]

The airport is not a gateway to international destinations or futurity for Jane; instead it consists of "unechoing corridors, barricades and attrition – she wondered where 'the control' was, and, if it were a control, what it could do."[131] The airport recalls Montefort and dilapidated big houses throughout Bowen's fiction. It brings to mind the faceless bureaucracy that decides treaties and international policies. Harris informs the girls "the control tower" decides when Richard's plane can land. The corridors, barricades and attrition remember devastated cities across the world in continuous wars and revolutions of the previous fifty years, especially bombed European cities during World War II, when control towers charted the bombers' destructive flight paths. In the 1950s the control tower marks airpower's increasing centrality in shaping world politics, with the burgeoning Cold War and nuclear arms race between the superpowers America and the USSR. Primarily a mode of transport at the start of the twentieth century, aviation now authorises a new world order, replacing Virginia Woolf's British constable directing London traffic at Piccadilly Circus, who symbolised British authority in directing world trade and politics at the turn-of-the-century. Now, in 1954, Bowen records that anonymous air traffic controllers, and nuclear threats, direct personal and public lives en-masse. Jane's suspicion of 'the control' as anonymous but omnipotent recalls George Orwell's *1984* (1949) and pre-empts Michel Foucault's surveillance tower in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1973); she wonders how far its reach is and what are its powers?

The descending aeroplane interrupts Jane's reflections. Before the plane is in sight a disembodied voice announces it, first in Irish then, "in the other tongue."[132] The narrative shows that 'the control' at Shannon airport – Ireland's new border - is now Irish and no longer British.

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[128] Bowen, *A World of Love* 146.
[129] Bowen, *A World of Love* 147. Simone de Beauvoir writes, "The individual is always explained through ties with past instead of the future towards which she projects her aims." *The Second Sex* (1949; London: Vintage, 2003)
[130] Leed writes that in travel narratives and historical documents corroborate patriarchal gender systems, representing masculine mobility and assuming female domesticity. He argues that assumptions about mobility, rather than biological determinants, govern identity and gender differences. 221-223.
[131] Bowen, *A World of Love* 148.

But in turn, Irish authority is overshadowed by American authority, emblematised in the transatlantic aeroplane piercing through the "cloud-ceiling" obscuring the sky over Montefort and Shannon. Bowen humorously presents the fictional plane as if were an arriving American dignitary or in terms of colonial ships and Irish immigrant ships landing in the Americas or elsewhere, "Steps and an airport official went out to meet it; at the conclusion of formalities the passengers began to descend, glazed, dazed, indifferent."[133] Bowen's 1950s American plane, with its tourist passengers, becomes a reversal of seventeenth-century colonialism, and mid-nineteenth-century famine ships.[134] It represents the new wealth and industry brought into Ireland by American airline tourism, such as Pan-American Airways and TWA, and the development of Shannon Duty-Free Shop.[135]

Bowen seemingly reinstates the traditional novel form and social values by romantically concluding the aeroplane flight and the storyline with love at first sight between Jane and Richard, "They no sooner looked but they loved." – but uses Maud's perspective to undercut the romance narrative and closure[136] Shannon Airport and the plane become a new medium for non-threatening romance in 1954. Aviation now channels dangerous female sexuality back into a domestic stability, sanctioned in marriage, and in *A World of Love* the marriage has a further political dimension, representing an Irish-American union. Under Sean Lemass' government, and his sponsorship of the 'Shannon Free Airport Development Company', Ireland focused on American aid and business partnership.[137] However, Bowen's tritely romantic ending is undercut by her representation of the airport as a baleful surveillance engine, or a continuation of World War II hostilities in the Cold War, and as an extension of patriarchy and imbalanced sexual politics. The twelve-year-old Maud Danby derisively views the all-powerful twentieth-century aviation as an anti-climax:

> One watched its hesitating descent to such, alas, a remote part of the airport, that, landing, it dropped again out of view. It remedied this by coming taxiing endlessly, endlessly

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[132] Bowen, *A World of Love* 148.
[133] Bowen, *A World of Love* 148. Sweeney discusses the numbers of politicians, film stars, royalty, and super rich, such as Gene Kelly, Marilyn Monroe, President J. F. Kennedy and Senator Ted Kennedy, stopping at Shannon during the 1950s and '60s. 155-163.
[134] Roy Foster writes in *Modern Ireland 1600 - 1972* that the development of Shannon Airport after World War II led to an influx of American tourism, which he describes as a twentieth century marketing version of seventeenth-century planter promise, "...from the late 1950s Bord Fáilte approached the matter of marketing Ireland with more finesse, and to greater purpose. The development of Shannon Airport led to a huge American influx; the coach-tour industry took over. And the advertising industry 'sold' Ireland as energetically and unrealistically as any seventeenth-century plantation promoter." 581.
[135] Sweeney, 6-7 and 231-259.
[136] Bowen, *A World of Love* 149.
[137] Foster 569-596 and Sweeney 231-259.

> inwards along the runways, first at one angle, then at another, and so absurd was its progress in this manner, one could have wept. 'I did not think much of that,' said Maud, as the thing gave a final tremble and drew up more or less opposite them.[138]

She critiques its promise as an engine of futurity. From her perspective the new world order coming in on the wings of the gravity-defying technology, cannot replace the old world order, grounded in imperialism, the Anglo-Irish tradition and religious faith, with security, grounded in new, plural national identities and gender roles. 1950s politics will replay the cycle of old identity politics and aggression.

III The undomesticated goddess Eva Trout (1968)

Elizabeth Bowen gave her last novel two titles, *Eva Trout* or *Changing Scenes* (1968) and split it into two parts: 'Part I: Genesis', set in 1959 and 'Part II: Eight Years' Later' set in 1967, Bowen's present time of writing it.[139] The following analysis of Bowen's themes and technical inventiveness in *Eva Trout* both summarises and enlarges my argument, not only in this chapter, but in this thesis. The novel's two titles draw attention to Bowen's modernist aesthetic throughout her oeuvre, interrogating historical change and gender, by formally balancing the tension between traditional and modern social values and literary styles. The proper noun title *Eva Trout* signals the realist bildungsroman novel with its central coherent character and its marriage plot. However the metaphoric title *Changing Scenes* signals Bowen's modernist self-consciousness that human identity, especially in the twentieth century, is experienced as fragmented and shaped by rapid historical change and travel – which by the 1960s is speedier and (although a part of everyday life, due to assembly-line car manufacturing and airline competition) is more dislocating than in previous eras. But in this novel Bowen takes her modernist aesthetics, her themes and vehicular metaphors, to parodic extremes and pushes the boundaries of the modernist novel form.

For *Eva Trout* is both a modernist and a postmodernist novel. As Hermione Lee, Heather Bryant Jordan and Maud Ellmann have noted, far from being a 'unified character' its eponymous heroine Eva is a fragmented child-woman, in search of a 'self': "At fourteen Eva was showing no

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[138] Bowen, *A World of Love* 148.

[139] Alfred Knopf published *Eva Trout* in America in 1968; Jonathan Cape published it in London in 1969. I will refer to the novel by its published title *Eva Trout*, and only refer to it as *Changing Scenes* when making

signs of puberty."[140] A poor-little-rich girl whose father Willy Trout created a fortune in the post-war boom, her jet-setting childhood and lack of formal education have retarded her development so that at twenty-four-years old, when the novel opens, she still acts and talks like an adolescent. As a child Eva was left like luggage in various hotels, to be collected by Willy or someone else when possible. Bowen presents Eva as a Frankenstein type of monster born of World-War-II destruction and displacement. For economic expediency, Willy Trout hired a host of "displaced persons" to attend Eva, "from infancy' onwards."[141] Bowen pointedly uses building and travel metaphors to assert that Eva's disjointed childhood, cared for by foreign transients with their partial English, is the reason why Eva talks and acts like a "displaced person". Eva's "outlandish, cement-like conversational style" has irrevocably "set" by the time she is sixteen.[142] Bowen's mixture of refugee tropes and building materials to describe Eva's speech, and thereby her persona and ability to describe herself, represents the post-war fluidity between nationalities in the aftermath of imperialism and Nazism. The onset of the Cold War, decolonisation and the consumer boom in the 1950s and '60s witnessed the quick erection of new boundaries and cultural identities between Maoist China, the Soviet Bloc, North Korea and the West, leading to NATO in 1949 and bringing about on the one hand the concentrated mixing and meshing of peoples and languages, but also the resettlement of ethnicities the and division of former countries.[143] Post-colonial India divided into Sikh India and Muslim Pakistan in 1947; while under the process of British decolonisation Africa broke down into nationalist states along and the British withdrawal from Palestine gave rise to the Palestine-Israeli conflict.[144] In *Friends & Relations* Bowen revealed that the British Empire and British homes were like a vulnerable travel network of people, rather than an organic family tree rooted in the English soil. In *Eva Trout* Bowen shows that in the aftermath of two world wars, many people across the world feel they are placeless nomads.

Formally Eva's gigantic figure, her fragmented 'self' and her cement-like outlandish English signifies, not only the epistemological crises of modernity but also the ontological crises of postmodernism, both of which the novel form from the 1950s onwards struggled to represent amid the increasing cultural uncertainty.[145] *Eva Trout* is modernist in its treatment of fragmented

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a specific point in reference to the second title and its meaning in the novel.
[140] Elizabeth Bowen, *Eva Trout* (1968; London: Vintage, 1999) 49.
[141] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 17.
[142] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 17.
[143] Davies 853-886.
[144] James 525-622.
[145] Steven Connor 'Postmodernism and literature' in ed. Steven Connor, *The Cambridge Companion to*

memory, time and personal identity; in its multiple perspectives; in its interior consciousness and the way its subject matter interpenetrates its narrative form. *Eva Trout* displays postmodernist tendencies in its self-reflexive staginess "Anybody looking in at a window – though who should? – " and literariness where its characters are almost aware of their fictional status and take charge of the plot line, "Because, we must put our heads together before we part. Don't you think so? Begin to concoct something..."[146] Bowen's metaphorical employment of Eva's Jaguar and bicycle and a transatlantic aeroplane flight identify Bowen's modernist and postmodernist aesthetics. As with *A World of Love* and *The Little Girls* the vehicles encode gender and cultural changes in Britain and America at the end of the 1950s and '60s. However, in *Eva Trout* her metaphors not only impact on the novel form by subverting its fictional unity and suspension of reality, but more than this they break the contract between the author, the novel and the reader. They underline the epistemological and ontological gap between reality and art, which art must still try to bridge. In addition Bowen transfers her personal memories of homelessness, her anxieties about her lost *Bowen's Court* and her family tradition, and the early loss of her mother onto her fictional representation of Eva's Jaguar and bicycle. In doing this Bowen represents the fact that in 1968 she and many others born before World War I feel they are pieces of historical baggage out of place in modernity; or else they are pieces of luggage without any history, past or values with which to identify themselves in a groundless post-war universe.[147]

The themes of historical change and gender, and the metaphors of travel and female mobility which characterise Bowen's earlier writing are taken to extremes in *Eva Trout* as the plot careers through a host of locations, '*Changing Scenes*'.[148] The novel's topography switches between English rural settings in Worcestershire and the Lake District, London, the English coast near Kent, a transatlantic flight, Mid-West America, back to London, Paris, and a fatal finale in London, at Victoria train station, where Jeremy, Eva Trout's eight-year-old adopted son, shoots

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Postmodernism (Cambridge: CUP, 2004) 65-68.

[146] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 96 and 45

[147] Davies, 853-886. See Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1987) and Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (Routledge: London, 1990); also Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

[148] As mentioned, Bowen titled her unfinished autobiography *Pictures and Conversations*. She drew her title from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as she explains, "It is not easy to make a synopsis of this (projected) book - of which the title is drawn from page 1 of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." *Pictures and Conversations* 6. As I argue in Chapter three, Bowen drew parallels between her own childhood, shuttling back and forth between Dublin and Cork and then moving to England, and the fictional Alice in wonderland. In *Pictures and Conversations* she intended to trace the relationship "between living and writing" and show the contrasts and affinities between Bowen's historical comprehension and personal experience of Anglo-Irish Ireland, twentieth century Ireland, England, and her fictional topography.

her dead. The novel leaves Eva's death open-ended, as to whether it is an accident or infantile matricide. Eva's own search for and fictions of self-hood structure the novel: "[t]ime, inside Eva's mind, lay about like various pieces of a fragmented picture. She remembered, that is to say, dejectedly. To reassemble the picture was impossible; too many of the pieces were lost, lacking. Yet, some of the pieces there were would group into patterns - patterns at least... Occupationally, this pattern arriving-at was absorbing, as is a kindergarten game, and, like such a game made sense in a way."[149] Eva creates fantasies to thread her own disjected memory and time into a coherent personal narrative and identity.[150] As Maud Ellmann also notes, Eva's fantasies and memories cohere and fragment like coloured patterns in a kaleidoscope.[151] Each chapter forms like a new twist in Eva's kaleidoscopic patterning of her fictions-memory-reality, threading a fragmented storyline from Eva's perspective, which jumps backwards and forwards in time, and is occasionally interpolated by a chapter giving another character's perspective, clarifying Eva's action. In most of the chapters a mode of transport marks the transition from one to the next, carrying Eva or another character into the new setting. This very deliberate encoding of transport technologies testifies to Bowen's intentionally subversive treatment of these vehicles to counter or undermine the novel's traditional linear narrative. For instance, when driving in her Jaguar Eva asks the twelve years' younger Henry Dancey to marry her. When Henry refuses, Eva asks him at least to act out a mock marriage with her at Victoria train station in order to fool their friends and enable Eva's escape from England. The motorcar momentarily becomes a space to redefine sexual roles and power relations, and further to undermine the sanctity of an English marriage and thereby England's social fabric in the 1960s. Bowen's vehicular metaphors become important registers of change and/or resistance to traditional gender relations.

The Jaguar is presented as central to Eva's existence; it moves her through the first chapters of the novel and through her failed homes, as she echoes the "on-the-road" life-style of the Montmorencys in *The Last September*. Anthropomorphic, the motorcar characterises its owner as both of them personify a powerful feline. The car gives Eva authority, as chapter one opens and closes under the Jaguar and its owner's dictate:

> 'This is where we were to have spent the honeymoon,' Eva Trout said, suddenly, pointing across the water. She had pulled up the car on a grass track running along the edge of a small lake. She switched off the engine - evidently, they were to gaze at the castle for some time...Eva, as ever, extra heavily breathing, about to twitch the ignition key. 'Are you all there, children?' appealed the mother. Wherever this was,

[149] Elizabeth Bowen, *Eva Trout* 46.
[150] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 199.
[151] Ellmann 212.

> it was soon to be somewhere else - for the Jaguar, stealthily purring, was creeping forward.[152]

The twenty-four-year old Eva is four months short of her father's inheritance when the novel begins. Eva's background is a twentieth-century-style tragedy. The love of Willy Trout's life was the entrepreneurial cosmopolite Constantine Ormeau, who lives in London. Because of this, a few months after giving birth to Eva her mother Cissie bolts with her lover in an aeroplane and dies when it crashes over the Andes. The year before the novel opens Willy commits suicide because of Constantine's betrayals, but first saddles Constantine with Eva's guardianship. Constantine in turn hands Eva over to her ex-teacher Iseult Smith who is now the married Mrs Eric Arble living in Worcestershire. At twenty-five Eva will be independently wealthy and free from both Constantine and Iseult, to direct her own life aided by her Jaguar, her bicycle and aeroplane travel.

Eva also recalls Portia Quayne in *The Death of the Heart,* who was bequeathed to her stepbrother and remainders herself in the Hotel Karachi until he and his wife promise a true home for her. Only two places felt like home for Eva and both of them were boarding schools. The first was an experimental co-educational, concocted by Constantine and his lover Kenneth, sponsored by Willy Trout's money and located in the Lakeland castle that Eva and the Jaguar bring Mrs Dancey and her children to view at the novel's opening. Eva's second home was Lumleigh girls' school, where she began learning to read, think, speak, and turn herself into an integrated human being (a female named Eva Trout) under the instruction of the priestess-teacher Iseult Smith, now Iseult Arble. Following Willy's suicide Eva buys a Jaguar and lands upon Iseult and Eric Arble, " - so far, no children. Accordingly, room for Eva."[153] This putative home is however short-lived. Bowen ironically names the Arbles home Larkins; Eva is the cuckoo who enters the Larkins' nest and is the innocent catalyst in fragmenting their troubled marriage (she is later the innocent catalyst that restores it), "Visits terminate, visitors have to go - she now was a visitor no longer. What had deteriorated?"[154] Her honeymoon with the Arbles now soured, the novel begins with Eva in her motorcar ironically requiting Iseult's rejection with her own fictitious engagement and planned honeymoon at Constantine's Lakeland castle: the aborted coeducational school and her first home.

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[152] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 11-15.
[153] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 18.
[154] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 18. At Lumleigh school she discloses to the then unmarried Iseult her fears that she is a cuckoo, echoing Hermione Meggatt's nightmare in *Friends & Relations* that she is a cuckoo and 'nowhere'. *Friends & Relations* 109.

The Jaguar compensates for Eva's broken dreams of a home and sexual identity, firstly in her two schools as an adolescent, and secondly with the Arbles as an adult. However, it also complicates her relationship with others. By identifying Eva with her Jaguar, and both of them with a large feline, Bowen indicates Eva's potential as a powerful, sexualised, mobile and therefore autonomous, woman. Bowen draws upon cultural fears of the motorcar and untrammelled female sexuality endangering marriages and destabilising society. In her short story 'Summer Night' Bowen portrays the motorcar as an accessory in adultery, giving Emma the licence to leave her husband and pursue her lover. In *Eva Trout* Eric Arble is a motorcar mechanic (a skill he acquired in the army during World War II), with whom Eva has dreams of working in the garage in an attempt to usurp Iseult or to make her jealous and notice Eva. Eric is besotted with Eva's Jaguar, and then with Eva, following Eva to her first home, the rented villa Cathay where he bewails the loss of her Jaguar. Its growling engine is Eva's signature tune; Iseult and Eric tensely await the Jaguar's return, "'Yes,' he said, 'that's the Jag. Here she comes...'"[155] The Jaguar not only ensures Eva's independence from her guardian and keepers, but Bowen presents its growling engine as a counter-point to the plot's end at Victoria station. Eva escapes her homelessness in motorcar trips in her Jaguar with her new acquaintances, the intellectual brood of vicar's children, the Danceys, from the local Rectory:

> The four Dancey children, packed in the back seat, climbed over one another to see better (the view was framed by the Jaguar's left-hand windows). The Danceys had had no idea where they might be going to, or why: all they knew was, Miss Trout was taking them for an outing. For two-and-a-half hours, up hill, down dale, they had been rushing through cold scenery...January knifed through the heated Jaguar, a child sneezed as it battled its way to freedom, and Mrs Dancey, erecting her fur coat-collar and sinking so far as might be down into it declared: 'I think I'll stay where I am.' Eva did not reply; she had walked away. The children set off in the reverse direction - their mother impaled on draughts, sent a whinny after them...Once alone, Mrs Dancey who had a crick in her neck, saw no need to study the castle...Still ruminating over the school's fate, the children, swarming back to the Jaguar, looked behind them once or twice at the castle. Eva did not - she could not, now, wait to be off. Her boorish infidelity shocked the Danceys.[156]

Bowen identifies Eva as a captor who directs the destination of her passengers on a need to know basis; the movement of the car and their position in it frames the occupants' perspective on the world, and reveals the occupants' sense of or lack of autonomy. Comically Bowen details the children struggling into freedom, as striding ahead of them Eva criticises their immobility. In

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[155] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 26.
[156] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 11-15.

contrast, Mrs Dancey stays in the motorcar and sinks down into her fur coat, calling to mind the middle-class trophy wives sitting in their family cars, in Bowen's 'A Walk in the Woods'. Mrs Dancey sits impaled by drafts, as the Jaguar resembles the drafty vicarage; her position in the passenger seat places her in the passive role. But the Jaguar is also a blessed reprieve from her duties as a wife and mother. Under Eva's steerage the Jaguar becomes a freeing space, as Mrs Dancey manifests the duality of a mare responsible for her foal, but also retains the sense of a horse in the open away from the vicarage. Whereas the Jaguar is an ambiguous space for the married, fur-encased Mrs Dancey, it is a wholly positive one for the unattached Eva.

Constantine warns Iseult that Eva's wealth and control of powerful vehicles will empower her to direct her own and their future, which Constantine states in terms of Eva literally walking out on them all, "...Eva is to an extent forcing my hand. She desires to leave your keeping, and has told me so. Not only does she desire to, she intends to. To put it abruptly, she might walk out."[157] Her mobility will transform their lives and the plot, showing females connected with powerful technologies of motion become ungovernable catalysts for social change. Constantine warns Iseult of their dual responsibility to restrain Eva's automobility, "Come April, you and I turn Eva loose on the world. Restraint ended, further control impossible. At large, with not an idea. That fabulous wealth - *she*, who has never owned anything, but a Jaguar! At liberty." [158] Constantine's description represents Eva as a volatile, renegade missile. While Mrs Dancey is contentedly encased in fur in the passenger seat, denoting her acceptance of the position of married women in England in the late Fifties, Eva is not content to stay with the Arbles, or emulate their marriage union and the concept of a 'normal' nuclear family. The Jaguar once again signifies Eva's rebellion. In contrast, the London train carrying her to her guardian unsettles her, as it is a technology Bowen identifies with Victorian imperialism and patriarchy. Later, the London train debilitates Iseult Arble after her meeting with Constantine about Eva. Eva is not in charge of the train, as she is her motorcar, and is afraid of losing her luggage on it. Forced to sell her Jaguar, so as to cover her tracks when bolting from Constantine and the Arbles, Eva catches a train to her newly rented villa Cathay. Ominously, Eva is described as one of the Russian soldiers said to have passed through England in 1914 on the way to the Front, as Bowen sets the clues towards Eva's demise at Victoria train station.[159]

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[157] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 32.
[158] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 40-41.
[159] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 76-77.

Eva entrusts the sale of her beloved Jaguar to the twelve-year-old Henry Dancey, "'Can you not understand me? This is nobody's business - my own Jaguar.' 'Registered in your name: yes. That ought to be quite plain sailing. But shan't you miss it?' Yes, cried out Eva. Thumping her chest with a fist, she rocked towards Henry. 'Goodbye to it is horrible anguish - no other ever will be the same.'"[160] *Eva Trout* was written eight years after the destruction of Bowen's Court. In portraying the sale of Eva's prized motorcar, Bowen repeats the sea imagery which she usually uses to describe the loss of an Anglo-Irish big house and home, or her own sense of placelessness journeying between Ireland and England. Bowen depicts the motorcar sitting in a garage, like the big cat it is named after, or Eva's familiar, awaiting her need, ready to rescue her and be her home, "...which awaited developments in hiding in a lock-up round the corner from Henry's school."[161] Sitting in the lock-up, the Jaguar becomes a simile for Bowen's Court, in real life, waiting in Cork, while Bowen lived and rented in England for most of her childhood and adult life, trying to maintain the house. The fictional sale of Eva's Jaguar in 1959 in *Eva Trout* parallels the reality of Bowen being forced to sell Bowen's Court the same year. In 'Part II: Eight years later' Eva buys another Jaguar to replace the first, as in real life, Bowen returns to Kent and buys a brand-new villa in 1961, which she named 'Carbery' in memory of the Colleys' big house, to replace Bowen's Court.

Comically, Eva follows the juvenile Henry Dancey's advice on renting a home, word for word: she opts for the Edwardian villa Cathay, in Broadstairs, North Foreland, from the newly established, satirically named, estate agents Denge and Donewell. Broadstairs recalls Folkestone and Hythe in Kent where Bowen lived with her mother; and where the widowed and homeless Bowen rented a villa in the 1960s. Her satirical portrait of Mr Denge is drawn from her own dealings with local estate agents. Built in 1908 and fronting onto the English Channel the fictional Cathay resembles the villas Bowen and her mother explored together and rented that year, shortly following their flight from Dublin and Henry Bowen's illness. Eva's first act, after disembarking from the train in Broadstairs, astounding Mr Denge, is to purchase a bicycle before seeing Cathay. The bicycle momentarily replaces her Jaguar. It is a fictional analogue to Bowen's first bicycle bought for her when aged thirteen, in an effort to compensate her for her mother's recent death. In *Eva Trout* Bowen works through the two crucial events that seismically changed her life: the loss of her mother and the loss of Bowen's Court. In *Eva Trout* Eva's car and bicycle, the two vehicles that ensure autonomy, figuratively exorcise Bowen's own

[160] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 71.
[161] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 76.

remembered helplessness.

The bicycle, like the Jaguar, safeguards Eva's authority. Eva hitches the bicycle onto the shocked Mr Denge's company Rover, "They obtained the bicycle (which Eva had roped, forthwith, to the back of the Rover)."[162] Mr Denge, uncomfortably helping Eva purchase domestic goods, afraid of Broadstairs propriety, wishes Mrs Denge was available to respectably induct Eva into domesticity. Bowen playfully connects Mr Denge and his masculinity with the Rover and with dogs, paralleling her association of Eva with her Jaguar and large felines. Bowen develops this parody of English marriage politics in their short car journey to Eva's new home:

> The Rover wound down a road and bumped to a stop. Mr Denge got manfully out, heaved open a gate, got back and drove through on to an asphalt sweep...Eva, on return from a swift reconnaissance, let Mr Denge let her into Cathay. He immediately plonked his hat down, in a proprietary manner she did not care for, on a refectory table...Eva could not, now, wait for him to be gone. Walking decidedly away from him, she set out on a tour of the reception rooms...Mr Denge ran her down, finally, in a black-tiled bathroom she was admiring.[163]

Bowen highlights the sexual politics of the late Fifties by representing the business transaction between Eva and Mr Denge in terms of a 'mock marriage'. The association of Mr Denge with his company Rover encodes the influence of real estate and the motorcar industry upon English marriages and social values, as Rover was the largest English car manufacturer in the 1950s and '60s.[164] Bowen draws out her imagery of men as the active partners in a marriage; Mr Denge drives a passive Eva to her home, as her Jaguar is out of order and her bicycle is yet to be emancipated from the back of his Rover. Her motorcar imagery reveals the bourgeois husband in his primal guise as the hunting male with his best friend. Comically Bowen contrasts Mr Denge, like a dog, proprietarily leaving his masculine scent around Cathay, with Eva walking away, touring the house on her own. Bowen's representation associates Eva with explorers and adventurers, and indicates Eva's suspicion of marriage and 1950s sexual politics.

In a final comic explosion Mr Denge intrusively flushes Eva's lavatory, triggering an answering explosion from Eva who chases him from her home, "The resultant roar, cataclysmic, stampeded Eva, who pushed nay fought her way violently past him, shouting: 'This is enough!

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[162] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 78.
[163] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 80-81.
[164] James Flink, *The Automobile Age* 5, 20 and 318.

Go – go away at once! You take liberties!"[165] Hilariously the ejected Mr Denge immediately identifies Eva as a male warrior, a 'she-Cossack', instead of an outraged woman; instantly cautionary tales about male estate agents being seduced by single females runs through Mr Denge's mind, "Fraught though his calling was with erotic risks, nothing had so far singled him out. A frame-up? Blackmail?...He should not have bought sheets with her without Mrs Denge."[166] Bowen mocks the masculine and British public mindset, personified in Mr Denge, that a man's profession is a religious calling, while Eva personifies the temptress luring him from his path of masculine virtue, anchored in work and marriage. It is public opinion that assumes men like Mr Denge are desirable, purely because they are men. Bowen puns with the name "Broadstairs" and the concept of Eva being spied upon by her new neighbours. Eva refuses to eat in restaurants in town, despite the visiting Eric Arble's urging, preferring her two local cafés. But the fictional Mr Denge's fear of sexual blackmail is based on a real concern from Bowen's childhood. In *Seven Winters* she remembers discussing the meaning of the word 'blackmail' with her mother Florence in 1908, shortly after the mother and daughter arrived in England alone, without Henry VI. Bowen remembers, "it was not the thing for a woman other than a widow to be without a husband, and my mother was suspiciously lovely-looking, in addition to being accompanied by me. I learned not how the land lay but how it might have from a chance conversation, when I was about nine. "What is 'blackmail'? I asked her out of the blue."[167] Her question reveals an anxiety for the mother and daughter's reputation and vulnerable position, between 1906 and 1912 when they rented villas on their own in Folkestone and Hythe, which was something respectable women did not do. Their relations, the respectable Cousin Isabel Chenevix Trench and Cousin Lilla Chichester, shielded Florence and her daughter "Without those two, our position – in those days, when everything was rather more right-and-tight – might have been ambiguous."[168] In *Eva Trout* Mr Denge's fears of blackmail and the eyes of Broadstairs society watching him introduce Bowen's memory of her and her mother's vulnerable position in 1906. Broadstairs society will be watching Eva for any irregular behaviour that contravenes the social order.

Bowen continues projecting Eva and Mr Denge's characteristics, and thereby English

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[165] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 81.
[166] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 81.
[167] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 13.
[168] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 13. As a child Bowen transformed her Colley females in England into a protective matriarchy: an all-powerful refuge. Comically, in *Eva Trout* Mr Denge falls back upon his wife's opinion, an ambiguous one, as the voice of public probity.

marriage politics, onto their vehicles. Eva imperatively orders Mr Denge "Out!" with a silent gesture, echoing biblical and pictorial representations of patriarchal authority: depictions of God or the archangel Michael as God's emissary, ordering and barring Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Mr Denge's submission is relayed like a car engine forced into a sudden gear change, "'Just as you wish,' he stuttered, like a choked engine.'"[169] Eva's final dismissal of Mr Denge's masculinity is registered in her formal request that Mr Denge emancipate her bicycle; the hyperbolic dialogue nuances the social outrage of clashing perspectives on gender, where each feels the other trespasses their role:

> '- Have you set free my bicycle, my new bicycle?'
> Miss *Trout*...?
> Have you untied my bicycle from your Rover?'
> He stuffily said: 'It is in the hall.'
> 'Is there no garage for my bicycle?'
> Mr Denge, in justifiable silence, brought out a key labelled 'Garage' and, at extreme arm's length, handed it over.'[170]

Eva's ludicrous insistence on the garage for her bicycle shows the importance of the bicycle as a substitute for her Jaguar, but Bowen also underlines the importance of both for female independence and equality: both professionally and sexually. The bicycle becomes a surrogate friend and turns Cathay into a home for Eva, 'Having installed the bicycle in its quarters – as new to it as, tonight, hers were going to be to her – she then homegoingly turned indoors.'[171] In contrast bicycles and motorcars signal for Constantine, Iseult and Mr Denge deranged femininity and a public threat. Mr Denge views Eva's cycling as proof of her dangerous character, confiding in Iseult who reports to Constantine, "...sallies into Broadstairs, in incomplete control of a powerful bicycle have been reported."[172] Eva's wishes to control her own life is regarded as anti-social behaviour, broaching on a public menace and mental instability; Constantine softly threatens her with both, "In short his impression was...instability."[173] A single, independent woman is under surveillance; Mr Denge's desire to contact relevant authorities, which has brought Eric Arble, and then Constantine and Iseult down upon her in Cathay, asserts the threat that even in the 1950s and '60s too much female self-assertion is sectionable.

Bowen changes the narrative form of *Eva Trout* in chapter eleven. Titled 'Interim' it is written in the form of a letter from a fictional philosophy professor, Portman C Holman,

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[169] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 81.
[170] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 81.
[171] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 82.
[172] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 102.

addressed to Eva Trout, recounting their transatlantic flight from Paris to New York, and the destabilising effect Eva and the aeroplane had on him. Bowen lampoons here the narcissistic male academic who interprets the world and women according to his masculinist education and reads his interpretations as reality. Professor Holman is erotically attracted to Eva during their flight; following touchdown Eva escapes Holman in the chaos of the baggage hall. Miffed, Holman refuses to pursue Eva in New York. Back at his university, unmanned by his desire for Eva, he vainly pursues her by letter, hoping it will catch her at the Drake Hotel in New York, or be sent to her forwarding address.

While Holman's epistle is ostensibly a love letter addressed to Eva, it is so in name only, for as Bowen constructs it, the self-confessed addressee is Holman himself, "Knowing for sure it has missed its mark, what shall I feel? Chagrin? Relief? Resignation comes to me all too easily...Do I already look on this letter as doomed to have as its reader myself only? More than half, I write for my own eye."[174] Male potency, travel, and the masculine desire to transcend the self and reach a female receptacle, is mocked in the penned letter supposedly missing its mark, Eva, when in reality it is directed for the writer's satisfaction. Writing it is an egotistical act of self-therapy or confession. Holman draws back from acting on his desire for Eva when in the aeroplane, or on the ground in New York and the fictional University of Wyana. Instead he takes the normally female position of resignation, trying to imagine the journeying Eva. Immediately Bowen reverses stereotypes of the 'domesticated woman' and the 'adventuring man'. Holman has a fixed university address and regular family background; his parents and sister's family live in Ohio, "(This is the address that will unfailingly find me, but may not reach you.)"[175] In contrast Eva has mysterious origins and no abode or final destination.

Bowen satirises the figurative use of flight in male narratives (and flight-narratives by aviators) in "Portman C Holman" and his letter, while also mimicking the pedantic syntax and cerebrations of the male philosophy professor. She challenges patriarchal virility myths where men are constructed as mobile and active, and women as the passive receptacles of their masculine potency.[176] In Western thinking, the myth that mobility and potency constitutes masculinity is propounded through historically documented male journeys and travel narratives, which set up counter-myths in narratives where maternity and domesticity constitutes

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[173] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 102.
[174] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 122-123.
[175] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 123.

femininity.[177] Bowen's representations of the aeroplane, of Eva and Holman's mid-flight conversation, and Holman's letter, dramatise the crises in male identity and being in the late 1950s, which revolved around definitions of liberty and procreation.[178] Personally for Bowen, Holman's fears fictionally voice her own terrors of dislocation and non-being, in 1959. In that year Bowen's Court was destroyed, and from the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, she flew back and forth between England and America on lecturing and publicity trips, since she could not afford to keep herself in England.

The concept of liberty is the cornerstone of the modern individual and western society. Isaiah Berlin[179] identifies a human's first experience and expression of liberty in birth, and the infant's first steps away from their mother. [180] As argued, throughout history the free person is usually represented as male, while women are represented as a confined 'other', a sex, in opposition to the male subject.[181] Throughout the twentieth century suffragettes, feminists, writers, and ordinary men and women complicated these antithetical stereotypes, produced by travel and travel narratives. Aided by social changes wrought by two World Wars, the Cold War, and the growing motorcar and aviation industries, they rebutted these stereotypes.[182] But by 1959 (in *Eva Trout,* Holman's letter is dated October 30th, 1959) US-driven consumerism, propelled by the motorcar industry across Western Europe and Britain, was 're-domesticating' women into the idealised maternal figure, and reinforcing the husband as the active wage earner.[183] 1950s aviation reaffirmed patriarchal gender roles and separate domains, cordoning the aeroplane into

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[176] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 123.

[177] Leed 220-229.

[178] Bowen represents Professor Portman C Holman as an existentialist: "As a concept, 'the hand of fate' is distasteful to me; I mislike the anthropomorphic. I do defer, however, to the mathematical probabilities of chance, to the point of holding those could determine." *Eva Trout* 124.

[179] Elizabeth Bowen and Isaiah Berlin were close friends since Bowen's early married days living in Oxford, when they were both part of Maurice Bowra and David Cecil's intellectual circle. She corresponded with Berlin throughout her life. Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen* 60, 103, 114, 114, 216-217, 239.

[180] Leed reads liberty as the freedom to move under one's own volition, constituted in human travel, and quotes Isaiah Berlin on the essence of liberty in the West, "The essence of the notion of liberty, both in the 'positive' and in the 'negative' sense, is the holding off of something or someone - of others who trespass on my field or assert their authority over me." Leed charts the change in perception of journeying from exile (originating in the biblical story of Adam and Eve) to civil liberty (celebrated in modernity) exemplified in the absolute and free human individual as a social ideal. Leed 228-229.

[181] See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; and Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas.*

[182] See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *No Man's Land Vols 1-3*; and Smith 73-121 and 167-191.

[183]Goldstein, *The Flying Machine and Modern Literature* 191-224 and Smith, 171-179. For a deeper analysis of sexual politics and marriage in England in the Fifties see Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945 : women, family, work and the State in the Post-War years* 45-96.

the male cockpit and female cabin. Men piloted the planes while female stewards, known as 'air hostesses' (itself an ambiguous title which contributed to the belief that these women were sexually available) served businessmen and predominantly wealthy, male passengers. Discounting the achievements of the 1930s aviatrixes, the gender politics of 1950s aviation now domesticated and effeminised airborne women.[184] In Holman's epistolary memory of his and Eva's transatlantic flight, Bowen mischievously emasculates Holman and mocks male representations of women as archetypal mothers, passive, grounded and a refuge for their men. She mocks male fears of mortality, and their desire for progeny and their artistic creativity, to extend themselves through time and transcend death.

The aeroplane triggers the gender reversal: Holman is the neurotic flyer whilst Eva easily reposes and appears the "habituated air traveller", an oxymoronic female persona.[185] The flight opens the normally reticent Professor Holman to personal disclosures, stereotypically a feminine trait; in contrast Eva is enigmatic. The novel ironically juxtaposes the effeminising of Holman aboard the aeroplane with his role as a Philosophy professor, disseminating the history of Western male thinking on reality, male/female polarities, and his impression of Eva's physicality. The purpose of Holman's flight is his research in Paris and New York on Descartes. Bowen plays with the disembodying effect of air travel in the cabin, which accentuates the mind-body duality and brings on a male existential crisis in Professor Holman:

> Followed the no-hour: the ever to me enormity of an airborne post-noon. An unreal torpor fills the pressurized air; bodies abandon themselves to daylit slumber in contorted attitudes of death. Awake or asleep, Mrs Trout, who is not afraid? There is mistrust. Nerves register, exaggerate, at this hour the stealthy continuous tremor of the plane. Outside, the glare: inimical, contemptuous, landmarkless, unabated, unchanging. The nullity of speed, the nullity of height. We accept that we move; do we know? - what evidence have we? Enough, to remain sustained. Shall we, shall we not? The terrible onus is on the plane, elongated the longer one looks along it to an all but hypothetical vanishing-point. One is within a directed pencil. Yet the onus is on the passenger, his vigil. No longer the critical individual but one alert lest he cease to be…I was right out at my lowest ebb, Mrs Trout. It was then that I let myself look across. You, your repose was absolute.[186]

The plane's vibrations transmit to passengers the tenuousness of life; flying they feel suspended in a void. The passengers surrender to the plane's control; its interior turns day into night, and accentuates the reality that life is a living death. Aviation confirms mankind's mastery of the

[184] Smith 115-117.
[185] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 123.

skies, but it also heightens the male experience of travel as a living death, in the loss of the old self in departure and during the changes of transit.[187] The aeroplane becomes a moving tomb or time capsule for Holman, with the passengers undergoing rigormortis. Its advanced technology nullifies movement, thereby ending the sense of freedom incorporated in travel that historically constitutes western masculinity and the modern world. Sitting still, Holman has to accept on faith that he is moving and therefore that he exists. His faith is based on a belief in aeroplane technology, rather than his own thinking and the evidence of his senses, "landmarkless, unabated, unchanging...We accept that we move; do we know?" The plane brings about an existential doubt in Holman, paralleling Descartes' doubts in his *Meditations*.[188] At any moment passengers can fall from being into non-being, depending upon the plane's mechanics. In *The Heat of the Day* the anti-hero Robert Kelway, who was wounded first by Victorian patriarchy and then when his leg was crippled at Dunkirk, commits suicide or else accidentally falls from a roof, once his cover is blown and his identity as a German spy is revealed to his lover Stella. He explains to Stella he could not logically betray England, because England was never his country; it had already betrayed him by leaving him emasculated in limbo following World War I, "'I was born wounded; my father's son. Dunkirk was waiting there in us – what a race! A class without a middle, a race without a country. Unwhole. Never earthed in...You have been my country.'"[189] Now his affair with Stella is over his masculinity has no-place to hold onto and no-one to confer an identity on him. His fall, in the style of "Icarus", represents his final descent into non-being, ending in death.[190] In *Eva Trout* Bowen's metaphor of the plane as a directed pencil carrying passengers willy-nilly to a hypothetical end undermines cultural conceptions of aeroplanes and writing as phallic symbols and extensions of male potency. Bowen comically shows that modern aviation, with its unseen pilots and air traffic control, canalises and emasculates passengers. Men, like women, are no longer in control of air travel, nor their destiny. Holman struggles between letting the aeroplane reorder his subjectivity, and his own vigil against it, "One is within a directed pencil. Yet the onus is on the passenger, his vigil. No longer the critical individual but one alert lest he cease to be." Holman battles to hold onto his identity, based on his previous

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[186] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 125-126.
[187] Leed 7-17 and 73-78; and Smith 76-79.
[188] Descartes writes in his 'First Meditation' "Everything I have accepted up to now as being absolutely true and assured, I have learned from or through the senses. But I have sometimes found that these senses played me false, and it is prudent never to trust entirely those who have once deceived us." *Discourse on Method and the Meditations* (1637; London: Penguin, 1968), 96.
[189] Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (1949; London: Vintage, 1999), 272 - 273.
[190] Lis Christensen's chapter 'A Latter-day Icarus (*The Heat of the Day*)' in her study *Elizabeth Bowen: The Later Fiction*, first suggested to me the connection between Robert Kelway, aeroplanes and emasculated masculinity (Tusculanum: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2001), 165-173.

comprehension of reality, which is threatened by the disorientating air flight. Religious phrases accentuate the sense Holman is experiencing of an existential crisis of being and belief, a reordering of his sense of himself and the world so far.

Mid-flight, across the Atlantic, Holman feels his identity and familiar sense of the world at its lowest ebb, "a sinister volatility". Bowen's "aeroplane flight" metaphor literally enacts the postmodernist crisis of delegitimation from the Fifties onwards. The concept of history as a source for identity, indeed the concept of history itself and traditional pre- World War I and II values and certainties, were all being 'de-bunked', but were only replaced with contested social theories and consumerist politics, instead of a new centralising authority.

Writers such as Iris Murdoch, in her novels *Under the Net* (1954), *The Bell* (1958) and *The Unicorn* (1963) and Sylvia Plath, in her novel *The Bell Jar* (1963) and in her poetry collection *Ariel* (1965) registered this tension and fragmentation.[191] The change either historicized people, leaving them nostalgic for a lost world, or left them culturally placeless. In *Eva Trout* Bowen represents the futility of literary nostalgia which she earlier warned against in 'The Bend Back'. Holman turns towards Eva, his new maternal ideal, and creates a refuge in her and her family tragedy. Taking poetic licence, he rewrites Eva's dysfunctional family story as idyllic, imagining himself a part of her life in her rented villa Cathay. Out of his own necessity, he transforms Eva into the grieving Mater Dolorosa who comprehends and bears all human suffering, "The I understood [sic] still recent end of your father was unexpected, I hope not shocking; the dolor you manifested forbad my asking."[192] From the start of the flight Holman's letter progressively identifies Eva through religious iconography, reviewing her as successive manifestations of biblical and pagan females, from Eve to Mary, the Mother of God and of humanity. Before take-off, Eva's physique attracts the Professor, 'Your lengthy and unencumbered physique with its harboured energy seemed to me, and not at first glance only, that

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[191] Iris Murdoch, a younger Anglo-Irish author, became close friends with Bowen after World War II, staying with her at Bowen's Court, Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* 144, 201 and 218 and Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 183, 225 and 226, and Peter J Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (London: Harper Collins, 2001), 398, 416. There is a photograph of Iris Murdoch seated with the Vernons, James Egan, Mary Delamare and Elizabeth Bowen around the dining table at Bowen's Court. Sylvia Plath identified Bowen as one of her favourite writers and a literary influence, and interviewed her for *Mademoiselle*, 'Elizabeth Bowen and Sylvia' for their College Board edition. *Mademoiselle* 37, August, 1953 in The British Library. Sylvia Plath, *Letters Home*: *Correspondence, 1950-1963*, selected and edited with commentary by Aurelia Schober Plath (London: Faber & Faber, 1975) 115.

[192] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 126-127.

of the dedicated discus thrower.'[193] Through Holman's deductions, Bowen plays with cultural representations of modern aviatrixes as Ancient Greek representations of agile goddesses and modern androgynous athletes. Following take-off, Bowen mocks representations that depict independent travelling women, especially in aeroplanes, are monstrous temptresses.

The Professor is fixated by Eva's apple rolling towards him: "symbolically bounded towards me across the aisle."[194] At the end of the letter Holman describes himself haunted by imagining rolling apples. Returning the apple opens communication between them. The rolling apple, Eva's name, and Holman's desire recalls the biblical Adam and Eve and the fall which triggered their expulsion and the history of human travel and homelessness.[195] Upon questioning, Eva informs the Professor she is flying to be reunited with her son, a half-lie as Eva is not yet a mother, but is flying to New York to adopt an American infant boy. Her news transforms Eva from an individual or erotic figure into a maternal archetype. The Professor uses her to update his preconceived notions of motherhood. Divulging himself to Eva, he begins to transform her into the Virgin Mary, the absolute female 'Other' and 'Mother', "Can I forget the manner in which you (literally) regarded me, when you did at last? Your eyes - Mrs Trout, it is true to say - *rested* upon me when I returned the apple. I felt contemplated. Your gaze gives size to what is contained within it: I was."[196] Preceding chapters and the section-titled 'Part I: Genesis' prepare the reader for Holman's personification of Eva as 'Our Lady'. Eric Arble visits Eva in her new home Cathay in March. The Catholic Church celebrates the feast of the Annunciation on the 25th March. Later Eva informs Iseult that she is going to have a child in December and deliberately lets Iseult believe that Eric is the father; in fact Eva intends flying to New York to acquire the child Jeremy – hence Eva's mid-Atlantic flight. As the 'Other', Eva verifies Holman's narcissistic self-view and brings him into consciousness and therefore into being. Holman betrays his patriarchal education, identifying Eva in relation to the Western iconographic duality of women as either monstrous or heavenly, and never human and multiple. At turns Eva is both the seductress Eve and Our Lady of Contemplation whose maternal look redeems mankind from sexual sin. Bowen uses Holman and his letter to represent the dangerous power of 'Woman', even when she is limited within the dyadic Western stereotype, to both undo and affirm the new masculinity, which the aeroplane accentuates.

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[193] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 123.
[194] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 125.
[195] Leed 31-33.

The aeroplane, however, unravels Holman's attempts to affirm his identity in opposition to Eva's complex femaleness. The displacement he experiences in the air continues to affect him on the ground and negatively impacts upon his writing and thinking:

> As a being you are autonomous. Absolutely, it was as that you struck me. Your being not or other or less than that is, I have to tell you, wholly out of accord with the image of you less formulated by me than formulated for me by its own forcefulness...Had it ever been your impression that *I* defaulted, you are more than avenged. You can be denied no longer; I am faced by totality of recall.[197]

The convoluted syntax momentarily camouflages the fact Holman reads Eva according to his classical ideas about women. Eva is autonomous only because her figure on the aeroplane exceeds the Professor's taxonomy of women, and she not only escapes him in "Arrivals" but also psychically eludes him now. The real image of Eva clashes with his expectations and overwhelms him, "The then total reversal of my ideas could not be without some emotive effect."[198] Eva has defaulted on the Professor's expectations and undermined his previous trust in his senses - and Western epistemology in an echo of Descartes' doubts. Thus, upon landing Holman experiences a dislocation that brings him down to earth twice, as he suffers both an epistemological and ontological crisis. Holman attempts to masterfully reformulate Eva's image after the flight with his pen, in accordance with his preconceptions and, thereby, regain his old sense of authority, "Had it ever been your impression that *I* defaulted, you are more than avenged. You can be denied no longer; I am faced by totality of recall...Seemingly back where I was, I shall no doubt be so. What alternative is there?"[199] As the increasing tone of perplexed outrage throughout Holman's letter testifies, the reformation is impossible as Eva's 'outlandish' femininity exceeds, undermines and escapes Western philosophy's representations of women. On campus, when lecturing, and even in the act of writing, Holman is undone by disruptive memories of Eva and her apple, "I know I am most beset when I see what I do not, an apple rolling."[200] Bowen's presentation of Eva escaping Holman's patriarchal assumptions, through the disorientating effects of flight and her resistance to normative femininities, counters Eva's fictional death at Victoria train station at the novel's end.

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[196] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 125.
[197] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 123-128.
[198] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 123.
[199] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 128.
[200] Bowen, *Eva Trout* 129.

CONCLUSION: PLACING BOWEN

The end result of a literary study on the work of an author should, in Bowen's words, discover the novelist's core pattern, "the sense of truth in the vision" and it should place the author and their work within one or more literary traditions, either as a central player or marginal echo. [1] Bowen critics find it difficult to place Bowen neatly in a number of literary categories, either the British realist or comedy of manners novel, the Anglo-Irish regional, comic or gothic novel, the British and Irish modernist or postmodernist novel, or feminist literature. Her work cuts across these novel genres: both exemplifying and deconstructing them. In turn Bowen renovates these genres and transforms the novel and short story forms into something new, something modern, in keeping with the changing reality of the "febrile" twentieth century.[2]

The difficulty of placing Bowen is ironic considering as Bowen herself asserts, and the majority of Bowen critics agree, that one of Bowen's core themes is place, belonging and home, "Am I not manifestly a writer for whom places loom large?"[3] But the difficulty is equally predictable considering that Bowen's other core theme is dislocation, both historical and personal, and concomitant travel in the twentieth century. Bowen's mature reflection on her oeuvre, which I quoted as an epigraph to this thesis, asserts, "I have thriven, accordingly, on the changes and chances, the dislocations and (as I have said) the contrasts which have made up so much of my life."[4] The two themes, of place and of dislocation, dialectically support each other. Bowen herself notoriously predicted the difficulty now confronting later critics who try to map her unspecific and scattered yet carefully assembled fictional terrain, and try to fix her literary concerns and styles "Should anyone give it a thought after I am dead, that will be too late. To it, only I hold the key."[5] Nevertheless, it is the very difficulty of pinning down Bowen's kaleidoscopic prose style and themes which fascinates the reader. 'Elizabeth Bowen: Empire, Gender and Travel in the Twentieth Century' considers Bowen a major Irish and British modernist, because of her deployment of travel and transport technologies figuratively throughout her oeuvre to interrogate historical breaks and contemporary dislocations, through her interlocking themes of the end of the Empire and concomitant crises in gender in the twentieth century.

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[1] Bowen, 'Disloyalties' (1950) and 'The Roving Eye' (1952) in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 60-62 and 63-65.
[2] Bradbury and McFarlane 19-55.
[3] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 34.
[4] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 137.

As highlighted in my introduction, recent Bowen critics draw attention to Bowen's contradictions and use them to establish her modernist and postmodernist tendencies. Hermione Lee asserts that while Bowen was not a feminist per se, unlike Virginia Woolf, her writing does interrogate the changing position of women in marriage throughout the twentieth century. She therefore positions Bowen at the forefront of the first wave of literary female moderns - as established by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's three volume *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century*. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, Maud Ellmann, and Neil Corcoran vouch for Bowen's modernism. All four critics refer to Bowen's literariness and unique style, but Bennett & Royle unequivocally celebrate Bowen as pre-empting 'deconstruction' with her plots dissolving into a postmodern meaninglessness, instead of revealing that the power of Bowen's style is grounded in the fact she balances a dialectical tension between the traditional and the (post)modern novel forms.[6] Except for her analysis of *Eva Trout*, Ellmann places Bowen as a writer who echoes the broader concerns of modernity rather than a writer who is in control of her own modernist aesthetics and directly engages, throughout her oeuvre, with the problem of representing in the modern novel the epistemological and ontological transitions of her lifetime.[7] Corcoran acknowledges Bowen's modernist tropes, but reads her as over-determined by her Anglo-Irish past, which he believes gives her work meaning. Notwithstanding Bowen's assertions in her essay 'The Bend Back', he reads her post-World-War-II fiction as either an "enforced return" - to allude to the title of his study- to her Irish origins and earlier fiction, or he refuses to comment on the innovative *The Little Girls*. Like Ellmann he astutely reads *Eva Trout* as anticipating postmodernism and its deficiencies, but overall, despite his modernist critical aim, his study ends by placing Bowen in the Anglo-Irish gothic tradition.[8]

The above critical viewpoints, and the other critical perspectives referred to in my introduction (in particular the Anglo-Irish criticism), provide valuable insights into Bowen's style. But naturally they each give only a facet of Bowen's oeuvre, because as Lee acknowledges, Bowen's lifetime spans Edwardian, Georgian, modern and postmodern Britain. Bowen personally experienced the transition from colonial Ireland to an independent but partitioned modern Ireland. As the majority of critics agree Bowen's particular Anglo-Irish

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[5] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 36.
[6] Bennett and Royle 156-157.
[7] Ellmann 176-225.
[8] Corcoran 125-144 and 196-201.

background gives her both an insider's and outsider's perspective on British history.[9] She evinces a heightened sensitivity to the fact that historical change was quickly overwhelming individuals, leaving them either locked in history (living anachronisms or ghosts) or, worse, placeless between an old and a new world order. Bowen lived through the global dislocations wrought by the 'Woman Question'; World War I and World War II; the end of the British Empire; decolonisation; the Cold War; American consumerism and existential crises. Bowen was at the centre of a number of literary battles between the realist and the modernist and postmodernist British and Irish novel and short story forms, and between a masculine and a feminine aesthetic. Her writing not only chronicles but also engages with the literary struggles of gendering modernism and giving voice to an authentic, if contradictory (and constructed) female consciousness throughout the majority of the twentieth century. Bowen is one of the few twentieth-century female writers whose long career witnessed, in Gilbert and Gubar's calculation, three generations of literary female moderns and three phases in modernism: pre- and post- World War I; World War II and its immediate aftermath; and the 'Cold War' and the second wave of feminism in the 1950s and '60s.[10] Yet Gilbert and Gubar only refer to Bowen briefly, twice, in connection with representations of female betrayal, in their three-volume study. Bowen has been overlooked by critical anthologies on gendering modernism, for example Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism* (1990) and *Refiguring Modernism: Postmodern Feminist Readings of Woolf, West and Barnes* (1995). The very length of Bowen's career, her hyphenated background, her literary influences, the seismic cultural dislocations that her writing encompasses and her continuous formal innovation can overwhelm the critic.[11]

Bowen's literary influences (some of whom were close friends) show her engagement with and independence from both modernism and feminism. In Bowen's own words, her early influences were Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Sheridan le Fanu, R. H. Haggard, Antony Trollope, Henry James, Gustave Flaubert, Edith Somerville and Violet Martin (Ross), Marcel Proust, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Edith Sitwell, Katherine Mansfield. She also admired D. H. Lawrence and T. S. Eliot – whom feminist critics lambast for their misogynistic poetics.[12] Her contemporary influences before and after World War II were the Buchans, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Cyril Connolly, Hilda Doolittle, Henry Green, Graham Greene,

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[9] See my introduction above, 1-4.
[10] Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century,* 3 vols.
[11] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 221-228.
[12] Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 214-215; Pykett 6-14; Gilbert and Guber, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century,* vol. 1 125-164.

L P Hartley, John and Rosamond Lehmann, Louis MacNeice, Raymond Mortimer, William Plomer, V. S. Pritchett, Henry Reed, Stephen Spender, Evelyn Waugh and Eudora Welty. Bowen disliked the work of the older writers John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett and her contemporary Laura Riding – one of the few writers to whom she took a personal disinclination, warning William Plomer, 'be careful, she's most tenacious.'[13]

Bowen's literary influences display an eclectic mix cutting across nationalities, gender, class, politics, sexualities and aesthetics. While endorsing Woolf's essay 'The Leaning Tower' (1940) and its criticism of literary socialism in 1930s, Bowen did feel it was the role of the writer to implicitly challenge or reconcile the values of the State, especially after the mass exterminations and technology driven destructiveness of World War II made a final mockery of Victorian and Edwardian traditions. Following the war, Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene and V. S. Pritchett broadcast a series of 'open letters' between the three of them. They debated the future role of the novelist in Britain following the political manifestos of the 1930s and '40s and the fact that many British writers (including Bowen) worked for the British Ministry of Information during the war.[14] The broadcasts were published in 1948 as *Why do I Write*? The literary exchange crystallised for Bowen her re-evaluation of not only her early modernist aesthetics and adherence to Anglo-Irish and the realist novel traditions, but significantly the 'modern' literary project before and after World War II. Bowen published her personal re-evaluation as the essay 'Disloyalties' (1950).[15] She announces: "The novelist's subject is not society, not the individual as a social unit, but the individual as he himself is, behind the social mask. As such, his peculiarities are infinite."[16] Using war terminology, she describes the social responsibility of the contemporary writer. Bowen asserts the writer must be in conflict with the State or status quo, to represent the "shifting" human values and "the endlessness of human variation and dissonance, the doublings and twisting of mankind under the grip of circumstance and the pressure of life."[17] Hermione Lee underlines the fact that Bowen asserts the future writer should be like a "Resistance leader", but not an anarchic one who expounds upon a "platform"

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[13] Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen* 75.
[14] See my introduction above, 4 and Elizabeth Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 192 and 221-229.
[15] Disloyalties' was published as 'The Writer's Peculiar World' in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1950 and republished in Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 60-62. Hermione Lee drew my attention to the connection between *Why Do I Write* and 'Disloyalties', and their importance as statements of Bowen's aesthetic intent and development, *Elizabeth Bowen* 210. I explore further than Lee these statements as fundamental interpretations and re-evaluations of British and Irish modernism, which predict postmodernism.
[16] Bowen, 'Disloyalties' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 60.
[17] Bowen, 'Disloyalties' in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 60-62.

and undermines the State. Bowen criticises the political writers of the 1930s (as she would do the polemical feminists in the 1960s) for commandeering the novel form for their own personal agendas and undermining its aesthetic integrity.[18] Instead Bowen identifies herself with the "aesthetic-intuitive" writer who works from "memories and impressions" and whose subject matter and style derives from "the particular enclave which had given him birth".[19] Familiar "pieties" impel the writer's 'ancestor-worship', which although diluted by irony is "fundamental" to the writing.[20] But Bowen asserts that the writer's fundamental loyalty to their original environment cannot last; instead the writer must "make the break" from her old aesthetic alliances and familiar background to "strike out" and engage with the new and changing environment.[21]

Bowen's diagnosis of the necessary inner dilemma the artist suffers between an old and a new epistemology describes the literary struggles of the modernists Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Katherine Mansfield (among others) and their break with past traditions and history. Bowen encapsulates their artistic struggles to renovate the novel form without rendering it meaningless "his crisis, simultaneously felt in his personal being (because of his debts and affections) and his aesthetic being is the crux of the feeling writer's career."[22] Tellingly Bowen writes that the aesthetic-intuitive writer must "cease to honour his father and mother".[23] Once the writer becomes critical of the former pieties, readers will perceive "an unexpected tension between the writer and his accustomed subject" because the writer sees the old scenes in a new way. But Bowen's words objectively describe her own personal aesthetics, which, as I have argued, arise from a tension between her family's Anglo-Irish Edwardian values and the traditional novel form on the one hand, and historical changes and the modern novel form on the other. Bowen is describing more than an early modern anxiety of influence; she is putting into words not only the modernist but also the postmodernist literary project in the twentieth century: to register the gap between the individual, their social 'mask' and society.

My thesis builds upon Victoria Glendinning and Hermione Lee's assertion that Bowen is

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[18] Lee quotes Bowen's early, damning verdict on the post-war socially active style of young woman in a letter to William Plomer written at the end of World War II, "Scratch any of these cuties and you find the governess. Or so I have always found." (Sep 24th 1945) Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* 207. See also Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 10 and Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* 230-231.
[19] Bowen, 'Disloyalties' 62.
[20] Bowen, 'Disloyalties' 62.
[21] Bowen, 'Disloyalties' 62.
[22] Bowen, 'Disloyalties' 62.
[23] Bowen, 'Disloyalties' 62.

the link between Bloomsbury and the 1930s and '40s and post-war young writers.[24] Bowen is more than a link; she is the *pivotal* figure in British and Irish modernism and postmodernism. It is her themes of gender and the end of Empire, and her travel metaphors through which she encodes them, that make her central, because they are not only drawn from British history, contemporary English and Irish society; they are also drawn from and connect an Irish Gaelic tradition with an Anglo-Irish gothic/big house tradition. Bowen constructs her own complex style of literary modernism from the Gaelic tradition, from Anglo-Irish literature, from English realism, and from British and Irish modernism. Her technique is uniquely shaped by her feminine perspective and childhood dislocations between Anglo-Irish, Irish and English cultural "mythologlies]".[25] Bowen's modernism renovates these genres, making them pertinent to the modern novel form and its aesthetic responsibility to chronicle the historical and gendering dislocations throughout the Fifties, Sixties and early Seventies; not just the interwar years.

Bowen's deployment of travel motifs and transport technologies focuses the reader's attention on her characters' changing sense of place and placelessness. Her metaphors denote the individual's struggle with identity and place in reality. Many of Bowen's contemporaries, who had lived through technological warfare, experienced reality as being disorientating and transitory in a different way to the Victorians and Edwardians. Bowen draws her vehicular metaphors from nineteenth-century technologies and from twentieth-century ones that were bringing about changes in public and private lives. In this manner her metaphors register the dislocations and fulfil Ezra Pound's criteria for the modernist "complex Image".[26] In addition Bowen's new complex metaphors register the modern novel's struggles to represent the epistemological and existential crises. Her "walking" metaphors relay the negative impact of the first stages in the end of the British Empire following World War I, but also the positive opportunity for female liberty and the possibilities of new identities and relationships outside imperial gender and class codes. Bowen's "ship" metaphors register the circular history of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland from the seventeenth century until 1921 and symbolises the fact that homes and civilisation are increasingly at risk from warfare in the twentieth century. By linking her ship metaphors with train metaphors, Bowen constructs a complex "boat-train" leitmotif, from these two nineteenth-century technologies that were so much associated with the rise of the Empire. Her 'boat-train' metaphor not only interrogates British imperialism and masculinist historical narratives, but also anticipates the Empire's endangered future with the approach of World War II.

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[24] Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* 75; Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 2.
[25] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 23.

To counter masculinist linear narratives both in the realist novel and in modernism, and to recast her Anglo-Irish ancestor's planter-narrative, Bowen constructs her own modernist narrative technique, the "hawk-in-flight", from her family myth surrounding Colonel Bowen's arrival in Ireland. Bowen's hawk motif enables her to link a Catholic-Irish bardic tradition with an Anglo-Irish and a modernist tradition, to develop her own style of modernism and postmodernism. Her hawk-in-flight technique is at the heart of her modernist poetics; she employs it to cut back and forth across historical times and geographies, assembling them into a fictional 'mosaic' according to artistic necessity.[27] Her hawk-eye gives her writing style multiple perspectives and undermines any singular masculinist narrative. At the same time, she uses it in her memoirs and fiction to liberate her mother's and other female consciousnesses from traditional patriarchal representations of women as the silent objects of the male gaze.

My interpretation of Bowen's hawk-eye technique corroborates Hermione Lee's reading of Bowen's "'cold familiarity' – as of the spy in the camp, the secret onlooker.'"[28] Bowen's metaphorical treatment of twentieth-century technologies, bicycles, motorcars and aeroplanes, probes the emancipating promise and destructive potential of these vehicles and their impact psychologically and socially upon humankind. Chronologically, as Bowen's work develops, bicycles, motorcars and aeroplanes begin representing the 'unsayable' and the 'ontological' crises of post-World War I and World War II reality by gesturing towards not only female professional lives outside of marriage, but towards lesbian and homosexual desire. Her metaphors criticise 1950s and 60s British marriages and register the growing crisis in masculinity.[29] But her writing also attests that these new technologies reaffirmed traditional gender roles and social hierarchies. As her oeuvre develops her travel and vehicular metaphors betray an increasing tension between old and new social pieties and between traditional and (post)modern forms of the novel and short story. She pushes the boundaries of both realism and modernism to register the fictive nature of identity and reality. Her focus on the individual "as he himself is, behind the social mask" pre-empts the ideas of postmodernist theorists in the 1970s and '80s and gender theorists like Judith

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[26] Pound 3-14.
[27] Bowen, 'Pictures and Conversations' in *Pictures and Conversations* 37.
[28] Lee coins the term from Bowen's own interpretation of the novelist as someone who always observes the world and her or himself objectively as a fictional (social) construct, "he can write of himself with a cold familiarity", Elizabeth Bowen, "Grace," *New Statesman*, XVI 17 Sept. 1938, qtd. Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen* 206.
[29] Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century,* vol. 1, 227-272 and vol. 319-404.

Butler in the 1990s and 2000s. These writers attest the "performativity" of gender and identity.[30]

I believe my attention to Bowen's themes and travel metaphors prepares the ground for fruitful comparative studies on not only British and Irish but also American modernism. Research on the work of Edith Wharton, Elizabeth Bowen, Shirley Jackson and Sylvia Plath, and the significance in their writing of gender and transport technologies both thematically and formally, would introduce new perspectives on these writers, on female modernist, postmodernist, and gothic aesthetics, and on the Irish, British and American novel and short story form in the twentieth century. There are interesting literary parallels between Wharton and Bowen. Henry James labelled Wharton and her turn-of-the-century motor-flights across Europe, 'The Angel of Devastation'. He compared her personality and narrative style to an eagle, the "General eagle-pounces and eagle-flights of her deranging and desolating, ravaging, burning and destroying energy."[31] An early modernist, Wharton balanced the tension between the realist novel form and new modern techniques. Similar to Bowen, Wharton's themes were historical dislocation and the changing position of women (and men) in America and Europe at the turn-of-the-century. Wharton draws upon modern technology for her new artistic perspectives and in places uses vehicles as metaphors to register the difficulties with representing female sexuality and the individual's struggles between old and new values. But unlike the older Wharton, who died in 1937, Bowen continued experimenting with her themes and the modern novel and short story forms, throughout the Forties, Fifties and Sixties.

Bowen's innovative modernist aesthetic, combining realist, Anglo-Irish gothic and modernist techniques, influenced post-World War II American writers, in particular, Shirley Jackson and Sylvia Plath.[32] Bowen's writing shaped Jackson's new brand of American suburban gothic. Bowen's macabre parody of modern domesticity 'The Cat Jumps' (1934) uses gothic motifs in a suburban setting, and was one of Jackson's favourite short stories. Jackson named one of her most influential stories after Bowen's 'The Demon Lover' (1945) with its demonic male character, who died in World War I, who has returned in 1945 and drives a London taxi to abduct

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[30] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1987) and Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (Routledge: London, 1990) and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990); *Bodies That Matter On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, (London: Routledge, 1993) and *Undoing Gender* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[31] Henry James, qtd. Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, *Sex Change* 124.

[32] Bernice Murphy informed me of Bowen's profound influence on the work of Shirley Jackson and Sylvia Plath. Bernice Murphy, "Do You Know Who I Am? Contextualising Shirley Jackson," diss., Trinity College Dublin, 2003, 275.

his former fiancé, now a married mother. The 'Demon Lover' became one of Jackson's pivotal characters throughout her writing.[33] As already mentioned Bowen was one of five living authors whom the young Sylvia Plath regarded as the most important influence on modern literature. In a letter to her mother Sylvia wrote excitedly of her interview with Bowen, "Just got through criticizing Elizabeth Bowen's speech she gave the very day I talked to her – intellectually stimulating."[34]

In her introduction to *The House in Paris,* A. S. Byatt writes that instead of finding a 'traditionalist' she discovered in Bowen her "first experience of a wrought, formalized 'modern novel', a novel which played tricks with time and point of view."[35] More research needs to be undertaken on the links in the female British literary tradition between Woolf, Muriel Spark and Iris Murdoch. But more than this, I would welcome a comparative study between the writings of Rebecca West, Elizabeth Bowen and Iris Murdoch, which introduces the three as pivotal female Anglo-Irish modernist/postmodernist writers. I do not believe an Anglo-Irish female modernist tradition has yet been established. All three women, from very different Anglo-Irish backgrounds, were at the heart of British literary modernism and its struggles with representing historical change and 'existential crises' in the present moment.[36] All three refused to compromise their formal aesthetics for personal or social politics. There are similarities and differences in West and Bowen's modernist approach to gender and female mobility and the impact of transport technologies on society and art. Iris Murdoch became a close friend of Bowen, visiting Bowen's Court from the 1950s, and she both shared and influenced Bowen's post-war desire to turn "the structure upside down by allowing civilized middle-class characters to act out myth and nightmare and fantasy as characters in fairy stories do", but without breaking from the novel form completely.[37]

The fragment of Bowen's last novel 'The Move-In', which she was working on when she died in 1973, establishes that right up until the end Bowen was reshaping and experimenting with modernist and postmodernist preoccupations. The title, characters, metaphors and setting assert her thematic and formal concerns regarding dislocation and gender. Three anonymous youths, two boys and girl, arrive in a broken-down 'two-seater' motorcar (belonging to a 'former day') at

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[33] Murphy 275.
[34] Sylvia Plath, *Letters Home:Correspondence, 1950 - 1963* 115.
[35] A. S Byatt, introduction to Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris* (1935; London: Vintage, 1999) 7.
[36] Victoria Glendinning, *Rebecca West: A Life.* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987); and Conradi 23, 25, 29, 46, 201, 398, 415, 448, 462.
[37] Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* 218.

some anonymous decayed Anglo-Irish big house in an unnamed part of Ireland. The girl is drawn as a disruptively androgynous authority who, although not driving the car, is in charge of it (and the plot's) destination. Dressed in rolled-up jeans and "a man's shirt two or three sizes too large for her" she refuses the "lonely" "dicky seat" (now occupied with baggage) and precariously sits on the bonnet of the two-seater, "maintaining a balance at each of the hair pin bends, by clutching at the scalp of one or other of her companions."[38] Bowen's complex representation of the unnamed 'girl' draws attention to the increasing destabilising of gender and social structures in the 1970s, under the impress of the second wave of feminism and the new youth culture. The girl's clothes assert the performativity of identity. Her aggression, grabbing the hair of the men sitting in front of the car and cutting her own arms, registers the second wave of female anger and self-assertion, which writers like Donald Barthelme and Thomas Pynchon attempted to satirically circumvent.[39] But it also signifies the interiorised frustration of young women and men in a devalued world. In contrast her Anglo-Irish characters (verging on caricatures) turn their backs on the modern world and the future, which has turned its backs upon them. Uncannily echoing Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* (1959)[40] one of the male youths asserts, "The thing is, we can't go on", which the girl amplifies with, "The car won't", only to be undercut by "Nonsense" from the Anglo-Irish "Agatha".[41] Bowen gives the Anglo-Irish the last laugh and the last refusal, but it is an empty one. The fragment ends with a checkmate on the front drive of the decayed big house between the three youths in the broken-down motorcar, who want to move in, and the resisting owners of the big house who want them to move on. Her motorcar metaphor, surrealist dialogue, and realistic metonymic setting in 'The 'Move-In', parody the postmodern novel's self-parodic and self-reflexive representation of the gap between reality and fiction, between epistemology and ontology. Bowen's signature tune and poetic vision places her as one of the pivotal figures in (en)gendering British, Irish and American modernism and postmodernism. As in so much else, she was ahead of her time.

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[38] Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Move-In', *Pictures and Conversations* 74-76.
[39] Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Position of the Female Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 1, 334-335.
[40] Editions de Minuit first published Samuel Beckett's *L'Innomable* in France in 1952. John Calder (Publishers) Ltd published the English version *The Unnamable* in Great Britain in 1959.
[41] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* 75-75.

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