

THE DOUBLE-VOICED NARRATIVES OF MARIA EDGEWORTH, SOMERVILLE AND
ROSS, AND ELIZABETH BOWEN

By

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To my grandparents

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In this dissertation I trace the double-voiced nature of the narratives of Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen. These Anglo-Irish authors transmit the intricacies and complexities of their shared socio-historical culture. As daughters of the Protestant Ascendancy conquering class, Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen lived in the Big Houses of Ireland, and many critics claim they hid behind the simplistic, single-paned perspectives their Big House windows offered them. By reevaluating their artistic styles, my argument challenges this conception that these authors' views of culture and history are so entirely contained. The narratives under consideration in this project highlight the contested interplay of literature and history at the fundamental level of language. This project utilizes the theories of M. M. Bakhtin as outlined in *The Dialogic Imagination* to look at a range of textual examples that reveal the underlying divides these authors and their characters put on display. As contradictions arise out of the tension between tradition and change, these authors and their works reflect the dialogic quality of the personal and historical impulses that surface during a period of major social change. Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen reflect their historical moments, and their narratives transmit the intricacies of their culture of coexistence,

which means that they can be interpreted as conservative forces. Nevertheless, with all the incumbent contradictions between holding fast to traditions and ushering in rapid transformations, I argue that these authors' works ultimately promote a collective change and help support that change, which is occurring socially, politically, and economically from 1800 to 1955.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Understanding a Shared Context: Complicating the View from the Big House Windows

“The novelist stands in need of some essential formal and generic mask that could serve to define the position from which he views life, as well as the position from which he makes that life public.”

-- M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (161)

While I was researching and writing this dissertation, one of my research advisors forwarded me an informal recommendation from his acquaintance whom he told me is a genuine modern-day Irish princess. She wrote me this: "Maria Edgeworth will only make sense if she is read in her historical context. Same with Somerville and Ross. Somerville and Ross were showing the obvious respect the English foreigners had for the Irish, and vice versa; but also, Ireland was a conquered nation."¹ At that stage in my research and writing, I could not have been happier to read this counsel from one unfamiliar with my project but intimately aware of the peculiarities and nuances associated with the authors under consideration in this project. I felt like this project was on the right track. Knowing that I could speak to the historical context of Edgeworth (and for that matter Somerville and Ross and Bowen, too), I also felt confident that I understood the importance of the interrelationship between these authors and their historical situation in their homeland. But then I paused over her final comment: "Ireland was a conquered nation." I wondered; can Ireland, too, have done some of its own conquering of Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849), Edith Somerville (1858-1949) and Violet Martin [pseudonym Martin Ross] (1862-1916), and Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973)? With a publication history spreading over a hundred and fifty years, these

Anglo-Irish authors transmitted the intricacies and complexities of their shared culture even as they disappeared from popular reading lists and were left out of the anthologies that privileged the new nationalism that took root in Ireland and complicated the notion of a shared past with authors of this ilk.

These daughters of the Protestant Ascendancy conquering class lived in the Big Houses of Ireland, and many critics claim they hid behind the simplistic, single-paned perspectives their Big House windows offered them. By reevaluating their works, my argument challenges this conception that these authors' view of culture and history is so entirely contained. The narratives of these authors under consideration in this project highlight the contested interplay of literature and history at the fundamental level of language. My study of the "dialogue of languages as it exists in a given era" garners support from the theories of M. M. Bakhtin as outlined in *The Dialogic Imagination* (417). The examined narratives of Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen reflect the heteroglossia, or internally dialogized language, of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland. They write as members of a community whose "position was shot through with contradictions on many levels, all stemming from its dual identity and its occupation of two coterminous discursive locations: a dominant one *vis-à-vis* the native Irish, a subordinate one *vis-à-vis* England" (Smyth 65). As contradictions arise out of the tension between tradition and change, these authors and their works reflect the dialogic quality of the personal and historical impulses that surface during a period of major social change.

Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen reflect their historical moments, and their narratives transmit the intricacies of their culture, a culture of coexistence, with all its incumbent contradictions between holding fast to traditions and ushering in the

rapid transformations occurring socially, politically, and economically from 1800 to 1955.

This comes through in narrative form, as Bakhtin claims, where

individual differences and contradictions are enriched by social heteroglossia, where dialogic reverberations . . . penetrate the deep strata of discourse, dialogize language itself and the world view a particular language has (the internal form of discourse)—where the dialogue of voices arises directly out of a social dialogue of ‘languages,’ where an alien utterance begins to sound like a socially alien language, where the orientation of the word among alien utterances changes into an orientation of a word among socially alien languages within the boundaries of one and the same national language. (284-285)

This project examines how Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen engage with what Bakhtin refers to as an “internally persuasive word,” which is “half-ours and half-someone else’s,” namely Anglo-Irish (345). For Bakhtin, this “internally persuasive word,” like “authoritative discourse,” has the power to help determine our “ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior” (342). Because this word comes out of “a *prior* discourse,” it comes with some demands: “that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own” (342). While “we encounter it with its authority already fused to it,” this internally persuasive word is also “born in a zone of contact with unresolved contemporaneity” (342, 346). The transformative power of this contact zone arises out of the struggles in language against the “official line” which “results in semantic and emotionally expressive (intonational) changes” to one’s own discourse or voice (345).

The authoritative discourse surrounding the word “Anglo-Irish” (and these authors) was and is overwhelmingly negative. What these three authors work out, then, in the discovery of their own discourse, enables them to represent an alternative. Their narratives often attempt to encourage their contemporaries to find Anglo-Irish to be a fulfilling identity and to have it mean something honorable, productive, and positive. From both internal and external forces in Ireland, the struggle for influence remains

constant, which is what many analysts of the Anglo-Irish discuss as they explore the power struggles within the hyphenated community. Texts such as *Twilight of the Ascendancy*, by Mark Bence-Jones, *Inventing Ireland*, by Declan Kiberd, *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House*, by Vera Kreilkamp, *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History from 1789 to 1939*, by W. J. McCormack, and *The Anglo-Irish: the Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture*, by Julian Moynahan repeat the discourse that reifies the Anglo-Irish as a class with dubious privileges, precarious finances, and the constant threat of social isolation and violence. And from the discourse of colonialism and empire in texts such as *Strange Country*, by Seamus Deane, *States of Mind: A Study of Anglo-Irish Conflict 1780-1980*, by Oliver MacDonagh, *Decolonisation and Criticism: The Construction of Irish Literature*, by Gerry Smyth, we learn that the term Anglo-Irish identifies interlopers who subjugate and erase the native Gaelic political and social hegemony. The narratives of Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen enter into this struggle for influence through their composition of “intentional[ly] double-voiced and internally dialogized hybrid” novels (361).

This project, then, takes a look at a multitude of single utterances where “two potential utterances are fused” as a way to reveal the message of persistence in the face of demise (361). Recognizing the “borderline between oneself and the other” (293), the language of these narratives lays bare the contradictory impulses of the underlying divides these authors and their characters put on display. It is as though they are battling out the most primal wish to belong in the most simplistic terms that inevitably mean so much more. In the shouts of “I love it here” we hear the whispers of “I hate it here,” and just when a character thinks “I have a future here” she realizes that

her future emerges, in the language of heteroglossia, as one “that is broader, more multi-leveled, containing more and varied horizons than would be available to a single language” or singular experience (Bakhtin 414). The narratives under consideration in this dissertation introduce their own “semantic intentions” orchestrated through the heteroglossia present in the comic playing with languages, the character speeches, the character zones, the quasi-direct discourse, and the mixtures of genres (Bakhtin 324, 323, 319). The heteroglossic narrators integrate for us “*another’s speech . . . in another’s language*” which expresses authorial intentions but in a refracted way (Bakhtin 313). Tracing the many instances of heteroglossia in these narratives, we find the essence of the contradictions that informed the artistic styles of Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen as Anglo-Irish women writers. In order to discover all of this, we go back to Bakhtin: “what is needed is a profound understanding of each language’s socio-ideological meaning and an exact knowledge of the social distribution and ordering of all the other ideological voices of the era” (417).

Remembering the advice of Bakhtin to “coordinate the style under consideration with the background of heteroglossia, appropriate to the era, that dialogizes it” (420), I look to the biographical and historical materials that construct the context and the specificities of time and place associated with these authors. Each author is, of course, singular, yet they flow together in interesting ways. While still tied to the systemic principles of exclusion that bifurcated people and communities, Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen all produce unsettled—and unsettling—narratives that dislodge any anticipation of hegemony the reader might have given their gender, class, and political strictures. This is the work of the others of two cultures and the object of a

community always in danger of losing home (the Big House), losing place (lands and governance), and losing self (symbolic death, death of order, and real death).

Irish history runs the gamut of invasion, domination, oppression, and freedom; of tribal, imperial, and national governance. Scholars such as Roy F. Foster, Declan Kiberd, W. J. McCormack, and Julian Moynahan deftly chronicle a history of the Irish people, the colonization of Ireland by the English, and the intricacies of the politics associated with the sustained governance of Ireland. As McCormack says in *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History from 1789 to 1939*, “Historians have a rather difficult story to tell, indeed they have many stories to tell, not all of them reconcilable one with another” (6). Roy Foster makes this polyphonic aspect of Irish history prominent as he titles the Prologue to his massive historical text *Modern Ireland: 1600 – 1972* simply “Varieties of Irishness” and proceeds to ask questions before settling on some explanations. I leave the telling of this complicated story to historians, but I will pause for a brief schematic, outlining the inherited circumstances of Ireland as it relates to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the prevailing notions about the relationship of Ireland to England, especially as it concerns the Protestant Ascendancy and the Anglo-Irish tradition of literature.

Part of the impact of the English on the Irish comes, Kiberd says, from the quantity of contact years, as well as from the quality of these connections. Kiberd posits that “the sheer duration of colonial occupation, which lasted more than seven centuries” inevitably produces an enormous effect on the development of Ireland and the Irish cultural situation (251). Kiberd continues by describing the mutual and exclusive developments of Ireland and England:

Set against that [the colonial domination of seven hundred years], however, was the close proximity of Ireland to England: affinities of climate, temperament and culture made it hard for the English to treat the Irish consistently as their absolute Other and led to attempts, such as the Act of Union in 1800, to assimilate the occupied land into a united kingdom. (251)

This formulation which shows the slippery boundaries of insider and outsider highlights the indeterminacy associated with understanding national identity and politics in Ireland.

This indeterminacy blurs the lines of distinction for personal and cultural identifications, too, as the Anglo-Irish struggle with their own personal unity from within the culture of others and from outside a culture that increasingly produces or defines them as other.

The Act of Union of 1801 which brought all governance of Ireland to Westminster, Kiberd argues, increased the perplexity of these shared existences and permeable dividing lines: “Over the century and a half which followed, it became more and more clear that a strange reciprocity bound members of the ascendancy to those peasants with whom they shared the Irish predicament” (67). Foster situates the “[p]olitical energy in the age of the Union” in its local and national influences as he compares the effect of the Union across the Protestant and Catholic divide:

what is most striking is the mobilization of Irish politics at local and national level, a process linked with modernization and, ironically, Anglicization, in terms of language at least. But most of all it was closely connected with the recognition by the Catholic majority that, as the political game came to be played in terms of democratic numbers, they must be the inevitable winners. (290-291)

The Anglo-Irish must adjust, necessitated by this Union with Britain, which was supposed to “guarantee” Anglo-Irish protection but inevitably reinforced their precarious position (Foster 290). Moynahan recognizes the unexpected outcomes from the Union when he reflects that “far from becoming fully British, [the Anglo-Irish] became unfortunately Irish, in the old brooding unhappy sense of the term. Of course, this did not happen all at once, nor did they realize what was happening all at once” (9). This

emphasis on disjuncture, discordance, and distinct inseparability truly frames the narratives of all who come after the Union and, specifically, those examined in this project.

Elizabeth Bowen estimates the Irish estate is “something between a *raison d’être* and a predicament” and by extrapolation, this formulation certainly reflects on the history of the Anglo-Irish experience (Kiberd 376). Part of the incongruity and instability of the Anglo-Irish experience comes out of what Bowen and other historians of the Anglo-Irish point to, which is that there is a very short window of time where the Anglo-Irish were united around a common mission and exercised a semblance of control and authority within Irish politics. What Bowen claims is that “in the decades following 1760, the Anglo-Irish became aware of themselves as a race,” but by the time Maria Edgeworth began to publish in 1792 this awareness and authority began to be undermined (*Bowen’s Court* 158). The political reconciliation between Ireland and England and among the varying Irish factions began to fracture and as a result the Anglo-Irish slowly lost their wealth and status as the leaders of Ireland. In *Bowen’s Court*, Elizabeth Bowen’s great tome covering four hundred years of the history of her family and Ireland, she comments on the political instability at the end of the eighteenth century:

The '98 [1798] rising dealt the final blow to the Ireland Grattan had hoped to see, that Ireland he had already saluted on the May day of 1782. The reign of Anglo-Irish high confidence was to be, after all, for less than two decades. For eighteen years Grattan’s Patriot Party, with good will throughout the country behind them, fought to integrate Ireland. They failed . . . (204)

Feeling as she did that “Anglo-Ireland had suffered, with the Union, a vital shock to its self-respect,” Bowen’s emphasis on this pivotal moment in history leads us to

understand the context surrounding the authors in this study (223-24). To explain the period from the Act of Union to the establishment of the Irish Republic, Julian Moynahan claims in his study, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture*, that during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century “the privileges and power of this community begin to be curtailed and what had been called an Ascendancy heads down toward its inevitable demise” (xi). In other words, being a part of the ruling elite often meant being penniless, constantly in danger, and precariously situated on land that seemed at the whim of both Westminster and local agitations.

As we move into the Victorian period, Irish society begins to show the strain of this uncertainty stemming from Ireland’s diminishment of authority and devolution of status resulting from the fragmentation of a formally feudal society. McCormack addresses this specifically through his evaluation of Victorian Irish class dynamics:

Irish Victorian society was doubtless a more complex interaction of class than the traditional terminology suggests; nevertheless, to speak of an ‘ascendancy’ is to reflect an important sense of common purpose felt by various elements of the population—landowners, the established clergy, the genteel professions, the Protestant commercial classes. (*Sheridan* 268)

McCormack identifies the obvious “discrepancy between terminology and reality” in this society and opens up his reading of these discrepancies in the narratives of J. S. Le Fanu, one prominent Anglo-Irish author of the Victorian period (268). The atmosphere of reform common to Victorian England spreads to Irish affairs and some legislative changes take place that begin to offer concessions and adjustments for Irish society. And of course the entirely defining event of the mid-century is the great hunger, death, and destruction that spread far and wide during the famine years, 1846 to 1849. For all the appearance of solidity in the great power of the British Empire, in fact, P. F. Sheerhan claims the opposite is much more representative of the Irish reality: “Our

history during the nineteenth century is largely that of the decline of the Ascendancy and the rise of Nationalism” (108).

Protestant Ascendancy is more than any singular idea of religion, ruling power, or class connections. In *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish History from 1789 to 1939*, W. J. McCormack traces the idea of the tradition of the Ascendancy through a Yeatsian and Joycean focus, while also discussing the cultural expressions and experiences created by the presence of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland. In the process of defining the term Protestant Ascendancy, McCormack claims, “it is to Edmund Burke that we must look for the most penetrating account of its social origins” (88). Throughout Burke’s writings, oratories, and letters around the year 1792, he concentrated most effectively and ironically on the slogan of the hour, Protestant Ascendancy” (McCormack *Ascendancy* 67). The idea of Protestant Ascendancy comes to flourish in the fervor of the revolutionary 1790s and seems to be coined “as a phrase to provide an encapsulated history of the eighteenth century *in toto*” (9). For McCormack, the Protestant Ascendancy represents the “crowning feature” of the “distinctive if not unique social structure” of Ireland for most of its modern history (9).

McCormack is interested in investigating this concept of Protestant Ascendancy as a historical, political, and cultural incubator for the literary works of the Anglo-Irish. McCormack’s presentation of the conflicted nature of these authors and their works helps formulate a systematic naming of influence and participation in the production of a certain representation of experience. He highlights this experience as

the negotiation between the sociological formation calling itself ‘The Protestant Ascendancy’ and the ideological construction of an eighteenth-century hegemony of the same name. From this contradiction, rather than from any mechanical

causality in the families of Yeats and Synge and Lady Gregory, derives the modernist, valorized tradition associated with their names. (*Ascendancy* 9)

To this observation I will take an opportunity now to add briefly that in place of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory as the primary representatives of this tradition, this project aims to investigate how Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen shake up this tradition.

With the government of Gladstone and Disraeli at Westminster, land acts pass, the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland occurs, and Home Rule discussions gain a presence in Parliament. From around 1870 to the turn of the century, England starts the work of retreat from Ireland, though it will not go smoothly. Bowen categorized the 1890s for Anglo-Ireland as “a decade of fine consciences and of a humour that was uncombative, mellow and disengaged” (*Bowen’s Court* 398). So while Anglo-Ireland kept up their hunting, garden parties, and Big Houses, the country agitated around Home Rule and a new nationalism that would eventually exclude the Anglo-Irish. In 1918, “in Dublin, and in the country, Ireland’s bitter struggle for Ireland entered a new phase. Between the armed Irish and the British troops in the country, reprisals and counter-reprisals—tragic policy—raged. Fire followed shootings, then fires fires” (*Bowen Bowen’s Court* 439). After the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, civil war ensued in the Free State of Ireland before the Irish Republic settled its own national politics.

What Bowen’s ambitions for being a historian offer up in this retrospective glance is something beyond the dates, names, and places; she offers us an enlivened glance at the Anglo-Irish that is extremely informative:

The stretches of the past I have had to cover have been, on the whole, painful: my family got their position and drew their power from a situation that shows an inherent wrong. In the grip of that situation, England and Ireland each turned to

the other a closed, harsh, distorted face—a face that, in each case, their lovers would hardly know. (*Bowen's Court* 453)

For Bowen, the “microcosmic” quality of Anglo-Irish existence comes from “its isolation, and what might be called its outlandishness” (*Bowen's Court* 455). Thus this is the atmosphere out of which the Anglo-Irish comes into its own, at various turns both displaying and ignoring the most pressing aspects of their cultural, political, and economic inheritance. The Anglo-Irish literature, therefore, that we have from this conquered and conquering country is what Moynahan tries to define as “the writing produced by that ascendant minority in Ireland, largely but not entirely English in point of origin, that tended to be Protestant and overwhelmingly loyal to the English crown, and had its power and privilege secured by the English civil and military presence” (*Ascendancy* 4). What seems useful about this formulation is the presence of conflict and complexity embedded within it and the attempt at specificity with which it proceeds. This project proceeds, then, to the conflicts and complexities in the contradictory impulses embedded in the narratives of Maria Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Elizabeth Bowen.

Brian Hollingsworth in *Maria Edgeworth's Irish Writing* claims that Maria Edgeworth writes the first novel in the vernacular and uses the specificity of language, audience, and place to remain true to her educational priority toward scientific observation that comes out of the enlightenment ideals her father introduced to her (9, 26, 34). Gifford Lewis in her biographical and critical study of Edith Somerville and Martin Ross calls the writing style of Somerville and Ross “perfect preservation” of the rural Irish dialect, social elements, and culture (*Somerville* 11). Declan Kiberd in his immense examination of Irish politics and culture in *Inventing Ireland* makes this

declaration about Elizabeth Bowen: “Writers such as Elizabeth Bowen maintained the tradition of Somerville and Ross, leaving a priceless artistic account of events as viewed through Big House windows” (363). These narratives under consideration are decidedly informative about the pains of constructing and maintaining an identity within the scope of nation, community, family, and self. The many “formal and generic mask[s]” (Bakhtin 161) used by Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen reveal the great conflict and tension surrounding their shifting positions within the fluctuating socio-cultural ideologies of Ireland from 1800 to 1955. The double-voiced narratives under consideration in this project reinforce Seamus Deane’s theory of the Anglo-Irish “language of balance” (21). What comes out of an anachronistic community, according to Deane, is “the language of the half-made, the half-baked, the incomplete, the Anglo-Irish, the English-Irish” (21). While often divided, Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen, however, do not speak as half-baked or incomplete representatives of history; instead, they write the pervasively double-voiced narratives of generations, adventures, mysteries, and comedies born out of their unique relationships to Ireland.

Chapter Two introduces Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) and works through a careful reading of her four Irish narratives, *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *Ennui* (1809), *The Absentee* (1812), and *Ormond* (1817), as they reveal the development of her artistic style and the interplay of centralized and dislocated authority of the Anglo-Irish in Irish society. In her definitive biography of Maria Edgeworth, Marilyn Butler describes Edgeworth’s family life: “Maria Edgeworth was born into a family whose history was typical of the Anglo-Irish gentry” (*Maria Edgeworth* 13). Yet from this typical beginning, Edgeworth becomes a complex figure through her atypical literary pursuits, her

combination of narrative styles, and the influence of her father's eccentricities. As Butler asserts, Edgeworth reflects contradictory impulses: "By inclination she was the least controversial of Anglo-Irishwomen, and it was only through complex personal circumstances that she became the author of three progressive, at times even radical, studies of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland" (*Maria Edgeworth* 125). Undoubtedly, Edgeworth's novels reflect both an acceptance of change and a wistful nostalgia for Ireland's past. Helen Zimmern concludes her biography of Edgeworth with this suggestive declaration: "It is quite true that Miss Edgeworth's books bear reading twice: once for the general impression, the second time to see how cunningly this impression is produced" (Zimmern 176-77). Esther Wohlgemut attributes some of this dynamism to Edgeworth's ability to use her writing to "reconsider the meaning of the denomination 'Anglo-Irish,'" which leads her to "reconstitute 'Anglo-Irish' less as a category than as an ongoing mediation between borders" (645).

Edgeworth is an Anglo-Irish woman writing at the dawn of the nineteenth century, a "hard-to-pin-down place," and she crafts her narratives to demonstrate the struggle that comes from trying to "reconcile the irreconcilable" (Fauske 11-12). With her Irish narratives, Edgeworth continues to "challenge readers to understand her historical contexts" so that the specific social, political, and economic realities could be known, handled, and improved for Ireland's sake (Fauske 11). Her work can be seen as "an intellectually self-conscious attempt at a group portrait of a hybrid, often disunited people" (Butler "Edgeworth's Ireland" 268). Her work therefore serves as a benchmark for regional novels, giving her readers a specific account of Ireland and a context for Britain's Irish question (Belanger 109).

As scholars have noted, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Maria Edgeworth's father, influenced her greatly throughout her career, and so her father's circumstances relate to Maria's. As part of Maria's biography, Butler describes R. L. Edgeworth as a man who "had detached himself from the run-of-the-mill Anglo-Irish gentry in 1784," and so, Butler declares, "Maria in her fiction was to reflect that detachment to the full" (*Maria Edgeworth* 96). As a member of the Lunar Society, whose members playfully referred to themselves as lunatics, R. L. Edgeworth is a bit of a fringe character, outside of regular political and social circles for a man of his position in Ireland. On a serious philosophical note, Wohlgemut reads the Edgeworths' blending of eighteenth century principles with their own application of these principles in nineteenth century Ireland as a "rewriting" of Edmund Burke's popular and influential concept of "nationness" (647). According to Wohlgemut, Edgeworth adheres to her father's proclamations that "the difference of mind arose from education" and that the expression of "national difference" springs from a "sociocultural foundation" rather than an inherent "nature" (647), which gives Edgeworth the necessary space to work out the "problem of Anglo-Irish identity" (653).

Maria Edgeworth's education certainly influenced her literary style; her education was designed and administered by R. L. Edgeworth, the quintessential eccentric and Enlightenment man: "inventor, writer, educator, social theorist" (Nash xiii). Ironically, this education helped Maria Edgeworth break from tradition, and it "singled her out from her predecessors among writers of fiction" (Butler *Maria Edgeworth* 91)². Butler contends that because of her upbringing, "Maria Edgeworth has the intellectual stamp of a generation, or half a generation, earlier than that of her own early adulthood" (*Maria*

Edgeworth 66). The active participation of her father in heady eighteenth century philosophical cosmopolitanism and his molding of his children's education make Maria Edgeworth a transitional figure. Nevertheless, while most critics claim Edgeworth maintains a strict adherence to her father's designs and wishes, and the evidence indicates some adoption of his specific principles, Julie Nash starts her evaluation of Edgeworth with an interesting and fruitful alternative to consider: "if Edgeworth had merely reiterated her father's ideas, her work would not present the critical puzzle that it does. Maria Edgeworth's writings embody a curious tension between Edgeworth the dutiful daughter of patriarchy and Edgeworth the surprisingly progressive iconoclast" (Nash xiv). This critical insight depicts Edgeworth as a figure of complexity rather than someone maintaining straight-forward paternal allegiances.

Edgeworth is no Electra under the spell of her father. Instead, she represents the hyphenated culture of the Anglo-Irish and a female literary voice of the early nineteenth century, when both Anglo-Irish and female identity were in flux. John Cronin adds an important component to our understanding of Edgeworth as an informed and engaged citizen of her family and her community:

we know that from the time they settled in Ireland, Maria and her father were involved together in all the business of the estate and that she became a sort of permanent secretary to him, riding out with him to visit tenants, being present with him at the settling of disputes, the payment of rents and all the varied business of a prosperous Protestant Ascendancy landlord. (1: 23)

So while Edgeworth often hid behind her role as her father's helper, being the pseudo-governess for her more than twenty younger siblings, and even publishing her most famous novel, *Castle Rackrent*, anonymously for the first edition, Edgeworth maintained an active role in life around her.

Chapter Three brings us to the literary voices of two Anglo-Irish women who embody the early ambiguities Edgeworth's life hinted at. Somerville and Ross tell us, "Miss Edgeworth had been the last to write of Irish country life with sincerity and originality dealing with both the upper and lower classes, and dealing with both unconventionally" (*Irish Memories* 140). But this dynamic duo is ready to take up that sincerity and originality in their literary careers. Edith Somerville (1858-1949) and Violet Martin (1862-1915) became the authorial industry of Edith Somerville and Martin Ross which was quickly reduced to Somerville and Ross. These cousins started their writing partnership in 1886 and are what most considered a "brilliantly matched pair of minds" (*Lewis Somerville* 7). Somerville and Ross amazed their contemporaries and continue to confuse modern critics over the mechanics of their collaboration. Everyone wants to know who did what, and how two hands could hold one pen so effectively. That mystery remains, however, as both in public discourse and private records Somerville and Martin remained steadfast that all work was equal, done together, and a true representation of a partnership.

The partnership of Somerville and Ross put their decisions to pursue authorship as a career and a money-making business in the forefront, which makes them different from their predecessor Maria Edgeworth, who more often shied away from the public role of an authoress even though she kept detailed records of her earnings in her private diaries. The income Somerville and Ross earn plays a critical role in the survival of their family's estates and provides them with financial independence. But instead of using their assets as a means to pursue great adventure, they used this income to stay rooted within their families and to stay in their family homes. Their precarious finances

were a constant worry for them, but they worked hard to subsist on their meager income. They “sold their intimate knowledge of Ireland in order to remain living in it (Lewis *Somerville* 9). As “emancipated and adult women,” Somerville and Ross tackle the publishing world for their pleasure and their profit (Lewis *Somerville* 9). And, “[t]heir delight in the joke of being taken for men never tired, and the tiny, ladylike Martin took deep amusement and pleasure in being called ‘Mr. Ross’” (Lewis *Edith* 140). The families of these talented women were not so easily amused; their parents, siblings, and relatives, opposed them and criticized their works. Somerville and Ross had to overcome this opposition to carve out their writing career. Their efforts were often thwarted, especially by Edith’s mother Mrs. Somerville, through constant interruptions and demands on their sense of duty to their large families. The Somervilles on the whole panned Somerville and Ross’s works when they were allowed to read them. The family’s reluctance to accept these cousins as authors came to a head in Mrs. Somerville’s protracted bickering with Edith and her insisting that Edith adopt a pseudonym, which she did for the first of her publications but dropped immediately after that.

Somerville and Ross pressed on, however, and always highly motivated by the want of money, they actively participated in the society of the literati of the late nineteenth century. As contemporaries of Dublin’s avant-garde, which included Andrew Lang, Lady Gregory, John M. Synge, William Butler Yeats, and Oscar Wilde, Somerville and Ross swirled around literary notoriety and greatness and yet themselves remained mostly out of the artistic center of society. They chose, instead, to maintain their connection to the Irish countrysides of their youth where they fostered their devotion to

their families, duties, and houses. Authorship was an escape from the entrapment of marriage, but because Somerville and Ross had their roots in the Anglo-Irish culture of the Big Houses and ancient family estates, they teetered on the edge of tradition and change. They were devoted suffragists throughout their lives; Somerville writes after Martin's death, "Martin and I . . . were, are, and always will be, Suffragists, whole-hearted, unshakable, and the longer we have lived the more unalterable have been our convictions" (*Irish Memories* 313). And yet, for all their convictions, one of Somerville's last moves was necessitated by her being unceremoniously kicked out of Drishane House, her home for close to ninety years, by the son of her brother and the heir to the estate. A most interesting aspect of the personalities of these "brilliantly matched" cousins, however, is how Somerville and Ross covered the spectrum of political sympathies, as their national beliefs diverged from one another: "[Martin] felt that the country needed strong government, implemented by its top layer of landowners, and that the centre of government for the British Isles should be London. In comparison Edith was a positive home-ruler" (Lewis *Somerville* 19). These kinds of contradictory pulls of tradition and change are portrayed and embedded within so much of Somerville and Ross's work; the four resplendent examples under investigation in this project are *An Irish Cousin* (1889), *Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.* (1899), *The Real Charlotte* (1894), and *The Big House of Inver* (1925).

As Edgeworth got us started at the cusp of the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Bowen (1899 -1973) bridges the nineteenth with the twentieth century and in Chapter Four we see the effects of the protracted decline of the Anglo-Irish. The ill effects are countered by the sense of purpose Bowen creates, expressed in an artistic style that is

formed around the friction of the modern world. With this simple proclamation, “Born in 1899, she was the same age as her century,” Maud Ellmann lays out an enigmatic and emblematic part of Bowen’s story (x). Ellmann moves swiftly from these trifles to the substance of her academic pursuits, yet her opening is informative enough to pause over. Ellmann may in fact be saying more than she knows by this slip of accounting: Bowen is so entirely a part of the twentieth century and simultaneously just outside of it, too. Bowen’s birth year keeps her on the fringes of the nineteenth century while her life grows painfully through the tumults of the twentieth.

Bowen’s biographical history contains some of the same clues we have seen throughout this examination of liminal authors while it also contains some telling differences. What we notice as the major continuity between the authors, of course, is their class and their comfortable experiences with a notion of home through the solidness of their family big houses. But, Bowen lived much more in England during her childhood and for the majority of her adult life than her predecessors who reside mostly in Ireland. For Bowen, her family home, Bowen’s Court, served primarily as a summer retreat, or as a promise of repose when she needed it (as during the height of violence in London during World War II). And, very unlike any of her predecessors, Bowen lived to witness the destruction of Bowen’s Court after she was forced to sell it to escape the financial strain it put on her. There remains for Bowen a life much more itinerant than that of Edgeworth, Somerville, or Martin. Until age seven, she grew up at Bowen’s Court, County Cork, Ireland, but her father’s mental health faltered during her early childhood, so her mother took her to Kent in England. In 1912, Bowen’s mother died, so she relied on the kindnesses of relatives to keep her until she went to boarding

school. Throughout the existence of her family estate, therefore, she continued to summer and live sporadically at Bowen's Court: England and Ireland are threaded together and remain inextricably intertwined. Bowen highlights this plural existence as she explains, "I was being continually shifted from household to household, in and out of varying social groups, to and fro between Ireland and England. This made me diplomatic and imitative" (*Early Stories* ix-x). "Diplomatic and imitative" could also be seen as the performative qualities of one who is always the other, always already without origin. What one of Bowen's contemporary reviewers worries over seems quite fitting still: "To fit Miss Bowen into a group is one thing, to find her origins quite another" (Burgess 254). Bowen herself sees the world from contradictory impulses and gothicized sensibilities.

Bowen is the most modern of the authors in the trajectory of this project, and in her work we find a modern style that overtly displays former taboos, very violently and horrifically in the lives of her characters. Bowen grew up within a country experiencing "violent events which set the seal on that decline [of the comfortable colonial world] and ushered in a new political era" (Cronin 2:114). The influence of this is felt, as Ellmann describes, in Bowen's regard for "the Anglo-Irish as living ghosts" (15). Through her novels *The Last September* (1929), *The Heat of the Day* (1949), and *A World of Love* (1955) there remains the self-conscious exposition of the modern conflicts that arise from the hyphenated experience of the Anglo-Irish and the effective deracination of the inheritors of seven hundred years of conquered and conquering instabilities. The first two collections of short stories, *Encounters* (1923) and *Ann Lee's* (1926), as the first of Bowen's writings, stay more rooted in a psychological investigation that demonstrates

Bowen's intensely telescopic focus on singular moments; time and place are captured to see what comes of the digging in. The observant quality of these early short stories translates into the political, historical, and social commentary that we find so much more fully fleshed out in the novels.

As Bowen writes her family history in *Bowen's Court* in 1942, she looks back on this interplay between the personal and the national and comments on the relevance of the time marked by the Act of Union in 1801 to her current-day position as she writes in 1942. Bowen proposes that

[s]ociety—which can only exist when people are sure of themselves and immune from fears—was no longer, in the Anglo-Ireland I speak of, in what I called the magnetic and growing stage; it was on the decline; it was breaking up. It could exist in detail—comings-and-goings, entertainments, marriages—but the main healthy abstract was gone. And with this break-up of society there set in the dire period we are not yet out of, the dire period of Personal Life. . . . This *can* be lived . . . but it needs at the greatest, genius, at the least, discipline. (258-59)

What she reveals in this sweeping analysis becomes the parameters for a line of issues and the intriguing expression they take on in Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen. As inheritors of this tradition from one to the other, their separate narrative ambitions and artistic concerns demonstrate the historical influence particular to each but show the intertwined nature of all. In Bakhtin's words, "the writer of prose does not meld completely with any of these words, but rather accents each of them in a particular way—humorously, ironically, parodically and so forth" (299). In this project, the humorous, satiric, melancholic, mysterious, dramatic, heteroglossic, and contradictory narratives show the ongoing struggle over the authority of the Anglo-Irish position in all its permutations.

¹ This comment was relayed to me after an email correspondence between John Van Hook, librarian at the University of Florida, and his friend Elizabeth O'Reiley Kirpas whose ancestral home is in East Breffny, Ireland.

² Butler revisits this idea in her introduction to the Penguin edition of *Castle Rackrent* and *Ennui* published in 1992. Here, she summarizes the dominant educational philosophy that guided Richard L. Edgeworth and thus his daughter: "As educationalists, the Edgeworths followed Locke in their almost devout belief in the formative influence of acquired over innate characteristics" (47). Butler's use of the word "devout" reinforces the commitment and fervor of these principles in their lives. Katy Brundan in her essay "Cosmopolitan Complexities in Maria Edgeworth's *Ennui*" emphasizes the influence of Enlightenment principles and their carry-over into Edgeworth's particular brand of cosmopolitan representations in her works: "Edgeworth, writing in the early nineteenth century, inherited the Enlightenment cosmopolitan tradition of the "citizen of the world" ideally familiar with many nations and people" (123).

CHAPTER 2
MARIA EDGEWORTH'S IRISH NARRATIVES: WHERE CONTRADICTIONS MEET

“In the oxymoron contradictions meet: to reconcile these, Irish ingenuity delights.”

--Maria Edgeworth, *An Essay on Irish Bulls* (162)

The epigraph to this chapter, “In the oxymoron contradictions meet: to reconcile these, Irish ingenuity delights,” is a line of dialogue from the mouth of Edgeworth’s feisty Scottish character who is one member of the triad in the “Bath Coach Conversation,” which is a chapter in *An Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802). From the satirical resonances of the contradiction announced in this simple and intriguing sentence, we realize that Edgeworth’s literary path contains crisscrossing intentions and contradictory impulses. This contrast reflects both Edgeworth’s clear allegiances to the progressive narratives of Anglo-Irish authority and her glorification of an idyllic Irish past. While many critics feel Edgeworth is encased “behind the windows of the Big House” (Butler “Introduction” 33)¹ and that she reinscribes the political and cultural oppression of the existing ruling-class mentality, Butler argues that “Edgeworth’s real-life allegiances are not simply reproduced in the tales—where, on the contrary, her self-positioning is as complex and unstable as her representation of the Anglo-Irish landlord hero” (“Introduction” 49). This nuanced reading of Edgeworth’s situated role and representation reflects the most plausible and informative evaluation of this author and her diverging experiences and sympathies.

Much of Edgeworth’s “complex and unstable” existence results from historical particularities (Butler “Introduction” 49). Moreover, Edgeworth’s time is perhaps the last moment for any sense of potential or progress for the Anglo-Irish in Ireland. This is the time, according to Seamus Deane, when “Ireland was being treated as an irredeemably

strange country—one in which the faintest reaction against oppression was regarded or described as sedition against the state, in which the mass of the people were regarded as foreign to civil society, in which power had never learned the intricate lessons by means of which it could have become authority” (16-17). Throughout Edgeworth’s childhood, the international scene was full of revolutions that rocked America and France, and heady intellectuals were preaching the rights of man and reflecting on the conditions that underpin free societies. Edgeworth’s growing-up years appear to have been influenced by the ideas of Edmund Burke and his national conception of Ireland. Deane describes this influential time of ambiguities thusly:

For over a century after Burke, the same ambiguity prevailed—between the representation of a country that is foreign and unknown, in which the conditions are phantasmagoric, especially to the English reader, and a country that is, at the same time, part of the British system, perfectly recognizable and part of the traditional world that the French Revolution had overthrown. (17-18)

Ireland as the backdrop for Edgeworth’s writerly instincts, then, is, in Butler’s words, an Ireland of “violent contrasts” (Maria Edgeworth 79). What Edgeworth sees all around her teeters between oppression and opportunity.

Ireland was Maria Edgeworth’s family home, and it remained a place for comfortable living and the place of her happiest times with her father, her siblings, and her three stepmothers. Edgeworth remained connected throughout her lifetime and throughout her narratives to the notion of the “shared experiences” of all who resided in Ireland—throughout its history (Butler “Edgeworth’s Ireland” 288). Deane reads this as coming out of the tradition of the “process of normalization” taken on by political pamphleteers and travel writers who sought to present Ireland in a controlled manner. This narrative style works, Deane says, because through it, the

extreme is brought under control by an observer, traveler, storyteller, whose function it is to communicate to an audience that shares her or his values a sense of the radical difference of the other territory or condition and, at the same time, however contradictorily, to claim that this territory and condition, once relieved of the circumstances or causes of its extraordinary condition, can be redeemed for normality. (19)

Deane's recognition of the contradictory impulses within the narratives, as the authors try to define the politics of Ireland in the eighteenth century, is interesting here, but more significant is the contention that the narrative maintains a control. I argue, however, that Edgeworth's narratives demonstrate a blurring of subject and object.

Deane sees innovation in Edgeworth's arrangement of the "dyadic oppositions" of England and Ireland, which "no one before her had coordinated with a comparable skill" (30). Deane's compliment here also carries with it a distinct criticism that her fiction was not a real analysis of the colonial situation around her; instead "her treatment of the political and economic conditions of Ireland, although realistic in many ways, is also governed by the connection that they are exotic—that is, the consequence of quaint Irish behavior rather than of colonial conditions" (33). In her "nostalgia for the antique, the pre-modern, the regrettably lost past of the old world" Edgeworth betrays her role as one of the class of privileged colonizers. Deane argues that "[n]either [Burke nor Edgeworth] could conjugate the relationship between the traditional, understood as a mode of sensibility or energy, and the modern, understood as a system of discipline and frugality" (37). While I grant the presence of nostalgia throughout Edgeworth's narratives and that it defines her artistic style in part, the full story shows many heteroglossic moments that reverberate around this fused relationship between the traditional and the modern. The discourse of her novels remains double-voiced and ambiguous where "contradictions meet" (Edgeworth *Irish Bulls* 162).

If Edgeworth is able to bring together and inflect tense, person, and mood associated with the grammar of narratives, if indeed Edgeworth is able to conjugate her discourse and the alien social discourse, with their inherent contradictions, it must come from her willingness to experiment with genre, character speech, zones of contact, and the heteroglossia of everyday language. Butler notices this happening as Edgeworth introduces into her Irish narratives “an unusual variety of alternative plots, often based on fairy and folk tale, myth, and still more informal forms, such as practical jokes” (“Edgeworth’s Ireland” 289). And as far back as the 1883 biographical work on Edgeworth written by Helen Zimmern, Edgeworth’s style is estimated to have a shape-shifting quality to it: “Never did laughter and tears, sympathy and repugnance, lie more closely together than in these tales” (75). From her first endeavor to create an Irish novel to her last, Edgeworth offers us heteroglossic narratives that expose the contradicting desires to venerate traditions and to flow with changes. Through *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *Ennui* (1809), *The Absentee* (1812), and *Ormond* (1817) Edgeworth works to establish a tutorial outlining the way forward for the landowning Anglo-Irish families and in the process concedes the multifarious paths within this territory.

Castle Rackrent

The title page of *Castle Rackrent* reads: “An Hibernian Tale taken from facts / And from the manners of the Irish squires before the year 1782.” Noteworthy aspects of her first published novel include an underlying anxiety in the form of hedging, with lots of padding and supplemental material, especially considering the preface and the famous “Glossary,” which in its complexity constitutes a work unto itself even though it is fashioned as an explanatory companion to the original narrative. Still, *Castle Rackrent* runs on the compact or short side and its form befuddles readers in the same way

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* does; it is more than a long short story but somehow less than a full-length novel. *Castle Rackrent*, like *Heart of Darkness*, also flirts with the indeterminate relationships between the subjects of a colonial world and the stories that come out of it. Mary Jean Corbett sees *Castle Rackrent* as Edgeworth's exploration of her own colonial situation: "she seeks to produce the colonized for the colonizer and to establish her own authority for doing so, yet also to reform or reconstitute the relations between those two entities" (390). With the introductory remarks, the detailed glossary, and the colloquial narrator, *Castle Rackrent* is certainly more than a simple Hibernian tale or Gaelic folk story.

This so-called Hibernian tale embodies Edgeworth's hopeful musings about an Irish future with more prudent stewards of land and property, no matter their political, social, or national identities. The narrative reconstruction of the history of the Rackrent estate and its stewards in *Castle Rackrent* forms a first glimpse into the death of the old order. As the Rackrents mismanage and degrade their family and property, an educated, rational, and careful businessman recuperates the estate. In this narrative resolution, the most prudent caretaker of land comes from within the ranks of the steward or agent class of Irishmen, out in the country, nurtured from its land. This conclusion is radical since it demonstrates a shocking usurpation and a departure from hundreds of years of Ascendency rule and ownership, all lost within one servant's lifetime. *Castle Rackrent* "recognizes the possibility of subversiveness" that ultimately "does not restore the complacency it has taken away" (Hack 159). As a narrative full of warnings and consequences, *Castle Rackrent* "arouses anxiety which it does not dispel"

(Hack 161). Joep Leersen even claims, “Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1800) is an epitaph for eighteenth century Ireland” (8).

As an epitaph, *Castle Rackrent* is the story of four bad boys who ruin the privilege and property of their ancestral inheritance. Edgeworth’s choice of narrators for *Castle Rackrent* continues to fascinate critics and theorists, receiving the greatest analytical attention of any aspect of the narrative.² The family servant, honest Thady, tells this story and with this embodiment of the language of a traditional, class-conscious native Irishman, the narrative represents the discourse of the alien language and infuses the whole of the novel with this double-voiced heteroglossia. Thady is hardly honest by his own narrative accounts, however, and he is obviously unreliable as a storyteller because of his subservience and dull ineptness at judging the character and motives of the ruling class. Thus with Thady’s character speech and narrative voice we find a truly “dialogized ambiguity” and a “double-voicedness [that] sinks its roots deep into a fundamental, socio-linguistic speech diversity and multi-languagedness” (Bakhtin 325-26). Often parodically, therefore, Thady functions as a dynamic layering for gender, social, and political issues as he becomes the filter for Edgeworth’s philosophical musings. This filtering creates a text that “has at its core her [Edgeworth’s] ability to appropriate the tone, accent, and idiom of another, and to put them to a variety of literary, political, and economic uses. And that appropriation of a dependent’s persona makes her, to some extent, dependent on him, as a copy is to the original” (Corbett 390). Moreover, her narrator functions as a ripe source for Edgeworth’s critique of colonial rule in Ireland.

The family-history style narrative in *Castle Rackrent* creates the folklore of four successive generations and ties them to their Irish land. The narrative opens with a nod to the ancestral past by introducing “the old family name” of O’Shauglin and marking the family as Irish, Catholic, and “related to the kings of Ireland” (*Castle Rackrent* 67). Sir Patrick changes his family’s surname and, therefore, represents the movement toward assimilation common to Gaelic families wishing to secure their property entitlements during the “encroachment of Anglicization,” especially after the hard penal laws were enacted in 1690. The extra-literary heteroglossia of this event informs the novel’s dynamic layering of history and social conditions. From the perspective of old-Catholic Irish nationals this name change is tragic, yet it seems natural in this simple, declaratory statement that tells us the family is what it has become: “The family of the Rackrents is, I am proud to say, one of the most ancient in the kingdom” (67). Collapsing the history of a subjected class of people into a matter of “pride” represents the deeply rooted double-voicedness of this narrative. Within the narrative vignettes that capture the decisions, actions, and behaviors of these rough-around-the-edges aristocrats, Edgeworth puts on display a live-action tutorial of mismanagement: How to Lose All the Family’s Property and Titles in Four Generations. What they lose is an estate that becomes a mere sham of a proper Irish estate. Through Sir Patrick, Sir Murtagh, Sir Kit, and Sir Condy, readers witness the steady decline of property and person. Readers are goaded into laughing at these desultory patriarchs and the hilarity of their situations, all the while seeing the distressing nature of their faults and pain of their demise.³ More than any other Edgeworth narrative, *Castle Rackrent* shows that where “contradictions meet . . . Irish ingenuity” takes over from Anglo-Irish degeneration.

The laughter embedded in *Castle Rackrent* may seem a bit morbid at times, but it certainly fits this tragicomic narrative. Even Thady, our “honest Thady,” openly jokes to one of the Rackrents’ creditors. Thady’s amusement follows the sight of ducks being killed for dinner, which creates a symbolic portrait of the family. Thady wonders aloud, “‘How is it,’ says I, being a little merry at the time; ‘how is it but just as you see the ducks in the chicken-yard, just after their heads are cut off by the cook, running round and round faster than when alive?’ At which conceit he fell a laughing” (97). The Rackrents are the dead ducks running around with their heads cut off. With frequent circus-like exhibitions with references to farm animals and uncontrolled animalism within these men, this family and the estate are marked for lost, from negligence and carelessness. Without any regard for his family name, Sir Murtagh inherits his father’s (Sir Patrick’s) debts and faces the grotesque forfeiture of his dead father’s body, which he allows to be seized in lieu of payment. This predicament combines the solemnity of death with the hilarity of macabre comedy: “just as all was going on right [in the funeral procession], through his own town they were passing, when the body was seized for debt” (68). What makes this a telling critique of the Rackrents is honest Thady’s suggestion of the son’s role in the family’s public disgrace:

Sir Murtagh alleging in all companies, that he all along meant to pay his father’s debts of honour, but the moment the law was taken of him, there was an end of honour to be sure. It was whispered (but none but the enemies of the family believe it), that this was all a sham seizure to get quit of the debts, which he had bound himself to pay in honour. (68)

This passage reveals Sir Murtagh’s coarse relationship to both his family’s honor and the memory of his father. And Thady’s parenthetical aside is more than a hint of criticism; it is a narrative moment where “[t]he process of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance” and that

demonstrates a Bakhtinian moment of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 272). To include the announcement that “none but the enemies of the family believe it” is to belie the truth that we all should believe the worst of Sir Murtagh and his evasions of duty and honor (*Castle Rackrent* 68). His lack of nobility comes at a critical juncture of private and public exposure.

In his newly-assumed role as master of the Rackrent estate, Sir Murtagh halts the frivolity that became famous during his father’s time; he stops all parties and clears the cellar of all wine and whiskey. His ostensible practicality and frugality, however, fail to make him any less ridiculous. Instead, his pettiness and miserliness are revealed. Sir Murtagh forfeits his moral authority for pecuniary gain. He is perhaps used to this, though, as he is a lawyer who runs sixteen or so suits at any given time, and as Thady reminds us, “out of forty-nine suits which he had, he never lost one but seventeen” (70). The ambiguous judgment coming from the both the professionally-stylized language of law and the folkloric, everyday language of exaggeration show the confusion that comes from one utterance; this Sir Murtagh is bad news, but it’s hard to deconstruct the master’s house while standing inside it. Moreover, Sir Murtagh refuses to let Thady and the available workers mend the estate’s fences, and the porousness of his property shows the porousness of his morality; he fines his tenants for their animals’ intrusions and invites these intrusions even though they debase his property (70). Thady’s revelation that “there was always some tenant’s pig, or horse, or cow, or calf, or goose, trespassing,” allows readers to see through Sir Murtagh and to imagine the ensuing ruin that will occur during his occupancy (69). The circus of animals that run amok throughout the property and the house seems comical until we realize Sir Murtagh

purposely perpetuates the disorder to rob from his tenants. This subtle hint in the narration almost slips through the cracks, like the cracks of the Rackrent fence, but the humorousness of Thady's portrayal of the wayward field animals leads to the revelation that, indeed, Sir Murtagh fashions his own ridiculous image and makes a fool of the house and all its inhabitants. Through Sir Murtagh, a representative of the law who establishes very little order on his own property, Edgeworth emphasizes the ineffectuality of the governing system and these particular governors within that system.

The Irish system is Edgeworth's target, and tying the Rackrents to the lineage of ancient Ireland, owning the same land for generations, is important. Within this pastoral landlord system, the Rackrents and their tenants depend on the land and the estate's status, which should create a strong heritage, a practical livelihood, pride and pleasure, and a sense of belonging; these are the tenets of the planter society that took root in the early 1600s. Moreover, this Anglo-Irish estate represents the coagulation of cultures and families, Irish and English, and this constant state of hybridity lends itself to easy slippages and constant fluctuations between one and the other. Wohlgemut acknowledges this fact, placing Edgeworth's narrative inside Burke's theory of nationness:

Her [Edgeworth's] writing on Ireland, especially her early Irish tales, offers an important rearticulation of Burkean local attachment and philosophical cosmopolitanism to produce an understanding of the nation as neither tightly bordered (like nations based on historical premises such as blood or inheritance) nor borderless (like those based on rational notions of universal inclusion). This effort to rethink nationness makes Edgeworth more than the colonial writer who figures in current criticism. (645)

To highlight the insider-outsider theme, playing with the idea of heritage in flux, Edgeworth creates stark contrasts and contradictions within the narrative, including Sir Kit's marriage to a Jewish woman.

At the start of Sir Kit's reign of negligence, he brings his ill-fated, Jewish-English wife home to the family estate for her official introductions.⁴ One of the first outings for Sir Kit and Lady Rackrent includes a boasting tour of the Rackrent land, which is guided by Thady himself. As they approach a spot of great importance, one that represents the effort it takes to keep the family and the property intact, Thady begins to speak glowingly of the bog of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin. The reader, perhaps bewildered at such a name, is quickly joined in this state of amusement by Lady Rackrent, but this reaction greatly dismays Thady. Thady tells lady Rackrent about the bog and how Sir Murtagh spent two hundred pounds saving it—"we would not part with the bog of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin upon no account at all"—and we see Lady Rackrent's unabashed and unfiltered response as "she fell to laughing like one out of their right mind" (78). Thady's offended sensibilities are indicated by his comment that "one would have thought this would have been hint enough for my lady" and that Lady Rackrent should know better than to carry on so grotesquely in the face of something special to the Rackrent estate (78). Thady speaks in the language of heritage and Lady Rackrent speaks in her language of modern sensibilities (a name like that seems ridiculous to this modern ear), but the narrative is sympathetic with Thady in this utterance. The true dishonor marked in this moment of contradictory impulses comes from the heir's nonchalance and inaction. In fact, it is "Sir Kit standing by whistling" during the exchange between Thady and Lady Rackrent that demonstrates Sir Kit's inadequacy, since he does nothing to defend his family's pride or honor. On one level, this scene validates Thady's judgment of Lady Rackrent as discourteous and ill-suited to the Rackrent (or Irish) heritage and estate. By this same stroke, Thady imagines a rationale

for Lady Rackrent's fate, presumably unloved by Sir Kit from this moment forward. On a much more poignant level, however, this scene demonstrates another heir's failure to acknowledge or defend his family's honor, which is a failure to perform his duty to his family, his estate, and Ireland. The laughter of Lady Rackrent stands in full view of the Rackrent estate, and the narrative exposes the pain of the one who senses the threat to an ancient family and its land. In the narrative, Thady senses the threat, but by implication Edgeworth invites her contemporary readers and successive generations of Irish citizens, perhaps all those colonial subjects and rulers alike, to contemplate their identity.

The failures of Sir Patrick, Sir Murtagh, and Sir Kit illustrate the instability of power and authority in this grotesquely comical family history, and the next heir in line will be worse. Sir Condry is Thady's favorite and the final heir to the Rackrent estate. He is the last in the line of Rackrents to own and occupy the family land because his financial ruin leads to Thady's son, Jason Quirk, mortgaging the estate out from under Sir Condry. Jason flips the dynamic of owner and estate manager methodically and patiently. In order to support his carefree and extravagant lifestyle, Sir Condry relinquishes all of the estate's management to Jason. The heir's indolence and lack of managerial skills are summed up in Thady's evaluation: "the pressing letters were all unread by Sir Condry, who hated trouble, and could never be brought to hear talk of business" (93). While paying no attention to the accounting or the property, he and his wife Isabella also make constant demands for cash out of the estate in order to support their chosen lifestyle of social engagement. When finally performing his duty under Jason's guidance, Sir Condry faces "the sight of bills and load of papers all gathered on the great dining-table

for him” (107). His response reflects the deepest satire on Anglo-Irish authority as Sir Condy cries out ““Merciful Jesus! what is it I see before me?”” (107). In this discourse of pathos, Sir Condy plays the fool, and being like Bakhtin’s image of the fool, Sir Condy’s language “has the effect of ‘making strange’ any pretensions to lofty reality” and reveals the degraded state of Anglo-Irish landowners (Bakhtin 402).

While Sir Condy remains poorly educated because of his laziness, Jason, the son of a household servant, becomes a student of the law through diligence and opportunism. And while Sir Condy has the privilege of his ancient family name, Jason has the privilege of his family’s ties to a decadent and decaying system of governance. Thus it is Jason who has invested, managed, appropriated, and controlled enough land and wealth to finally demonstrate the silliness and futility of the Rackrent family’s existence. Faced with more debt than he can pay, Sir Condy calls out to Thady, ““Pooh! pooh! pooh!” says he, ‘here’s so many noughts they dazzle my eyes, so they do, and put me in mind of all I suffered, larning of my numeration table, when I was a boy at the day-school along with you, Jason—units, tens, hundreds, tens of hundred. Is the punch ready, Thady?’” (107). Faced with what is surely the end of the line for his family, Sir Condy maintains his flippancy and fulfils his tragicomic destiny through the language of the clown which helps to express the heteroglossic intentions of Edgeworth’s artistic style. Readers laugh at him and his ridiculousness as they become fully aware of the deserving demise of this last representative of the Rackrent dynasty.

Jason laughs at this situation as Thady narrates Jason’s demeanor during this transaction. Thady’s interpretation of the scene shows us how “Jason, whilst I was a saying this, and a great deal more, made me signs, and winks, and frowns” as though

this were a great gag of fun for Jason (109). Jason represents another of those dialogic categories that exposes the undecidability of the narrative as he embodies a bit of the rogue's ability to mimic the language of authority and demonstrate the parody on the traditional class structure in place in late eighteenth-century Ireland. Thady tells this with an air of disdain toward his son, and he claims that Jason is wrong, revealing that "[Thady] was grieved and sick at heart for my poor master, and couldn't but speak" (109). Honest Thady proclaims his devotion to the Rackrents to the bitter end, but the melodramatic quality of the whole scene clearly reinforces the complex negotiations and shifts of power and authority, moral and legal, that occur from one generation to the next and outside of the boundaries of proscribed roles. Perhaps Thady is not being all that honest in the face of his own son's great success, though Thady claims the transactions appear vulgar. Thady's son benefits from a situation that pulls at Thady's allegiances to flesh-and-blood family and his feudal ties to the Rackrent family.

Ennui

Edgeworth's next Irish tale, *Ennui* (1809), brings us back to Marilyn Butler: "*Ennui* was another of Maria's best and liveliest stories . . . [with] its original theme, which was the ill-effect on a man's character of a life of fashion" (*Maria Edgeworth* 237). *Ennui* is a text with a strong allegorical intention and a plot that develops "the symbolic rather than the particularized fall of a house and order" (Butler Introduction 32). Butler's commentary here is a bit confusing, however, because while the aristocratic Rackrents die off, the actual Big House remains intact in *Castle Rackrent*; in *Ennui*, however, the Big House burns to the ground while the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy family lineage recuperates and sustains itself. In an unusual twist of plot in *Ennui*, the strange permutations of two men's lives allow for the family patrimony, tentatively identified with

the destroyed castle, to live on, which fits Butler's analysis. This continuity does not come easily or seamlessly and represents an intensely subversive situation. Part of what drives this novel is the interesting mix of generic conventions: part *Bildungsroman*, part provincial family saga, this narrative focuses a tremendous amount of energy on one orphaned boy's path to a solid gentry position, and it comes directly out of a poor Irish peasant's cabin.

Ennui seems to have disappeared from all but the specialist's list of must reads, perhaps because of the many contrivances and plot twists this novel contains. While Butler readily admits that "[t]he faults of *Ennui* . . . are so glaring that few modern critics have bothered to give it a second glance," she concludes that "[i]n spite of these faults, *Ennui* is perhaps the best of Maria's Irish tales except *Ormond*" (*Maria Edgeworth* 365). A ranking of the narratives seems unnecessary, but the reality of Edgeworth's marginalized or dismissed literary status opens the door for a much-needed reexamination of Edgeworth and the Irish tales, including the neglected narratives such as *Ennui*. I would argue further that *Ennui* demonstrates the most vivid example of Edgeworth's willingness to question power, dismantle authority, and demonstrate the arbitrary and changeable nature of political relationships through the protagonist's physical embodiment of "two voices [and] two accents . . . that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of an utterance," as Bakhtin would say (360).

Marilyn Butler recognizes and comments on the important shift of narrative authority as she highlights the "challenge" within the narrative to the existing power structure and how Edgeworth's portrayal of one Anglo-Irish estate shows through as a commentary on the whole estate system: "On the level of allegory, this failing system

signifies something obviously greater than a single estate [. . .].” In essence, “[i]t represents the challenge to the old political order which had been felt in every Western European polity since 1790” (“Introduction” 28). Furthermore, Butler argues here for the cosmopolitan appeal and influence of *Ennui*, even though this novel represents a strongly Irish-centered exploration of issues and concerns that are important to Edgeworth.

Ennui is written after both *Castle Rackrent* and *An Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802), which Edgeworth coauthored with her father. The sequencing of *Castle Rackrent* to *Irish Bulls* garners much attention as these works create a compendium of Edgeworth’s philosophies. *Irish Bulls* presents a heavily satirical and farsical explanation of the peculiarities of Irish people’s speech, or bulls, like the stereotypical stage Irishman that had already become a sensation in the London theaters. This text, with its willingness to make fun of the English more than the Irish, is often interpreted as Edgeworth’s attempt to clarify her sympathetic allegiance to Ireland. And while many critics read Edgeworth and her narratives as abandoning politics and the hot topics of her day, in fact much of her narrative strategy and delivery encodes this supposedly-missing historical relevance and political insight through “an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another” (Bakhtin 361). As Butler reminds us, Edgeworth calls on the relevance of unmentioned but assumed subtextual actualities: for *Ennui* “the precise dating of the central, melodramatic events of the plot—in 1798, [was] a year of terrible slaughter and of the disintegration of Ascendancy Ireland” (“Introduction” 32). This disintegration, interwoven in the story’s plot, becomes

a salient means for the acknowledgement of political strife, turmoil, and the necessity for change.

Ennui is a narrative that highlights the “mixture of the magnificent and the paltry” (*Ennui* 170). The first-person narrator reveals the inherent ambiguity of a hyphenated existence and creates a mix of narrative contradictions through his internally dialogized discourse. It is a memoir of the simple re-telling of past events leading to a present, though this present is also set in the past by Edgeworth. There is also a voice overlay that corrects and commentates. Then, there are small moments of slippage where there is more obviously quasi-direct discourse from the author. This helps to create the irony of the text and reflects the heteroglossic nature of the author as an Anglo-Irish woman writing at the dawn of the nineteenth century, amid political and social turmoil. All of this layering in *Ennui* takes place in a mix of places in England and Ireland, Ireland providing the locus for redemption. Lord Glenthorn is a mixed and a mixed up character—his mixtures coming in the form of his ambiguous parentage, personality, and philosophy. The Earl of Glenthorn is born in Ireland and lives in Ireland until he is two years old. His father’s dislike of Ireland leads his son to share these prejudices and, therefore, Glenthorn avoids his family’s estate in Ireland (145). The hybridity within Glenthorn and his circumstances explodes all neat definitions and illustrates a heterogeneity that helps to deepen our understanding of socio-political realities of the early nineteenth century and Anglo-Irish identity. *Ennui* illustrates the distastefulness of the aristocratic—sycophantic—life by demonstrating Glenthorn’s intense malaise and perpetual melancholy while living the cosmopolitan life of the upper-class wastrel. *Ennui* also illustrates the complete negation of the myth of class and birthright as the

narrative employs the “switched-at-birth” trick of fate. Glenthorn admits that a lazy life is no life at all, which is part of Edgeworth’s incorporation of the Protestant work ethic and value system as an underlying “elemental force of social languages” that was prominent in Edgeworth’s culture and part of her authorial mission (Bakhtin 356). The narrative sets this character’s experiences in motion around the principle of breaking the cycle of boredom and ineffectuality. Importantly, Ireland becomes the focus for this intervention. In a telling tourist-guide passage posited in the narrative voice of Lord Glenthorn, the satirical possibilities of this narrative come out of the play of generic impulses and the extra-artistic ideology that emerges when Glenthorn delivers this bit of advice:

Upon this principle I should recommend to wealthy hypochondriacs a journey in Ireland, preferably to any country in the civilized world. I can promise them, that they will not only be moved to anger often enough to make their blood circulate briskly, but they will even, in the acme of their impatience, be thrown into salutary convulsions of laughter, by the comic concomitants of the disasters: besides, if they have hearts, their best feelings cannot fail to be awakened by the warm, generous hospitality, they will receive in this country from cabin to castle. (*Ennui* 176)

This passage works to evoke laughter from readers at Ireland’s expense even while it holds the travel guide’s sincere invitation to enjoy the great pleasures Ireland has to offer. With this awkward combination of critique and sentimentality, Glenthorn establishes a rubric for understanding manners, experiences, and relationships that will inform the development of Ireland in this story. This unusual message of Glenthorn’s, Edgeworth’s really, speaks to my theoretical model as it establishes the precedent for how to read this text for its simultaneous disclosure and deconstruction of social structure.

Glenthorn’s conversation with an “Irish gentleman” on the stairs of a Dublin hotel reveals Edgeworth’s daft and subtle foreshadowing technique. The Irish gentleman tells

Glenthorn directly, and seemingly out of nowhere, “we can project, but we can’t calculate. We begin like princes, and we end like beggars” (170). This comment from an arbitrary Irish gentleman, who never appears again, becomes the absolute truth of Glenthorn and his situation because he does start out as grand but will find out his beggar status in due time; this flip-flopping between being a prince and being a beggar becomes the locus of the embattled discourse in the narrative. The intensity of this dualistic moment comes from the psychological assessments and the personal observations by this first person narrator. Out of the mouth of the Irish gentleman comes the initial thought, but it is delivered to us through Lord Glenthorn, who is a lord in name only. This reveals the clever and deconstructive textual energy of Glenthorn’s story and the trickery of the plot twist. Glenthorn only knows a life determined by his name, however, so by extension, this narrative demonstrates the bifurcated aspects of Glenthorn’s experience. This is a prophecy of Glenthorn’s soon-to-be-realized situation: complicated, full of twists, lies, and false assumptions. Trials that ensue for Glenthorn will bring about plenty of pain but ultimately lead to an opportunity for growth.

Glenthorn takes possession of his inheritance at twenty-one years old, having lost both his parents early in his life. His mother died shortly after giving birth, and his father died a few years later. As an infant without his birth mother, he is nursed “in an Irish cabin” in order to become hardy. The Irish cabin does, in fact, have the capacity to make a weak child hardy, but the novel’s protagonist, Lord Glenthorn, would have benefited from that anyway; it is the true-born Lord Glenthorn, who was raised as Ellinor’s own son, Christy O’Donoghoe, who receives an unexpected benefit, and thus the major plot twist is exposed through the one character who through a combination of

birth and socialization speaks with two voices and two accents (145). The heir, without his mother, was evidently a bit of a weak child, and to add to that difficulty, he was dropped on his head by a drunken Dublin servant who was subsequently relieved of her duties. Because of this incident, the father decides to send his young son off to the seashore, with Ellinor as his nurse, in order for the baby to recuperate. Ellinor thus becomes the sole proprietor of Glenthorn's history; it takes her confession to the acting Lord Glenthorn for the truth of two baby boys and one Irish nurse to finally come out:

'[A]nd then I thought how happy he [Glenthorn's father] would be if he had such a fine *babby* as you, dear; and you was a fine *babby* to be sure: and then I thought how happy it would be for you, if you was in the place of the little lord: and then it came into my head, just like a shot, where would be the harm to change you? for I thought the real lord would surely die; and then, what a gain it would be to all, if it was never known, and if the dead child was carried to the grace, since it must go as only poor Ellinor O'Donoghoe's, and no more about it.' (274)

Ellinor reveals, then, that a fine baby was needed and she just happened to have one of her own who fit the profile perfectly. While she claims that "the devil put it in my head, and made me do it," as readers we realize the careful consideration that accompanies this deceiving action (275). The situation intensifies after Ellinor's initial decision to change the babies, however, because the original heir to the Glenthorn estate really does recuperate, and so there are two babies as healthy as can be who now both have ties to the aristocratic family. As Ellinor explains it, "the real little young lord did not die as I thought; and it was a wonder but he did, for you never saw none so near death" (275). Her rationale speaks to the basic desire for life to go on as it does currently though because she declares she feels it is "better the family should have an heir to the estate, suppose not the right, than none at all" (275). And in truth, she speaks correctly when she says that there was "none the wiser or the worse" for this shift because no one ever suspects or questions the legitimacy of the "babby" who

makes his claim to the title Earl of Glenthorn (275). But what this confuses within the narrative is a fantastic array of assumptions, established norms, assumed roles, and the legitimization of identity and authority.

Glenthorn's personality reflects an extraordinary emptiness; he is the paradox of a ruler who does not rule, a leader who does not lead, and a manager who does not manage. His pathological inaction, his self-diagnosed ennui, melancholy, boredom, gluttony, and self-destructive behaviors help expose the ruling elite. Therefore, Edgeworth uses Glenthorn to satirize the effete, ineffectual pattern of behavior she finds reprehensible within the landed gentry, especially as related to absentee landlords of Irish estates. Through Glenthorn's "habitual indolence" Edgeworth mocks the institutions of power and authority in the late eighteenth century (183). Glenthorn's daily interactions and behavior fluctuate as he remains completely uncommitted to anything or any principle other than his pursuit of pleasure. Upon discovering the true circumstances of his lowly birth, the former lord, who had his wants and desires satisfied as if by magic, takes up a working-class life and finds himself confronted with frighteningly complex matters: tea, sugar, butter, blankets, sheets, and washerwomen, which are concerns that "almost overwhelmed my spirits" (293). The sheer ridiculousness of Glenthorn's first confrontation with real-world matters fixes in our minds Edgeworth's condemnation of lordly ignorance and uselessness, and fixes in Glenthorn's mind the rapid transformation that must occur in order for him to survive.

A significant component of Glenthorn's transformation revolves around the intersections of love, relationships, and his application of philosophical principles. Love transforms Glenthorn because it awakens his buried humanity: eliciting feelings,

emotions, desires, and dreams. For Glenthorn, female companionship begins unromantically in the form of a contractual marriage, and then he experiences a romance devoid of love that never leads to a marriage, but finally he encounters courtship, romance, and a union that embodies romantic, sentimental love. To reinforce Glenthorn's lack of agency within his first marriage to a monetarily and socially advantageous bride, on the only occasion readers find him entering his wife's room, his presence instigates mayhem: "She [Lady Glenthorn] started at the sight of me as if she had beheld a ghost: the maid screamed, and ran to a door at the farther end of the room, to make her escape" (163). Glenthorn admits that he never loved his wife, but he is a bit piqued when he finds out that she intends to run away with her lover (162). Round one for Glenthorn yields no joy, happiness, progeny, or prospects. The marriage, never consummated, ends in disgraceful divorce.

After some time passes from his dissolved marriage, and once he is firmly established at his Irish estate, Glenthorn feels the spark of passion in the presence of an engaging young woman. Glenthorn finds himself caught up in romantic impulses for Lady Geraldine that come to a head as they are locked up in the temple on the property of Ormsby Villa. These affections and passions remain unrequited, however, as Lady Geraldine is really in love with another, though her family remains opposed to her choice. In order to help Lord Glenthorn see the folly of his declarations of love, Lady Geraldine tells him to jump out of a window and then go around and unlock the temple. She tells him, "Come, take the lover's leap, and get rid of your passion at once" (237). Instead of calming Lord Glenthorn, Lady Geraldine's dismissal challenges something within him: "I did not know the force of my own feelings, till they met with an obstacle;

they suddenly rose to a surprising height” (237). While this marks an important progression out of his melancholy existence, Lady Geraldine’s reaction includes the “look of comic vexation” and emphasizes the comic nature of this lord’s inability to read others (237). Lord Glenthorn, who hardly understands himself, just cannot get it right, yet, and his mishaps reinforce the tough road Glenthorn has ahead of him on the path to maturity and legitimacy.

When true love does strike, it happens on Irish soil, with a good Irish lady, and calls attention to the Anglo-Irish unionized political climate. As a synecdoche for national politics, this now-typical plot line of the domestic union that solidifies identity and destiny was radical in Edgeworth’s time. Moreover, the union subverts the predominant notion of practical decisions and relationships between the English and Irish societies. Finally, Glenthorn does get it right, and as he does he reinforces how mixed up we all can be on the path of social and moral duty. Glenthorn’s insight into his situation can be read as an allegory for national and political ambitions and realities. He cleverly philosophizes: “For many years, when I was rich, and could have married easily, I never wished to marry, and now that I have not enough to support a wife, I immediately fall desperately in love” (302). What he tells us is nothing new, but the narrative trick involves us all as we can easily nod our heads in agreement, recognize the truth of this paradox, and understand the implications of contradictory needs and desires inherent in this narrative utterance.

Glenthorn finds himself drawn to Cecilia Delamere, and his desire for her companionship lures him out of his dissipated lifestyle. For love, he becomes active, productive, and engaged in educating himself and working towards a brand new life of

diligence and responsibility. Cecilia cures him: “The enchantment of indolence was dissolved, and the demon of ennui was cast out forever” (305). But at this point, Glenthorn, who now goes by Christy O’Donoghoe, must prove himself capable of intellectual labor and moral fortitude to win the support of Cecilia’s family, even though it is clear that Cecilia feels affection towards Glenthorn. Glenthorn’s transformation takes him from a man who failed at taking care of himself or performing the simplest of daily tasks into a man who is ready to provide for Cecilia. He has confidence in himself and his abilities, and proclaims that she can “intrust her happiness to my care” (320).

The mixtures and ambiguities continue with the domestic union of the would-be Glenthorn-Christy O’Donoghoe. Instead of using his recently discovered surname, Glenthorn becomes a Delamere as he petitions to take Cecilia’s family name and join the ranks of the Delameres, eschewing the lowly O’Donoghoes. After Glenthorn’s foster-brother, the real heir to the Glenthorn estate, destroys the big house (his son Jason’s candle burns the whole house down and kills Jason in the process) he writes a letter to Glenthorn and tells him that Cecilia is the heir in law to the estate and that he abdicates it. As the Delamere family lawfully takes over the estate, Glenthorn as a Delamere has married back into the big house. This romance plot becomes entwined with something more akin to a family saga while also drawing on the great power of the gothic death and destruction within the domestic space. Keeping all of these internally dialogized discourses straight is as hard as keeping Glenthorn’s name straight.

Ennui ends with Glenthorn telling, from his own point of view, that he had been “stretched on the rack of a too easy chair,” which comes from Alexander Pope’s poem *Dunciad*, and brings in the posited discourse that illuminates the sadly ineffectual Lord

Glenthorn who falls in status but finally becomes the rightful lord of the Glenthorn estate by marriage to Cecilia Delamere. Birth, rank, class, love, romance, marriage, and death are all part of this narrative sharing “the odd mixture of absurdity and sense” (*Ennui* 286).

All of this mixture of absurdity and sense comes down to two emblematic scenes of fundamental relationships between the signifier and the signified. Lord Glenthorn, who at this moment in the narrative has renounced his title and his name as the true heir to the Glenthorn estate, assumes the name of Ellinor’s son, Christy O’Donoghoe. And when he arrives in Dublin to start this new life as a common man, he experiences confusion over how to behave, but his greatest moment of cognitive dissonance occurs when he reads his name on the post delivered by his landlady. Recognizing the name on the official correspondence as signifying him, he must face the reality of his altered state and the disconnect between what he thought to be true and what is true. It is laughable, as the Irish landlady proves, since it is to her “infinite amusement” that Glenthorn repeats the name on his letters out loud and in front of her, which makes him look “extremely silly or mad” (294). In fact, he is neither, but his mental state is emblematic of the disruptive nature of living in a period when identities are in flux.

Glenthorn’s public moment of confusion repeats itself in a private and poignant moment when he signs his name to a personal letter. After completing the letter, Glenthorn narrates his dilemma over his identity shift: “when I came to the signature,” he tells us, “I felt a repugnance to signing myself C. O’Donoghoe, and I recollected, that as my history could not yet be public, Lord Y--- would be puzzled by this strange name” (294). This is the extra-literary discourse of politics demonstrating the allegory of

duality, “fighting it out,” in the discourse surrounding the Act of Union and the distance between England and Ireland. In this heteroglossic development, then, Edgeworth produces an innovation as she finds a way “to explore a subject hitherto unfamiliar in fiction, the schismatic nature of modern Irishness, and the problem this represents for individual men and women in the age of dawning nationalism” (Butler “Introduction” 26). In exploring the nature of this “schismatic” Irishness, Wohlgemut argues further that Edgeworth “points to a disjunction between national identity and national origin” that pulls away the foundations of hitherto uncomplicated identities (649). At some level, therefore, Edgeworth’s novel makes the case that “Irishness is not intrinsic to Irishmen, nor is Englishness to Englishmen” (Wohlgemut 649). The Anglo-Irish gentry of *Castle Rackrent* and *Ennui* flirt with the possible negation of their ruling rights and authority. As these contradictions meet in these first two narratives, the available continuity offered up comes in the form of new governance, more native than colonizing, that reveals the “still warm ... struggle” surrounding both Edgeworth’s artistic style and the discourse of Irish cultural conditions in its “historical becoming and in social struggle” (Bakhtin 331).

Through the “concrete social context of discourse” expressed in *Ennui*, the narrative expresses the “socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of [her] epoch” and we find Edgeworth in an ambiguous position in relation to her political ideology and her class status (Bakhtin 300). Edgeworth seems to hold the attitude that the system must continue—in other words, she reifies the male-dominated hereditary system of authority and control over family and country—but this wish for perpetuation comes through a circuitous and destabilizing path. As we move to an

examination of Edgeworth's last two Irish novels we find narratives that are "washed by heteroglot waves from all sides" (Bakhtin 307). While the narrative force in *The Absentee* advances Edgeworth's drive for the social and cultural recuperation available in an enlightened Anglo-Irish male hero leading the way, this effort for stabilization still shows the cracks in the system. And in the last Irish novel, *Ormond*, while the structure of the *Bildungsroman* and the testing of the hero on his way to sound governance remains familiar to Edgeworth's established artistic style, the narrative explores multivocal identities and experiences embodied in the amalgamation of the titular character. In *The Absentee* and *Ormond*, then, readers glimpse an artistic style that actively conjugates the traditions Edgeworth might desire to hold on to with the forces of modernization she is prescient enough to recognize.

The Absentee

Heidi Thomson highlights the trajectory of Edgeworth's narrative themes when she comments that "[w]hile *Castle Rackrent* illustrated how Ireland could destroy itself by the lack of responsibility of those in charge, *The Absentee* emphasized how things could be remedied" (xiii). The most politicized title of all the Irish tales, *The Absentee* announces its focus at first glance. Edgeworth intends to tackle the ills of absentee landlordism, the abuses of out-of-sight and out-of-mind property managers, and the deplorable mockery associated with putting on airs of superiority. Thomson's introductory analysis of *The Absentee* reinforces this single-line synopsis: "Her agenda is moral, didactic and prescriptive: to provide an unambiguous message to Anglo-Irish landlords on the necessity of their presence and advice on how to run their estates for the greater good of themselves and their tenants" (xiv). This narrative again follows the development of

one male character and his path to estate governance; this time it is Lord Colambre, the heir to the Clonbrony and Colambre estates.

The Absentee is a mixture that is now a familiar refrain echoing from the “magnificent and paltry” that we found in *Ennui* (*Ennui* 170). Embedded within typical characters and conflicts in *The Absentee* we find mimicry, sarcasm, exaggeration, and finally truth. Employing the classic journey and *Bildungsroman* story structure, *The Absentee* presents moments of humor that “come in many guises” and include the things that are easy to laugh at such as “blunders,” and “grotesque mistakes,” and even the “crudeness” of the characters we meet along Lord Colambre’s journey (Thomson xx). The scheming Lady Dashfort, one of Colambre’s tests along his path to self discovery, provides the reader with the key to the biting comedy and truth about the nature of the cultural exchange between the English, Irish, and Anglo-Irish in this novel. Her manipulations of truth and her devious designs to control the unsuspecting and naïve people around her, demonstrate the embedded political nature of the social reality. The governing authorities representing England, Anglo-Ireland, and Ireland all compete to be heard above the din of post-Union anxieties. Edgeworth is putting on display the anxiety of influence in the character of Lady Dashfort.

If Lady Dashfort’s behavior simply attempted to create peace and harmony within this exchange between England and Ireland, represented by her marriageable English daughter and the proud Irishman Colambre, then her character’s intelligence, power, and manipulations might be read as admirable and inspiring. In a strict adherence to the Anglo-Irish point of view on life and governance in Ireland, this is the perfect union—England and Ireland married and reproducing the status quo. If Lady Dashfort

respected the noble son's birth and his rightful place then she would have been a purveyor of the truth and the progress that Edgeworth desires, but she does not and Edgeworth vilifies her. As Lady Dashfort twists the truth for her gain, she becomes the most degraded figure in the narrative. So while on one level Lady Dashfort delivers a misreading of Ireland through the voice of a hateful and vengeful foreigner, she is also what Bakhtin calls the rogue liar whose lies are "directed to liars" (Bakhtin 404). Lady Dashfort's lies expose those who try to hide from the systemic forces that perpetuate their existence. She speaks for countless Anglo-Irish people who might not articulate such ugly truths, but they have similar motives and are in similar situations as Lady Dashfort. Therefore, even though this is not Lady Dashfort's story, her manipulations provide an important subtext about pragmatism, and her ill-fated designs against Ireland represent a crack in the façade of Anglo-Irish acculturation in Irish society. In fact, Edgeworth uses Lady Dashfort's character speech to authenticate her own version of truth as it is set against the character's lies. The narrative, then, forces the reader to negotiate a complex combination of truths and lies, which becomes an important component of how "Edgeworth steers the reader towards her preferred version of Anglo-Irish rule in Ireland" (Thomson ix).

Lady Dashfort serves as a test for Colambre and reinforces his need to learn how to navigate and negotiate "appearances of various kinds against reality" as a part of his journey to adulthood and taking responsibility for his family's Irish estate (Thomson ix). Lady Dashfort demonstrates great skill at imitation and she tells everyone that "she was mistress of fourteen different brogues, and had brogues for all occasions" (Edgeworth *The Absentee* 100). She proves her skill through the easy laughter she produces in her

listeners and the admiration she receives from those who keep company with her. So not only is she a rogue whose lies betray the ugly truth of her society, she is also the clown who “has the right to speak in otherwise unacceptable languages and the right to maliciously distort languages that *are* acceptable” (Bakhtin 405). One person who laughs easily but not consistently at Lady Dashfort’s clownish behavior is Lord Colambre. Lady Dashfort has a way of “making Lord Colambre laugh at every thing at which she wished to make him laugh,” but in some situations his own judgment intervenes and stifles laughter when his convictions are violated (100). For example, when Lady Dashfort derides individuals, Colambre protests; “whenever she became personal, he became serious, or at least endeavoured to become serious; and if he could not instantly resume the command of his risible muscles, he reproached himself” (100). As Colambre shirks from the sting of Lady Dashfort’s crudeness, we witness the potency of his and the narrator’s critique. The text demonstrates an acute sensitivity towards how we do act versus how we know we should act and the uncomfortable psychological turmoil that this divide creates. Colambre is divided; he is susceptible to the manipulations of Lady Dashfort, an amoral sensual being who reveals the socio-ideological hypocrisies of all who hold power, but who also shows prudence in the face of difficult challenges.

The full development of Lady Dashfort makes her the woman we love to hate. As a character that combines instincts and emotional reactions with careful designs and manipulations, she prides herself on moving between extremes. Lady Dashfort’s cleverness transforms those who object to her; they feel antipathy toward her at first, like some people dislike olives but then they grow to wanting olives at all dinners, as

Lady Dashfort herself explains her strange charm (Edgeworth *The Absentee* 97). This might be innocuous enough with olives, but her charismatic appeal is villainous. She becomes a villain by making others appear foolish and by her self-proclaimed intention of destroying the integrity of any Irishmen in her presence. Lady Dashfort “often said to those English companions with whom she was intimate, ‘Now see what follies I can lead these fools into. Hear the nonsense I can make them repeat as wit’” (96). The textual commentary about such behavior reinforces the principle that influence “can debase or elevate the public taste,” and subsequently the narrative demands that this power must be used wisely and for the betterment of her countrymen (96). Edgeworth’s artistic style does not actually dismiss the traditional authority figures associated with Anglo-Irish rule in Ireland, even though she makes them absurd. Lady Dashfort is especially absurd because only a manipulated marriage can restore her family’s status. The heteroglossia embedded within the narrative, however, reveals the many voices that have a stake in this complex social and political climate. Edgeworth’s dismantling of authority is subtle rather than overtly revolutionary. Lady Dashfort’s use of her power and her selfish intentions doom her to harsh scorn from the national discourse delivered through Colambre and his friends.

But alongside characters’ and readers’ moments of indignation come poignant moments of realization and revelation: if we condemn Lady Dashfort, we condemn ourselves. And if we laugh at her and her antics, we feel the sting of our own piercing commentaries. Lady Dashfort’s mix of character roles (the clown and the rogue) brings the heteroglossic impulse into the narrative in a disruptive way. Her disruption comes with its contradictory opposite, however, as her own motives are mixed and weigh

heavily toward an evil bigotry that abuses people and slights a whole country. The narrative contains her and dismisses her from the future that is envisioned. We learn of Lady Dashfort's plans from the author's quasi-direct discourse, which skewers her: "[i]t was her settled purpose to make the Irish and Ireland ridiculous and contemptible to Lord Colambre" (101). Lady Dashfort's thinking represents a set of beliefs common to Edgeworth's time and social class. Edgeworth stands apart from this however. Helen Zimmern, a contemporary of Edgeworth, reminds us that "[f]or many years the mere name of Irishman had been regarded in England as a term of reproach, and they figured as buffoons in all the novels and plays of the period. It was Miss Edgeworth who first came to the rescue of her countrymen, and she did this by no exaggerated praises, but by sympathetic yet true presentment" (172).

After Lady Dashfort's duplicity is revealed, the narrative repetition of her rudeness and crassness and the characters' reactions to her function to highlight the absurdity of her aristocratic class. This ideological warfare among characters that represent ideas of home, country, industry, and morality is played out in the novel to give voice to Edgeworth's troubled view of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. Lady Dashfort carries on her mission "to disgust him [Colambre] with his native country; to make him abandon the wish of residing on his own estate. To confirm him an absentee was her object, previously to her ultimate plan of marrying him to her daughter" (101). With this subtle shift into her concern for her daughter, Lady Dashfort immediately assumes the symbolic function of the class-conscious, political strawman Edgeworth needs in order to advance her antidefamation principles. Knowing that the typical English mind perceives settling in Ireland as an inadequate though sometimes necessary second-

best option, Edgeworth reinforces the ridiculousness of this perception with Lady Dashfort's ill-founded complaint: "Her daughter was poor, she would therefore be glad to *get* an Irish peer for her; but would be very sorry, she said, to see Isabel banished to Ireland" (101). With the italicized "*get*" and the harshness of the term "banished," this quasi-direct discourse of commentary calls attention to these unfounded, biased, and inappropriate judgments.

While Edgeworth highlights Lady Dashfort's faulty logic and fallacious actions, the narrative simultaneously admits to some of the power associated with this character's skill. Why is Lady Dashfort so powerful? Her special powers raise her to the level of a force to be reckoned with: "she knew and followed all the arts of misrepresentation" (102). Lady Dashfort "knew how to select the worst instances, the worst exceptions; and to produce them as examples, as precedents, from which to condemn whole classes, and establish general false conclusions respecting a nation" (102). Lady Dashfort does not escape ridicule or reprobation, however, even though she remains immune to it as an influence for change in her behavior. Lady Dashfort herself calls attention to the "look of virtuous indignation" as she reads the face of one of her admirers turned critic, Count O'Halloran. Her response to the count's rebuke comes in the form of her laughing and her explanation that "believe me, comedy goes through the world better than tragedy, and, take it all in all, does rather less mischief" (119). The contradiction embedded in this single utterance strikes the reader and the count and delivers the opposite truth as well: Lady Dashfort's laughing—and desire to have others laugh—at Ireland and those deemed inferior on the Dashfort importance scale produces chaos on many occasions. Count O'Halloran's steadfastness again reinforces

the final judgment we are asked to maintain as readers of this politically charged narrative. The narrative vindicates Count O'Halloran and the reader's better sense: "his sense of right and wrong could stand against the raillery and ridicule of a fine lady" (119).

This conflict-riddled lady must suffer once more and the source of her suffering is Lord Colambre's educated critique of all that she stands for. Once Colambre becomes aware of Lady Dashfort's machinations and manipulations, he realizes the error of the respect he formerly paid her and her daughter. His judgment moves him to feel "contempt," and the narrator reveals "that he never wasted another sigh of pity for her degradation" (239). The complexity of Lady Dashfort and all she represents will not be sewn up with that final judgment, however, as she speaks again on her own behalf and speaks a searing truth about the general condition of women and the reality of their situation: "My Lord Colambre,' said she, in a low voice, 'I know your thoughts and I could moralise as well as you, if I did not prefer to laughing—you are right enough; and so am I, and so is Isabel; we are all right. For look here: women have not always the liberty of choice, and therefore they can't be expected to have always the power of refusal'" (239). Edgeworth's brief slippage here into *The Woman Question* outside of the political trajectory this character supports reveals Edgeworth's own awareness and preoccupation with more than just the national politics and Anglo-Irish cultural relations. Within *The Absentee*, Edgeworth has the space and she shows the sophistication to tackle the social and political issues which she witnessed around her, and she becomes a bit more cosmopolitan and in touch with the concerns of her time.

While *The Absentee* follows the typical Edgeworth narrative model of a focused exposition of either one or a series of male heirs, the women in this third Irish novel certainly maintain prominence as they define characters and situations, and represent a symbolic and real control over destinies and decisions. Colambre falls into this pattern as he buffets back and forth between Lady Dashfort and his mother, Lady Clonbrony, on his way to his genuine love match with Grace Nugent. Lady Clonbrony's defining characteristic is ridiculousness, but she represents a fruitful caricature of the dilemma for Colambre. As much as lady Clonbrony apes London fashion and attempts to establish herself within the ranks of the elite set of socialites, she proves to be pieces or parts rather than a whole being.

Lady Clonbrony represents all that is wrong, in Edgeworth's eyes, with abandoning Ireland and losing a sense of connectedness to heritage, family ties, and rightful place. With Lady Clonbrony's "natural and unnatural manner" she becomes a misplaced combination that reads wrong at every turn; she is the fool, in a Bakhtinian sense, who does not grasp the "conventions of society" (402). Dressed in costumes frequently out of place and more than slightly off the mark of fashion trends, she goes through her life as a strange "mixture of constraint, affectation, and indecision, unusual in a person of her birth, rank, and knowledge of the world" (4). She takes pains to hide her Irish origin, which on the contrary, simply works to exacerbate her misfit presence through her outlandish interpretation of English tone, accent, and delivery. Others mock her, mimic her, shun her, and simply degrade her through all of her efforts at assimilation and acceptance. Colambre witnesses his mother's extravagance and quickly reads the disdain her London counterparts have for her; he witnesses painful moments of

complete embarrassment for his mother and his family in London. Because his mother demonstrates such obvious “failures to understand,” Colambre feels “more melancholy than mirth” over her foolishness (Bakhtin 402; *The Absentee* 13). Along with the desire to simply laugh off this foolishness and overreaching of his mother, Edgeworth inserts the painful nature of Colambre’s awareness and sensitivity to the particulars of this social and political reality. This drives the overarching message of the authorial discourse, therefore, that Colambre must get his family back to Ireland, to a home, to the place where they can feel they belong.

Colambre’s desire to return the family to Ireland receives the support of his father, Lord Clonbrony. Even though Lord Clonbrony professes to believe that “[i]f people would but, as they ought, stay in their own country, live on their own estates, and kill their own mutton, money need never be wanting,” he remains susceptible to Lady Clonbrony’s whims and wishes for London society (19). He never effects their return to Ireland and instead simply pines after it in pitiable conversation with his son. The nostalgic reminiscences of Lord Clonbrony for a world that no longer exists show the double-voiced nature of his utterance and the reality, recognized by Bakhtin, of the shifts in genre and chronotopic trends between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: “the destruction of the idyll (understood in its widest sense) becomes one of the fundamental themes of literature” at this time (233). As Edgeworth’s narratives struggle to hold on to that narrative of generations and the importance of the family novel, the contradictions of the historical realities meet and show through in these powerful mixtures of tradition and change, such as the Clonbrony family represents. Colambre acts, therefore, with the authority of the up-and-coming and rightful heir as he

takes it upon himself to visit his homeland, Ireland, and to witness the current state of affairs at his estate lands.

Colambre's visit to Ireland and his discoveries about the goings-on at his family's house and property blend his own personal coming-of-age story with the stylistics of the travel narrative. As Colambre journeys through Ireland, he witnesses just what Edgeworth needs to report: there is a new Ireland and it is a thriving mix of the structure of the past and the potential of the future. As a reporter on the current state of affairs in Ireland, the character, and friend to Colambre, Sir James Brooks presents a pretty picture of post-Union realities as the voice of the author's direct discourse. According to Sir James the "society" in Dublin specifically is "a most agreeable and salutary mixture of birth and education, gentility and knowledge, manner and matter" (81). The agreeable nature of this mixture has, according to Sir James, infiltrated the very foundations upon which the social and political interactions, expectations, and realities exist. Edgeworth's utilitarian and progressively-minded voice comes through here in the declaration that within Ireland there is "a desire and a determination to improve and be improved—a perception that higher distinction can now be obtained in almost all company, by genius and merit" (81). This is a philosophical statement demonstrating one of her favorite themes of education and enlightened individuals making a better society for all.

The neglected state of Colambre's family estate demonstrates the abuses of the old Anglo-Irish ways of abandoning responsibilities and allowing corruption to flourish. Nick, the bad agent at Castle Clonbrony, is seeing tenants "in my lady's dressing-room," says the footman. So, while this is official business of the estate and should

take place in the office, Nick mixes official duty and private spaces; this reflects how he runs the estate, to suit his purposes. He defiles what is proper and fails to uphold the dignity and quality of the family's affairs. But as Widow O'Neil, a kindly and respectful tenant, says, "if the lady was in it, you wouldn't" behave with disregard to decorum and duty. What is most appalling to Widow O'Neil in this instance is the throwing of dirty gloves on the lady's silk damask couches in her dressing room, but there are obviously many offenses taking place in this convoluted scene. Therefore, the kind of mixture demonstrated here represents the most negative of cases for Edgeworth where a family's delinquency as leaders results in social, economic, and cultural decay.

In quite the opposite example, and as a further illustration of Edgeworth's aims for her dear home country, in and around Colambre town, where Mr. Burke is the agent in charge, things are mixed up in the best ways possible, within the country folks themselves and between Protestant and Catholic. Here Colambre witnesses the joys of "Protestants and Catholics sitting on the same benches, learning from the same books, and speaking to one another with the same cordial familiarity" (128). This ecumenism and cooperation stands as a stark contrast to the Clonbrony estate affairs and the bad agency of the unsupervised and ill-willed. This is the optimistic Edgeworth who supports a union of disparate communities for the greater good. Where these contradictory examples of estates meet, then, the only plausible way forward in Edgeworth's estimation comes from a union, not English and Irish, but Anglo-Irish and Irish.

The conditions of the Anglo-Irish estate under discussion in this narrative must be improved, and even the locals know it. Clonbrony Castle is decried as a place with

“magnificent apartments, hung with pictures of great value, spoiling with damp” (162). And Widow O’Neil with a slip of phrase reinforces this principle through likeness: “Then, isn’t it a pity to see them? There’s my lady, and all spoiling’ said the widow” (162). Widow O’Neil speaks in the language of the countryside and her single utterance contains a double-voiced criticism of those who abandon their duties. The narrative commentary in this heteroglossic moment extends to what is happening to this family, this land, this estate, and ultimately what is happening to Ireland when those charged with its care fail in their duties.

Lord Colambre finds himself ready to correct this and comes prepared for the task through the salutary mixture of his two worlds: his Irish and his English self. For Edgeworth, Colambre represents a combination that draws on the best of everything where “[t]he sobriety of English good sense mixed most advantageously with Irish vivacity: English prudence governed, but did not extinguish his Irish enthusiasm” (6). This yoking together of the opposites as country-specific traits is part of what Deane criticizes in his evaluation of Edgeworth’s tendency to employ “the process of normalization” (19). But since Edgeworth’s goal remains to settle on a system that works for Ireland, her portrayal of a double-accented and double-voiced family heir instead, I would argue, shows her internally dialogized socio-ideological stance as an author. She stands committed to the juncture of Anglo-Irish as these contradictions meet and therefore does not create a normalized vision for Ireland or a normalized Anglo-Irish hero. While Edgeworth’s elitist tendency reveals itself to some extent in these identifying categories, “sobriety” and “vivacity,” in fact Colambre is clearly not a

normal son of an Anglo-Irish family since he stands as a singular representation of the reform efforts Edgeworth sees as lacking and wanting in her homeland, her Ireland.

It is therefore Colambre who finds the resolution for his family and for this narrative through the restoration of proper behavior for a country with unionized and connected aims and missions. Colambre pleads with his mother who has rejected Ireland and attempted to adopt the cosmopolitan life of a Londoner but has, however, accrued failure, much embarrassment, and the ruining of her family's solvency. He speaks eloquently and with passion as he delivers this persuasive address to his mother:

'restore my father to himself! Should such feelings be wasted?—No; give them again to expand in benevolent, in kind, useful actions; give him again to his tenantry, his duties, his country, his home; return to that home yourself, dear mother! leave all the nonsense of high life—scorn the impertinence of these dictators of fashion, who, in return for all the pains we take to imitate, to court them—in return for the sacrifice of health, fortune, peace of mind—bestow sarcasm, contempt, ridicule, and mimicry!'. (194)

From here, this family can find their way through their own mimicry of leaders and of the good moral authority that keeps things right. A family in its rightful place needs to approach its land and personal governance with care. The theory being reinforced here at the end of *The Absentee* carries this message: “a more successful orientation to Ireland includes both critical friendship and personal interest” and this is the “orientation” Edgeworth “wants to inculcate in the Anglo-Irish” (Wohlgemut 652). Therefore, Edgeworth leaves *The Absentee* “with an evocation of the ideal Anglo-Irish position” (Wohlgemut 652). Instead of mimicking the London elite, the Clonbronzys need to go home and mimic the hard-working, dedicated, prudent, Anglo-Irish landlords and custodians of an ever-changing and exciting, unified Ireland.

Ormond

Ormond, published in 1817, is the last of Edgeworth's Irish novels; the first, *Castle Rackrent*, was published in 1800 and the almost two decades in between these two publications was a time of both political and social upheaval in Ireland. These years are the catalyst for reform movements and agitations, occurring after the events of the novel. This extra-literary and historical subtext for the development of the young Ormond in the novel parallels Ireland's political climate and shows Edgeworth's insight into this emerging social and political reality. *Ormond* is a narrative remarkable for its attempt to work out the vagaries of a country, a people, and a situation in flux. While connected to the earlier Irish works, *Ormond* has its unique contribution as well: "Less innovative than *Castle Rackrent*, less fantastic than *Ennui*, less didactic than *The Absentee*, *Ormond* is the most sophisticated of Edgeworth's four Irish novels in addressing her concerns about the place of history and myth in Ireland" (Cosgrove 62). Claire Connolly introduces *Ormond* as "at once intimate in its local knowledge and sweeping in its historical inclusiveness," which corroborates a view of Edgeworth's growth as an author (xvi). The intense focus and broad range of *Ormond* help to create what Connolly calls "in-between location layering mythical, topographical, literary and political allusions" (xvi). While it is interesting to see present-day critics reflect on the sophistication Edgeworth acquired and to applaud her greater complexity, it is also interesting to witness a nostalgic biographer contemporary with Edgeworth who maps *Ormond* onto Edgeworth's psychological and emotional experiences. For example, Helen Zimmern remarks that with *Ormond* "Miss Edgeworth is at her ease and at her happiest" because "on Irish ground . . . she moves with most *abandon*" (171). In this last Irish tale, then, published in the year of her father's death, Edgeworth finds herself

trying to write herself into the nineteenth century as one who helped further the mission of all her countrymen for her fellow Irish residents, native and imperial alike.

In *Ormond* this *Bildungsroman* narrative presents a tempered account of a hero so that readers might still have “the hope of imitation” (*Ormond* 32). Working within the parameters of a coming-of-age narrative style, Edgeworth gives us our lesson here: be good, industrious, and a quick study, and success can be achieved. Edgeworth’s narrative, however, makes the possibility of this imitation that she hopes her fellow Anglo-Irish will aspire to, simultaneously possible and impossible. While *Ormond*’s personal growth and betterment qualify as something that can be imitated and modeled, *Ormond*’s particularity and specific circumstances are uniquely crafted for the purposes of this story-telling. So while the generic quality of *Ormond* reflects the common storyline of a plucky boy finding his way in the world through adventures and challenges, this text can also be seen as an act of writing that exposes the complexity of identity instead of establishing a false coherence of Anglo-Irish subjectivity.

Ormond finalizes Edgeworth’s Irish narratives perfectly because this last effort at a salutary Irish text exposes the concerns and works on solutions for the contradictions that remain constant through the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Of importance to note here, however, is the contrast between Edgeworth’s ambitions in the early nineteenth century and the stark reality that approximately two hundred years later, there is still no resolution of the conflict between England and Ireland. The many paths Edgeworth’s Irish narratives have taken show both her desire for order even while her narratives reinforce the ever-present anxieties for commoners and the elite alike. She chronicles, then, the many fluctuations felt by a colonial entity within the British

Empire while accepting and fighting against this assigned role. Just as *Castle Rackrent* chronicles the eventual demise of the ruling family, so, too, does *Ormond*. Just as *Ennui* confuses birth and rank but recuperates social order through love and a foundation of a strong and good family, so, too, does *Ormond*. And, just as *The Absentee* warns of the dangers of leaving one's home and property to the care of others and also abandoning one's duty and rightful place for a life of fancy that lacks substance, so, too, does *Ormond*.

Harry Ormond also represents the philosophical debate over the benefits of a cosmopolitan lifestyle and a desire to stay in Ireland, the home country. The repetition of this phrase, home country, within the narrative and from Harry Ormond specifically, reinforces the message: absentees are out, and identity is in. Harry's fierce loyalty helps him overcome his less-than-ideal start in the world. As Clair Connolly summarizes it, "*Ormond* is the last of Edgeworth's major Irish fictions and offers something of a distillation of earlier developments: it plots the journey of a protagonist who is born with nothing towards property and happiness in a world where blood lines are revealed to be arbitrary, and nurture thicker than nature" (xii). The narrative structure of the idyllic, provincial chronotope emphasizes the didactic aims of the coming of age story embedded within. The narrator promises to deliver "not only every improvement and advance, but every deviation or retrograde moment" that Ormond experiences in his development into a gentleman, a land owner, and a husband to the daughter of a fine, socially established and morally solid Anglo-Irish family (*Ormond* 32). This novel remains a much more character-centered and psychological novel than Edgeworth's previous Irish installments and with that we find "[t]he themes of *Ormond*

are not the dominant element in the work; rather, they are articulated uncomfortably, without resolution” (Cosgrove 82).

Our hero, then, must be malleable and fixed all at the same time: open to new ideas and adventures but steadfast in his desire for the improvement of himself and his country. This is made possible in part from his mixed nature and qualities. The narrative presents Ormond as distinct from but akin to each man of power and authority, and in the process, he remains the best of all possibilities. Harry Ormond “can thus be constructed as both rooted in Ireland and free from an essentialist notion of Irishness” and continues to serve the didactic and far-reaching aims of Edgeworth’s narrative (Hagemann 272). Ormond through his growth and development into a representative of Ireland never has “comfortable choices” but rather must

negotiate a multidimensional puzzle as to the appropriate courses of behavior advocated by the novel—a negotiation that mirrors the acts of adjustment and re-adjustment engaged in by those living in early nineteenth-century Ireland and looking to competing histories and utopias for justification. (Cosgrove 63).

So Ormond remains a hybridized character and representative of Edgeworth’s struggle with the multi-layered discourses of history and potential futures. Thus, through Ormond’s many heteroglossic speech acts and embodiments of recognizable social and political prototypes, his “dialogized ambiguity” shows the “deep” and “fundamental” double-voiced nature of this narrative and Edgeworth’s artistic style within this text.

In this search for utopia and a history upon which to base the future of Ireland, the narrative manufactures the deaths of two kings who also symbolize Ireland’s history. These two grotesque and outlandish characters set Ormond in relief. One, from Ormond’s point of view, remains as “king or no king, the most warm-hearted man on earth” and able to offer a “gracious, cordial, fatherly welcome” (34). King Corny, this

gracious man, remains, however, a gout-suffering drunkard whose jovial nature and honest care for his Black Islands and its inhabitants makes him admirable at large, but a bit of a clown upon close examination. King Corny is very much tied to and associated with his geographic particularity, the Black Islands, and this location represents the remote, isolation, and self-reliant nature of this old-time native member of the Catholic royalty.

The other outlandish character present to help form Ormond and determine his situation is Sir Ulick O'Shane. Sir Ulick favors and spoils his dear Harry Ormond and is even said to prefer Harry to his own son Marcus, that is, until the family estate and lineage concerns come into play, at which point Sir Ulick's loyalty remains fiercely tied to his son and personal gains. Sir Ulick moves through the world as a "practiced *schemer*" and thus slips into whatever shape, mold, care, or concern serves his grand purposes for pleasure and profit (25).

These two archetypal characters embody ridiculousness in one way or another, but recognizing their abuses of themselves and others, their slippery slope of moral turpitude, and their eventual, untimely, hideous deaths reinforces the tragicomic axis of this narrative and the difficulty Edgeworth has in dealing with the contradictory impulses surrounding tradition and change. Within *Ormond*, Edgeworth introduces this new phrasing "tragi-comic" to illustrate the mixtures and ambiguities of this not-yet coalesced society of Ireland that she continues to reflect upon. Through the mixtures of "profusion and carelessness," French, Irish, and English cosmopolitanites, low and high birth, and rank and moral authority in this narrative, we find the one character that can assemble himself through all of these warring factions and embody the contradictions for a

progressive future. This one character, then, becomes emblematic of this novel which “is her [Edgeworth’s] most sustained and artful literary collage, a composite portrait of Irish (meaning Irish-resident) men and women over the two centuries that began with the arrival of the first Elizabethan planters (Butler “Edgeworth’s Ireland” 286). Harry Ormond as an amalgam of a gothic past and the hope of a tempered future represents Edgeworth’s ideal for Ireland: this is what we need for a sustainable country and for the good people of Ireland.

For further definition through comparison, Harry Ormond also stands tall among his contemporaries. Sir Ulick’s son Marcus, King Corny’s neighbor’s twin sons Black and White Connal, and the good Annaly family heir Herbert Annaly all help to define Ormond. Even though they are much more socially elite, all four of these landed gentlemen pale in comparison to Ormond as he bests them on various fronts.

In contrast to White Connal, who is all show and no substance, Ormond proves that having the right props does not make an accomplished aristocrat. While White Connal has the horses, guns, and trappings of a country gentleman, he has no knowledge, skill, or understanding of how to use them or reap the benefits of them. Thus, White Connal meets his demise through his own lack of integrity. In contrast to the other twin, Black Connal, Ormond demonstrates the good trait of loyalty and fidelity to his home country. Black Connal has decided to forgo his rightful place and his family land in Ireland for the vapid life of cosmopolitan Paris. Abandoning duty for pleasure represents the worst offense for Edgeworth, who sees a commitment to place as the highest virtue and the greatest reward for the deserving.

The one contemporary companion who appears to be his friend, Marcus O'Shane, provides an immediate and long-term comparison for Ormond's characterization. Marcus is nothing but trouble and always getting himself into either deadly or merely unlawful predicaments. Of course this is not surprising because Marcus is the offspring of the scheming and morally corrupt Sir Ulick. Marcus consistently demonstrates abuses of his own power, mismanagement of money, rudeness, and a lassitude that indicates he lacks the drive and determination to manage his property or govern himself, much less anyone else.

While Herbert Annaly stands as the paragon of morality and inveterate goodness, he remains weak-bodied. As the heir of an industrious, well-balanced family with a strong, smart, and socially aware matriarch, Lady Annaly, Herbert has all the promise of a good leader. His promise is undermined, however, by his lack of strength. His health is precarious his whole life, and he dies at a very young age from the sudden bursting of a blood vessel. His body literally explodes and exposes his weakness according to Edgeworth's grand designs for Ireland's future: he lacks the heartiness of having come up from the land and having set his path through his own determination. The Annaly family represents those Protestant families common at the time that spent most of the year in England and perhaps just the summers in Ireland; for Ireland to have a prosperous future, this model must be remedied, according to Edgeworth's principles.

Perhaps what makes these foils most interesting is their interconnectedness to what does exist in Ormond, both in his best self and his flawed self. He shares the desire for material wealth and prosperity with Marcus and the Connal twins; he also shares his hot temper, his passions, and his getting into trouble with these three as well.

Harry Ormond's social ease and his ability to move freely in various classes he shares most noticeably with Black Connal in their Paris adventures. And, for the best of him, Ormond shares his desire for improvement, a happy homeland, and good stewardship with Herbert Annaly.

Harry Ormond can offer a bridge between the old and new order and completes that union with a romance and a love match with a socially elite, but kind and morally motivated, Anglo-Irish Annaly family. We therefore learn from this hero's advantageous mixture of his surroundings that it takes a little bit of everything to live strong and prosper. Edgeworth's narrative reinforces that the old order is either too rough, unrefined, and adventurous, which leads to an unlucky and early death, or too corrupt, dissipated, and scheming, which then leads to disgrace or an early death. Among the up-and-coming in the ruling class, and the future leaders of estates and households, Ormond still bests those who would appear better than him socially. The one example of fine morals, moderate living, and beneficial governance, Herbert Annaly, turns out to be born too weak to carry on the lineage of authority. From the field of his friends and rivals, Ormond shines as more kind-hearted and generous than Marcus O'Shane, heir to Sir Ulick's debt-ridden estate, more capable than White Connal, who is all show and no substance, more loyal than Black Connal, who has given up his country for the pleasures of Paris, and lastly more robust than Herbert Annaly.

The philosophy Edgeworth promotes in this novel is that personal and national improvement and success come from hard work and good moral guidance. While Ormond starts out living with the "neglect of all instruction or discipline," with a "deficient education," and having been "let to run wild at home" this unlikely hero's beginning

represents a singular existence (10). His father has left him for the life of an officer in India after Ormond's mother's death at his infancy, so he is taken in under the good graces of Sir Ulick though never treated as a son of the estate's aristocratic family. Because of Sir Ulick's fondness for Ormond, however, Ormond is able to move freely between the good people of the land and the genteel family within the big house. He is also, therefore, offered guidance by Lady Annaly, who is a guest of Sir Ulick's and meets Ormond in his late adolescence at a time when he needs good counsel and a strong moral compass. Lady Annaly embodies an undiluted Protestant-Enlightenment ideal of education, self improvement, and self reliance, and as such she leads the philosophical and didactic aims of Edgeworth. Lady Annaly advises Ormond that "the greatest part of our happiness or misery in life depends upon ourselves" and she sparks an interest in Ormond for his own refinement and betterment (31). With this advice and strict adherence to the ideal, Lady Annaly becomes a function of the narrative more than a true-to-life character and thus the Annaly family "can fulfill their functions vis-à-vis the protagonist—moral mentoring and the reinforcement of legality—without being stamped as 'Irish' or 'English'" (Hagemann 272). The influence the Annalys have, therefore, is not country-specific, but philosophically based upon the universal principles Edgeworth promotes most advantageously.

Because of this spark from lady Annaly and what he witnesses around him, including King Cory, Sir Ulick, and Marcus, Ormond realizes that he wishes to distinguish himself in the world and not just be a part of it and not just float from one man's property to another as an untethered soul; at this time he tests his merit and seeks to find his way to a satisfying future. Ormond is related to the outreach of Empire

from Ireland to India through his father's family. Ormond's father married a woman from India, a "mahogany girl," and her death and their son's death leaves Ormond a "very considerable property" (157). Because "his birth and fortune are both products of hybrid alliances" however, Ormond complicates a strict interpretation of this relationship as an imperialist transaction (Cosgrove 75). Ormond's "hereditary taint" is "more complex than that of being the beneficiary of unjust exploitation" (Cosgrove 75). Ormond therefore uses this monetary windfall to finance his desire "no longer merely to see the world, but to distinguish himself in it" (172). Being able now to buy property and support himself in an aristocratic society, Ormond takes off to the continent and joins King Corny's daughter and her husband in Paris. Gaining a tremendous sophistication of knowledge and experience while in France, Ormond can now embody the intersection of not only Empire as defined politically at the time, but also the broad interconnectivity of Europe and Asia. Ormond profits from his father's connection to otherness in India and integrates what he gains from these privileges and from the exposure to equally privileged acquaintances into his own betterment. Ormond, thus, represents the "opposite view" normal to Edgeworth's Irish tales, where now we see that "a man could change for the better" (Butler *Maria Edgeworth* 380). His growth, change, and experience of new adventures merely add to his appreciation for his roots, however, as "Ormond, in his secret soul, preferred the bay of Dublin to all he then saw on the banks of the Seine" (*Ormond* 242). By remaining appreciative but fundamentally unaltered by France and the influence of French society, Ormond proves his worth as an Irishman.

Ormond's experiences and social interactions in France will be the perfect stage for the exposure of the dislocated, yet carefully constructed, self. During his movement

out of the comfort zone of Ireland and into the fashionable and intellectual scenes of Paris in the midst of great excess, Ormond's identity shifts between an Irishman, an Englishman, and one adapted to a Parisian life. This reveals how he is accepted and cared for but always painfully something other and not quite right. Upon arriving in France, the Connals (Dora, King Corny's daughter and her husband Black Connal) accept and welcome Ormond into their home, but Black Connal has much to offer in the way of advice and improvements. In order to effect many superficial adjustments of Ormond's fashion and presentation, Black Connal makes rapid work of offering up his hair dresser, his tailor, his shoemaker, and his chapelier. Acknowledging that "what could you do better in Black Islands? Paris is the only place" for such fineries as he offers, still, Black Connal reinforces the provincial nature of a young man from the remote and isolated parts of Ireland where they both originated (239).

Ormond seems to want to be the author of his own adjustments, and we learn of Ormond's insecurities over being out of place and aware of his blended nature. As though from his own voice, though embedded in a straight narrative of the third person point of view, a subtle internality is revealed: "He must wear off his English or Irish awkwardness a little, before he should be presented to Mad. de Connal, or appear in French society" (239). The intimation in the narrative is that he speaks this to Black Connal, but the narrative moment is much more ambiguous. So instead there is just this subtle hint that Ormond is a bit self-conscious, that he and the narrator are still unsure whether or not Ormond is Irish or English, but certainly all are agreed that he is something other. Ormond's circle of acquaintances gives credence to this subtle hint as Ormond's appellation changes and shifts because he is so hard to pin down: "He went

afterwards, at least in Connal's society, by the name of '*Le bel Anglois*.' Half in a tone of raillery, yet with a look that showed she felt it to be just, Mad de Connal first adopted the appellation, and then changed the term to '*mon bel Irlandois*' (254).

Before she becomes Mad de Connal, King Corny's daughter spends time under the tutelage of her maiden aunt, "an aunt by her mother's side" and upon Dora's return to the Black Islands, her father's home, she brings this aunt, Miss O'Faley, or "*Mademoiselle*—as Miss O'Faley was called, in honour of her French parentage and education," for an extended visit to Corny Castle (73). Before their arrival, Ormond feels certain about what to expect—someone befitting the old, maiden aunt personage, but "[n]ever was man's astonishment more visible in his countenance than was that of Harry Ormond on the first sight of Dora's aunt. His surprise was so great as to preclude the sight of Dora herself" (73). What Ormond realizes is that there is "an extraordinary difference between our hero's preconceived notion and the real person whom he now beheld" (73).

In what is to be a common interconnection between France and Ireland reiterated in this novel, Miss O'Faley is identified as "half French and half Irish—born in France, she was the daughter of an officer of the Irish brigade and of a French lady of good family" (74). Perhaps more interesting than her lineage is her cultural heritage and the expression of this duality: "In her gestures, tones, and language, there was a striking mixture or rapid succession of French and Irish. . . . the moment she attempted to speak English, which she spoke with an inveterate brogue, her ideas, manner, air, voice, and gestures were Irish; she looked and moved a vulgar Irishwoman" (74). This leads us to wonder why she is eloquent in French and vulgar in English, and why her Irishwoman

ways impart vulgarity to her observers. What remains equally telling about this description is the “inveterate brogue” and the assurance that her Irishness never leaves her. Her connection with Ireland thus appears inevitable and at the ready. As soon as she steps into an English/Irish situation, Miss O’Faley’s presentation evokes recognition and judgment. We laugh at her exaggerated vulgarity and wince at the indication that it is uniquely Irish and arises out of her experiences with the English language.

Miss O’Faley’s reputation precedes her at Corny Castle. Before her arrival, King Corny tells Ormond it is better to work with Miss O’Faley than to try to fight her. King Corny becomes resolute that he will try to be as gracious as possible when dealing with Miss O’Faley and says in his most comical character speech, “I shall make it my practice to give her her swing and fling” while she visits (75). Miss O’Faley’s influence is such that King Corny finds himself overwhelmed by her improving designs and machinations for many alterations of architecture and aesthetics at the castle. With the remoteness of Corny Castle and the Black Islands, and with the many reiterations of this land as a place removed from modernization and decorative manipulation, Miss O’Faley’s presence at the castle provides the reader with an outsider’s vision of the remoteness and rudimentary quality of Corny Castle and the Black Islands. Outsiders would conclude that Ireland needs some attention, too. This also works to reveal how Corny’s “lifestyle and attitudes are old-fashioned and seem to belong to the early-to-mid seventeenth century, when Ireland and especially Munster was also the homeland of projectors, inventors, [and] plantation-makers [. . .]” (Butler “Edgeworth’s Ireland” 287). So perhaps some improving might be in order, but the headstrong Miss O’Faley sets a mission of impossible tasks. The tasks are to King Corny a bit of a joke, as he calls

after Miss O’Faley, “ ‘if it is possible it *shall* be done; and if it is impossible, it *must* be done” (76). Corny both announces the credo by which Miss O’Faley lives and challenges that credo with his comical and nonsensical *bon mot*.

The laughing and the pleasantries come to a halt, however, when King Corny finally reaches his height of frustration and feels overwhelmed in his own castle. Miss O’Faley’s efforts cross the line of cordiality and helpfulness and breach into an aggressiveness that is unwelcome in this castle: “[i]n the course of a week, she made so many innovations, that Corny, seeing the labour and ingenuity of his life in danger of being at once destroyed, made a sudden stand” (76). Corny reveals his disease with a wonderfully graphic, articulate, and clever illustration of the turmoil this upheaval causes him. He bluntly addresses Miss O’Faley and tells her that “[t]his is Corny Castle, mademoiselle,’ said he ‘and you are making it Castle Topsy-Turvy, which must not be” (76). The circus-like invocation and the impression of the chaos that comes out of the phrase “Topsy-Turvy” evokes both the hilarity and the painfulness of this experience for an aging, out of place aristocrat trying to hold on to his power and authority. When we learn that “[h]is majesty was both proud and ashamed of his palace” we see Corny’s sensitivity to his situation and his awareness of the reality of a comfortable but unimpressive home (76). Therefore, Corny, who is usually the clown himself, exposes the double-voiced nature of his existence: “his ready wit had excuses, reasons, or remedies, for all mademoiselle’s objections” (76). Commanding autonomy and demanding that his wishes be followed, Corny reestablishes the social dynamic and comfortable physical surroundings he desires. His attempts at allowing improvements

or changes, and the obvious ways he and his palace needed them, however, are part of the march forward to a newly imagined Ireland.

Maria Edgeworth's solution in *Ormond* tells us that it is in the best interest of all to accept the variations that exist and to embrace the mixed-up nature of the social climate. Acceptance and connectivity serve Edgeworth's greatest purpose, which while not always about direct equality of classes is about general access to education and molding good leaders for Ireland. Of utmost importance for Edgeworth, and reinforced by her devotion to her father's principles, is her desire for any citizen of Ireland to be productive and to contribute to the betterment of the world. Claire Connolly reads this as "a specifically Irish contribution to the rethinking and recombining of such central Enlightenment categories as education, property and the individual" (Connolly xxxii). And more than a singular narrative, this last Irish novel arcs back "to the complexity of the first and demonstrates with the passage of time Maria Edgeworth only deepened her understanding of her art" (Cosgrove 82).

Edgeworth's solution in *Ormond*, therefore, is not unlike the solutions she sought in all of her Irish narratives: good governance, good stewardship, good awareness, good fellowship between Irish and English and this in-between rank of Anglo-Irish, always in flux, constantly morphing out of good beginnings, bad beginnings, good endings, and bad endings. As Frances Botkin comments specifically on *Castle Rackrent* and more generally for all of Edgeworth's Irish novels, these Irish works "demonstrate an ongoing concern for the Irish poor as well as a censure of Anglo-Irish neglect, attesting to her belief that Irish and Anglo-Irish alike owe it to themselves and to each other to regulate their behavior" (97). There is, as Botkin remarks, evidence of

Edgeworth's "possible uneasiness with the Irish lower classes" within her narratives, and certainly there are instances which prove her anxiousness over anything that is "potentially dangerous to the Anglo-Irish hegemony" within Ireland (97). This is not the whole story, though, and this elides "[t]he quick alternation of laughter and tears that is a marked feature of her Irish tales" which tells us so much (Zimmern 176).

¹ Here, Marilyn Butler is summarizing some of the most important postcolonial Irish studies literary critics. The full quote includes these critics by name: "In this way Thomas Flanagan, W. J. McCormack, Tom Dunne and Iain Topliss, who between them have written most of the best recent Edgeworth criticism, have all at different times concluded, with different kinds of emphasis, that she positions herself behind the windows of the Big House." (Butler "Introduction" 33). Butler further emphasizes her interpretation against this view in her article "Edgeworth's Ireland: History, Popular Culture, and Secret Codes" published in 2001. Butler remains convinced that Edgeworth works and sees outside of the Big House: "Edgeworth has other objectives, including but not limited to nationalism, that prove her much more expressively committed than has hitherto appeared to the history, language, culture, and future of Irish people" (267). In fact, Butler clarifies this argument by reminding us that the layering of French, English, and Irish experiences and locales within her Irish fiction, makes Edgeworth a writer of "consciously cosmopolitan novels" (269). See Mary Jean Corbett, "Another Tale to Tell: Postcolonial Theory and the Case of *Castle Rackrent*" for a dense and detailed teasing out of Edgeworth's colonial situation and her role in the "postcolonial" writings of Ireland. Also relevant to this is Esther Wohlgemut's proposition that the Edgeworths (Maria and her father Richard) understand the complexity of the Anglo-Irish position as one that "is not static deadlock or incongruity, but rather an active and ongoing reconciliation of contradiction" ("Maria Edgeworth and the Question of National Identity" 655).

² See Daniel Hack's essay, ["Inter-Nationalism: *Castle Rackrent* and Anglo-Irish Union" *Novel* (Winter 1996): 145-164], takes a look at the complex structure of the narrative, author, and narrator dynamic: In *Castle Rackrent* "an Anglo-Irish estate-manager learns to mimic an Irish servant and then writes a tale in his voice by imagining herself to be his obedient amanuensis" (149). Hack sees this relationship as ultimately a controlling mechanism for Edgeworth and as an extension of her subjectivity and not that of an authentic Irish voice: "Thus, while Edgeworth does learn to speak in Thady's voice, this voice is not *other than*, but it is rather a *version of*, her own" (156).

See, also, Marilyn Butler, who argues that the opening pages of *Castle Rackrent* with Thady's voice "subvert the common expectations of their day" ("Introduction" 9). And that "[a]s an act of mimicry the voice of Thady works on a number of levels, an idiolect influenced not only by linguistic factors such as the rhythm of Gaelic, but by cringing and flattery', as Edgeworth calls it in *Ormond*, or the 'equivocating, exculpatory or supplicatory' language of the lifelong inferior" ("Introduction" 9). Realizing the complexity of Thady and his subjectivity, Butler argues for the interconnectedness of this narrator and his story: "The archaeological layering of Thady's idiom provides a cultural history of his people, the hybrid stock of late eighteenth-century Ireland. Whatever the topic, the language also says that native and settler, *colon* and *colonise*, have experienced centuries of coexistence" ("Introduction" 12). Marilyn Butler takes this up again in "Edgeworth's Ireland: History, Popular Culture, and Secret Codes" and emphasizes Thady's role as a messenger of political and social critique, more than just a comic relief or wholly colonized figure: "Despite the spoken idiom in which it is delivered, Thady's narrative has real claims to be taken seriously

as history, both for its detail based on fact and for its coolly detached commentary on seventeenth-century Longford and its landlordism” (274).

From Mary Jean Corbett, we again see the postcolonial reading of Thady and his position that she sees as ultimately devoid of power and authority, yet the locus of the “ironic bent” of the narrative: Maria Edgeworth's narrator, Thady Quirk, is rather less knowing than he realizes about the full implications of the tale he tells. But it is also, in Suvendrini Perera's words, “the first significant English novel to speak in the voice of the colonized,”⁽¹⁾ and the conjunction among these classificatory categories—regional novel, ironic comedy, and colonial tale—is no mere coincidence: its Irish narrator and its Irish setting are what give *Castle Rackrent* an ironic bent” (383).

Kit Kincade provides an analysis of Thady's voice as a narrative device employed by Edgeworth: “The most apparent use of E's obfuscatory technique is demonstrated in the narrator himself. If readers think that they understand Ireland because they understand the kind of person they believe Thady M'Quirk to be, then they are sorely mistaken. Thady is the epitome of that literary device, the unreliable narrator, who in this case turns out to be uncomfortably situated as well” (253).

Connected to this structural evaluation and the importance of the constructedness of this voice of the narrator, Joanne Cordon adds her interpretation that “Thady's voice and the narrative have a rhythm and syntax to it that conveys the special nature of it, but Edgeworth avoids the misspellings and physical markings to convey the ‘brogue’ of Thady. . . . This rendering of Thady's voice emphasizes the vitality rather than the peculiarity of his language” (145).

³ Mary Jean Corbett maps a strict postcolonial reading onto *Castle Rackrent* as a whole and thus concludes that these moments of laughter are not disruptions but an effort to secure authority and power from the colonizer to the colonized. She writes that “Thady Quirk and his masters are laughable only to the extent that we persist in seeing them as beneath or below us. And this ironic distance is not only a literary device, but also a political one, which works to construct and secure the superiority of the domestic English reader over the Irish subject” (387). While my reading of the laughter produced and the disruptive moments within the text contradicts this strict reading of the top-down authority model, Corbett's reading represents an important recognition of the reality that inequality, deliberate subjectification and oppression existed and were perpetuated throughout Ireland's entire history as an island that was conquered and contained. The laughter, my argument contends, however, is directed much more poignantly at the existing ruling class and Edgeworth's contemporaries.

⁴ The Jewish lady Rackrent receives much critical attention, too, as she represents a nexus of criticism associated with Edgeworth's representations of harmful religious and ethnic stereotypes. Mary Jean Corbett adds to this discussion in her analysis from a postcolonial context. Corbett reflects on the complex relationship of power and prejudice as she reads the judgments in Thady's voice as a part of the myriad layers of otherness in the narration: “Thady and ‘the Jewish’ thus have similarly doubled positions: each could function as a mirror for the other, but neither registers any likeness between their situations. The linguistically deficient native other sees no similarity between himself and “the Jewish,” whose subordination to his master is even more pronounced in some respects than his own; ‘the Jewish’ derives her sense of superiority to Thady from her class position and her place as his mistress, but her racial otherness, from English and Irish alike, makes her, in a way Thady's other masters and mistresses are not, as subject to his condescension as he is to hers. . . . Caught as they are in a hierarchy of structural gendered and racial inequalities, Thady and ‘the Jewish,’ like Edgeworth herself, understand the other's otherness as inferiority, failing to perceive their own subordination to English patriarchal rule while still accruing certain benefits from it.” (397)

For a more general and substantive discussion of Edgeworth and her treatment of Jews, see Judith W. Page's chapter “Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington* (1817): Jews, Storytelling, and the Challenge of Moral

Authority” in *Imperfect Sympathies: Jews and Judaism in British Romantic Literature and Culture* New York: Palgrave, 2004, 133-158.

CHAPTER 3
NARRATIVES NEGOTIATING DEMISE: SOMERVILLE AND ROSS

“Because admitting to an admiration for the writing of Somerville and Ross in some quarters in Ireland is like admitting to a secret vice, and because their reputation in England has gone adrift somewhere in the Irish Channel since the separation of Britain and Ireland, they have fallen into a deep-freeze between two cold shoulders.”

-- Gifford Lewis, *Edith Somerville* (1)

From the start of their collaborative efforts in the late 1880s, cousins Edith Somerville and Violet Martin (pseudonym Martin Ross) enjoyed their literary successes and their active social lives together. Through the narratives of *An Irish Cousin* (1889), *Some Experiences of an Irish R. M.* (1899), *The Real Charlotte* (1894), and *The Big House of Inver* (1925) Somerville and Ross revisit the Gothic, the adventure novel, the family saga, and the romance genres. These narratives contain a fluidity illustrative of Bakhtin's theories about the discourse of the novel, and these narratives work also to reveal the living nature of these authors as they are refracted through the languages, the characters, and the ripe mix of tragi-comic utterances throughout their narratives.

An Irish Cousin

An Irish Cousin (1889) was “[b]egun in idleness and without conviction” (Somerville *Irish Memories* 132). But what Somerville and Ross hoped would be their contribution to the popular trend of “Shilling Shockers” actually morphs into Somerville and Ross's first earnest literary effort (*Irish Memories* 132). Somerville writes that their new-found “literary impulse” came as a response to “some thrill of genuineness” they experienced during a visit to Somerville's “pathetic little old spinster” kinswoman in a “lonely house” at “the edge of the sea” (*Irish Memories* 132). More precisely, Somerville tells us that it is the lasting image of the house with a “darkened façade” and a “white

face” in the window which reminded the cousins of “certain subjects not to be approached,” the not-so-secret family secrets that were a part of the “history of that old house” (133). This scintillating experience brought the mystery and scandal of “living ghosts” into sharp focus for Somerville and Ross and therefore offered them the “shock” that was needed to bring *An Irish Cousin* “into life” (134). Looking back on the production of their first jointly-authored publication, Somerville reifies their first collaborative effort as a foundational moment: “Little as we may have achieved it, an ideal of Art rose then for us, far and faint as the half-moon, and often, like her, hidden in clouds, yet never quite lost or forgotten” (134). Somerville’s exaggerated tone of false modesty in this language of the memoir still speaks the truth of Somerville and Ross’s literary careers. Their earnest approach to writing complex novels and their dedication to an Ireland they felt driven to portray and honor pervades even their quickly produced, money-making sporting stories, travelogues, and recycled collections of stories. The thaw needed to melt away their somewhat still frozen reputation mentioned in the epigraph to this chapter comes through this recognition of their heteroglossic vision for their Irish world.

An Irish Cousin owes much to its Anglo-Irish literary predecessors. Most notably, the narrative follows the story of J. S. Le Fanu’s Gothic novel *Uncle Silas*, but Somerville and Ross eliminate the kind of overt danger seen in Le Fanu’s macabre masterpiece. This is most obvious in the development of the uncles in both stories: while Le Fanu’s Uncle Silas has a murderous past and then also attempts to murder his ward and niece, Maud, in order to secure her fortune, Uncle Dominick in *An Irish Cousin* appears to be once-removed from the murder of his brother as his peasant mistress is

the one directly responsible for brother Owen's death. Dominick's involvement seems to be limited to helping the murderess dispose of the body and fix documents, which lead to his falsely inheriting the family estate. The blood on Dominick's hands is damning, but having already accomplished what he needed, he holds no further malice for his now-orphaned niece who moves into the family home because none of the family's wealth is tied to her as it is for Maud in *Uncle Silas*. While paralleling many aspects of *Uncle Silas* through characters and circumstances--the orphaned young woman, plucky heir with little-to-no gentility or education about him, dilapidated house, and degenerate uncle as the head of the failing family—*An Irish Cousin* shows the negotiations of power and authority that fascinate Somerville and Ross. This narrative borrows from the conventions of the Gothic to speak the language of fright which helps to intensify the currents of tradition and change underscoring this narrative and the artistic style of Somerville and Ross. This novel, then, becomes noticeably dialogized through what Bakhtin calls the “novelistic layers of literary language” that are “permeated with laughter, irony, humor, [and] elements of self-parody” (6). The tonal layers in *An Irish Cousin* are a result of the Gothic styling inside the typical drama of the Big House narrative of generations, and therefore, the narrative shows frequent humorous eruptions out of the general gloominess.

An Irish Cousin borrows from the past as it also introduces the contemporary; full of common tropes of nineteenth century fiction such as the orphaned girl, the stifled and inappropriate romances, the madwoman in the attic, and the circulation of secrets and mystery through strangers and sudden insights, *An Irish Cousin* shows the beginnings of a style particular to Somerville and Ross. According to Bakhtin, “the novel as a whole

is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice,” and with *An Irish Cousin* we see Somerville and Ross beginning to formulate their world view “into a structured stylistic system that expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of his [her] epoch” (261, 300). As the central figures of *An Irish Cousin*, Theo and her cousin Willy, “clatter down the road helter-skelter” on their horses during Theo’s first hunt, we see the defining quality of this narrative and much of what Somerville and Ross are willing to portray in their exposé of the countryside and its inhabitants at the close of the nineteenth century (*An Irish Cousin* 72). Somerville and Ross’s heteroglossic style in the midst of the discourse of their epoch incorporates the joviality of an outdoor life, adventurous heroines, increasingly dilapidated Big Houses and Big House families, and a wide scope of characterization; *An Irish Cousin* contains it all.

As the narrator, Theodora Sarsfield presents her journey from her maternal family home in Canada to her paternal family estate in the remote countryside of County Cork through fresh eyes. She sees her homeland as a foreigner might, even though she is tied to it through blood. Theo’s position represents the ambiguity of one who carries the old-world past with her, yet comes from the new world and must find her way on her own. On the long and cumbersome journey to her family estate, Theo realizes the importance of this new location and its old ways as she narrates the contradictory nature of her position: “I began to doubt that such a person as Theo Sarsfield had ever really existed . . . my past life had slid away from me, and the future I had not yet grasped” (*An Irish Cousin* 14). What Theo does find in her present is an unnerving and disorienting entrance into the suffocating existence for Anglo-Irish families in the Irish

countryside. The duration of Theo's visit to Ireland and her uncle's—her family's—home is indeterminate, and it remains entirely unclear throughout the narrative whether or not Theo truly does have a grasp on her destiny. It seems she journeys to the past, to her father's place of origin, to find a future. But at Durrus, there are few options that have any future associated with them and therefore this place figures mainly as a world of gloom associated with a lack of potential. Somerville and Ross use the typical Gothic chronotope with claustrophobia and cyclical time indicators to create the never-ending loop which is part of what seems to preclude escape or progress for Theo and the Sarsfields. This novelistic form, then, connects the reader to what Somerville and Ross see and experience around them toward the end of the nineteenth century as families vacate their ancestral Big Houses and leave them to renters. This was the case for Ross House, Martin's family home, from the time her father died in 1872 until the time her oldest brother and mother decided to open Ross back up in 1888 to reclaim what the estate agent was managing into ruin. It connects to the herculean efforts the Anglo-Irish put forth to carry on through the crop failures of 1879-1880, and the financial and power shifts as a result of the Land League time of the 1880s. This also speaks to a familiar experience for the Somervilles with the dissipation of the sons of families into emigration or into service for Great Britain and duties abroad as finances necessitated.

The Sarsfield family estate of Durrus is under duress. Theo relates that three times in two days "since my arrival at Durrus, my self-possession had been disturbed by a trivial event which I should formerly have laughed off" (50). Viewing this statement through Bakhtin's theoretical lens, "a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies" is seen within Theo's narration (272). The battle over

expectations and reality is reflected in the uncanniness of Theo's experience; the unfamiliar in her family's home, the place which she understands should produce a natural sense of belonging, unnerves her and reflects the historical reality of disturbances and changes happening in the familiar landscape of Somerville and Ross's country. Theo's disturbances cover three distinct aspects of Durrus: the incongruous state of grandeur mixed with dilapidation, the spectacle of characters surrounding the estate, and the manners and situations of her relatives. While darkness, madness, fearfulness, and awe are elements typically associated with the haunted house in the Gothic genre, the narrative of *An Irish Cousin*, with its "[a]ctual social life and historical becoming" embedded within this Gothic style, reveals what Bakhtin claims is a "multitude of concrete worlds" within the seemingly "unitary national language" of the Irish Big House narrative (288).

Theo's first impression of Durrus, her family's estate, and her new living arrangement brings out the sharply critical eye of the "quasi-direct discourse" of Somerville and Ross so that Theo's internal speech appears "to merge, in an organic and structured way, with a context belonging to the author" (Bakhtin 319). Durrus appears to Theo as "a long, low house, looking wan and ghostly in the moonlight" which marks the impression of decline from the start (*An Irish Cousin* 16). The "solid stone buildings with rickety doors and broken windows" comprise a Big House that remains sturdy but shows a terrible lack of basic upkeep and no attention to the finery one might expect in a country house of the gentry (47). The combination of the appreciative term "solid" with the abhorrence of the "rickety" and the "broken" reveals the voice of authors with intimate knowledge and dedication to the Big Houses that surround and house

them. And, it also brings to life this symbol of hereditary pride gone sour; this is much too well-informed to be the voice of the fresh-faced orphan from Canada. In this house, we look out of these broken windows and see the “untidy old flower-garden” and we witness, through Theo’s internal dilemma over feeling the contradiction of deflated expectations over what actually surrounds her, the socio-ideological boundaries of this novel. The potential for untidiness surrounding the Big Houses of Somerville and Ross’s environment appears to be disturbing to these authors and yet is constantly exposed as an inevitable part of the social and political changes underfoot.

When Theo discovers the housekeeper has used her hairbrush to keep open her bedroom window, Theo sees the reality of her family’s estate and understands that all residents of the house are making do, curbing the decline which seems to have its own volition. Theo, through her narrator’s role as critic of the state of things, reveals that there is “something in this misplaced ingenuity which was eminently characteristic of the slipshod manner of life at Durrus” and thus reveals the tensions held in place through all of these contradictory manifestations, like a hairbrush holding up a window.

Considering Bakhtin’s theory helps readers penetrate the surface of the text, revealing meaning in Theo’s statement, which is “infected by mutually contradictory intentions and stratifications” (316). The “ingenuity” of the housekeeper’s action seems to reveal what she might have said about her decision to put the hairbrush in the window, but the “misplaced” and “slipshod” evaluation of this action more clearly reveals the discourse of propriety and moral authority of the genteel class to which the authors and narrator belong. This narrative combination of “prosperity and dilapidation” as judgments from

two distinct positionalities reveals what Bakhtin calls the double-voiced nature of this discourse (*An Irish Cousin* 47, Bakhtin 324).

During Theo's introductory walk about the property guided by cousin Willy, the family's fox terriers (house dogs) are caught eating out of the trough, "in a clandestine enjoyment of a meal with the pig," but they put on a show to convince their owner otherwise, or "to dissemble their guilty confusion" (47). The brief moment of narration by the animals is a technique repeated in Somerville and Ross's stories and demonstrates the heteroglossic impulses in their style. This moment reinforces the quick abandonment of the oppressive gloom of the household that Theo is discovering and instead allows a moment of comic relief in through a shift in character speech. The richness of this narrative moment comes out of the juxtaposition of the quick and easy giggles over silly dogs with the poignant wincing back from this implied connection between the Big House and a pig's trough, and therefore it seems to add to the overall impression of impropriety at Durrus.

These sudden transferences back and forth from silly to serious reinforce the importance of Theo's initial utterance upon arriving at Durrus and her first acquaintance with the pain of disappointed expectations and the taint of a sadly unfulfilling hereditary homecoming: "For weeks this arrival at my father's old home had been constantly in my mind, staged and acted by myself with a vast outlay of enthusiasm and hope; now that it was over the enthusiasm had gone as dead as flat champagne, the hope was drowned in disillusionment, even in foreboding" (19). Within this narrator's voice is the menace of the Gothic style and a subtle incorporation of what Bakhtin terms the "extra-artistic" language of the everyday, in this case, the confession (320). Theo's confession reveals

more than she should know, or could know, and thus reflects the “refracted” intentions of the authors and the heteroglossia of the narrative (324). Theo’s evaluation sheds light on her family’s mysterious past, the particular ambiguities of an Anglo-Irish cultural experience, and also provides a projection of the social changes occurring within the authors’ culture. The family mystery and foreboding Theo announces center on the drowning of both Theo’s father and, at the end of the story, Uncle Dominick as well. As the secrets of the plot unfold, we learn Theo’s Uncle Dominick sank her murdered father in Poul-na-coppal bay when Theo was just an infant, and later at the climax of the narrative, he drowns himself once his guilt overcomes his sanity. The Durrus residents and the neighbors surrounding Durrus all fall under the “flat champagne” metaphor invoked in this initial impression since there is almost no vitality or bubbly life left to enjoy or experience in Durrus house or in the company of the one family who still occasions their country house in the summer, the O’Neills. And the last part of this truth-telling evaluation that Theo delivers so early in the narrative is—hope as we may—we cannot stage-act our lives or overcome the disillusionments of reality. The social and political climate of the late 1880s in Ireland has shifted irreversibly at this point, and even for a culture that has been in decline since 1800, the intensification of political change and the mutability of social positions through the rise of the middle class, the transference of lands from aristocratic ownership to the tenantry, and the increase of political power coming out of the native population occurring at the close of the nineteenth century rock the foundations of the Anglo-Irish landed elite. Somerville and Ross are testifying to the truth that, act as they may, there is little-to-no gentility left in the genteel class.

The disturbance Theo feels at her dashed hopes for her family home is compounded by the uneasiness born out of her brush with the “ghosts” of the estate and the difficulty she has reconciling what is with what should be. The ghost story keeps the thread of the Gothic narrative active as it emphasizes the importance of family secrets in the degeneration of the Sarsfields and by implication the Anglo-Irish in Big Houses who still have not learned the right way to behave in order to govern themselves and others. As part of his filling in for the role of the guardian, which Uncle Dominick should rightly take but abdicates, Willy decides to warn Theo of the peculiarities of the house that all the residents seem quite accustomed to. Willy tells Theo about Moll Hourihane who “is a bit queer in her head,” and he indicates that “she wanders about these bright nights, and she gets into the house sometimes” (29). Willy’s character speech here follows the standard delivery in the ghost-story or folktale style of the Gothic, but Willy is totally out of place in a Gothic narrative as a plucky, sporting, and fun-loving semi-heroic romance man. While the information Willy tells is not horrifying information, really, Theo still feels uneasy about this mystery. Theo’s reaction is disproportionate to Willy’s disclosure that a woman, whom the family and servants know, has some oddities of behavior about her, lives in close proximity to the house, and occasionally shows up in and around the house. This too yields to Bakhtin’s insights because it is at the level of language that the frightfulness appears: Willy carries with him the characteristics of a protector, perhaps even a chivalric romance hero, so his appearance in the Gothic frame is used “to show the object of representation in a new light (to reveal new sides or dimensions in it)” (312). Instead of her being phenomenal or in the realm of the mystic unknown, Mad Moll is made an everyday

object in a world that houses multiplicity and layers of social strata. Theo's self-conscious reaction, "I probably looked as alarmed as I felt, for he laughed protectingly," reaffirms Willy's movement from one character zone to another (29). Willy's laughter at Theo's reaction, designed to soothe her and reassert his authority over the house and their safety, highlights the disjunction between what he has just matter-of-factly disclosed and normal expectations: mad women should not be roaming about the grounds or penetrating the Big House walls. This situation again speaks to the lack of containment, the loose boundaries, and the contradictory impulses of acceptance and disgust being played out in this narrative fraught with the tension that comes from feeling the pulls of tradition and change.

Theo's promised encounter with this woman, who has what Willy describes as "a sort of dumb madness," comes during Theo's second night at Durrus (29). Theo is thankful, after she regains her senses, that Mad Moll "introduced herself to me from without, instead of first appearing to me within the walls of Durrus" (45). Mad Moll comes to be known by Theo in the "dim light" outside her bedroom window. Theo sees Moll as a dancing wild woman whose "jaunty liftings and bendings of her body" are contrasted sharply with "[h]er absolute stillness" at other times. The stillness is what becomes for Theo "more dreadful than the strange movements she had previously gone through" (44). Theo surmises that she is witnessing a moment of "supplication" in this sudden stillness made shocking by the moon which has the effect of "hardening and fixing in a moment the limits of light and darkness, and as if with a sudden movement, it flung the shadow of the praying woman on the ground before her" (44). This woman's shadow, her glistening eyes, her supplication, and her fixated stare on the window next

door to Theo's halt as quickly as they started with Mad Moll's final gesture: "opening her arms wide, she let them fall to her side with an elaborate curtsy and sidled back into the impenetrable shadow of the trees" (44-45). The court-jester style and the grotesquely comic nature of this wild woman dancing and praying in the shadows of the night all combine to create great "fright" for Theo. After relaying her fright to Willy, he demonstrates the fluidity of established practices at Durrus; his "amusement overcame his sympathy, and he laughed loud and long" (46). Willy's laugh punctuates Theo's fright and confusion, and as investigators of this text, we are "confronted with several heterogeneous artistic unities" of the novel (Bakhtin 262). Somerville and Ross's style is to blend this Gothic episode with the comic play of language as they remain focused on trying to write an escape for Theo and a continuation of the narrative of the Big House, ghosts and all.

Mad Moll bears the weight of another's misdeeds along with her own, as she clearly reflects all the ills of men with power who mismanage themselves and wield their power to disastrous ends. Moll's history with the Sarsfield family mirrors the scintillation of the authors' initial encounter with the "pale white face" in the window which sparked Moll's artistic rendering in *An Irish Cousin* (Somerville *Irish Memories* 132). In Dominick and Owen's boyhood, Moll was the servant of the house who also made claims that she was a daughter of a rogue uncle. This notion seems to have been entertained by the brothers' father and Dominick but eschewed by Owen. The narrative also implies that Moll was Dominick's mistress before he settled down with his proper wife. As the mystery surrounding Theo's father's death unravels, Theo discovers that Moll must have been the one responsible for the actual murder because Dominick, in his final

hallucination, tells Theo, whom he mistakes for the ghost of Owen, ““You were dead when she brought me into the room”” (280). What were Moll’s and Dominick’s motives? As the boys’ father has just died a few days before this murder of Owen, the inheritance was at stake. Owen was the firstborn and naturally stood to gain the estate upon their father’s death. But perhaps even more importantly what was at stake was the way of life Moll had grown accustomed to and must have desired to continue with Dominick as the head of the family rather than Owen, who disapproved of her general relational claims and her lack of cleanliness about the house. Even though Moll had the favor of Dominick and the boys’ father, after Owen’s death, the situation changes radically for Moll. Dominick clears her out of the house anyway and she is relegated to the role of the wife of the lodgehouse keeper. Moll is cleared out, that is, except as the source for Dominick’s drink.

The sordidness of Moll is not solely her responsibility but seems to be shared by the shameful decisions and comportment of the authority structure around her. Mad Moll and the mystery surrounding her represents a direct link to the scintillating vision Somerville and Ross witnessed during their visit to their kinswoman’s, which Somerville claimed as the spark that lit their novel-writing path. Moll resides, therefore, in this character zone which ties Somerville and Ross’s autobiographical inspiration to the familiar story of the overtly sexualized and dangerous servant woman who has an ambiguous relationship to the Big House family. As such, Moll is at once representative of mysterious and Gothic danger, the madwoman in the attic, and the hysterical mistress stereotypes of women common to a patriarchal system in flux. Though not totally victimized, as she appears to have had volition and some independent actions,

Moll remains nonetheless a victim of a social and cultural system intent on maintaining the status quo (male-dominated family and governing systems that enact the containment of any figure who threatens an existing authority). And while Somerville and Ross eventually write several strong and independent female characters, this early work, *An Irish Cousin*, posits this potentially subversive mistress and makes her the living ghost contained by her Gothic predecessors (*Jane Eyre* and *The Woman in White*, especially). Just like *Jane Eyre* and *The Woman in White*, however, this punishing patriarchal system is shown to be deeply flawed even as it is maintained.

The fluctuations in the social scheme of this novel and the “dialogic reverberations” are completely polarized by the reigning Sir and his heir, Sir Dominick and his son Willy (Bakhtin 284). Theo’s relatives have such contrasting manners and styles that they disrupt her self-possession during those crucial first three days at Durrus. Again, instead of being able to laugh at her frightful fancies, Theo’s discomfort shows the disconnect between expectations and reality, which resonates with judgment as it also reveals the “quasi-direct discourse” of the authors who wish to draw attention to the misdeeds and mismanagement of the institutions they hold dear. As Theo feels “at a loss to understand” her Uncle Dominick who surprises her and unnerves her, we see first the menacing figure of the Gothic uncle and secondarily the actual historical and social menace of those who abandon their duties (58). Upon first meeting Dominick, Theo notes that she is “struck by the absence of Irish accent in his voice, which was of a mellifluous not to say alarming propriety” (17). This narration shows the authors’ attempt to bridge the outsider point of view and their insider knowledge of social rank and stylized behavior. This last descriptor of the “alarming propriety” also

jumps out as an utterance relaying an erroneous reading of Uncle Dominick's propriety since his history reveals his impropriety and his base actions of the most grievous kind. While Uncle Dominick is well-educated and enjoyed "his own sporting days when he was a young man at Oxford," this undercurrent of refinement now barely shows through in his current state of "faded gallantry" (61, 50). Uncle Dominick's persistent demeanor showing "somber melancholy" and the grotesque smile that occasionally appears to "lift his mustache and show all his teeth" remain the most dominating characteristics of Uncle Dominick (38, 39). Uncle Dominick, with these overlays of Gothic styling, becomes emblematic of the foreboding family saga so relevant to Somerville and Ross's persistent critique of their class in this novel and throughout their literary careers.

While Uncle Dominick's occasional creepiness and air of menace is unfamiliar to Theo and slightly unnerving, this "governor," as Willy calls him, remains an icon of tradition. At a rare dance held at the O'Neills to celebrate Theo as the newest member of the neighborhood, Uncle Dominick defends the old order oligarchy with vigor and in a tone of disbelief that there could be any other way: "I cannot believe that any sane person can honestly hold such absurd theories. What! Do you mean to tell me that one of my tenants, a creature whose forefathers have lived for centuries in ignorance and degradation, is my equal?" (97). Miss O'Neill, however, is able to respond progressively, "His degradation is merely the result of injustice" which simply throws Dominick into a fit of absolutism as ridiculous as he is at this moment. He delivers his "strong" opinion on the subject that "[i]t is absurd to suppose that the natural arrangement of things can be tampered with" (97). Dominick's hypocritical statement here damns him and exacerbates the treachery of his own actions that created an

unnatural order of things, for example, the murder of his brother and his close affiliations with the servant who might be his cousin. Uncle Dominick's sins haunt this family as his own son has a serious relationship with the lodgekeeper's daughter, who is Mad Moll's daughter, and Sir Dominick's inflexibility in this circumstance forces Willy and Anstey to emigrate to Australia instead of maintaining their Irish home.

The heteroglossia of this novel reveals itself in this overtly political and philosophical conversation, which reflects an interesting combination of the intense drama surrounding the family saga (sins of the father passed down to the son) and the Gothic claustrophobia (Moll and her daughter both being linked sexually to Sarsfield men). Nothing could be more Bakhtinian than this narrative moment. All of this narrative blending comes out of Somerville and Ross's crafting of prose art with a deliberate feeling for the historical and social concreteness of living discourse, as well as its relativity, a feeling for its participation in historical becoming and in social struggle; it deals with discourse that is still warm from that struggle and hostility, as yet unresolved and still fraught with hostile intentions and accents. The prose art of Somerville and Ross puts on display the discourse in this state and subjects it to the dynamic-unity of its own style (Bakhtin 331).

It is perhaps tempting to look for the authors' worldview in the voice of Sir Dominick, but his degeneration into a hallucinating madman eclipses the sympathy we might expect for the paragon of the old order. Willy, on the other hand, provides the contrast to Sir Dominick and his melancholy and contains many of the characteristics Somerville and Ross insert into their very best heroes. With his "fatuous" smiles, easy manners, and democratic fluidity through all of the countryside and with the

townspeople, Willy appears likable, affable, and while not particularly a gentleman, he is certainly a good man. Willy remains resourceful, a good sportsman, and close to being a gentleman except for his lack of educated refinement in genteel ways. Willy is reminiscent of Maria Edgeworth's depiction, found in her last Irish tale, of Ormond, the good boy who comes up from the land and through a bit of polishing becomes a strong vision for the future of Ireland. Overall there is a genuine goodness about Willy, including what he considers his final act of sacrifice to avoid the dishonor on his family that would come of Mad Moll revealing the secrets of the family murder. Though Willy once adored Anstey, Moll's daughter and his springtime sweetheart, he now regrets his attachment to her, but marries her anyway in order to maintain peace at Durrus. Anstey's father seems to carry the threat of exposure and thus is able to secure Willy's commitment to the daughter with whom Willy had flirted for a year or more.

Willy is much more grounded than a normal member of the gentry. In one episode, he is thrown into the mud by his new horse, Alaska, during the fox hunt and comes up "inky and bedraggled" (83). Willy's disheveled appearance after his unexpected fall leaves Theo "secretly unspeakably tickled" because of the "absurdity" and the "rakish effect" on his visage from this rough and tumble outing. Theo swiftly shifts from being "secretly" amused, to collapsing into laughing "till the tears poured down my cheeks" (83). While falling down and becoming muddy could happen to anyone on hunt, the laughing to tears foreshadows the many tears both Willy and Theo will shed over the ruffled and muddy interior of their family lives. The discourse of adventure and romance peeks out in these fun-filled moments of romping and riding,

but the Gothic fatalism that comes out of the novel's stylistic structure continues to reign in these pleasurable moments.

An Irish Cousin demonstrates the way the moorings are coming loose in the Anglo-Irish culture and society of the late nineteenth century, within particular families, inside and outside of the Big House, and through the generational divides and their degeneration. This is a culture of mix-and-match familial ties and an ever-tightening spiral of internality, as is represented by the Gothic quality of the narrative. It seems that Theo and Willy have acquired a degree of stability through an escape from the confines of Durrus and the Sarsfield family sins, but the emigration of an heir destabilizes the future of this class. Further destabilizing are the many questions that this narrative leaves unanswered. Somerville and Ross seem unsure how to negotiate the "difficulties of so ambiguous relationship as that of first cousins," and how to envision the perpetuation of a culture that relies on an outmoded system of personal and national governance in a future of unknown permutations and alliances (*An Irish Cousin* 86). Within this narrative, in the time and space of just one generation, family becomes too helter-skelter to actually hold on to tradition as the Sarsfields awkwardly jerk forward through contemporary social changes. In this multiform narrative, *An Irish Cousin* represents what Bakhtin describes as "a dialogue that is forever dying, living, being born: co-existence and becoming are here fused into an indissoluble concrete unity that is contradictory, multi-speached and heterogeneous" (365).

Some Experiences of an Irish R. M.

In her 1970 biographical study of Somerville and Ross, Violet Powell pinpoints the value of *Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.* in Somerville and Ross's oeuvre while simultaneously recognizing the pathos of their literary reputation: "For some years an

Everyman edition of *Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.* was the only survivor in print of all the descendents of *An Irish Cousin*, a frail bridge along which new readers would have to find their way” (209). Even though the literary world is beginning to recognize Somerville and Ross for their intense studies of characterization and family dynamics in *An Irish Cousin*, or in their masterpiece *The Real Charlotte*, by all accounts it seems that their contemporaries knew them primarily as the authors of the riotous R. M. stories. And as Powell describes it, one can have no doubt why these stories gained such popularity: “incapacitating attacks of laughter are common throughout the R. M. Stories” (97). In fact, these stories, were started at the request of *Badminton Magazine* as “a series of hunting stories,” first appearing serially in the magazine and then appearing collectively as a production of thirty-four inter-related stories that were published throughout Somerville and Ross’s career as *Some Experiences of an Irish R. M.* (1899), *Further Experiences of an Irish R. M.* (1908), and *In Mr. Knox’s Country* (1915) (Powell 91). Powell emphasizes the immediate impact these stories had as she argues that “[i]t was when praise came from readers and critics all over the world for *Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.* that the authors’ position became unassailable” (115). In fact, their notoriety went all the way to the top; these stories even “reached the throne, for Queen Victoria accepted a copy on her last visit to Ireland” (Powell 115).

If the R. M. stories are the bridge to Somerville and Ross, however, it is a doubtful bridge and a rickety one in our modern world because of concern over the comic tone and the exaggerated portrayals that dot these narratives. In her 2005 study of Somerville and Ross’s works, Gifford Lewis claims that “[f]rozen distaste for this book [*Some Experiences of an Irish RM*] . . . has blighted appreciation of their more serious

work” and that because of this distaste, these stories and their authors “still inspire some of the violent feelings that Kipling arouses” (*Edith Somerville* 1). Furthermore, Lewis claims that one’s reaction to Somerville and Ross and the RM stories has been used as “an unfailing index” of a person’s nationalism within modern Ireland (1). A careful examination of these texts, however, as Lewis argues they deserve, yields a vision of stories with a light tone that also grapple with major social issues and the most pressing changes facing their nation and their contemporary world (2). In *An Irish Cousin* we saw how the primary narrative structure of the Gothic frame is diversified by the comic, adventure, and romance impulses that pop up, and in this narrative, *Some Experiences of an Irish R. M.*, we see how a seemingly dominant form of the adventure narrative scheme showcases the strengths of Somerville and Ross but still contains within that artistic unity the heteroglossic impulses of the culture in flux. So as we follow Major Yeates, the new Resident Magistrate, through his experiences all about the towns and countryside of the West of Ireland, we witness an array of inter-personal, political, sexual, public, and private relationships and experiences that represent the dialogized style of Somerville and Ross informed as it is by their era. Even though according to stylistic qualities outlined by Bakhtin, adventure novels often have a chronotope that perpetuates an infinite relay of time and event with no specificity so that the adventure is always going on, is dominated by chance, and has no connection to actual historical events, the R. M. stories maintain their connectedness to the social and historical particularities of County Cork, Ireland, and the Irish and Anglo-Irish experiences at the end of the nineteenth century (Bakhtin 91-92; 100-101).

The general impression of frivolity and adventure-novel style derives from the many entanglements of Major Yeates with his landlord Flurry Knox and the practical jokes, fox hunts, and moments where plans and practicalities all go awry. The collection of inter-related short stories in *Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.* marries the short story compactness with the breadth of a full-length novel so that the characters do experience some growth and development. Instead of being simply “rollicking” tales of an outrageous, helter-skelter nature, these stories, more accurately, present serious fun. Comedy combined with a penetrating commentary, fully stylized in the RM stories, represents the heteroglossic strategy Somerville and Ross will perfect throughout their careers.

To open the stories, Major Yeates narrates his arrival as a newcomer to an area representative of his roots; he is an Anglo-Irishman and his grandfather was well-known by the locals of an older generation, but he has been gone from Ireland long enough to be unfamiliar and to feel unfamiliar upon his return. Just like Theo in *An Irish Cousin* and Francie in *The Real Charlotte*, this subjectivity of the fresh eyes becomes an effective medium for Somerville and Ross to refract their authorial intentions. Encapsulating Major Yeates’s subjectivity and the dynamics of the contradictions between familiar and unfamiliar, the first jumbled sentence of the text resonates with the “and yet” syntax that demonstrates Bakhtin’s idea of the double-voiced position of the narrator. Major Yeates reveals his situation: “A Resident Magistracy in Ireland is not an easy thing to come by nowadays; neither is it a very attractive job; yet on the evening when I first propounded the idea to the young lady who had recently consented to become Mrs. Sinclair Yeates, it seemed glittering with possibilities” (1). This first

sentence offers so much to unpack and examine, even at the level of grammar; this is precisely the type of utterance that demonstrates Bakhtin's principles of heteroglossic discourse. With two semicolons and multiple contradictions embedded within this relay of information, we are drawn deep into this single utterance to find the "internally dialogized hybrid" narrative impulses (Bakhtin 361). If, as the first negation "neither" tells us, the Resident Magistracy is not such a great job to have, one wonders why it might be so hard to "come by," and why Yeates seeks this job so fervently. The build-up of the "glittering with possibilities" language becomes a narrative tactic aimed at emphasizing Yeates's understanding of his role as a provider for his potential family, and it lays the groundwork for the lawlessness the lawman finds himself a part of, the ambiguity of social situations, and the general expressions of incongruity which delight but shame the narrator's (and reader's) refined sensibilities. This opening sentence locates Yeates and the narrative in their particularities and shows the beginnings of the "coupling of incomprehension with comprehension, of stupidity, simplicity and naiveté with intellect" that Bakhtin sees as a "highly typical phenomenon in novelistic prose" (403).

"The Holy Island" story demonstrates the blurring of the adventure narrative with the extra-artistic languages of profession, religion, and everyday speech in order to show the negotiations necessary to move through everyday life. This story exposes the limits of the law through unchecked lawlessness and also presents the uncomfortable reality of minority oppression, reflecting this historical time and place. Flurry Knox, as representative of the role of the adventurer and counterpoint to the confined Major Yeates, is as Bakhtin describes "admirably suited to exposing and portraying all layers

and levels of private life” (126). Flurry holds the position of Magistrate, comes from a long line of the local Anglo-Irish Knox family with deep roots and many branches, and thus embodies a little bit of something from all parts of his home county. He therefore is privileged to information usually withheld from outsiders. Major Yeates and Flurry Knox are intertwined throughout the whole series of stories, but the polarity of their utterances in “The Holy Island” demonstrates the most acute moments of mixture and ambiguity.

“The Holy Island” starts during a particularly foggy spell in November when an American ship has “gone on the rocks” at Yokahn Point and is “breaking up fast” (130). The booty on the ship is sure to include lots of rum, bacon, and butter and thus the accident creates a mania among the area residents who all flock to the shore to collect the spoils. The administrators of law in the area, Murray (a kind of policeman) and his crew plus Major Yeates are charged with preventing what will be considered looting if any of the goods are taken or consumed by the people in the area. Clearly they prevent nothing as people from miles around simply take what they want, consume what they want, and hide what they want.

Two hilarious episodes ensue from the general mayhem of this event. Flurry Knox convinces Major Yeates to take a break and have a drink at Mr. James Canty’s public house before heading home after an exhausting effort at controlling the beach. The next day with his “Monday head” it becomes clear that Mr. Canty’s establishment had whisked away some of that shipwreck booty while Yeates and his crew were inside drinking and “the collective wisdom of the Bench decided that I was suffering from contraband rum, and rejoiced over me accordingly” (138). In this narrative retelling of the event, Major Yeates’s language blends with the professional jargon of “the Bench”

and the everyday language of the public house (pub) and we see the comedy of the moment. Major Yeates, personifying the law, finds himself a part of the lawlessness he tirelessly worked to thwart. All have a good laugh over this to the effect of reinforcing the novelistic point that Yeates and the like all inevitably live in the gray area outside bold lines of demarcation. This is one of the moments that reinforces the novel as an “internally dialogized hybrid” through our Bakhtinian unpacking of the “two utterances that are socially distinct” that seemed to be fused into one (361).

The final insult to law and order comprises the last laugh associated with the shipwreck booty, and it is embedded within the language of ritual associated with death, a funeral, and religion. Thinking he has secured all of the unbroken rum, bacon, and butter barrels, Mr. Murray keeps a small regiment guarding the barrels which actually contain nothing but seawater and mud while the actual rum has been siphoned and packed in “Fresh Fish, Urgent” boxes and sent along with the district Bishop’s funeral train to Cork by Mr. and Mrs. Canty. Destination of this contraband: Mr. Canty’s brother’s pub in Cork. Flurry Knox takes pleasure in disclosing this information to Mr. Murray and Major Yeates. Major Yeates accepts this trickery in stride, mostly, but the heist infuriates Mr. Murray who declares his intention of proceeding against Canty. Flurry knows better as he tells Murray ““You won’t proceed far,”” and that ““you’ll not get as much evidence out of the whole country as’d hang a cat”” (148). Murray then directs his rage at Flurry, to which Flurry responds with an easy laugh. Flurry’s taunting in the folksy, or colloquial, language places him briefly in the role of the clown who demonstrates the buffoonery of authority figures, which reinforces Bakhtin’s notion that this is a novel “shaped by the current of decentralizing, centrifugal forces” (273). The

ridiculousness of Murray and Yeates is encapsulated in the last line of the story and the telling end to this tale of manipulations, machinations, and alliances: “Well, by the time the train was in Cork, yourself and the Major were the only two men in the town that weren’t talking about it” (148). So while Flurry has the same legal role as Yeates, and in a related degree to Murray—in other words they should all be united and on the same side—it is clear that Flurry enjoys a less rigid social role within the community. And here the novel gives way to its “parodic” undertones that are “aimed sharply and polemically against the official languages of its given time” to create a “heteroglossia that ha[s] been dialogized” (Bakhtin 273). These narrative moments do the work of unraveling the rigidity of control perhaps desired by the authors but unmanageable in the three-dimensionality of their novelistic prose (Bakhtin 315).

Part of the fluidity of Flurry’s social role comes out of necessity; Flurry traverses the middle-class business world as a horse-dealer and a property manager and comes from one of the Big House families. Flurry has family ties to “a clan that cropped up in every grade of society in the county, from Sir Valentine Knox of Castle Knox down to the auctioneer Knox, who bore the attractive title of Larry the Liar” (*Some Experiences* 5). Flurry himself occupies “a shifting position about midway in the tribe” (5). While he is an everyman, his family ties come to be the most significant factor in Flurry’s happiness as he pursues his cousin Sally, whose elevated station in life as one of the Castle Knox’s creates the only obstacle Flurry seems doomed to falter over. The truth of his love and the goodwill he engenders, however, puts others in the mind to scheme up their elopement. After taking control of their fate, Flurry and Sally actually receive the approval of the menacing matriarch, Lady Knox, but by the time she concedes, she

has little chance of stopping the developing events. The wedding celebration ends this series of the R. M. stories and reinforces that even through the adventure-style action, the family saga is at the heart of the Somerville and Ross novelistic style and keeps playing out the dynamics of relationships, marriages, futures, and pasts.

The narrative prominence of the middling characters, like Flurry, representing shifting social positions and ambiguous gradations of family takes hold in Somerville and Ross's style through the R. M. stories and becomes central to their exposition in later works. The families in Somerville and Ross narratives find they must negotiate and make do in ways that the Somerville and Martin families were also experiencing, in ways, in fact, that the Chief Justice Charles Kendal Bushe and his wife Nancy Crompton, the authors' great-grandparents, could never have imagined¹. The contribution of this realism appears simultaneously progressive and pathetic. The horse dealing of Flurry gives him the all-access pass to every level of society and social sphere, spreads his travels and associations across a wide area, and molds his character accordingly. But the weight of his ownership of the deceased Great-Uncle McCarthy's house, a family house, leaves him no choice but to let it to strangers for its upkeep (which is still negligent and gross). Great-Uncle McCarthy's ghost remains a resident of this house-to-be-let and bespeaks the ghostly existence of the Protestant families within a swiftly shifting Irish countryside.

Flurry, "like a stable boy among gentlemen and a gentlemen among stable boys," embodies the incongruities and mixed nature of positions and experiences within the narrative, and he shifts with them (4). Flurry's Grandmother Knox's estate and his Great-Uncle McCarthy's home are equally telling embodiments of incongruity. Old Mrs.

Knox of Aussolas, Flurry's grandmother, is known for her "remarkable ménage" and entertains Flurry and Major Yeates with a dinner that "was as incongruous as everything else" exposing the dirty "evening dress" of Mrs. Knox, "chipped kitchen dish" used for the beautifully cooked salmon, and the serving of port "draped in immemorial cobwebs, wan with age, and probably priceless" (43). Old Mrs. Knox tells Major Yeates that she knew his grandfather and danced with him at the fashionable parties at the Castle. With that bit of archived history revealed we realize the true depths of all of this ambiguity and social fluctuation that has occurred in the two generations present at the table. The dinner conversation reveals that Yeates clearly belongs on the inside of this scene and with this community, even though he does not feel like it. And, as Old Mrs. Knox speaks to Yeates, she represents a relic of the past who speaks in the language particular to her generation, concerned as it was with family, community links, and relationships. This is no longer the language of Flurry, the commoners, the professionals, nor of Yeates, and yet somehow seems to reflect the background of the authors into the foreground for a brief moment.

Major Yeates chooses to rent Great-Uncle McCarthy's house because it still had a considerable portion of its roof intact and could be "fit for occupation" in a few weeks time owing to the "few little odd things to be done" as announced by Flurry (2). Three weeks, and a pair of fighting plumbers and carpenters, turns into a string of summer months needed to get the house ready for Major Yeates to move into. The house remains filthy with a "reek of cabbage" from the kitchen, but it seems to suit its current purpose. Its former purpose had been imagined as something much grander, as Yeates describes the original layout: "One side of the yard is formed by the coach-house and a

long stable, with a range of lofts above them, planned on the heroic scale in such matters that obtained in Ireland formerly” (16). The contrast between the current mediocrity of this house with the nostalgia of a past still evident in the very structure of the buildings speaks to the experiences of both Somerville and Ross and their devotion to properties and homes that quickly, throughout the authors’ lifetimes, lose their viability. By the late 1880s the lasting effects of the Great Famine of midcentury and two subsequent but briefer periods of crop failures added to the financial troubles of landlords and many Anglo-Irish Big Houses were either abandoned or adapted into rental properties such as we witness in the Irish R. M. stories.

Leigh Kelway, Private Secretary to Lord Waterbury, is an old school friend of Major Yeates and comes to Ireland to accompany Lord Waterbury, who is on a fishing holiday. Not a fisherman himself, Kelway decides to look up his old friend Yeates for a visit and collect some statistics on the “Liquor Question in Ireland” (70). This unsuspecting, generally decent Englishman bears the full brunt of Somerville and Ross’s torturous debacles. And though he is a decent person, it is clear that Kelway has come to uncover and document the ills of Ireland and for that our authors and their cast of characters have no sympathy. Kelway speaks the language of the true outsider and serves in the narrative dynamics to help position Major Yeates within the Irish countryside by comparison. The tongue-and-cheek disclosure from Yeates about his friend—“He further informed me that he thought of popularising the subject in a novel, and therefore intended to, as he put it, ‘master the brogue’ before his return”—sends the shivers of deep distaste through a modern reader’s spine just as it seems to horrify Yeates. Within this utterance, the author’s quasi-direct discourse seems to be shouting

back to England: Enough with the affected brogue already, and leave Ireland to us. We know from the many tribulations Kelway suffers at the hands of his creator that Somerville and Ross must feel unkindly towards an Englishman's assumptions of superiority, and they certainly feel clever enough to demonize the stage Irishman mode of presentation, even as they present their comic tales of West of Ireland. Through the admonishing of Leigh Kelway and the thwarting of his presumptive mission, Somerville and Ross expose some of what Bakhtin claims helps to create the "sociological stylistics" of the novel and the author's style (300). Somerville and Ross portray the "concrete social context" of interpersonal and inter-national relationships through the "social dialogue" of Leigh Kelway (300). Distancing themselves from the language of Kelway, they attempt to move closer in this dialogized language to their ideological position as a part of the collective in Ireland.

Leigh Kelway is one part of the seriousness that I argue underscores the humor and fun in the Irish R. M. stories, but the barely contained violence that seems to be ever-present in these stories plays a larger role in settling this balance. The Gothic haunting and suicide of Bud Callaghan nods again to the style of Le Fanu and particularly the short stories collected in *In a Glass Darkly* full of spiritual incarnations of guilty consciences and physical violence from the world of the occult.² In "The Waters of Strife" Major Yeates leaves his "Petty Sessions day at Sekbawn" at five o'clock on a brilliant September afternoon to witness "The Sons of Liberty" regatta on the lake at Lough Lonen (53). At this scene of adventure and sport, Bat Callaghan obtains "prominence" in Major Yeates's "regard" (53).

The murder of Jim Foley by Bat Callaghan brings the law and its representatives into connection and interplay with the community in ways that demonstrate the cultural shifts and political and historical vagaries common in the West of Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century. The mixture of everyday language of the folk life and the stylized sporting language of the races within the scene suggests the cacophony of life around a popular social event. The natural competitiveness of the regatta, however, seems to carry with it a more personal and immediate threat of violence; spectators and competitors alike are lively and in the process a few small fights erupt and later Jim Foley is murdered. No witnesses and no clarifying information seem available about Foley's murder, however, until one night just before Major Yeates retires to bed he hears a slight tap at his window and learns in a whisper from the "shy bird" of an "Irish informer": "Them that wants Jim Foley, let them look in the river" (59). The heteroglossic moment in the text here bridges the folksy quality of the "them that knows" style with the language of the law with which Yeates addresses Murray, the policeman. This discourse sparks Murray's memory as he recalls an almost identical situation of an equally important clandestine tip. "In the Land League time," Murray learned of a plot to "shoot a boycotted man" through pre-drilled holes in the chapel door (60). The intervention of the informant and Murray save the boycotted man's life as he takes his morning prayers at home that Sunday. This reminiscence of violence fails to relate directly to Jim Foley and a day of regatta, except as a reflection of the complex layering of violence, information, and law and in showing how the discourse of each plays a crucial role in the functioning of any society. Buried in this story is the historical reality of what it meant to be a "boycotted" man during the conflicts between landlords and

tenants during the Land League wars and the pervasive, everyday quality of violence that permeates the history of Ireland as a captured country. These underlying historical utterances break out from the style of the adventure novel and refract more accurately the discourse of a hybridized novelistic language particular to Somerville and Ross.

Murray and his crew find Jim Foley's body and Bat Callaghan has gone missing. Callaghan's mother, Widow Callaghan, seeks assistance from Major Yeates at his home while Major Yeates attempts to describe to his landlord Flurry Knox "the defects of the pantry sink" (61). The disjunction between the life and death situation as represented by the murderer's mother standing just outside his hall door and the quotidian nature of the broken pantry sink, create a disjunction and conjunction of everyday matters; in one moment the language of the law and the home mix in a slightly absurd way. Bat's mother is desperate to find out any news of her son, and Major Yeates, even in spite of the "gift of the goose," relays to Widow Callaghan his "inability to help her" (63). In fact, the law in this case remains completely stalemated as both Yeates and Murray are left throwing barbs at each other for the "entire impotence on the part of the law" to bring about closure (63). The linguistic interaction of Widow Callaghan's style and the Yeates and Murray law style comes through in Yeates's narrative utterance and reveals the unenviable position of both: Widow Callaghan seeks solace of a humanitarian kind as a worried mother, but she seeks it from the representative of the law who is helpless without the trappings of authority such as control, information, ritual, and institutional support. At his home, worried about the sink, Yeates really is at a loss to help Widow Callaghan even though he remains compassionate in his dealings with her.

Closure to the murder mystery comes from the personal conscience of the transgressor, however, as Bat Callaghan, having changed his name and joined the English Army, finds a place in a regiment, Major Yeates's old regiment, "quartered at Whincastle" (63). He takes his post as the sentry on magazine guard, but this one night he should have been guarding himself. On the night of Yeates's visit with his old regiment, Callaghan, now called Harris, is on duty and he shoots his rifle at "the face stuck there staring at him" claiming in his delirium, "God Almighty . . . it was there always!" (67). These guilty hallucinations overpower Callaghan's sensibilities and he shoots himself in an attempt to shoot the ghost face of Jim Foley, his conscience. This dip into the discourse of obsession, or the haunting familiar to the Gothic style, further dialogizes the Irish R. M. stories as a whole and reinforces the serious fun of the Somerville and Ross artistic style. While it is not his particular duty or concern, Yeates goes to examine the dead man on a hunch that he might know him based on the letter the soldiers removed from Callaghan's pocket. The letter, written by Widow Callaghan, is signed only "Your Fond Mother," and it is as everyday as it possibly could be, talking of how the cow "swelled up this morning" and worrying over the "laurels or and eirub" that she might have eaten, and leaving off with "I am thinkin' them that wants ye is tired lookin' for ye" (68). While Yeates's fellow officer and Englishman, Brownlow, asks, "And what the deuce is an eirub" Yeates can "abstractedly" answer without hesitation, "It's another way of spelling herb" (68). The letter is in the language of Widow Callaghan as a commoner in the countryside of West Ireland, but it is a language embedded within Yeates, and through his own utterance of easy recognition and thoughtful explanation of this other way of spelling herb, Yeates comes to be seen as

what Bakhtin would refer to as internally dialogized. Yeates is able to identify the body, “‘I know him,’ I said, ‘his name is Callaghan’” and with that “The Water’s Strife” ends, but the story continues. The interrelatedness of the Callaghans’s language and Yeates own recognition and embodiment of it, speaks to the many experiences throughout *Some Experiences of an Irish R. M.* that demonstrate the active connections and contrary impulses that have not died along with Bat Callaghan.

The Real Charlotte

Somerville and Ross thread their gifts for comedic narratives with a poignant commentary on principles that define a community and the vectored relationships between neighbors as well as family in *The Real Charlotte* (1894). In this depiction of the major social changes underfoot in the microcosm of the culture of Connemara, County Galway, Somerville and Ross yoke the disease of the dying past with the painful future for this menagerie of characters. As a family saga style of novel, *The Real Charlotte* depicts an interesting mix of gender, rank, and moral identities. While the Anglo-Irish Big House and its occupying gentry family provide a certain foundation for the community of this narrative, *The Real Charlotte* is not a story of the well-to-do but rather an investigation into the lives of those who wish-to-do, or the upwardly mobile and ambiguously defined characters. If the Knox clan in the Irish R. M. stories had many layers and Flurry landed somewhere in the middle, *The Real Charlotte* amplifies this look at gradations and explores the interiors of a wide spectrum of situations. The story is Charlotte’s—as in discovering the realness of the Charlotte in the title—but the fullness of the surrounding characters provides a verisimilitude of amazing proportions. And while Charlotte is a new invention for Somerville and Ross, the familiar character zones and character speech typical of their style appear in this narrative as well; in *The*

Real Charlotte, we find the new arrival (in the form of a fresh faced young woman again), the sporting fellow, and the old, ineffectual head of the Big House family. The depth and scope of this novel naturally intensifies under the generic umbrella of the novel of manners and society, and we find intermixed throughout *The Real Charlotte* extended moments of adventure, comedy, and romance creating the heteroglossic narrative that vibrates with the tensions drawn tight between the representatives of tradition and change.

The narrative, then, represents more than just a discovery of a real Charlotte; in fact, this narrative explores the dynamism of a series of triangulated connections between Charlotte and the surrounding cast of characters. Three dynamic relationships that pivot on the same two characters demonstrate the weaving nature of tradition and change in the narrative. Charlotte Mullen and Roderick Lambert parallel and cross each other in their relationships with the Dysarts (the gentry family), Julia Duffy (the most ambiguously designed and sympathetic character), and Francie Fitzgerald (the blank canvas). The linguistic utterances developed out of the cross sections of character zones and character speech in these relationships highlights the basic pulls along the “borderline[s] between oneself and the other” that reveal what Bakhtin reads as the underlying divides that “permit a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized)” to flourish within these Big House narratives of Somerville and Ross (293, 263).

Charlotte, Roddy Lambert, and Christopher Dysart of Bruff are triangulated most notably by the commonalities of the estate agency and properties. Charlotte’s father immediately preceded Lambert’s term as agent to the Dysarts; Charlotte delights in

reminding Christopher and Lambert of her intimate knowledge of Dysart affairs at every turn possible. At the start of the narrative, at Lady Dysart's famous yearly lawn tennis party, Charlotte walks right into an all-male conversation and opens a dialogue with Christopher about the management of Dysart affairs and finds out that "So it's talking of charming young ladies you and Roddy Lambert are when he comes to see you on estate business!" (19). The most telling aspect of Charlotte's conversation comes in the not-so-subtle reminder of her intimacy with the Dysart family estate: "When my poor father was your father's agent, and I used to be helping him in the office, it was charming young cattle we talked about, and not young ladies" (19). Spoken in what Bakhtin calls the socio-ideological language of business, as an insider with a professional jargon, this comment reveals the heteroglossia of the novel and also reveals a criticism of the current arrangements established between Christopher, Lambert, and Charlotte (Bakhtin 271). Charlotte's overt engagement with aspects of the family that are no longer her legitimate concern is slightly off-putting, but the punishing nature of a system that removes one obviously so capable and ready to perform a job simply on the basis of gender comes out of this exchange as highly suspect through the quasi-direct discourse of the authorial voice here. Faced with the questions, doubts, and objections of their families over their professional careers as authors, Somerville and Ross are also intimately aware of a woman's struggle with confinement and emancipation.

Charlotte's head for business as it connects to the Dysarts and Lambert develops acutely when she wishes to destroy Lambert as an act of revenge for her unrequited love of him. Charlotte demonstrates her ability to keep careful account books and piece

together incomplete records to achieve a full balance of all accounts under the charge of Lambert, including his own. Charlotte uncovers the clearest picture of rent rolls, discrepancies, and value of Lambert's property and debts and the Dysarts's as well. When she presents Christopher with the evidence, which he does not want to hear, about Lambert's indiscretions and embezzlements, her razor sharp skills slice through, in spite of her usually ameliorated demeanor, and she becomes a force. She stands along the shoreline with Christopher with "her feet planted firmly on two of the least rickety stones of the quay" and delivers her treacherous message "in her most temperate, ladylike manner": "and I am prepared to place certain facts before you, on whose accuracy you may perfectly rely" which will prove Lambert's sham accounting (353). Charlotte speaks here through the professional language of an accountant and the stylized language of law where facts and proof are paramount and yet she delivers this message in the voice of a lady. The mixture of ladylike and businesslike creates an intense pressure on Charlotte that eventually erupts. Christopher's hesitation and general disgust at Charlotte's ease with the character speech outside of her proscribed role leads to a rare outburst from Charlotte where "more violence" of manner escapes her than she would wish as she throws after Christopher her rapid-fire rage: "If you want to know more, I can tell you more, and plenty more" (353). At that, Charlotte becomes the monster who might just explode: "She was losing hold of herself; her gestures were of the sort that she usually reserved for her inferiors, and the corners of her mouth bubbled like a snail" (353). Charlotte knows so much and feels the intensity of all her passions—justice, revenge, love, hate, authority, and oppression—to the point that her exterior exposes these interior conflicts and desires. While Christopher feels

aggravated at this situation because he is stuck talking with “a woman so abhorrent and so contemptible,” all that she levies against Lambert is true, even though Christopher deems it “feminine espionage upon another man” (353). The indirect authorial comment here is not hard to uncover, however, as certainly these strong-willed authors are willing to “tell us more, and plenty more” just as Charlotte does. These confrontations with Christopher set Charlotte in relief against the backdrop of the New Woman narratives engaging with the Woman Question, equality, and women’s rights in fin de siècle intellectual culture.

Foaming at the mouth or not, on the level of business, Charlotte works shrewdly and competently. Clearly, her potential outshines the slipshod and deceptive agent that Lambert has become. Charlotte is frugal rather than profligate, ambitious but not showy, and reverential to the point of being repulsive. As Charlotte works to undo Lambert’s position and respectability, she stays focused on appearing to be selflessly devoted to the Dysarts as she tells Christopher, ““Yes, Sir Christopher, my feeling for your estate is like the feeling of a child for the place where he was reared; it is the affection of a woman whose happiest days were passed with her father in your estate office”” (351). The disorienting nature of Charlotte’s comment here seems to come directly out of the ambiguous double-gender references; by using the male pronoun “he” to speak about a homeland connection and the direct reference to herself as the “woman” who stands there as the embodiment of all her experiences, Charlotte’s utterance reveals her predicament as a woman and as a keeper of tradition. Charlotte cannot be faithful to tradition and the establishment and claim any right to the estate management position as a woman, but as an embodiment of desires, capabilities, and

training, she wishes nothing other than the assumption of her father's role. Somerville and Ross's own dilemma over keeping their houses and estates running properly without any male heads of the household seems to shine through in these conflicting discourses.

In contrast to Charlotte's devotion to the estate, no matter how far she steps outside the traditional role of women, Lambert carries the grudge of a man who works within close proximity of prestige and money but seems to be outside that privilege at all times, and he therefore remains jealous of Christopher and the Bruff estate. Lambert feels empowered in the presence of his simple-minded "turkey hen" wife and bespeaks his displeasure through a harsh censure of Christopher's short-comings of personality and he mocks Christopher to Mrs. Lambert. Lambert shares his disapproval of Christopher's lack of adventurousness when he tells his wife how he feels: "A fellow that'd rather stick at home there at Bruff having tea with his sister than go down like any other fellow and play a game of pool at the hotel! A sort of chap that says, if you offer him a whiskey and soda in a friendly way, "Th-thanks—I don't c-care about anything at this t-t-time of day"" (32). His mimicry makes Mrs. Lambert burst with laughter and compliment her husband saying, "how comical you are!" (33). So Lambert's major criticism of Christopher rests on Christopher's willingness to stay close to home and to be more sober than social. Clearly these are not grave faults in Christopher and Lambert's mockery of his slight stutter, or conversational hesitations, does more to make Lambert a fool than Christopher. Lambert's criticisms must, however, reflect something extra-literary as they clearly are not limited to the heir's speech pattern or his drinking habits. Lambert's discursive potential in the critique of the landed aristocracy is

as the spokesperson for the sensibilities and philosophical underpinnings of the modern man within Ireland, and all of Europe, who have ideas of taking down the old order and altering the disbursement of properties and funds. Even as these social changes comprise part of the backdrop of this narrative, the personal nature of Lambert's mimicry leaves the surface of tradition undisturbed. And as Lambert's actions become increasingly motivated by greed, his believability as a spokesman for the equal distribution of capital is erased entirely. Still, the triangular relationship of Christopher, Lambert, and Charlotte shows the strains of major social changes in class mobility and gender equality common to the intellectual conversations of the 1890s.

Out of these three characters, Charlotte remains the most conflicted combination of desires and drives. Part of what tugs on Charlotte's ambition comes from her lack of agency, literally, her lack of employment in the job she learned while tagging along with her father and about which she always waxes rhapsodic. Charlotte delights in using her intellectual faculties and feeling powerful through activity. Could this foaming-at-the-mouth monster be sympathetic, then? Nineteenth century and modern readers alike can easily see the systemic injustice that keeps a capable woman out of a job an incapable man is performing, based solely on gender, but her lack of agency is not Charlotte's whole story. Charlotte's disgrace runs deep when it comes to her comportment with Julia Duffy and Francie Fitzpatrick. In the triangulation concerning power, money, and authority with Christopher and Lambert, Charlotte never bests her male counterparts completely and must hold on to her angst for one more generation before the gains of the New Woman will have changed gender dynamics forever. Likewise, in the triangulation between Charlotte, Julia Duffy, and Lambert, Charlotte

wins her way in the business transactions that ruin Julia Duffy, but they fail to parlay into the fulfillment of all her desires. Charlotte remains close to success in her missions, but the thwarting of her personal impulses mirrors the tug of tradition and change the novel struggles through.

Julia Duffy represents a direct counterpart to Charlotte based on a few important parallel factors: their ties to properties that are a part of the Dysart estate and their plain, unmarried, rough-around-the edges existence. Julia Duffy is just the extreme of the unsociable side of Charlotte and yet has none of her treachery. Julia, therefore, suffers under the manipulations of Charlotte through Charlotte's control over the indebted Lambert. For Charlotte the idea of Julia Duffy as an individual with subjectivity remains inconsequential compared to her desire for greater acquisition of property and status; thus the treatment of Julia Duffy by Charlotte and Lambert encapsulates the narrative acknowledgment of the changing commercial culture and displays a great distaste for the unrelenting drive of the marketplace mentality. The thrust of Charlotte's and Lambert's consideration of Julia as a small obstacle on their way to pecuniary gain, stands in direct contrast to the narrative energy spent on the development of Julia Duffy's personage, home, social rank, heritage, and choices.

Julia maintains a "carefully genteel voice" in a house that still has "some air of the old order" to it (45). In contrast to its admirable past, the house currently shows its decline through the "rotten timbers" and the "shroud of cobwebs" that bespeak its lack of upkeep (44). It is further marked as a symbol of the degeneration of the Duffy family when we learn that instead of it being a welcoming residence this house door "remained shut from year's end to year's end, contrary to the usual Irish custom" (42). The sharp

contrast between the style of this character's discourse and her appearance, her financial situation, and her general status in Lismoyle society represents what Bakhtin would consider a deepening and widening of the novel's heteroglossia. Gurthnamuckla house was fine enough in Julia's grandfather's time, and her grandfather had been "all but a gentleman" while her father remained a drunk man married to his dairy-maid (44). But now Julia lives in the "wreck of her fortunes" and lives with the most unkempt personal style, including turf ash in her "crinkled mat of hair," filthy and stained skirts, and boots with laces that "trail on the ground beside her" (45). The land around Gurthnamuckla is all gone to weeds and the house is falling apart. Julia's kitchen is free and open to the "hens and turkeys" on the property for their habitation or feeding, and even though were usually forbidden, on the worst of days for Julia a handful of ducks "adventured themselves" inside this dirty kitchen to gobble at the "plate of potato skins and greasy cabbage on the floor by the table" with "their long dirty bills" (211). Though usually chased and beaten, these ducks go unnoticed on the day that Julia's "misfortunes were converging" (211). Everything around Julia Duffy speaks of "bygone plenty and present wretchedness" and the disjunction feels both laughable and disgusting as the double-voiced narrative development of a single woman and her culture clash in both the interior and exterior spaces of her world.

On a "fine morning towards the end of August" Julia Duffy receives a letter "threatening to process her for the long arrears of rent that she had felt lengthening hopelessly with every sunrise and sunset" (211). The discourse of the cold accountant keeping track of Julia's misfortune reveals the sympathetic worries of a woman marking time in her life by the sunrises and sunsets. All along through her subsistence at

Gurthnamuckla, Julia has lived off of renting her grazing grass to local herders and the odds and ends she might make from her special skills with “the mysteries of medicine and the culture of herbs” (43). And she has staved off eviction through the help of the Land League years and her own self composure; she is able to “tranquilly” defy Lambert, “offering him at intervals such rent as she thought fitting” (43). The last part of her confidence comes from her sure belief in the gentrified manners of the time and the security she feels from “a promise that she should never be disturbed in her father’s farm, made to her, she alleged, by Sir Benjamin Dysart” (43). So even though Julia uses the dismantling of the landowner system to her advantage, she also wants to use the moral structure associated with it to guarantee the old-time patterns of behavior concerning protectionism. The day of her letter and her crises, therefore, spurs her to trek to Bruff, stopping along the way to regain her strength in Charlotte’s kitchen occupied at the moment by only Julia’s cousin, Norry the Boat.

Julia does make it to Bruff, with the help of a perfectly-timed messenger cart from Bruff that crosses Julia’s path, whose footman agrees to take her on to the house, but the pathetic conditions simply multiply for Julia as Sir Benjamin, while still lord in name, has more nonsense about him than anyone else in this menagerie. Julia gains audience with Sir Benjamin and reminds him that “I and my family have always lived on your estate, and my grandfather has often had the honor of entertaining you and the rest of the gentry, when they came fox hunting through Gurthnamuckla” (218). In this single utterance the weight of the past crushes the conditions of the present moment and reveals what Bakhtin’s theoretical lens terms the “basic line of movement and play of intentions” within the narrative (418). In this interview, Julia Duffy carries with her the

emotion of her once-exalted station in life as she continues to feel “all the Protestant and aristocratic associations” of her Duffy family name, but her hearkening the past comes to naught as her interview deteriorates into Sir Benjamin “making sweeps at her with his oak stick” (218). This failure of the old order to keep sane and provide steady rule, in the figure of Sir Benjamin and his histrionics, leaves Julia with a “homeward journey that stretched, horrible and impossible” (219). The homeward journey-woman never makes it back to her home and instead, trying to laugh in the face of her own demise, her “face [becomes] vacant and yet full of pain” (222). Julia Duffy falls ill and as she recuperates from her bodily ills she falls deeper into an insanity which leads quickly to a sad death in an asylum. Julia Duffy’s situation and fate cast a negative pallor over the entire community involved in this family saga narrative; she is reminiscent of the madwoman in the attic running loose on the streets and the woman in white locked up through shady circumstances. Julia Duffy speaks from within the system to show the abuses of the structure of authority and the horrors surrounding the traditional methods for suffocating that which might expose frailty and fault within traditional circumstances.

The conversation between Sir Benjamin and Julia Duffy, the two weak-bodied and mentally unstable curmudgeons, stands in direct contrast to the conversation on the rocky shoreline between Sir Christopher and Charlotte Mullen that takes place after the erasure of both Sir Benjamin and Julia. The parallel structure and divergent motivations reinforce the grotesque machinations of Charlotte. Part of Charlotte’s success with Julia rests on Lambert’s involvement and his willingness to precipitate Julia’s crisis of losing her home. Not that Lambert avoids implication in wrongdoing, because he stands to gain from Charlotte’s willingness and ability to pay true and timely rent on the

Gurthnamuckla property in contrast to the arbitrary amounts Julia came up with yearly. The more pleasing aspect of getting Charlotte the property is the implementation of his scheme to raise horses as a profitable pastime in the plenty of the property's stable and with the best grass for them to graze. This arrangement comes out of Charlotte's desire for a joint venture with Lambert, which she speaks about in business jargon but which reveals all of the sexual overtones she feels, when she invites him to put his horses in her stable. Lambert ruins it all, however, as he brings his own desires for Francie Fitzpatrick between him and Charlotte, and he pays for this mistake dearly with the wrath of Charlotte's revenge, as previously described.

This last triangulation of Charlotte, Lambert, and Francie Fitzgerald lies at the heart of all of these other dealings and relationships. Francie is Charlotte's cousin by some convoluted line of Charlotte's uncle and Francie's grandmother both being Butlers—more Irish cousins and family tree entanglements than anyone could keep straight. The repetition of the language of lineage, heritage, and inheritance surrounding Charlotte serves to highlight the duality of the tradition and change contradictions within the narrative. Charlotte serves to maintain the frame of the system while manipulating her role within it which goes against the principles that govern the feudal landlord schematic. While Charlotte relates through family to Francie, Lambert appears as a presence in Francie's life from her early childhood days which certainly adds to the discomfort of their eventual marriage and his devotion to her all along. Lambert's marriage to Francie drives a permanent wedge between him and Charlotte that precipitates the vengeful actions taken by Charlotte to ruin Lambert's reputation. The newly precarious situation of an exposed and vulnerable Lambert, with Charlotte as

an enemy instead of as an ally, sends Francie off-balance and leads to her being crushed to death by the spooked horse she ironically hopes to ride to safety. Francie's many tumbles and brushes with death throughout the narrative have forewarned us that her death would come from the adventure narrative, but this final fall for Francie speaks more to the saga of the horrifically interconnected and suffocating relationships between Francie, Charlotte, and Lambert. Francie and her escapades open and close the novel in a manner that almost usurps this narrative out from under Charlotte, even though she is the eponymous character. This narrative triangulation is a tug between the title character and the crux character.

Francie appears as a blank canvas throughout the narrative waiting on others' desires to color in her life's destiny, but this flatness contrasts to the few moments of her expressed subjectivity, which shows her as a pathetic and aimless young woman. Charlotte's jealousy over Francie's easy nature and delightful beauty sends her to madness on one level but also plays into her potential schemes as she could see Francie capturing the heart of an impressionable Christopher Dysart. As Francie will have nothing to do with Christopher's advances, Charlotte sends Francie away and never suspects that the greatest devotee of Francie has all along been Lambert. Lambert then begins designing Francie's life around his own and wins her hand in marriage but never wins her heart, which remains tragically a-flutter for a scoundrel of an English soldier, Mr. Hawkins. Desiring to be with Mr. Hawkins more than anything, Francie is never truly Lambert's and his disappointment at that shortfall keeps him in constant agitation. This romance plot embedded within the more general novel of social critique, rivals the twists, turns, promises, and heartbreaks of any Jane Austen narrative

or modern-day soap opera. So, Charlotte and Lambert push and pull all around and through Francie and finally end up in the potato loft of Charlotte's new domain, Gurthnamuckla, fighting over the future while the catalyst for the fighting falls to her death on the road just outside the property gates. Because this was Julia Duffy's house that Charlotte and Lambert schemed to take away from Julia, the demise of their last object of contestation at the gate of this tortured home seems ultimately fitting. The narrative ends when at last Charlotte and Lambert lose the object of their deepest triangulated struggle. It ends with the doubts and confusions created in this "internally dialogized hybrid" novel wondering still how to envision a future for the Anglo-Irish countryside. This hybridization gets even more extreme—if that is possible—in Somerville and Ross's last novel under consideration in this chapter.

The Big House of Inver

Much the way Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) creates a painfully detailed chronicle of the fall of the Rackrent estate through the laughable missteps of the bad-boy heirs, *The Big House of Inver* (1925) showcases Somerville and Ross's take on a house of disorder and the inheritance of degeneration. And with Somerville and Ross's narration of this Big House under distress, we catch a glimpse of what comes next in the tortured narratives of Elizabeth Bowen. *The Big House of Inver* acts as a pivot that looks all the way back to the first of the Irish narratives of Edgeworth and also turns to face the bleak future that comes in *The Last September* (1929), Bowen's own Big House exposé.

The defining quality of *The Big House of Inver* and its contribution to the narrative trajectory of Somerville and Ross can be distilled down to excessiveness. This narrative contains the most internally dialogized characters and situations, feels the

most torn between tradition and changes underfoot, captures the most gloomy and melancholy atmosphere, and shows the most exposed failings of a whole family through individual defeats. Combined with that, this narrative also contains the strongest female character—even more willful than Charlotte—full of passion and determination to save a system she has only a marginal claim to. Through this family saga that is the most obviously politically and socially motivated narrative, Somerville and Ross fold in contemporary concerns over class ambiguity and the Victorian moral values of propriety, self control, and industry. In this narrative, then, hints become exaggerations, suggestions become shouts, and early warnings of systemic ills become epidemic; the big houses will no longer protect ancient families or support the traditional social roles of those around them, as this narrative replete with double-voiced utterances illustrates.

The telescopic opening of the narrative draws the distant past in to serve as a constant backdrop for the present and sets the present circumstances in relief against past exploits as it collapses history into one long line of family triumphs and tragedies. The first line of the story, “The Big House of Inver stood high on the central ridge of the promontory of Ross Inver,” sends the narrative on a flashback to Mr. Robert Prendeville and the time of Queen Anne and introduces the language typical of the historical novel as seen through the experiences of one family (1). The situation of the house, the location, and the Norman history of the Prendeville family pours out after this first reference to the novel’s title and reflects, with a shocking lack of alteration or fictionalization, the family history of Violet Martin, the Martins of Ross. The modern narrator reveals, however, the self-consciousness of relating the story of conquest in an aside “regarding the many thousand acres acquired by the Prendevilles” that opens up

the ambiguity of the profits of such families as the Prendevilles: “remembering that the verb to acquire is non-committal as to methods” a historian of Ireland might think “protection was rather required by the Wild Irish (or Gorillas) than by their Norman invaders” (1). Immediately after shining this light on the turbulence, from the historical perspective, of an embattled Ireland and the ambiguity of the political and social foundations of contemporary life, the text recuperates a singular focus with the assertion that “this is a point that need not now be discussed” (1). Nothing could be more Bakhtinian: what “we have before us is a typical double-accented, double-styled *hybrid construction*” (304). The refraction of the authors’ perspective here goes through several layers of direct and indirect discourse couching the historical with the contemporary all within the same utterance.

Fast-forwarding to the subject of the current generation of Prendevilles who live in and around Inver, the rest of the story starts with Jasper, born in June 1824. He is the “seventh in descent from Robert the Builder” (4). At the start of action, Jas is already an old man, as most of the events chronicled in this narrative occur in 1912. This narrative, then, seems to develop from the idyllic chronotope as we see a distinct “unity of place,” Inver, which reflects the “spacially limited world” defined by the “age-old rooting of the life of generations to a single place, from which this life, in all its events, is inseparable” (Bakhtin 225). The idyllic chronotope effects what Bakhtin considers “the creation of the cyclic rhythmicalness of time” that blurs boundaries between “cradle and grave” and “between individual lives” (225) *The Big House of Inver*, therefore, with its obviously cyclical style, carries with it the concerns of many generations and the contradictions awakened in the transition from the old ways to the new sensibilities. Because Lady

Isabella, Jas's grandmother, has an "iceberg of pride," the family suffers an enforced isolation from her neighbors and it ruins them: "the glories and the greatness of Inver therewith suffered downfall. Five successive generations of mainly half-bred and wholly profligate Predevilles rioted out their short lives in the Big House" and subject the family estate to degradation and ruin (4). The quasi-direct discourse on the subject of the Predevilles is the voice of judgment softened by the sympathetic allegiance that Somerville and Ross still feel towards the Big House social order.

Lady Isabella's obsession with control and propriety leads to the most tragic yet comical spoiling of the Big House's integrity. When Jas is just a toddler and his grandmother Lady Isabella passes away, his mother has to use the assistance of the police to make a "sweep that could hardly have been called clean" of the Big House and "its inmates, who scattered to various outlying footholds of the family, each bearing with him or her . . . such spoil of furniture, pictures and china as could conveniently be abstracted" (7). The implicit presence of clowns, fools, and rogues shows through in this utterance which works to collapse the "distance between author and language" as there is no doubt as to the harsh critique Somerville and Ross have for this exploitative tom-foolery and degeneration of the Big House (Bakhtin 302). This "routing" of the clowns and fools effected, Jas's mother instructs the agent Mick Weldon to let the house to the first reliable tenant he can find (7). The bachelor Reverend Harry D'Arcy, a rogue from within the ranks of the Protestant clergy, lets it as a replacement for a destroyed parish house and proceeds to have riotous parties, allow rough bachelors to stay on as guests, and destroy parts of the roof just as he leaves the Big House of Inver. Apparently no single part of society will be relieved from their share of despicable

behavior and critique by the pen of our authors. The destruction of the parish house mentioned as though in passing, speaks to the discourse of history in the background of this narrative as the Reverend D'Arcy loses his house during the upheaval surrounding the Tithe Wars and the hostilities between Catholic natives and Protestant churches. This historical time and space is marked, therefore, for those who see the imbedded dialogism of the circumstances. With a half-destroyed Big House, the Tower at Inver, then, becomes the only available and decent housing on the great Prendeville lands. Therefore, the Tower is Jas's home first with his mother until she dies from the Famine fever, next as a rowdy bachelor on his own, then for a short time as husband and father before his wife dies in childbirth.

Jas represents the struggle over knowing the old ways still, but having no strength of character or fortitude to hold them up; he is an exaggeration of decline from the early models of degenerating "Sirs" such as Uncle Dominick in *An Irish Cousin*. Without enough ready money to simply hang about Inver, Jas joined the Army and waited until he got bored with it (or got kicked out) to return home again. Just as was the case in the Somerville family where three of Edith's brothers entered English service, the realistic financial constraints on Big House families meant they could no longer offer opportunities for growth and prosperity in their remote and dilapidated conditions. Jas's carousing as a young man was infamous and destructive, and he fathered a child by the barmaid at his favorite tavern. Without much to-do, however, the child, Shibby, and her grandmother (her mother dies shortly after giving birth) are moved into the Tower and incorporated into the fold, which while not an exemplary situation was certainly acceptable and handled easily. Back on his home turf, he drinks heavily and wishes to

live a carefree life with all his desires fulfilled, which he relies on his agent John Weldon to provide; this is the same recipe for disaster that harkens back to Sir Condy and the Rackrent estate of Edgeworth's tale. So, one "stormy November afternoon" John Weldon helps to celebrate Jas's purchase of a grand yacht and when the last cup was drunk, John Weldon "produce[s] the draft of a lease of the demesne-lands of Ross-Inver" for a long time and a small fee. Jas in his drunken state and profligate way simply signs away that portion of his family's property for the pleasure of a boat. In this initial introduction of John Weldon's importance to the Prendeilles, he is revealed through the discourse of contracts and ownership as he represents the narrative concern over solid and secure finances that stands as a direct contrast to the total lack of the language of authority from the reckless Sir Jas.

As he advances in age, still single, he realizes he would like to see an heir of his own for the property so John Weldon finds him a suitable though not aristocratic bride. Jas settles with Esther, they have two healthy children, and in the birth of a third both mother and child die. The widowed Jas raises his family in the Tower: Shibby Pindy, his illegitimate daughter, and his legitimate children, son Kit and daughter Nessie. Shibby is old enough to be Kit and Nessie's nurse and caretaker after their mother's death which allows this blended family to continue living on in the Tower and holding on to the Prendeville legacy. And as Old John passes on the estate manager duties to his capable and sensible son Young Johnny, Old Jas has support all around him. Jas relies on Shibby and Young Johnny Weldon to manage all of his affairs while he does nothing but be a retired Army man and a hard-drinking recluse. As this character gives up on his duties and the comportment expected of the head of a gentry family, the

narrative illustrates the general sadness and malaise Somerville and Ross witnessed all around them at the end of the nineteenth century.

While Jas and his son, the heir Beauty Kit, no longer feel the pride and joy of the Big House or the ancient family ties, Shibby and Young Johnny represent two alternatives for the future of the land and its development. The heteroglossic impulse of *The Big House of Inver* radiates from these two diverging and sometimes connecting characters. These two in-the-middle characters are exactly the same age and yet fall into two very different versions of Irishness: Shibby, illegitimate birth and all, is still an insider and a devoted caretaker of the feudal system that also denies her any claim to authority while Young Johnny Weldon is the current agent of the Prendeville estate, one of a long line of managers who remains extremely legitimate and proper but always on the outside of the gentry privilege. Jas, therefore, is the most torn between the dueling alter egos in Shibby and Young Johnny and he represents the last of the old order waiting to see what will come in the new. Will it be Shibby's way or Young Johnny's? What little motivation or intention Jas had as a youth is now completely absent. In some respects he is the reincarnation of the absentee landlord that suffers under Edgeworth's harshest criticism, except that Jas's physical body remains on the property. The critique remains, however, that the absence of self government is the ill that must be corrected in the Anglo-Irish gentry class for any kind of future to be possible. And from the perspective of 1925, with the Easter Rising of 1916 and the transference of power in Dublin effected in 1922, Somerville has already witnessed the irreversible historical changes in her country. In *The Big House of Inver* set mostly in 1912 as it is, the chronotope of this narrative, the narrative of generations, or the family saga, clings, as

Bakhtin would say, to a hope for a future that has already proved nonexistent and impossible. So perhaps the intention of the Somerville and Ross narrative that remains is not an unrealistic vision for the future but a realistic reminder that honor must be paramount in whatever historical and familial trials ensue.

While Shibby Pindy represents in her very name the bastardization of the Prendeilles, she is the mirror of her namesake, Lady Isabella and “[t]hose who had seen the portrait of the Lady Isabella would declare that no better likeness of Shibby Pindy could be imagined” (46). Shibby’s voice is the double-voice of past and present and the blending of peasant with gentry as she also seems to inherit the “autocratic” ways of Lady Isabella and carries the essence of Prendeville authority in spite of—or perhaps because of—her illegitimate ties to the family line (197). Shibby works tirelessly to keep the Big House clean, “as clean as her strong hands could make” it, and to begin to furnish the empty house with pieces she buys at auctions from the money she makes selling pigs, or other small goods available to her. Her greatest wish now is to “live to see him [Kit] rise up out of his bed to reign in glory (with Peggy, was implicit in the prophecy) in the house his ancestors had built” (239).

Fixing the Big House for Kit and recreating the glory of those ancient family halls is Shibby’s singular focus. The obsessive narrative energy associated with the details of her cleaning, arranging, and negotiating calls out the suffocating insularity still surrounding this family’s narrative. There is what Bakhtin describes as a “still-evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)” aspect to the repetition of Shibby’s daily tasks as it leaves open the hope for a future. The narrative travels deeper and deeper into the discourse of the small moments in order to avoid the closure of the obviously

dead future. Shibby seeks to recreate the greatness that the portrait of Lady Isabella, still hanging in the empty rooms, witnessed and protected to suffocation. But part of what maintains tied to the family, despite Shibby's hopes that it will finally be cast off, is the wicked web of philandering and indiscretion. Kit's spring fling with Maggie Connor, the worst of the barroom girls in town, unravels all of Shibby's plans. While what Kit does is "no more, my poor child, God help ye, no more than your father done before ye!—and no more than them that came before him" it is also tragically, Shibby knows, "but too much—O God! Too much!" (209). Kit's actions, instead of being accepted as was the case for his father, coincide with the cultural shift towards the moral sensibilities of Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Weldon who condemn and whisper about such indiscretions. Shibby's comment to Kit reflects the internally dialogized narrative that Shibby is aware of and can pronounce but clearly does not believe herself. She stands on the outside of the judgment though she delivers it for her beloved Kit to understand. None of this would matter at all if the Predevilles still had the prestige and money to maintain their insulated life, but with a great sum of wealth and the demesne lands inherited directly by Peggy Weldon from her grandfather Old John, what the Weldons think becomes of greatest importance. Kit also happens to adore Peggy Weldon and yet his past mistakes will keep him from achieving this love match. As much as it hurts Shibby Pindy, her friend Dr. Willy Magner speaks the truth for the Predeville family situation when he opines "there was no doubt but a handy sum of money in the heel of a young man's fist, was a more useful thing for him than a big empty house" (263). The language of the doctor, the only other prominent middle-class figure in the novel, reinforces the financial dictates that are taking hold alongside the social conduct rules

and expectations as exemplified by the Weldons. Dr. Magner's statement and the realization that the Big House of Inver is gone from the Predevilles brings "tears to her eyes" as Shibby mourns the death of her vision and her dreams for the youth and his future (263).

Young Johnny, as a part of the rapidly rising, upwardly mobile, practical, solid, and industrious middle-class, has plans and visions of his own for the future of Inver. Guided by a surface of morality and holding tight to the principles of evangelical religion, Young Johnny judges the profligate past of the Predevilles and sees their degradation for what it's worth: his own gain. Following his father's resourcefulness, good work ethic, and prudent investment, Young Johnny becomes one more of the family who adds to the "cement steps" leading to his family's "cultural elevation" (52). What's left for these ascending ambitions? If his daughter Peggy were to marry a title, the family's transition would be complete. The Weldon family could move from the outside to the inside of the privilege Young Johnny has watched go to ruin around him. Shibby's and Johnny's ambitions both circle around Peggy, though obviously for very different purposes. If Peggy marries Kit, the Predevilles win, so to speak, or gain some more time to perpetuate the façade of ancient authority. If Peggy and her demesne lands go, along with the Big House, to a new-money and newly-titled man, then the Predevilles become obviously the relics they really already are under the surface.

Johnny creates an advantage for his ambitions by presenting Old Jas with a buyer for the Big House and a hefty sum of money to give Kit a different future than that of his current depressed state. Jas seems to react to this opportunity with a paternal instinct for helping his son in a way that he apparently has avoided in Kit's twenty-seven years

up until now. Once the offer for the purchase of the Big House is made, Sir Jas thinks “he’s [Kit’s] not had the chances I had” and that with the money instead of the house a “better time might be coming for him and for me, too” (243). Sir Jas tries act bravely by claiming “I’m well pleased to get it off my hands at last” as he has often referred to the Big House as unpleasant as a barracks. But once the papers are actually signed and his family’s home gone, tears appear in his eyes and betray that “terror was waking” in him at this decisive action which he realizes will forever alter the dynamics of his family’s heritage (232, 234). This singular utterance for Sir Jas’s experience speaks volumes for the terror that is waking in the Anglo-Irish community in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Young Johnny’s vision for the future comes through the heart of the old order and the painful adjustment becomes visible in Old Jas, and of course, more especially Shibby who had so much investment in a by-gone tradition. Old Jas takes Young Johnny’s way, but the text mourns Jas’s decision through “piteous mumblings of the Old Captain” and through Shibby, who becomes “an immense embodiment of the spirit of Tragedy” (234, 260). Johnny, contrarily, spreads news of his “triumph through his native place” that he feels over the sale of the Big House to Sir Burgrave and his daughter’s engagement to this wealthy man (263). For Sir Burgrave, Somerville and Ross spare no amount of abhorrence and critique. Burgrave is not necessarily an evil man, but he despises all things Irish, brings his father’s trade-industry money to buy his family a coat of arms, and wields this *nouveaux riche* money to find just the right land and property necessary to establish his presence as one entitled and titled. Johnny desires the match be made with his daughter, Peggy, so that her ownership of the

demesne land added to Sir Burgrave's title and ownership of the Big House will therefore also add a layer of cement high enough to achieve his family's upward-mobility dreams.

It is hard to fault Johnny for any of his prudence or even most of his ambition, but the narrative sympathy clearly rests with Shibby and the Prendy-Prendeville establishment. The solidness of the Weldons creates the foundation on which the future will be built, but it takes the destruction of the old foundation to get there. As Shibby prepares the transfer of the Big House of Inver by clearing it of her possessions, Old Jas remains ensconced in the house with his pipe, and he accidentally burns the house down. The relic of the old order dies inside the Big House he abandoned, and his death is the result of his own negligence. While Jas's fate is symbolically tragic, Johnny provides the levity of the moment with his sincerity and thus reinforces the changes that have now decidedly taken place; as an insurance agent, he took out a policy on the house the day the sale was finalized. With all the assurance and joviality possible at this moment, he throws out, "Sure I had it insured, to be sure! On the same day we paid the money . . . I'm an insurance agent, don't ye know!" (268). Young Johnny's voice here is the voice of industry and prudence and is obviously the voice of the future defined by admirable principles. While divergent from the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy gentry "party line," so to speak, the heteroglossic nature of this novel embeds the social and historical reality as a part of the painful and tragi-comic artistic style of Somerville and Ross. With these last lines of the narrative this insurance agent reminds us that a sure future for Inver lies with him and the prudence of his

actions. Burgrave and Peggy clear away the past after it has been incinerated and will surely rebuild a Big House of their own and create a new legacy at Inver.

Just as at the start of the nineteenth century Edgeworth imagined a Jason M'Quirk who could rise out of the agent class to take over ownership of the Rackrent estate, *The Big House of Inver* breaks into the twentieth century and represents the slow degeneration and destruction of Anglo-Irish estates. But this narrative is not an isolated expression of duality; in fact, "in place of a stable world with fixed truths," as Ann Owen Weekes claims, Somerville and Ross narratives "present an inchoate world dying and forming at the same time" (70). The alternations between perpetuation and decline demonstrate the investment these authors have in the narratives of their contradictory and tension-filled existences. Weekes describes the parallel efforts of the authors and their lives as she writes, "It is fair to say that both Violet and Edith expended enormous physical efforts in preserving the estates reserved not for them but for their brothers and the brothers' male children" (63). And what keeps them and their narratives spinning around comedy and tragedy is that Somerville and Ross demonstrate how they clearly recognize "hideous injustices, both personal and political" but "they nevertheless cherish" their society and their place as Anglo-Irish women in the Big Houses of the Irish countryside (Weekes 79). Throughout Somerville and Ross's literary careers they engage in the socio-cultural particularities surrounding them which infuses their narratives with both the pleasurable and painful realities of their culture as it parallels the turmoil in Ireland and the modern world. It seems that throughout all of their negotiations of demise and disaster is an undercurrent of hopefulness (naïve though it may be) for humane coexistence of communities.

¹ See Gifford Lewis's descriptions of these precarious financial realities: "Robert Martin, Martin's brother, received no rents from the Ross estates after 1879. The Coghills, Edith's relations who lived at nearby Glen Barrahan, were in deep difficulties from the early eighties. Edith entered in her diary on 8 January 1882: 'Uncle Josc's tenants have paid up 300lbs and refuse to give more. The amount due is 1600lbs' (*Somerville* 26). Furthermore, Lewis describes the common perception that "Cork landlords were not rapacious bullies of a down-trodden peasantry, but that they were merely outmoded, no longer necessary" (28). On the Martins' side, Lewis reveals that "[t]he Martins tried to live away from Ross, but in 1888 Mrs. Martin and Martin returned as tenants, living in five rooms. Robert Martin joined the household with his wife and daughter, contributing £3 weekly to the carefully kept housekeeping fund" (29). Robert's daughter "sold Ross out of the family in 1924 during the Troubles" (29).

² Le Fanu's 1872 collection of stories entitled *In a Glass Darkly* (London: R. Bentley and Son) includes a series of psychological cases as reported to a Swedenborgian doctor, which is the essential framing device used to connect the various incarnations of haunting, and also his famous vampire story *Carmilla*.

CHAPTER 4
CROSSING THE THRESHOLD: ELIZABETH BOWEN'S CREPUSCULAR
NARRATIVES OF A CULTURE IN DECLINE

"It will have been seen that this is a country of ruins. . . . Now, we no longer seek the 'picturesque circumstance'—in a crepuscular world our nerves have enough to bear."

--Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court* (15-16)

Maud Ellmann's book on Elizabeth Bowen begins with the claim that "Bowen is one of the finest writers of fiction in English in the twentieth century," but she adds that "[Bowen] is also one of the strangest." Ellmann's double-voiced critique exemplifies what Bakhtin calls the "internally dialogized hybrid," which can also describe Bowen's artistic style (Ellmann x, Bakhtin 361). Bowen's narratives have been referred to as atmospheric, concerned with and connected to a preciseness of time and place, obsessively detailed, and vaguely haunting. Bowen explains part of this in her Preface to the 1951 Knopf edition of her short stories when she reveals that she got her start in the short story form by "exploring the possibilities of atmosphere" and by shining a "spotlight" on singular moments and concepts on her way to learning how to "illuminate steadily" in novel form (xv, xvii). This Preface is Bowen's own critique of the formal quality of her stories. In the Preface she openly admits that she writes as someone with fewer answers than questions, and considering the questions her stories raise, she writes, "many end with a shrug, a query, or, to the reader, a sort of over-to-you," revealing that at the time she "was not yet ready to try conclusions with any world I knew" (xviii, x). Born in 1899, Bowen knew a world full of political turmoil and by the early 1920s it becomes clear that she is affected by coming to maturity "in a Europe losing its innocence in World War I and in an Ireland engaged in wrenching a sense of

national identity from the Anglo-Irish” (Weekes 83). The historical boundaries and events of her adult life—World War II, especially—also work to intensify the dislocation and dispossession felt by Bowen and expressed in what Ellmann refers to as the “frictional disjunctions” within her narratives (4). Throughout her literary career, as an Anglo-Irish woman writer in the first half of the twentieth century, Bowen “remains aware of the primeval impulses battering at the bastions of modernity” and writes the heteroglossic narratives that expose the contradictions associated with this rapidly changing terrain around her.

The critical reception of these awkward, intense, and atmospheric stories, however, was decisive for Bowen because of the effect contemporary reviews had on her. Bowen mused, “the critics, by perceiving what sort of writer I ought to be, had done much to shape me” (xv). Indeed, Bowen’s fully three-dimensional prose style is achieved through a sort of evolutionary development consisting of several stylistic commonalities repeated, examined, and developed—beginning in these early short stories. This connection between her short stories and her novels is palpable, and as Ellmann avows, “her longer fiction thrives precisely on the tension between the epiphanic concentration of the story and the leisurely expansion of the novel” (25). Out of Bowen’s great body of work, this chapter will focus on two novels set in Ireland, *The Last September* (1929) and *A World of Love* (1955), as well as complementary short stories and her war-time novel, *The Heat of the Day* (1949). Taken together, they help to illuminate the tensions Bowen’s artistic style demonstrates. Dominated by what Bakhtin terms the “chronotope of *threshold*,” Bowen’s narratives reiterate concerns over

the “breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold)” (248).

Early Stories and Ann Lee's

In the collections of stories, we see various external and internal struggles that come out of this examination of the threshold between the sanctity of individuality or internal personal integrity and the confinement of the roles we play in society. Bowen constructs her novel's characters and then chips away at that construction, as she shows them fighting to find a balance between the private, internal self and the external, social self. Threaded through the stories are the social discourses we use to define ourselves: religious, community, hereditary, and individually chosen. In addition, Bowen uses various boxed-in structures such as houses, rooms, terraces, and pergolas which highlight the inside and outside living spaces her characters occupy. As R. B. Kershner summarizes, structure is the key to the drama embedded throughout Bowen's narratives: “In every sense, Elizabeth Bowen is a writer of houses. Her novels and stories are, at least superficially, civilized, domestic, and often familial in focus. Her emotional dramas are played out within walls—walls which, ambivalently, can either unify and protect a family group, intensify the isolation of a single soul, or frame the falseness of a group's mores” (407-408). As characters open the door and cross the threshold, or close a window and cross a different threshold, Bowen's narratives portray both the claustrophobia of containment and the relief of freedom.

Along with the many two-word titles of the short stories, we see a pattern develop through a variety of fill-in-the-blank roles. The narratives teeter back and forth in their singularity and yet obvious universality: daughter, sister, wife, woman, brother, husband (youthful and aged, alike), helper, controller, friend, lover, journalist, neighbour,

servant. These boxed-up roles hold the contents of some conflicted characters. This role-playing and difficult negotiation between public and private identities often leads to or prevents desirable relationships. Conflicts and desires within both romances and friendships dominate the narratives, just as the ghosts of the dead--known and unknown--and the attendant memories of buried pasts haunt them. Violence punctuates the narratives of the first two collections of short stories, especially "Ann Lee's" and "Recent Photograph," but psychological torture, hurting loved ones, also appears frequently in these early stories, for example, "The Shadowy Third" and "The Storm." The common denominator in these stories is Bowen's play with socially repressive situations. The early stories, therefore, play a crucial role for Bowen in developing what Bakhtin refers to as the "ideological development" of an author; this development is "an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values. The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not *finite*, it is *open*; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer *ways to mean*" (346). In "The Parrot," "The Return," and "The Shadowy Third" Bowen starts giving a context for "ever newer ways" to understand gender, class, and relationships.

The stories are frequently melodramatic and certainly atmospheric, but Bowen develops a grotesque social comedy narrative in "The Parrot" in order to spotlight the kinds of cages we live in and the caged roles we play—knowingly and unknowingly, by choice and by conditioning. The great escape of the parrot in this story demonstrates a vivid social comedy laden with tragedy that provides a poignant critique of the roles of privileged women, their paid companions, and communities of class divides. The story

opens with the flight of a “pale-green streak across the sky” which is identified as Mrs. Willesden’s parrot. Eleanor Fitch, who hates this caged bird, still works diligently to recover her employer’s beloved pet as she understands that her service to Mrs. Willesden includes the care of this bird. The story develops, then, from the whims of the parrot and the human follies inevitable in the act of capturing a rogue and dodgy creature. In this grotesque comedy, the parrot plays the clown, Eleanor the fool, and the opened cage releases the same trick of narrative we found in frequent use by Somerville and Ross, giving us a diversion from the singularity of narrative point of view to include the direct discourse from the animal’s perspective.

The escaped parrot’s demeanor is initially described as a “mixture of ecstasy and apprehension,” and that crucial combination establishes the rhythm of this dance between humor and social commentary where we come to know as much about a bird’s emotions as we do a young woman’s (175). As a paid companion under the supervision of Mrs. Willesden, Eleanor feels caged up herself. During her dutiful stalking of the roving bird, her introspection strays to her innermost desire for something other than her current situation. She does not feel hopeful, however, about her situation, as it is marred by this knowledge: “She knew, however, that she could not be dangerously attractive, because although she was quite ready to marry anybody who seemed at all suitable, and thus escape from life with Mrs. Willesden and the equally odious alternative of using her brains, nobody, even of the most unsuitable, had so far presented himself” (177). The repetition of the word “escape” from the first line of the story to Eleanor’s interior musings while in the act of attempting to re-cage the parrot draws attention to the parallel lives of these two trapped creatures. As with Francie in

Somerville and Ross's *The Real Charlotte* or Lois in Bowen's *The Last September*, Eleanor has an internal dialogue that highlights the caged role of women in the institution of marriage rather than presenting a true avenue for escape; it might be leaving one place of servitude or confinement, but "to marry anybody" would simply subject Eleanor to another confining role.

The bird's flight takes it to the Lennicotts' rooftop; these are slightly scandalous and very modern neighbors. In order to get to the rooftop, Eleanor crosses into this new and exciting house and through the window out into the openness of the boundless sky. While the rooftop is threatening and dangerous for the parrot, it is cathartic for Eleanor. The bird gets harassed by other birds and shows the wear of it, as Mr. Lennicott tells us: "I believe, you know, that the other birds have been nasty to it. They don't like anything a different colour from themselves" (190). Eleanor, in contrast, gets a wide view of the neighborhood and feels an excitement for this adventure while up on that same rooftop. The discourse of confinement and prejudice associated with the dialogue of the upper middle-class neighbor separates Eleanor from this interior space; even though she has crossed this threshold into the Lennicotts's house, it is temporary and her place in it is defined by the color of her feathers, so to speak, as the servant next door. The character speech emblematic of high society here lays bare the class divides as something barbaric, as primitive as birds' instincts. While usually trying to appear as distinct from animal qualities as possible, this casual utterance reveals the brutality underlying society.

The sharp humor of this story revolves around a cycle of torment: Eleanor acts knowingly out of her sense of duty and chases after a bird she hates in order to save

her job which she hates, and in the process she becomes enamored with the risqué neighbors who are and will remain completely out of her reach socially and economically. She feels the tantalizing appeal of the joviality of these neighbors and their amiable company and decides that “she did not want to go back to that house of shut-out sunshine and great furniture, where the parrot was carried royally from room to room on trays, and she was nothing” (192). The spark flares out quickly, however, as she immediately comes to the pathetic awareness that “it was useless, not an inch of their way and hers lay parallel; to catch at them would mean, ultimately, only another of these wrenches” (192).

This narrative has one of those “over-to-you” open-ended endings Bowen recognized in her prefatory critique (xv). And in the case of Eleanor Fitch and “The Parrot” we are left to wonder if the new call, “like the crowing of the cock” is the wake-up call, the call to action, and the change-of-life epiphany made good for Eleanor, a paradigm circulating through the New Woman popular debates and in the fiction of George Egerton, Sarah Grand, and Ouida. Up on that rooftop, the possibility shines as brightly as the morning sun, but back in the still-curtained bedroom of Mrs. Willesden, it remains dimmer. The re-caged bird’s calling out in the dim bedroom emerges as “a note of regret and bewilderment,” but perhaps this is where the paths divide for Eleanor and Polly the parrot. Still, if nothing else, we are left with Bowen’s critique of a social system that cages people like bright and pretty birds.

For the paid companion Lydia in the story “The Return,” regret and disgust accompany the return of the masters of the house. A sociable couple, Mr. and Mrs. Tottenham have, we find out in the opening line of the story “come home” (26). They

enter their house after a six-week absence and shatter the solitude Lydia had enjoyed while free from the hierarchical relationship of employee and employer. Lydia feels the weight of her mistress's return heavily upon her soul and responds secretively and internally with angry emotions. Initially we find that Lydia feels "aware but dimly of a sense of desolation and loss" upon the return of the Tottenhams, but the subsequent intensification of Lydia's distress leads to something much darker than a disgruntled servant: an exposure of the social ills within this class system. As Mrs. Tottenham "burst[s] open the drawing-room door and cross[es] the threshold" back into Lydia's life we immediately feel the invasive action of Mrs. Tottenham. Though she is the "mistress of the house," and this space belongs to her, she moves about it as though it (and those in it) need to be dominated. Mrs. Tottenham crosses the threshold and the narrative discourse that accompanies this movement and decisiveness reveals the quasi-direct discourse of the author who though politically quite conservative, seems entirely unwilling to accept the status quo of these social institutions she portrays in the collected stories. This contradiction reflects the resentment of the class-conscious servant and the customary confidence of the employer.

The repetition of disturbing terms from the discourse of horror reveals the violence and the seething agitation in Lydia's stream of consciousness narration as it is set in relief against the idyllic friendship Lydia developed with the once-empty house. This story seethes with the "pounce," "nervous rigor," "suffering irritation," "quivering with hostility," that comes out of the "dark and sullen," "gloom" "looming" in the "disturbed," "mar[red] and bull[ied]" house. Lydia muses that she and the house became "friends" in the Tottenham's absence, when it was just "me, myself and the house" (28). The

“hostility” Lydia feels towards the “invaders who were the owners of the house” changes her relationship with this house as she announces, quietly, secretly, internally, “now we are afraid and angry with each other again” (28). The fear and anger announced through the personification of the house is embodied in Lydia’s self-consciousness as she witnesses herself in the drawing-room mirror: “Lydia felt as though she had caught her own eye, and was embarrassed and discomfited. She listened with derision to her glib and sugary banalities of speech . . . ‘Yesterday we believed you were sincere’” (33). Lydia talks to herself, and as the voice in her head gains prominence, it is marked in the text by the quotation marks; these are her internal utterances, which divide her internal self from her external self. Lydia’s internal dialogue reveals the struggle she goes through to try and reconcile the conflicting appearance of acquiescence she maintains on the outside and the reality of disappointment she feels on the inside. Revealing Lydia’s internality as different from her externality through this self-talk is a deft move for Bowen as we witness the “unification and disunification intersect in the utterance” that opens up the heteroglossic nature of this compact story (Bakhtin 272).

The material reality of this situation cannot be ignored, and it remains unchanged. The Tottenhams own the house, and the employee-employer relationship between Lydia and Mrs. Tottenham maintains its habitual rhythm. Lydia’s internal chaffing, however, and her own acknowledgement that she is “well-schooled” to provide “constant attention” and service to her mistress comes with the narrator’s intrusive and telling question, “why had she forgotten?” (29). Though this question is left unanswered in the text, this quasi-direct discourse of the author leaves the question open to her readers. Ending with this “query,” as Bowen called it, the discourse extends beyond the

bounds of Lydia and the Tottenhams and shines the spotlight on the economic and social institutions in flux in the 1920s.

Lydia herself describes her desires as simple, yet profound, in that they entail this hypothesis: “if only this room were all her own: inviolable. She could leave the rest of the house to them, to mar and bully, if she had only a few feet of silence of her own, to exclude the world from, to build up in something of herself” (34). Published in 1923, this sentiment precedes Virginia Woolf’s articulation of a woman’s need for *A Room of One’s Own* published in 1929. It does, however, resonate with Bowen’s own room- and house-specific experience during the writing of these stories and speaks to the conversations actively taking place around the chronotope of this novel. Bowen’s own writing space is detailed and described in her prefatory remarks in the 1951 reprinting, and we know from Bowen’s biography and her comments in the preface that Bowen felt out of place through much of her life. Therefore, the particularity of her writing table and the “scene” where she first endeavored to complete “The Return” and the other short stories in this collection reflect the sense of ownership and connectedness to a single location that remains significant throughout the stories. This locatedness also speaks to the gender and class discussions circulating around from the 1890s to the time of Bowen’s writing these stories. Familial space, like personal space, is a deeply “ambiguous power” in Bowen’s life, as Kershner claims in his reading of the oneric quality of houses in her novel *House in Paris* (408). This “ambiguous power of houses” emanates from “Bowen’s deeply ambivalent concept of them” and they seem to play a “formative role” in her narrative style and fictional aims. “Certainly,” Kershner writes, “houses for Bowen are the single most important embodiment of the principles of

continuity, community, and renewal, and further serve to characterize the various qualities of human relationships” (408).

Class differences and stations reflect only part of Bowen’s willingness to expose the violence and cruelty encased in the most socially repressive situations. Characters acting cruelly to the ones they love break the veneer of civility frequently throughout these collected stories. The many scenarios showing the cruelty of ignoring or emotionally abandoning a spouse and the inconsiderate infidelity or revengeful nature of married partners, the tormenting impulses of a daughter towards her mother, or the rough-and-tumble of girls’ adolescent friendship all demonstrate this bubbling up of the monster within each of us that buffets against the containment asked of us as entrenched members of a social system.

“The Shadowy Third” introduces the discourse of gothic haunting to demonstrate, as J. S. Le Fanu did in “The Familiar,”¹ that the ghosts of those we wrong never leave us. For Captain Barton in “The Familiar,” past indiscretion comes back to him in footsteps, odd visions, and a horrifying decline into paranoia and illness. There is nothing very subtle about Le Fanu’s warnings; for Bowen, however, the nod to this gothic stylization pops up to the surface only occasionally. Martin and his wife Pussy feel the psychological strain of the shadow of Martin’s first wife as they learn to negotiate Martin’s past neglect in their present circumstances in “The Shadowy Third.”

Martin, the “pale little man” who bursts into the opening of the story, seems to be a rehabilitated and rejuvenated man now as he rushes home on the 5:20 train to meet his second wife and dotes dutifully on her as he engages himself in every aspect of their lives together. He is scarred, however, and the destructiveness of his behavior in his

first marriage becomes all the more clear when this new wife reveals her innermost fears: she knows how fragile love is and that being intertwined with other people may bring some pain with it, which is very astute for one who appears so entirely one-dimensional at first glance. When Martin's wife, Pussy, tells him, "I was trying to imagine what I'd feel like if you didn't care," Martin rushes to comfort her and surround her with the care she seems to desire. But the disruption of this episode is not controlled so easily. Pussy continues, "I think,' she said, 'that not to want a person must be a sort, a sort of murder. I think a person who was done out of their life like that would be brought back by the injustice much more than anybody who was shot or stabbed.'" (121). In Pussy's seemingly innocent utterance the narrative reveals instead the knowledge that Martin failed to care for his first wife and by implication, then, suffers this accusation of murder through the voice of wonderment in his naïvely prescient new wife. He is not guilty of any murder according to the standards of law and the dictates of the social contract, but Pussy's dialogue reveals how an emotional death can carry with it the same kind of intensity as an overt act of violence. Pussy's speech with its reliance on the simplistic notions of black-and-white, absolute morality combined as it is with the romantic and folkloric notions of the possibility of a ghostly return of a broken-hearted lover shows the terror that penetrates all aspects of the marriage institution.

We know that Pussy is unaware of Martin's guilty reminiscences about his first wife and the particular ways in which he did ignore her and how he failed to sustain his desire and compassion for his first wife, who suffered terribly after a miscarriage. Martin guards these flashbacks and has shared few details with the somehow innocent yet fully aware new wife. Martin was, in fact, a bit mean-spirited and failed to provide emotional

and physical support to this first wife and Pussy's utterances call him out and call out the titular "shadowy third," the ghost who still haunts their lives together and their shared house. Martin tries to stand strong against the presence of guilt and the hauntings of the past by holding close to Pussy: "'Nothing can touch us,' he reiterated, looking defiantly into the corners of the room" (122). Martin remains unconvincing though he is clearly trying hard to contain the spookiness which reveals just the opposite: something has already touched this couple and remains for them to negotiate. The contrast between Martin's spoken words and his internal quiet speak contrasts his exteriority and interiority, which makes this characterization a part of what Bakhtin notes is the human image being represented as "multi-layered [and] multi-faceted" showing that there is "a core and a shell, an inner and an outer, separated within" the character (136). While in classical Greek texts, a man was only an exterior being, with no internality or a "concept of silent thought," this model of human representation shifts in subsequent epochs and in modern times, the human image becomes "literally drenched in muteness" (Bakhtin 135). Bowen uses the power of this deep internality in the narrative to reveal what really counts is the most haunting aspect of this story; it is not the ghost in the corner of the room that totally unnerves us, but the ghosts lurking in our minds. As Bowen practices this snooping into the character's mind, we see her preparing to reveal just how true the epigraph to this chapter is for her: "in a crepuscular world our nerves have enough to bear" (Bowen *Bowen's Court* 16).

These early works, then, show a concentration on the shock and horror within individual experiences and isolated moments. By shining the spotlight on single utterances in these stories, Bowen achieves what Bakhtin sees as the "two responses .

. . . harnessed” to produce an “internally dialogized hybrid” narrative. What develops in these short stories is an artistic style that highlights Bowen’s penchant for combining intensity and levity in these suffocating interior and exterior constraints. These contradictions intensify in Elizabeth Bowen’s subsequent novels. Bowen’s chronotopic preferences reach across to the European continent (frequently taking root in Italian vacation spots) and back to English countrysides and seashores, London counties and London proper, and most assuredly, Ireland.

The Last September

The last Somerville and Ross big house narrative, *The Big House of Inver*, published in 1925, I have already argued, is an exposé on a house and family in disorder and the destructive quality of this degenerated inheritance. As Bowen enters into her literary career at the same time *The Big House of Inver* is published, she naturally picks up the story in this crucially displaced state as she gives witness to the deracination of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland that intensifies through the 1920s to the end of her life. The Somerville and Ross Inver house burns down to the ground as a result of the negligence of the family, and as Bowen posits this story and makes it her own, Danielstown in *The Last September* burns to the ground from an act of external violence. The 1920s was for Bowen when “Ireland’s bitter struggle for Ireland entered a new phase” and she explores this fully in *The Last September*, a narrative of threshold riddled with contradictions and decisive breaking points of life (*Bowen’s Court* 439; Bakhtin 248).

Bowen’s novel *The Last September*, published in 1929, plays out the violence of Irish agitations and the fight for the freedom of home rule. This novel illustrates what Mark Bence-Jones in his historical retrospective *Twilight of the Ascendancy* feels is a

realistically fashioned fictionalization of the disturbances in the countryside: “*The Last September* . . . describes with almost terrifying accuracy what life was like in an Irish country house at this time and how the people living in the house felt” (199). Bence-Jones points to the year 1920 as the time “Elizabeth Bowen had in mind when she wrote the novel,” and he exposes the “bleak” aspects of “Irish country-house life” during that time (199, 202). Told in three parts, these end-of-summer vignettes in *The Last September* demonstrate the intense psychological drama of the younger generation of Anglo-Irish contained in, and yet betrayed by, the big houses of their families. The characters move easily in and out of a few plot lines as the cyclical nature of the narrative subverts the importance of the plot and instead opens up Bowen’s exhibition of the “ideological worlds” at play in the microcosm surrounding the big house of Danielstown.

The Last September has as its principal artistic quality the organization of the Big House novel, a novel of generations and family saga. Set as it is in Ireland circa 1920, however, this narrative is more than touched by the Gothic sensibilities of ruination, claustrophobia, and violence. While *The Last September* is a family novel, the Anglo-Irish family living at Danielstown is getting sparse: the elder Naylor’s are joined by one nephew from Lady Naylor’s side of the family and one niece from Sir Richard’s side of the family. The novel shows some tendencies, also, towards the familiar chronotope of the provincial genre with the glorification of the “age-old link between the life of generations and a strictly delimited locale” and the “unity of the place as locus for the entire life process” (Bakhtin 229). But instead of the “rhythm of human life” being “in harmony with the rhythm of nature,” as is common in the provincial novel, the rhythms

of the lives around Danielstown are determined by either an adamant complacency by the Naylor or the overwrought agitations provoking crisis by the younger generations of the English, Anglo-Irish, and Irish.

The narrative trajectory of *The Last September* strikes down the life of clear continuity that the Anglo-Irish Naylor desire as the narrative brings to the forefront the historical reality of The Troubles of the early 1900s in Ireland. *The Last September*, then, brings in the overwhelming sense of loss that ends *The Big House of Inver*, and without any insurance agent or the assurance of the nouveaux riche Englishman and his middle-class Anglo-Irish bride to build up a new house on ancient land, Bowen seems to be saying that this really is the death of the old order at this moment. And even though Somerville and Ross exposed the ultimate decline of the social and financial viability of the Anglo-Irish gentry and convincingly buried them in *The Big House of Inver*, and to some degree in their earlier novel *The Real Charlotte*, Bowen breathes just enough life back into the Naylor family and their friends and neighbors to expose them once again. Through a double exposure, as on a photograph, this narrative shows, then, the double-voiced impulses of the contradictions in Anglo-Irish life in the Irish countryside of the 1920s.

The pains of the adolescent and orphaned Lois parallel the pains of Ireland at this moment in the narrative. As the novel opens at the end of the summer, we see Lois trying to figure out what to do with herself now that she is twenty, without a profession, with very few interests or passions of any kind, and with nothing more than a basic education. As a New Woman, the world is wide open to Lois, but she has no idea what her future will be. A new Ireland is also opening up at this time after the Easter Rising

of 1916, the many political shifts occurring in elections, including the meeting of the First Dáil, and the actual start of war efforts in 1919, but the outcome of all this change remains uncertain. For Lois, this unknown future seems both tantalizing and scary as she begins her flirtation with Gerald, an English officer stationed in Danielstown to protect the Anglo-Irish families. But through various subtle hints we sense that Lois disapproves of the English soldiers and their actions in the struggles with the native Irish and feels more sympathy for the local people with whom she was brought up. And Sir Richard and Lady Naylor make no hesitation about their disapproval of the soldiers in their Ireland. While we witness Lois defining her future by process of elimination—Gerald is shot and therefore no longer a prospect for the escape of marriage such as Eleanor Fitch was looking for in Bowen's short story "The Parrot"—we witness an Ireland working to eliminate the Naylor's and their class from its future.

There is tension in the narrative between the reluctance to abandon tradition by the Naylor's and their neighbors and the danger this tradition precipitates, electrifying the otherwise languid narrative, which simply walks through a few common days of life in a house. The everyday language and the casual utterances of the novel's characters give Bowen's heteroglossic narrative the space to "fight it out in the territory of an utterance," to fight out, as Bakhtin says, the ambiguous possibilities embedded within the whole. The full cast of characters, from the few neighboring Anglo-Irish big houses and in the garrison town of Clonmore holding the British army, flits from the tennis courts to the drawing rooms and picnics in-between; they are frequently reminded, however, to be home before dark, to be wary of sitting out on the front house steps after nightfall, and to be careful about traveling from country house to country house. In other words, the

reality of their endangered existence remains real and understood, even if mostly ignored or repressed. The precedent for this nonchalance comes from Bowen's own experience at Bowen's Court at the start of World War I when she was fifteen. She and her father were on their way to a garden party where the "Anglo-Irish people from all over north-east County Cork" were assembled, and after stopping at the post office, her father learned that "England has declared war on Germany" to which Elizabeth replies "Then can't we go to the garden party?" (*Bowen's Court* 435). Bowen's reaction to this news telling the onset of war becomes an emblematic memory for her of her desire to carry on with life just as it always had been; Bowen critiques this naïve response saying, "If at ten or twelve I had been precocious, at fifteen I was virtually idiotic" (435). So, these virtually idiotic Naylor's and their neighbors carry with them just that same contradiction of decisiveness and ridiculousness that the narrative explores.

The big event at Danielstown is the arrival of the long-expected guests and friends, the Montmorencys. They fit right into the fold of Danielstown, but provide a bit of that fresh perspective of the newcomer, such as Somerville and Ross used to their advantage in several narratives. While Francie Montmorency is sure they will be shot at if they sit on the steps of Danielstown, her companions get a good laugh over what they consider to be her foolishness. Mr. Montmorency's preoccupation with the avenue and the big scary outdoors has to do with Lois and her admitted dancing along the lane with her beau, Gerald. He wonders if it wouldn't be hard on her shoes for Lois to be dancing much on the lane (26-27). There is an air of imperviousness and impracticality that brings forth the easy chuckles of the reader, but also betrays a more violent and harrowing reality. These are the casual utterances of the characters that yield to

Bakhtin's insights on the truth and limitations that are combined in the "elemental force of social languages" (356). There is danger on these steps on a global scale and there is personal danger approaching Lois specifically.

While the adults sit and ponder the presence of violence, Lois plays the role of the romantic heroine as she wistfully dances in the avenue. Lois experiences the freshness and fullness of fear during this nostalgic reminiscing and her solo reenactment of her dancing along the avenue with Gerald earlier in the day. Cloaked in complete darkness, Lois loses herself momentarily in the memory of Gerald's cheek, his strength as a dance partner, and her growing desire for him. Her new partner, however, is fear: "Her fear of the shrubberies tugged at its chain, fear behind reason, fear before her birth; fear like the earliest germ of her life that had stirred in Laura" (41). The frightfulness of this moment is heightened as the narrator reveals the psychological nature of the horror within: "she did not hear footsteps" and, instead Lois "thought what she dreaded was coming, was there within her" (42).

But, alas, a man in a trench coat does pass by, unaware himself of his audience, as Lois is now hiding in the darkness along the edge of the shrubberies. Lois and the reader see only a partial view of him as the narration describes him as "some resolute profile powerful as a thought" and continues with an explanation of intention: "It must be because of Ireland he was in such a hurry" (42). This hidden, coated, swiftly passing no-man stops Lois's dancing and dreaming and reduces her moment of nostalgia to a moment of insecurity over political and national identity. This passerby leads the narration away from the action and into a reverie on the country, and Lois's naiveté

again represents the great potential of exploration and discovery that seems to go nowhere with her but seems to be growing ever more definite for Ireland.

As the narrator reveals that Lois “could not conceive of her country emotionally” we are reminded of the powerful effect of the hyphen in the term Anglo-Irish. Even though this identity seems to remain emotionally unknowable, Lois is credited with some astute knowledge of geography as Ireland is described as a “frayed island moored at the north but with an air of being detached and drawn out west from the British coast” (42). The insertion in the narrative of this language of cartography, or geography, brings out an obvious moment of heteroglossia where we see “*another’s speech in another’s language*,” refracting the intentions of Lois and the author. The narrative reveals, then, the author’s concern over this frayed island that contains frayed people and frayed identities. And beyond the scope of this narrative, this description seems to be an accurate description of late twentieth and twenty-first century political realities. There is more than an air of personal change in this moment with Lois and her ambiguous internal fears and her emotional disconnect to Ireland because there is the reality of the independence-seeking man in the trench coat, army garrisons, lorries on patrol, and violence that seems to be barely contained under the surface of everyday life.

Information on the army is delivered through Sir Richard over the soup bowls at dinner. “‘This country,’ says Sir Richard, ‘is altogether too full of soldiers with nothing to do but dance and poke old women out of their beds to look for guns’” (30). One of these lorries on patrol, in fact, breaks the silence of the still night air as the Naylor, Montmorencys, Lois and Laurence are all lounging on the steps in the front of the house during their post-dinner repose. This lorry is slow, deliberate, though it struggles a bit:

“It seemed that the lorry took pleasure in crawling with such a menace, so slowly along the boundary, marking the scope of peace of this silly island, undermining solitude” (38). The personification of the lorry in this moment allows it to stand in for all of England and the military and political policies being enacted at the time. The quasi-direct discourse of the author here reveals England’s imposition, felt by the Anglo-Irish as well, as this protective force “undermine[s] solitude” (38). The lorry continues its path and it is not long before “[t]heir world was clear of it [the menacing lorry], so that a pressure lightened” (38). The pressure from the outside, the English forces, and the pressure from the inside, Peter Connor and the hiding rebels, combine on this night creating a haunted and internally dialogized discourse which reveals the precarious position of all parties involved. Bowen’s narration reminds us that the shadows and the thoughts just below the surface are always present in our experiences with major social and political changes.

In spite of these shadows and thoughts, which occasionally bob to the surface, Lady Naylor valiantly fights to repress this subterranean nastiness. During soup service at their welcoming dinner, she hushes Laurence in front of the Irish parlourmaid, and she quickly and smoothly interrupts talk of England and Ireland to insert details about the tennis party that is to be held the next day. While their class interests are mortally threatened, Bowen’s characters still think it best to avoid sore subjects in socially-mixed company, yet others engage in idle dinner chatter that might invite disaster. This is a clear satirization of the class, already in decline, which is negotiating its role, within the mind and within the new socio-political reality of Ireland.

This is the kind of psychosis Somerville and Ross put on display in *The Real Charlotte*, through Sir Benjamin and Lady Dysart, where Sir Benjamin is wheeled about by an attendant in his bath-chair speaking nonsense and lashing out in an abhorrent manner, and Lady Dysart plants the chickweeds instead of the asters in the family's flower garden. It is easy to laugh at the depictions of such oblivious and pathetic characters and to find them ridiculous, and yet it is also easy to feel implicated in that judgment because of the double-voiced nature of this narrative.

There is one moment of direct confrontation between the two Irelands, and the episode takes on a typically gothic dimension and atmosphere. On a leisurely afternoon stroll, three characters come upon an abandoned, decaying mill: Marda, a house guest at Danielstown, and the "most modern" and "wild" girl of twenty nine, still unmarried, but positively engaged—again, Hugo Montmorency, who is about to be tragically in love with Marda, and Lois, who is desperately waiting for anything to happen. Marda, with her usual impracticality exclaims, "Oh, what *is* that? The ghost of a Palace Hotel?" (178). The mill is described as sitting there "ghoulishly" and "like a corpse," and Hugo's interpretation overlays the national significance as he reflects on "another of our national grievances. English law strangled the—" and still his evaluation and history lesson remain unfinished because the two women have gone bounding ahead to investigate this horrific and fascinating ruin. The mill creates the perfect place for a scintillating adventure for the young women and a great moment for political discourse for Hugo. Adventure and politics converge in this structure with its crumbling walls and opened-out windows to show another threshold being crossed in the narrative. A mill is a place of work, a place of sustainability, and a livelihood, but the narrator reveals that

this “dead mill entered the democracy of ghostliness” (178). What is noticeable immediately in this unusual description, “the democracy of ghostliness,” is the attention it pays to the universality of disrepair and decay in her Irish countryside; does this discourse ask us to consider that if one layer of society suffers that in turn they all do? This is one of those queries left to the reader reminiscent of Bowen’s short story style that still plays an important role in her critical glance at socio-economic issues within the novel’s discourse.

This now-defunct mill houses a sleeping man. While unaware of this resting Irishman, Marda and Lois playfully pick their way through the nettles and around the crumbling and scattered pieces of the building until they open the door to his makeshift bed chamber with a “coat rolled into a pillow” (180). Yet, he remains undisturbed by the girls’ entrance and noises. Finally, after much peering in on him, the presence of Marda and Lois disturbs his peace enough that he awakens with a start and a pistol in his hand. While it is not particularly pleasant for these ladies being confronted by a startled man with a gun, this narrative withholds any exposure of overt violence. The now-awake Irishman makes these two women seem foolish for being out on their leisurely walk and coming from the Big House of Danielstown when he says “yez had better keep within the house while y’have it” (181). The carefully reproduced character speech here marks an implied anger and violence coming out of the language of rebellion, the strength of which is a very real part of the discourse in this moment of crisis in a crepuscular world. At this point the reader realizes the political motivation and therefore the identity of this unnamed and undescribed man. Throughout the novel leading up to this point, vague warnings and references to weaponry, soldiers, and the hidden

mysteries no one can quite define are dropped in to the narrative from both the casual comments of characters and from simple descriptions in the narrator's discourse.

Marda, Lois, and the pistol-carrying Irishman enact this dynamic and play their roles self-consciously.

As part of the mysterious twist of this text, the narration zooms out rapidly from the interior of the mill and hides the dramatic encounter of politics, class, national identity, and potential violence taking place within. Instead, we find the dawdling Hugo caught up in his own interiority; he is day-dreaming and oblivious. The sound of the pistol shot pierces Hugo's ruminations and he springs into action, racing towards the "façade of decay" and towards that singular sound of disruption. Hugo rushes headlong into his duty and finds only the bleeding hand of Marda already administered to by the comforting attentions of Lois. Hugo continues on into the interior of the mill even as the women beg him not to; they pass at the threshold and the narration remains on the exterior with the sanguine victims. This threshold divides the experience of violence from the narrative discourse.

Marda and Lois hold the details of the gun-shot event secret between them which seems to nod again to the Gothic undertone of this family saga, especially as it is played out in the Gothic-style ruin of the old mill. They also hold their pact because, Lois tells us, "we swore," which can be seen as an utterance revealing the voice of many: Marda, Lois, the Irishman, the narrator, and the author. This was a communal experience and all indications reveal that the author honors the conflicts and pacts the Irish and the Anglo-Irish make together. Marda and Lois resist the urge even to go over any of the details of the situation amongst themselves. The event remains, therefore,

unspoken and unnarrated. Marda and Lois maintain an uncanny calm in the face of this gothic violence. By eliminating the textual representation of this violence and leaving only a glimpse of an all-okay, all-resolved conclusion without explanation, the narrative of *The Last September* demonstrates that the social aspect of these political and national ills is infinitely complex and horrifying whether we witness them or not. Bowen is a realist who brings the narrative back from a true judgment because as an Anglo-Irish woman of property and hereditary ties to Ireland, she is inextricably linked to the fate of those who would be judged.

Even to the end of Marda's visit to Danielstown the three witnesses to this violence remain steadfast in their pact of nondisclosure. It does not go without comment, however, as Hugo gibes ironically and knowingly, "I don't know what Miss Norton's [Marda's] friends will think of her hand . . . Their worst suspicions will be confirmed; they will think we have been shooting at her. Her stumble was most unfortunate" (197). The truth in this lie jumps out at the all-too-aware reader: the violence remains real, evident, and perhaps still shocking enough to keep from being completely ignorable.

The most respectable young ladies and the Army garrison gents literally and metaphorically dance around the issue of violence and vulnerability as the CO's wife arranges and pulls off the liveliest of social events depicted in the novel: a dance for the locals and the soldiers. While they are there for frivolity, the "slight discomfort, of national consciousness" persists for those in attendance. One sweet, innocent young lady announces with no apparent irony, "'Wouldn't it be a rag,' said Moira, releasing the tenseness tactfully, 'if they tried to fire in at the windows while we were dancing?'" (209).

The party decorators and designers dutifully draw the curtains to ward off this disruption, but drawing the curtains on trouble opens up our reading of this narrative. The troubles obviously exist and everyone is aware of them, but as crisis seems just on the other side of a thin threshold (the windows, curtains, and walls) of these Anglo-Irish spaces, the actions taken seem totally incommensurate with the level of anxiety being felt. While the event comes off without incident, plenty of small details remain to show the delicate balance of negotiation required by these two separate entities: locals and stationed military. The girls all find families to stay with for the night instead of driving home through the unprotected and purportedly unsafe country roads; the soldiers try to dance, drink, and eat away their headaches and the “hate” for Ireland that tortures so many.

The summer comes to a close and the Big House empties. The Montmorencys are off to Mediera, Laurence returns to his rightful place at Oxford, and Lois finds a way to something new and different away from Danielstown. She has left for France to embark on learning French and touring with “an interesting, cultivated family” (300-01). As Lady Naylor and her neighbor Mrs. Trent discuss Lois’s plans, Mrs. Trent makes a passing comment that helps to mark the seasonal changes and the social changes incumbent upon them: “Mrs. Trent nodded an approving farewell. ‘Every autumn, it strikes me this place looks really its best’” (302). Of course this is the last September for this family and their Big House.

Danielstown, and Sir Richard and Lady Naylor, come to their inevitable demise at the end of the narrative when the “executioners” intensify their raids. In a marked shift from progressive narration to reflective and retrospective descriptions, Bowen’s

narration reports the doomed fate of Danielstown. The narrator reports in a voice heavily accented with the author's, "Here, there were no more autumns, except for the trees. By next year light had possessed itself of the vacancy, still with surprise" (302). As the only living witnesses to the events at Danielstown, these trees speak of the surprising and disorienting loss of which Bowen writes, which comes through the narrative's syntax replete with convoluted prepositional phrases and the personification of light. If the seasons continue to cycle then the trees follow the seasons, and the land supports its inhabitants. This reads like an attempt at understanding that circumstances change and lives adjust, but the tension created within the internally dialogized narratives is that these are hard experiences. The sensibility of these platitudes is disrupted, in fact, by the harshness of Bowen's narrative descriptions of the intrusion upon Danielstown and the death of the Naylor's.

It seems as though Bowen's sentimentality and intensely dramatic naming of the violence as "the execution," and her melodramatic narration of the events opens up a sense of moral indignation and perhaps her own feelings of betrayal:

At Danielstown, half way up the avenue under the beeches, the thin iron gate twanged (missed its latch, remained swinging aghast) as the last unlit car slid out with the executioners bland from accomplished duty. 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 confidently to the steps. The door stood open hospitably upon a furnace. (303)

The anthropomorphism of the aghast gate and the hospitable door show how aware Bowen is of a significant transition: the flux of life and power and the inevitable cycles of existence. The shock of these cycles comes from the contrast to the previous cycles which included house guests, tennis parties, and their evening strolls, even though the autumnal chill had already begun to creep into the air.

Throughout *The Last September* the narrative has drawn our attention to the moments of tension and languor that hover on either side of the threshold, dividing tradition from change. For the Anglo-Irish folks this is a state of living, but there may also be some critique of their easy slipping back and forth without some awareness of the material realities of the situations at hand. There is an obvious desire to maintain the pact of secrecy and camaraderie between the Anglo-Irish and the Irish, like the pact between Marda, Lois, and the hiding Irishman in the old mill, but when no one recognizes the changes incumbent upon them, this pact burns up.

The Heat of the Day

Bowen pens her idea about the state of the world and its crepuscularity (“in a crepuscular world our nerves have enough to bear”) in 1942 during her retreat to Ireland from war-torn London. She goes to Bowen’s Court to write her family’s history and the history of the house. Clearly the increased attacks on English soil, the intensity of fighting during 1942, and the overall atmosphere of war inform Bowen’s observations on the shifting world and the tension associated with those changes, even though she is purportedly writing about Ireland and her family’s place there. It is no surprise, then, that Bowen’s wartime novel converges around this comment, in both concept and actuality: *The Heat of the Day* is a crepuscular narrative set in 1942. Published in 1948, this historical novel orchestrates a tale of wartime London that reverberates with the tones of a discordant community, city, and nation. And though precisely dated and reflective of events of the war, there is little-to-no historical account of the war except as the constant backdrop recreating an atmosphere that exposes the souls of the “crowds still eating, drinking, working, traveling, halting” who inhabit London during the Second World War (*The Heat of the Day* 92). While characters attempt to just simply go on with

the provincial nature of everyday life amid the air raids and destruction, this narrative also reflects the intensity of this time of crisis through the narrative chronotope of threshold.

For the most part, *The Heat of the Day* is a story about Stella and her domestic life, but war, politics, treason, violence, and relationships are all powerful subtexts within this heteroglossic narrative. Stella is a middle-aged divorcée and widow; she is also the mother of a dutiful soldier, Roderick. With two other men playing crucial roles in defining Stella, we witness how Stella's life buffets between national duties and personal desires. The covertly traitorous character Robert, Stella's lover, is accused of selling war secrets to Germany, showing Bowen's complex negotiation of loyalty (or disloyalty) through the language of patriotism and absolutism. The representative of the official state, Harrison, tracks Robert and wishes to negotiate with Stella for Robert's freedom and life, and becoming Stella's lover is his price. Louie, the rough-around-the-edges, lower-middle class counterpart to Stella, provides a crucial voice of alterity and frankness within the cacophony of war-torn England. The intersection of these characters, their voices, and their overlapping conflicts helps to bring out the "differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of [her] epoch" (Bakhtin 300).

The disturbing effects of the war are most visible in the conflation of exteriority and interiority. As exterior conditions—bombs, sirens, and information (or its lack)—destabilize the foundations of core concepts such as allegiance, patriarchy, life, and death, the narrative constructs a polyphonic version of a historical event. Recognizing Bowen's concerns over the notion and the physical reality of homes as the locus for the

blurring of boundaries, Kristine Miller helps to draw the connections between Bowen's fictionalization and the historical reality underpinning *The Heat of the Day* as she writes that during World War II in England, "traditional notions of the home's seclusion and security crumbled with the walls of townhouses, flats, private homes, and air raid shelters" (140). Without the stabilizing effect of dwellings and solid structures, *The Heat of the Day* opens up room to explore atmosphere and the haunting effects of violence on the outside and on the inside, which has been a persistent quality in Bowen's narratives from the short stories and through *The Last September* as well.

Some critics argue that *The Heat of the Day* is a story about the personal and political struggles of Stella, an upper-middle class woman living in London during the Second World War, and her subsequent growth and development in the face of these challenging circumstances. Stella is, certainly, a transmittal vehicle for the human element in this particular psychic London under examination as the reader lives through much of the indeterminacy of life through her. But she is one of many whose criss-crossing through, around, and even out of London figures in this sometimes claustrophobic and always disorienting historical drama. The younger generation of Stella's son and soldier Robert and Louie, Stella's working-class counterpart, reveals the two separate futures Bowen imagines coming out of war-torn England: on the one hand there will be Ireland and a family estate for Robert; on the other hand, there will be Louie, who along with Thomas Victor, her fatherless baby, escapes off to Seale-on-Sea, the nostalgic homeland for Louie that was devastated by bombings but has the promise of becoming inhabitable again. The novel ends with the eventual, eventful, and from a reader's perspective, necessary, "unexpected-expected day" of the end of the war since

this is the retelling of history (328). Presumably, then, life will continue in some kind of normalcy. Bowen is not, however, offering a synthetically concordant conclusion; the negotiation of boundaries and the nerve-racking effects of this crepuscular world in *The Heat of the Day* amplify the tensions expressed in Bowen's artistic style.

Opening the novel on a Sunday, with an outdoor concert, in a park, in bombed-out London, in the afternoon of a long, late-summer, early-autumn day, Bowen sets the stage for the in-betweenness of this crepuscular narrative. Throughout the novel, the in-between spaces are indefinite and disturbing physical, psychological, and emotional representations of the state of London and the people who populate it. The first lines of the story read: "That Sunday, from six o'clock in the evening, it was a Viennese orchestra that played. The season was late for an outdoor concert; already leaves were drifting on to the grass stage – here and there one turned over, crepitating as though in the act of dying, and during the music some more fell" (7). This opening passage demonstrates an intriguing combination of specificity and non-fixity in its crepuscularity: as the day is named Sunday and the time is pin-pointed as clock time, the season is merely "late." In elaborating the effects of the changing season, we see how the more fluid, more indeterminate narrative description fills out the paragraph.

From a specific day and time, Sunday at six o'clock, we move through to a more amorphous association with the atmosphere of the season, and in that movement there is a complementary flux and flow of meaning. As calendar time and clock time fade out, the logic of those regulatory systems fades with them, thus exposing the double-voiced nature of the discourse. The narrative is layered with the present moment, watching the leaves fall and hearing the music, and the inevitable future outside of this time and this

narrative, the historical events surrounding the war. There is more story to unfold in this single utterance. The “knots of narrative are tied” as Bakhtin would say, at these intersections of chronotopic values—present and future, fictional and historical (250). And the clumsy ambiguity of “some more fell” exposes the layers within this single utterance; while the leaves are falling here we also know that bombs will fall, people will fall, homes will fall, cities, nations, and even empires will fall. This embeds the narrative with the thrill and the terror of the unpredictable future so keenly demonstrated in Bowen’s artistic style.

In the “open-air theatre” of this Sunday afternoon in the park, there is a concert: there’s music, people, and a pleasurable moment of life. The arena displays the artfulness and the commonness of existence in a single experience. The concert announces itself softly in mere “hints” throughout the park that disturb the amblers who are then “slowly drawn to the theatre by the sensation that they were missing something” (7). Described as being not “completely in shadow,” the concert area remains unfilled as people pause “doubtfully” at the gates because “all they had left behind was in sunshine, while this hollow which was the source of the music was found to be also the source of the dusk. War had made them idolize day and summer; night and autumn were enemies” (7). Again the work of the heteroglossic narrative delivers the notes behind the scenes, the haunting meanings between the lines, as the lure of the music is contaminated by the dread of the dusk which demonstrates the tensions felt by the people in war both phantasmally and materially. As many pause at the gate, on the threshold of dusk and the hollow, the crisis of war is exposed and the tension associated with complicated choices which in any normal everyday Sunday really

should be simple choices: go sit and listen to a free outdoor concert or keep walking on. But what Bowen shares so poignantly here is that at a time affected by war, none of the everyday aspects of life are commonplace anymore.

This crepuscular opening of the novel plays out the specific chronotope of the threshold and creates ambiguity: with the changing of day to night that happens with the “light so low, so theatrical, and so yellow that it was evident it would soon be gone,” balancing on the cusp of summer and autumn, on a specific day, at a specific time, but really lacking date and lacking time, lives exist in this state of flux. The combination of the duskiness of the twilight and the “glass-clear darkness” that is fast approaching at this concert in the park, reflects a similarly cryptic amorphousness and ambiguousness of the novel’s heteroglossic discourse (7).

Through the frame of Stella’s glassless bedroom window, we see the broken down, depleted, devastated landscape of the bombed-out London, and we feel the destabilizing effects of this absent, useless boundary between inside and outside. This haunting window that raises up “with a phantom absence of weight” actualizes the perviousness of seemingly impervious elements (93). Without the intervening barrier of the glass panes, we feel as much as see how the “mists of morning charred by the smoke from ruins each day rose to a height of unmisty glitter,” and that days filled with “singed dust” and “smoke” destabilize routine and disrupt the normal expectations for everyday life (90-1). The dilution of permanence to impermanence and the dust that surrounds all of these regular moments of time and experience renders a disturbing, uncanny otherness to that which should be familiar.

The double-voiced discourse of historicity and crepuscularity constantly reinforces the idea that in wartime life is uncertain and especially susceptible to uncertainties during the barrage of exterior forces on interior spaces. The disruption of normal life is expressed in the narrative through the excesses of the unusual life for all of the “stayers-on in London” (94). Stella’s particular “sensation of being on furlough from her own life” represents some part of this unreal reality (94). And Stella’s amorphous state resonates with her surroundings as she witnesses how “the existence, surrounded by one another, of these people she nightly saw was fluid, easy, holding inside itself a sort of ideality of pleasure” (94). This pleasure-living made visible in the narrative posits the fools and clowns of public spectacle. The carnivalesque absurdity of a new London where “there was plenty of everything—attention, drink, time, taxis, most of all space” transfers the aching, the straining, and the haunting nearness of death into its opposite, a revelry for the people of this charged atmosphere and peculiar place (95). This stop-gap solution is, apparently, what helps to bring characters through the “lightless middle of the tunnel” associated by Bowen with the autumn of 1942 that opens this crepuscular narrative.

Like the “living ghosts” populating Bowen’s narratives, the most formally gothic element of this psychic London is the disorienting integration and oscillation between the living and the dead that becomes apparent in the erasure of the usually discrete boundary between life and death (Ellmann 15)². The twilight of the concert in the park that opens the novel is thus reiterated here as the etherealness of a fully-living, not-fully-dead existence becomes apparent. It is again in the chronotope of threshold and

through the crepuscular narrative discourse where these slippages come to inform the text:

The wall between the living and the living became less solid as the wall between the living and the dead thinned. In that September transparency people became transparent, only to be located by the just darker flicker of their hearts. Strangers saying 'Good night, good luck,' to each other at street corners, as the sky first blanched and then faded with evening, each hoped not to die that night, still more not to die unknown. (92)

Later in this narration the many unknown dead, the fathomless depths of loss and disappearance without recognition worries the text and remains as the most strikingly ghastly remnant of trauma of the Second World War as it is experienced in London. So it seems as death comes to the surface of events instead of being neatly buried underneath our consciousnesses, intimacy is fast, readily available, required, and supplied. The betweenness and the transparency of this "particular conjunction of life and death" radically alters any normal system of signification: if living is as close to death as it is to the excesses of corporeal life, then even the presumably distinct polarity of life and death becomes muddled, unclear, undecidable as a fundamental category and instead based on conditionality, contingency, and the work of the narrative. And as it takes the exchange of utterances between strangers for each to feel present, the narrative reflects the Bakhtinian nature of "the word in language [as] half someone else's" (293).

The Heat of the Day pushes the reader through the historical atmosphere of the disturbing assaults on London in this claustrophobic narrative, like pushing through the "lightless middle of the tunnel" (90). Air raid sirens and bombs as the true-to-life elements of war in this narrative become the extreme limits of this phenomenon of infiltration; these elements erase the divide between exterior and interior and allow us to

examine the hazy uncertainties that arise along this threshold. The uncertainties in this novel include questions about patriarchy and the traditional social roles that lose all meaning in the inside spaces of a world in crisis. These uncertainties are also most surely raised in questions of inheritance, family land, and finding a home, which seems to be possible only outside the city and in ambiguous territories like Ireland. And perhaps most haunting is the questioning of life and death as the narrative creates a transparency between the two. The crepuscularity of this novel—the twilight, the dimness, the haziness, the evening out of boundaries, borders and barriers—allows us to consider many of the “subtle forms of ideological violence” that Miller identifies as being “concealed in times of peace” (155).

A World of Love

While there may be external peace in *A World of Love* (1955), the internal disruptions and hauntings are plenty and widespread. As the very first words of this narrative arch back to *The Heat of the Day*, we realize the chronotope of threshold and crepuscularity will once again define the artistic style of *A World of Love*. The narrative opens at the start of day: “The sun rose on a landscape still pale with the heat of the day before” (9). While hoping that this sunrise will bring “into being a new world,” in fact this is still a world of damaged marriages and estranged families who most of the time exhibit more meanness to each other than affection (9). In the midst of a heat wave, set in the south of Ireland, with a timeline spanning the two World Wars and an early 1950s historicity, this narrative remains another folding over of time and place. *A World of Love* opens up in the midst of convoluted relationships and a marching on of time, but saunters first with a cryptic and fantastical girl all alone in the haze of dawn’s light. In her “trailing Edwardian dress” Jane Danby appears “like a Vision” to the only servant at

Montefort who sees her as she comes to work in the morning. This posited, dreamlike figure appears as though she were the orphan Lois plucked right out of *The Last September* and dropped in to this more modern exposition. This confusion of time and space has the same effect of disorientation that we find in *The Heat of the Day* as memories, ghosts, present and past reverberate with the possibilities of discovering something new and something deeply repressed.

Bowen's full expression of the ghostly quality and disorientation common in the Irish countrysides comment comes out distinctly in *Bowen's Court* in a lengthy rumination that consequently illuminates much about this haunted narrative of another family saga playing out in another Big House:

The not-long past of these houses has been very intense: no Irish people—Irish or Anglo-Irish—live a day unconsciously. Lives in these houses, for generations, have been lived at high pitch, only muted down by the weather, in psychological closeness to one another and under the strong rule of the family myth. Lack of means, concentration of interests, love of their own sphere of power keeps most Anglo-Irish from often going away. I know of no house (no house that has not changed hands) in which, while the present seems to be there forever, the past is not pervadingly felt. (19)

A World of Love will not be written for more than ten years after this comment was set down, but this evaluation connects both the atmosphere and the reality of the artistic style that appears in the story of Montefort.

Montefort, set down as it is with its "blind end" to the river, has in its favor the "vestige" of a Venetian window that is now sealed up, and a "broken-walled" garden. Both work to reinforce the theme not only of the general "air of having gone down," but also the intense isolation of the house and the people in it. Even though the narrative starts with daybreak and the new beginning, the reality of the situation already shows decline, doom, and the shadow of former glory. The one monumental aspect of the

property, the obelisk, casts its shadow onto the house, but that remains its only connection to these modern inhabitants. This big house and the family within have clearly defined economic and familial parameters in this novel, and their particular situation clearly comments on the more generalized political and social realities of the Anglo-Irish at the end of their long decline.

A mixed up brood of Danbys live on at Montefort as what Ellmann refers to as “relics of the ascendancy” in a situation that bespeaks “paralysis for all concerned” (177, 180). Antonia is the hereditary owner though she only visits Montefort in summers and stays most of the year instead in London being fashionable. Fred Danby is the illegitimate son of a rogue Montefort uncle who grew up in the stables and reminds the reader immediately of the Prendy to Prendeville connections in *The Big House of Inver*. Montefort is given over to Fred, however, to run and work (it is a working farm estate, as well) with his wife Lilia whom he gets as a package deal with the house. Antonia arranged it all; Lilia had been engaged to the legitimate heir and another cousin, Guy Danby, who was killed in battle in World War I. Fred and Lilia have two daughters, Jane and Maud, and Jane, who is Antonia’s pet, gets to live on with Antonia in London and school in England. Jane’s characterization and costuming in the opening of the narrative reveals the heteroglossic impulse of this novel from the start. The ambiguity and duality established by the dawning of the new day shining light on both Jane and the degraded and doomed house parallels the ambiguity of the lives of those on the interior.

Even though Jane, “ready and empty” as she is described, inherits the future of Montefort, she unburies the past in the form of a packet of old and hidden love letters

(51, 37). The discovery of these letters by chance encodes the narrative with the language of the dead and sends the whole of Montefort into a state of “wobbling reality” (67). The letters are the reminder of the torment of lost love, of lost life, of un-lived life, even yet to be lived life. These letters take on the fullness of a character in this mostly realistic novel as they travel, exist, define mood, create relationships, and affect the outcome of the story. The letters remain anonymous and timeless with no envelopes and no signatures or greeting; removed from location and posting, they exist equally as artifacts of the historical past and correspondence for the present day of the narrative. They embody a spirit and a capability all their own as they make themselves known to Jane: “they fell at her feet, having found her rather than she them” (27). Initially she is much more interested in the dress that covered these letters than she is with the letters, but clothing oneself in history draws one further into the “intense centripetal life” of the family domain (*Bowen’s Court* 20).

The letters create a vivid double voice in the narrative as they relay the most intimate peculiarities of each member of the Montefort household and are part of the exposure of the monsters within the characters and story (52). Jane approaches the letters and feels that “apprehension within her gathered into a peak: the inner course of her life was about to change” (33). Maud, who adheres to traditional ideas of order and desires strict patriarchal authority around her, delivers them up to her father, Fred. Fred seems to feel the most removed from them and simply delivers them to Lilia because he believes they must belong to her. Lilia, who is obviously not the beloved being addressed in these sweet letters, seems finally willing to let them and Guy go from her grip, so they simply fall off her lap where she limply holds them. Antonia gets to find

them for herself, as they lay in wait in the hall, but she quickly drops them off for “whoever’s next, I guess” in the servant Kathie’s domain, the kitchen (124). It is Jane who breaks the rubber band holding these various ghosts of Guy, but as part of her romanticized response to the letters, she ties them back up with a bit of sweet, fancy, white satin ribbon. This ribbon finds its most useful potential as an adornment in Kathie’s hair as they pass through her hands on their way back full circle to Jane. What had been a highly charged symbol out of the discourse of romance comes back to the everyday as the letters become something that needs to be dealt with like modern day junk mail, and the ribbon that kept them together takes its functional place in the servant’s hair. And so it is Jane who will be the decisive actor in burning them to ashes and releasing their pent-up energy. In a country with a painful relationship to burnings, it is interesting that this would be a welcomed incineration.

When the letters first find their way to the kitchen it is through Antonia, but the presence of letters in Kathie’s space upsets her. She demands an explanation from Antonia and declares her completely double-voiced reaction to their showing up: “Only, for goodness sake what’s come up? I’m sure I’d never care to stay where there’d been a curse” (123). Kathie’s comment reflects the discourse of superstition and common sense simultaneously. It also raises the reader’s awareness of the existing irony in the situation at Montefort where the Danbys continue living-on in the deteriorated and gothic conditions that are perpetuated at this cursed family estate. Though dismissed by Antonia in a lie as simply “Miss Maud’s fun,” the curse of the circulating love letters flips; once they are dealt with they actually cure the emotional stagnation that has plagued this big house (124). Kathie, with her superstitious voice of reason, does not want to be

involved in any house that has a curse on it, even though a fresh sense of frightfulness or concern over spookiness seems anachronistic to this already melting big house. The heat of these days, and the many dawns that have shone upon this house, have already crumbled the walls and killed the air inside these not-quite-living, not-quite-dead quarters that vividly show the curse of unwelcome deracination. Mostly practical, Kathie also displays the motif common to the comedic discourse of the folklorish, mythical, Irish country servant. Her outburst and slip into her gothic moment of mystery and supernaturalism, therefore, rings out as part of the living contradictions of entrenched traditions in a modern world.

One very special annual event lures the whole family off of Montefort property, the Hunt Fête, “which drew the entire county” (28). After getting all geared up for this ritual to display her worth and her rightful place in her family’s home territory, Antonia trips over a tent peg and what used to look and feel fine at the Fête, is now seen through her “jarred” vision which reveals the grotesque opposite: “revulsion set in, as it now did always” (29). The hilarity of the trip to the Fête becomes the ugliness of the slapstick trip and fall. The excess of the “pungent sweat and heatedly trodden grass, fumes of tea and porter, thrum of hoofs from the paddock, the strikings-up and dyings-down of the band” are initially appreciated as a “kaleidoscopic shimmer” but instantly become turned upside down in this carnivalesque moment: “like a bullet-hit pane, the whole scene shivered, splintered outward in horror from that small vacuum in its core” (29). While having appreciated the fame and frivolity of the social, public event when she first arrived, Antonia’s spirits come crashing down into an anxiousness and a sense of panic to escape: “she could not wait to get out—where was Fred? Where was the Ford?” (29).

The ambiguities inherent in this internally dialogized character speech are evident in Antonia's assessment of her possible escape route. Antonia's worry permeates the scene as it reinforces the folly of excesses and the danger of looking like a fool in a country where her existence continues on even though it is clearly a defunct way of life. She would like to have the assistance of her male (cousin) escort (though hardly the knight in shining armor, he is a good man), and she yet she knows practically that her escape is simply tied to the locomotion of the motor car, named specifically as the Ford; the chivalric romance of the damsel in distress is made modern as she looks for the machine that can actually do the job. A realist to the end, she remains, however, in need of a bit of saving. Fred's sureness in this incident helps to guide Antonia as he "resignedly took Antonia by the elbow and got her through the crowd to the parked car" (29). Reticent and bogged down by the weight of familial entanglements of guilt, power struggles, and past or future dramas, Fred usually says little to Antonia, but he does inquire after her health once they are on the road to home: "Sick? was all he asked on the drive home" (29). To this, Antonia coldly replies, "Only of everything" (29). Upon their return to Montefort, the big house, Fred puts back on his work clothes, marking the end of the public self (though his persona undoubtedly remains much the same) and the return of the private. The doggedness of Fred and the resignation of Antonia combined reflects the torture of existence under erasure, or as J.C. Beckett quips in his historical review *The Anglo-Irish Tradition*, "Even in the Irish Republic of today the ghosts of the Protestant ascendancy walk still" (44).

This same kaleidoscopic social occasion brings out the pain of disillusionment for Lilia, as well, who at fifty-something and worn out by loss, is not as fresh as a lily

anymore. Her state of disappointment occurs to her as she looks at herself in the mirror and we find the violence of self examination: “she and her image confronted each other and the day’s disillusionment” (30). The return of this disillusionment feels remarkable even though expected as “the marvel was that it should recur—summer after summer, the same story” (30). Lilia interprets her own situation, her reflection, her glove, her external façade and declares it all as “[d]amage: that was what it all came down to!” (30). Lilia is hard on herself in this internal dialogue, but as she learns to deal with her feelings of being besieged and “under observation” at Montefort, she helps to purge her family of its own torments and find a new vision in the mirror of everyone moving forward. Lilia moves on from her despair and damaged existence that she is so critical of in her reflection and proceeds to the arms of Fred to finally have a relationship built around love and understanding. Likewise, Jane learns to spread her wings; Jane takes off on a journey to the airport and a real-life love in the just-arrived Richard Priam. Antonia settles and becomes less contentious and leads the reader to imagine that she will be happier with Montefort, with her actual, real, state in life.

There are no working clocks in Montefort and modernity seems to have skipped over the place almost entirely. In true heteroglossic style, however, *A World of Love* pulls the reader through the narrative in lurching movements characterized by the newest of technologies: the motorized speed of automobiles and aeroplanes. These contradictory realities expose the stagnated interiorities the whole of the Danby clan inherited. The narrative examines the intense obsessions, relationships, and atmospheric experiences of the generations of pre-war and post-war Anglo-Irish landowners. The oppressiveness of this late novel harkens back to the penetrating

vignettes of Bowen's early short stories, is viewed from the reiterated big house windows of *The Last September*, and flinches within the claustrophobic confines of haunted interiors and exteriors that take prominence in *The Heat of the Day*. But this narrative ends in the open-air, opening out into a great beyond in the pleasurable, airy, evening drive of Lilia and Fred, and the arrival of Richard Priam by aeroplane which subsequently brings some fresh blood to this degenerating lineage. This novel, then, sets loose in the reader's imagination the possibility of a viable future now that the past is finally accepted, mourned, burned, and buried. To imagine this potential requires a remarkably optimistic outlook on this isolated big house family in remote County Cork, Ireland in the early 1950s. Moving from the Free State government and status which was being worked out in the late 1920s and early 1930s to the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1949 and joining the United Nations in 1955, the same year as *A World of Love* is published, Southern Ireland can no longer be considered the province of the Anglo-Irish in any respect. And yet, Bowen's inheritance and subsequent representation of life in this burgeoning republic, so different politically from the colonized Ireland Edgeworth and Somerville and Ross inherited, brings forth the artistic style of one who pauses in the threshold between tradition and change.

Alfred Corn's review of Bowen's writing style is that she "is all perception. Reading her you realize you have never paid close enough attention to places or persons, the mosaic of detail that composes the first, or the voices and gestures that reveal the second" (620). The aim of this chapter has been to pay close enough attention to the many thresholds Bowen crosses and bridges while finding the strength of her artistic style from the contrary impulses of tradition and change that surround her and inform

her. Writing about the generations of Anglo-Irish settlers in *Bowen's Court*, Bowen provides a key to understanding her internally dialogized style as a reflection of her socio-historical inheritance. Bowen explains that by the late 1700s, "[t]he grafting-on had been, at least where *they* were concerned, complete. If Ireland did not accept them, they did not know it—and it is in that unawareness of final rejection, unawareness of being looked out at from some secretive, opposed life, that the Anglo-Irish naïve dignity and, even, tragedy seem to me to stand" (*Bowen's Court* 160). Her fictionalization of this Bakhtinian principle of "a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the openended present)" shines through from her narrative spotlights on caged roles and escapist desires, haunting pasts and ghostly mysteries, death and rebirth, and the in-between spaces and erasure of boundaries. As illustration of this dialogic principle, what haunts Lois in *The Last September* the most is this openended present which feels as imposing as the forest around Danielstown: "Looking down, it seemed to Lois they lived in a forest; space of lawns blotted out in the pressure and dusk of trees. She wondered they were not smothered; then wondered still more that they were not afraid. Far from here, too, their isolation became apparent" (92). Lois and the anthropomorphized house stand in "amazement at the wide light lovely unloving country" out in front of them (92). This concern over isolation sits at the root of Bowen's social ideology as she represents the growing tensions between the contradiction of admittance and exclusion in the "lovely unloving country" (*The Last September* 92). These impulses play out as she continues to ask her characters and her readers "to throw open the doors and windows,

and to acknowledge our community in desire” (Kershner 422). Without this embrace of community, as Kershner claims, “the house of desire is a fatal habitation” (422).

¹ “The Familiar” was originally published under the title “The Watcher” in 1851 and then adapted by Le Fanu for inclusion, with this new title “The Familiar,” in the 1872 collection of stories entitled *In a Glass Darkly* (London: R. Bentley and Son).

² This phrase comes from Ellmann’s evaluation of the ghost in Bowen’s short story “The Back Drawing-Room” and Bowen’s regard for the Anglo-Irish, her own class, as “living ghosts” who “died before their mansions were burnt down, haunting their ancestors’ crumbling demesnes” (Ellmann 15). The specifically Anglo-Irish context for the comment remains applicable to all the hauntings scattered throughout Bowen’s narratives.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

“It is as if the author has no language of his own, but does possess his own style, his own organic and unitary law governing the way he plays with languages and the way his own real semantic and expressive intentions are refracted with them.”

--M. M. Bakhtin *The Dialogic Imagination* (311)

This project started from a desire to see what the work of *Anglo-Irish* authors conveyed transhistorically and also to understand the precise details of the historical circumstances of modern Irish literature written in English. As a scholar, perhaps I am as conflicted as these authors are in their stories. But the idea of discovering and interpreting cultural motifs across vast periodic boundaries remained interesting to me as one with an appreciation for archived stories and authors; the uncovering has proved fruitful. I noticed a palpable culture of communication born out of a culture dominated by inheritance and family life throughout the narratives of Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen. The novels under consideration in this project work to transmit the intricacies of a culture by representing its triumphs, tragedies, and trajectory across a very fluid one hundred and fifty years. While monumental changes occurred in politics, governance, social conditions, and personal lives, Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen represent informative links in the chain that binds the Anglo-Irish to each other and to Ireland. At some level, periodization seems to have passed over these authors and yet they bring to bear their own situations and circumstances in all that they produce. These Anglo-Irish women authors compose themselves and the culture and ideology converging for them and their communities as they play with language and find their “organic . . . real semantic and expressive intentions” (Bakhtin 311).

These authors put on display the struggles that come from transitional living; living through several distinct eras and many changes in circumstances, there remains an interesting thematic continuity that pivots around the issues of inheritance and heritage for individuals and communities alike. Chronotopically, though, these narratives examined in this project always reflect back their fundamental historical time-and-space particulars. The family saga, the story of generations, dominates the narrative energies of these authors—even underlying and surfacing in adventure novels and intense character studies. Thus my work on the narratives of these authors directly addresses this collective fascination with inheritance and lineage, as all three owe so much to the ones who came before them. From Edgeworth to Somerville and Ross, and then to Bowen, we see the looped and interconnected double-voiced utterances from fools, clowns, rogues, quasi-direct discourse, and genres of all types. These narratives turn around the single most important question dominating the lives of these authors (and their country and their communities) that has a multitude of answers but few certainties: How are we all connected and will we learn from one generation to the next in order to prosper, or are we stuck on the path of peril? Can we hold on to our traditions and embrace the changes that are constantly evolving?

These authors were actively engaged in telling the stories of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland and by doing so again and again they work through a few ever-present contradictions. For example, as Edgeworth reimagines the power structure in *Castle Rackrent* and posits the leadership role in the heart of the upwardly mobile middle class, we are still left with the sense of loss as narrated by the not-so-Honest Thady. How things were is no longer how things will be in this novel of generations and with this shift

Edgeworth implies a sense of loss. This warning, therefore, appears as a constant “semantic and expressive” intention in the narratives of Edgeworth’s Irish novels, ending with a totally reconfigured and remade future for Ireland through the figure of Ormond. Somerville and Ross share Edgeworth’s desire to examine their culture and their community in order to report back on what they cherish and renounce what they disdain. Somerville and Ross cast off Sir Dominick, Sir Benjamin, and Old Jas for their abuses of power and general misconduct while they struggle to foster a future for Theo and Willy in *An Irish Cousin*, Francie, Roddy, and Charlotte in *The Real Charlotte*, and Shibby and Beauty Kit in *The Big House of Inver*. As the narratives struggle over sustaining and releasing—sustaining the good and honest while releasing the destructive and diseased—there is an honesty that surfaces in the artistic style of Somerville and Ross. While Bowen could be voted the one least likely to keep writing domestic tales and family sagas with an Anglo-Irish focal point, the stories she told from 1929 to 1950 are as replete with the daunting quest for a viable future as the earliest of Edgeworth’s narratives in 1800. Bowen’s style is refracted, as it were, through the Big House windows found in her predecessor’s narratives, even while it brings a new focus on the psychological turmoil that spread through the modern world. Lois, Marda, and Hugo brood all through *The Last September*, while in *A World of Love*, Jane, Antonia, Lilia, and Fred torture each other over their shared secrets and their stultified lives.

In the process of uncovering what Bakhtin calls the “three-dimensionality” of prose in the narratives of Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen, this dissertation has shown the way these Anglo-Irish authors moved between the borders of their class and their personal and political identities: while circumscribed and boxed in at times they

also frequently display the subversive and exploratory qualities of true observers of their culture. In the many moments (incorporated languages, multiplicity of languages) where these authors give over to the complexity and variability of their contradictory existences, they reinforce my argument posited in the introduction of this project that while Ireland “was a conquered nation,” Ireland has done some conquering of Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen. These authors, as so many of their class and community, rest on the hyphen of the “hyphenated culture,” the Anglo-Irish.

Oliver MacDonagh takes an in-depth look at this concept of turmoil and intense complexity within Ireland and for the Anglo-Irish specifically, in his study *States of Mind: A Study of Anglo-Irish Conflict 1780-1980*. He eloquently and succinctly captures the divided psychological and circumstantial existences of this complex class of Southern, Protestant, Irish citizens. Ireland is their home and the root of their existence, but it is guaranteed to them by external forces and an authority structure which therefore excludes them. He writes:

Their Irishness was established by their very local supremacy and superiority of status, which ‘placed’ them in all senses. But the fact that this superiority depended not only essentially but even self-confessedly upon British arms and influence made them see themselves as part of an imperial structure. Domestically they were still overlords, but externally they were dependants. Over the next sixty years, 1825-85, however, their standing in Ireland was gradually eroded. This compelled them to modify their traditional view of ‘homeland’ and ‘mother country.’ . . . They had to face the fact that, sooner or later, they would be irrelevant in all the crucial matters of life to their own countryside, unless they bent, as most of them never would, to the winds of the new nationalism. (27)

One morning during the writing of this dissertation I woke up with a tune stuck in my head from a song I must have listened to the day before but could not distinctly remember. Just this one melodic phrase kept coming back to me, and so I tried to pay little attention to these tricks of my mind during this intense process. Later that same

day, the tune came back to me and this time with these lyrics attached to it: “We're swimming, we're floating / And in this moment we are beholden / To what we've caused, to what it takes / The one perfect world / Can we learn to live another way?” (Indigo Girls “Perfect World”). This allows me to close, then, with what I imagine to be the perfect modern-day poetics for what I wondered about and witnessed Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, and Bowen worrying over in their narratives.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in Miami, Florida, Sarah Margaret Mallonee attended Saint Lucie County public schools for elementary, middle, and high school. As a graduate of Lincoln Park Academy High School and as an International Baccalaureate diploma recipient, Ms. Mallonee attended Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in May 1998. Ms. Mallonee then returned to her home state and earned a Master of Arts degree in English from the University of Florida in May 2003. In the summer of 2005, Ms. Mallonee accepted a position at Indian River State College and returned to the community of her growing-up years to serve in the English and Modern Languages Department as a full-time professor of English.