

ABSTRACT

Space, Identity, and Conflict in Elizabeth Bowen and Deirdre Madden

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This thesis argues that there exists a fundamental relationship between space and identity construction and that this correlation becomes more apparent during periods of conflict. Because space plays a key role in identity construction, the lack of a proper space or an intrusion of that space has negative consequences for the individual. The oppression of a space can hinder individuation, and the loss of a formerly positive space causes a disruption that can be traumatic. While the relationship between space and identity is evident during periods of peace or normalcy, the strength of this connection becomes even more apparent during conflict—both personal and political. Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*, set during the Anglo-Irish Troubles, and Deirdre Madden's *One by One in the Darkness*, set during the Northern Troubles, both demonstrate the relationship between space and identity and how it is threatened by conflict.

Space, Identity, and Conflict in Elizabeth Bowen and Deirdre Madden

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This thesis argues that a fundamental relationship exists between space and identity construction and that this correlation becomes more apparent during periods of conflict. An individual's spaces—country, landscape, house—often shapes her identity. Because space plays a key role in identity construction, the lack of a proper space or an intrusion of that space has negative consequences for the individual. The oppression of a space can hinder individuation, and the loss of a formerly positive space causes a disruption that can be traumatic. While the relationship between space and identity is evident during periods of peace or normalcy, the strength of this connection becomes even more apparent during conflict—both personal and political. During conflict, external forces act upon the individual in much more intrusive ways. Spaces that were once neutral frequently become harmful because of the way they are used by those involved in the conflict. Furthermore, spaces that are oppressive for reasons unrelated to the conflict become even more so during periods of crisis.

The significance of this argument lies in its increasing popularity in scholarship and its relevance to literary works. Analyzing the particular spaces in novels, poems, and even plays has become a common approach among scholars (Cusick 42). Part of this can be attributed to increasing concerns about the environment and how the biosphere tangibly affects individuals. This trend, however, extends beyond ecocriticism. Scholars examine landscapes, houses, even individual rooms as essential components of literary

texts. These aspects of a work have transcended their former designation of “setting” and are now being recognized as integral elements of a text. Understanding the dynamics of a specific space becomes especially important when writers discuss conflict. When writers deal with difficult issues, it is often obvious why their characters struggle to the degree they do. There can be, however, underlying problems that even the characters do not apprehend. The tainting of a once beloved space seems so much less upsetting than the loss of a loved one that it can be dismissed as inconsequential. Developing a framework of how space affects individuals enables the critic to understand the depth of these problems and the underlying issues involved. Moreover, exploring the relationship between space and identity can help the reader on a personal level better cope with spatial intrusions and violations.

Elizabeth Bowen’s novel 1929 *The Last September* and Deirdre Madden’s novel 1996 *One by One in the Darkness* exemplify this pattern of space and identity being threatened by conflict. While Geraldine Higgins has pointed out some similarities between Bowen and Madden, there is no extended study of these two authors together (145). Thus, there is a gap in scholarship that needs to be explored. Bowen and Madden’s rich texts offer much to study individually, but they also benefit from being analyzed together, particularly because they both recognize the importance of space to identity and how that can be undermined. They have different emphases when it comes to space—Madden does not simply parrot Bowen’s notions of space—yet this fundamental idea appears in both their works despite their many differences. They came of age in different time periods and had quite dissimilar backgrounds in regards to religion, class, the political issues of the day, and gender equality. That two women with

varied life experiences had the same observation about space, identity, and conflict indicates its universality.

While Bowen and Madden's dissimilarities make their connection unique, it is their similarities that make them more of a natural pairing for scholarship. They stand in the same literary tradition of Irish women writers, they both grew up during periods of political conflict and national upheaval, and their writing displays many of the same interests and fascinations. When I asked if Bowen could be considered an influence on her work, Madden replied, "I do admire Bowen very much, particularly *The Last September*. I haven't thought about her very consciously as an influence, but there is something about the way she writes about Ireland that I like—particularly the sense of the house, the rooms, of being in a house in the country" ("Thesis"). She goes on to say, "In fact the more I think of it, you're very perceptive in noticing this, because it's a subtle but real point of connection. It's something about the atmosphere of her work that really appeals to me" ("Thesis"). Both writers notice the way a particular space can set the tone for a work. This emphasis on atmosphere and space permeates both writers' novels, but *The Last September* and *One by One in the Darkness* work particularly well together because they both capture the end of an era. Bowen sets her novel in the final months before the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 and the end of Anglo-Irish dominance. Madden sets her work the week before the first IRA ceasefire in 1994, which marks the beginning of the end of the Troubles. Both periods do continue to linger, but these works capture the pregnant pause before great change.

CHAPTER TWO

Interchapter on Elizabeth Bowen

The Anglo-Irish War of 1920-1 reflects centuries of tension and outright conflict between English and Irish, Protestant and Roman Catholic, landed gentry and dispossessed poor. While determining a true starting point for these hostilities proves difficult, it certainly can be traced as far back as the Elizabethan plantations. The Cromwellian settlement, James II's siege of Derry, the Battle of the Boyne, and the Battle of Aughrim all contribute to the changing power structures of the time. The 1798 Rising and resulting Act of Union continue to define the political climate of Ireland and set the stage for increased English and Irish tensions in the early twentieth century. As a member of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy—the Protestant ruling class, Elizabeth Bowen inherits this complicated history, as well as her family's Big House, Bowen's Court. The Anglo-Irish's ambivalence toward the English and Bowen's ambivalence toward the Anglo-Irish shape her attitudes toward the Anglo-Irish War. Furthermore, her own childhood experiences growing up at Bowen's Court began Bowen's lifelong fascination with the dynamics of space and emplacement. This house played such a pivotal role in Bowen's life that Danielstown—a Big House that meets its end during the Anglo-Irish War—serves as the setting for her novel *The Last September*.

An examination of this novel would be incomplete without an understanding of the historical context of the Anglo-Irish War and the formative events that led to its eruption. In many ways the conflict began with Queen Elizabeth's desire to "secure royal authority

in Munster by establishing a ‘plantation,’ or colony” in the early seventeenth century (Beckett 20). English plantations in Ireland had been attempted earlier but with little success. Plantations slowly increased in number until 1603 when the Gaelic chieftain Hugh O’Neill finally surrendered to the Tudor monarchy (23). O’Neill’s decision to leave Ireland to spend the rest of his life on the Continent—a move which, in conjunction with other Gaelic leaders leaving, later became known as the Flight of the Earls—provides an early example of Irish displacement at the hands of the English (Foster 43). O’Neill’s situation exhibits both national and religious tensions—national in that he fought for the retention of Gaelic culture and religious in that he was an “ally of the pope and Philip II against the queen of England,” despite his earlier stated allegiance to the queen (Beckett 22). Naturally, the English and Irish viewed O’Neill’s departure in a different light: the English thought that the Ulster lords had finally admitted to being fugitives, and the Irish blamed the English for causing the Earls to leave (Foster 44). Regardless, the true importance of the event lies in the “symbolic image of the last great Gaelic chieftain joining the world of Irish exiles” (44). The forced English settlement of Irish plantations created a sense of injustice and discontent that characterizes much of the ensuing English and Irish conflict.

The significance of land to both individual well-being and, more notably, as a means of power becomes even clearer during the Cromwellian land confiscations. Because the English Parliament used promises of Irish land to raise funds and in lieu of pay for soldiers, having enough land to cover these debts became a serious concern after the war (110). Appropriating land also became the primary source of punishment for those who opposed Cromwell (110). The extreme change in land ownership that resulted from the

English overextension of Irish lands drastically altered the power dynamics of the nation.

As J. C. Beckett suggests,

The old corporations, which had been a major element in the political power of the recusants down to 1641, now passed under protestant control. In the cities and towns that had been held by the Confederates, all property was confiscated, and granted or leased to protestants. Attempts to drive recusants out of the towns altogether had only partial success; but those who remained had no political power, and little share in trade. In town and country alike, the protestant interest that had been growing since the latter part of Elizabeth's reign had now established complete ascendancy; and this Ascendancy, surviving both Restoration and Revolution, was to control the life of Ireland down to the nineteenth century. (109)

This land redistribution shifts political power from Catholics to Protestants, without which the later Protestant Ascendancy would have not have been possible.

Though this new system of property laid the groundwork for later Protestant rule, it was not completely established yet. In fact it was greatly threatened by James II's siege of Derry in 1689. The last English Catholic monarch, James II fled England after being deposed by the Protestant William of Orange and Mary. He attempted to reclaim some power by advancing against Derry, one of the few cities in Ulster still controlled by Protestants (142). The city was ill-equipped for withstanding a siege—the food supply being much too low for the 30,000 people in the city walls, but the military leaders and popular opinion both wanted to resist James II's invasion (143). Eventually, Derry received relief from English ships and the Jacobite camp retreated after a fifteen week siege (143). This siege has significance in Protestant and Catholic relations because “its failure marked a turning-point in James's fortunes. Had Londonderry fallen, the moral as well as the military effect would have been immense; and William would have found the task of dislodging [James] from Ireland infinitely more difficult” (143). Unrelenting

resistance and harsh living conditions enabled the Protestants to survive this Catholic threat.

James II's tenuous position in Ireland grew increasingly precarious and finally non-existent after the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 and the Battle of Aughrim in 1691. James's defeat at the Battle of the Boyne was so severe that he "lost at one stroke almost all Ireland east of the Shannon. Dublin could not be defended, and James himself ordered its evacuation" before leaving the country himself (146). While this loss weakened James's forces significantly, he did not admit true defeat until after the Battle of Aughrim in Galway (148). More important than the loss of lives at the battle itself were the peace conditions attempted: Jacobite general Patrick Sarsfield sought religious toleration and civil rights for Roman Catholics (148). Although William wanted the Treaty of Limerick to remain in force, the Irish Parliament resisted. It wrote a "series of penal laws against the Roman Catholics [which were] contrary to the whole spirit of the treaty" (149). Additionally, almost a million acres of land was confiscated from Roman Catholic landowners, leaving approximately one-seventh of the country in Roman Catholic hands (149). According to Beckett, "The monopoly of political power that the protestant minority had enjoyed even before the Revolution was thus reinforced by a monopoly of land that was to survive almost unchallenged until the middle of the nineteenth century" (149). While the literal acquisition of such a large amount of land provides power enough, it is the knowledge of military success that furthers Protestant celebrations. Beckett argues, "The great change of fortune experienced by Irish protestants—from threatened destruction in 1689, to assurance of victory in 1690, and final triumph in the following year—left a memory that has survived until the present day" (149). This

lingering consciousness of past victories makes the Protestant Ascendancy both secure in its right to rule and upset when that right is challenged.

The 1798 Rising provides another decisive moment in Irish history because its failure resulted in increased sectarianism and led to the Act of Union. Formed in response to harsh treatment by the Ascendancy and the British government, the United Irishmen consisted primarily of Protestants, but also included some Roman Catholics and nonconformists (262). The insurrection began on May 23, but due to logistical and political hindrances, the rebellion was not enacted according to plan and was quickly suppressed (263, 265). What had initially seemed a potential bridge across a religious divide soon became reason for increased hostilities. R. F. Foster explains, “A campaign marked by horrific and unforgotten atrocities on both sides—already described as ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’—ended the rout on Vinegar Hill, 21 June 1798, and left an inheritance of heightened sectarian animosity” (279). The Act of Union in 1801 was considered a response to the 1798 Rising and proposed to provide a “structural answer to the Irish problem, with overtones of ‘moral assimilation’ and expectations that an infusion of English manners would moderate sectarianism” (282). While the Act of Union proved ineffective in decreasing sectarianism, it did further cement the Ascendancy’s position in Ireland; it was during this period that they began to be known as the Anglo-Irish (Rauchbauer 4).

After increasing in power and land ownership for two hundred years, the Ascendancy began its decline in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Numerous land reform acts in the late nineteenth century led to the Land Purchase Act of 1903 (Pašeta 46). This act attempted to solve the land problem by encouraging property

rights: largely Catholic tenants were encouraged to buy land and mainly Protestant landlords were encouraged to sell—with a considerable amount of persuasion provided by the British treasury. Being separated from their primary source of power made the Ascendancy's position in Ireland considerably more tenuous. The Protestant population declined by one-third between 1911-1916 (Jordan 50). The death knell for the Anglo-Irish's privileged position came with the Anglo-Irish Treaty signed in December 1921 (Pašeta 84). While this agreement did not provide Ireland with the complete autonomy that many wanted, it did greatly reduce the amount of control England had over Ireland—with the exception of the six northeastern counties which chose to remain under England's rule. The changed relationship with the British Empire drastically altered the lives of the Anglo-Irish in the southern parts of Ireland by ending their period of dominance and privilege.

The Anglo-Irish's feelings toward the English can be characterized chiefly by ambivalence whereas the Irish attitude toward the Anglo-Irish was in some cases more hostile. With notable exceptions such as Wolfe Tone, W. B. Yeats, and Lady Gregory most members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy opposed an Irish Parliament until the political situation compelled them to accept this as a reality (Rauchbauer 7). If the Anglo-Irish had lived in Ireland for so long, why did they still support British rule? Many of them felt a lingering sense of commitment to the Crown and Constitution and preferred to maintain a link to the British Empire (Pašeta 70). Furthermore, they did not all feel that a sense of Britishness was irreconcilable with their Irish identity. Not all Anglo-Irish, however, can be considered entirely in favor of the British. In fact, Cyril Connelly, a friend of Bowen's, said that when he was teased by Anglo-Irish cousins for being

English, he interpreted this “deadly insult” to mean “a combination of snobbery, stupidity, and lack of humour” (Glendinning 16). In contrast the Anglo-Irish were “better born, but less snobbish; cleverer than English and fonder of horses; they were poorer no doubt but with a poverty that brought into relief their natural aristocracy” (16). The complicated nature of the Anglo-Irish’s hybrid identity gave them mixed feelings about their relationship to the English: in *The Last September*, Bowen characterizes Lady Naylor’s ambivalence to the English as a “normal Anglo-Irish trait” (“Prefaces” 203). During the political tensions of the Anglo-Irish war, the Irish were somewhat less conflicted about the Anglo-Irish. Between December 6, 1922, and March 22, 1923, 192 Big Houses were destroyed by IRA fires (Jordan 47). These were generally burned as reprisals for republican homes burned by the English (Rauchbauer 10). Even though this arson was not completely unprovoked, the Ascendancy’s being used as a target for frustrations with the British reveals their precarious position.

Bowen deeply felt the impact of these destructions because of her personal connection to her family’s Big House, Bowen’s Court—a place that played a major role in Bowen’s development and in her writing. The Bowens’ history in Ireland begins with Henry Bowen, a Cromwellian planter of Welsh descent who settled in County Cork in the 1650s (*Bowen’s Court* 67). The house as Elizabeth Bowen knew it was not completed until 1775 “when Henry Cole Bowen watched the date cut [into the stone under the parapet] and saw the last slate set in Bowen’s Court roof” (161). Unfortunately, Bowen’s Court had declined past its prime by the time Bowen lived there. Her father wanted to practice law rather than take care of the estate full-time, much to his father’s disappointment and anger (Lassner 3). The combination of her grandfather’s spiteful and

intentional neglect, as well as her father's part-time residence there, left Bowen's Court in a less than ideal state. Nevertheless, the house was certainly still more than livable, even enjoyable, for the young Bowen who spent summers at Bowen's Court for the first seven years of her life (Glendinning 21).

Though Bowen did not live at Bowen's Court permanently as a child, this place still had an indelible impact on her and inspired her to chronicle its history in the book *Bowen's Court*. As Edward Casey notes, "[W]e rarely pause to consider how frequently people refer back to a certain place of origin as to an exemplar against which all subsequent places are implicitly to be measured: to their birthplace, their childhood home, or any other place that has had a significant influence on their lives" (xiv-xv). Any childhood home can be influential because of formative experiences had there, but certainly a home that has been in one's family for generations and serves as a symbol of a dying class has a greater impact than most childhood homes. The prevalence of and attention to space in Bowen's work testifies to the formative nature of her early life spent in Bowen's Court. She describes this effect on not only her, but also on her entire family: "A Bowen, in the first place, made Bowen's Court. Since then, with a rather alarming sureness, Bowen's Court has made all the succeeding Bowens" (*Bowen's Court* 32). Wanting to trace the history of the succeeding Bowens provided the impetus for Bowen's book-length exploration of her family's history, specifically as it related to the estate. Phyllis Lassner believes that in *Bowen's Court*, Bowen "exorcises the ghosts which haunt her creative imagination by forming characters who feel dependent on her family homes for their very lives and ... builds a psychological portrait of her family as entrenched in a self-made tradition they came to believe determined their lives" (4). This concept of a

house having agency over its inhabitants, whether real or imagined, permeates *The Last September*.

The afterword of *Bowen's Court* details the sad end of this ancestral home. Bowen's Court survived its more likely fate of being burning during the Anglo-Irish War and instead fell prey to financial difficulties. After her husband's death, Bowen could no longer manage the estate and sold it to a neighboring farmer with the full belief that he would maintain the grounds and live in the house with his family. Unfortunately, he found this unfeasible and instead demolished the house in 1961. Bowen saw the destruction of her beloved home in two ways: "so often in my mind's eye did I see it burning that the terrible last event in *The Last September* is more real than anything I have lived through" and saw its actual end at the hands of another owner ("Prefaces" 204). Perhaps she found some consolation in that "[i]t was a clean end. Bowen's Court never lived to be a ruin" (*Bowen's Court* 459).

While Bowen clearly loved her family home, she had decidedly ambivalent feelings toward the Anglo-Irish class that gave it to her, mostly because of her sympathy for the native Irish. She critiques the Anglo-Irish, "Having obtained their position through an injustice, they enjoyed the position through privilege" (456). She also did not condone the Act of Union which she describes as "a bad deal ... against the stated wish of the country ... forced through an unrepresentative parliament" (Bowen qtd. in Lee 23). Bowen recognizes the limitations of the Irish at this point in their country's history and the injustice of those limitations, despite her own prospering from that hierarchy. The relationship between the "empowered and the powerless" figures greatly in her life and subsequently becomes prevalent in her works (Lassner 7). Perhaps Bowen displays such

sensitivity to this issue because of her own family's background. Being of Welsh descent separates her from the Anglo-Irish, who are in fact historically English. When the English settled the Gower peninsula in South Wales after the Norman Conquest, Bowen's ancestors experienced a form of English dispossession (Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen* 28). This deeply rooted family memory of being displaced by the English likely provided the impetus for the Bowen family being more benevolent than most Anglo-Irish families (25). This, in turn, could be responsible for Bowen's Court being spared the fate of many Big Houses in the Anglo-Irish War. Bowen's familial background with dispossession and her own awareness of the suffering of the native Irish leads her to recognize the great potential for uprising and harm from those without their rightful homes. As Edward Casey observes, "Separation from place is perhaps most poignantly felt in the forced homelessness of the reluctant emigrant, the displaced person, the involuntary exile" (x). Bowen recognizes this truism and believes, "We have everything to dread from the dispossessed" (*Bowen's Court* 338). In spite of having a strong attachment to her heritage, Bowen readily acknowledges the inherent unfairness of the Ascendancy's position.

Bowen's ambivalence towards being Anglo-Irish also stems from the split personality common among that class; she felt the constant tug of war between two cultures that had an equal claim on her. Bowen describes this tension in the preface to the second edition of *The Last September*, "Inherited loyalty (or, at least, adherence) to Britain—where their sons were schooled, in whose wars their sons had for generations fought, and to which they owed their 'Ascendancy' lands and power—pulled them one way; their own temperamental Irishness, the other" (Bowen, "Prefaces" 202). Since they

were a mixed class, the Anglo-Irish never felt completely at home in either culture.

Among the English, they felt Irish. Among the Irish, they felt English. It is difficult to determine to what degree Bowen defined herself as Irish or English. She admits her own childhood desire to “out-English the English by being impassibly fashionable and correct” (*Bowen’s Court* 420). Hermione Lee argues that Bowen dealt with this dual citizenship by deciding to “live the most Anglicized kind of Anglo-Irish life, to write as much of English themes, and out of English and European influences, as of Ireland, and to submit, thus, in her art as well as in her life, to the disappearance of the Ascendancy” (42).

Bowen had no illusions about the end of the Ascendancy—she wanted her readers to know that the time in which *The Last September* was set “is done and over with”—and she displayed no interest in Gaelic culture, but Bowen did value and identify with her Irish heritage (“Prefaces” 200). She writes, “In about two generations, we reckon here, the non-indigenous family has begun to show all the native traits. No country, probably, has taken a sweeter or by the end more gentle revenge upon its invaders” (“Ireland” 155). Her decision to live in Bowen’s Court after her father’s death shows her affinity for an Irish rural life. This continual juxtaposition of cultures lends Bowen’s writing a richness not always found by those who grow up in a single culture. Heather Bryant Jordan observes that Bowen’s writing has both traditional English and Irish characteristics: English in that it deals with intricacies of social exchange, belief in class distinctions, and a focus on London and the English countryside, and Irish in that it displays a love of ghosts, an unexpected twist, sense of humor, attachment to the soil, and love of word play (ix). The ambivalence felt by Bowen toward her complex heritage enables her to see

England and Ireland from both an outsider and inside perspective. This background has the potential to cause feelings of confusion, frustration, and ostracism, but the end result is a unique viewpoint with a depth of insight not common among those who are completely on the outside of a culture.

Bowen's attitude toward Big Houses specifically also demonstrates a high degree of ambivalence. She describes them as "something between a *raison d'être* and a predicament" (Bowen qtd. in Glendinning 13). Bowen recognizes the primacy of Big Houses in their owners' lives and the emotional attachment often formed between house and inhabitant. Nevertheless, her feelings about the position of the Anglo-Irish extends to their dwellings. The injustice which gave them their land and power is manifested in the Big House. Bowen realizes that in order to appease a sense of guilt and to justify their position, many Anglo-Irish developed a myth of the Big House as a "maternal beneficence and benevolence" (Lassner 32). By focusing on the philanthropy of the Anglo-Irish or even simply their presence as a cultural improvement, the Anglo-Irish coped with an unfair situation by creating a false ideal of the Big House's function in Ireland. According to Bowen, this strategy did not secure a future for the Big House because this mythologizing did not "give history direction" (*Bowen's Court* 452). While fearing the loss of her own Big House, Bowen believed the "destruction of the big houses as the inevitable result of entrenched and unchanging attitudes on the part of an unassimilated and exclusive population" (Lassner 26). This complicated view of the Big House as an integral part of family heritage, as well as the symbol of a dying class unwilling to adapt, characterizes *The Last September*.

CHAPTER THREE

Making Space in the Big House

“Nothing can happen nowhere. The locale of the happening always colours the happening, and to a degree shapes it.” Elizabeth Bowen, The Mullberry Tree (71)

The amount of critical attention paid to Bowen has been rather inconsistent: she was quite popular and respected in the 1940s, then largely forgotten by the 1980s, and has recently—within the last twenty years—been more widely read and studied again (Ellmann 17). Maud Ellmann argues that this variance stems from the inability to easily categorize Bowen’s writing (17). While those who appreciate her work regret this lack of attention, Bowen herself would most likely not have minded. Ellmann explains, “Unlike Joyce, Bowen declared no ambition to keep the professors busy for centuries unearthing the recondite allusions in her works. On the contrary she said it would be ‘sad to regard as lecture-room subjects books that were meant to be part of life’” (18). Phyllis Lassner’s 1990 book-length study of Bowen, part of a woman writers series, provides an early example of her works regaining popularity. Books that discuss Anglo-Irish writers and how Big Houses appear in literature often include a chapter on Bowen, e.g. Julian Moynahan’s *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture*, published in 1995, and Vera Kreilkamp’s *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House*, published in 1998. In her 2003 *The Shadow Across the Page*, Ellmann analyzes Bowen’s work with historical, psychoanalytic, and deconstructive methodologies. The following year Neil Corcoran provided another book-length study on Bowen in *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return*.

Eibhear Walshe has also done much to support Bowen scholarship. He edited *Elizabeth Bowen Remembered: The Farahy Addresses*, published in 1998. This collection includes several commemorative addresses, which are given yearly in St. Colman's Church in Farahy, Co. Cork, in honor of Bowen's work and her family's connection to the church (MacCarthy 7). Bowen donated the present altar in memory of her mother, aunt, and uncle who died in 1912. She, along with several other members of the Bowen family, is buried in the churchyard (7). Moreover, it is Bowen's link to this church that saved it from becoming redundant. When Robert MacCarthy, the provost of Tuam, visited the church a few years after Bowen's death, he noticed that it badly needed repairs and was not currently being used. He raised funds and the church was reopened in 1979 (7). The church is still in use and the Bowen commemorative addresses continue to this day, the most recent address being given by Mary Leland in 2011 ("Church of Ireland" 1). Walshe also compiled and contributed to a collection of essays about Bowen for the *Visions and Revisions* series published by Edinburgh UP in 2009. The topics include Bowen's position as a modernist writer, her use of ghosts and other Gothic elements, and where she currently stands in criticism and Irish literature. Most recently, Walshe edited *Elizabeth Bowen's Selected Irish Writings*, published in 2011. These works include Bowen's reviews, essays, and even reports for the Ministry of Information. Bowen still remains somewhat overshadowed by Woolf and other Modernist writers, but prominent scholars recognize her worth as a writer and continue to contribute to scholarship on her work.

Having grown up to some degree in the charged atmosphere of a Big House, Bowen recognizes that houses affect their inhabitants in a tangible way. In *The Last September*,

Lois Farquar struggles to formulate a clear sense of identity amidst the strong presence and symbolism of her family's Big House Danielstown. Beyond the political and cultural meaning of Danielstown, Lois must also contend against its physical isolation, her lack of privacy in the house, her marginal position as niece, and her aunt's overbearing nature. These factors all contribute to her difficulties in developing her sense of self. She contemplates marrying a British officer as a means of leaving the house and establishing her own place, but this possibility proves ineffective. Lois must ultimately leave Danielstown—and Ireland—to have the space in which to form her identity.

Edward Casey, who has made significant contributions to the study of space in literary criticism in recent years, argues that humans always have an idea of place, even if they do not have a stable or permanent place at the time. He writes, "While we easily imagine or project an ideal (or merely a better) place-to-be and remember a number of good places we have been, we find that the very idea of, even the bare image, of no-place-at-all occasions the deepest anxiety" (ix). A sense of implacement, therefore, is an essential component of the human experience. In recalling her childhood, Bowen herself admits that "it is things and places rather than people that detach themselves from the stuff of my dreams" (Lassner 11). While this in some way reflects the nature of Bowen's childhood and the abstractness of her parents' personalities, it also points to the universal condition of being formed by one's spaces just as much as one's experiences. Casey asserts that the various spaces one occupies—neighborhood, city, state, etc.—"serve to implace you, to anchor and orient you, finally becoming an integral part of your identity" (23). Spaces do more than provide room in which to live; they affect the way one lives, or even who one is.

If neighborhoods, cities, and states affect one's development, how much more so does the home? Bowen writes, "We not only require, we are as humans completed, by what the home gives us—location. Identity would be nothing without its frame" ("Idea of the Home" 163). This primacy of home in our personal development comes largely from the fact that it is all we know. The habits and models seen in the home become the basis for how we evaluate all subsequent modes of living. Gaston Bachelard posits that the house in which one dwells in early childhood "has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting. [...] All other houses are but variations on a fundamental theme. The word habit is too worn a word to express this passionate liaison of our bodies, which do not forget, with an unforgettable house" (15). A Big House certainly fulfills the role of unforgettable, both in its role in its inhabitant's early development and in showing how a domestic space can be a "contested site in which men and women, young and old, redefine and conflict over definitions of national and cultural memory and identities" (Lassner and Derdiger 195). The dual role of shaping development and revealing conflict manifests itself in *The Last September's* Danielstown.

Though Danielstown has the power to affect any of its inhabitants, through the power invested in all spaces and its specific political and cultural meaning as a Big House, Lois Farquar feels its presence the strongest because of her lack of clear identity. It would be an overstatement to say that Lois does not possess any defining traits and that her characterization in the novel is entirely vacuous. Nevertheless, she does not exhibit a clear sense of self and spends most of the novel searching for her true identity. This haziness is somewhat typical of Bowen's characters in general as Ellmann observes: "In Bowen's fiction, the inner world of consciousness is 'whitened and gutted,' [...] in order

to provide the outer world of objects with its frightening vitality” (Ellmann 7). Lois, however, seems to struggle more than the novel’s other characters to formulate an identity. Part of this difficulty stems from her Anglo-Irish heritage. Lois grew up in Ireland, but attended school in England. Her time split between the two cultures and the knowledge that she does not fit entirely into either one prevents Lois from embracing Ireland as her patria. Ireland’s precarious relationship to England at the time further complicates matters. Bowen explains, “[Lois] could not conceive of her country emotionally: it was a way of living, abstract of several countrysides, or an oblique, frayed island moored at the north but with an air of being detached and drawn out west from the British coast” (*Last* 42). It seems as if Lois defines Ireland in terms of its connection to England. She does not know herself how much she identifies as an Irish citizen, and she does not know the nature of Ireland’s relationship with England long term. The uncertainty of her role in Ireland and Ireland’s relationship to England contribute to Lois’ unfixed identity.

Another primary factor in Lois’ confusion arises simply from her young age. Bowen recalls that when she was Lois’ age of nineteen she asked herself “*what* [she] should be, and when? The young (ironically, so much envied) all face those patches of barren worry” (“Prefaces” 199). Though Lois does not frequently vocalize her concern about her identity to the other members of Danielstown, she has moments in which the underlying tension of ambiguity clearly frustrate her. Her suitor Gerald notices that Lois “resented almost his attention being so constantly fixed on something she wasn’t aware of” (*Last* 67). In Lois’ search for her sense of self, she approaches a feeling of bitterness at Gerald’s assumption that he understands her and could define her as a person. She has

a similar, though more pronounced, reaction when she overhears Lady Naylor and Mrs. Montmorency discussing her. When the latter says, “Lois is so very—,” Lois suddenly panics and slams her water jug so hard that it cracks the basin: “She didn’t want to know what she was, she couldn’t bear it: knowledge of this would stop, seal, finish one” (83). Lois seems strangely terrified by the possibility of being characterized by Mrs. Montmorency. Perhaps she fears that the older woman’s assessment will be false. Lois could also fear that it would be an accurate and unpleasant estimation that she does not want to face. Most likely, Lois resists this secondhand evaluation because she does not feel equipped to judge its veracity. If she does not know herself who she is, how is she to tell whether others’ opinions are correct? During the events of *The Last September*, Lois undergoes a typical late adolescent period of searching for the type of person she wants to be.

Unfortunately for Lois, the strong presence of Danielstown does not prove conducive to this process. Throughout *The Last September*, Bowen personifies this Big House, making it as much a character in the story as the human participants. It seems to possess a consciousness and agency of its own. Danielstown does not behave as an inanimate object should; rather, it feels and stares and waits and alters the moods of its inhabitants. When the Montmorencys arrive, the house greets them by “star[ing] coldly over its mounting lawns” (4). Later, Mrs. Montmorency admits that she felt “very strongly a sense of return, of having been awaited. Rooms, doorways had framed a kind of expectancy of her; some trees in the distance, the stairs, a part of the garden seemed always to have been lying secretly at the back of her mind” (14). Not only does the house express an emotion at Mrs. Montmorency’s return, but also it has the ability to

impress itself on her consciousness. Even when she is physically far from Danielstown, it lingers in her mind. This almost psychic connection demonstrates the power Danielstown has over its visitors.

Furthermore, the house has the capacity to respond to the actions of its inhabitants. After Lois agrees to marry Gerald, the ante-chamber reveals its knowledge of the event: “The ante-room chairs, now looking at Lois askance, knew also. What she had done stretched everywhere, like a net. If she had taken a life, the simplest objects could not more have been tinged with consequence. The graded elephants on the bookcase were all fatality” (237). The house’s awareness and gloomy response lend it an almost Gothic feel. This type of scene, one that blurs the line between reality and unreality, inanimate objects and human consciousness, occurs often in Bowen’s work and reveals her fundamental approach to objects. Ellmann posits, “In Bowen [...] things behave like thoughts and thoughts like things, thus impugning the supremacy of consciousness. Thoughts are outsiders within, rattling in the empty chambers of the mind, while things are insiders without, phantasmal fugitives from consciousness” (6). This almost supernatural ability of objects to exhibit prescience does not benefit Lois; rather, it emphasizes the hostility of her environment and situation. Again, this process typifies Bowen’s writing in which the material world offers not comfort, but oppression (8). Lois’ physical surroundings stifle her desires and attempts at establishing autonomy.

Another manifestation of Danielstown’s influence comes from its historical significance, both as the symbol of a class and the length of its existence. Corcoran notes that the personification of the house is common in Big House novels (*After Yeats and Joyce* 37). Having such an important role in history and serving as a symbol of a class

inspires writers to grant it actual prescience in their works. Noting this treatment of Danielstown, Dominique Nicholas calls the house the “hero and martyr of the book” (299). Bowen’s use of the term “execution” to describe its final burning supports this reading (*Last* 303). Beyond its role as cultural icon, Danielstown has a strong presence due to the many generations of the family who lived there before. These ancestors are represented visually by the portraits that hang high in the dining room. When the current residents of Danielstown sit down to eat, they feel stifled by the remnants of the house’s earlier inhabitants. Bowen writes, “While above, the immutable figures, shedding into the rush of dusk smiles, frowns, every vestige of personality [...] cancelled time, negated personality and made of the lower cheerfulness, dining and talking, the faintest exterior friction” (28). The silent portraits exert their presence over the modern Naylor family and friends, making them feel less alone and also less free to express and enjoy themselves. This passage foreshadows an observation Bowen later makes in *Bowen’s Court*, “With each death, the air of the place had thickened: it had been added to. The dead do not need to visit Bowen’s Court rooms—as I said, we had no ghosts in that house—because they already permeated them” (451). The sense of history, the long years in which Bowens had lived and died in Bowen’s Court, give the house a sense of crowdedness, as if there is not enough room for all the generations to live there at once. This same feeling of overpopulation hinders Lois’ development at Danielstown.

Another, more practical, reason that Lois must struggle to form her identity at Danielstown can be found in the invasion of her personal and private space by the house’s residents. Despite the size of the house and Lois’ privileged position as family, she does not have a quiet room safe from intrusions by other residents in the house. Her

room, being attached to the ante-chamber, is privy to the conversations that happen there. Ellmann observes, “With its multiple exits and entrances, this ante-room also resembles the stage set for a farce” (58). Indeed it is somewhat absurd that Lois hears Lady Naylor and Mrs. Montmorency discuss her relationship with Gerald and must make her presence loudly known by slamming her basin (*Last* 83). This lack of a quiet space away from visitors and even family does not help Lois develop her own sense of self. In addition to the verbal intrusion into her space, she also experiences an aggravating physical invasion when Mrs. Montmorency comes, in Lois’ words, “bursting into my room at nights” (281). She desires more privacy and personal space in the house.

Lois would also benefit from a greater sense of agency in regard to her surroundings. She seems to have little control over her immediate physical environment and must submit to the desires of her aunt and uncle. When Lady Naylor shows Mrs. Montmorency to her room, she explains, “The rooks on that side of the house disturbed so many people; we’ve changed the rooms around and put Lois in there; she prefers them” (16). This rearrangement appears quite unfair to Lois. Perhaps she genuinely prefers the rooks as Lady Naylor glibly states, but valuing the comfort of visitors over one’s family could also reveal Lois’ lack of a voice in the matter. Even aside from the location of her room, Lois is given little opportunity in the novel to tangibly affect her surroundings. She actually seems at odds with the decor: she often trips over the jaws of a tiger skin on the ante-chamber floor and feels no affinity for the various colonial artifacts adorning the space (7). Lois’ discomfort in Danielstown does not reflect ungratefulness or unrealistic expectations on her part. Casey, drawing on Freud, calls this phenomenon “*umheimlichkeit*—the uncanny anxiety of not feeling ‘at home’ [...] even *in*

the home” (x). Lois has a stable environment that meets all her basic needs, yet privacy and agency would be essential for true happiness and fulfillment in the house. Every time Lois returns to the house or simply awakens in it, “she and these home surroundings still further penetrated each other mutually in the discovery of a lack” (*Last* 244). The house does not approve or accept Lois, and Lois finds it a disappointment.

Moreover, Danielstown hinders Lois’ development in its physical isolation from both the land and the community surrounding it. Casey believes that a “landscape has its own determinacy” and that implacement occurs between one’s body and the landscape (24, 29). Danielstown’s positioning behind a screen of trees causes Lois to experience no connection with the land nearby and the people who live on it. Exposure to new ideas and new ways of living would give Lois a better opportunity to explore her sense of self rather than being cloistered in the Big House with the unsatisfying models of her family and their visitors. This exclusive existence was common among the Anglo-Irish: “Each demesne is an island, and sometimes the family may not leave it for days at a time. [...] The isolation is more than geographical: it is, for these people who are still in some sense ‘settlers’ after generations, an affair of origin” (Glendinning 13). Despite living in the country for two hundred years, some Anglo-Irish still did not feel fully integrated with the land. Bowen describes Bowen’s Court as “by no means out of the current world, yet its first isolation forever stamps it” (“Bowen’s Court” 141).

This sense of isolation brings loneliness, as well as anxiety. When driving in the countryside with Mr. Montmorency, Lois catches a glimpse of Danielstown and realizes, “Far from here, too, their isolation became apparent. The house seemed to be pressing down low in apprehension, hiding its face, as though it had her vision of where it was”

(*Last* 92). Vera Kreilkamp comments, “In such a passage Bowen is most explicit about the claustrophobic, smothering quality of the Big House, whose inhabitants are isolated not only by location but also by religion and class from easy social intercourse with an unloving Mother Ireland whose bosom it has ravished with its alien limestone structures” (155). The land itself rejects the Anglo-Irish settlements and the structures used to demonstrate the Ascendancy’s position. Julian Moynahan offers a similar reading of this passage in which the country and its native inhabitants resent the presence of a building like Danielstown (242). Being unable to connect with the land and community, even being at odds with them, makes Lois uneasy and lack confidence in her position and sense of self.

She must also deal with the stifling isolation caused by her aunt and uncle’s intentional obliviousness to the realities of the Anglo-Irish War. Sir Richard and Lady Naylor refuse to acknowledge the seriousness of the political situation, and subsequently, their danger as members of the Ascendancy. When Mrs. Montmorency questions the safety of sitting on Danielstown’s front steps in the evening, Sir Richard laughs at her fears and teases her about being English (26). Lady Naylor displays this same flagrant disregard for her precarious position: “Something said in the English press has given rise to the idea that this county’s unsafe” (78). This dismissive attitude renders the Anglo-Irish War a mere rumor generated by English newspapers. This mind-set could be typical of the Naylor’s class and Anglo-Irish ennui in general; an Irish joke claims that time in Anglo-Ireland is “always mid-afternoon after a heavy Sunday meal” (Ellmann 63).

The Naylor’s willful ignorance of the conflict could also be motivated by their fear of being displaced were Danielstown burned; they deal with this fear by increased

socialization. Describing the type of panic that develops when faced with losing one's home, Casey writes, "No wonder, either, that fleeing in the face of our panic, we resort to elaborate stratagems to avoid the void that looms before us" (x). The Naylor's cope with their potential displacement by maintaining an active social life. This strategy seems ineffective, and perhaps even silly, given the gravity of the situation. Drawing from personal experience, Bowen admits the limitations of this approach and offers, "One can only say, it appeared the best thing to do" ("Prefaces" 202). Certainly, Sir Richard seems comforted by telling himself that the soldiers have "nothing to do but dance" (*Last* 30). Lois, however, does not appreciate this coping mechanism as much. She exclaims, "How is it that in this country that ought to be full of such violent realness there seems nothing for me but clothes and what people say? I might as well be in some kind of cocoon" (66). Lois seems to resent being sheltered and discouraged from facing the political reality.

Perhaps this isolationist approach to the Anglo-Irish War reflects a deep generational divide that proves harmful to the younger inhabitants of Danielstown. Lassner argues, "To experience external reality the young must first know how their guardians feel about themselves and the world beyond the demesne" (35). The Naylor's rarely leaving the safety of Danielstown stunts Laurence and Lois's need to accurately identify the situation and develop methods of addressing it. Strongly critiquing Sir Richard and Lady Naylor, Lassner believes that the guardians "direct their energies towards fashioning Lois and Laurence into sanitised replicas of their forebears" (35). The Naylor's do not seem as keen as Bowen to acknowledge the end of the Ascendancy era. Having spent more of their lives during this period, the Naylor's want their family members to continue in a proper Anglo-Irish way of life. Lois seems expected to "behave better than her rebellious

and beautiful mother who broke with the family, married disastrously, and died young” (154). By obeying her aunt and uncle and marrying a suitable match, Lois can redeem the impropriety of her mother. Lady Naylor tries to impose this older sense of behavior on Lois in particular, as will be discussed later in greater detail.

The Naylor’s treatment of the younger generation could also stem from the peripheral status of their niece and nephew, another source of isolation for Lois. Like her cousin Laurence, Lois does not enjoy the privileges and affection that would be granted to a direct descendant. She occupies the role of orphan, not heir. As Ellman observes, “It is notable that all the characters, with the exception of the lord and lady and their overbearing ancestors, visit rather than reside in Danielstown, whose ‘strong own life’ goes on without them” (60). Even family members do not experience full presence in Danielstown. In her preface Bowen wonders whether Lois’ position as niece would make her less sad at Danielstown’s final burning (“Prefaces” 204). While Lois would never be glad at the destruction of her family home, she does feel underappreciated in her family context. She wants to be an integral member of the household whose presence is essential to the others: “she had wanted to be alone, but to be regretted” (*Last* 40). Unfortunately for Lois, the all too common *modus operandi* of her family is to take no notice of her (35).

In addition to being ignored, Lois has difficulty sharing formative experiences, such as her encounter with the IRA rebel in a trench coat, with other members of the household. One night after dinner, Lois walks by herself down the avenue. As she reflects on her ostracism from her family, she becomes aware of another presence. Thinking for a second that it might be a ghost, Lois “stood by the holly immovable,

blotted out in the black, and there passed within reach of her hand, with the rise and fall of a stride, some resolute profile powerful as a thought” (*Last* 42). The rebel startles the dawdling Lois with his sense of purpose. She muses, “His intentness burnt on the dark an almost visible trail; he might have been a murderer, he seemed so inspired” (42-3). His strong sense of national identity and single-mindedness juxtaposes the insular, hybridized Naylor family cocooned in the drawing room. Moreover, he reveals the Naylor’s isolation as a mere illusion: “Sir Richard and Lady Naylor administer their estate with the benevolent condescension of nineteenth-century landlords, while twentieth-century Ireland invades their demesne” (Kreilkamp 152). Lois’s aunt and uncle allow themselves the fantasy of safety and separation from the conflict, but Lois, who leaves the confines of the house, sees firsthand that the IRA has encroached on the family land.

Unlike her aunt and uncle, Lois feels exhilarated by the presence of the rebel and wishes she could share the experience with the rest of the household. So thankful that he is not a ghost, “she felt prompted to make some contact: not to be known of seemed like a doom of extinction” (*Last* 42). His physicality contrasts with not only ghosts, but also Danielstown’s residents. Because he exudes a degree of purpose and vitality, he validates Lois’s desire for life outside the house. Lois tries to minimize the significance of this encounter, but she cannot deny the reality of the epiphany that “she had surprised life at a significant angle in the shrubbery” (43). Yet as soon as she approaches the house, her sense of adventure dissipates and she begins to fear the possible reactions to her story. She has learned that “[a]t a touch from Aunt Myra adventure became literary, to Uncle Richard it suggested an inconvenience; a glance from Mr. Montmorency or Laurence would make her encounter sterile” (43). Lois cannot vocalize formative

experiences because of the dismissive censure she receives from the occupants of Danielstown and her inherent difference in being moved by such an encounter.

Lois has another revelatory experience at the ruined mill, which serves as a foil to Danielstown, one that she can only share with Marda. Corcoran describes the mill as “the other, the opposite, the suppressed, the repressed, the deviant, with which the socially acceptable norm is nevertheless darkly intimate and collusive [...] the mill is both prolepsis and metonym” (*Elizabeth Bowen* 55). The ruination of the mill by bad English economic practices foreshadows the destruction of Danielstown by the IRA. Mr. Montmorency perceives this prophetic power of the mill: “The mill behind him affected like a sense of the future; an unpleasant sensation of being tottered over” (*Last* 182). It is as if the mill provides a physical image of what Danielstown will eventually become. Even more than envisaging the future of Danielstown, the mill reveals what the Big House currently lacks. Ruined mills are an ironic source for insight given their description as “never quite stripped and whitened to a skeleton’s decency: like corpses at their most horrible” (178). Regardless, the mill both offers excitement and inspires epiphanies. This encounter with an Irish rebel is more dramatic than Lois’s seeing the man in the trench coat; the intensity of these experiences increases with distance from the stuffy atmosphere of Danielstown. The mill also serves as the impetus for revelations: Marda realizes her desire to have children, and Lois discovers that Mr. Montmorency is in love with Marda (186, 185). These types of revelations occur infrequently, if at all, during everyday life at Danielstown. This combination of drama and insight also creates a bond between two people, in this case, Lois and Marda, another rarity in Danielstown.

Unfortunately for Lois, the experience at the mill must remain between her and Marda and cannot be shared with the other residents of Danielstown. Lois seems concerned that she and Marda will have to break their promise of secrecy to the rebel because Mr. Montmorency hears the accidental shot that grazes Marda's hand. She continually asks Marda for reassurance that the secret will stay with them and seems relieved when Marda agrees (187). While Lois does enjoy the intimacy of a secret between her and Marda, she also fears the reaction of the other residents of Danielstown. Mr. Montmorency's overreaction serves as a good indication that Lois's fears are justified. Lassner believes, "Keeping the Irishman's presence a secret is an attempt to discover and preserve a reality that Danielstown conceals from Lois and Marda" (42). Lois has learned from past experience that the event she has just experienced will be either trivialized or distorted by her family's intentional obliviousness. This inability to process and bridge experiences that occur outside Danielstown with the life that exists within it contribute to Lois's identity confusion.

Casey argues that emplacement has a social aspect; one cannot feel completely in a place without the necessary relationships being available (23). This lack of relational fulfillment seems particularly tragic in a Big House. In describing the extensive hospitality practiced during her time as owner of Bowen's Court, Bowen writes, "This house was built for a family—so it makes one" ("Bowen's Court" 149). Big Houses were never intended for individuals; their main purpose in existing was to house a family for generations. Lois recognizes that Danielstown—with its many rooms and long family history—should be more of a familial environment. She complains, "You'd think this

was the emptiest house in Ireland—we have no family life” (*Last* 126). This Big House’s lack of intimate relationships contribute to its insufficiencies as a space for Lois.

Given Lois’ hope for familial affection, it is especially disappointing that a major obstacle to her identity construction lies in the controlling and intrusive behavior of her Aunt Myra. As discussed above, both the Naylor suppress the younger generation with their intentional isolation and expectations of propriety. Lois, however, bears the brunt of this oppression even more directly than Laurence, particularly at the hands of Lady Naylor. Lois’s lack of full presence and expression in Danielstown can, in many ways, be attributed to her aunt’s domineering ownership of the house. There seems to be no question in the novel of who has the most power over the domestic space of Danielstown. Phyllis Lassner and Paula Derdiger argue that an evil matriarch, as opposed to a villainous patriarch, reflects Bowen’s Gothic tendencies (196). The Gothic elements present in Bowen’s other works, and even in *The Last September*, give credibility to this reading, but it excludes other possibilities for Lady Naylor’s overbearing personality. Perhaps Lady Naylor feels such investment and control over Danielstown because she has no vocation outside the home. The women of her generation had few options outside marriage, as evidenced by Mrs. Archie Trent’s perspective, “But I don’t see what else the girls are to do” (*Last* 255). Since the home became her primary sphere of power and influence, she feels hesitant to relinquish any control to Lois.

Furthermore, Lady Naylor’s behavior reflects the decay of traditional Ascendancy roles. Corcoran explains, “The withdrawal of class or caste power is represented by the vanished patriarch; and the vacuum of authority is filled by the flailing, destructive, and self-destructive perversion of maternal affection” (*After Yeats and Joyce* 40). While

Lady Naylor does not fit this more extreme version, her role as matriarch does symbolize the changing positions within the Anglo-Irish. Kreilkamp observes, “Oppressing the young becomes the most accessible outlet for waning authority” (154). While hesitant to admit the full implications of the Anglo-Irish War, Lady Naylor does seem aware that her position of authority is precarious. To deal with the instability and impending loss of power, Lady Naylor becomes overly involved in Lois’s major decisions.

Lois seems to recognize, even if only on a subconscious level at times, that she must find ways to deal with the oppressive circumstances of the space she occupies; she contemplates marrying the British soldier Gerald as a means of establishing a new place (*Last* 182). Though Lois vacillates about her relationship with Gerald throughout the novel, the other characters perceive that she never genuinely loves him. Their relationship is not based on shared interests or even strong mutual affection. Rather, Lois views marriage with Gerald as an escape from her tenuous position in the Big House. When the rebel in the mill tells Lois and Marda that they should leave and return to Danielstown while they still had that option, Lois agrees with his logic, yet feels uneasy at his solution. She knows that “[s]he had better be going—but where? She thought: ‘I must marry Gerald’” (182). Being married would allow Lois a space of her own. She would not be dependent on her aunt and uncle to provide for her, and she could create a space that reflects her interests and personality. Since Gerald is a British soldier, being married to him would give Lois the opportunity of doing more than establishing her own house. She would probably leave Ireland and could travel as far as China, a destiny Lois cannot help but imagine (161).

More than simply being a means to her own place, Gerald himself represents a type of space to Lois. She regards his physical presence as a fixed location. When they dance, Lois “felt she was home again safe from deserted rooms, the penetration of silences, rain, homelessness” (221). Simply being with Gerald gives Lois a sense of implacement. The idea of being at home in someone’s arms could be considered a cliché, but this concept has a parallel in Bowen’s own life. According to Glendinning, Bowen’s husband Alan Cameron “was the safe harbour, the ‘location’ for her dislocated life” (59). He provided Bowen with the stability and permanence she needed to be able to write, in contrast to the frequent moving and uncertainty of her young life. Perhaps Bowen projects her relationship with Cameron onto Lois’ desire for Gerald. Bowen articulates this connection between being with a person and feeling a sense of implacement in Marda’s relationship with her fiancé Leslie: “Essentials were fixed and localised by her being with him—to become as the bricks and wallpaper of a home” (*Last* 187). Leslie’s presence enables Marda to feel more secure and implaced than she does on her own. Lois’ intense need for a sense of place causes her to turn to Gerald as a means of spatial fulfillment.

Ultimately, however, this attempt fails to provide Lois with the true space she needs, and she decides to leave Danielstown, and Ireland, to formulate her identity. Casey writes, “Only by foraging in *another* place can the insufficiencies of the present place—its lacks and privations—be overcome” (xii). Sometimes the challenges and limitations of one’s environment cannot be surmounted by sheer willpower. Lois simply could not compete with the myriad factors threatening and stifling her identity. She had to leave the charged meaning of the Big House, the political turmoil of this region, her

family's lack of emotional intimacy and appreciation of her, and her aunt's officious nature. Only by removing herself from the situation could Lois hope to develop a clear vision of her identity. Lassner and Dergiger argue that Lady Naylor actually determines Lois' tours in France and that Lois' absence at the end of the novel signifies her lack of voice and autonomy (202). Yet this reading does not take into account that Lois travels to a place neither Lady Naylor nor Sir Richard desired for her. They consistently believe she should attend art school and "Paris they will not hear of" (*Last* 265, 285, 258). That Lois does not attend art school but rather travels to France demonstrates that she finally exerts some control over her life.

Moreover, Lois' wish to travel appears well before the final chapter. She longs for escape and independence several times in the novel. When she tries on Marda's mink coat, for example, she envisions herself as older and self-sufficient, not needing the people in her life she currently depends on and is often disappointed by (109). Lois copes with the struggles of her present life and space by imagining new ways of living and new places. She dreams of going abroad, "There was Rome, and she would like to stay in a hotel by herself" (142). This need to get away becomes particularly strong when she and Gerald attempt to salvage their relationship. She tells Gerald losing him would mean losing everything, but in that moment she "thought of going, hesitating with delight, to the edge of an unknown high-up terrace, of Marda, of getting into a train" (280). In a world of travel, the unexplored, and friendship, Gerald cannot mean everything. Lois must experience new spaces untainted by the constraints of her current life before she can have a meaningful romantic relationship.

Bowen does not disclose in the text the success of Lois' attempts to establish her identity or what that identity looks like, but there exist enough parallels between Lois and Bowen to assume that Lois' time away from Ireland will be, at the least, a positive development. Lois and Bowen cannot be conflated as Bowen herself points out: "Lois derives from, but is not, myself at nineteen" (Bowen qtd. in Jordan 49). Nevertheless, Bowen does create many similarities between her younger self and the character of Lois. They both spent much of their childhood in their family Big House, were raised by aunts, were educated in England, displayed frivolity as adolescents, wanted to be artists but lacked enough talent, and were involved romantically with British soldiers (Doody, 6, Jordan xiii). Lassner believes, "Bowen found the answer to professional identity in England" (47). Her desire and ability to write could not develop until she left her family home and the political realities of the Anglo-Irish War. In fact, *The Last September* was written in Oxford where Ireland "seemed more like another world than another land" ("Prefaces" 201). Bowen needed distance, both physically and temporally, to be able to process the events of this time enough to write about them. Perhaps this distance proves valuable for Lois as well, especially considering that she moves to France. Living in neither Ireland nor England spares Lois the feelings of hybridity inherent in being Anglo-Irish.

When faced with losing a beloved home or simply an important space, most individuals romanticize the space and feel deep nostalgia when they think of it. "Among these symptoms [of displacement], nostalgia is one of the most revealing" (Casey 37). Bowen's ambivalence toward the Anglo-Irish and Big Houses prevents her from becoming completely nostalgic about Bowen's Court, even after its decline and eventual

destruction. She never ceased to love her childhood home, but she also saw the many complications of its position. Its origins in injustice and its status as a symbol of a dying class contribute to its oppressive nature. Furthermore, any house, regardless of its size and history, can be destructive if it lacks the private space and emotional support necessary to develop as an individual. Lois's process of coming of age is made more difficult by the political and personal conflict that characterizes the spaces she inhabits. The Anglo-Irish War threatens the nation's stability and undermines the Ascendancy's security. In avoiding the conflict, her family members become insular and deny Lois the opportunity to explore other perspectives and ways of experiencing the world. Lady Naylor makes the house a space of personal conflict for Lois by not allowing her agency in regards to her surroundings and pressuring her to conform to class and familial standards. For unsure and searching young women like Lois, the best, and sometimes only, way to cope with such a contested space, sadly, is to leave it.

CHAPTER FOUR

Interchapter on Deirdre Madden

As with *The Last September*, a strong political historical context permeates Deirdre Madden's *One by One in the Darkness*, perhaps even more so because of Madden's specific references to key people and events during the so-called "Northern Irish Troubles." Though the exact beginning of the Troubles remains debated, a common starting point is the 1969 deployment of British troops to control rioting in Derry and Belfast (Feeney 6). This culmination of civil unrest that manifested itself so violently in 1969 was the product of years of tension and mistreatment that began with the Elizabethan plantations, as mentioned above in the previous interchapter. It continued long after the events of *The Last September*. Ever since the formation of Northern Ireland in 1921, most of the political power was held by Unionists—a primarily Protestant group of individuals who believed that Northern Ireland should remain politically united with Britain (Mulholland 87). Though much less militant than Loyalists, who also supported Britain's role in Irish government and often resorted to violence, they did control how money was spent, who was allowed to live in public housing, and even interfered with employment rates (Feeney 7). Brian Feeney explains, "The vast but ailing engineering and shipbuilding industries, located mainly in east Belfast, which had formed the core of Unionist prosperity were naturally protected and provided with favourable commercial conditions. Jobs in these industries went overwhelmingly to Protestants" (80). Emily, the mother of the Quinn sisters in *One by*

One in the Darkness, recalls the difficulties of being a Catholic in the 1950s and affirms Feeney's description of job placement:

As far as the unemployed fathers were concerned, the big shipyards and the other heavy industries of Belfast might as well have been on the moon for all the chance they or their sons had of getting a job there, because they were Catholics. Only the most gifted, the most determined and the most hard working had even the slimmest chance of making out well in the world. (119)

This discrimination against Catholics was widespread and even government sanctioned in the period leading to the Troubles.

As Emily notes, Catholics could hope to succeed through education (119). In fact, education proves to be one of the major impetuses behind the Troubles. Due to the extension of the British free education system to Northern Ireland, the generation of Catholics coming of age in the 1960s enjoyed a better education than their parents and wanted their role in society to reflect that (Feeney 8). They were no longer willing to accept a marginalized position. Another key factor that led to the Troubles can be found in Terence O'Neill becoming the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in 1963 (6). He tried to initiate reforms that would improve Catholic civil rights. While not all Catholics appreciated O'Neill's attempts at reform—Emily's brother Michael reduces them to "a few odds and ends to keep them quiet"—O'Neill's resignation was seen as unfortunate to many Catholics (Madden, *One by One* 78, 94). O'Neill had raised the hopes of nationalists, a largely Catholic group who wanted political independence from Britain, and republicans, the more militant and violent version of nationalists (Mulholland 58). Though they differed in their approaches, nationalists and republicans both wanted more political autonomy.

The Catholic civil rights movement demonstrated its increasing momentum in 1966; the celebration around the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising increased tensions and inspired the formation of the Protestant UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force). In honor of the Easter Rising anniversary, republicans held parades, displayed republican symbols associated with Dublin, and bought a commemorative coin featuring Patrick Pearse, a hero among Irish nationalists (Feeney 14). This proud display of nationalism made unionists uneasy. In response to the growing political tension, a small group of men from Belfast “styled themselves the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) after the militia established in 1913 to prevent Home Rule [the political movement that sought Ireland’s ability to be self-governing]. They declared ‘war’ on the IRA” (15). They destroyed Catholic property and even killed two Catholics in gun attacks (15). Ironically, the IRA was not currently a major threat at the formation of the UVF (16). It did, however, eventually become a major paramilitary organization that dominated much of the Troubles, particularly after Bloody Sunday in early 1972.

Two political parties that shaped much of the Catholic politics behind the Troubles are the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) and Sinn Féin, both mentioned in *One by One*. The SDLP was founded in 1970 “with aims to promote a united Ireland by peaceful means and agreement” (135). It advocated social change through non-violent means. Sally, the youngest Quinn sister, is a member of the SDLP, though she questions its efficacy: “Yes, I’m still a member, for what that’s worth” (Madden, *One by One* 141). Sally does generally support the ideals behind the SDLP, but she also thinks they are simply “as good as you’re going to get” (141). Another major political party during this time is Sinn Féin (Ourselves Alone), founded in 1904-5. This much more radical group

“aims to create a united thirty-two-country Irish Republic” (Feeney 135). Existing during the Anglo-Irish Troubles, the party originally wanted to create a “judicial system separate from the [British] crown” (Mulholland 66). The ensuing insurrection and war was not anticipated (66). The party became increasingly popular in the period leading to the Troubles, and it eventually became closely associated with the IRA (Feeney 135). Brian, the Quinn sisters’ uncle, supports the ideals and methodology of Sinn Féin. It is most likely his membership in Sinn Féin that caused him to be targeted in the attack that killed his brother Charlie Quinn (Madden, *One by One* 47). While Brian’s link to Sinn Féin causes controversy in the family, Sally recognizes that several members of Sinn Féin approach it in the same way she views the SDLP—not ideal but also the best one can do (141). In such a charged political atmosphere, choosing the right party can be a difficult task.

Organized marches became a visible sign of both increased Catholic unrest and what Catholics were willing to endure to have equal rights. One of the main organizers of these marches was the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) formed in February of 1967 (Feeney 16). They followed the non-violent model of Martin Luther King’s civil rights marches and even sang the African-American anthem, “We Shall Overcome” (17). Unfortunately, the loyalists did not respond to these marches well; they often enacted violence on unarmed marchers. Rather than quell these marches, this harsh treatment made “the marchers look like victims and the forces of the State look like fascists” (17). A particularly violent police response occurred at a march in Derry in October 1968. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) injured seventy-seven marchers and bystanders in front of cameras (18). In *One by One* Brian and Charlie attend this

march, with Brian getting cut in the face badly enough to require stitches (Madden 71). Taken aback by the severity of the RUC response, Charlie exclaims, “There was no sense in what happened today. [...] They just hammered the living daylight out of people” (71). He does, however, express gratitude that the event was captured on film so that the Unionist administration could not keep this incident quiet (71). Charlie was correct in predicting the negative response to the Derry march. The British government forced O’Neill to meet many of NICRA’s demands (Feeney 18).

The British became even more involved in the Troubles—to the point of deploying British soldiers—after intense rioting spread in Derry and Belfast in August 1969 (24). According to Marc Mulholland, “British opinion was shocked” by the brutality of the riots and immediately sent Army troops to bring stability to the cities (60). Initially, the soldiers were well received: “The British soldiers arrived amid scenes of jubilation from the beleaguered Catholics. People hailed them as saviours from the wrath of the RUC and the B Specials” (Feeney 25). In Madden’s novel, Emily expresses this opinion about the troops. She comforts her friend who lives in Belfast “by saying what a good thing it was that the British government had decided to send troops to Northern Ireland. The people who lived in the areas where the trouble took place over the summer were relieved and thought that they would be protected now from further harm” (Madden, *One by One* 94). Brian disagrees with Emily’s assessment of the British troops. While he might underestimate the assistance the troops did bring, he was right in that the presence of British troops did not mean peace and protection for Catholics in Northern Ireland.

In fact British soldiers often escalated tensions, particularly with their practice of internment. The Special Powers Act in 1922 granted the government the right to arrest

individuals and search homes without warrants, prohibit marches, and imprison suspects without trial (Mulholland 26). These powers were not frequently used until 1971 when internment became widely enforced; 2,158 individuals (primarily republicans) were interred between 1971 and 1975 (26). Charlie's brothers, Brian and Peter, both experience internment first hand. Early one morning soldiers forcibly enter Brian's home and take him and Peter to prison with no explanation (Madden, *One by One* 100). Then they interrogate Brian for hours about members of the IRA and who had weapons and explosives. Unable to supply the soldiers with information, Brian is hit in the face (102). Rather than deter Republican activity, these internment raids only increased retaliatory violence and inspired many to join the IRA (Mulholland 77). One of the Quinn's neighbors claimed that her son had no political involvement before being interred, but "[t]hat might change, after all this" (Madden, *One by One* 102).

Two other key events in the Troubles that implicated both sides in unnecessary violence are Bloody Sunday and Bloody Friday. Bloody Sunday occurred in Derry on January 30, 1972, and has been described as the "debacle that led to the almost complete collapse of Catholic opposition to the political violence" (Mulholland 79). The British elite parachute regiment shot and killed thirteen unarmed demonstrators, and a fourteenth later died from his wounds (79). The injustice of the act deeply affected Catholics across Northern Ireland. The Quinn sisters recall their parents' grief and anger and "[t]heir family, like almost all the families they knew, had hung a black flag from the window of their house" despite not personally knowing anyone who died (Madden, *One by One* 130). The events of Bloody Sunday inspired IRA retaliation attacks. The worst of these attacks occurred six months later in Belfast. Twenty-two bombs exploded; nine people

were killed and 130 people were injured (Feeney 38). As Madden observes, an additional tragedy of the day was that due to the confusion of hoax warnings “[s]ix of the people who died had been taking shelter in a bus station, having been warned away from a place near by” (*One by One* 129). Brian sees Bloody Friday as a sad, but necessary rebuttal to Bloody Sunday, but Charlie insists, “That was wrong and this is wrong [...] The one doesn’t make the other right” (130). Both incidents demonstrate the drastic measures employed during the Troubles with civilians often caught in the crossfire.

Eventually, the political climate did change, as evidenced by the first IRA and loyalist ceasefire in 1994 and the more promising Belfast Good Friday Agreement in 1998. While several factors contributed to the first ceasefire, Britain’s encouragement of nationalist sentiments indicated a shift in policy (Mulholland 131). As Mulholland explains, “Sensing a change in the wind, John Hume, the leader of the SDLP, assiduously encouraged the republican movement along the path of peaceful negotiations” (131). In December 1993 the British and Irish government expressed a desire for reconciliation and a “new political framework” without expecting Protestants to “accept Irish unity” (132). This change enables the IRA to call a “complete and unequivocal” ceasefire on August 31, 1994; loyalist paramilitaries agreed to a ceasefire six weeks later (132). Unfortunately, this ceasefire did not last or signify the end of the Troubles, but it did mark the beginning of the end. It was a hopeful sign that the Troubles would not last indefinitely. The Belfast Good Friday Agreement in 1998 brought additional resolution to the Troubles (150). While it is impossible to immediately erase twenty-five years of turmoil, both sides were able to compromise and set a common goal: “The overt unionist insistence upon the absolute rights of the majority, and the militarism of paramilitary

nationalism were increasingly displaced by rhetoric of inclusiveness and peace-making” (150). The lasting effects of this degree of political change remain to be seen, but the worst of the Troubles are certainly over.

Both Ireland in general and the Northern Troubles in particular influence Madden’s work. Madden herself explains, “I am always thinking about Ireland and about home. It is for me inextricably bound up with the impulse to write, and with the act of writing, even if the actual subject is unrelated, as is often the case. [...] For me, writing is a way not just of getting at something, but of getting back to something” (“Looking for Home” 29-30). Her deep sense of home and origins makes her birth country a significant presence in her work. Because the Troubles comprise a great deal of her formative experiences growing up in County Antrim in Northern Ireland, Madden’s work often addresses the events of the Troubles and how one can begin to process those experiences (White 451). Liam Harte and Michael Parker write, “Her art depicts a politics operative in and beyond domestic spaces and narratives” (242). Even when writing about seemingly innocuous subjects, Madden’s work reflects the conflict.

Just as Bowen saw that the Anglo-Irish Troubles made issues of identity formation more challenging, Madden perceives that the Northern Troubles also creates complications for one’s sense of identity. Harte and Parker assert that her novels “engage deeply with private and public histories in Northern Ireland, whose principal characters struggle for release from the disabling legacies of the past and challenge the legitimacy of the received discourses of identity that have sustained the sectarian divide in the region” (233). When one’s schema for identity construction is based on a system that results in such violence, critiquing the system automatically undermines one’s identity. This

individual identity construction both contributes to and is a product of the larger national identity revisioning that was widespread in Northern Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s (234). As Jerry White articulates, “It is also not surprising that among her persistent concerns are fluidity and instability of personal and cultural identity, and the even trickier question of the relationship between the two” (451). The Quinn sisters’ search for an identity that takes into account the atrocities of the Troubles mirrors the private and national struggle of this time.

While separating such intense experiences as the events of the Troubles from one’s art is an impossible task, writing about the Troubles has its own difficulties. How does an artist draw from these incidents in a meaningful way without aestheticizing suffering and violence? This question has been considered heavily by authors, with Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley being two notable examples of writers who have wrestled with this issue in their work. Geraldine Higgins observes that there exists less debate in regards to how the Troubles affect contemporary fiction (144). Writing about the Troubles is never an easy task, but the 1994 ceasefire did alleviate some hindrances with the “spirit of possibility” it inspired in Northern Ireland (White 460). The ceasefire, though not actually ending the Troubles, did signal a change in the conflict and provided tangible evidence that it would not last forever. *One by One* was published two years after the first ceasefire, as if Madden needed the ceasefire as a chance to distance herself from the immediacy of the Troubles and began reflecting on its effects.

Beyond providing content for her novels, the Troubles also shapes Madden’s narrative techniques. According to Parker, “Her fictions are often characterized by constant shifts in focalization, perspective and chronology, which destabilize the

narrative, an appropriate strategy since, as Paul Ricoeur has commented, ‘a discontinuous structure suits a time of dangers’” (83). This technique appears throughout *One by One*: the chapters offer different points of view and alternate between the past and the present. Madden’s presentation of the narrative suggests that a disjointed narrative best expresses a disruptive time. This narrative style also echoes Joseph Frank’s idea of “spatial form,” in which “the reader is intended to apprehend [the] work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence” (225). In this type of form, chronological time becomes subsumed by the momentary experience of an event. It often results in the factual background of a novel being presented in small portions over the course of the novel, as is the case with *One by One*. Frank describes this reading process as “continually fitting fragments together and keeping allusions in mind until, by reflexive reference, [the reader] can link them to their complements” (234). This attempt to piece together past events in a coherent way is reminiscent of the rebuilding of one’s identity after a traumatic event.

Another issue with writing about the Troubles is that authors are unsure about what images are appropriate to use, so they often look to other writers for assistance. Parker explains, “As a result, one frequently encounters in Madden’s work self-reflexive references, allusions to writing and other kinds of texts—photographs, films, memories, landscapes, domestic and public spaces” (83). One clear allusion to other writing occurs when Helen reflects on her father’s books and looks at his copy of Heaney’s *North*, the volume of poetry in which Heaney addresses the Troubles most explicitly. Photographs, memories, landscapes, and domestic spaces also permeate *One by One* and will be discussed later in greater detail.

In addition to allowing the Troubles to shape her narrative techniques, Madden utilizes novels as a means of coping with the conflict. She chooses to emphasize the grief process and how to handle such experiences rather than merely representing the violence (Higgins 148). This shift in focus enables her to not simply replay such scenes but also consider how to move beyond them. Moreover, she emphasizes people and places, not historical events. While Madden does reference specific incidents, she does not provide dates or excessive details about them. This confirms Bachelard's assertion that "[f]or a knowledge of intimacy, localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than the determination of dates" (9). That O'Neill's resignation distracted the adults from Tigger's new brood of kittens reveals more about the daily impact of the Troubles than the exact day of his departure (*One by One* 94). Finally, it could be argued that Madden sees her novels as a place themselves, as "narrative structures in which to contain and interpret traumatic events" (Higgins 143). This view of novels as a place enables the Troubles to be "compartmentalized" and gives the individual the choice to "visit or not" (150). While considering novels as a place stretches the traditional definitions of the word, it does point to Madden's use of her work to process the events of the Troubles.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Troubled Space

Little scholarship on Madden exists at this point, though her works are generally well-received and have won several awards. *Hidden Symptoms* (1986) was awarded the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, *The Birds of the Innocent Wood* (1988) won the Somerset Maugham Prize, and *One by One* (1996) was short-listed for the Orange Prize and won the Listowel Kerry Ingredients Book Award (O'Hare 194, Parker 82). Madden also received the Hennessey Award in 1980 (O'Hare 194). To date no one has written a book-length study of Madden. *Authenticity*, *Hidden Symptoms*, and *One by One* have generally received the most critical attention. In 1999 Jerry White published "Europe, Ireland, and Deirdre Madden," which contains a short section on each of Madden's novels published by that time. Also published in 1999, Geraldine Higgins' "'A Place to Bring Anger and Grief': Deirdre Madden's Northern Irish Novels" examines *One by One* and *Hidden Symptoms*. A year later Michael Parker published "Shadows on a Glass: Self-Reflexivity in the Fiction of Deirdre Madden" in the *Irish University Review* and co-edited *Contemporary Irish Fiction: Themes, Tropes, Theories* with Liam Harte, which features a chapter on *One by One* entitled "Reconfiguring Identities: Recent Northern Irish Fiction." The book chapter has similar content to Parker's article, but it also has an extended comparison to Bernard Mac Laverty's *Graces Notes*. More recently in 2011 Margarita Estevez-Saa published "Deirdre Madden's Portraits of the Woman Artist in

Fiction: Beyond Ireland and the Self.” Given the quality of Madden’s work, there is much room for more scholarship about her.

Throughout Madden’s corpus, space plays a key role in identity construction, a relationship made even more apparent against the backdrop of the Northern Troubles. Her emphasis on specific places permeates her novels; rarely does Madden mention a locale without providing physical details of the place. She often uses a particular space as a method of characterization. The reader learns about the true nature of a character by examining the way he or she constructs a home. Almost every character in *One by One*—the Quinn sisters, the Quinn family as a whole, and the extended family—is defined in terms of his or her surroundings. For instance, Cate’s move to London demonstrates her agency and adventurous personality, Helen’s Belfast apartment mirrors her austerity, and Sally’s decision to stay home reveals her close-knit relationship with her mother. The family finds its center relationally in Charlie and spatially in the kitchen—the room most closely associated with him. In addition to revealing more about the characters’ identities, space also forms a basis for organizing memories: events are recalled more by where they occurred than when. Because of the extreme significance of space to identity construction, family dynamics, and a sense of safety, the invasion of spaces by the events in the Northern Troubles is all the more egregious. The Irish Catholic Quinn family has first their country, then their own family invaded by British soldiers. Charlie Quinn’s death destabilizes the family’s sense of implacement, thereby unsettling the sisters’ sense of identity. They must struggle to regain an implacement that can bring healing, even if that space must be a vision rather than reality.

Madden centers many of her works on the exploration of spaces and their impact on the individuals who inhabit them. Even when discussing insignificant places, Madden provides a material description. In one of the childhood chapters, Helen must walk to Sister Benedict's office to have her plans for university study approved. Madden illustrates the journey "along wood-panelled corridors, past coloured-plaster statues on plinths, with posies of flowers before them, past closed doors from behind which came the sound of singing, or chanted verbs, or the solitary voice of a teacher explaining something to her class" (152-3). This hallway does not serve a major purpose in the novel. Madden mentions it only this once and places a greater thematic emphasis on Helen's conversation with Sister Benedict. Nevertheless, Madden deems it worthwhile to give the reader a description of Helen's walk. Rather than burden the reader with unnecessary sensory details, this emphasis on space grants a feeling of groundedness. The reader rarely has to imagine for herself what a location in the novel might look like. Making the space easier to visualize better enables the reader to experience the events of the novel as the characters do.

The importance of place and how it affects one's perception and emotional state even opens the novel: "Home was a huge sky; it was flat fields of poor land fringed with hawthorn and alder. It was birds in flight; it was columns of midges like smoke in a summer dusk. It was grey water; it was a mad wind; it was a solid stone house where the silence was uncanny. Cate was going home" (Madden, *One by One* 1). Cate defines her idea of home largely in terms of the physical landscape. While her family also shapes her notion of home, she must first situate them in the area surrounding her childhood house. Moreover, the love she received from her family has the power to transform a less than

ideal landscape into something that produces the nostalgia often associated with home.

The midgets that are so irksome in the childhood chapters become the more poetic “smoke in a summer dusk” (1) The water is grey—not a clear blue—and the wind is mad, but Cate still has positive connotations with these aspects of the landscape because they remind her of home. This passage introduces the relationship between a physical environment and emotional attachment that grows increasingly apparent as the novel progresses.

Her work also posits that each locale has its own associations; places can almost be considered characters because of their personalities and distinguishing traits. In *One by One*, for example, London seems big, foreign, busy, shallow, and overly commercialized. The lover of Helen’s friend Dave expresses frustration with London’s excessively high standard of living and the amount of time spent in the overcrowded Tube (Madden, *One by One* 58). Though he later misses London’s shops and social life, this feeling reflects more on his characterization as a Londoner than London’s actual merits. Emily goes so far as to see London as a corrupting influence. When she learns that her daughter Cate is pregnant and unmarried, she yells, “I never wanted you to go to London! [...] I knew it would end in trouble,” as if getting pregnant while unmarried only happened in such cosmopolitan places (109). While not as big and artificial as London, Belfast still causes more stress and anxiety than more rural areas; Helen tells Cate that getting out of the city every weekend serves as a “safety valve” (6). While these visits home are later tainted by her father’s death, Helen still feels a need to leave the city. The countryside has the most divided identity in the novel. It offers a series of contrasts: untouched landscapes and manmade structures, religious buildings and old pagan sites, the warmth of home coupled

with the fear of sectarian violence. Because of its innate characteristics and the events that occurred there, each place has its own identity.

Madden presents the relationship between space and identity in a more reciprocal fashion than Bowen. While the Naylor did actively alter the environment of the Big House in turn for being influenced by it, Lois's relationship to space was much more one-directional. She was denied the opportunity of interacting with the space around her and was primarily acted upon. Madden's characters tend to have a more involved relationship with their spaces. In fact, space often serves as an important method of characterization. How a character either creates or responds to spaces reveals much about them as an individual. Describing a visit to find a cure for Sally's nosebleeds, for example, Madden writes, "Like the house she lived in, the woman with the cure looked completely unremarkable," implying that this reflection of the woman in her house and vice versa is a perfectly normal occurrence (62). Casey also notes this correlation: "[W]e tend to identify ourselves by—and with—the places in which we reside" (120). This identification also affects how others perceive an individual. When Cate thinks about her family early one morning, she pictures them in their respective places, Helen in Belfast and Sally and Emily at home. She cannot think of her family in a void and must provide with her mind's eye the physical details of Helen listening to classical music in bed and Sally waiting in the kitchen for the kettle to boil, emphasizing the inability to separate a person from his or her space (*One by One* 1).

The central and most defining space of the novel is created by the Quinn house. This "solid stone house where the silence is uncanny" bears similarities to Danielstown in its stone composition and deep sense of family history (1). The Quinn house, however, feels

much more intimate than the Big House and its demesne. As Bachelard notes, “The house, even more than the landscape, is a ‘psychic state,’ and even when reproduced as it appears from the outside, it bespeaks intimacy” (72). This emphasis on intimate relationships as the crux of the house itself can be seen in the house’s first appearance in the novel. Rather than describing the outside structure in detail, Madden immediately mentions that Emily waits for Cate by the parlour window (7). This image of a mother eagerly anticipating the arrival of her daughter reveals more about the house than the placement of the porch or color of the front door. Cate savors the intimacy and warmth of her visit home and reflects on how much she enjoys catching up with her family during their first meal together: “It reminded her of the visceral, uncomprehending emotional closeness that had bound them together over dinners of baked beans and fish fingers eaten at the same table when they were small children” (8). The kitchen table serves as a reminder, emblem even, of the intimacy shared throughout the years. By extension of the table, the kitchen becomes the most important room in the house. Madden provides a thorough picture of the layout of the room, more than any other room in the house, thus privileging its significance for the Quinn family (21).

Much of the kitchen’s meaning comes from its close association with Charlie, the center of the Quinn family. Charlie approved of several renovations to the house, but he preferred to keep the kitchen as it was. Helen recalls him saying, “To tell the truth, I can’t see anything wrong with it the way it is” (21). Charlie’s love for the room inspires the family to keep it unchanged after his death. Madden writes, “[N]either the sisters nor their mother desired to make any change to the room: they wanted it to remain as he had known it” (21). It serves as a type of memorial, a picture of Charlie being a prominent

feature of the kitchen (8). Charlie's connection with the kitchen reflects his caring and generous personality. He consistently shows his daughters affection and support, from buying them sweets when they go out to encouraging them to be their own person (42). While Emily certainly loves her children, it is Charlie's affection and warmth that enable the family to have the emotional intimacy that it does. Even after his death, the kitchen retains Charlie's memory and expresses his personality more than any other room in the house.

This relationship between space and identity is also exemplified in Cate, particularly in the agency she exerts over her spaces. More than the other members of her family, Cate intentionally arranges the space around her and is willing to move to be in a place better suited for her. Despite the negative conceptions of London seen in other members of the Quinn family, Cate's decision to live in London does positively demonstrate her agency and illustrates her inherent differences from the rest of her family. Cate works at a high-end fashion magazine and lives in an equally stylish apartment, a far departure from the lawyer Helen and school teacher Sally. Though not a shallow person, Cate enjoys the opportunities found in a big city. Even Belfast is not cosmopolitan enough for Cate; she realizes that she would not have been happy living in Belfast (4). Her move to a place in which she could be happy also shows that she cares about happiness, in contrast to the more austere Helen who lives in Belfast even though she does not particularly enjoy it.

Some critics see Cate's life in London as a way of escaping her origins, but this view denies that moving is part of her identity. Harte and Parker believe, "Despite their earthing effect on her, Cate has become willfully estranged from both [childhood] scar

and landscape, metonyms for the identity she has spent her professional life trying to efface” (240). Admittedly, Cate changes the spelling of her name because Kate Quinn sounds “too Irish, too country” (4). She does seem to recognize that her professional career requires a certain distance from her life in County Antrim—largely because of British bias toward the Irish—but this does not necessarily mean that Cate rejects her origins. As Madden writes about herself, “I grew up in the southern part of County Antrim, near the village of Toome, a place I will always regard as home, although I have not lived there for many years, and possibly never will again” (“Looking for Home” 27). Moving from one’s childhood home and establishing a career different from the typical family occupations does not result in an effacement of one’s identity and repudiation of one’s beginnings. In fact, at least in Cate’s case, it reveals her identity. Cate has always been more adventurous and risk-taking than her sisters. Her desire to travel and see new places continues into adulthood; on her visits home she always wants to go more places than Sally and Emily (Madden, *One by One* 82). Her family finds it odd that she “takes so much pleasure in driving through the countryside and spending time in decidedly Protestant villages” (O’Hare 195). Unlike Sally and Emily who tend to avoid change and potentially hostile environments, Cate enjoys being in places that are different. More than proving Cate’s identity erasure, her life in London exemplifies her desire to experience new places outside Ireland.

Just as Cate’s choice of city provides an important aspect of her characterization, so does the more intimate space of her apartment. Madden gives little description of Cate’s apartment, but she does portray Cate as someone with an innate sense of design. When Cate enters Helen’s apartment, she stops and “for a few moments try[s] to decide what

changes were needed: a stronger, warmer colour for the walls, to begin with. The room was big, it could take it. Maybe some sort of urn over in that corner, or there needed to be more focus on the fireplace...” (87). This “habit” of Cate’s, as Madden describes it, reveals both Cate’s natural response to exert influence over her surroundings and her aestheticism. This desire for beauty can also be seen in Cate’s large wardrobe with its numerous articles of clothing and shoes. Bachelard observes, “A wardrobe’s space is also *intimate space*, space that is not open to just anybody” (78). This specific personal space with its excessive number of clothes could be attributed to materialism and superficiality, but Cate does not seem to possess either of those traits. Rather she simply wants her life to be aesthetically pleasing. In addition to sizing up rooms, Cate also has a habit of examining other women’s appearances “professionally, but not unkindly, she liked to think” (87). Cate does not act condescendingly toward those less attractive or less fashionable than she—she comes closest to Charlie in terms of warmth and kindness—but she does believe that life should be beautiful and that she has the power to make it so.

The Catholic icon in Cate’s apartment also reveals her inner life. Helen assumes that Cate no longer practices her religion when she moves to London, but upon visiting, Helen discovers a religious picture hanging in her apartment (22). As Bachelard notes, “An entire past comes to dwell in a new house. The old saying, ‘We bring our *lares* with us’ has many variations” (5). Cate’s icon is a rather literal manifestation of the Quinn family “household gods” and serves as a clear connection to her parents’ strong faith. The nature of the icon as a tasteful reproduction, as opposed to a “cheap, kitsch print,” is especially meaningful because it demonstrates Cate’s adherence to her faith while not

compromising her aestheticism (22). White believes, “This image of the classy religious icon in a posh London apartment is central to the novel. Even as Cate leaves her marginal community for the metropolitan/imperial center of London, and even as she *changes her name*, she retains central parts of her marginal identity and manages to update them and make them relevant to her condition” (458). The icon expresses the internalization of Cate’s faith and a continued bond with her upbringing.

Helen’s chaotic approach to interior design differs greatly from Cate’s love of beauty and interaction with her spaces. Unlike Cate who feels more strongly the relationship between her self and her surroundings, Helen “felt no particular attachment” to her Belfast apartment (Madden, *One by One* 24). She views her living space as purely functional. As Madden describes, “She’d bought furniture and curtains in the same frame of mind in which most people bought pints of milk and loaves of bread: she needed them” (24). To Helen home always meant her childhood home in the country; no other space would have the same emotional investment for her. Helen does recognize the way she has neglected her apartment. She admits, “It was too sparsely furnished. [...] [t]he combination of clinical neatness in the main room with the chill atmosphere always struck her particularly after she had been home for the weekend. She knew she needed more pictures, more rugs, more *things*” (45). Helen, however, fails to take the trouble to increase the comfort of her apartment, which is characteristic of her life as a whole. She works long hours at a difficult job and has little inclination for fun and leisure. The vibrant and charismatic Cate noticed this trend in her sister beginning in childhood and “had watched her austerity close around her like a sheet of ice” (25). Helen’s sober lifestyle manifests itself most clearly in her cold and dreary apartment.

While Helen primarily exhibits an attitude of gravity, the messiness of her bedroom and display of her father's photo uncover other facets of her personality. In contrast to the seemingly uninhabited living room, Helen's bedroom is all too lived in. Her floor can barely be seen under the piles of newspapers and political magazines, dirty coffee cups, CDs, books, and stray shoes (45). Helen's messiness—which she tried to control as a child—shows that she needs a release from the pressure of being the oldest child and a successful lawyer. Helen's bedroom offers her a space away from others' opinions where she can fully relax. It even has a touch of home in the old parlor chair that her mother gave her. Helen's photo of her father on display in her sitting room also links Helen's apartment to her childhood home. This photo, taken when Helen graduated from law school, captures the great affection between her and her father (26). Charlie is Helen's soft spot; according to her aunt Rosemary, she was more devastated by his death than either of her sisters (47). These seeming anomalies of Helen's chaotic bedroom and warmth for her father add depth and complexity to her austere characterization.

The youngest sister Sally's decision to continue living at home reveals a dogged faithfulness to the spaces of her childhood and an intense attachment to her mother. As a small child, Sally clung to her mother and stayed at home as much as possible, not even venturing over to her uncle's house next door to play with her cousins on Sunday afternoons. Emily matched her daughter's devotion and kept her at home with the slightest excuses (111). Living at home and being so close to her mother makes Sally more connected to her childhood than her sisters. Helen reflects that Sally's faith "like much else in her life, ran in a straight and unfractured line direct from her childhood" (21-2). Sally never experienced the change in perspective that would result from a move

to London or even Belfast. When Cate asks her sister why she never left, Sally acknowledges that she feared a sense of displacement. She says, “I was afraid that I would make strong links in some other place, but not strong enough, so that I’d feel discontented wherever I was” (139). Sally’s excessive attachment to her mother and home as a child grants her a tie with County Antrim that she cannot bear to risk losing. She knows that leaving might cost her the deep sense of implacement she currently possesses. Like Cate, Sally sees the link between space and emotional attachment, but she lacks Cate’s agency when it comes to creating an environment that would be a better fit for her. Unfortunately, maintaining this implacement has its own costs. Her relationship to her mother often stifles Sally’s independence. Emily enjoyed having a companion who so completely suited her, “whose will and whose nature she had formed to fit with her own needs” (140). The Quinn daughters recognize that Emily never encouraged Sally’s autonomy, to the point that Sally remains perfectly content continuing to living in her childhood home.

The personal space of Charlie’s brother Brian and his wife Lucy also sheds light on their characterizations in the novel. Their house can be seen from the Quinn family home, signifying the close relationship between the two families. As children Helen and Cate often spend time at Brian’s house and find it a safe, happy place. Cate believes that “even if you closed your eyes and tried your hardest, you couldn’t imagine a nicer house than Uncle Brian’s, with its two little windows sticking out of the roof and the porch and the shiny front door the colour of chocolate” (14). Behind the house lies a garden that Brian allows to grow as it pleased; this more natural and wild style of cultivation reflects Brian’s easygoing personality. Lucy shares her husband’s relaxed attitudes—she places

less emphasis on “things like tidiness and good behaviour” than Charlie and Emily (15). While the children clearly enjoy spending time at Uncle Brian’s because of the additional freedom they have, they also appreciate the standing welcome that Brian and Lucy extend to the girls. They enter the house through the kitchen, never being expected to knock, just as they do in their own home (15). Brian’s laid back personality creates a comfortable atmosphere in his domestic spaces and the immediate landscape around his house. Sadly, this happy characterization of both Brian and his home changes dramatically when Charlie is killed in this kitchen, as will be discussed later in further detail.

Peter, Charlie’s other brother, lacks a stable home of his own, which indicates the disruptive nature of his drinking problem. Peter cannot hold a steady job long enough to afford a house so he lives with Brian and Lucy. During his drinking binges, he sleeps in a caravan behind the house, a sign that his alcoholism causes displacement (16). Peter’s vagabond existence partially explains why his presence is felt less fully in the novel than Brian’s. He does not exhibit a strong personality, almost as if Madden has difficulty portraying vivid characters without giving them a place that can also speak to their identity. The clearest memory that Cate has of Peter occurs when he takes Cate, Helen, and their cousins to the island in the lough in front of their houses. Though concerned about the numerous bird nests on the island, Peter exhibits his good-willed nature by agreeing to stop at the island (18). Cate becomes utterly fascinated by the nests and new hatchlings she sees. Bachelard elucidates the appeal of nests: “We want them to be perfect, to bear the mark of a very sure instinct. We ourselves marvel at this instinct, and a nest is generally considered to be one of the marvels of animal life” (92). Nests point

to the innate desire for a home, a need to create a safe space for oneself and one's family. Peter has no nest of his own, but his willingness to take the children to see the nests becomes a central fixture of his identity to Cate. When she feels frightened at hearing Uncle Peter's drunken screams at night, she comforts herself by thinking of the man who took her to see the nests. Cate seems to hope that the island is Peter's true locale, not the displaced caravan in Brian's yard.

The dichotomy between Emily's parents also becomes apparent when examining the places associated with each. Granddad Kelly, though not alive during the main narrative or the flashback chapters, makes his presence felt in the novel through his schoolteacher's cottage by the sea. When visiting her mother's childhood home, Helen finds the cottage a "lovely place" with its nearby sheep, hedges of wild fuchsia, and the sound of the sea (40). The cottage exemplifies the quiet affection Emily received from her father. He played with her by pretending to see pictures in the embers of a dying fire, and he walked with her along the beach, telling her about the different types of oceans in the world (112). Sadly, Granddad Kelly died while Emily was quite young; she lost that peaceful cottage and loving father at once.

Granny Kelly's personality and house stand in stark contrast to those of Granddad Kelly. She lives with her son Michael and his wife in a "grey-painted terraced house" that had "no garden, no dogs or cats, and the television was never turned on" when the Quinn sisters visited (37). Upset that Granny Kelly rejected her daughter's marriage—both in giving up her career as a teacher and marrying someone without money—Emily only visits her mother at Christmas. Charlie did not want to be the cause of Granny Kelly not seeing her granddaughters so he took the girls to see her by himself, making an

awkward visit even more uncomfortable. The discomfort from these visits stems equally from the austere atmosphere and Granny Kelly's stern personality. Considering the cold feeling of the parlor despite a fire, Helen contributes at least part of the problem to the abundance of glass objects in the room: a glass-topped table, a china cabinet with glass doors, and a glass vase that never contained flowers (39). The flowerless vase epitomizes Granny Kelly's cold, joyless existence. Helen also perceives the reciprocal nature of the space. Granny Kelly does cause the space's gloominess with her rude comments to Charlie and strict rules of behavior, but she also suffers the effects of the space herself. Because of her bad eyes, she must avoid natural light. Helen thinks of her grandmother sitting in the dark all the time and realizes "how horrible that must be for her. No wonder she was grumpy" (41). Granny Kelly never possessed a winsome personality, but her living conditions do exacerbate her temperament. When she does visit, Emily also experiences the stifling effects of the space. Her laughter was "forced and nervous, not the full, unbuttoned laughter they would hear at home" (78). Granny Kelly's gray house reflects her severity and attempts to control those who enter it, just as she tried to dictate Emily's life.

In addition to being a method of characterization, spaces also provide a way of organizing memories in the novel. While the childhood chapters do progress chronologically, their exact times are not always clear. Rather, Madden presents the memories more in terms of places. The first flashback chapter exemplifies this pattern. Cate recalls first the church, then Granddad Quinn's grave, then the small store, and finally Brian's house and her house (10-4). The where of each location supplies a structure for the what that happened and the who that were present. Madden sees

memory, along with time and imagination, as “linked to place, always linked to place” (“Looking for Home” 26). She believes that place contributes to memory to such a degree because children are “particularly susceptible to the spirit of a place, its *genus loci*; are open to its reality in a way that becomes more difficult later in life” (27). A child’s deep awareness and emotional investment in places burns specific locales into her memories and serves as a framing device for recalling those memories later. Bachelard observes, “Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are” (9). This static quality of memory explains why the kitchen table immediately reminded Cate of earlier meals eaten there. Being securely in the place where the memories originally occurred enabled Cate to recall them more vividly.

Not only do memories center around places, but also places retain memories. After hearing the news of Cate’s pregnancy, Emily processes the information in her conservatory. Sally tries to speak to her mother about the situation, and Emily is adamant they move to the kitchen “in case there should be hard words spoken that would poison the air and then she wouldn’t be able to sit amongst the flowers ever again without being assailed by unpleasant memories” (107). Emily knows that time would not automatically erase the link between a place and the memories that happened there. This illustrates Higgins’ point that “place is both a real location and an imaginary locale, inhabited by the memories and experiences attached to it” (148). Each new experience adds another level of meaning to a particular space. This retention of memory partially explains spaces’ significance to identity construction.

The importance of spaces, both to understanding other individuals, housing memories, and developing one’s own sense of self, makes the intrusion by the Troubles

that much more devastating. Madden leaves no doubt that the Troubles did invade the spaces of those who lived in Northern Ireland. While most Catholics initially received the British soldiers into their country gratefully, welcoming them into their homes was another matter. The Quinn family expresses surprise and discomfort at being questioned in their parlor (*One by One* 98). Brian experiences a greater violation of his domestic space when soldiers kick in his door and take him and Peter to be interred (100). Being forced to accommodate foreign and hostile presences in their homes undermines both families' security. Emily's friend Miss Regan undergoes an even greater threat to her personal space during the Belfast rioting. She must stay with her sister out of town and fears not having a house to return to (95). As previously established, a home represents more than a place to stay; losing a home means losing a part of one's identity and the close connection to the memories housed in the space.

The Troubles can also taint places for those who are not directly impacted by the violence that occurs there. One day Cate drove through Fermanagh and was struck by the town's many flowers, quaint shops, and "air of quiet prosperity" (83). Later that day, she hears on the radio that a young man had been killed in the town. Driving back through the town that night, Cate encounters an army check point and sees the police tape around the crime scene. The picturesque little town has been transformed into a painful reminder of the conflict. Higgins observes about this passage that, "Place has become imprinted by both personal and political meanings. The natural landscape has been overlaid by political markings, the land traversed by marches, travestied by bombings and road blocks" (149). What was previously peaceful and ordinary now bears the mark of the conflict. The ability of the Troubles to negatively affect a space extends to Cate's

apartment in London. While Cate slices beef for a stir-fry, the radio brings news of a shooting in South Armagh. She feels as if the newscaster's voice "seep[ed] from the radio into the bright, warm kitchen where she stood, looking now in revulsion at the cut, heaped meat on the bloodstained wooden board" (Madden, *One by One* 141). Cate's geographical distance and lack of direct relation to the individual shot do not prevent the Troubles from disrupting commonplace domestic tasks.

The worst intrusion in the novel occurs when loyalist paramilitaries burst into Brian's kitchen and kill Charlie, violating both the space of the kitchen and the place of Charlie's body. One of the biggest travesties of this already traumatic incident lies in the mistaken identity of the victim. The attackers assumed that because their target was in Brian's house that he was in fact Brian—a member of Sinn Féin. They occupied as the enemy the space that Charlie was occupying as family. Helen feels most strongly that "the horror of what had happened to their father had been compounded by it having taken place in Brian's house" (44). That the murder happened in a supposedly safe, familiar locale makes the injustice of it even worse. More than invading Brian's kitchen, the attackers intrude on Charlie's implacement in the most basic form possible by mutilating his body. When considering what individuals mean by the phrase "being here," Casey posits that the most fundamental sense of "here" is one's body. He writes, "Indeed the implicit corporeal equation 'here=body=place' may lead me to take this particular implacement of the here for granted or, contrastingly, to assume that it may be the only such implacement" (52-3). Without a physical body, one cannot experience any other type of implacement. In *The Last September* Gerald represents to Lois a type of space, but in *One by One* Charlie himself is a space. His death prevents his body from serving

as his primary locus for emplacement and is now only a “landscape on which the nationalist drama [i]s inscribed” (Gilsenan Nordin qtd. in Davey 13). Charlie’s displacement disrupts the sense of emplacement felt by the rest of his family.

Obviously, the area most immediately ruined by Charlie’s death is Brian’s kitchen. A year after the incident, Brian and Lucy have the kitchen completely remodeled (22). The new stove, fitted pine units, and vinyl flooring mask the scene of Charlie’s shooting, but they cannot erase the violation of this space. The local priest admits that visiting Brian’s house feels different and less comfortable than the Quinn home (126). As with other spaces in the novel, the kitchen retains a memory of the events that happened there, in this case a horrific event. Helen refuses to enter her uncle’s house after her father’s death, partially because she blames Brian, but also because she does not want to encounter the changed space. This aversion to a contaminated space explains why Helen moved into her apartment as soon as it was built; she wanted to know that “it was, psychically, a blank” (44). Helen has difficulty interacting with this space because she fears losing another place she cares about deeply. While the new version of the kitchen does ease the immediate reminder of Charlie’s violent death, it also creates a barrier to the happier memories that occurred in that space. Brian and Lucy now seem uncomfortable in their own kitchen, with Lucy going so far as to call it “desecrated” (143). The kitchen can no longer function as the house’s heart of intimacy after Charlie’s death.

Though not the actual site of the attack, the Quinn family home also undergoes a change in identity. Emily and Sally now lock the doors all the time, and Helen fears the sound of the doorbell late at night (28). As Harte and Parker observe, “Once, before

violence erupted, home was a place of shelter, a secure centre, a site where self and place were organically fused” (234). The attack forever destroys the sanctity of the home and the secure comfort of being implaced there. The Quinns always knew they were vulnerable simply because the Troubles’ violence was rarely fair, but the degree of their defenselessness did not become apparent until the shooting happened next door. Losing Charlie also altered the tenor of the Quinn home. Casey argues, “Of one thing we can be certain: both the continuing accessibility and the familiarity of a dwelling place presuppose the presence and activity of the inhabitant’s lived body. This body has everything to do with the transformation of a mere *site* into a dwelling *place*” (116). In many ways Charlie’s physical presence shaped the atmosphere of the house. His no longer occupying the house in an embodied form most likely contributes to the silence becoming “uncanny” (Madden, *One by One* 1, 181). Like Lois, the Quinn sisters and their mother experience “*umheimlichkeit*—the uncanny anxiety of not feeling ‘at home’ [...] even *in* the home” (Casey x). In addition to losing a husband and father, the remaining Quinn family members must also cope with the changes to the spaces he inhabited.

Because Emily, Sally, and Helen do not possess Cate’s agency in regards to their surroundings, they feel most disrupted by the displacement caused by his death. Emily laments, “The world’s empty to me without my husband” (126). Her sense of dispossession extends from her home to the entire world. Sally, the family’s quintessential homebody, no longer wants to live in Northern Ireland. She admits that living at home was tolerable, even enjoyable, until her father died (139). Having to help her mother through the grieving process tainted the house while Charlie’s death made her

realize the severity of the Troubles. Expressing her disgust of Northern Ireland, Sally exclaims, “All that guff about it being a great wee place, and the people being so friendly. I feel ashamed for having gone along with all that; other people were being killed the way Daddy was, and I was the one of the ones saying, ‘There’s more to Northern Ireland than shooting and bombing’” (139). No longer able to compartmentalize the atrocities from her view of her home, Sally now wants to leave the place that so completely formulated her identity.

Helen, too, experiences a deep sense of displacement and subsequent identity confusion. Her disrupted implacement manifests itself in her inability to imagine her place in the universe. To lull herself to sleep as a child, Helen visualized that she floated far above the earth, high enough to “see and feel that the universe was alive” (179). She then traveled closer to earth, past Japan, past China, to Ireland, and then to Northern Ireland. Helen saw her school, Uncle Brian’s house, her own house, her room, her bed, and finally herself, “drowsing, waiting for sleep and feeling safe, so safe and so happy” (180). After Charlie’s death the images that enter Helen’s mind before sleep reverse this trajectory. She begins with a vision of her father’s attackers entering the kitchen and shooting Charlie in the head. Then her thoughts “swung violently away, and now she was aware of the cold light of dead stars; the graceless immensity of a dark universe” (181). Whereas the universe formerly gave Helen a starting place for seeing where she fit in the cosmos, it now reminds her that her father’s death is a small act known only to small number of people. Bachelard believes that the main advantage of a house is that it “protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace” (6). Sadly, the Quinn house no longer offers that shelter for Helen. The change in implacement brought about

by Charlie's death forces Helen to "reassess both the value and purpose of her work as a Catholic defense lawyer and the meaning of home, now that its ordinary 'essence' has been permanently and irrevocably violated" (Harte and Parker 237). Helen's home and identity have been deeply violated by the Troubles.

Cate differs from her mother and sisters in that she copes with her grief by creating new spaces. Madden writes, "One of the first things she did after the funeral was to arrange to have her apartment redecorated in pale colours which gave a greater sense of light and space" (91). She also bought an excessive numbers of flowers, as if reminding herself that life still possesses beauty. While these acts of agency do help the grieving process, Cate goes a step further by deciding to have a child. She has difficulty articulating her motives other than desiring "something real" (93). Perhaps Cate's pregnancy reflects her need to create a new space in the form of her baby's body. The child could never replace Charlie's physical presence, but it would make the Quinn family five members again. Madden suggests that the baby would have a positive effect on the house. Toward the end of Cate's visit, the women sit together in the kitchen, talking and peacefully imagine having a baby in the house again (177). A child could grant the house more happy memories to retain.

Most of Cate's changes remain at the personal and familial level, but she also knows that there must exist a space for healing at the national level:

She imagined a room, a perfectly square room. Three of its walls, unbroken by windows, would be covered by neat rows of names, over three thousand of them; and the fourth wall would be nothing but window. The whole structure would be built where the horizon was low, and the sky huge. It would be a place which afforded dignity to memory, where you could bring your anger, as well as your grief. (149)

The square shape of the room reflects the need for order after such disruption and chaos while the names provide a personal touch and connection to the victims. The wall comprised entirely of a window is the most striking feature of the memorial. Bachelard sees the borderline between outside and inside as negative because it feels painful on both sides, but a liminal space can be the only way to bring healing (218). This proves especially true when outside forces invade interior spaces. A healing memorial must bring both types of space into equilibrium. The window's ready access to the sky shows the contrast between Helen and Cate. Helen sees the sky as dark and cold, whereas her sister believes the sky has the room to handle the emotions caused by the Troubles. The "huge sky" has room for anger, not just a memorial's usual grief. Parker asserts, "The antithesis of the 'solid stone house where the silence was uncanny' (p. 1), the shrine, like the text itself, serves as a potential space for recuperation, a theatre for purgation" (102). Because the Troubles violated so many spaces, only a newly created space can bring complete healing.

Madden's work addresses the most recent conflict in a long and tortured relationship between Catholics and Protestants, English and Irish. She stays true to her fascination with home and other spaces that formulate an identity while highlighting the effects that sectarian violence can have on both individuals and places. Some places, such as Belfast and Derry, bear deeper scars, just as some individuals feel the wounds of the Troubles more intensely. While never minimizing the pain of the conflict, Madden does offer hope. Cate serves as an example of the human ability to affect one's space. She demonstrates that being completely impervious to outside intrusions is impossible, but

that exerting agency over space in any way one can facilitates the healing process, even if that space is merely a vision.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

The Last September and *One by One in the Darkness* have several important continuities that enable these works to be studied in tandem. Both Bowen and Madden recognize the degree to which space can influence one's identity and that a sense of identity often manifests itself in specific places. The way that an individual interacts with space reveals much about who she is as a person. That Lois does not take ownership of her surroundings points to her insecurities and uncertainties about her identity. Marda, who is older and more self-assured, makes her room at Danielstown more her own than Lois ever does. Likewise, in *One by One* the way the Quinn sisters relate to their spaces provides a major aspect of their characterization. For instance, Helen's lack of investment in her Belfast apartment is analogous to her general austerity. Sally's decision to continue living at home as an adult relates to her intense emotional closeness with her mother. Cate's vivacious personality and aestheticism are readily apparent in the way she travels to new places and arranges her apartment to be beautiful and welcoming. Throughout both works, the relationship between space and identity permeates the texts.

Bowen and Madden also note that conflict makes this correlation even more apparent, sometimes for the better but often for the worse. In some instances conflict reveals that an individual has a healthy relationship with space and that space can facilitate healing. For example, Cate responds to her father's death by making her

apartment feel more open and inviting. She deals with the Northern Troubles as a whole by imagining the memorial that could have a therapeutic effect on those who remain. While deeply impacted by her father's death, Cate's relationship with space spares her the degree of devastation felt by Helen. Because Helen's sense of displacement is more rooted in Charlie and the way he represents home and family life, she is completely unsettled by his death and does not show much promise of ever regaining that same stability. Part of the reason for Helen's inability to fully recover stems from the Quinn house's uncanniness. In contrast to the noise and life of the house when the sisters were growing up, the house is now characterized by a disconcerting silence. The silence is more than simply having adults as occupants instead of children. It points to losing Charlie and all that he meant to the family. A similar feeling of uncanniness is found in Danielstown. Lois feels uncomfortable at home due to the long history of the Naylor family in a country that still sees them somewhat as foreigners. The present family's isolation and lack of warmth also contribute to the house's uncanniness. In both novels, this uncanniness points to past conflict and disrupts the peace of a particular space.

Amid the many similarities between these texts, they do have notable discontinuities, one of which being the nature of the conflict in the novels. While both works address political and familial conflict that is often quite similar, the exact conflict differs. In *The Last September*, the conflict that Lois encounters with her family is more subtle. She must deal with feeling like an outsider, being underappreciated, and not having meaningful relationships. She does lose both her parents, which in one sense is worse than the Quinn's sisters' situation, but her parents did not die in such a violent, horrific, senseless way. That Lois deals with more subtle conflict—the political conflict in the

novel does not culminate until she has already gone abroad—reveals that Bowen emphasizes identity prevention rather than the identity disruption seen in Madden. The latter presents a text in which the protagonist tries to formulate an identity but cannot due to the extenuating circumstances of her present situation. Madden, however, sets half of the novel after the great crisis of the work has already occurred. She shows the uprooting of one's sense of identity that takes place after such an event. She also explores how some characters try to rebuild their lives and what prevents others from doing so. The nature of the conflict in the novels reveals that Bowen and Madden have different emphases in regards to how space affects one's identity.

Another key dissimilarity between *The Last September* and *One by One* can be seen in the main characters' class. Lois and her family represent the upper-class, whereas the Quinns are firmly middle-class. This distinction in class shapes the spaces in the novels. While other places are certainly mentioned in *The Last September*, the novel focuses primarily on the Big House. This points to the Naylor's isolated position from their community; they have practically all of their needs met in their fortress-like dwelling. They do not have to leave the Big House or its demesne unless they choose to. In contrast to the Anglo-Irish's more localized existence, the many spaces of *One by One* are reflective of a middle-class lifestyle. The Quinns do not have the luxury of remaining in their isolated house while servants buy what they need. They must interact with their community more than the Naylor's out of necessity. Furthermore, because their houses are smaller and offer less room for entertaining, they are more likely to visit other houses, as seen by Cate and Helen going over to Brian's house on Sunday afternoons. Being middle-class tends to expose one on a regular basis to several places that become

important. Class differences are also seen in the level of intimacy in the disparate places in the novels. Upper-class dinners in the Big House seem cold, stifling, and uncomfortable while meals eaten around the family kitchen table have warmth, closeness, and years of good memories. While the destruction of an upper-class house is tragic because of its primacy, perhaps the loss of an intimate middle-class home is even worse.

The Last September and *One by One in the Darkness* are both complex works that offer many areas of fruitful study, but they particularly excel at elucidating the significance of space. Space encompasses and affects so many aspects of a person's life. It can signify problems at the national level or illuminate issues in the immediate family. Space can demonstrate how individuals interact with a natural landscape, such as the Anglo-Irish imposing Big Houses on the Irish countryside. It can also address manmade houses that have the imprints of specific people as seen in the Quinn family home. This ability of spatial studies to be expansive or narrow in scope contributes to its fascination and value in literary criticism. As Bowen and Madden illustrate, a space is never just a space.

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