Unlived Lives, Imaginary Widowhood and Elizabeth Bowen's *A World of Love*

Abstract

This article reads Elizabeth Bowen's 1955 novel *A World of Love* as exploring the legacy of certain highly imaginative coping mechanisms that were adopted by women in response to wartime losses. Acknowledging how Bowen's mid-century works exhibit a curious return to the lot of those who came of age amidst the demographic imbalances that followed the Great War, it suggests that *A World of Love* interrogates the psychological draw of 'imaginary widowhood': a form of counterfactual self-fashioning that saw many single women of Bowen's generation elect to view themselves not as spinsters, but as those who would have been married were it not for the conflict. Noting parallels between the novel's depiction of a girl whose sexuality is awakened by the letters of a long-dead soldier from the Great War and the various forms of appropriation that were encouraged around the body of the Unknown Warrior – including the 1918 literary hoax *The Love of an Unknown Soldier: Love Letters Found in a Trench* – the article offers a new account of *A World of Love* as a text which registers the ambivalent and creatively rich qualities of a psychological climate that was at work throughout the twentieth century. Bowen's novel, it argues, is propelled by a profound interest in the forces which induced successive generations of British women to forge intimate counterfactual relationships with those lives rendered unliveable, and the loves that were denied them, on account of world war.

Elizabeth Bowen's *A World of Love* opens at daybreak on a hot June morning in 1950s Ireland. A haze-less sky holds a slowly smouldering sun, and as the knotty syntax unfurls, 'a sort of coppery burnish' tinges a rural landscape 'still pale with the heat of the day before'. At the centre of this copper-hued tableau lies a prospect likely familiar to readers of Bowen's earlier works: an 'impoverished' Big House, Montefort, whose declining aspect is saved from dereliction only by the faint 'ghost of style' still carried by its façade. Into this scene of burgeoning heat and waning prowess saunters a girl who also emits a spectral, uncanny quality. 'Wearing a trailing Edwardian muslin dress', the twenty-year-old Jane Danby appears to 'belong to some other time'.[1] Yet like the dilapidated Big House from whose shadowy depths she emerges, Jane is not merely a stylish ghost but a ghost of authorial style: a glance backwards to the early-twentieth century and to many of Bowen's previous ingénues, particularly her first Anglo-Irish heroine, Lois Farquar of *The Last September* (1929). Decked out in attire incongruous with the sharp modern cut of her 'golden hair', her appearance certainly feels affectated, as though compiled from a none-too-judicious rummaging about in the dressing up box of her creator's oeuvre.[2] Indeed, her beautiful face is one 'perfectly ready to be a woman's, but not yet so', residing at the limits of that childish innocence from whose shackles so many of Bowen's emotionally stilted creations fail to escape. Change, however, may yet be afoot, for the key to Jane's liberation appears to be already upon her: clasped within her delicate hand is an old and well-thumbed letter, with which she has fallen passionately in love (10).

Writing in 1950, Bowen had described the Second World War – 'with its excoriations, grinding impersonality [and] obliteration of so many tracks and landmarks' – as

having left such vital, rejuvenating qualities as 'heart and imagination' lacking in society.[3] Traces of this anxiety are discernible in the first sentence of *A World of Love*, where the pallor associated with '*the heat of the day before*' offers a playful allusion to her previous novel, the wartime noir *The Heat of the Day* (1949), as well as to the serious matter of how sustained periods of total war work to dry up human life, leaving once ardent sensibilities withered and stale. It is tempting, therefore, to see something rather hopeful – romantic, even – about the flush of colour that slowly suffuses the parched landscape around Montefort, bringing a dormant but soon to be roused heroine in its wake. Indeed, when considering what she understood to be the duties of contemporary novelists in the essay 'The Bend Back' (1950), Bowen had declared that they should feel compelled to 're-instate the idea of life as liveable, loveable': to use art to help fashion a world of love from the scorched earth left by the world at war.[4] Playing dress-up in a garment dating from before the Great War, and caressing the pages of a yellowed missive, *A World of Love*'s heroine might at first seem like a figure out of time. Yet for all her early-twentieth century trappings, Jane, like the novel in which she appears, is a decidedly mid-century creation, implicated in that particular post-1945 period of reckoning and resuscitation during which Bowen had turned her mind back to the aftermath of an earlier world war, and to those imaginative coping mechanisms through which the 1914 generation had sought to assure their existential survival.

A World of Love is set in County Cork, and follows the fortunes of the Danby family in the days following Jane's discovery of a bundle of old love letters in Montefort's attic. Lacking envelopes or a named addressee, these letters are written in the hand of Guy Danby, the former fiancé of Jane's mother Lilia, who had been killed on active service in 1918. Young, impressionable and desperate for her first taste of romance, Jane takes possession of the missives, writing herself into the ambiguous identity of Guy's intended recipient. These letters might have slept quietly for over thirty years, but their re-emergence in a society eerily devoid of young men succeeds in unleashing floods of long-repressed emotion. Promiscuous in life, and apparently even more faithless in death, the insight that Guy's long-lost words might provide into his fickle heart comes to arouse the hopes and expectations of his many conquests. Unfortunately, amongst these are the three women currently residing in his old familial home: Jane, Lilia, and Antonia, Guy's glamorous and cynical cousin. Implicated also in the fallout from letters' return are Jane's father Fred and younger sister Maud. Concerned by the crisis of masculinity that the reinvigorated cult of Guy has precipitated in their father, Maud resolves to steal back the letters, instigating their final journey towards Montefort's hearth. Jane, bereft of her sacred scripts, is left to consider the consequences of having 'felt entitled to raid, despoil, rifle, balk or cheat' the past by claiming one of its fallen heroes as her own (35): 'Anybody's game, she had thought […] anybody's game! Though which of them, dead man and living girl, had been the player, and which the played-with?' (119).

Still imbued with the impatience of youth, Jane does not dwell long on the implications of her dangerous game. At last in possession of a budding sexuality, she ends the novel having answered the adoring gaze of a new flesh and blood lover, an American named Richard Priam. In what follows, however, I mean to pay less attention to this process of engagement with then relinquishment of an emotionally rich past, than to those pervasive – and historically specific – psychological climates, dispositions and coping mechanisms that *A World of Love*'s overwrought atmospheres and eccentric cast of characters dramatize. In sum, I wish to propose a reading of this mid-century work as an exploration by Bowen of certain counterfactual identities that were entertained by women in particular in response to the desolation of the Great War, and of what long-term effects these supposedly '"I"-saving' patterns of thought might have upon both individuals and society at large.[5] Indeed, it is my

contention that despite the wealth of critical attention given to this novel as a self-conscious exploration by Bowen of her own artistic development,[6] *A World of Love* is in fact propelled by a much broader interest in the intimate relationship that members of her own generation had been encouraged to form with counterfactual experiences: especially those concerning their unlived lives and unrealized loves. Bowen's literary output is, of course, part of that wider story of her generation's developing creative consciousness. And yet my aim here is to push against accounts too quick to dismiss the novel as a parodic reckoning, and instead to position this most revelrous and dynamic of Bowen's works relative to the ethically fraught legacies of two highly imaginative forms of counterfactual thinking that were at work throughout the interwar period and into the latter part of the twentieth century: the appropriation of the life of the Unknown Warrior, and a related psychological phenomenon that Katherine Holden has termed 'imaginary widowhood'.

Examining the changing characterisation of single women across a range of discourses in the twentieth century, Holden has identified the advent, in the aftermath of the Great War, of a new form of socially ratified female identity: the War Spinster. From newspaper headlines to school assemblies, girls, popular debutants, and middle-aged women alike were being encouraged to see themselves not as having been left on the shelf, but as those who *would have been married* were it not for the aberration that was the Great War. Apparently doomed by the demographic imbalance that followed the conflict never to find husbands, many girls coming of age in the 1910s and 1920s would come to see their passage into emotional and sexual maturity as having been sacrificed alongside the three quarters of a million British servicemen who laid down their lives for King and Country.[7] In effect, these women had been persuaded to conceive of their unmarried status as a form of war-induced bereavement, and in so doing, to take on the emotional and psychological trappings of widowhood. The Unknown Warrior, with his untapped and miscarried romantic potential, held, as we shall see, a particular appeal for women who found themselves in this predicament: anonymous, heroic, and imaginatively available, he could be easily claimed as the unwedded husband. Pledging their romantic fidelity to one of the silent and unknowing fallen seems to have allowed many women to entertain in self-sustaining fantasy the union that the circumstances of global warfare had appeared to render unrealizable. *A World of Love*'s heroine is a child of the 1930s and a woman of the 1950s; and yet I mean to argue that through its portraits of both Jane and her mother, Bowen's novel evidences and explores at what cost certain women in the interwar period adopted these highly romantic but ethically fraught means of entering the world of heterosexual love.

Bowen's oeuvre contains many iterations of her belief in the necessary 'overlapping and haunting of life' by fictionalized, counterfactual experiences. Reflecting upon the importance of literature to her childhood in the essay 'Out of a Book' (1946), Bowen begins with the striking admission that 'I know that I have in my make-up layers of synthetic experience, and that the most powerful of my memories are only half true. […] Reduced to the minimum, to the what did happen, my life would be unrecognizable to me.'[8] Elizabeth's mother Florence might have prevented her from learning to read until she was seven years old, but once initiated, the young Bowen became a voracious reader, devouring books 'ravenously, unthinkingly, sensuously'.[9] Those worlds that opened up before this sheltered only child in the pages of her beloved texts were both acutely vivid and deeply affecting; such 'synthetic' experiences as were had within their bounds remained, Bowen declared, 'indistinguishable' from the fabric of her 'real' life in those years because they constituted the more evocative, 'greater part' of her personal development. Whilst Bowen's use of the term 'synthetic' in the essay catches senses both of 'artificial' *and* 'synthesized', these

qualities are by no means seen as in conflict with one another. In fact, her account of youthful reading argues eloquently for an understanding of human psychology in which such synthetic experiences are acknowledged as inextricable from and wholly compatible with an earnest sense of self. It is by looking to the example of 'reading-children,' Bowen accordingly proposes, that we see the marked 'insufficiency of so-called real life to meet the requirements of those who demand to be really alive'.[10] The diminishment of opportunities for adventure or fulfilment out in the world should not therefore be sufficient to condemn those more enterprising minds to the frustrations of an impoverished existence: individuals must merely look beyond the confines of 'real life' for their sources of emotional and psychological nourishment. Indeed, conceived of in this way, both human lives and the identities to which they give rise are understood as not merely constituted of actualized events, but of a range of unlived experiences cultivated within the minds of those bold enough to ask more of the world.

It had nevertheless been a year before writing 'Out of a Book', when reflecting on her time on the British Home Front in the Second World War, that Bowen had composed her most explicit treatise on the insufficiency of 'so-called real life' to satisfy the emotional and existential demands placed upon it by those affected by total war. The Postscript to the American Edition of her short story collection *The Demon Lover* (1945) had seen Bowen reassert the well-known fact that, during those years, 'Everyone [in Britain] read more'. However, as in 'Out of a Book', this widespread use of literary escapism is posited not as an isolated phenomenon, but as part of a range of self-saving imaginative practices adopted by her fellow Londoners. '[S]trange, deep, intense dreams […] by night, and the fantasies […] with which formerly matter-of-fact people consoled themselves by day were compensations', she had noted, for a regimented and diminished existence. Embedded both in these wartime tales and in Bowen's retrospective appraisal of them is a palpable esteem for what the mind can create when it wants not only to live another day, but to feel alive: 'to survive not only physically, but spiritually'.[11] This abandonment of an unfulfilling reality in favour of mind-forged nourishment constitutes the subject matter of one of *The Demon Lover*'s most atmospheric tales, 'Mysterious Kôr', in which a young couple, Pepita and Arthur, who are unable to find either a bed or dark corner in which to consummate their love retreat instead to Kôr, the ruined city from Rider Haggard's 1887 novel *She*. The story's interest in those forms of sexual and romantic frustration produced by the extraordinary circumstances of wartime also includes the plight of Pepita's roommate Callie. One of Bowen's many ruinous innocents, and a 'brotherless virgin' to boot, Callie's 'proprietary pride' in Arthur as her friend's lover quickly yields, thanks to an uncomfortable night spent with the couple in her cramped 'two-bedroomed flatlet', to an untried but powerful wave of desire: an emotion which, the reader suspects, must likewise find expression only in this bewildered girl's dreams.[12]

The collection's eponymous story, 'The Demon Lover', prefigures themes that would return in *A World of Love*; although in this earlier work, Bowen's prevailing interest is in the darker side of the fantasies which had 'rall[ied]' to fill the experiential 'vacuum' left in women's lives by the accumulated losses of world wars.[13] The story follows Kathleen Drover, a respectable middle-class housewife, who calls into her shut-up London home to collect a few of her family's possessions, only to be confronted by a spectral letter from her former fiancé, who had been reported 'missing, presumed killed' in 1916. Doubtless playing on contemporary anxieties that the missing of the Great War might yet return home to find that their loved ones had moved on, 'The Demon Lover' also withstands readings that see its ghostly villain in pseudo-psychoanalytic terms. Indeed, signing his letter only with a 'K', the

same initial as that belonging to Kathleen, the writer appears to be an embodiment of those sadomasochistic sexual desires that had been awakened by their affair but left unfulfilled in Mrs Drover's late, safe, compensatory marriage.[14] Alarmed to discover that she can still remember their parting 'with such dreadful acuteness', Kathleen finds herself driven away from the domestic drudgery of her life and condemned to become again the girl enthralled by a brutal and passionate soldier, caressing 'the weal left by [his] button on the palm of her hand'.

Standing in her abandoned home in the midst of the Second World War, Mrs Drover had been overtaken by such clear memories of the Great War as to cause the intervening 'twenty-five years' to 'dissolve like smoke'.[15] Elizabeth Bowen wrote vivid and innovative fiction about her experiences on the Home Front between 1939 and 1945, yet when thinking about the long-term psychological upheavals produced by violent conflicts, her mind likewise tended to be drawn back to the example of her first world war. Born in 1899, Bowen shared the privilege afforded to several of her characters of being about the same age as her century. From the Russo-Japanese War that captured her imagination in childhood and the Irish Civil War that divided her nation, to the world wars that raged through her adolescence and middle years, warfare, in its various spheres and guises, dominated and directed the course of her life. Nonetheless, as Heather Bryant Jordan has remarked, that a soldier killed in 1918 should play a pivotal role in a novel of 1955 attests to the fact that Bowen, like many artists of her generation, continued to see the Great War as *the* defining trauma of the age, even in the wake of another global conflict.[16] Middle-age, Bowen wrote in 1955, offers a chance for 'a halfway pause, a taking of thought'; and it was around this period, having experienced the uncanny echoes of one world war in the carnage of another, that she turned her mind again to what had been the formative event both in her life, and in the course of the century alongside which she had aged.[17] Indeed, *A World of Love* is one of three works written after 1945 in which Bowen had explored the influence of the Great War on women's lives: her radio play 'A Year I Remember – 1918' (1949) and novel *The Little Girls* (1964) look back to the turning points provided by the Armistice and August 1914 respectively. The persistent imaginative hold exerted by this conflict was nevertheless undoubtedly strengthened by its concision with Bowen's teenaged years. World War, after all, had struck her peers at a time when their appetite for experience and for self-knowledge had been at its most acute.

Elizabeth was resident at her family home, Bowen's Court in County Cork, when news first reached her of the outbreak of the Great War; but she was to spend the majority of its duration in England at Downe House School on the south coast. 'The Mulberry Tree', her 1934 essay about those wartime schooldays, records the various anxieties that afflicted the generation of girls who grew up 'under the intolerable obligation of being fought for, [who] could not fall short in character without recalling that men were dying for [them]', and offers a self-conscious appraisal of the unique – and possibly not quite natural – worldview that they developed. In such a climate of heroic sacrifice, Bowen notes, the 'moral stress was appalling', and was to have a lasting impact on their emotional maturation:

Our morbidity was ingrowing. I cannot, either, remember discussing men. Possibly the whole sex had gloomy associations. […] All the same, I and my friends all intended to marry early, partly because this appeared an achievement or way of making one's mark, also from a feeling it would be difficult to settle to anything else until this was done. (Like passing the School Certificate). Few of my friends anticipated maternity with either interest or pleasure

[…]. Possibly, however, we were not natural girls. We may have discussed love, but I do not remember how. The future remained very hazy and insecure.[18]

By the time she wrote 'The Mulberry Tree', Elizabeth Bowen had become as Mrs Alan Cameron, the wife of a decorated war hero.[19] Looking back to these years at Downe House, she does so from a post-war future that had seemed unimaginable to her younger self, having made the kind of marriage that she and her school friends had had very little faith in securing. '[A]ll' may have 'intended to marry early', but each had been aware – like the sisters Janet and Laurel in Bowen's *Friends and Relations* (1931) – that this would be 'an achievement' at a time when 'men were so few'.[20] That matrimony is nevertheless acknowledged as having remained a prominent aspiration despite men having developed such 'gloomy associations' speaks to the intractability of certain social expectations, especially amongst the upper and middle-classes. Bowen's friend and mentor Virginia Woolf had illuminated the years of conditioning that lay behind this behaviour in *Three Guineas* (1938) when discoursing on the lot of 'an educated man's daughter' before 1919: 'In short, the thought of marriage influenced what she said, what she thought, what she did. How could it be otherwise? Marriage was the only profession open to her.'[21]

It was thus one of the resounding ironies of the Great War that it was to be these marriage-hungry classes of British society that the subsequent demographic imbalance between men and women of marriageable age would most affect. Due, in part, to the culture of gallantry bred in Oxbridge colleges and English public schools, the officer class of the British Army suffered a significantly larger proportion of fatalities than those lower down the ranks (seventeen per cent of officers were killed, compared to twelve per cent of ordinary soldiers).[22] Unlikely ever to have socialized outside their class, those well-to-do girls who populated Britain's female public schools spent the war years becoming aware that their pool of potential suitors was growing perilously thin. The likelihood of there being a post-war gender imbalance, and the patrilineal and generative crises this would precipitate, were gradually grasped over the course of the conflict. And as the casualty lists reached astounding lengths, certain educators sought to assure that the girls in their care were prepared for the worst. In her autobiography *Woman in a Man's World* (1977), the pioneering newspaper editor Rosamund Essex – who, like Bowen, had been aged seventeen in 1917 – recalls the fateful address that the headmistress of Bournemouth High School for girls made to that year's sixth form students: 'Only one out of ten of you girls can ever hope to marry. This is no guess of mine. It is a statistical fact. Nearly all the men who might have married you have been killed. You will have to make your own way in the world as best you can.'[23]

Marriage might offer the short-term gratification of allowing a girl to make her parents proud and her friends envious, but much like 'passing the School Certificate', it was also a rite deemed necessary for entry into the adult world. As Joan Chandler notes, the structure and ideology of the marriage sacrament had been established over the centuries as central to the gendering of women.[24] Sarah Bilston even asserts that in much of the 'socially conservative Victorian discourse', with which the 1914 generation had been raised, 'womanhood was produced by marriage; "woman" almost necessarily meant "married woman"': 'a young girl attained adult status suddenly, almost instantaneously, through the performative "I do" of the marriage vow.'[25] The sociological and psychological implications of aligning the attainment of womanhood with matrimony troubled Bowen throughout her writing life. The potentially interminable state of girlhood that it created was a topic she explored frequently through the maladjusted adolescents who populate her fiction, as well as

in essays for as wide-ranging publications as *Vogue, Leader* and *Punch* magazines.[26] And it is the specific problem of how to be a woman without being a *married woman* that instigates the tragic plot of her 1935 novel *The House in Paris*. Affronted, during a trip to Ireland, by her Aunt Violet's implicit suggestion that she 'might' try to 'be something more' than the previous generation of women had managed to be, Karen Michaelis finds herself drawn back to Paris and into a disastrous love affair with Max Ebhart.[27]

Those girls who were coming of age in the late 1910s were, admittedly, facing the prospect of spinsterhood in a world radically different from that which would have met their grandmothers. The passing of the Married Women's Property Act in 1882, the rise of the women's suffrage movement, Marie Stope's pioneering work on contraception and the increased employment opportunities thanks to wartime labour shortages had at least ensured that the discourse of female emancipation was available and familiar to women in a manner that made life, fulfilment, and respectability outside the bonds of marriage conceivable, if not always desirable, possibilities. That being said, to acknowledge that alternative conceptions of womanhood existed in the public realm during the interwar years should not diminish appreciation of the challenges that certain traditionally minded women faced. For some, accepting their statistical disadvantage meant repressing biological urges and aspirations born from years of social conditioning. Entire life stories and willed identities, fashioned from the earliest days of girlhood, had to be imaginatively rewritten. In *Testament of Youth* (1933), Vera Brittain describes how resigning herself to the likelihood of proving 'barren stock' had necessitated 'push[ing] into the deepest recesses of my mind […] the once confident dreams, […] the visionary children for whom […] I had planned to work and achieve.'[28] Speaking on behalf of her classmates, Rosamund Essex simply stated with resignation that '[w]e should never have the kind of homes in which we ourselves had been brought up. There would be no husband, no children, no sexual outlet, no natural bond of man and woman. It was going to be a struggle indeed.'[29]

In February 1920, the *Manchester Evening News* ran an article examining Dr Murray Leslie's startling analysis of post-war demographics beneath the headline 'Husband Hunting – Tragedy of England's Million Surplus Women'. The *Daily Mail* accordingly christened 1920 the year of the great 'Husband Hunt', only to be taken aback when the publication of the 1921 census revealed that their figures had been out by nearly a million. The *Mail*'s owner, Lord Northcliffe, nevertheless took the shock solicited by the census as a mandate to refer openly to what he called the national problem of 'two million *superfluous* women'.[30] A woman's apparent 'superfluousness' in the marriage game did not, of course, preclude her from proving useful in other areas. Yet from the moment that an Allied victory had been judged to be imminent, women had found themselves expelled from the world of work. The final months of the Great War saw thousands of munitions workers laid off; and whilst there had been a *de facto* expectation that women in blue collar industries would resign their wartime professions to make way for returning heroes, the passing of the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act in 1918 ensured that there was now legal grounding for claims that women's wartime employment had only ever meant to be temporary.[31] Many nevertheless still identified themselves as workers, and by May 1919 as many as 494,000 women had registered themselves officially as unemployed.[32]

Confronted with accusations of redundancy touted by the British media and various employers, some single women found themselves entertaining alternative forms of self-definition: even if this meant re-engaging with wartime losses. By characterising Britain's war dead as 'the men who might have married you', Rosamund Essex's headmistress might

have proposed a more intimate relationship between her charges and these unknown, unknowing servicemen than had yet been conceived of by her impressionable students. But in so doing, she had also offered them a chance to align themselves imaginatively with those women, perhaps like their own mothers or older sisters, who had sacrificed husbands, children and financial security in the service of King and Country. Imaginary widowhood was to be a form of refashioning that the lives of single women in Britain would continue to be subject to for many decades to come. As late as 1938, the MP for Bradford, William Leach, was delivering a speech arguing for a more generous retirement policy for spinsters in which he referred to the nation's unmarried women *en masse* as 'the sweethear[ts] […] of the dead soldier'. Leach's argument was that whilst the 1916 Royal Warrant, which introduced a war widow's pension scheme, had made allowances for the spouses, pregnant lovers and common-law wives of deceased British servicemen, no such arrangements had been made for their girlfriends, fiancées, or for those women who, under different circumstances, would have become their wives.[33] Choosing to speak of Britain's spinsters – regardless of their age, class, employment status or sexual orientation – as the bereaved 'sweethearts' of the dead of the Great War, Leach was undoubtedly using the emotional capital of wartime sacrifice to bolster support for his cause. Yet his campaign also evidences the numerousness and social visibility of single women in the interwar period: by the late 1930s, those eligible to adopt the counterfactual identity of imaginary widowhood had become a collective which it was politically viable both to speak for and attempt to enfranchise. No longer indicative of the shame of having deviated from society's heteronormative and family-centric values, a woman's single status was being reclaimed as a timely reminder of wartime losses and of the nation's duties to those who had paid the price of victory.

Alan Cameron – himself a veteran of the Great War – died in August 1952, making *A World of Love* the first of Bowen's novels to be written from within the state of widowhood. In looking back to the interwar phenomenon of imaginary widowhood, it nevertheless comes to probe the utility of those taxonomies – lover, wife, widow – mustered to contain and delimit such complex psychological states as are experienced (and often counterfactually perpetuated) in the extremis of love or loss. The term 'widow' did not after all suit Bowen, for in the years that followed her husband's death, she continued to feel like his wife; writing to William Plomer in May 1958, she would declare that 'Alan never seems dead, in the sense that he never seems gone […] he continues to accompany [me] through every moment'.[34] Indeed, having been widowed appears to have only reaffirmed for Bowen the resistance that the human mind is capable of offering to notions of absolute extinction. More, it was an experience that reinvigorated her long-standing interest in those comparable means by which relationships with, and identities forged relative to, the dead of two world wars had been maintained within the psychologies both of individuals and of nations.

Of all of Bowen's characters, it is *A World of Love*'s Lilia who is engaged in the most explicit imitation of war widowhood.[35] (The illusion is so convincing, indeed, that when offering a plot summary of the novel, a recent work of scholarship claimed erroneously that Lilia and Guy had enjoyed a 'short lived marriage' and that Fred Danby was in fact her 'second husband').[36] In 1918, Lilia had been a seventeen-year-old 'golden willow of a girl', engaged to a handsome young soldier. Swept up in their fairy-tale romance, Guy had nevertheless failed to 'connect […] with outside reality' and make a will. He died intestate, leaving Lilia, like the women Leach rallied for, 'unprovided for' (14). As Guy's next of kin, it was Antonia who inherited Montefort. Embarrassed that Guy could be so remiss as to make no provision for his besotted and feckless fiancée, Antonia decided that something must be done. '[U]ntrained to work and now not disposed to try', Lilia had become a typical example

of a superfluous woman: unattached, unemployed, and incapable of fashioning a livelihood from what scant options she had left. Mistaking charity for kindness, Antonia agreed to 'virtually adop[t] this girl of all but her own age,' and sponsored Lilia's listless existence while optimistically placing her into 'a series of gift shops, tea shops' and bringing her 'in vain to the notice of likely friends'. Softened initially by Guy's flattery, Lilia was ruined by Antonia's benefaction: quickly losing all sense of how to stand on her own two feet (15).

It was the approach of Lilia's thirtieth birthday that finally persuaded Antonia to marry her off to Guy's illegitimate cousin Fred (15). Having fled Montefort in his youth in search of work abroad, Fred had served with the Australian Army during the war. Exhibiting both Irish and Australian affinities, it is tempting to read him as Bowen's nod to beliefs in the interwar period that there were still plenty of husbands available for desperate women if they would only consent to extend their hunt to the colonies.[37] Getting Fred to agree to take Lilia had not proved difficult. Should he want to live rent free in Montefort and manage its estate, he need only marry the girl Antonia offered. Lilia, however, was not so amenable. Accusing Antonia of having 'forgotten how once [she] was good enough for Guy', she refused to acknowledge that the ill-mannered and common Fred was her best prospect. Nevertheless, threatened with being cut off should she refuse, Lilia had eventually agreed to become, for the second time in her life, the future Mrs Danby (16-7).

Psychologically speaking, the wrung-out and wretched Lilia we find in the novel's present – and notably in a society which retains many of the demographic imbalances of Britain in the 1920s – feels far more like Guy's widow than Fred's wife: a situation only compounded by the pivotal role that her first love played in authoring her subsequent life. Both Bowen's plot and Antonia's plotting allow Lilia to achieve the very status symbols she would have attained had she been Guy's spouse, albeit in a somewhat diminished capacity. Performing those familial duties that Guy had erroneously or intentionally neglected at the time of his death, Antonia fashions Lilia's subsequent marriage as a stage set for this grieving girl's imaginary widowhood. As Mrs Danby, mistress of a decaying Big House she can ill-afford, Lilia is virtually indistinguishable from the soldier's widow she almost was. Yet the problem is that her daily battles with scrimping and saving not only evoke her counterfactual marriage to Guy but offer a damning indictment of that to Fred: a man who, for all his Danby blood, is no match for the fallen hero. Still referring to Lilia as 'Guy's girl' after more than twenty years of marriage (104), Fred struggles to release his identity from that of the bastard usurper who stole his cousin's lover, condemning her to poverty and a lower social standing. Their union, he charitably admits to Lilia, was 'a bad come-down, after all you'd been, in the first place, led on to expect and hope for' (103).

Lilia Danby's imaginary widowhood, festering unchecked for decades, is stifling; a counterbalance to her daughter's synthetic but resuscitating romance, her plight is one that permits Bowen to expose the long-term damage done to both men and women by these supposedly consoling forms of counterfactual speculation. A latter-day Miss Havisham, Lilia has reached middle-age and the mid-century having allowed herself to be defined entirely by the marriage denied her decades earlier. It is a mode of self-conception that makes her acutely vulnerable to existential collapse: 'if not the Beloved [of Guy], what was Lilia? Nothing. Nothing was left to be' (96). Recalling her own experience of husband hunting in the years after the Great War, Rosamond Lehmann admitted to having found herself haunted by similar misgivings: 'I had it lodged in my subconscious mind […] that the wonderful unknown man whom I should have married had been killed in France, along with all the other

wonderful men; so that any suitor – and quite a few uprose – would be a secondary substitute, a kind of simulacrum.'[38]

'That missing of unknown people – that was grief', Bowen had written when reflecting on Armistice Day 1918.[39] Lehmann's continued imaginative recourse to the 'wonderful unknown man', the man she 'should have married', is likewise drawn from a psychological climate acutely sensitive to the magnitude of lives lost in that conflict: not only those of servicemen, but the projected life stories rendered unliveable for those who remained – the meetings that cannot now take place, the friendships that will go unforged, the marriages that will not occur, the children who will not be born. But this figure of an 'unknown man […] killed in France' also had particular cultural associations in the interwar period that might account for Lehmann's predicament, as well as for the persistence with which the romantic potential of Bowen's Guy succeeds in enthralling his relations. Armistice Day 1920 had seen the burial, in Westminster Abbey, of 'the Unknown Warrior': an unidentified serviceman who had been exhumed amidst the utmost secrecy from his grave on the Western Front and reinterred, with full honours, 'among the most illustrious of the land'.[40] That the British Army chose to select the body from several found in areas around the Somme, Aisne, Arras, and Ypres might well have determined that 'the Unknown Warrior' was almost certainly the Unknown *Soldier* he has come to be known in popular discourse. Yet his official title was decided upon with a view to allowing him to represent the dead and missing from all branches of the British armed forces. Contemporary reports often chose to praise this 'classless, rankless inclusivity'; *The Times* called him 'an emblem of "the plain man", of the masses of the people'.[41] Rumours did nevertheless circulate as to what sort of man actually lay buried at the heart of British post-war commemoration. A particularly potent belief was that the cabinet committee who organized the process had intended, as far as possible, that a corpse from 1914 be picked, making the Unknown Warrior a member of the original British Expeditionary Force. In the years before the introduction of conscription in 1916, the B. E. F. had had a particular demographic make-up, a fact which in turn gave rise to the popular theory that the Unknown Warrior was likely to have been unmarried and probably no older than his twenties when he died, and therefore precisely the sort of man that debutants like Lehmann believed that they should have ended up with.[42]

11 November 1920 had seen not only the burial of the Unknown Warrior, but the unveiling of the Cenotaph war memorial in Whitehall. Between 11 and 15 November it was estimated that as many as one and a half million people paid their respects at the Cenotaph, and at least half a million made the journey to the Warrior's final resting place.[43] Writing to the architect Edwin Lutyens, who had been responsible for the Cenotaph's design, David Lloyd George outlined why the British public had been given these two distinct centres towards which to direct their grief: 'The Cenotaph', he observed, 'is the token of our mourning as a nation; the Grave of the Unknown Warrior is the token of our mourning as individuals'.[44] The burial of an unknown soldier had originally been conceived as a symbolic act which would represent, like the Cenotaph, the deaths of over three quarters of a million British servicemen; and yet it became abundantly clear in the days that followed his interment that the Unknown Warrior had become the focal point of a far more intimate and imaginative form of mourning. His anonymity was such that ensured his body offered minimal resistance to those fantasies about his name, life, and unlived years imposed upon it by others. Irrevocably unknowable, each of his potential identities was permitted to remain in play; and thus, as Neil Hanson has observed, 'every person, if only in the privacy of their own thoughts, [could] assume a personal link' with the Unknown Warrior should they wish.[45]

What one witnesses in the case of the Unknown Warrior, then, is an occasion on which the imaginative appropriation of a vulnerable, silent body was permitted, if not encouraged, on an almost national scale. To a modern sensibility such practices might feel exploitative and perhaps even perverse. And yet accounts from the early 1920s also chart how a radical and emotive form of tolerance built up around this keenly contested figure. One from amongst those tens of thousands who believed that their father, son, brother, husband, lover or friend lay beneath the black marble headstone might, statistically speaking, be correct. But for those families of the missing, each of whom had been previously denied a site at which to commemorate their loss, it seemed to matter little whether others found in the presumed body of *their* loved one a conduit to an alternative and comforting form of identification.[46] In 1921, *The Times* reported the case of an elderly woman who had visited the tomb 'carrying a bunch of chrysanthemums and heather', and had 'told those about her that a clairvoyant had said that the body of her son' was the one buried in the Abbey. 'No one', their correspondent noted with pride, 'disturbed her faith'.[47]

Bowen might have elected to call *A World of Love*'s fallen soldier 'Guy', but it is a name that permits him to remain, in a sense, anonymous. Pushed by Fred in a moment of frustration to account for her former lover's philandering, Antonia can indeed do little better than to declare that 'Guy was Guy' (82). Ostensibly suggesting that Guy's faithless behaviour was innate or inherent, Antonia's explanation struggles against punning slippages that threaten to recast her thoughts about his individual character as those about men in general: that Guy was just a guy, acting as all guys do. The word 'guy' can, after all, denote a named individual ('Guy'), a specific but unknown person ('that guy'), an everyman figure ('a guy') or a symbol of a wider cause or populace (a 'guy' in the sense of an effigy or dummy). And as one of the dead of the Great War, Maud Ellmann agrees that Bowen's Guy functions 'in one sense' as 'just a guy, a *nameless* casualty amongst the decimated millions' and 'in another' as 'a symbol of his slaughtered generation'.[48] Guy might not now exist save in the memories of those who knew him, but like the Warrior laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, his disposition and character seem subjectively up-for-grabs: unique to, but not wholly satisfying of, the emotional demands of the many women who loved him. Nonetheless, as Antonia notes when answering Jane's obnoxious inquiry about whether Guy was actually 'in love' with her mother, Montefort's female residents have at least found themselves in the privileged position of being able to '[b]elieve what [they] like' about this fallen soldier, for the simple reason that he is 'dead and out of it' (74).

That being said, accounts which stress the predominantly passive role played by Guy in his posthumous appropriation must acknowledge the agency that Bowen insists upon affording his letters. The passage of description detailing their initial discovery by Jane is after all rife with suggestion that this impressionable girl might be less the player than the played with, walking into a trap laid years before. Drawn back to Montefort after a summer fête possessed by an 'inexplicable feeling of being summoned', that 'she *had* been sent for, and in haste', Jane had made her way up to the attic in a kind of trance. She might have happened upon the bundle of letters whilst liberating the Edwardian dress from an old trunk, but this momentous event is articulated more as an imposition than a chance discovery: '[t]hey fell at her feet, having found her rather than she them' (27); 'She gloried in having set free the dress. But the letters – had they not insisted on forcing their own way out?' (35). Bowen makes it perfectly possible to argue that by identifying herself as Guy's intended recipient, Jane is simply yielding to the impression given off by the letters themselves: namely, that they 'had been no more than delayed on [their] way to her' (48). As the one raiding a dead man's possessions, we might have assumed Jane's absolute autonomy in

electing to enter Guy's world. Yet this novel seems to imply that to place all responsibility with the living for the pull they feel towards the past and its victims would be to misunderstand the affective power that lingers with the untimely dead, especially those killed in traumatic circumstances. 'What's unfinished haunts', Bowen wrote elsewhere. [49] And the type of atmosphere charted in the pages of *A World of Love* is one acutely aware that if sections of post-1918 British society were drawn to the untapped romantic potential of the Unknown Warrior, then others were, like Kathleen Drover in 'The Demon Lover', struggling to free themselves from the clutches of those now unrealizable expectations, pledges, and self-conceptions made in relation to the dead of the century's many wars.

Certainly, even the scant information we are given about Guy's letters is sufficient to arouse suspicion about his posthumous intentions. Divested at one time of their envelopes, they contain no clear indication of the woman to whom they were originally addressed. Lost also are their postmarks, and with them any evidence of 'where they had been written or when posted'; 'all in the same hand', the letters were 'headed by day-names only' (33). Yet these details do not help to solve the mystery of how they ended up lying in wait in the attic of their author rather than with his unknown lover. One might speculate, as Ellmann does, that the letters were never sent.[50] Undoubtedly imbued, like Guy himself, with an aura of unfulfilled romantic potential, they could be but the trace of some unrequited or unexpressed love. Bowen's narrator has a few theories of her own:

Sent back to Guy, why? A breaking-off, a reproach, a revengeful act? Or had she died, leaving somebody else to take speaking action? Had they returned here among Guy's things after Guy's death? Or had he, alive, on one of his leaves here, […] seeking their right grave, bitterly or poetically buried them in the ceraments [sic] of some other expired summer, the muslin of the dress? Or hoarded them, with their charge of love, against such a winter as for all he knew he might have to live to see? […] Nor had they been buried, but lightly hidden – hidden to be found. Found as they might be found by a seeking girl on an idle evening.

Or, after he had been killed, […] had there unknown been a comer to the place, letters in her hand? (140-1)

The majority of the novel's readers have been happy to leave the mystery there, flickering in the oscillating possibilities and enticing poeticism of Bowen's prose. But it is worth noting that the various confounding properties of Guy Danby's letters do have at least one uncannily close literary precedent: the love letters of 'an unknown soldier' that were published by John Lane in the final months of the Great War. These letters, which were collected as *The Love of an Unknown Soldier: Love Letters Found in a Trench* (1918), had allegedly been brought to Lane's office by 'a young officer of the R. F. A. [Royal Field Artillery]' who purported to have found them 'secreted in a dark corner' of an abandoned gun position on the Western Front. Convinced that their author was 'in all probability dead', the R. F. A. officer had apparently considered destroying the papers, but stayed his hand upon realizing that their rightful owner was the woman for whom they were written.[51] Likewise devoid of envelopes, these letters were composed to an American Red Cross nurse whom the soldier had courted whilst on leave in Paris. Wary of embroiling the girl's affections further at a time when he could not guarantee his own survival, this unknown soldier had drafted the love letters with no intention of sending them – 'I will play a game', he writes in the first, 'I will not send you what I write, but I will speak the truth to you on paper'.[52] As such, the nurse's identity is never revealed.

In his Publisher's Foreword, Lane admits to having been 'impressed with [the letters'] literary value', but concedes that his motivation for making this private correspondence public was to 'discover' the 'particular American girl, who, all unknowingly, had quickened the last days of this unknown soldier's life with romance'.[53] From its publication on 11 September 1918, *The Love of an Unknown Soldier* was an instant bestseller, with a second print-run being ordered within just three weeks and new editions continuing to appear throughout the 1920s. Further indication of the work's success can be seen in the number of letters that Lane received from readers, many of which are now housed in the publisher's archive at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas. Sue Bruley's work with this archive has revealed general trends amongst correspondents' reactions. A number of veterans of the Great War wrote to Lane to commend the book's presentation of the British fighting spirit, an honourable conception of soldiery which had been somewhat eroded by the disillusionment literature of the period. Many of his female correspondents experienced a strong emotional response to the work: Bruley cites the example of one Grace A. Tong from Lincolnshire, whose hyperbolic praise was not uncommon amongst her peers.[54] Nevertheless, across both genders the most common reaction was to enquire whether Lane had any further news to divulge concerning the identities of the soldier or the American nurse; several correspondents even enclosed stamped addressed envelopes to ensure they were kept updated. Behind these entreaties lay both the vestiges of a profound investment in the story, and a desire to be more intimately connected with the couple. Servicemen were at pains to know if they might have fought alongside the man in question; bereaved families wondered if he could have been their son or brother; whilst Lane's female American correspondents might well have written in the hope that these glass-slipper-like love letters had been composed for them. All, however, were destined to be disappointed. *The Love of an Unknown Soldier* turned out not to be a collection of love letters penned by a young man killed on the Western Front, but a work of fiction by the Anglo-American writer Coningsby Dawson.

Dawson had served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the Great War, but unlike his unknown soldier, would survive the conflict to enjoy both the success of his hoax and a prolific career as a novelist. Some of the book's earliest critics had been sceptical about the tale of a R. F. A. officer arriving unexpectedly in Lane's office bearing literary treasure, with reviewers for both the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Saturday Review* drawing poignant comparisons between the more incredulous elements of the text and another commercially successful piece of literary fraud: *An Englishwoman's Love Letters* (1900).[55] Evidence nevertheless suggests that members of the public have, by and large, remained convinced that the letters were genuine. Dawson was officially outed as the author of the book in 1930, when Walter Hutchinson republished his 1919 novel *The Test of Scarlet* with a frontispiece listing *The Love of an Unknown Soldier* amongst the author's other works. Yet this revelation does not appear to have been disseminated widely enough to dispel the myth propagated by Lane. The majority of modern editions still cite its author as 'Anonymous', and a 1979 BBC radio programme on the book ended by appealing to its listeners for their help in uncovering the soldier's identity.[56]

It is difficult to know precisely what inspired Lane and Dawson to cook up this origin story for the letters. Bruley, for one, states her belief that this was an example of two savvy men who 'exploited a grieving and vulnerable public for commercial gain'.[57] Yet it might be prudent to consider the insight that both the instigation and long-term success of this hoax reveals about the dispositions at work within pockets of British society throughout the twentieth century. When placed alongside accounts of imaginary widowhood and those

practices of appropriation encouraged around the body of the Unknown Warrior, *The Love of an Unknown Soldier* offers further evidence of a psychological climate in which individuals were encouraged to seek out opportunities to combat what Dawson himself would call the 'disillusionment of reality' by forging romantic and life-giving (if fictional) relations with the war dead, and with those alternative lives they might have lived had these men survived.[58] In the wake of such catastrophic wartime losses, corresponding spaces opened up within British culture for literary texts that could give rise to powerful surges of counterfactual thinking; and especially popular, it seems, were those that permitted individuals to play with, deride, and perhaps even to overcome, particularly painful or inhospitable circumstances.

As Harold Orel has noted, the missives that make up *The Love of an Unknown Soldier* are 'filled with sentimentality'.[59] The public's will to believe in their romance and in the chivalry of their author is, however, worth taking seriously – as indeed Elizabeth Bowen would appear to have done. Whether or not she was amongst those who, after 1930, were made aware of Lane and Dawson's deception, Bowen's *A World of Love* seems all too cognisant of both the emotional need attested to, and profound ethical questions raised by, this literary hoax. When reflecting upon her romantic entanglement with a fallen soldier, Jane Danby had pondered 'which of them, dead man and living girl, had been the player, and which the played-with?' Like Guy's letters, those disseminated by Lane and Dawson succeeded in making much needed counternarratives of consummation and romance available to people who had been robbed of formative experiences by war. Yet they showed, also, just how easily the tables could be turned on those who invested too much of themselves in the miscarried potential of its untimely dead.

In the short term at least, synthetic experiences like those produced by these love letters could sustain individuals on the brink of existential collapse. But, as Bowen's heroine eventually comes to acknowledge, to 'dall[y]' too long in the emotional and imaginative riches of such foreclosed possibilities is to lay oneself open 'to being dallied with': played for a fool by the inherent faithlessness of an unknown warrior, whose unlived years, however diligently cultivated in the mind, are such that could never belong to one individual alone (120). Taken together, *A World of Love* and *The Love of an Unknown Soldier* offer a timely and poignant challenge to the affective power that is often assigned solely (and quite unthinkingly) to 'what *did* happen'; just as through her portraits of Lilia and Jane Danby, Bowen reminds readers of the creatively vital – if potentially damaging – connection that was retained by successive generations of twentieth-century women to longed-for lives which, thanks to world war, they were forced to leave unlived.

[1] Elizabeth Bowen, *A World of Love* (London, 1999), 9-10. Further references to this edition appear in the text.

[2] This comparison between Montefort's cavernous attics and Bowen's imagination has also been noted by Maud Ellmann. See *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh, 2003), 178.

[3] Bowen, 'The Bend Back', in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. Hermione Lee (London, 1999), 55.

[4] Bowen, 'The Bend Back', 55.

[5] Bowen, 'Postscript to *The Demon Lover*', in *The Mulberry Tree*, 98.

[6] See, for example, Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen*, rev. edn (London, 1999), 184; Ellmann, *Shadow*, 178; Neil Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return* (Oxford, 2004), 77-8.

[7] Katherine Holden, 'Imaginary Widows: Spinsters, Marriage and the "Lost Generation" in Britain After the War', *Journal of Family History*, 20 (2005), 388-409.

[8] Bowen, 'Out of a Book', in *The Mulberry Tree*, 48.

[9] Ellmann, *Shadow*, 27.

[10] Bowen, 'Out of a Book', 48-9.

[11] Bowen, 'Postscript to *The Demon Lover*', 96-7.

[12] Bowen, 'Mysterious Kôr', in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. Angus Wilson (London, 1999), 821-34.

[13] Bowen, 'Postscript to *The Demon Lover*', 98.

[14] Corcoran, *Enforced Return*, 162.

[15] Bowen, 'The Demon Lover', in *Collected Stories*, 743-9.

[16] Heather Bryant Jordan, *How Will the Heart Endure: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of War* (Michigan, 1992), 30.

[17] Bowen, 'Mental Annuity', in *People, Places, Things: Essays by Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh, 2008), 345.

[18] Bowen, 'The Mulberry Tree', in *The Mulberry Tree*, 17.

[19] Bowen married Alan Cameron in 1923. A recipient of the Military Cross, Cameron had fought in the Battle of the Somme as well as on the Italian Front. See Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (London, 2012), 47.

[20] Bowen, *Friends and Relations* (London, 1999), 18.

[21] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, in *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Anna Snaith (New York, 2015), 122.

[22] *Viewpoint: 10 Big Myths About World War One Debunked*, (pubd online Feb 2014) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25776836> accessed 31 Feb 2020.

[23] Rosamund Essex, *Woman in a Man's World* (London, 1977), 5.

[24] Joan Chandler, *Women Without Husbands: An Exploration of the Margins of Marriage* (Basingstoke, 1991), 2.

[25] Sarah Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women's Popular Fiction 1850-1900* (Oxford, 2004), 6.

[26] See, for example, 'Modern Girlhood', in *People, Places, Things*, 336-41.

[27] Bowen, *The House in Paris* (London, 1998), 80.

[28] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London, 1978), 579-80.

[29] Essex, *Man's World,* 5.

[30] Virginia Nicholson, *Singled Out: How Two Million Women Survived Without Men after the First World War* (London, 2007), 22-3 (emphasis added).

[31] Angela Smith, *Discourses Surrounding British Widows of the First World War* (London, 2013), 54.

[32] Gerry Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840* (London, 2005), 147.

[33] William Leach, 'Speech 1938', quoted in Holden, 'Imaginary Widowhood', 389. The pension scheme entitled an otherwise unsupported war widow to draw up to twenty-six shillings a week with the option of additional child allowances. Aid was similarly available to unmarried women who could prove that they had been financially dependent upon the deceased serviceman, and, in certain cases, to those who had been impregnated by one. See Smith, *Discourses Surrounding British Widows*, 62.

[34] Bowen, 'Letter to William Plomer, 6 May 1958', in *The Mulberry Tree*, 209.

[35] A remarkable number of Bowen's heroines *almost* qualify as war widows (in circumstance if not, like Lilia Danby, in mind). In *The Heat of the Day*, for example, Stella Rodney escapes the accolade only on a technicality: her divorce is finalized a matter of weeks before her ex-husband Victor dies of wounds he sustained in the Great War.

[36] See Jane Hu, 'Interception as Mediation in *A World of Love*', *Textual Practice*, 27 (2013), 1197-1215, 1202-3.

[37] In *Singled Out*, Nicholson cites the example of Louise Field, the Hon. Secretary of the National Council of Women's Emigration, who wrote to *The Times* in 1920 assuring readers that there was a total excess of 430,000 men of marriageable age in Canada, Australia and New Zealand combined (82). Another notable emigration enthusiast is Lady Bruton in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), who likewise writes to *The Times* to encourage the superfluous youth of both genders to seek better employment and marriage prospects abroad.

[38] Rosamond Lehmann, quoted in Gillian Tindall, *Rosamond Lehmann: An Appreciation* (London, 1985), 32.

[39] Bowen, 'A Year I Remember – 1918', in *Listening In: Broadcasts, Speeches and Interviews by Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh, 2010), 75.

[40] This quotation is taken from the inscription on the Unknown Warrior's tomb in Westminster Abbey.

[41] Roger T. Stearn, *Unknown Warrior, Unknown Soldier* (pubd online Sept 2004) <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-77079;jsessionid=5148F1DEDD623A5AFC224E4A832A32DE> accessed 21 Oct 2019; 'Armistice Day', *The Times* (11 November 1920), 15.

[42] Stearn, *Unknown Warrior, Unknown Soldier*.

[43] Neil Hanson, *The Unknown Soldier: The Story of the Missing of the Great War* (London, 2005), 472-3.

[44] David Lloyd George, 'Letter to Edwin Lutyens, 17 November 1920', quoted in Hanson, *Unknown Soldier*, 462.

[45] Hanson, *Unknown Soldier*, 463.

[46] Stacy Gillis has offered the compelling argument that the 'whodunit' form of Golden Age detective fiction – in which the aim of the detective is to discover as much as possible about the corpse – similarly arose as a reaction to the vast numbers of British war dead whose remains could never be recovered. Like the burial of the Unknown Warrior, writers such as Dorothy L. Sayers helped to put the fiction of identifiable body back at the centre of mourning practices in the years after the Great War. See 'Consoling Fictions: Mourning, World War One, and Dorothy L. Sayers', in Patricia Rae (ed.), *Modernism and Mourning* (Lewisburg, 2007), 185-97.

[47] 'Flowers at the Cenotaph', *The Times* (14 November 1921), 5.

[48] Ellmann, *Shadow*, 187 (emphasis added).

[49] Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (London, 1998), 321.

[50] Ellmann, *Shadow*, 183.

[51] John Lane, 'Publisher's Foreword (1918)', in [Coningsby Dawson], *The Love of an Unknown Soldier: Love Letters Found in a Trench* (London, 2015), 5-6.

[52] [Coningsby Dawson], *The Love of an Unknown Soldier*, 19.

[53] Lane, 'Publisher's Foreword', 6.

[54] Sue Bruley, 'The Love of an Unknown Soldier: A Story of Mystery, Myth and Masculinity in World War I', *Contemporary British History,* 19 (2005), 459-79, 462.

[55] See 'Who Is He?', *The Saturday Review* (5 Oct 1918), 917 and 'List of New Books and Reprints', *The Times Literary Supplement* (26 Sept 1918), 458.

[56] Bruley, 'Myth, Mystery, Masculinity', 467.

[57] Bruley, 'Myth, Mystery, Masculinity', 468.

[58] [Coningsby Dawson], *The Love of an Unknown Soldier*, 82.

[59] Harold Orel, *Popular Fiction in England, 1914-1918* (London, 1992), 219.