

# On the Circular Structure in Bowen's *The Death of the Heart*

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**Abstract:** Elizabeth Bowen was one of the few truly accomplished Irish women novelists and one of the most distinguished writers of her time during which she was born and lived with the Anglo-Irish naïve dignity and tragedy with the class declining and becoming insignificant. Through the reading of her representative “coming-of age” novel *The Death of the Heart* produced in the interwar period, the readers can perceive the influence of Bowen's childhood experiences on her creation and her major Anglo-Irish religious and philosophical views of life. The purpose of this article is to focus on its circular structure that parallels the structure of the myth of the Fall, in which the heroine Portia is portrayed as a Christlike figure who develops from an innocent and ignorant girl belonging to nowhere to an integrated and conscious individual after experiencing betrayal and the death of the heart's innocence. By means of an ingenious manipulation of its circular structure and the portrayal of the Christlike figure Portia, Elizabeth Bowen demonstrates her lifetime of continual “shuttling between England and Ireland”, witnessing alternative conflict and compromise between England and Ireland, and her Anglo-Irish religious outlook of predeterminism: let it be and accept it as it is.

**Keywords:** Circular Structure, Portia, The World, The Flesh, The Devil, Anglo-Irish

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## 1. Introduction

Elizabeth Bowen's “coming-of-age” novel *The Death of the Heart* is set chiefly in London in the interwar period. It narrates the story of a sixteen-year-old orphan, Portia Quayne, who moves to London to live with her half-brother Thomas Quayne and falls in love with Eddie, a friend of her sister-in-law Anna. The novel makes up of three parts: *The World*, *The Flesh* and *The Devil*. *The World* part takes place in the Windsor Terrace and *The Devil* part ends with the Windsor Terrace, which composes a circular structure. Just as the novel title and the subtitles of its three parts imply, the whole book also reminds its readers of the myth of the Fall in which the heroine Portia is portrayed as a Christlike figure. Through the exploration of the circular structure of this novel, the paper attempts to probe into the development of the protagonist Portia, whose experience not only parallels Bowen's childhood experience but also insinuates Christ's suffering. The elaborate design of the circular structure makes *The Death of the Heart* an elegant modern “coming-of-age” novel, which is greatly attributed to Bowen's unique Anglo-Irish autobiographical experience and her religious and

philosophical views of life.

## 2. The Circular Structure of *The Death of the Heart*

*The Death of the Heart* is composed of three parts: *The World*, *The Flesh*, and *The Devil*, each part closing with Portia's diary, in which the first two parts disclose the content of her diary and the third part resolves the crisis of her diary. Apparently, Portia's diary is the trigger of the development of the whole story, and as well the indication of Portia's psychological development and growth. The first part begins with Portia's arrival and stay at Windsor Terrace and the end of the third part implies that Portia will be fetched by Matchett to Windsor Terrace. In this way, it demonstrates a kind of circular structure, beginning and ending with Windsor Terrace. Moreover, the story of Portia's life journey from the *World* to the *World* after experiencing the *Flesh* and the *Devil* also indicates such kind of circularity. By means of the metaphorical naming of the three parts, Bowen associates the story of Portia with the myth of the Fall from the garden of Eden: Adam and Eve fall down to the world, suffer the pains

of the flesh and go to the devil so as to get God's redemption before rebirth. That's also the life circle of human beings: birth, growth, death, birth.... Lastly, Portia fulfills her commitment of being accepted by the Young Quayne with the compromise of herself and Anna who does the right thing through empathy and understanding.

### 2.1. The World

Part I *The World*, for the innocent Portia, looks more like a nowhere world since she moves in with Anna and Thomas after her father and mother died within a few years of each other. Her father felt sorry for her because he hadn't provided her a stable home since she was born. Thus, before he died, he left his will to his son Thomas and wished that the Young Quaynes could accommodate their exiled and homeless half-sister for one year to give her a taste of normal, cheerful family life.

The story opens with Anna's confidential talk with her friend St. Quentin in a freezing January afternoon in Regent's Park. Anna confides to St. Quentin that they feel quite embarrassed and uncomfortable at the appearance of Portia, in particular after she discovered and read Portia's diary detailing the lives of those around her. As urbane and reserved Londoners, they are incapable of forming close personal relationships with anyone, let alone with the child of the elder Quayne's disgrace and second marriage. In Anna's narration, Portia is the child of sinful Old Quayne, who fell in love with Portia's mother Irene while staying with his first marital relationship with Thomas's mother. Undoubtedly, Portia's parents committed adultery according to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, and Portia is another naïve Pearl whose mother bears the Letter "A". Here Portia's birth echoes the Fall of the Man: when her parents tasted the forbidden fruit (extramarital affair), her father was expelled from Dorset by Thomas's mother who thought she had done the right thing: so, at his own wife's unyielding insistence, Mr. Quayne divorced Thomas's mother and married Irene. Thus, after Irene gave birth to Portia, they began to drift through Europe as exiles from society and from the Quayne family, living in the cheapest of lodgings. It is obviously noted that their deprivation of the normal life is attributed to their 'fall' from the Quayne family.

Portrayed as God's child, after the Fall, Portia has to experience the earthly pains, sufferings and absurdity before getting the redemption. After her 'sinful' parents passed away, Portia is sent to the 2 Windsor Terrace in *The World* where she does everything that she can to please the Quaynes, being obedient, well-mannered, and quiet. Yet whatever she does cannot win Anna's sympathy and concern, motherless as Anna is. Anna is too resentful of the slight disruption caused by Portia's presence to feel any real pity or concern for her. Same as Brontë's orphan girl Jane in the Reed family, Portia is 'in' but not 'of' the Quayne family where she stays as an onlooker who observes the people around her minutely and records in a diary her thoughts about them. She is uniquely innocent in her observations of people, and is baffled by inconsistencies between what they say and what they do, and wonders why

people say things they do not mean. In one word, at the beginning of the novel, Bowen makes Portia behave like an omniscient God keeping an eye on the people coming and going in the 2 Windsor Terrace, which intensifies Anna's rage with the feeling that an omnipotent god is watching them from the heaven. Just like the day Portia was born, when the first Mrs. Quayne went to garden to pick snowdrops, and "now and then she'd keep stopping and looking up, she felt the Almighty watching" [1] (93).

In terms of the structural layout of *The World* part, same as the layout of the whole book, Bowen shows to readers its well-organized circular structure. It contains nine chapters, beginning with the discussion of Portia's diary in chapter I and ending with the revelation of her diary in chapter IX. And in chapter II appears the housekeeper Matchett, who goes upstairs to say good night to Portia in chapter VI, revealing what the day Portia was born looked like in response to Portia's attempts to figure out the significance of her existence. Some other examples are Major Brutt's appearance and revisit in chapter III and chapter VII respectively, Eddie's letter in chapter IV and Eddie's date with Portia in chapter VIII. (Figure 1)

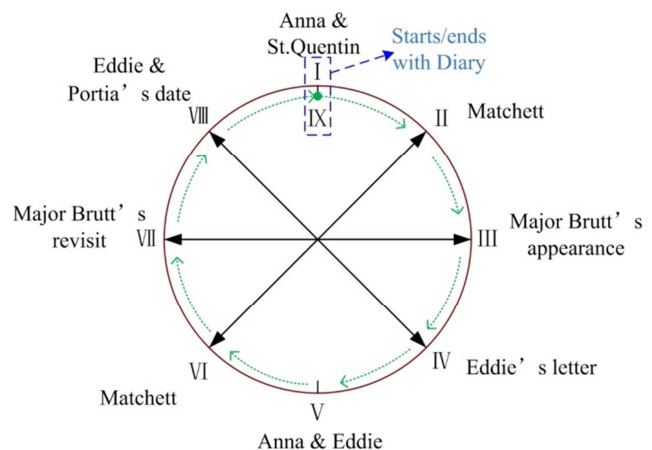


Figure 1. The Structural Layout of *The World* part.

### 2.2. The Flesh

In the freezingly cold *World*, Portia is solitary and alienated by Anna's repulsion and Thomas's indifference. Her effort of finding self-definition through blood ties does not work. Thus, when the spring is coming, the warm *Flesh* part begins, Bowen offers Portia another opportunity to seek for her whole individual. The day before Thomas and Anna are to travel for their Easter holidays, Portia is to go to Mrs. Heccomb, Anna's former governess, living at Seale-on-Sea. Here Portia's experience echoes Bowen's childhood one: mother and daughter became intensely close and interdependent in the absence of father, and after mother's death, while Bowen was taken care of by a series of Colley aunts, Portia was sent to London and then to Seale-on-Sea looked after by Matchett and Mrs. Heccomb respectively. At the very beginning of this *Flesh* part, Bowen has implied that Portia will grow to learn real but harsh human life so as to find herself as an integrated

individual: "the curtain of darkness is suspended, as though for some unprecedented event...No moment in human experience approaches in its intensity this experience of the solitary earth's... It is in this unearthly first hour of spring twilight that earth's almost agonized livingness is most felt" [1] (157-58).

Moreover, at the beginning of *the Flesh*, Bowen's elaborate design of the juxtaposition of Anna and Portia, at different moments, both crossing different bridges over the lake, viewing the Cytherean twisting, looking up and seeing pigeons cluttering the transparent trees, suggests that Anna and Portia become a pair of antithetic double. In this episode, their journeys are running parallel, which means they are unlikely to reach a junction, unless they 'run' in a circular way. That is to say, they'll return to where they get started—Windsor Terrace, in which their ambivalence resides. Just as the circular structure of the book displays, the story begins with the conflict in Windsor Terrace and will end up with its resolution in Windsor Terrace. Likewise, the narrator shows that as a paralleling counterpart of Portia, when Anna lost her innocence and no longer trusted her boyfriend Robert, Portia will as well lose innocence and break up with her boyfriend Eddie, which anticipates her invalid effort of finding self-definition through romantic love. It seems that her efforts of finding self-definition through blood ties in the *World* or romantic love in the *Flesh* are in vain. Then how will Portia find self-definition and grow to be an integrated individual? Portia feels quite confused about her situation.

From Windsor Terrace to Waikiki, Portia has ambivalent feelings. On one hand, she feels a new life has begun, because she knows where everyone was, what everyone does and in Portia's room, the electric light, from its shade, pours down with a frankness unknown at Windsor Terrace. On the other hand, she feels stupefied by this entirely new world. She's not yet adjusted to all this. She begins to think of Windsor Terrace, especially the things in the house:

Only in a house where one has learnt to be lonely does one have this solicitude for things. One's relation to them, the daily seeing or touching, begins to become love, and to lay one open to pain. Looking back at a repetition of empty days, one sees that monuments have sprung up. Habit is not mere subjugation, it is a tender tie: when one remembers habit it seems to have been happiness [1] (179).

However loveless and lonely she feels in Windsor Terrace, she still has her affection for it, since it is a visible and tangible place where her only attachment with her father and the Quayne family dwells. She has been working very hard to become one of them, to atone for her parents' betrayal and beg for pardon of the Quayne. Portia and her mother always felt guilty for the breaking of old Quayne's family, leaving Mrs. Quayne and Thomas alone in Dorset. It is evidently shown in her conversation with Matchett, "was Mrs. Quayne sorry? I mean, did she mind being alone?... She'd made such a sacrifice" [1] (91-2). Just as she works hard to be accepted by the Quayne, in the image of God's child, Portia also undertakes the responsibility of pursuing God's grace and salvation for all mankind and wishes to come back to His

embrace.

Before long, Portia begins to learn a great lot about cruel but true reality, just as the name *The Flesh* implies, from Mrs. Heccomb's most reassuring personality and Daphne and Dickie's frank and rough manner, through a couple of social activities organized by Daphne. In the first few chapters in *The Flesh*, things start off well, Portia has her head thoroughly turned here: Being taken notice of [1] (266). Rather than a nobody in Windsor Terrace, Portia has got the attention of Daphne's friend Cecil. But things take a bad turn since Eddie's visit. His coming breaks the tranquility of Portia's innocent heart, because it lets Portia see through his side of irresponsible playing with love and perceive the cracking of the vulgar and ruthless moral sound box in Waikiki. Portia gets startled and feels betrayed when she finds Eddie and Daphne holding hand at the cinema. She is unable to keep silent about it and anxious to figure out why they behave like that. Lastly, she gets two kinds of answers from Eddie and Daphne. Eddie's indiscreet way of getting off with people makes Daphne think Eddie has a thirst for girls because Portia is a kid in Eddie's eyes. So, when Portia asks for an explanation, primitive Daphne hesitates and doesn't actually answer her directly but tells her Eddie's unreliability and her tolerance and admission of Portia and Eddie:

I wouldn't see any harm in your going around with an idealistic sort of a boy like Cecil, but honestly Eddie's not idealistic at all. I don't mean to say he'd try anything on with you; he wouldn't want to: he'd see you were just a kid.

Now look here, I simply dropped you a word because I felt in a sort of way sorry for you. But there's no reason for you to be vulgar. I was really surprised when you said you had got a boy friend. What I thought was, he must be rather a sap. But as you were so keen to have him, I was all for his coming, and as you know, I fixed Mumsie about that...But the moment you brought that boy here, I could see in a moment anybody could have him. It's written all over him [1] (264-65).

Interestingly, at the critical moment when Portia experiences earthly pains and sufferings from Eddie's betrayal and Daphne's dreadful remarks, Bowen brings Anna's portrait again in front of the readers after its first appearance in Portia's first night in Waikiki. As an antithetic double of Anna, Portia wonders whether young Anna had suffered, or if she had, whether she could be able to face the suffering and how she did it. In the pastel-portrait of Anna does Portia wish to find an answer: She did not know what she looked for in the pastel—confirmation that the most unlikely people suffer, or that everybody who suffers is the same age? [1] (269) In the narrator's words, no matter how irritated she feels, it is better to maintain composure and focus on invariable things, because the unpredictable rarely presents itself.

What help she did not find in the picture she found in its oak frame and the mantelpiece underneath. After inside upheavals, it is important to fix on imperturbable things. Their imperturbableness, their air that nothing has happened renews our guarantee...These things are what we mean when we speak of civilization: they remind us how exceedingly seldom the unseemly or unforeseeable rears its head [1] (270).

Also, the writer Bowen's philosophical outlook of life manifests between the lines: since people are unable to foresee what will happen to them, why not keep calm and accept it when it comes? Maybe they should try to leave alone what they cannot control, such as their past or future, but concern their present. Just as a saying goes: Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift. That is why it is called the "present". Similar to the above example, Miss Bowen's religious and philosophical thoughts permeate throughout the text.

Concerning the symmetry of the structure, Miss Bowen still sticks to take Portia's diary as the closing episode of *The Flesh*. Compared with her previous diary in *The World*, this one takes up more space and is more mature in terms of its content. Instead of observing and recording the detailed things, Portia begins to express herself openly and defend her opinions bravely. By means of Portia and Dickie's talk in the diary, Bowen put forward two kinds of determinism popular at her time, when Portia and Dickie discuss the way of judging people. Dickie says he judges people by their characters, because he thinks what happens to people depends on their characters, while Portia says people's characters get so different at times, as it depends so much on what happens to them. Obviously, Dickie is the kind of person who supports personality determinism while Portia stands for another group of people who agree with environmental determinism, which demonstrates that Portia's personality is being shaped by her environment and her experiences. Indeed, Portia has changed since she came to the Seale. Rather than observing as an onlooker, she gets involved in the activities, not only learning to form her own thoughts and speak them up, but also reflecting on people's viewpoints and making a comparison with her own. No longer an innocent and ignorant girl, Portia is developing into a conscious and integrated individual. Just as the preserver and witness of the past, Matchett, discovers, "My goodness, they have taught you (Portia) to speak up. Anyone wouldn't know you" [1] (303).

Associated with Bowen's personal recollections, it again reminds readers of her Anglo-Irish religious and philosophical thought of 'environmental determinism' or predeterminism: let it be and accept it as it is. She was born with Anglo-Irish protestant heritage, and when she was young, she was kept unknowing of her family calamity, viz her father's psychological illness, before moving out of her home with her mother. She had nothing to do with her childhood environment, but at last her solitary, insecure and deceptive childhood experience shaped her life and finally made her determined to become a self-conscious writer<sup>1</sup>. As an independent adult, she couldn't get rid of the Anglo-Irish influence but lived with the Anglo-Irish naïve dignity as well as tragedy, with the class declining and becoming insignificant throughout the twentieth century.

### 2.3. *The Devil*

In *The Devil*, when the Young Quayne come back to

Windsor Terrace, they are getting more and more conscious of what they've done to Portia and rethink what has happened to her: Thomas thinks that Portia may not have been enjoying the spring in the seaside really, and they might have left her there longer. Anna suspects that there must be something wrong with Portia if Portia is not enjoying the spring. Anna even begins to ask herself why she liked Portia so little, because

Everything she does to me is unconscious; if it were conscious it would not hurt. She makes me feel like a tap that won't turn on. She crowds me into an unreal position... She has put me into a relation with Thomas that is no more than our taunting, feverish jokes.

But, after all, death runs in that family. What is she, after all? The child of an aberration, the child of a panic, the child of an old chap's pitiful sexuality... she marches about this house like the Race itself. They rally as if she were the Young Pretender. Oh, I know Matchett's conspiratorial mouth. And it's so monstrous of Eddie; really it's so silly [1] (323-24).

Anna's inner monologue further assures us that Portia is too unconscious or innocent to be an integrated individual. According to Freud's Personality Theory, when a person behaves or thinks in an unconscious way, this person is still in her unconscious ego stage, and she'll not possess a complete superego until she is fully conscious of herself and the people around her [3]. Here, by means of Anna's soliloquy, Bowen wants to tell her readers that Portia is on her way of growth and integrated personality. As Portia's antithetic double, while Anna lost her innocence after leaving her boyfriend Robert, Portia will definitely break up with her boyfriend Eddie and lose innocent ego, before growing to be a conscious and integrated person. Likewise, as Portia's double, Anna has a keen insight into what has been happening and what Portia is, but she decides not to offer help to Portia, because now they land into this inferno of glare [1] (316), only the God can save her: Well, Heaven help her: I don't see why I should. Well she'll never find any answer here, thought Anna... [1] (324)

When Portia returns to Windsor Terrace after experiencing the harsh but real human life in Waikiki, all the people are going to rendezvous at the original place where all the tension and ambivalence will dissolve. Thus, it's the time that the focus of conflict is brought to the light, i.e. diary. Just as Kenney argues that its master Portia must face the "Devil" in the concluding section of the novel to bring her to full consciousness of her experiences in the world and the flesh [9] (61). Before long she is told by the evil informer St. Quentin that Anna has read her diary. St. Quentin, the man of art, plays the role of Judas, who coaxes Portia into speaking something about her diary, and teases her that she should lock it up if she had one, otherwise somebody read it. He even asks Portia to keep their talk unknown to Anna, who in this way experiences her friend's betrayal. St. Quentin admits that he breaks an accepted rule when he gives her way to Portia. Their conversation has ended in an abyss, when St. Quentin mentions Eddie's fascination for Anna and his breaking of every rule every time. Portia's innocence of heart is totally ruined and destroyed.

Although Portia may now see that life demands a conscious

1 see from Edwin J. Kenney's *Elizabeth Bowen*: Bowen reveals the feelings that are the source of the creation of her fiction and also her subject in a Preface to her first publication, *Encounters* (18-19)

effort to live it, she still cannot accept this, so several days later she runs away from the Windsor Terrace, first to Eddie and then to Major Brutt, still hoping to find a safe world elsewhere. After being rejected by both of them, Portia performs a final, self-conscious dramatic act and elevates herself to the level of art governing the behavior of the adults. She tells Brutt she will return to the Quaynes only if they do "the right thing." This is the reader's last view of Portia, and the story ends with Matchett's arrival at the Karachi Hotel to pick up Portia. It significantly shows Portia's turning toward the *World* of the beginning of the novel, rather than attempting to escape it and the *Flesh* in some dream of spiritual loving in eternal light. Therefore, from the *World* to the *Flesh*, down to the *Devil* and back to the *World*, it circulates and echoes the circular structure of the book as well as the life circle of human beings, birth, growth, death and then birth.

Furthermore, the circular structure embodies itself again at the moment when Anna finally identifies with Portia, after being put into the position of dislocation in the *World*, the juxtaposition in the *Flesh* and then to the conjunction in the *Devil* (lastly back to the *World*). How Anna identifies with Portia is illustrated as follows: first Anna turns into a spy just as Portia spies on her in *The World* [1] (321). And in her *escritoire*, Anna also keeps a diary of her own. While Portia is betrayed by Eddie, Anna is betrayed by her good friend St. Quentin who supposes that Anna wants to know why he told Portia about her reading of Portia's diary, but Anna shows the same response as Portia. 'How like Portia—she took no interest, either.' [1] (400). Finally, the 'right thing' in Portia's words is if Anna were Portia:

if I were Portia. Naturally, that's impossible: she and I are hardly the same sex. Though she and I may wish to make a new start, we hardly shall, I'm afraid. I shall always insult her; she will always persecute me.... [1] (410)

To respond to the assumption in the second part (the *Flesh*) of this article, Anna's identifying with Portia further demonstrates that their journeys are NOT going to run parallel, but run in a circular way before reaching a junction, because they make a compromise and which in turn leads to their reencounter at the starting point after a circular 'running'.

Just like Shakespeare's Portia, only if the suitor chooses the 'right' one from the three caskets can he get married to Portia. Only if Anna does the right thing can they fetch Portia back home. Although Anna thinks it's impossible for her to be Portia, she makes the right decision to send Matchett for Portia. Right here at the end of the *Devil*, Bowen shows that after invalid efforts of searching self-definition through blood ties and romantic love respectively in the first two parts of the novel, Portia will successfully grow to be a conscious and integrated person in the last part when her innocent ego is elevated to be a superego, which is realized by Portia's endurance of betrayal of those close to her, and later Anna's compromise with her. This compromise reinforces Anna's identifying with Portia, her empathy and understanding of Portia's situation and her acknowledgement of Portia's being as someone's child [1] (409). Kenney also notices that this point of compromise, achieved by a death of the heart's

innocence without a complete loss of heart, identifies Portia's essential integrity as a whole person, child and adult, and Elizabeth Bowen's essential response to life. Here, after suffering pains and hardships, the God's child comes back: Portia will attempt to picnic in Eden no longer; she will, like Elizabeth Bowen, choose to be both a child and an adult in some form of accommodation [9] (63).

### 3. Reflection on the Circular Structure of the Death

To sum up the above analysis, the circularity in *The Death of the Heart* is reached through Portia's return to the *World* (Windsor Terrace) and her being accepted by the Young Quayne, which is realized by Portia's endurance of betrayal of those close to her, and later Anna's compromise with her. All this in some sense evokes again the reflection on Bowen's Anglo-Irish religious and philosophical thoughts.

#### 3.1. Circularity Between Conflict and Compromise

On the one hand, as presented above in the article, the protagonist Portia's development resonates with Bowen's adolescent transition from being a child, always kept unknowing and in the power of others, to being an adult with her own autonomy, and which led to her establishing herself as an adult by writing. On the other hand, the 'great mutual past' bond between Portia and Matchett, who brings Portia's advent that is a 'consummation', echoes Bowen's efforts of building a bond between England and Ireland. The bond turns into a cosmopolitan sensibility, in Bixby's words, that Bowen retained a certain affiliation with Ireland and its vexed history of colonial occupation, nationalist agitation, hard-won independence, and state building [4]. She was inescapably of her own time, her own class and her own kind of literary sensibility.

In a Preface to her first publication, *Encounters*, written 25 years after the book's initial appearance in 1923, Elizabeth Bowen reveals her feelings of her adolescence:

Motherless since I was thirteen, I was in and out of the homes of my different relatives—and, as constantly, shuttling between two countries: Ireland and England. I was, it seemed, at everyone's disposition. Though quite happy, I lived with a submerged fear that I might fail to establish grown-up status. That fear, it may be, egged me on to writing: an author, a grown-up, must they not be synonymous? As far as I now see, I must have been anxious to approximate to my elders, yet to demolish them [9] (19).

Elizabeth Bowen was an only child who was alone without a mother or father at critical stages of her development, and she was Anglo-Irish not only by descent but also by physical movement between the two countries as a critical stage in the relations between England and Ireland. As an Anglo-Irish, she felt most at home in the middle of the Irish Sea, being seen as English in Ireland and Irish in England [15].

Elizabeth Bowen was born in Dublin to Henry Cole and Florence Colley Bowen, whose families both shared

Anglo-Irish, landowning, Protestant, Unionist views. The family heritage, Bowen's Court was built by the third Henry Bowen in the eighteenth century, the highpoint of the Protestant Ascendancy. This place defined Elizabeth Bowen's emotional and imaginative connection to Ireland, as it had done for all her family. The Big House, its garden and the surroundings are actors who can tell the story about the living condition, social relationships and beliefs of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy in the last days in Ireland [17]. It was a complex and conflicted sign of the Protestant Ascendancy, and symbolized separateness from Catholic Ireland and dual allegiance to Ireland and England. The sense of the past she felt was a social one focused primarily on Anglo-Irish landowning Big House life:

Each of these houses, with its intense, centripetal life, is isolated by something very much more lasting than the physical fact of space; the isolation is innate; it is an affair of origin. It is impossible that Anglo-Irish people, like only children, do not know how much they miss. Their existence, like those of only children, are singular, independent and secretive [9] (22).

Significantly Bowen used her own childhood as a simile to describe this life. By considering the Anglo-Irish society as children, one may more easily forgive, or at least accept, them.

Bowen sympathized with those Anglo-Irish who sincerely wished what they thought best for Ireland without ever fully understanding their alienation from most of Irish life. "If Ireland did not accept them, they did not know it—and it is in that unawareness of final rejection, unawareness of being looked out at from some secretive, opposed life, that the Anglo-Irish naïve dignity and, even, tragedy seems to me to stand. Themselves they felt Irish, and acted as Irishmen" [9] (23). The phrase "that unawareness of final rejection" suggests betrayal. Miss Bowen's whole conception of the Anglo-Irish naïve dignity and tragedy implies and depends on a sense of betrayal, a feeling that the best intentions of the best of her class were somehow betrayed both by others of that class and by the native Irish (as in 1916). This view of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland is also Elizabeth Bowen's view of having been brought up to be Anglo-Irish, and ultimately her view of life itself.

Bowen's personal experiences give abundant evidence of that Anglo-Irish life of circularity in betrayal and compromise. The adult, the writer, like the child, relies for life upon being lied to, but the adult also tells the lies, creates her own fictions for life. Bowen once wrote that fiction seems to lie because it says "something happened that did not." Therefore, it "must contain uncontradictable truth, to warrant the original lie." [6]. Kenney asserts that the feelings of betrayal and guilt are connected in a circular process in which Miss Bowen recalled and used her feelings of childhood in her creative act as an adult. Thus, this circularity manifested itself in her lifetime of continual "shuttling between Ireland and England" as she did as an Anglo-Irish child. It kept her moving, but in a circumscribed orbit that delineated her psychic distance from both countries and her vacillation between betrayal and guilt [9] (30), witnessing the alternative conflict and compromise

between England and Ireland.

### 3.2. Religious Outlook of Predeterminism

As mentioned above, the circular structure not only echoes Bowen's lifetime of continual "shuttling between England and Ireland", alternative conflict and compromise between England and Ireland, but also reflects Miss Bowen's religious outlook of predeterminism: let it be and accept it as it is, for no matter how different Human life journey is, they will come back to where they come from, to God's grace. In order to showcase her religious thoughts, Bowen creates a Christlike figure Portia and instills plentiful religious allusions throughout the text.

Blodgett thinks, to sustain its myth, *The Death* bears out the Passion of the Lord through texture as well as action [2]. Reminders of the important Week of the Passion enter obliquely when, at Portia's school, itself symbolic of the Anglican Church: buff-blue tiles, marble, gilt embossed wallpaper...big domed skylight, gothic chair like a bishop...[1] (63-67) each Thursday (because Thursday is the day of the Last Supper), as Portia's diary reports, "We had a Lecture on Events of the Week. ... We had a Lecture on Events of the Week, and a lady to teach us to read out. ... We had a Lecture on Events of the Week, and a special lecture on Savanarola" [1] (139,143,152). The incremental refrain establishes the idea of a significant week of events, to which there must be proper responses, and which involves religious martyrdom. From the Anglican services for Holy Week, Miss Bowen recalls the "abide in me" of John (John 15:4 English Standard Version) but also including in Portia's diary "Matchett took me on a bus to afternoon service at St. Paul's Cathedral. They sang 'Abide With Me'" [1] (145).

Furthermore, in *The Flesh*, more intense passion scene from the book's own iconography of suffering comes to the spotlight. When Eddie and Portia walked inland, uphill, to the woods behind the station, Eddie now and then stops to glance up at the sky—as though Someone there had said something he ought to have heard. Eddie here struggles to reject Portia, who makes futile attempts to comfort and save a corrupted soul. Miss Bowen incorporates imagery from the Passion to figure her symbolic Portia as the suffering Christ:

I don't want you; I've got no place for you; I only want what you give. I don't want the whole of anyone. [said Eddie] Life is so much more impossible than you think. Don't you see we're all full of horrible powers, working against each other however much we may love? You agonise me by being so agonized. Oh cry out loud, if you must: cry, cry—don't just let those terrible meek tears roll down your face like that [1] (279-80).

Eddie, who can see only evil everywhere, with himself as its victim and agent, to Portia's despair abjures "comfort":

"I can't bear it when you talk." When she got her wrists free, she once more locked her arms around him, she started rocking her body with such passionless violence that, as they both knelt, he rocked in her arms. 'You stay alone in yourself, you stay alone in yourself!'

Eddie, white as a stone, said: "You must let go of me."



Sitting back on her heels, Portia instinctively looked up at the oak, to see whether it were still vertical. She pressed together her hands, which, torn roughly from Eddie, had been chafed in the palms by the rough tweed of his coat. Her last tears blistered her face; beginning to lose momentum they stuck in smarting parches: she felt in her coat pockets and said: "I have got no handkerchief" [1] (280).

The tree (cross), the roughly torn palm, the "meek" and "last" tears, the missing handkerchief are significantly grouped stylized details from the Passion. For this scene they may be derived from the traditional iconography of the Stations of the Cross, transformational symbols which recapitulate the closing scenes of the Passion. Miss Bowen elsewhere incorporates into her narrative "stations" which may likewise recall the Stations, or, in the example of young Portia's trip, may more simply be a play on the metaphor of "station" as way point on one's route of spiritual growth. Portia goes from Charing Cross to Lymly (the junction) for Seale, and "uphill station" [1] (167).

Another more complex use of "station" occurs when Matchett goes to fetch Portia and herself has a transformational experience. On this last night of the novel Matchett makes her own as well as a representative symbolic pilgrimage across London. When, at such an important point in the narrative-so near to its ending-Miss Bowen gives some four pages of monologue to a character who has been a background figure till now, one knows that the monologue is important. Matchett's monologue of perturbation includes an emotional change and a spiritual growth. As she travels, she passes two stations of the underground. (Hyde Park, the first station, is an underground station) Miss Bowen uses this metaphor to express that, as a Christian, Matchett has achieved the second station because she has undergone a psychic change. The second station in the iconographic Stations of the Cross is Christ's reception of the cross, relevant since Matchett has taken up her cross. Miss Bowen labels only the second station, South Kensington Station, as a "station" because emphasis belongs on it. At South Kensington Station Matchett recalls Portia's "good supper" and Portia's preferred "biscuits" [1] (416); the buried allusion is to the Lord's Supper for the Holy Communion, the rite of the Eucharist based on the Last Supper.

Since Miss Bowen has chosen to use Matchett as a symbolic figure for ritual participation in existence: in awe of approaching sleep, ...she served the idea of sleep with a series of little ceremonials. The impassive solemnity of her preparations made a sort of an altar of each bed...there is always the religious element. The diurnal cycle is observed with more feeling [1] (90), it is appropriate that she give the character Matchett a transformation of feeling. As significant ritual, transformation is what she should effect. Thus, she should conduct "Portia" back, even though she doesn't know where she is going.

Inside her, her spirit balanced in her body, with a succession of harsh efforts, as her body balanced inside the taxi. When at moments she thought, she thought in words.

I don't know, I'm sure [1] (413).

Oh, Hyde Park, is it?... Well, I don't know, I'm sure [1] (414).  
South Kensington Station...Well, I don't know, I'm sure [1] (416).

Oh, so we're stopping, are we? Well, I don't know, I'm sure [1] (416).

The point of all this is that Matchett has achieved a new psychic balance: what she thinks in harmony with what she feels; and what she feels, a renewal of faith. Her attitudinal progression is from consternation and uncertainty to faith, with wonder-chancing it an trusting Him. I don't know-but I am sure.

At the very closing scene of the story, Bowen makes Matchett fulfill her own and as well the representative symbolic pilgrimage to fetch Portia, the suffering Christlike figure. Just as Matchett herself murmurs, she doesn't know, but she's sure that she comes to the right place to bring Portia's advent that is a 'consummation', for Portia will be taken to the Quayne where she comes from and she belongs to, after enduring the betrayal of the people close to her and the death of the heart's innocence, which metaphorically symbolizes that she can embrace God's grace because God gives his mercy to humanity by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross and secure men's eternal salvation from the sin. All of this is predetermined, and that's Bowen's fate as well as the fate of the Anglo-Irish.

## 4. Conclusion

In this article, the circular structure of Bowen's "coming-of-age" novel *The Death of the Heart* is illustrated in every detail through cycling shift of its setting from the Windsor Terrace to Waikiki, back to the Windsor Terrace on the surface level and as well through the heroine Portia's developmental trajectory from an innocent girl falling down to the *World*, experiencing and suffering the *Flesh* and the *Devil*, to an integrated and conscious individual returning to the *World* on the metaphorical level. Through an ingenious manipulation of its circular structure and the portrayal of the Christlike figure Portia, Elizabeth Bowen demonstrates her lifetime of continual "shuttling between England and Ireland", witnessing alternative conflict and compromise between England and Ireland, and her Anglo-Irish religious outlook of predeterminism: let it be and accept it as it is.

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