

Irish neutrality and censorship in the Second World War;

A comparison of Sean O'Faolain's *One World* essays

and Elizabeth Bowen's wartime reports.

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## Abstract

To gain insight into the way neutrality was experienced in Ireland during the Second World War this paper will compare two works by two especially relevant authors during the war, namely the *One World* Essays published by Seán Ó Faoláin in the literary magazine *The Bell*, and Elizabeth Bowen's reports to the British Ministry of Information. How do depictions of neutrality and censorship in both the *One World* essays and Bowen's writings compare to each other, and how do they reflect upon Irish neutrality? Expectations are that the *One World* essays will be more actively opposed to instances of censorship, while their idea of Ireland is one of a fully independent Irish nation. Bowen's work will be in more pro-British in its opinion, and depictions of neutrality and censorship will lean to an idea of an Irish nation that is more closely related to its British neighbour. These works, written by two distinctly different authors, could provide an interesting new insight into Irish neutrality from their respective viewpoints. Through comparison with the actual political state of neutrality these insights might shed a new light on how the neutrality was experienced in Ireland itself.

Key words: Ireland, Emergency, Neutrality, Censorship, The Second World War, *The Bell* Magazine, Elizabeth Bowen, Sean Ó Faoláin

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## 1 Introduction

World War II seemed to have engulfed all European nations, but a few countries managed to stay neutral throughout the entire conflict. Nations such as Switzerland and Sweden, but also Ireland. The war was known as the Emergency in Ireland and although a state of emergency was declared from 1939 until 1946, Ireland never formally entered the war for either the Allies or the Axis powers, instead adopting an isolationist policy. Ireland had recently gained de facto independence from Britain and was declared a sovereign state with the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921. Ireland drew up a new constitution in 1937, making the move from the Irish Free State to the new state of Éire official. After the 1916 Easter Rising and several years of war with Britain, followed by a civil war, Ireland did not need another war. Soldiers belonging to the Irish army that joined the war in Europe were even considered to be traitors in Ireland itself. However, talks with Britain were held in case Germany decided to invade Ireland and use it as a backdoor for the invasion of Britain, just as they did with the Netherlands and Belgium. A long-held belief is that the experience of World War II was alien to the neutral state of Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

*The Bell* magazine, founded in 1940, was a monthly literary magazine based in Dublin. It served as a platform for high quality liberal Irish material from 1940 until 1954. In her book about *The Bell* Matthews explains that the journal is seen as a depiction of modern Ireland, or a ‘survey of Irish life.’ “The Bell was consistent and explicit in advocating the construction of a complex and inclusive Irish identity: a version of Irishness that could accommodate the multiplicity of Irish historical heritages, as well as the diversity of contemporary experiences in a young nation in the midst of modernization.”<sup>2</sup> Wartime censorship meant that *The Bell* was not able to openly discuss issues and ideologies plaguing the deeply divided nation, but

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<sup>1</sup> Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland During the Second World War* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 10

<sup>2</sup> Kelly Matthews, *The Bell Magazine and the Representation of Irish Identity: Opening Windows*. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), 164.

by opening its pages to descriptions of things as they were it became the most important Irish periodical of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Censorship and neutrality went hand in hand in wartime Ireland. The Fianna Fáil government did not allow anything to be published that was perceived as a threat to the neutral status of Ireland. It actively tried to prevent the public from forming an opinion in favour of either the Allied or the Axis powers, fearing an even greater division in post-civil war Ireland.<sup>4</sup> Sean Ó Faoláin, *The Bell*'s editor in chief, was outspoken and fiercely critical of censorship. He voiced his liberal opinion of the neutrality through works such as his series of editorials titled *One World*. During a period that he believed to be a time of political and intellectual stagnation he, "In effect, frames the development of Irish democracy and radicalism in relation to a larger global historical phenomenon of anti-imperialism expressed through complementary, but distinct, nationalist discourses", as Quigley puts it in an analysis of modernization in Ireland.<sup>5</sup>

Elizabeth Bowen was an influential author from the same time period that has been labelled as both the 'grande dame of the modern novel' in 1960<sup>6</sup> as well as 'the spy who loved daddy' by the Guardian in 1999<sup>7</sup>. Her aristocratic dame-like manner may have stemmed from her roots in upper-class Irish society,<sup>8</sup> and reflected on her writing which was often syntactically complicated according to Teekell: Bowen's prose is "riddled with inversions, ellipses, subjunctives, and double or even triple negatives."<sup>9</sup> Her characters also somewhat resembled her own life; they were involved in intelligence gathering during the Second World War in the novel *The Heat of the Day* (1946) for example, much like herself in the same

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>4</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 344.

<sup>5</sup> Mark S. Quigley, "Modernization's Lost Pasts: Sean O'Faolain, the *Bell*, and Irish Modernization Before Lemas," *New Hibernia Review* 18, No. 2 (2014): 54, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.20140068>.

<sup>6</sup> "Elizabeth Bowen, the 'Grande Dame' of the Modern Novel – archive," *The Guardian*, February 15, 1960, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/feb/15/elizabeth-bowen-author-fiction>

<sup>7</sup> "The Spy who Loved Daddy" *The Guardian*, February 4, 1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/1999/feb/04/features11.g2>

<sup>8</sup> *The 'Grande Dame' of the Modern Novel*.

<sup>9</sup> Anna Teekell. "Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War." *New Hibernia Review* 15, no. 3 (2011): 61-79. <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.

period.<sup>10</sup> Although she was an Irish national that recognized Ireland's need to stay out of the war, she had grown impatient with Ireland's neutral stance and its refusal to aid Britain in the battle for the Atlantic which resulted in her contacting the Ministry of Information. She started to report back on issues of opinion, and especially on the issue of neutrality.<sup>11</sup> Her reports focussed on Dublin life during the Emergency. She also contributed to *The Bell*, for example by submitting a review of Jim Phelan's wartime study of Irish Neutrality, *The Ireland-Atlantic Gateway*. Furthermore, Ó Faoláin and Bowen knew each other personally and even had an affair, which explains the title of the 1999 Guardian article. Their relationship was complicated for several reasons including the marriages and families of both authors, the use of Ó Faoláin's platform by Bowen, and Bowen's reports to the British government which Ó Faoláin knew nothing about.

Analysing how these works written by Bowen and Ó Faoláin compare, and how they reflect on censorship and neutrality, might provide a unique insight into The Emergency in Ireland. This paper will explore how depictions of neutrality and censorship in both the *One World* editorials from July 1944 and October 1945 and Bowen's reports to the British Ministry of Information from 1942 compare to each other, and how they reflect upon Irish neutrality. Opinions of two distinctively different authors will be put side by side, and light will hopefully be shed on how the situation of neutrality was experienced in Ireland itself. Besides solely analysing depictions of neutrality, depictions of censorship will also be evaluated. In time of crisis, censorship is often crucial and carried out because of legitimate concerns about the general public.<sup>12</sup> In wartime Ireland it was carried out by Fianna Fáil to prevent an even further division in Irish society.<sup>13</sup> Opinions on the matter will therefore

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>11</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 117.

<sup>12</sup> Doris Graber, "Styles of Image Management During Crises: Justifying Press Censorship," *Discourse & Society*, 14, no. 5 (2003): 539, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265030145001>.

<sup>13</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 344.

provide a valuable insight into how the authors viewed the government's standpoints in a nation that only recently became independent after years of conflict.

Expectations are that the *One World* essays will be more actively opposed to instances of censorship, while their idea of Ireland is one of a fully independent, and thus neutral Irish nation. Bowen's writings will be more pro-British in their opinion, depictions of neutrality and censorship will lean towards an idea of an Irish nation that is more closely related to its British neighbour as they were born out of frustrating with Ireland's neutral status, while Ó Faoláin's opinion will be distinctly more anti-British. These texts were selected because they convey the personal opinions of two authors from completely different backgrounds in a striking way. Bowen was neither truly Irish nor truly British, of upper-class origin, and able to move freely among both the British and Irish political and artistic elite. Ó Faoláin on the other hand had been a republican activist during the war for independence, and although fiercely critical of the Irish state that had emerged, he was entirely allied to Ireland<sup>14</sup>. The depictions of censorship and neutrality will also differ in their nature because Bowen's writings include reports to the Ministry of Information that were not subjected to censorship, while *One World* is a series of essays different by nature that were subjected to censorship, providing an interesting difference. Depictions of neutrality and censorship will then be compared to the official neutral standpoint of the Irish government, and a conclusion of how this standpoint is reflected in the sentiments of Bowen and Ó Faoláin may be drawn.

Studies into Bowen, Ó Faoláin, and their individual opinions and beliefs have been conducted in the past. Ó Faoláin featured Bowen's work in *The Bell* on several occasions and the two authors even had a love affair.<sup>15</sup> Ó Faoláin himself was fiercely in favour of a strong Irish nation independent from other nations, which stemmed from his involvement in the 1916 Easter Rising, while Bowen was opinionated in favour of a stronger Anglo-Irish relationship

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<sup>14</sup> *The Spy who Loved Daddy*.

<sup>15</sup> George Hughes, "Scandalous Matters: Sean O' Faolain, Elizabeth Bowen and the Art of the Modern Short Story," *The Harp* 12 (1997): 113, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20533370>.



through her personal situation and frustration with Ireland's refusal to step away from complete neutrality.<sup>16</sup> Historical and political studies on Irish neutrality and several books like Clair Wills' *That Neutral Island* (2007) and Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* (1995) have been written on the matter. Wills' book in particular is a vital source of information about Irish culture and its perceived stagnation during the war. Kelly Matthews' *The Bell Magazine and the Representation of Irish Society* forms another vital source for this paper as it is one of the most recent evaluations of *The Bell* magazine in which the *One World* editorials were published. The book itself also builds on Wills' *That Neutral Island*. A study contrasting Ó Faoláin and Bowen's works in order to shed light on the Irish neutrality has, however, not been conducted before. Publications in *The Bell* magazine itself are hard to access, but the *One World* essays have been republished in *Selected Essays of Sean O'Faolain*, edited by Brad Kent. Bowen's writings are easily available as well as they have been compiled in Eibhear Walshe's *Elizabeth Bowen's Selected Irish Writings*.

A broader insight that might also be provided is how groups to which the authors belonged might have viewed the neutrality. Ó Faoláin for example can be said to belong to a group of liberal Irish nationalists with an opposition to established religion together with his fellow editors Frank O'Connor and Peadar O'Donnell. Bowen was also a prominent figure in the Irish literary world and belonged to a group of female writers known as the Women's Writer's Club, which included some of Ireland's best known authors. Their aim was to sharpen their wits, to improve the standard of criticism, as well as encouraging the writers."<sup>17</sup> Alongside the conclusions about Bowen's and Ó Faoláin's standpoints and their respective differences in these standpoints, this insight will further contribute to the field of study of Irish neutrality during the Second World War. This paper will not only focus on the purely

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<sup>16</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 117.

<sup>17</sup> Deirdre Brady, "An Irish literary set that was more Bloomsbury than barstool," *The Irish Times*, May 7, 2015, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/an-irish-literary-set-that-was-more-bloomsbury-than-barstool-1.2203909>

historical aspect of the period, but also on the more personal aspect of a reflection of opinion of two leading authors.

## 2.1 Historical background

The first half of the Twentieth Century was a turbulent time for Ireland, as it was for almost anywhere in Europe. It was a time that would see Ireland become an independent nation, a nation in search of its own identity after years of oppression and years of wars. The historical context of the formation of the independent nation of Ireland and the events leading up to the Emergency are vital for understanding Irish sentiment during the World War II era Emergency, and to understand why Ireland felt no desire to join the war on either side.

During the First World War Irish Nationalists saw their chance to establish independent rule while Britain was heavily engaged in waging war. According to McLaughlin the rebel groups consisted of “an amalgam of old Fenian revolutionaries, poets, Gaelic enthusiasts, educators, and labour organizers. Most important, though, they were all Catholics.”<sup>18</sup> In 1916 they seized part of Dublin together with the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen’s army but were defeated within six days by the British army. The Easter Rising was the first significant uprising in years, and it would become the start of the Irish revolutionary period. Although the uprising was relatively small and had little support except from the Germans, who tried to supply the rebels with weapons and make Britain divert valuable resources to the uprising, it helped cause a shift in public opinion in favour of the Republicans. The way the rebels were treated by the British, and martial law being declared after the uprising, helped cement this shift. Within a week from the rising the British effectively elevated the rebels to martyrs.<sup>19</sup> After the First World War ended general elections were held in Ireland in 1918. The elections led to a major victory for the rebels in British

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<sup>18</sup> Robert McLaughlin, *Irish Canadian Conflict and the Struggle for Irish Independence, 1912-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctt2tv4ph>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 96.

parliament, gaining 73 out of 105 seats available for Ireland, even though most of Sinn Féin's politicians were locked up on false charges for 'aiding a German plot.'<sup>20</sup> Sinn Féin declared Ireland an independent republic after refusing to take up their seats in Westminster, forming the First Dáil Éireann. The refusal to negotiate anything short of full independence sparked the Irish War of Independence, or the Anglo-Irish War, with Britain when a group of Irish volunteers that would later become the IRA made off with a cart of mining explosives and killed two British guards.<sup>21</sup> The Irish republicans were led by Michael Collins, who fought to achieve the 'freedom to achieve freedom'. The war lasted from 1919 until 1921, and with the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty in 1921 the war ended, resulting in Ireland gaining de-facto independence as a part of the Commonwealth of Nations. The British monarch was still the head of state, and Northern Ireland was not included as a part of the Free State as provision for partition had already been made under the Government of Ireland Act of 1920. Ireland did manage to gain the right to self-govern because of the treaty.

Turbulent times were not over yet, however, as Ireland descended into civil war in 1922. The Anglo-Irish treaty was the main cause of the conflict as a faction within the Irish Republican party Sinn Féin's led by Éamon de Valera saw it as a betrayal of the Irish Republic that was proclaimed in 1916 during the Easter Rising, while the Nationalist forces of the Provisional Government, or the Irish Free State, and the other faction within Sinn Féin supported the treaty. They did not think the concessions made to please Britain weighed heavily enough to protest because they had gained so much by making concessions.<sup>22</sup> With help from the British Government the Irish Nationalists eventually won the war in 1923. It should be noted that the disagreement over the treaty, the following civil war and the atrocities committed during it, would leave the Irish Nation divided for years to come. It

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Heintz, "The Freedom to Achieve Freedom: Negotiating the Anglo-Irish Treaty," *intersections* 10, no. 1 (2009): 446.

would lead to the IRA attacking Loyalists until the Republic of Ireland was declared in 1948, and it continued to be the source of a deep political division until well after the Second World War with the two largest Irish political parties bearing the names of the two ‘embattled factions’.<sup>23</sup> The ‘freedom to achieve freedom’, as Collins called it, was utilised by passing an entirely new Irish Constitution under supervision of De Valera in 1937. The new constitution replaced the one drawn up in 1922 which was still heavily, for some negatively, associated with the Anglo-Irish treaty.

By the late 1930’s dark clouds were looming over Europe once more, and the Second World War broke out in 1939 with Hitler’s invasion of Poland. As advised by De Valera, his Fianna Fáil party opted for a neutral stance in the conflict, a position which held major popular support. The government did not overly display a preference for either side, partly because it had had its fair share of war, but also to keep the fragile peace in Ireland itself. The neutrality in Ireland was mainly born out of necessity. It made sure the fledgling nation would survive without any real prospects of defending itself.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the nation was still deeply divided, with large parts of Irish society rejecting anything remotely British after years of oppression. Some parts of Irish society even had admiration for the Germans, remembering their attempts to supply Irish rebels with weapons in 1916. The morals promoted by the Catholic Church in Ireland certainly helped with the favourable view of the Germans, as it itself was largely organised along totalitarian lines and responsible for “the complete concealment of the real nature of continental Fascism from the mass of the Irish people.”<sup>25</sup> In Britain, however, Ireland’s neutrality was perceived as a betrayal of its neighbour and blamed it for their mounting casualties in the Battle of Britain as they did not gain access to Ireland

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<sup>23</sup> McLaughlin, *Irish Canadian Conflict and the Struggle for Irish Independence*, 176.

<sup>24</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 344.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

strategic Atlantic ports to help combat German submarines.<sup>26</sup> Many Britons simply forgot that Ireland was no longer part of Britain, and in no way able to fight a war.<sup>27</sup> Wills explains that, leaving military capabilities aside, “The small army, no navy, little air power, DIY defences – neutrality was not presented to the world as the result of weakness. Government declarations dwelt on sovereignty and self-determination, and the democratic rights of small nations.”<sup>28</sup> This rhetoric of intellectual and moral superiority that was the hallmark of Irish policy in a time as desperate as the Second World War was definitely remembered by the Allied public, and it helped shape their opinion on the neutral Irish nation, even though the political reasons for these policies could be traced back to the diplomatic failings of the past and the discrimination of Catholics by Britain in the North.<sup>29</sup>

Despite declaring neutrality, the Fianna Fáil government declared a state of Emergency in 1939, and the Emergency Powers Act was passed allowing the government not only to censor the press, film, and correspondence by mail, but also to institute a travel ban.<sup>30</sup> Newspapers had to maintain a strict balance of Allied and Axis perspectives and had to avoid any overt statement of opinion. Newsreels from the United States and England were especially targeted by the censors, going as far as censoring the word ‘war’ itself, in fear of foreign propaganda influencing the Irish public.<sup>31</sup> Wills has documented the severity of Irish film censorship in *That Neutral Island*: “While cinema audiences in the rest of Europe watched coverage of battles, shattered towns and cities, refugees, prisoners, the shell-shocked and wounded (albeit from different perspectives), the war was glossed over for Irish filmgoers, who were informed instead of horse racing, annual festivals, the work of the Irish army and

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Cole, “Good Relations: Irish Neutrality and the Propaganda of John Betjeman, 1941-43,” *Éire-Ireland* 30, No.4 (1995), <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.1995.0055>.

<sup>27</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 5

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>30</sup> Cole, *Good Relations*, 38.

<sup>31</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 272.

the LDF [Local Defence Force], and the activities of the pope”.<sup>32</sup> These measures were aimed at keeping Ireland isolated from the war and, according to Wills, the government felt that it allowed anything newsworthy to pass through while enabling the Irish people to keep their balance. De Valera was of the opinion that any other policy would have divided the Irish people, and “for a divided people to fling itself into war would be to commit suicide.”<sup>33</sup> In reality it meant that they effectively instigated a state of social, intellectual and psychological siege in Irish society.<sup>34</sup> Kelly Matthews mentions that the historian F.S.L. Lyons started the debate about Irish cultural and intellectual stagnation during the mid-twentieth century using the image of Plato’s cave to describe the isolated state of Irish society during the Emergency<sup>35</sup>: “It was as if an entire people had been condemned to live in Plato’s cave, with their backs to the fire of life and deriving their only knowledge of what went on outside from the flickering shadows thrown on the wall before their eyes by the men and women who passed to and fro behind them.”<sup>36</sup> The fire of life may be seen as a metaphor for the Second World War, while the flickering shadows are a representation of the information that managed to get past the overzealous censors. The full extent of the extreme censorship differentiated Ireland from other neutral nations, nations with longer histories of independence that were more accustomed to their role as an independent nation, and the Irish public would not know to what extent the media was silenced until after the German defeat.<sup>37</sup>

## 2.2 Methodology

The aim of this paper is to explore how depictions of neutrality and censorship in both the *One World* editorials from July 1944 and October 1945, and Bowen’s reports to the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 270-279.

<sup>35</sup> Matthews, *The Bell Magazine*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London 1971), pp 557-8.

<sup>37</sup> Matthews, *The Bell Magazine*, pp.142-143.

British Ministry of Information from 1942 compare to each other, how they reflect upon the Irish socio-political climate in general, and how they helped to form an independent Irish identity. This has been investigated by listing and examining each instance that mentions either neutrality or censorship in the works of both authors. Besides solely analysing depictions of neutrality, depictions of censorship have also been evaluated, as censorship went hand in hand with how De Valera's government envisioned that the Irish society during the Second World War. Each instance has been interpreted in light of each respective author's background and convictions. The comparison will shed new light on how the situation of neutrality was experienced in Ireland itself in the broader sense, and on how the authors differ from each other in opinion and in their opinions on the government's standpoints in a nation that only recently became independent.

The *One World* editorials appearing in a periodical, and Bowen's reports falling outside of any traditional literary genre poses some difficulties in analysing them. It is extremely difficult to analyse a periodical as a whole due to its fragmented nature, even more so for *The Bell* because it features such a broad spectrum of texts from authors of all kinds of different social standings. Texts in a periodical are not meant to be read as a whole but in their individual historic and social contexts as Matthews also points out, and readers have a different role because they can interact by sending in comments and letters which *The Bell*'s editors actively promoted.<sup>38</sup> Bowen's texts do not fit with any literary genre, which also poses a problem for analysis. There is no possibility for an analysis of plot for instance because the texts were never meant to be read by the public in the first place. Her reports, however, were written in roughly the same historical circumstances as Ó Faoláin's editorials with the key difference that the reports were not subjected to censorship. Social identity mainly revolves around self-categorization and social comparison. These identities exist as part of a structured

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 3.

society that is formed through a collective cultural memory that is shaped by historic events.<sup>39</sup> Having gone through several traumatic historic events and wars as a society, events that left it deeply divided, it is only natural that Irish society and its government looked inward to find positive parts of Irish history to help cement a unified identity when another conflict loomed. Both author's works have to be carefully considered in comparison to this situation, and with regard to the formation of social identity. They also must be considered from both a modernist as a post-colonialist perspective, as *The Bell* could be considered a modernist reaction to the stagnation of wartime Ireland, while Bowen's reports contain a hint of 'the other' as she describes Irish society from her Anglo-Irish viewpoint. With consideration of these factors the comparison of both works should provide an interesting insight into Emergency-era society and the further formation of Irish identity.

### 3.1 *The Bell* Magazine

Key to the debate about Irish society in the mid-twentieth century is *The Bell* Magazine. A year into the Emergency, *The Bell* was established in Dublin in 1940. It was founded by Sean Ó Faoláin, a man who was already a successful novelist, and who had a history as a rebel, together with fellow writers Frank O'Connor and Peadar O'Donnell. Because of its unique and complete representation of the Irish literary world of the mid-twentieth century it is vital to any study of Irish culture of the time. As a monthly publication it continued until 1954, with a hiatus from 1948 until 1950.<sup>40</sup> Readership numbers were not high with an estimated 2000 to 3000 copies being circulated with each issue while Catholic periodicals managed a weekly circulation of 50000 copies, and only about 1000 copies in total seem to have made it abroad. Its importance does not lie in the numbers, it lies in the broad

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<sup>39</sup> Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* no.3, vol 63. (September 2000), pp. 224-225, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2695870>.

<sup>40</sup> Matthews, *The Bell Magazine*, pp.4-6.



spectrum of Irish society that it appealed to.<sup>41</sup> Ó Faoláin called the magazine satisfyingly small in a time when isolationist and conservative policies dominated Irish politics. Its smallness ensured its independence, and in a time of strict censorship, *The Bell* welcomed anyone with an Irish identity to use the magazine as a platform with authors actively inviting readers for discussion.<sup>42</sup> Its aim was to “open as many windows as possible on the lives of as many people as possible, so that we may form a full and varied picture of modern Ireland,” as Ó Faoláin later stated in a preface to a series of articles on the country’s major religion.<sup>43</sup> It is this heterogeneity and openness that sets it apart from other literary forms according to Matthews, as it invites far greater interactivity.<sup>44</sup> The magazine contrasts the development of Irish democracy and radicalism in relation to the larger global historical phenomenon of anti-imperialism through nationalist discourse.<sup>45</sup> Instead of regressing into nostalgia for a past before British rule it looked forward and tried to deal with implications of rapidly modernizing life, it provided a forum for writers from the complete spectrum of Irish society to voice their own experiences of modernity.<sup>46</sup> The magazine itself could be regarded as a modernist magazine, as it approaches the world from different perspectives and addresses the fragmentation of the reality of mid-twentieth century modern life. Its editors regarded themselves as working outside of the realms of literary modernism, however, and repeatedly refused to publish aesthetically modernist writings. In their opinion Irish identity was best reflected by a focus on literary realism. Tensions between different writing styles, a downside of such an open platform, provided issues that the editors often found difficult to resolve.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp 37-38.

<sup>42</sup> Sean Ó Faoláin, ‘On Editing a Magazine,’ *The Bell* 9:2 (November 1944), pp 95-96.

<sup>43</sup> Sean Ó Faoláin, note preceding Revd Matthew Bailey, ‘What it means to be a Presbyterian: Credo –1,’ *The Bell* 8:4 (July 1944), 298.

<sup>44</sup> Matthews, *The Bell Magazine*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Quigley, *Modernization’s Lost Pasts*, 54.

<sup>46</sup> Matthews, *The Bell Magazine*, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Matthews, *The Bell Magazine*, pp.1-2.

*The Bell* also bore the full brunt of the Emergency Powers Act censors. As Matthews points out *The Bell* had to submit all material they intended to publish that related directly or indirectly to the war, like all newspapers and periodicals, to the Controller of Censorship. The result of these restrictions is surprising to the modern reader according to her. An example she gives is the silent replacement of A.J. Leventhal's article *What it Means to Be a Jew* by the article *What it Means to Be a Quaker*. All references to anti-Semitism were considered threat to Ireland's neutrality, and about two-thirds of the article was cut. She speculates that the censors perhaps feared a rise in anti-German bias, but why they felt the need to cut passages about a rivalry between Jewish and Christian boys in Dublin remains unknown. Editors were not allowed to hint that a text had been censored, for example by leaving blanks, so it was decided to replace the article altogether.<sup>48</sup> It should also be noted that *The Bell*'s editors were very much aware of the situation Ireland found itself in, and how the rest of the world perceived their stance in World War II, pointing out that many Irish people were indeed up to date about the war as they received their information not only from Irish sources but also from British and American sources that escaped the censors.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.2 *One World*

Despite wartime restrictions regarding censorship, *The Bell*'s editor-in-chief Sean Ó Faoláin realised the need for a form of outward perspective that could facilitate public discussion, a discussion that his magazine could facilitate by providing a platform for reader's responses. For this purpose, he started his series of *One World* editorials. The series consists of 10 essays that began in January 1944 and ran until 1946 when Ó Faoláin resigned. Topics they discuss include the position of the young and independent Irish nation in the newly emerging world order that was becoming apparent towards the end of the war. According to

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 143-144.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 144.

Matthews, Ó Faoláin attempted to “re-orient Irish thought, and to promote a version of Irish identity which did not depend solely on political definitions of national sovereignty.” They are not anti-British, and neither was *The Bell*, they simply argue for a sovereign and neutral country that manages to position itself internationally. Matthews continues by stating these editorials stand as one of the best examples of *The Bell*’s efforts to counter the inward-looking and conservative policies of De Valera and the Fianna Fáil government and the censorship they imposed.<sup>50</sup> They stand directly in line with the general idea of *The Bell* to look forward instead of inward, to promote the advance of literature instead of its stagnation, and they perhaps even exemplify what the magazine stood for. They helped to address the modernist issue of a fragmented society’s position internationally through a literary form that promotes discussion, facilitated through *The Bell*’s openness to anyone of Irish descent. For these reasons this paper will focus on two of Ó Faoláin’s *One World* editorials, namely *One World* appearing in *The Bell* 8, no.4 from July 1944, and the post-Emergency *One World: An Irish council* appearing in *The Bell* 11, no.1 from October 1945. These two editorials particularly deal with Ireland’s position regarding Great Britain and with Northern Ireland, moreover, July 1944’s *One World* and *One World: An Irish Council* are one of the few *One World* editorials that were re-published and thus available for research outside of Irish libraries.

In the first of the *One World* editorials this paper will deal with Ó Faoláin discusses the relationship between Ireland and the Commonwealth of Nations. He further raises the question of the unification of Ireland, not necessarily the ‘problem of Union,’ but the ‘problem of Partition,’ i.e. the problems that Partition poses outweigh the cultural and political problems that Union poses. According to the editorial there had been little mention of international relations during the elections of May 1944. Ó Faoláin speculates that this might have to do with De Valera’s policies. For example, promoting the Gaelic language over the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 145.

past two years, as a sort of smokescreen to mask Ireland from the international world by directing its focus inward to its own historical roots. He states that not much can be done about this in 1944, it is during the Emergency after all, but that “Nevertheless, if we have had any real and sincere intention of facing either of them [members of the Commonwealth] in the future – if we have any attitude about them to present to the world when the world is more ready to listen – our statesmen should be now preparing the public mind against that time.”<sup>51</sup> Ó Faoláin mainly uses the example of the unification of Canada to illustrate the problems that unification of Ireland with Northern Ireland would pose, relating that the two countries knew similar, mostly religious and cultural differences, and the division of revolutionary groups in young countries being led down their own roads instead of cooperating (the Irish civil war comes to mind).<sup>52</sup> “It becomes patent that while we, here, spend much of our time on short-term propaganda about alleged present religious discrimination we spend far too little in long-term analyses of the economic basis of possible future Union; and it is on that plane and at that distance that our minds should be constructively working,”<sup>53</sup> Ó Faoláin concludes, and he explains this by stating that the main reason for Northern Ireland joining the South would be the economic factor. The South would have to have something to offer the North, something post-war Britain could perhaps not in a post-war depression. Times would become so complicated that politicians such as De Valera would be reduced to ‘lovable old patriarchs’ after a revival of the question of Union or Partition, which are lifeless questions in 1940s Ireland, ‘a cliché about an aim to be kept steadily in mind.’ These questions must be viewed in international perspective in light of the future of Europe and the rest of the world, and not only as local or domestic ones. According to Ó Faoláin, at least Northern Ireland looks at the

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<sup>51</sup> Sean Ó Faoláin, “One World,” in *The Selected Essays of Sean O’Faolain*, ed. Brad Kent (Québec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2016), 261

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

question of Union or Partition in this light, and why shouldn't Éire do the same? "It is *One World*. And we *are* part of it?"<sup>54</sup>

In the second *One World* editorial this paper will deal with, *An Irish council*, Ó Faoláin proposes an Irish counterpart to the established institution of the British Council. The British Council is an institution that aims to further the spread of British language and culture, while being completely independent from the British government. Ó Faoláin particularly stresses the fact that it operates throughout the empire without being influenced by government policies.<sup>55</sup> As it covers almost the entire cultural field, from books to music, film, and the sciences, it must be considered a 'most valuable, practical and patriotic body,' an institution that Ireland lacks and perhaps should establish. The lack of decent representation abroad, apart from a few poorly managed legations, severely limit the country's promotion of knowledge about itself internationally. Ó Faoláin explains that: "The handicaps under which Ireland labours as a consequence are too obvious to need elaboration."<sup>56</sup> The lack of international representation is blamed on two matters, the first being the isolationist policies of the Irish government adopted during the Emergency, Ó Faoláin again uses the example of the manner in which De Valera tried to promote the Gaelic Revival, the way of promotion is considered by Ó Faoláin to be 'unmodern and unEuropean' because of its narrow interpretation, the promotion of the Gaelic language in itself he considers a natural and invigorating idea.<sup>57</sup> The second reason he mentions is the lack of a unified society in Ireland itself. He argues that the two most cultivated groups in Ireland, namely the group that used to be known as the Anglo-Irish, and the writers, are virtually treated as outlaws in conservative Catholic Ireland, "Is there, for example, a single Protestant dispensary doctor in [Éire]? A

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>55</sup> Sean Ó Faoláin, "One World: An Irish Council," in *The Selected Essays of Sean O'Faolain*, ed. Brad Kent (Québec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 310.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 312.

county librarian? A county commissioner?”<sup>58</sup> Instead of using national culture, such as the Gaelic Revival as a way to fend off the uncertainty that the new world order at the end of the Second World War brought, ‘little Irelandism’ as Ó Faoláin calls it, though understandable through events from the recent past, should instead be utilised to fortify the position of the young nation of Éire internationally. Because Ireland’s contact with the outside world had until recently been through Britain it is of vital importance that Ireland differentiates itself from Britain’s powerful influence, Éire is after all inherently different from the other members of the Commonwealth because it is a predominantly Catholic nation.<sup>59</sup> Ó Faoláin continues by stressing that the government should by no means be involved in a hypothetical Irish Council, except for financial support, and that it should at the basis consist of cultural committees such as the literary committee. Past efforts of the government to promote Irish identity were unsuccessful according to him, he exemplifies by naming an instance in which different ministries either approached Irish writers, including himself, to write ‘something’ in the American press in their defence, while another ministry was effectively reducing the image of Irish writers in the eyes of the world to ‘little better than common pornographers.’<sup>60</sup> “A bad reputation at home has never prevented Irish writers and artists from building that country’s reputation abroad: what is to the point is that they, and a great many other Irishmen, scholars, scientists, industrialists, could do a hundred times more to keep that world-reputation high, to our enormous benefit morally and economically, if organised for the purpose of diffusing a better and fuller knowledge about Ireland and her achievements to the world,” Ó Faoláin concludes.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 315.

### 3.3 Neutrality and Censorship in *One World*

In the first *One World* editorial the topic of neutrality is introduced by example of the Irish elections of May 1944 right at the start of the editorial. Very little mention was made of the relations of Éire and the Commonwealth of Nations and of Partition. Ó Faoláin notes that the silence is informative as they elections are fought over things an electorate feels strongly about. He further notes that Ireland has very few problems to worry about at the present time, and that many people might possibly feel that they would get on very well without any government at all.<sup>62</sup> Ó Faoláin continues by arguing that this is not the way forward, and that Ireland's statesmen should begin preparing for the time where the issues of the Commonwealth and Partition become relevant again, moving away from a neutral standpoint.<sup>63</sup> In the following section he deals with the forming of the United States and a united Canada in order to put the issue of Partition that Ireland faced into perspective. The lack of pressure for Union is mentioned, and the fact that the climate in Ireland itself wholly favours Partition. After the technical history of the formation of Canada, in the next section, he mentions the nostalgic clinging to patriarchal images of life of the Irish regarding their Golden Age, directly referring to the inward look of Emergency Era Ireland and its nostalgic 'weren't-our-grandfathers-better-off-on-butther-and spuds' wishes.<sup>64</sup> The next mention that Ó Faoláin makes regarding the situation in Ireland in the next section when he states that in Ireland much time is spent on short-term propaganda about alleged religious discrimination, and far too little time is spent in analysing the economic basis of a possible future Union. He explicitly mentions the differences in stance regarding World War II between Southern and Northern Ireland, and that they will leave different marks on its respective societies.<sup>65</sup> In a union between the North and South Ó Faoláin discusses that there would be no place for the

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<sup>62</sup> Ó Faoláin, *One World*, 261.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 266.

present ideas of De Valera, because in the case of a federal union of Ireland the situation would become far too complex for them. The editorial is concluded by the statement that the question of either Union or Partition has become stale, neutral perhaps, and that it will remain in that state until Ireland's culture and domestic problems are considered in an international perspective instead of a local one.<sup>66</sup>

Instances of censorship are not found in this instance of *One World*, at least not directly. It was written in 1944 during the time the Emergency Powers Act was still in full swing and suggesting that censorship took place was simply banned, even leaving a simple blank space to indicate something had been left out was not allowed.<sup>67</sup> All the comments that Ó Faoláin makes on the government and De Valera's inward policies throughout the editorial, however, could be interpreted as an indirect criticism of censorship. These policies were the hallmark of the isolationist direction of the Fianna Fáil government and were intended to ensure neutrality. Censorship was one of the main tools to enforce them, and censorship is the direct antagonist of a forward-thinking society that is trying to position itself in an international community. Having censors cut out mentions of war while desperately trying to maintain the absence of foreign influence over Irish society certainly does not help internationally. Trying to fend off foreign influence by directing a society increasingly inward could be considered a form of censorship in itself as it essentially throws up a social barrier against outside opinion.

In the second editorial *One World: An Irish Council* Ó Faoláin argues for an Irish counterpart to the British institution known as the British Council. The topic of neutrality is introduced in this editorial by arguing that while Ireland is still part of the British Commonwealth of Nations they should make the most from the benefits such a position

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>67</sup> Matthews, *The Bell Magazine*, 143.



brings.<sup>68</sup> Following this remark he argues that an Irish Council would promote Irish culture to the outside world instead of what Ó Faoláin calls ‘Little Irelandism.’ According to him nationality is currently used mainly as a ‘bulwark’ against the challenges of the contemporary world. He adds that the isolationist attitude is, though tragic, historically understandable because of the abusive relationship with Great Britain that used to be the way Irish life was communicated to the outside world.<sup>69</sup> A further reason that Ó Faoláin poses for the backwardness of the promotion of Irish culture are the tensions in the country itself. Fianna Fáil and De Valera were strong proponents of the argument that neutrality was vital to keeping these tensions in check.<sup>70</sup> An Irish Council as envisioned by Ó Faoláin should therefore also be void of any connection to the government except a financial one. It should be a neutral institution that is not affected by any political persuasion. He concludes by stating that by keeping world reputation high, Ireland could benefit immensely in a moral and economic sense.<sup>71</sup>

Censorship is only directly mentioned towards the conclusion of *One World: An Irish Council*. Ó Faoláin recalls an instance in which he was approached by government officials in which he was unofficially asked to write something in the American press. Something that undoubtedly would have had to depict Ireland in the best light possible without making polarising statements in favour of either America and the Allies or the Axis powers. He underlines the ‘comical patheticness’ of the government’s attempts to promote Irish culture, as he calls it, by contrasting it with the fact that another ministry was trying its utmost best to present Irish writers in the worst light possible.<sup>72</sup> Censorship in a more overt and indirect manner could again be considered in the same way as in the 1944 instalment of *One World*. ‘Little Irelandism’ and wartime censorship would have no place in the Irish Council he

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<sup>68</sup> Ó Faoláin, *One World: An Irish Council*, 311.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 314.

envisions. Instead of using an inward perspective on nationality this perspective should be turned around to face outwards, and to promote the best range of what Irish culture and society have to offer.

#### 4.1 Elizabeth Bowen

Another important person in Emergency-era Irish society was Elizabeth Bowen. Her reports to the British Ministry of Information, and the opinion she voices in them, are of particular interest for this paper. She was a writer and novelist of Irish upper-class descent but moved to England when her father fell ill during her childhood. According to Kiberd she realised in her early years the injustice of her Anglo-Irish forefathers in profiting from the Irish land, but at the same time shunning its people and failing to justify its privilege by service and pushing their Gaelic culture underground. This made her an expert on class differences and the ‘death of the heart,’ or social and cultural stagnation.<sup>73</sup> During the Second World War she remained based in England, not settling back in Ireland until after the war. Some of her most noteworthy works include *The Last September* (1929), *The Heat of the Day* (1946), and *Eva Trout* (1968) which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 1970. When she first met Sean Ó Faoláin she had already written six acclaimed novels.<sup>74</sup> Like many Irish writers which were oriented towards Europe and the modern world she became a critic of Irish wartime policies, or impatient with them to say the least.<sup>75</sup> These writers were separated from the majority of the Irish public by class, education, and religion but much of what they wrote during the War must be seen as a challenge to censorship and neutrality, a challenge to the cultural stagnation of the Emergency.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*. (London: Random House, 1995), 365.

<sup>74</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 79.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

At the beginning of the war her opinion was still in favour of neutrality, as she considered the disaster that would be Ireland's involvement in the war. Being clearly affected by the British public's discontentment over Ireland's refusal to let the Allies use its ports, however, she was pushed to start working for the British Ministry of Information. Her own opinion shifted as well to what she regarded as Ireland's stubborn refusal to acknowledge the consequences of neutrality for Britain, according to Wills.<sup>77</sup> She noted, contrastingly, that even if De Valera had wanted to act differently than he did, this would have been impossible due to widespread anti-British sentiment in Éire.<sup>78</sup> Wills continues by mentioning that Bowen was a great admirer of Winston Churchill, and that his accession to the position of Prime Minister of Britain undoubtedly influenced her decision. Another deciding factor was the fall of France and the incredibly high stakes that Britain faced during the battle for the Atlantic.<sup>79</sup> Her activities closely resemble espionage as they involved secret reports and meetings at both the Dominions and War offices, but according to Wills espionage is both too strong of a term as well as being too narrow in scope. Bowen's activities, as she herself called them, contained much more than just a report on the political situation, they contained reports on the atmosphere amongst both writers and intellectuals in Dublin, and amongst people living in the country.<sup>80</sup>

Another interesting fact is that Bowen had a close personal relationship to *The Bell*'s Sean Ó Faoláin. As George Hughes put it in an article in *The Harp*: "There hangs over the personal relationship between Elizabeth Bowen and Sean [Ó Faoláin] the atmosphere of a rather sophisticated, almost fictional scandal."<sup>81</sup> Scandalous as some might call it, the peculiarity of their relationship lies mainly in the fact that both authors never shied away from reviewing each other's work, often using *The Bell* as the platform of choice. Their love affair

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>81</sup> Hughes, *Scandalous Matters*, 113.

should also be considered in the light of the fact that Bowen had been married since 1923, and Ó Faoláin had been since 1927. According to Wills their relationship was a sort of secret accommodation between the Catholic, republican common folk and the Protestant landed gentry because of the author's respective faiths and backgrounds. During the Emergency their affair had evolved into a friendship, a friendship which undoubtedly influenced both Ó Faoláin's essay as it did Bowen's clandestine reports.<sup>82</sup>

#### 4.2 Bowen's 1942 reports to the British Ministry of Information

It is Bowen's reports on Ireland during the Emergency that were selected for study in this paper instead of one of her novels. Although *The Heat of the Day* is arguably one of the best depictions of the isolation experienced in a city during the War, and that the distant description of the Second World War from the character's perspectives might be seen as a direct link to the way the people of Ireland experienced the War. Her novels that deal with the war, however, were written after the conflict and the reports simply outweigh the novels by the fact that they convey Bowen's direct reflections on life in Dublin and the County Cork countryside as it was experienced during the isolation of the Emergency. The later reports from February and July 1942 are of particular interest because they contain the most varied impressions of Emergency-era Ireland, while coming the closest time-wise to Ó Faoláin's *One World* editorials, which were initiated later.

The reports contain general notes on life in Ireland, and on for example the journey to Dublin and the weather. In these general notes the opinions of war-time Irishmen are put into contrast with the factual realities of an isolated country such as supply difficulties, rationing, and fuel shortages. Descriptions of Dublin life, its views, and its clothes rationing are contrasted by reports from the countryside in the County Cork where Bowen's house was

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<sup>82</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 80.

situated.<sup>83</sup> Besides general notes the reports also contained more detailed sections on topics such as the Irish people's opinion on America, the role of De Valera in representing his people's opinion, the influence vacationing people from Ulster had on public opinion, the black market, transport, and other key figures such as James Dillon and the Archbishop of Dublin. Dillon was a member of the Fine Gael opposition party during the Second World War and resigned over the standpoint of his party to agree with De Valera and Fianna Fáil to remain neutral.<sup>84</sup> Another key issue that is addressed, is the way the war is presented in the Irish media, if there is any news media available at all. It is noteworthy that papers are scarce and often 2-3 days out of date, and that news over the wireless is even more difficult to obtain, especially for people living in the countryside.<sup>85</sup> These reports that Elizabeth Bowen sent to England were also generally intertwined with her own opinion on affairs in Ireland, an important thing to note given her advisory role to the British government. She notes, for example, that certain exploits by the government that play into the imagination of the public might be a way to distract the public from actual governmental policy, she also sometimes comments directly upon direct implications of the war that cause her personal discomfort, such as the lengthy mailboat journey from Britain to Ireland and having to stay overnight in a blacked-out train.<sup>86</sup>

#### 4.3 Neutrality and Censorship in Bowen's Reports

Elizabeth Bowen's report dated 9 February 1942 begins with general impressions of wartime Éire. Her first comment on the neutrality of Ireland is that the new difficulty of undertaking the journey from England to Ireland increases the impression of an isolated Ireland. She notes that many people appear depressed partly because of a fear that Dublin will

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<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, "Report for the Ministry of Information: 9 February 1942," in *Elizabeth Bowen's Selected Irish Writings*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 77.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

be bombed because US troops have been stationed in Ulster, and partly because the people feel that Éire is still on the verge of being dragged into the war. People fear that war is not something you partake in, but something that you catch even though you as a country are neutral. Envy is also expressed of the good employment facilitated by the war in Britain. She notes that Irish workers appear to be suffering from the drawbacks of war without profiting from the benefits of war, although she claims that she has met no-one that claims joining the war at this point is a good idea.<sup>87</sup> According to Bowen, America's entry into the war in December 1941 could have possibly furthered the isolation of Ireland because Ireland used to identify with the United States. She also notes that De Valera is possibly to thank for this development. America, however, has been reluctant to make clear that they regard Ireland's neutrality as a nuisance like Britain did.<sup>88</sup> She goes on by commenting on the withdrawal of James Dillon from the Dáil; she is of the opinion that, if more younger men were interested in Irish politics, Dillon would have perhaps had a stronger support in the Dáil. She expresses the desire of some people to see a third party in the Dáil, one that does not stem from the civil war, and that manages to gain an outward perspective on external affairs. The idea that Dillon would lead Ireland to war is however more widespread even though he is much more European in outlook, sympathies and taste than people like De Valera, whom Dillon believed to be insane.<sup>89</sup>

Bowen's reports from July the same year continue where she left off in February. She comments on the fact that the 'flag of the Emergency' is a difficult cause to rally a people around. This did not stop the government from making a considerable effort, for example by posters that call people for help with the saving of resources. Bowen notes, however, that virtually no restriction is well received by the Irish public, and that every cut is attributed to

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<sup>87</sup> Bowen, *Report for the Ministry of Information: 9 Feb. 1942*, 77.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

the failings of the Fianna Fáil government. She describes Dublin as running out of patience.<sup>90</sup> Later in the report she notices that she has encountered no pro-German feelings thus far in Ireland, but that there is somehow some admiration for the way Germany fights. She tries to explain this with the idea that the people's interest in the war stems from their isolation from it. She also notes that Éire's neutrality initially might have stemmed from national vanity, but that this idea is beginning to wane.<sup>91</sup> She captures the sentiment felt in Ireland as apathetic. Even the upcoming local elections later mentioned by Ó Faoláin were supposed to be non-political in character. It should focus only on Ireland's local field which was regarded as the best solution for Ireland. The 'invasion' of Ulstermen vacationing in Dublin during their holiday has helped cement the sentiment of apathy even further, as the workers did not seem to take the war effort altogether that seriously. This apathy was also noticed by Bowen in Eamon De Valera's behaviour during her own attendance at the Dáil. She observed him giving apparently habitual replies while his head remained firmly supported by his hands. His attitude implied a certain intellectual weariness reflected in the cultural stagnation that plagued Irish society.<sup>92</sup>

Depictions of censorship can be seen directly in Elizabeth Bowen's reports as they were secret and did not have to pass through the board of censors. She starts her report by noting that the Irish have even been deprived of something as basic as a weather information from England as the censors have filtered it out of their mail. She is confronted with rumours of England's paralysation by frequent and heavy snow because of this.<sup>93</sup> The main instance in which censorship directly comes forward is the resentment of the Dublin cinemagoers. They felt that Hollywood had shifted its focus fully to the war, and because of the Emergency Powers Act no films featuring war, British or American, fictional or non-fictional, were

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<sup>90</sup> Bowen, *Report for the Ministry of Information: 12 July 1942*, 87.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-98.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

allowed to be screened in Éire.<sup>94</sup> There was freedom of speech, so people could openly discuss what they wanted, but there was no freedom of press that could help establish opinion.<sup>95</sup> The section that is dated July 31<sup>st</sup> deals with the availability of news in the County Cork countryside, or the lack thereof. The delay in the delivery of newspapers, caused by both censors and a paper shortage, and the lack of batteries for wireless sets further contributed to the isolation of the Irish people. The added censorship deprived the people even further from information, but Bowen argues it is this lack of essential information that drove the interest in the war to greater heights amongst the people. She adds that the government recognized this and tried to blame Irish people interested in the war for substituting it for their interest in their own local affairs. Dillon's anti-neutrality standpoints and his following resignation from the Dáil were also censored from the Irish media as they were of course anti-neutral and thus against government policy.<sup>96</sup> The policies instigated by the government, she notes, deprived the Irish of being critical towards their own country's policy of neutrality, it even deprived them from receiving awards to honour men that had fought alongside the Allies in the war.<sup>97</sup>

## 5.1 Comparison

Sean Ó Faoláin's opinions that come forward in both his *One World* Editorials are of an activist nature. They actively promote and argue for an independent Ireland with an outward perspective towards the rest of the world. These opinions reflect the greater intent of *The Bell* magazine, which promoted an outward look to prevent the literary world from becoming stagnant. True independence, and with it neutrality, should by no means entail an isolationist policy. He regards the government as incapable of coping with an international society, and attributes their isolationist policies towards these facts. He strongly disagrees

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 95

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 93.



with De Valera's idea of neutrality and resents the fact that the Irish people are kept in the dark in an attempt to shelter them from outside influences. 'Little Irelandism' is everything that he wants to avoid in his vision of the world. The *One World* editorials are distinguished by a progressive outlook on how the issues of a modern and fragmented Irish society should be dealt with. Dealing with this fragmentation in this way instead of a regressive one corresponds with Ó Faoláin's ideas on how the formation of a strong Irish social identity would best be achieved. His idealism in both the editorials and in *The Bell* could therefore be seen as modernist. Bowen's reports present a more straight-forward representation of Irish society during the Emergency; they are, after all, reports. She shares Ó Faoláin's ideas that Irish political policy is essentially keeping Ireland not only neutral, but also completely in the dark. The comments about Ireland's darkness also have a certain 'colonial impatience,' as the Guardian puts it, about them.<sup>98</sup> She went as far as describing Irish parliament as 'muddled' for example, still seeing Ireland from a colonial perspective.<sup>99</sup> Bowen's frustration with the stubborn Irish neutrality becomes apparent through this undertone, an undertone which she always managed to keep out of her more publicized writings, and which exemplifies her vision of a restoration of the relationship between Britain and Ireland. The version of an Irish social identity that was being formed through De Valera's policies seem to agree with a backward and colonial version of Ireland in her opinion, a social identity that could be avoided by enforcing ties with Britain.

Contrastingly, Ó Faoláin and Bowen differ in the way they see Ireland's neutrality in its essence. Neutrality without the isolationist policies of De Valera or the concessions that were made towards the allies in for example repatriating downed Allied airmen.<sup>100</sup> Bowen, on one hand, started her efforts for the British Ministry of Information partly because she felt frustrated by Ireland's stubborn refusal to join the war effort on the British side. She felt that a

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<sup>98</sup> *The Spy who Loved Daddy*.

<sup>99</sup> Bowen, *Report for the Ministry of Information: 12 July 1942*, 87.

<sup>100</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 10.

stronger Anglo-Irish relation would benefit both nations, granting Britain use of Ireland's ports while making sure the Irish people did not only feel the negative effects of war, but also its positive economic effects. On the other hand, Sean Ó Faoláin only resented the isolationist policies that the neutrality brought about under the Fianna Fáil government, not the fact that the state of Ireland was neutral in itself. A fact that he considered completely understandable in historical context. Ó Faoláin, being an ex-revolutionary, had strong nationalist feelings. He was very much in favour of a strong and independent Ireland, but one that did not try to shelter itself internationally out of fear of disturbing the balance in its fragile society.

The link between both authors and public opinion in wartime Ireland also differ. While the common Irish person might have regretted their lack of cigarettes or an adequate newspaper during the Emergency, the general consensus was that Ireland's neutral status and political direction largely reflected the public's opinion. This sentiment is exemplified by the lack of support for Dillon's cause in the Dáil and his subsequent resignation. Bowen might have wanted Ireland to join the Allies and open up its ports for the British Atlantic fleet, but this sentiment was by no means represented in society itself. Furthermore, highly educated people such as Ó Faoláin and his *Bell* co-writers might have recognized the intellectual stagnation in the country, but the regular Irish worker did not. As becomes apparent from Bowen's report on Ulstermen vacationing in Dublin, Southern Irishmen did not get the impression the war was taken that seriously among them. This and the anti-British sentiment instigated by anti-Irish propaganda helped cement their opinions. Dublin for example continued to be prosperous despite the war going on in the rest of Europe, it even saw an increase in turnaround in certain places because of the wealthy Irishmen spending their money in Dublin because they were now unable to go shopping in places such as London. Tourism from Northern Ireland also managed to find its way to Dublin as well as Irish coastal towns and resorts. It was an easy commute from peace to war for them, and despite both the British

and the Irish government trying to monitor and contain border movements they remained popular.<sup>101</sup> *The Bell*'s low circulation numbers can also be interpreted as a disconnection between the magazine and the *One World* editorials, and the public. It might have represented a uniquely broad spectrum of Irish authors, but the Irish people were not directly concerned with a stagnation of the literary world.

The two respective authors do not directly overlap in opinion, nor do they directly overlap with the opinion of the majority of the Irish people that was not actively opposed to Ireland's neutral status. This does not make their works, or the views conveyed in them any less important. In both cases neutrality is deeply criticized as being the work of a narrow-minded governmental policy, while censorship is considered a product of this situation. They provide an interesting insight into the world of wartime Ireland and help place the situation in its historical context. Modern Irish society at the time was a fragmented one, and both the *One World* editorials and Bowen's reports try to cope with its problems and the formation of Irish identity in their own ways. Ó Faoláin argued for an Ireland with a strong international position in order to ensure its society's survival, while Bowen felt more for a strong Anglo-Irish bond that would ensure Ireland's prosperity. The respective author's backgrounds always have to be kept in mind while reading these works. Ó Faoláin was a revolutionary during the 1916 Easter Rising after all and continued his critical voice after getting a higher education. Bowen on the other hand moved to England in her childhood, but always felt a connection to her home country, eventually reporting on it for the British government out of frustration with Ireland's political direction. Their opinions will differ, of course, from those of the common Irishman, but it is the contrast to the isolationist policies of the Irish Fianna Fáil government and Eamon De Valera that sets them apart. The *One World* editorials in *The Bell* magazine pose a view on national identity that can still be considered progressive, especially

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 154.

in the current developments in international politics with countries increasingly looking inward. A nation should be allowed to be proud of its identity and its achievements, but it should remain inclusive instead of closed to the outside world in order to further benefit the good of the nation. The depictions of neutrality and censorship, and the way in which they reflect upon the situation in wartime Ireland, could be seen as a direct reflection of both author's convictions. Bowen's reports provide a less activist approach to the situation in wartime Ireland. They not only contain her own opinion on life during the Emergency, but also that of others. Especially the example of James Dillon's resignation after his realisation of a lack of support for his anti-neutrality standpoint is telling for the climate in Éire. Furthermore, the mostly indirect instances of censorship in Ó Faoláin's first *One World* editorial were directly influenced by the censors themselves, who made sure he could not openly discuss the subject. In *One World: An Irish Council* he briefly reflects on censorship and the government's conflicting efforts of promoting Irish culture. In Bowen's reports censorship is directly present and commented upon, and it becomes evident through her reports to what extent the censors influenced Irish life during the Emergency. Critical thought continued to exist in Ireland during the Emergency despite the government's best efforts, and it is people like Ó Faoláin and Bowen who helped to maintain progress in a time of cultural and social stagnation.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The turbulent history of Ireland in the early twentieth century, fighting first the British for their right to self-govern, only to descend into civil war afterwards, ultimately led to the adoption of its deeply conservative and isolationist policies when war again became a reality in Europe in the mid-twentieth century. The country's stance in the conflict was shaped by the experiences it had previously encountered. With their declaration of neutrality, they cut themselves off from the rest of Europe in order to preserve their newfound sovereignty, and

while afraid of an even further divided nation they tried to keep their residents as neutral as possible through extensive censorship of the media. This was their goal at least officially, as for example anti-Irish propaganda in British media did manage to reach the Irish public and further set them in their neutral ways. Both Sean Ó Faoláin's *One World* editorials and Bowen's reports to the Ministry of Information were written in this climate, and their authors, influenced by their respective backgrounds depicted the censorship and neutrality of the Irish nation in their own respective ways as a reflection of their own views on the issue. Elizabeth Bowen and Sean Ó Faoláin did not overlap in opinion, especially not on the subject of the neutrality in its essence, and they did not directly reflect the sentiments of the Irish people either. The public simply was not worried about literary stagnation, instead it was worried about a potential involvement in the war, a very real threat. Bowen was pressured into her 'activities' at the beginning of the war because she felt she had to do something after Ireland's refusal to assist the Allies, being of Anglo-Irish descent and having interests in both countries. The neutral isolationist policy of Ireland stood in the way of a strong Anglo-Irish relationship the way she envisioned it. Her observations have a certain colonial air about them, viewing the Irish public as a sort of 'other'. In contrast, Ó Faoláin only regretted the isolationism as he foresaw a place for Ireland as a sovereign and neutral nation in an international society of intellectual and cultural exchange. A strong and sovereign Ireland that would be able to tackle the issues of a modern and fragmented society. The depictions of neutrality in their works do concur in the fact that they are deeply critical and reflect the author's respective opinions towards predominantly De Valera and the Fianna Fáil government. In the government's attempts to remain neutral they went to such an extent that both authors generally consider the policies backwards or even ridiculous. They also concur on the fact that the censorship was disproportionate and a result of the isolationist idea of neutrality. The aim of censorship was further benefited by other government policies that made sure that Irish identity remained

oriented inward in an attempt to ward off outside influence. Emergency-Era Ireland should not be seen as version of Plato's cave, as there were people like Bowen and Ó Faoláin working to keep the intellectual and cultural process going during the Emergency. People who ultimately helped direct Irish culture and society outward to cement the status of Ireland as a sovereign, independent, and neutral nation with its own identity, often using *The Bell* as the platform to do so.

The influence of the personal relationship that Bowen and Ó Faoláin maintained before the war, a relationship that grew into a close friendship, has not been considered in this paper. Further research into the effect this relationship had on both *One World* or Bowen's reports to the British Ministry of Information could perhaps be further examined. Further research that could also be conducted to help understand the progress of Irish sentiment during the Emergency could be done in the form of a timeline of sorts, tracking the progress of one author's works and the development of their opinion on instances of neutrality and the censorship that came along with it in Wartime Ireland throughout the years that the Emergency Powers Act was in effect. Research could also be expanded by including the full extent of both Bowen's reports and Ó Faoláin's editorials. The selection that was made for this paper was on the basis of the most relevant depictions of neutrality and censorship, and in the case of *The One World* editorials also their reflection of *The Bell*'s mission and their availability. Digitalization of the rest of the works submitted to *The Bell* magazine and their respective international availability would greatly benefit further research into mid-twentieth century Ireland.

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