

# At Elizabeth Bowen's\*

CYRIL CONNOLLY

[April 1934] Ireland quite derelict, empty and down at heel. Elizabeth [Bowen]'s house<sup>1</sup> lovely but rather forlorn. The country so cold, as usual. Owing to rural torpor increased by the relaxing climate all literary effort is here impossible so will only summarise briefly. Next day (Sat) go to have tea at Anne's grave. Woolfs arrive. He small spare intellectual Jew, she lovely, shy and virginal. They seem shocked by Jean's<sup>2</sup> dress (Virginia asked Elizabeth what unnatural vice was) and talked only of plans and motoring. Occasional flickers of animation over the boringness of Arthur Waley and Bob Trevelyan, and the difficulty of entertaining (why should drink be necessary?).<sup>3</sup> Virginia Woolf gave a satirical description of G. B. Stern.<sup>4</sup> We agreed that we could not like people if we didn't like their books. They left next morning.<sup>5</sup>

## NOTES

Cyril Vernon Connolly (1903–74), reviewer and essayist. A prolific and influential commentator on literary trends, Connolly co-founded *Horizon* (1940–50), the leading periodical of its day.

1. For information about Elizabeth Bowen, see p. 172. Bowen's Court is the subject of a memoir by Bowen published in 1942.

2. Jean Connolly, his wife.

3. Arthur David Waley (1889–1966), poet and translator, an authority on Japanese and Chinese literature. Robert Caverley Trevelyan (1872–1951), classics scholar and poet, elder brother of the historian G. M. Trevelyan.

4. Gladys Bertha Stern (1890–1973), prolific popular novelist.

5. For Woolf's impressions of this encounter, see entry for 3 February 1927, *Diary*, IV, 210, and a letter to Vanessa Bell, *Letters*, V, 229.

\* From *Journal and Memoir*, ed. David Pryce-Jones (London: Collins, 1983; New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1984) pp. 254–5.