

**COMING HOME TO HISTORY: THE DOMESTIC INTERIOR AND THE NATION  
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY IRISH LITERATURE**

(Order No.            )

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**ABSTRACT**

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha asserts that, in a colonial situation, the “recesses of domestic space become sites for history’s most intricate invasions.” This dissertation explores that claim in relation to specific home spaces in twentieth-century Irish literature. Ireland’s long colonial history and the Celtic nationalism that emerged in response to British imperialism had a pervasive, lasting, and significant impact on the Irish domestic interior. Representations of the home space in Irish fiction, drama, and poetry reveal the complex but invariably compromising effects of colonialism on the home space and its inhabitants. Chapter One examines the private Irish home of Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) to reveal how domestic architecture and objects encode colonialism and nationalism and contribute to immobilizing the female occupant of the domestic sphere, Molly Bloom. Through *flânerie* and transnationalism, Leopold Bloom resists the colonial presence that permeates his domestic interior in the form of sexual invasion and the proliferation of imperial commodities. Chapter Two argues that the theatrical staging of the intimate Irish domestic interior evokes a literal collapse between public and private space that responds to Ireland’s national history. The domestic props and physical staging of Sean O’Casey’s *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), Samuel Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1958), and Brian Friel’s *The Home Place* (2005) illuminate invasive and displacing elements of Ireland’s colonial past while exposing the false division between politics and domesticity. Chapter Three presents the poetry of Eavan Boland (b. 1944) as an important evolution in literary depictions of the Irish home.

Boland's poetry, primarily centered around a suburban domestic interior, is attuned to the complex history of the Irish domestic space and resistant to its limitations. Her work liberates the domestic sphere from compromising elements of Irish national history and identifies alternative responses to marginalization other than the poles of exile and entrapment evident in the work of her predecessors. In the process, Boland's poems reclaim the Irish home space, offering the domestic sphere as a location that nourishes artistic inspiration and enables meaningful political engagement.