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DIPLOMARBEIT

„Journalist Chicks!
Journalism in Selected Contemporary
English/American/Irish Chick-Lit Novels and Short Stories“

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Declaration of Authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written this MA-thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledge in the bibliographical references, either in footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

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Diese Diplomarbeit hat nachgewiesen, dass die betreffende Kandidatin befähigt ist, wissenschaftliche Themen selbstständig sowie inhaltlich und methodisch vertretbar zu bearbeiten. Da die Korrekturen der/des Beurteilenden nicht eingetragen sind und das Gutachten nicht beiliegt, ist daher nicht erkenntlich mit welcher Note diese Arbeit abgeschlossen wurde. Das Spektrum reicht von sehr gut bis genügend. Die Habilitierten des Instituts für Anglistik und Amerikanistik bitten diesen Hinweis bei der Lektüre zu beachten.

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1 Introduction

“Just because I read chick lit?”¹

1.1. Cognitive Interest

Chick-lit polarises. As a fairly new genre of women's literature it is loved by fans and hated by critics. But no matter how harsh critics slander chick-lit, the fans love the paper backs with brightly coloured covers unconditionally. Chick-lit was and still is a huge success and, therefore, big business.²

According to Cris Mazza³ about 240 new chick-lit books are published each year. In 2002, for example, “chick-lit books earned publishers more than \$71 million, prompting publishers [...] to create separate imprints dedicated to the genre.”⁴ Moreover, “seven chick-lit books occupied Publishers Weekly best-seller lists for ninety weeks.”⁵

Consequently, it seems necessary to question the reasons for this commercial success in greater detail. This can be done in two ways: one can either concentrate on the readers and find out why they find this certain genre so appealing or one can concentrate on the books and their contents. This paper will concentrate on the books itself and more precisely on a the aspect of media in chick lit.

How is journalism presented and how are journalists portrayed in chick-lit?

The main reason why this paper will deal with journalism and the portrayal of journalists is a guidance on how to write your own chick-lit which reads as follows⁶:

1 Weisberger, 2008, p.217.

2 cf. Ferriss, 2006, p. 1-13.

3 cf. Mazze, 2006, p. 26.

4 Cabot, quoted in Ferris, 2006, p. 2.

5 Gelsomio, quoted in Ferris, 2006, p. 2.

6 cf. <http://www.dbcbloggen.dk/16/11/2010/dbc-prisesen-2010-chick-lit-kvalitet-pa-formel/>

Make Your Own Chick-Lit Novel!

1. START WITH ONE YOUNG URBAN FEMALE

(who's a low-level
employee in:

2. CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

a) PUBLISHING	b) PUBLIC RELATIONS
c) ADVERTISING	d) JOURNALISM

add

3. ANXIETY ABOUT ONE OR ALL THE FOLLOWING:

a) BODY	b) SEX LIFE
c) BIOLOGICAL CLOCK	d) ANNOYING MOTHER
e) EMOTIONALLY IMMATURE MEN	f) DYING ALONE
g) SHOPPING ADDICTION	h) INSUFFICIENT COLLECTION OF SHOES
i) NICOTINE ADDICTION	j) CRAPPY SALARY
k) EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION	
l) FINDING LOVE IN THE CITY OF:	
1. NEW YORK	2. MANHATTAN
3. GOTHAM	4. LONDON

Mix it all together

4. ZANINESS ENSUES.

Your book should look something like this:



OR



"Make Your Own Chick-Lit Novel!" from *Book* magazine, July-August 2003.

As this “Make Your Own Chick-Lit Novel!” mentions journalism as one of the four major choices for the protagonist's employment, it seems a good idea to look deeper into the subject.

Another reason that this paper will deal with journalism/journalists in chick-lit is a personal one. Having also done media studies it seems an appropriate approach to study popular literature concerning their presentation of journalism/journalist. Moreover, this approach enables one to do an interdisciplinary study: the findings of this paper will be compared to studies on journalism in reality. In the end it is possible to judge if the authors portray reality or if the books are just a fictional version of reality.

One further point promotes the idea to look at chick-lit with an interdisciplinary approach: a number of successful authors worked or still work in the media or media related areas.

1.2. Research Questions

This cognitive interest leads to the following research questions.

RQ 1: Which media are portrayed in chick-lit?

RQ 2: How is the media world portrayed in chick-lit?

RQ 3: How are journalists presented?

RQ 4: How do journalists go about their work in chick-lit?

RQ 5: How do the findings concerning the questions above correlate with the real media world?

2 Theoretical Approach

2.1. Chick-Lit

*“Smart, Fun & Modern Fiction for Females”*⁷

Before giving more detail on the topic of chick-lit, a definition of the word and the idea behind itself is necessary.

Chick-lit is a

“form of women's fiction on the basis of subject matter, character, audience, and narrative style. Simply put, chick lit features single women in their twenties and thirties 'navigating their generation's challenges of balancing demanding careers with personal relationships (Cabot).”⁸

A scientific definition is given by Chris Baldick:

“A kind of commercial fiction addressed to British women readers of the late 1990s and early 2000s and subsequently imitated in the United States and beyond. [...] Chick lit novels are written by women about the misadventures of contemporary unmarried working women in their 20s and 30s who struggle with multiple pressure from reproachful mothers, inadequate boyfriends, and tyrannical bosses while consoling themselves with shopping trips, chocolate, and erotic daydreams. The stories are commonly told in the first person in tones of humorous self-deprecation.”⁹

Chicklitbooks.com defines chick-lit in a broader sense as

“a genre comprised of books that are mainly written by women for women. The books range from having main characters in their early 20's to their late 60's. There is usually a personal, light, and humorous tone to the books. [...] The plots usually consist of women experiencing usual life issues, such as love, marriage, dating, relationships, friendships, roommates, corporate environments, weight issues, addiction, and much more.”¹⁰

As can be derived from the definitions above chick-lit is not as easily defined as one might think and a great variety of characters and topics are dealt with in various books which can be described as chick lit. To make the distinctions clearer it is important to look at the various sub genres of chick-lit.

The term chick-lit itself was coined by Cris Mazza and Jeffrey Deshell in 1995 and was originally intended as an ironic term “not to embrace an old frivolous or coquettish image

⁷ chicklitbooks.com, 2011.

⁸ Ferris, 2006, p. 3.

⁹ Baldick, 2008, p. 53.

¹⁰ chicklitbooks.com.

of women but to take responsibility for our part in the damaging, lingering stereotype.”¹¹ They never expected that the term would once be used to describe a whole genre of women's literature.¹²

2.1.1 Sub Genres of Chick-Lit¹³

The classic chick-lit novel was defined in Britain by

“Helen Fielding's comic novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996), a widely discussed bestseller in which a heroine, a single working woman, records her frustration with a succession of unsatisfactory boyfriends while also keeping track of her attempts to lose weight.”¹⁴

Americans quickly took over the British concept for success in woman's literature and the “main stream literature focused on white, middle-class, twenty – and thirtysomething professional women.”¹⁵ Today, however, there is a wide variety of chick-lit novels, which can be divided into sub genres according to “generation, ethnicity, nationality, and even gender.”¹⁶ Popular sub genres are for example “Bigger Girl Lit”¹⁷, which features “bigger-than-average women living, loving and working” while trying to lose weight, “Glamour Lit”¹⁸, which are novels about the rich and the beautiful, “Mommy Lit”¹⁹, which is mostly about women who want children, who go through pregnancy and try to raise their children without going mad or “Working Girl Lit”, which “treat the professional world as the ultimate chick challenge.”²⁰ Possibly the most important and largest sub genre is “Multi-Cultural Lit”²¹ or “Ethnic Lit.”²² Although chick lit started out as a white, middle-class phenomenon the genre quickly crossed the racial divide. Publishers soon realized the potential that ethnic chick lit holds and nowadays chick lit features protagonist from nations and cultures from all over the world. In addition to the English based chick lit books “international versions have developed, including the Indonesian 'sastra wangi' ('fragrant literature') and Hungarian chick lit.”²³

Other sub genres are Christian Chick Lit, Chick-Lit Jr., Hen Lit, Dick Lit, Mystery Lit,

11 Mazza, 2006, p. 18.

12 cf. Mazza, 2006, p. 17-18 .

13 for more details cf. Ferris, 2006 & chicklitbooks.com.

14 Baldick, 2008, p. 53.

15 Ferriss, 2006, p. 6.

16 Ferriss, 2006, p. 5.

17 chicklitbooks.com.

18 chicklitbooks.com.

19 Ferriss, 2006, p. 7.

20 Ferriss, 2006, p. 7.

21 chicklitbooks.com.

22 Ferriss, 2006, p. 7.

23 Ferriss, 2006, p. 6.

Fantasy Lit, Single City Lit and Wedding Lit.

This list above is taken from various sources and raises no claims to completeness. Furthermore, books can easily fit into more than one sub genre and a clear distinction between the genres and a clear assignment of books to one sub genre may not always be possible. Moreover, the labels of each genre may vary from source to source and the terms used are not standardised. Although the definitions, distinctions and labels of the various sub genres may seem indistinct and vague the sub genres should be mentioned when discussing chick lit.

2.1.2 Anchoring Chick-Lit in History

“These books that others may dismiss as fluff”²⁴

In 1996 the British author Helen Fielding published her novel *Bridget Jones's Diary*²⁵ which is considered to be the first chick-lit novel. Chick lit was a British thing but soon American authors followed suit. *Sex and the City*²⁶ by Candace Bushnell is often referred to as the second major chick-lit novel.²⁷

However, every well-read reader of chick-lit will recognize storyline, themes and motifs of novels written much earlier. Many parallels can be found between the 21st century chick-lit and the 19th century British novel. It seems safe to assume that women writers who established themselves in the 18th and 19th centuries were the ancestors and pioneers for modern chick-lit authors.

Two regularly mentioned female writers who serve as an inspiration to chick-lit are Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë.²⁸

Although Jane Austen (1775 – 1817) was never particularly popular in the 19th century, she gained popularity in the 20th century and is still widely read today. Austen's style is distinguished by an ironic tone, the limited milieu she portrays and her narrative style. Her novels are told through the eye of her protagonists, which are mainly young girls, who have a limited and naïve view of the world. These protagonists have to earn their standing in the world by overcoming various internal and external obstacles.²⁹

24 Swendson, quoted in Harzewski, 2006, p. 36.

25 cf. Fielding, 2001.

26 cf. Bushnell, 2004.

27 cf. Ferriss, 2006, p. 4-6.

28 cf. Harzewski, 2006. p. 38-39 & cf. Wells, 2006, p. 47-70.

29 cf. Rubik, 2008.

Austen's stylistic features can be – to a certain extent – found in many modern chick-lit novels. Chick-lit is famous for its funny and ironic tone. The classical chick-lit novel is set in a rather small milieu: white, middle class. The story is often told by the main character, who has a very limited view of her situation in life, while the reader often knows or at least can anticipate what will happen to her. In order to achieve her goal in life, no matter if it is marriage or a career, the protagonist has to overcome various obstacles. Naturally, the kind of irony, milieu, world-view and obstacles changed in the course of nearly 300 years but the main essence of what makes a good chick-lit novel has stayed the same.

If one knows Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*³⁰ (1813) and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* it is impossible not to see parallels in the plot. Helen Fielding took the classical novel and very successfully transferred the story into the 21st century. Therefore, there is no doubt that Jane Austen can be considered as an antecedent chick-lit author and *Pride and Prejudice* probably is the best known chick-lit novel of the 19th century.

Charlotte Brontë (1816 -1855), the oldest of the three Brontë sisters, worked as a governess for nine months but hated it. She wrote about these experiences in *Jane Eyre*³¹ (published 1847 under the pseudonym Currer Bell), which was immensely popular during her lifetime. In contrast to Jane Austen's rather passive female characters Brontë's heroines are upright, independent and self-sufficient. Brontë established a new type of woman, who takes her future into her own hand.³² This trait can often be found in modern chick lit, where the protagonist eventually rises above her various shortcomings in order to achieve happiness.

In *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Brontë includes her own experience of being a governess and a working female in a time when women of a certain standing were supposed to be wives and mothers. Jane Eyre, like modern chick-lit heroines, has to struggle to achieve fulfilment in her work and her private life. *Jane Eyre* can be seen as an early attempt of nanny lit or working girl lit.

There are other female writers who are forerunners of modern chick-lit but Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë are the best-known ones. Their influence on the whole genre cannot be dismissed and their influence on certain novels can easily be recognised.

30 cf. Austen, 1994.

31 cf. Brontë, 2006.

32 cf. Rubik, 2008.

Other female authors who wrote books which today might be label chick-lit are for example Susannah Gunning's (c.1740-1800) *Love at First Sight* or *Fashionable Involvements*, Fanny Burney's (1752-1840) *Evelina*, Amelia Opie's (1769-1853) *Valentine's Eve*, Marie Corelli's (1855-1924) *Innocent*, *Her Fancy and His Facts* or Edith Wharton's (1862-1937) *The Costume of the Country*.

It is, however, important not to forget that the modern chick-lit heroins set themselves apart from their predecessors in several ways:

“its emphasis on the role of sexual adventures in the romantic quest; the nature of the conclusion of the romantic plot; the importance of the heroine's experiences in the world of work and her evolution as a professional woman; the delight and consolation the heroine finds in indulging herself, particularly in consumer goods; and the privilege of entertainment value, particularly humor, over any challenging or experimental content or style.”³³

2.1.3 Chick-Lit within Literature

“She's only reading chick lit”³⁴

This part of the paper will try to place chick-lit within the wide range of literature. It must be noted that a clear-cut classification to one or another genre will not always be possible and that a chick lit novel can contain elements of various genres at a time. A selective classification is made even more complicated by the fact that the genres stated below are not always as mutually exclusive as one would wish.

First of all chick-lit can be defined as fiction, or rather “faction”, a mix of fiction and reality. Most likely chick-lit novels and short stories will be fiction and only some contain realistic influences, although the whole genre tries to describe the (love) lives of their protagonists as if they were real.

This categorisation as part of fiction is still very general and a more elaborate classification is attempted below.

2.1.3.1 Romance Novel³⁵

According to Ramsdall and a strict approach to literature every piece of fiction actually is a romance, meaning that any work of fiction is unrealistic and, therefore, a version of romance. Yet this classification is too narrow and a more appropriate definition is

³³ Wells, 2006, p. 49.

³⁴ The New Yorker, quoted in Wells, 2006, p. 47.

³⁵ cf. Ramsdall, 1999.

"[...] the focus of the plot is the love relationship between the two main characters. Of course, there are usually other complications and problems, such as mysteries to be solved, career goals or social successes to be achieved, and daring escapes to be made. But these are always secondary to the love interest [...]."36

Other features are that it "[...] almost demands a certain emotional involvement on the part of the reader"37 and "the *Satisfactory Ending*"38, which "usually, but not always, [...] is a traditional happy one."39

When working with the definition above chick-lit novels classify as romance novels if the main story is about the love between the protagonists and other problems are in the background. This is true of a large number of chick-lit texts and it can be claimed that chick-lit novels are romantic novels.

Although romance novels all share basic features the romance novel can be subdivided into several categories according to certain characteristics.

Contemporary Romance⁴⁰

Contemporary romances are

"love stories within contemporary settings, these novels usually focus on the attempts of a woman to find success and happiness both professionally and romantically. Usually by the end of the book, she has attained both."41

Although the plots of contemporary romances vary according to setting and characters "the basic boy-meets-girl, boy-misunderstands-and-therefore-loses-girl, boy-gets-girl (or its reverse) structure tends to remain more or less the same"42 The reverse of the traditional structure above gained popularity recently and the girl becomes the more active part in the quest for love. This goes hand in hand with a heroine who "often displays a high degree of independence, intelligence, initiative, and determination, relying more on herself to solve her problems than on the hero."43

Women's romantic fiction is a sort of fiction within the contemporary romance. It features "a strong heroine, often with goals other than love and marriage, and yet contain important romance elements."44 "A flashy, fast-paced, jet-set version of this type is

36 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 4.

37 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 4.

38 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 4.

39 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 4.

40 cf. Ramsdell, 1999, p. 43-80.

41 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 43.

42 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 44.

43 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 45.

44 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 48.

often called Glitz and Glamour⁴⁵ and this is basically what chick-lit is. Chick-lit novels or short stories are set in a contemporary setting, the story develops along the boy-girl structure and although love is often the major goal of the protagonist, professional or personal achievements are just as important to her as a romantic happy ending. All chick-lit sub genres fall under the category contemporary romance or more specific women's romantic fiction.

As has already been stated above every chick-lit is a contemporary romance but certain sub genres of chick-lit can also qualify as different kinds of romances. Mystery lit can be classified as a form of romantic mystery. Romantic mysteries

“usually employ two distinct plot lines – one romance, one mystery. The two plot lines may begin separately but [...] as the story progresses, story lines increasingly overlap and intertwine, ultimately arriving at the successful, nearly simultaneous, conclusion of both.”⁴⁶

If the emphasis is on the romantic plot line the whole story is defined as a romantic mystery but a clear distinction between romantic mystery or mystery-suspense it not always easily drawn. Romantic Suspense is a sub category of romantic mysteries with “fast-paced tales filled with action, mystery, suspense, and, of course, romance.”⁴⁷ Those novels have a contemporary setting, the protagonist may “travel to far-flung, exotic places, may interact with a large number of people”⁴⁸ and the style of the “suspense novel is usually lively, upbeat and direct.”⁴⁹ Suspense mysteries have a lot in common with mystery lit and the placement of chick lit in romantic / suspense mysteries can be easily comprehended.

Alternative Reality Romance includes “everything from darkly sensual vampire tales to humorous stories of time-traveling ghosts”⁵⁰ with a focus on the development of a love relationship between the protagonists. This alternative reality romance is a good background for fantasy lit. Fantasy romance and fantasy lit share their fable for myths, legends and fairy tales; use characters such as fairies and elves and like to incorporate magical elements. Paranormal romances and fantasy lit use the supernatural and include characters like “vampires, angles, psychics, ghost, werewolves, witches, spirits, reincarnated people [...]”⁵¹ Time-travel romance and fantasy lit have in common

45 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 49.

46 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 81.

47 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 87.

48 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 82.

49 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 82.

50 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 211.

51 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 221.

“protagonists who are transported from one time period to another.”⁵²

“The Inspirational Romance is essentially a love story infused with religious (typically Christian) values and beliefs.”⁵³ This inspirational romance has much in common with Christian lit and is, therefore, another sub genre to which at least a certain subtype of chick-lit can be linked.

Simply put an ethnic romance “is a love story in which one or both of the protagonists are African American, Latino, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or have a heritage other than the traditional 'generic European’”⁵⁴ This gives the romance a different flavour and tone, incorporating cultural values and beliefs. This ethnic/multicultural romances are a variety of ethnic/multi-cultural lit.

It is now clear that chick-lit has a strong anchoring in romance fiction but it is wrong to presume that chick lit developed from the romance genre only. It is just as strongly linked to the confessional novel and the novel of manners.

2.1.3.2 Comedy / Novel of Manners⁵⁵

A Comedy or a Novel of Manners represents

“the complex and sophisticated code of behaviour current in fashionable circles of society, where appearances count for more than true morals character. [...] Its humour relies chiefly upon elegant verbal wit and repartee.”⁵⁶

Firstly, contemporary chick-lit texts often are comedies: they represent everyday life and “explore common human failings”.⁵⁷ The main characters often stumble from one comic or entertaining situation into the next, make fools of themselves and are liable to all sorts of personal and professional catastrophes. However, a happy ending is perfectly natural, as in Jill Mansell's *Making up Your Mind*⁵⁸. Secondly, chick-lit texts are novels of manners in depicting the codes of modern behaviour patterns of certain parts of society and make fun of them. A good example is *The Devil wears Prada*⁵⁹: the protagonist, Andrea Sachs, is faced with the ridiculous behaviour of the members of the fashion industry, plays along for a while but then realizes that she cannot cope with the shallowness of the business.

52 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 230.

53 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 273.

54 Ramsdell, 1999, p. 289.

55 cf. Baldick, 2008,

56 Baldick, 2008, p. 63.

57 Baldick, 2008, p. 62

58 cf. Mansell, 2006.

59 cf. Weisberger, 2004.

2.1.3.3 Coming-of-Age Novel⁶⁰

The Coming-of-Age Novel is derived from the educational novel. While the educational novel “will follow the maturation of the protagonist from infancy [...] to early adulthood”⁶¹ the Coming-of-Age Novel focuses on a certain time span in the protagonist's life. Popular time spans are, for example, “the crisis of early adolescence involving courtship, sexual initiation, separation from parents, and the choice of vocation or spouse.”⁶² Chick-lit texts qualify as coming-of-age novels as they usually observe the protagonists in particular times of life. The main characters are (young) women who try to find their place in life and society: they struggle for independence, try to make a career, try to find a partner and so on. Examples of coming-of-age chick-lit novels are numerous and strictly speaking every chick lit text contains elements of the classical coming-of-age novel or, rather, is a coming-of-age novel.

2.1.3.4 Epistolary Novel⁶³

Epistolary novels are

“written in the form of a series of letters exchanged among the characters of the story, with extracts from their journals sometimes included. A form of narrative often used in [...] the 18th century, it has been revived only rarely since then [...]”⁶⁴

In the chick-lit novels this idea of incorporating letters or journals is taken up. In *Bridget Jones's Diary* journal entries are included, in *PS, I Love You*⁶⁵ the protagonist receives letters from her dead husband and *Where Rainbows End*⁶⁶ tells an entire story through letters, emails and postcards. This method makes the story more lively and the readers feel experience a stronger attachment to the protagonists, as personal journals and texts give the impression of being in the writer's mind.

2.1.3.5 Short Story⁶⁷

So far it was assumed that chick-lit texts are novels. This, however, is not the case as many short stories qualify as chick-lit. Examples for such short stories can be found in the numerous anthologies available on the market. Therefore, it seems necessary to elaborate a bit on short stories classified as chick-lit.

60 cf. Baldick, 2008.

61 Baldick, 2008, p. 64.

62 Baldick, 2008, p. 64.

63 cf. Baldick, 2008.

64 Baldick, 2008, p. 114.

65 cf. Ahern, 2004.

66 cf. Ahern, 2005.

67 cf. Reid, 1977.

The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines a short story as “an invented story which is no more than about 10 000 words in length”⁶⁸. A more elaborate definition is given by Reid. A short story is “intended as fictional”⁶⁹, has “a three phase action”⁷⁰ (“three or more events are conjoined, with at least two of them occurring at different times and being casually linked”⁷¹), a “deep-rotting aesthetic preference”⁷² (a beginning, a middle and an end), focuses “as a rule, on human affairs”⁷³ and “is generally applied to almost all kinds of fictitious prose narrative briefer than a novel”⁷⁴. It must be noted though that not every short story follows the conventions established by Reid and that the term short story generally covers a wide range of works.

Chick-lit short stories deal with the same themes as chick-lit novels and only differ from novels in terms of length.

2.2. Literary Theory⁷⁵

This chapter tries to match chick-lit with certain literary theories. This assignment is important as every study must be based on a theory or theories in order to make it scholarly.

There is a great variety of literary theories and only a small selection seems appropriate for this research project. These three approaches and an explanation why they seem appropriate will be provided in this chapter. However, for completeness other approaches that have been considered but dismissed will be now shortly discussed. Peter Barry provides an introduction to twelve literary theories out of which some are obviously inappropriate because of the research interest. Those are Postmodernism, Lesbian/gay Criticism, Postcolonial criticism, Stylistics, Narratology and Ecocriticism.⁷⁶

Other literary theories might seem appropriate for the research interest but were dismissed as unsuitable after careful consideration. Post-structuralism/deconstruction is a more philosophical approach, which is concerned with deconstruction of texts in order to gain an insight into the “textual subconscious”.⁷⁷ This is not the aim of the thesis, as

68 Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2008.

69 Reid, 1977, p. 8.

70 Reid, 1977, p. 5.

71 Reid, 1977, p. 5.

72 Reid, 1977, p. 6.

73 Reid, 1977, p. 8.

74 Reid, 1977, p. 9.

75 cf. Barry, 2002.

76 cf. Barry, 2002.

77 Barry, 2002, p. 73.

it wants to construct the world of journalism and journalists by connecting information from various texts with each other. Psychoanalytic criticism with its interest in the “‘overt’ [...] and the ‘covert’ content”⁷⁸ is appropriate for an in-depth-analysis of characters but is too much concerned with “unconscious motives and feelings [...] of the characters”⁷⁹ for this research project. Although the characters are important, their inner motives and feelings do not play a major role for the answering of the research questions. New historicism and cultural materialism is “based in the *parallel* reading of literary and non-literary texts”⁸⁰ in order to “place the literary text within the ‘frame’ of non-literary texts.”⁸¹ Although statistics on journalists feature in the study this is only one fifth of the whole research interest and is not as important as the general presentation of journalism and journalists. Therefore new historicism/cultural materialism is not considered in the theoretical approach.

2.2.1 Feminist Criticism⁸²

The theoretical approach mostly discussed when dealing with chick-lit is feminist literary theory.

From the early beginnings on feminism was

“literary [...], in the sense that it realised the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature, and saw it as vital to combat them and question their authority and their coherence”⁸³

Feminism is mainly concerned with the feminine, as “a set of culturally defined characteristics”⁸⁴ and how those are linked to and enforced by the term female, which is “a matter of biology.”⁸⁵ Feminist criticism explores how women are portrayed in literature: looks, works, relationships and their experiences in general. While early feminist critics explored “‘androtexits’ (books by men)”⁸⁶, modern feminist critics prefer to explore “‘gynotexits’ (books by women)”⁸⁷ for the feminine. This interest in texts written by women coined the term gynocritics.

78 Barry, 2002, p. 105.

79 Barry, 2002, p. 105.

80 Barry, 2002, p. 172.

81 Barry, 2002, p. 173.

82 cf. Barry, 2002, p. 121-138.

83 Barry, 2002, p. 121.

84 Barry, 2002, p. 122

85 Barry, 2002, p. 122.

86 Barry, 2002, p. 123.

87 Barry, 2002, p. 123.

One school of feminist critics (the Anglo-Americans)

“maintain a major interest in traditional critical concepts like theme, motif, and characterisation. They seem to accept the conventions of literary realism, and treat literature as a series of representations of women's lives and experiences which can be measured and evaluated against reality.”⁸⁸

This definition of feminist criticism seems to be the one most appropriate with chick-lit. Chick-lit represents the world of females today and gives – to some extent and dependent on the various sub genres – a true account of what life really is like for modern women. They portray their struggle for professional and interpersonal success and happiness. Looking at the findings from this study it should, therefore, be possible to draw a rather accurate picture of modern women, their jobs and personal relationships.

Feminist critics, however, argue that chick-lit does not portray a real picture of women in the 21st century. They argue that the values in novels and short stories are not up-to-date: protagonists in chick-lit seek the perfect man and although they work – more or less – successfully their main quest is still love.

2.2.2 Structuralism⁸⁹

Structuralism postulates “that things cannot be understood in isolation – they have to be seen in the context of the larger structures they are part of.”⁹⁰

“Thus, in the structuralist approach to literature there is a constant movement away from the interpretation of the individual literary work and a parallel drive towards understanding the larger, abstract structures which contain them.”⁹¹

This implies that a single text cannot be understood on its own but only in connection with other texts. When this approach is applied to chick-lit it can be argued that chick-lit as a genre only exists because the individual texts share a similar structure and by collecting all those texts the genre chick-lit developed. This is certainly true: chick-lit texts, although there are various sub genres, are essentially the same. The girl-meets-and-finally-gets-boy-structure or girl-achieves-something-great-and-is-happier-than-before-structure can be found in every chick-lit novel or short story.

Furthermore, structuralists say that “the culture we are part of can be 'read' like a language, using these principles, since culture is made up of many structural networks

88 Barry, 2002, p. 124.

89 cf. Barry, 2002, p. 39-60 .

90 Barry, 2002, p. 39.

91 Barry, 2002, p. 40.

[...].”⁹² As literature depicts culture/reality it can be argued that through reading literature culture can be read as well. So structuralism allows one to draw the connection between literature and reality and, therefore, the one cannot exist without the other. When taking this thought even further one arrives at the conclusion that “structuralists accept that the world is constructed through language, in the sense that we do not have access to reality other than through the linguistic medium.”⁹³ Structuralists argue “that language doesn't just reflect or record the world: rather, it shapes it, so that how we see is what we see.”⁹⁴ Literature does not reflect the world as it really is but every writer reflects what s/he sees. This perception is again shaped by what a person knows and believes. Applying this argument to the research interest of this thesis means two things. Looking at journalism/journalist in chick-lit will give an idea of how journalism/journalists work in reality. This reality is clouded by the personal (work) experiences of the authors. Although the findings of the content analysis will be compared to studies conducted about the real-life job this does not imply that the study will generate true answers as everything seems to be shaped by individual perception and nothing can be seen as it truly is. This means that chick lit-texts create a world that is perceived to be true. This literature induced reality can be proven or falsified by comparing the findings of the study to studies about real-life journalists. In comparing the findings of both studies an objective reality might be reflected.

2.2.3 Marxist Criticism⁹⁵

To include Marxist criticism into a theory on chick-lit might appear unusual but there are three arguments for doing so.

Firstly, Marxist criticism argues that “good art always has a degree of freedom from prevailing economic circumstances, even if these economic facts are its 'ultimate determinant'.”⁹⁶ It is true that chick-lit is not necessarily what Marx and Engels called good art but this objection shall be overlooked. What is much more interesting is the economic circumstances: it is a fact that chick-lit earns publishers and authors a lot of money but still authors are reluctant to talk about their own financial gains by writing chick-lit. “[...] chick lit writers are [...] coy about any financial motives for their writing”⁹⁷.

92 Barry, 2002, p. 47.

93 Barry, 2002, p. 64.

94 Barry, 2002, p. 61.

95 cf. Barry, 2002, p. 156-171.

96 Barry, 2002, p. 158.

97 Wells, 2006, p. 56

It is, however, obvious that money plays a major role in the whole chick-lit business. So, although, authors argue that money is not a motif for writing, Marx and Engels might be right when arguing that money is the primary motive for (chick-lit) authors.

Secondly, Marxist critics link the manifest content of a text with its hidden context, therefore, gaining insight into the social structures of a certain time. Although chick-lit is not overly critical of modern society a lot can be learned about it by reading the texts closely. Certain truths might not be clearly stated but by reading between the lines chick-lit can still give an insight into modern society. This is similar to feminist criticism and their line of argument. Therefore, it should be possible to learn about the society by reading about fictional society. If this is true will be seen when comparing the findings of this study to studies about real journalists.

Thirdly, it is interesting that Marxist critics try to “explain the nature of a whole literary genre in terms of the social period which 'produced' it.”⁹⁸ For chick-lit this means that Marxist criticism looks at the social circumstances and tries to conclude from that why chick lit has become popular at a certain time. When this idea is turned around one could do a social survey by looking at literature. This is basically what will be done in this thesis. A reality concerning journalism/journalists might be constructed by taking information from a literary genre. As it is not certain that those findings may correspond to reality, the research at hand goes one step further and compares the fictional world with the real world.

2.3. Journalism and the Journalist in Reality

In order to connect literature to reality it seems a good idea to link the findings of this research project concerning journalism/journalists to reality. Therefore, this part of the paper is concerned with results of scientific studies about journalism/journalists in Great Britain, Ireland and the United States.

2.3.1 Great Britain⁹⁹

The data mentioned in this part of the paper are from a study conducted in 1995 in Great Britain and published in 1998. Some readers will now think that the data are outdated but as the novels which will be analysed were published between 1998 and 2001 this will hardly matter.

⁹⁸ Barry, 2002, p. 167.

⁹⁹ cf. Henningham 1998.

The study focuses on full time journalists employed by daily or weekly news media including national and regional newspapers, television, radio and wire services. It, therefore, excludes freelance journalists and journalists working for popular or special interest media.

15,175 journalists were “employed full time by mainstream news organizations at the time of the study”¹⁰⁰ and out of those 726 journalists were interviewed. One third of them

“were employed by national newspapers – 30% by national dailies and 4% by national Sundays. The largest single employers were regional dailies (34%), whereas 10% of journalists were with regional weeklies. One in six were with broadcasting - BBC television 6%, BBC radio 1%, independent television 8%, and independent radio 1%. Three percent worked for wire services [...] and 4% for agencies.”¹⁰¹

Most journalists are very satisfied with their jobs and only 4% are dissatisfied. However 24% feel very stressed, 51% feel stressed and 87% think that stress is increasing. Nevertheless, 75% would advise young people to pursue a career in journalism.

British journalists seem to be rather self-centred: 62% rate the pay as very important, 45% want to get ahead in their organization, 33% appreciate a freedom from supervision and 10% like the benefits the job entitles them to.

Moreover, “British journalists appear to be less ethical in their attitude”¹⁰² and do not object to certain methods for getting information: 86% do not object to “using confidential business or government documents without permission”¹⁰³, 50% do not object to “badgering unwilling informants to get a story”¹⁰⁴, 49% make “use of personal documents [...] without permission”¹⁰⁵, 65% may pay “people for confidential information”¹⁰⁶, 73% justify “using hidden microphones and cameras”¹⁰⁷, and 78% may use “re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors”¹⁰⁸.

British journalists have a positive attitude towards modern technologies: “72% of journalists believe the new technology has improved the quality of their work and 68% believe it saved time.”¹⁰⁹

“British journalists are predominantly male: Only 25% of full-time journalists are

100 Henningham, 1998, p. 144.

101 Henningham, 1998, p. 145.

102 Henningham, 1998, p. 155.

103 Henningham, 1998, p. 156.

104 Henningham, 1998, p. 156.

105 Henningham, 1998, p. 156.

106 Henningham, 1998, p. 156.

107 Henningham, 1998, p. 156.

108 Henningham, 1998, p. 156.

109 Henningham, 1998, p. 158.

women.”¹¹⁰ However, the number of female journalists increases steadily. They are younger than their male colleagues: “67% are under 35, [...] The median age for female journalists is 33, five years younger for males”¹¹¹, work as freelancers and for magazines and are “particularly underrepresented in national daily newspapers (specially tabloids).”¹¹² “The median age of a journalist in Britain is 38”¹¹³, with older ones working as (national) newspaper journalists and younger ones working in broadcasting. Especially journalists working for independent radio and regional weeklies are under 30. Seventy-one percent of British journalists are married or in a partnership, while 24% live alone. What is interesting though is that while 31% of male journalists are single, 53% of female journalists are single, which “is almost three times higher than the female population's figure of 21%.”¹¹⁴ Twenty-nine percent of all couples consist of two journalists. “On average, about 40% of social contacts are with people connected with journalism or other media, and between 10% and 20% work for the same organization.”¹¹⁵

Most of the survey participants decided for a career in journalism during their teens either because of their writing skills, the perceived glamour of the job or because of their interest to serve the public. They began their first job at an average age of 21 at a regional newspaper. Forty-nine percent of journalists have a university degree either in arts, economy, science or commerce; only 2% have a degree in journalism. Twenty percent “have or are attending a tertiary institution”¹¹⁶ and about 30% have been trained on the job. A generational difference in education can also be noticed: “more than 70% of those aged between 25 and 30 were graduates, the proportion was less than one in four those aged over 45.”¹¹⁷

Most British journalists are from a middle class background and are White Anglo-Saxons Protestants. “Journalists are overwhelmingly British-born (93%), with 90% describing themselves ethnically as 'European'. Only 1% are Indian or Pakistani [...], and only 1% Black African American or Caribbean.”¹¹⁸ About 46% belong to the Church of England, 16% are Roman Catholics and only 1% is Jewish. Despite being raised

110 Henningham, 1998, p. 147.

111 Henningham, 1998, p. 148.

112 Henningham, 1998, p. 148.

113 Henningham, 1998, p. 147.

114 Henningham, 1998, p. 148.

115 Henningham, 1998, p. 147.

116 Henningham, 1998, p. 149.

117 Henningham, 1998, p. 150.

118 Henningham, 1998, p. 148-149.

religiously 72% now do not practice a religion.

“Most journalists have no particular speciality”¹¹⁹, although 13% specialised in sports, 6% in finance, 5% in politics and 4% in culture. All the others work in various departments.

It needs to be mentioned that the results of the survey presented are representative but do not necessarily represent the opinions and attitudes of all British journalists.

2.3.2 Ireland

Ireland has always had a rather strong print media. “It is divided into daily national newspapers and a strong regional sector of weekly newspapers. The national newspaper market is further divided into distinct daily and Sunday markets.”¹²⁰ Rather interesting is the influence of British media in Ireland. This is due to “the geographic, cultural and linguistic closeness of the two countries combined with a degree of post colonialism.”¹²¹ Therefore,

“newspapers published in London had targeted the Irish market, using Irish editions- often little more than the word ‘Irish’ appearing on the mast head and two to four Irish pages wrapped round British content. British newspapers have always been available in Ireland and read, often for sports coverage of British soccer and horse racing, but as the Irish economy grew it became an increasingly attractive proposition to specifically target Ireland in order to gain advertising revenue.”¹²²

Very important are furthermore the many regional and local weekly newspapers, which now often belong to larger media groups. In addition to the print media, broadcasting and especially radio is very popular in Ireland.

In Ireland no standard education for becoming a journalist is available. Although there are courses at colleges and universities “only a minority of Irish journalists have taken such a course”¹²³ A study conducted among journalists of national print and broadcasting revealed that 61% of Irish journalists have a college degree, 19% have only a Leaving Certificate and about 2% leave school at the age of 16. Moreover, only 25% have studied journalism at college and approximately 20% have “completed a formal journalism apprenticeship.”¹²⁴

119 Henningham, 1998, p. 151.

120 Foley, 2010, http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/article/ireland/.

121 Foley, 2010, http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/article/ireland/.

122 Foley, 2010, http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/article/ireland/.

123 French, 2007, p. 48.

124 French, 2007, p. 48.

Unfortunately, there are no socio demographic statistics available on journalists in Ireland and an elaborate description comparable to the studies of Henningham and Weaver is impossible.

2.3.3 The United States¹²⁵

This survey was conducted in the U.S. 2002 and published in 2007. The sample consists of 1,149 “full-time news people responsible for the information content of English-language traditional general-interest media in the United States.”¹²⁶ Journalists are “those who had responsibility for the preparation or transmission of news stories or other timely information – all full-time writers, reporters, writers, correspondents, editors, news announcers, columnists, photojournalists or other news people.”¹²⁷ Not considered in this survey are freelancers, part-time correspondents and people working on an occasional basis.

The typical American journalist is “a married male just over 40, less likely to come from a Protestant background, and slightly more likely to hold a bachelor's degree.”¹²⁸ He is “still more likely to work for a daily newspaper than any other type of news media [...], to have attended a public college or university, to work for a news organization owned by a larger company, and to have not majored in journalism.”¹²⁹

116,148 journalists are “working full-time for daily and weekly newspapers, a handful of general interest news magazines that are published more than once a month, radio and television stations with news departments, and general wire service bureaus.”¹³⁰

About 70% are employed by the print media, about 29% by the broadcast media and only 1% by other news services. However, not every media appeals to male and female employees equally: women prefer to work for news magazines (~ 43%), in television (~ 37.5%), closely followed by weekly newspapers (~ 37%) or daily newspapers (~ 33%).

The job satisfaction of journalists is lower than that of the general workforce, but about 50% are fairly satisfied, ~ 33% are very satisfied and only ~16% are somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

American journalists do not generally object to somewhat unethical reporting practices: 78% do not object to “using confidential business or government documents without

125 cf. Weaver, 2007.

126 Weaver, 2007, 255-256.

127 Weaver, 2007, p. 256.

128 Weaver, 2007, p. 1.

129 Weaver, 2007, p. 1.

130 Weaver, 2007, p. 2.

authorization”¹³¹, 54% do not object to “getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information”¹³², 52% badger “unwilling informants to get a story”¹³³, 41% “use personal documents [...] without permission”¹³⁴. Moreover, 17% do not object to “paying people for confidential information”¹³⁵ and 14% do not object to “claiming to be someone else”¹³⁶. Furthermore, 60% may use “hidden microphones or cameras”¹³⁷ and 36% may use “re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors”¹³⁸.

American journalists are predominantly male (67%), with only 33% being female. Interestingly, the number of women in journalism is consistent, “despite dramatic increases in women journalism students and increased emphasis on hiring more women [...]”¹³⁹ This could be due to the fact that women do not work as long in journalism as their male colleagues: about 21% believe that they will leave the industry in about five years.

The average journalist is 41 years old.

About 60% of all journalists are married, approximately 6% live with a partner but are not married, ~ 23% are single and have never been married and about 10% are separated, divorced or widowed. Female journalists are less likely to be married (48% as opposed to 67% of male journalist). Approximately 42% have children, with female journalists being less likely to have children (32.5%) as opposed to male journalists (46%). Approximately one-third of social contacts are with people connected to journalism in some way.

Journalists choose their profession for a number of reasons: ~ 40% choose the profession because they like “writing, story telling, talking to people, asking questions, covering events and so forth”, a large number likes the idea of serving the public, 20% make their decision because of experiences during their education, 10% think that the job is fun and some become journalist because of family obligations or just by accident. “There is no single set of requirements for becoming a journalist, although it is more and more necessary to have at least a bachelor's degree from a college or university.”¹⁴⁰ Approximately 89% of journalists have a college degree and about 36% of those have

131 Weaver, 2007, p. 163.

132 Weaver, 2007, p. 163.

133 Weaver, 2007, p. 163.

134 Weaver, 2007, p. 163.

135 Weaver, 2007, p. 163.

136 Weaver, 2007, p. 163.

137 Weaver, 2007, p. 163.

138 Weaver, 2007, p. 163.

139 Weaver, 2007, p. 6.

140 Weaver, 2007, p. 35.

majoring in journalism. Other major subjects are English, History, Political Science, physical or biological sciences, Business, Education and Law. Moreover, journalists continue their education since starting to work: 64% have “taken a short course, sabbatical leave, workshop or fellowship”¹⁴¹ and about 62% want additional training.

About 85% of all journalists “come predominantly from the established and dominant cultural groups in society.”¹⁴² 6.2% are Jewish, 3.7% are African Americans, 3.3% are Hispanics, 1.0% are Asian Americans, 0.4% are Native Americans. Approximately 46% come from a Protestant background, about 32% from a Catholic background, about 6% from a Jewish background and about 14% from a different religious background or none at all. However, only 2/3 practice their any religion.

Journalists are not believed to be very rich but they are not exactly poor either, with an “estimated median personal income of [...] \$43,588.”¹⁴³ Journalists working in the North-East earn more than those working in other areas and those working for large organisations earn more than those working for small ones. Furthermore, “women made about 80.6% of what men made”¹⁴⁴, because they are younger, have less work experience, work for smaller organisations and are less likely to be managers.

Although the data are derived from a scientific survey and the results are representative, they do not necessarily reflect the ideas and ideals of all American journalists.

141 Weaver, 2007, p. 48.

142 Weaver, 2007, p. 12.

143 Weaver, 2007, p. 97.

144 Weaver, 2007, p. 100.

3 Methodical Approach

The following chapter will give a detailed description of the methodical approach.

3.1. Research Questions

RQ 1: Which media are portrayed in chick-lit?

RQ 2: How is the media world portrayed in chick-lit?

RQ 3: How are journalists presented?

RQ 4: How do journalists go about their work in chick-lit?

RQ 5: How do the findings concerning the questions above correlate with the real media world?

3.2. Content Analysis

The research questions, which have been stated above, will be answered with the help of content analysis.

“Content analysis is a systematic technique for analyzing message content [...]”.¹⁴⁵ This basically means that all research “questions must be investigated uniformly, through all parts of a defined body of text ('systematic')”¹⁴⁶, that “all data alike [...] are impartially collected ('objective')”¹⁴⁷, that “communications are taken at their face meaning, not subjectively interpreted ('manifest')”¹⁴⁸ and that “findings thus reveal [...] characteristics not otherwise observable because of the mass complexity, or chaotic nature of the communications ('description')”.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, content analysis can be defined as

“a general-purpose analytical infrastructure, elaborate for a wide range of uses. It is intended for anyone who wishes to put questions to communications (pictorial and musical, as well as oral and written) to get data that will enable him to reach certain conclusions.”¹⁵⁰

Furthermore, content analysis can be divided into quantitative content analysis and qualitative content analysis. Quantitative content analysis operates on the basis of frequency counts and is a hypotheses-testing approach. Qualitative content analysis on

¹⁴⁵ Budd, 1967 p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ Carney, 1972 p. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Carney, 1972 p. 24.

¹⁴⁸ Carney, 1972 p. 24.

¹⁴⁹ Carney, 1972 p. 24.

¹⁵⁰ Carney, 1972 p. 26.

the other hand does not count frequencies and aims at developing hypotheses.¹⁵¹

For this research project the quantitative content analysis seems more appropriate as it gives the researcher the freedom to change and adapt the analysis tool in the course of utilising: it seems impossible to know all relevant categories beforehand and so a flexible analysis tool is essential. Another point for qualitative content analysis it's not the frequency of remarks regarding journalism/journalist that is important, but whether journalism/journalists are mentioned or not and if which aspects of journalism/journalist are referred to.

According to Mayring¹⁵², qualitative content analysis is executed in several steps. Firstly, the research questions are proposed, categories are found and the analysis tool is fixed. Secondly, the analysis tool is applied to the chosen material. Thirdly, the results of the analysis are interpreted bearing in mind the research questions and the theory. As this general description is rather vague a more detailed explanation according to Mayring seems to be useful.

- "Definition of material for analysis"¹⁵³

This implies the exact definition of the material, which will later be analysed. It includes the main unit and the sample.

- "Analysis of the development of the material"¹⁵⁴

This means that the situation in which certain materials are developed must be analysed. This is important when working with interviews or discussion; it is not important when working with films or texts.

- "Formal characteristics of the material"¹⁵⁵

Formal characteristics describe the manner in which material is available. Most material will be available in written form, as it is in this research project. However, it is also possible to have for, example, audio, visual or audio-visual material.

- "Direction of the analysis"¹⁵⁶

This defines in which direction the analysis will go. It is possible to analyse the source of

151 cf. Carney, 1972 p. 72.

152 cf. Mayring, 2003 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

153 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

154 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

155 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

156 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

the message, the message itself, the channel through which the message is transported or the receiver of the message.¹⁵⁷ In this research project the message will be the focus of the analysis.

- “Theoretical differentiation of the problem”¹⁵⁸

Theoretical differentiation means that research questions must be properly defined and that already conducted studies must be included in the theoretical background of the analysis.

- “Definition of the analytical method and definition of the precise mode of action”¹⁵⁹

At this point now starts the empirical work. The definition of the precise mode of action ensures that no analytical step is overlooked, that the study is comprehensible and that it is applicable to other research questions.

As this is the main part of any content analysis a more detailed explanation of how this is done seems necessary. Based on the theoretical background and the research questions variables and dimensions for the analysis and the utilisation are generated. Those categories are divided into sub-categories which form a basic analysis tool. This tool will provide rules for coding and examples for each category. After the definition of the recording unit the analysis tool will be tested and possibly revised. Eventually the material will be analysed. After coding the (computer-assisted) evaluation takes place and the results are presented.¹⁶⁰

- “Definition of the recording unit”¹⁶¹

The recording unit is defined. This also includes the defining of the sampling unit.

- “Analytical steps by use of categories”¹⁶²

An evaluation instrument is prepared and the material is analysed with the help of the categories of the evaluation instrument.

- “Revision of the categories upon the theory and the material”¹⁶³

157 cf. Budd, 1967, p. 3.

158 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

159 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

160 cf. Mayring, 2003 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

161 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

162 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

163 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

Categories are composed with relation to the theoretical background and/or the material for analysis. This allows a competent handling and an appropriate answer to the research questions.

- “Interpretation of the utilisation”¹⁶⁴

Finally, the results of the analysis are presented in a condensed way, the research questions are answered and hypotheses are generated.

3.3. Sampling

This part of the paper explains of what the main unit consists of and how the sample is drawn.

3.3.1 Main Unit

The main unit or population “consists of those characteristics of all the [...] objects [...] to which conclusions are going to apply.”¹⁶⁵

When trying to identify the main unit for this research one major problem arises. The number of novels considered as chick lit is indefinite and it is not possible to list all chick lit texts written to date. Even when one argues that only chick lit, which is about journalism or whose main character is a journalist should be included in the main unit it still is an impossible task to list all those books and short stories.

Therefore, the main unit for this thesis consists of all chick-lit texts which feature journalism/journalist, but no concrete list of those novels and short stories will be made.

3.3.2 Sample

The sample

“consists of one or more measurements or observations taken ('drawn') from a selection of persons, objects, ect. This sample is drawn from within the population with the aim of reaching some general conclusion about that population. The sample is the body of documents which is actually analyzed in the study.”¹⁶⁶

There are various methods of drawing the sample from the main unit. In the case of this research paper the sample is drawn in a rather unorthodox way. As the main unit is not known not all books or short stories have the same possibility to be selected and

164 Mayring, 2003, p. 54 'translation Sophia Pichler'.

165 Carney, 1972, p. 134.

166 Carney, 1972, p. 134.

randomness cannot be achieved. It was, therefore, decided to select the sample by just looking at those books and short stories which can be easily obtained and are easily workable. It is clear that the conclusions drawn from the results will, therefore, not be representative but will be biased.

Eventually, the sample consists of the following chick lit texts:

- Gaylin, Alison. *Trashed*. London: Little Black Dress, 2008.
- Green, Jane. *Jemima J*. London: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Keyes, Marian. *Sushi for Beginners*. London: Penguin Books, 2000.
- Webb, Sarah. "How Emily Got Promoted". *Irish Girls are Back in Town*. Ed. Ahern, Cecilia. Scanlan, Patricia. O'Connor, Gemma. New York: Downtown Press, 2004. 127-152.
- Wickham, Madeleine. *Cocktails For Three*. Margate: Black Swan. 2000.

As it cannot be assumed that the reader is familiar with these chick-lit texts and as the knowledge of the content is vital for understanding this study, short plot summaries of the five texts will be provided.

Trashed

Simone Glass works for a trashy magazine in LA doing everything for a juicy story. She is on to the story of her life when she finds a bloody shoe in a bin. Simone quickly becomes involved in a truly gruesome murder story, which could mark a turning point in her career.

Trashed fits several chick-lit sub genres. It is a working girl lit, set in LA , therefore, making it single city lit. Working for a magazine implies that it is glamorous career lit and the series of dead people qualifies the novel as a text also belonging to mystery lit.

Jemima J.

Jemima Jones is a girl in her twenties, who works for the Kilbrun Herald, has a crush on her editor Ben Williams and is seriously fat. Her life starts to change when she takes a course on the internet: she becomes friends with Ben Williams and Geraldine and she meets sexy Brad from California online. Unfortunately, Brad thinks she is a size ten sports babe and when Ben leaves the Kilburn Herald to go on national television Jemima subscribes to a gym, becomes addicted to exercise and loses weight until she

really is a size ten beauty. When she flies to California to meet Brad they get on like a house on fire, at least in bed and Jemima thinks herself in love. Everything starts to get horribly wrong when she finds out that Brad only uses her. But luckily Jemima has made friends in Santa Barbara and when she coincidentally meets Ben everything seems right again and after a few ups and downs everything really turns out just perfect for Jemima.

Jemima J. can be categorised into various chick-lit sub genres. The novel certainly qualifies as bigger girl lit, as Jemima struggles with her weight and thinks to achieve happiness only when losing it. Moreover, it can be labelled working girl lit, with Jemima working to support herself. And finally, it can even be categorised as glamour lit and more specifically glamorous career lit and famous lit. This is not because of Jemima but due to Ben Williams, who leaves the regional newspaper for national television to be a newsreader and in the course of his career becomes a celebrity himself.

Sushi for Beginners

Lisa Edwards suffers a nervous breakdown when she is sent to Dublin to establish a new women's magazine. Ashling Kennedy can hardly believe it when she gets the job as Lisa's assistant at Colleen. Their work relationship is rather rocky and the fact is not helped by their good-looking boss Jake Devine. But during the course of the book, Lisa arranges herself with her new life, even comes to enjoy it and eventually works things out with her husband. Ashling learns to relax and finds happiness with Jack.

Sushi for Beginners fits a number of chick-lit sub genres. Firstly, it can be defined as working girl lit, as the heroines try to establish a new women's magazine. Secondly, it can be classified as glamorous career lit, as working for a magazine is considered to be quite glamorous. Thirdly, it is a single city lit set in Dublin. When minor plots are taken into account two more sub genres fit *Sushi for Beginners*. Ashling's friend Clodagh Kelly is a housewife and mother, who struggles with her two children as is generally the case in mommy lit. Ashling's neighbour Ted becomes successful as a comedian the novel becomes famous lit as well.

How Emily Got Promoted

Emily is a freelancer, who has her heart set on a staff job at the Irish magazine Ruby. To get that job she has to come up with a 3000 word piece about a topic of her choice. To make a good impression she wants to write about an Irish movie star but unfortunately cannot get an interview. However, fate intervenes and due to a bit of

blackmailing Emily gets her interview and with it her staff job at Ruby's.

This short story can be categorized as working girl lit, as Emily has to get a staff job with a magazine in order to improve her living conditions. It can also be labelled as a glamorous career lit, then even as Emily does not perceive her work as being overly glamorous women around her think that it is.

Cocktails For Three

Maggie, Candice and Roxanne work for the same magazine and their monthly cocktail gatherings are essential for their friendship. This friendship is put to a test when Maggie leaves work to have a baby, Candice is caught up by the past and Roxanne moves abroad after her personal life gets turned upside down.

Cocktails for Three offers a variety of chick-lit sub genres. The three protagonists work for a magazine, which qualifies the novel as a glamorous career lit, although Roxanne has the most glamorous job travelling all over the world. As all three women work either because they have to or because they want to, the novel, furthermore qualifies as working girl lit. It also qualifies as mommy lit, as Maggie goes on maternity leave and struggles with child bearing and caring for an infant. And eventually, *Cocktails for Three* can be labelled single city lit as the main plot is set in London.

3.4. Operationalisation

Operationalisation means that research questions are made measurable. This is necessary for answering them. This chapter only gives a brief overview of how this is done with regard to the research questions of this survey. The categories, characteristics, rules for coding and examples can be found in the analysis tool in the appendix.

RQ 1: Which media are portrayed in chick-lit?

This question is answered by combining the data from several characteristics from the analysis tool: the kinds of media, the names of certain media and the employer/position of the characters.

RQ 2: How is the media world portrayed in chick-lit?

This research question is answered by summarising data concerning the kinds of media, the media landscape, the work ethic, the work topics, position of the character,

the workplace, the working hours and the job specifications.

RQ 3: How are journalists presented?

How journalists are presented can be derived by looking at data from the category journalists. Furthermore, data from job creation, job discipline, work ethic, job satisfaction, work topics and job satisfactions need to be considered.

RQ 4: How do journalists go about their work in chick-lit?

Research question number four is answered by data from job discipline, work ethic, working hours, job specification and career.

RQ 5: How do the findings concerning the questions above correlate with the real media world?

This last research question is answered by comparing the joined data from all analysed texts with the data from the surveys conducted in reality. As the analysis tool reflects the categories and characteristics of the scientific studies a comparison should be quite easy and the results should be satisfactory. It is, however, important to summarise the data of each category succinctly. If this is not done properly a tangle of data will make a comparison impossible and this last research question unanswerable.

4 Utilisation

This chapter describes the single steps which are undertaken in the course of the survey. It enables the reader to follow and to understand the individual working steps of this qualitative analysis.

4.1. Pre-Test

After having completed the analysis tool (cf. appendix), it is put to the test. This test ensures the applicability of the tool with regard to the sample. Therefore, *Mr Charisma* by Yasmin Boland was analysed with the tool. It showed that the analysis tool was usable and produced meaningful results. However, the pre-test showed that so much data are generated when analysing every single character of the texts. It is necessary to reduce the sample. As reducing the number of texts seems unrewarding it is justifiable to reduce the number of characters which will be analysed. Instead of analysing all characters, only journalists will be taken into account. Nevertheless this reduction is not enough. Especially the novels contain a large number of journalists and a detailed analysis of all of them would be beyond the scope of a thesis. It, therefore, is best to reduce the number of characters analysed: only the six major journalists of each text will be thoroughly analysed. This will on the one hand reduce the amount of data and, on the other hand, still leave enough data for serious discussion and satisfactory results.

The pre-test did not require an alteration of the analysis tool but a slight reduction of the material.

4.2. Inquiry

For data collection a time slot of four weeks is calculated, starting at the beginning of April. The inquiry itself is done by reading the whole texts and simultaneously recording the data in survey sheets. In order to simplify the transfer of data onto the evaluation sheets the texts are noted down on a laptop. After the inquiry is completed the data are transferred to the evaluation sheet. The text components are then reduced and finally generalised in order to compare them and to gain satisfactory results.

5 Evaluation

*“Never apologize for your reading tastes.”*¹⁶⁷

This fifth and most important part of the thesis shows the results of the qualitative analysis. It provides a descriptive and detailed presentation of the results, answers the research questions and, finally, states the theses that are derived from the general findings.

5.1. Descriptive Presentation of Results

In total five pieces of chick-lit are analysed; this equals 1672 pages in print. The sample consisted of four novels and one short story.

Trashed¹⁶⁸

Trashed, by Alison Gaylin, encompasses 370 pages and was published in the US in 2007 and in Great Britain in 2008. American author Alison Gaylin has a degree in journalism from the University of Columbia and has worked for various magazines; her first job was for a supermarket tabloid. This work experience is visible in *Trashed*, which is her third novel.¹⁶⁹

Trashed is set in Los Angeles and is about tabloid reporter Simone Glass, who is unable to find a job in serious journalism and, therefore, opts for a career with a trashy magazine. In contrast, her sister Greta works as a television journalist and presenter at a respectable station. The novel portrays a very diverse media landscape that features news and entertainment media. However a biased attitude towards media is expressed: “leave it to the real newspaper.”¹⁷⁰

The novel features or at least mentions a wide range of media. Tabloids, the radio, cable TV, daily and weekly newspapers and glossy celebrity weeklies are explicitly mentioned. Moreover, a great number of specific media products are named directly; some fictional magazines and TV programs and a great number of actual magazines, newspapers, TV channels and TV programs. Examples of magazines are *Vanity Fair*, *People*, *Playboy*, *LA Edge*, the *National Enquirer*, the *Interloper*, *The Sun*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Post*, the *Daily Mail*, the *LA Times*, *USA Today*, *Wallstreet Journal*,

167 Betty Rosenberg.

168 cf. Alison Gaylin, 2008.

169 cf. <http://www.alisongaylin.com>

170 Gaylin, 2008, p. 256.

Entertainment Weekly, *Forbes Magazine* and others; examples of the broadcasting media are *CNN*, *Fox station*, *CSI*, *Nightline*, *One Tree Hill*, and *Entertainment Tonight*.

As diverse as the media itself are the news topics that are mentioned in *Trashed*: “headlines about alien abduction and Hitler’s secret love child”¹⁷¹, “*Britney Goes Berserk! Brangelina Baby Scare! Celebrity Cellulite Hall Of Shame!*”¹⁷², “*Cher Dumps Bagle Boy! Madonna And Sean’s Sexxx-Rated Secrets!*”¹⁷³, “*The Secret Talk That Ended Hollywood’s Happiest Marriage*”¹⁷⁴, “*Is Dirty Dylan Pregnant?*”¹⁷⁵

Trashed focuses on tabloid journalism but, nevertheless, the findings apply to quality and tabloid media. In general journalism is portrayed as a rather hard line of work.

It is difficult to find a job: “Please let me get this job[...]”¹⁷⁶ without connections: “*I’m sure Greta could find you something at her network*”¹⁷⁷ and to keep a job: “[...] if she hadn’t lost her job at the *LA Edge* before it even started. [...] informing her that the *Edge* was ‘closed indefinitely.’”¹⁷⁸ Journalists and especially investigating journalists have to be very disciplined and enthusiastic. The working hours are long: “[...] from seven a.m. to seven p.m. every day.”¹⁷⁹, irregular: “[...] come back at eleven thirty p.m.”¹⁸⁰ and overtime is common: “We will all be working through the weekend to keep our momentum going.’ And no one complained.”¹⁸¹ Generally the pay is very moderate with “a day rate of one hundred thirty dollars.”¹⁸²

In addition to long working hours and poor pay, investigative journalism is exhausting. People do not want to talk to reporters, especially tabloid reporters, and tabloid journalists have a bad reputation: “You wreck people’s lives, [...] You’re tabloid reporters. You’re better off dead.”¹⁸³ But not only is the job difficult and exhausting, it can also be dangerous. Reporters are often threatened and sometimes even attacked: “His hands were around her throat, thumbs pressing against her voice box. He did it lightly, but she felt his thick fingers - the potential.”¹⁸⁴

171 Gaylin, 2008, p. 2.

172 Gaylin, 2008, p. 15.

173 Gaylin, 2008, p. 16.

174 Gaylin, 2008, p. 162.

175 Gaylin, 2008, p. 178.

176 Gaylin, 2008, p. 12.

177 Gaylin, 2008, p. 14.

178 Gaylin, 2008, p. 13.

179 Gaylin, 2008, p. 139.

180 Gaylin, 2008, p. 17-18.

181 Gaylin, 2008, p. 191.

182 Gaylin, 2008, p. 17.

183 Gaylin, 2008, p. 245.

184 Gaylin, 2008, p. 219.

Journalism is not a secure profession either and one has to work very hard to keep one's job: "If I do not get something brilliant from you by the end of the week, do not bother to come in on Monday. Your trail here is complete."¹⁸⁵ There is a constant competition as many people want a career in journalism and people are easily interchangeable when their performance is weak. However, journalists who work for the same paper or broadcasting station are generally loyal to each other: "I wish I could help you to get on Nigel's good side."¹⁸⁶, try to help each other: "Whatever news we pick up, you get all the credit."¹⁸⁷, motivate each other: "I'm so proud of you!"¹⁸⁸ and give each other advice: "You're in that hotel closet, honey. You call the shots."¹⁸⁹

The average journalist has to have many talents, needs to be knowledgeable on a great number of subjects and has to do all kinds of work. Of course there are also specialists for certain topics; the Asteroid has a "*domestic refuse expert*"¹⁹⁰, an infiltration specialist and an interviewer for "[...] on-record interviews, as he can talk the knickers of a nun."¹⁹¹ However in general journalists have to be all-rounders.

Although it is a hard job, journalists are portrayed as being generally satisfied with their job: "Simone thought about [...] how fulfilment always showed up where you least suspected it: Working at a tabloid [...]."¹⁹²

Biased is the topic of work ethic that is portrayed in *Trashed*. The tabloids are described as trashy magazines, who write all kinds of nonsense and their employees are believed to be unethical, to have no conscience and to act ruthlessly and in a condescending manner. This, however, is not totally true. Not only the main characters but also minor ones are portrayed as sensitive characters who have doubts about their jobs and the way they get information, stories and pictures: "Would she ever be allowed to tell the truth?"¹⁹³ and "[...] that Simone's conscience woke up and started tearing at her."¹⁹⁴ However, the need to keep one's job often forces the protagonists in *Trashed* to act against their beliefs and conscience: "She'd received high honors in journalistic ethics and now... now she was an *insider*."¹⁹⁵

185 Gaylin, 2008, p. 132.

186 Gaylin, 2008, p. 143.

187 Gaylin, 2008, p. 138.

188 Gaylin, 2008, p. 147.

189 Gaylin, 2008, p. 313.

190 Gaylin, 2008, p. 18.

191 Gaylin, 2008, p. 51.

192 Gaylin, 2008, p. 367.

193 Gaylin, 2008, p. 77.

194 Gaylin, 2008, p. 101.

195 Gaylin, 2008, p. 102.

Juicy information is often used in exchange for exclusive stories or interviews “[...] agreeing to a sit-down interview [...], the topic: the actress's secret heartbreak over her cheating boyfriend [...]”¹⁹⁶

Pretence is used to get information and infiltrating is popular in order to get information. This involves getting dressed up or pretending to be someone else in order to gain information or access to people and places: “Simone didn't play tennis, but she was wearing tennis shorts. She was walking a dog that didn't belong to her in a neighborhood she didn't live in, [...]. [...] 'Yes, [...] I'm the tennis pro.’”¹⁹⁷ Thereby, attractiveness is useful and sexual advances are common: “What you do with him is, you rub up against him in the craft services tent, tell him how much you admire his work.”¹⁹⁸ or “Remember, you're young and cute. That's powerful stuff in this business, so feel it. Work it.”¹⁹⁹

Informants are bribed and paid for relevant information: “‘Yep, along with the eight grand Nigel paid her up front’”²⁰⁰, or threatened:

“‘I realize I'm being recorded, so I will keep this as civilized as possible and remind you that you did sign a binding contract and if you do not come to our offices [...] will grind you into a pulp so fine your own mother won't even recognize you.’”²⁰¹

But not only informants but also journalists from different media make deals, bribe each other, share leads or work together: “‘We can be like...a secret team.’”²⁰² However this is not popular: “‘It has come to my attention, [...], that you have been associating with enemy. [...] This is instant grounds for dismissal.’”²⁰³ and giving false leads to rival reporters is not uncommon.

Important for tabloid journalists is that they can gain people's trust: “‘I can trust you, right?’ Simone felt a stab of guilt but nodded anyway.”²⁰⁴ In order to get a good story journalists lie to and betray people and even friends: “‘Call her up and let her know how sodding, pissing awful you feel about all the bad press she's been getting.’”²⁰⁵

Some journalists do not even mind making things up when a deadline needs to be kept: “‘If you are unable to get the details from legitimate source, then *make them up*...within

196 Gaylin, 2008, p. 30.

197 Gaylin, 2008, p. 74-80.

198 Gaylin, 2008, p. 36.

199 Gaylin, 2008, p. 48.

200 Gaylin, 2008, p. 55.

201 Gaylin, 2008, p. 50.

202 Gaylin, 2008, p. 198.

203 Gaylin, 2008, p. 223.

204 Gaylin, 2008, p. 84.

205 Gaylin, 2008, p. 183.

legal limits.”²⁰⁶ and the truth is not always a priority: “The truth is overrated.[...].”²⁰⁷

Generally, work ethics in *Trashed* are rather low and lying and deception are portrayed as being the daily bread of a tabloid journalist.

Trashed is the most recently published book of the sample and the characters have the most modern equipment and means of communication. Journalists have home phones and cell phones, picture phones, answering machines and BlackBerries. They use microcassette recorders to record interviews, write their stories up on laptops or computers and have diskettes to save information. They use the Internet and several databases for research. Communication is made easy by cell phones, texts and emails. Although, the equipment is up to date, the office itself is not spectacular and the reporter's room is

“a scary Orwellian place [...] with six identical desks lined up two by two, identical spotless computers placed squarely on top. There was nothing on the walls, nothing else in the room other than the TV, because Nigel believed personal touches [...] revealed reporters' weaknesses to potential spies.”²⁰⁸

The six most important journalistic characters in *Trashed* are Simone Glass, her sister Greta Glass, Simone's boss Nigel Bloom, Simone's three co-workers Elliot, Kathy Kinney and Neil Walker.

Simone Glass is twenty-six, of a small and slim build (presumably a size two), with henna-died short spiky hair and green eyes. She went to college, has a master's degree from “Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism”²⁰⁹ and has always wanted to be a journalist. She is very dedicated to her work, desperate to get a job in journalism and even moves from New York to Los Angeles to work as a reporter for the supermarket tabloid *Asteroid*, which “had recently been dubbed 'the lowest form of sleaze.’”²¹⁰ Due to being new in LA and working very hard she mostly socialises with her co-workers or the people she has to write about. She is single at the beginning but falls in love with a (rival) journalist.

Simone works as a reporter for the *Asteroid* and as she is the newest member of the bureau she has to do whatever she is told to do and her job specification is rather vague. She has to “drive the getaway car”²¹¹, “to pick through some soap's stars used

206 Gaylin, 2008, p. 93.

207 Gaylin, 2008, p. 100.

208 Gaylin, 2008, p. 50.

209 Gaylin, 2008, p. 17.

210 Gaylin, 2008, p. 13.

211 Gaylin, 2008, p. 22.

*Kleenex...*²¹², “to pose as extras, to infiltrate [...], and find out whatever dirt they could on Emerald for use in the exclusive interview.”²¹³ She also tracks down people, she observes places like bars, strip clubs or other, more unusual, places: “You want me to hide in a closet. With a camera phone. And take pictures of them.”²¹⁴ Moreover, she does background research and on-the-record interviews, goes to press conferences and writes news stories, features and sidebars. In the end Simone gives up working as a tabloid reporter, moves back to New York and works “as a copy editor at a major publishing house.”²¹⁵

Greta Glass is Simone's older and very successful sister. Although she never wanted to be a journalist and is not considered to be a real journalist by Simone she is very good at her job. Greta works as “a cable TV news anchor”²¹⁶ in New York and Simone dismissed her work as “*reading off a teleprompter*.”²¹⁷ Nevertheless, Greta is popular and successful. She has her own “criminal law show, *Legal Tender*”²¹⁸ and is “nominated for a Glory Award [...] one of journalism highest honors.”²¹⁹ The relationship of the two sisters is rather difficult and competitive. Simone envies Greta's career:

“Listen, you and I bust our asses on these stories and then people like Great Glass, they sit there in their air-conditioned studios, reading from teleprompters and using all our information. And they get called real journalist and get nominated for awards...”²²⁰

and does not understand why her sister works in journalism anyway: “[...] she was more of a journalist at birth than Greta had been in her whole teeth-bleaching, spray-on-tanning, nose-job-getting lifetime.”²²¹ Greta looks down on her sister's job: “Look, I could understand it if you were going out there for a real job----”²²² and patronizes her: “But I've been in journalism longer than you and LA is no place to start a career.”²²³ However, in the course of the story their relationship improves and Greta admits that she could not do Simone's job and admires and respects her and her work: “I could never work there. [...] I mean...you've to have guts to work for a tabloid. No one talks to you, you

212 Gaylin, 2008, p. 19.

213 Gaylin, 2008, p. 35.

214 Gaylin, 2008, p. 312.

215 Gaylin, 2008, p. 366.

216 Gaylin, 2008, p. 9.

217 Gaylin, 2008, p. 58.

218 Gaylin, 2008, p. 11.

219 Gaylin, 2008, p. 129.

220 Gaylin, 2008, p. 260.

221 Gaylin, 2008, p. 11.

222 Gaylin, 2008, p. 10.

223 Gaylin, 2008, p. 10.

need to go find leads on your own.”²²⁴ In the end they understand each other better and are able approve of each other and their respective jobs.

Nigel Bloom is the “bureau chief, a fast-talking British man”²²⁵ and Simon's boss at the Asteroid. He is “short and wiry with a face full of angles and tense, darting eyes.”²²⁶ He speaks very fast without stopping for breath, likes to swear and is very impatient: “I cannot be expected to wait any longer.”²²⁷ He is the prototype of a hard-boiled journalist. He takes his work very seriously and lives for his newspaper. He expects his employees to work hard and to get the work done promptly: “Get on it then. No time to waste”²²⁸ and discreetly. He believes that people work best in a bare environment and his office is no exception:

“[...] blank, white walls, The desk, too, was empty, save for a phone and a computer. [...] In the entire space the only sign of life was the empty Red Bull cans, which filled the wastebasket to overflow.”²²⁹

He is not easily impressed by his employee's work but values their good work enthusiastically: “If it isn't the best insider we've ever known.”²³⁰ However he is more generous with reprimand: “[...] or I will sack you this minute.”²³¹ than with praise.

Elliot is Simone's co-worker and as average as one can be. He is between 25 and 50 with wild hair and a beard. His skin is white (presumably from mostly working at night) and he has white blue eyes.

He is very experienced and good at his job as a tabloid reporter. He divides his working time into fieldwork and work in the office. Although he actually is the “*domestic refuse expert*”²³², he does whatever is needed to be done. He does general research, follows up leads, looks for people, writes articles and sidebars.

He becomes a friend and mentor for Simone and helps her in various situations to keep calm and to carry on with the, sometimes rather difficult, work.

Kathy Kinney is Simone's female colleague. She is “a slender, fortyish blonde who resembles a soccer mom from a Chevrolet ad”²³³ with deep, velvety blue eyes with

224 Gaylin, 2008, p. 320.

225 Gaylin, 2008, p. 14.

226 Gaylin, 2008, p. 15.

227 Gaylin, 2008, p. 26.

228 Gaylin, 2008, p. 92.

229 Gaylin, 2008, p. 16.

230 Gaylin, 2008, p. 178.

231 Gaylin, 2008, p. 55.

232 Gaylin, 2008, p. 18.

233 Gaylin, 2008, p. 34.

thick, curving lashes. Despite her stunning looks, she is very adaptable and feels comfortable in any situation and company. She is able to infiltrate any occasion and is so-called 'tabloid gold': "Kathy Kinney had infiltrated close to one hundred funerals, three dozen A-list charity benefits, fifty-some-odd weddings, and Fred Savage's bar mitzvah."²³⁴ She is very experienced at what she does and dedicated to her work. She becomes Simone's teacher, confidante and, eventually, friend.

Neil Walker is the male protagonist and Simon's love-hate relationship. He is "good-looking in an intense, sleepless kind of way and his dark hair was tousled"²³⁵ with very blue eyes.

He has worked for tabloid newspapers for over 15 years and is a senior reporter at the *Interloper*, the *Asteroid*'s rival magazine. He likes his job, is dedicated and very good at what he does. His good looks and charm help him to gain people's trust and get the information he wants; he is very good at reading people and telling them what they want to hear. Moreover, he is not easily intimidated and very self-assured: "Oh, and just FYI, I don't beg. For anything. Ever."²³⁶ Despite all he is actually a nice and sensitive man: "Oh shit. Please don't do that.[...] I hate it when women cry."²³⁷ However not everything is as straightforward with him as it seems: "Neil Walker is my spy. [...] *Interloper* spy."²³⁸ At first Simone is attracted to him: "[...] the first normal person she had met since moving to this strange city."²³⁹ but when she finds out that he is really a reporter, who has sounded her out she comes to dislike him deeply. Nevertheless, there is a certain force of attraction between them: "But somehow it was better to be near him - [...]"²⁴⁰ and they even decide to "call a truce"²⁴¹. Despite this connection they are still competing reporters and do not like to work together: "But, you know... don't expect me to share anything with I get in there with you."²⁴² Simone and Neil have a very ambivalent relationship: "I don't trust you. [...] But I don't hate you, either."²⁴³ In the course of the novel she gets to know him better, learns about his true character and really starts to like him: "She wanted to be at a hotel room on the VIP floor of the Beverlido, having

234 Gaylin, 2008, p. 34.

235 Gaylin, 2008, p. 49.

236 Gaylin, 2008, p. 203.

237 Gaylin, 2008, p. 277.

238 Gaylin, 2008, p. 339.

239 Gaylin, 2008, p. 85.

240 Gaylin, 2008, p. 202.

241 Gaylin, 2008, p. 203.

242 Gaylin, 2008, p. 203.

243 Gaylin, 2008, p. 204.

champagne and omelets²⁴⁴, watching a little HBO....” Although they have an affair: “Simone fell asleep in Walker’s arms, thinking, *How can I ever leave this place?*”²⁴⁵ they still compete fiercely at work. Nevertheless they become a couple in the end: “I’m his girlfriend.”²⁴⁶

***Jemima J.*²⁴⁷**

Jemima J., a novel by Jane Green, encompasses 450 pages and was first published in the UK in 1998. British author Jane Green worked as a journalist for the Daily Express before going freelance to have more time to write her own novels. Her novels all were instant successes. Besides writing novels she has her own blog and writes for various print publications. Like many other chick lit authors Jane Green has a background in journalism and her work experience is highly visible in *Jemima J.* She now lives in Westport, Connecticut with her husband and their six children.²⁴⁸

Jemima Jones is the protagonist in *Jemima J.* She is highly overweight and struggles with all the prejudices fat people are confronted with. Despite being nice and funny, people judge her by her appearance and do not see her full potential. Jemima herself hates her life as the fat girl and often daydreams about her life after losing weight. When she meets Californian gym owner Brad on the internet she decides to lose her weight and to become a perfect size 10. She succeeds and, finally, her life seems to change. She is promoted to a feature writer at the Kilbrun Herald, she meets lots of men and when she visits Brad he is instantly in love with her. However, Jemima does not feel really happy; she thinks that something is wrong with Brad and her all time sweetheart Ben Williams stopped contacting her. After lots of entanglements Jemima and Ben become a couple, Jemima overcomes her obsession with food and exercise and finally leads the happy and fulfilled life she has always daydreamed about.

Jemima J. deals with the print and the broadcasting media and even mentions the Internet as a new media. The print media features in the form of local newspapers, glossy fashion magazines, tabloids and books. The broadcasting media are mentioned in terms of regional and national television, daytime shows and American television shows. The Internet as a relatively new medium is mentioned in connection with

244 Gaylin, 2008, p. 259.

245 Gaylin, 2008, p. 283.

246 Gaylin, 2008, p. 337.

247 cf. Green, 1998.

248 cf. <http://www.janegreen.com/>

newsgroups, forums and bulletin boards.

Specifically mentioned are a number of newspapers like the *Kilburn Herald*, the *Solent Advertiser*, the *Guardian*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *News of the World*, the *Outlook*, the *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter*. Glossy magazines are *Vogue*, *Elle*, *FHM* and *Cosmopolitan*. Although books are constantly mentioned throughout the novel only *Romeo and Juliet* is explicitly named.

In addition to print media the broadcasting media are very important in *Jemima J.* Explicitly named is the *BBC* and various programs like the *Six O'Clock News*, *Entertainment Tonight* and *London Night*. American television shows are *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *Days of our Lives*, *Seinfeld* and *Rosie O'Donnell*.

Therefore, *Jemima J.* is the only novel which includes television as a main media and does not only feature the printing press. The novel explores the workings of print and television journalism and portrays journalism in very realistic terms.

It is difficult to get into journalism and connections are always an advantage when seeking a career in journalism: "I nod, thinking again, about Lauren, and wondering whether she just might possibly consider finding me some work, or at least putting me in touch with people who could."²⁴⁹ People who want to be journalists cannot be choosy and one often has to start at the bottom when seeking work in the industry. However, with the right attitude, good looks and the right support a career is easily obtained.

Journalism is portrayed as a difficult job:

"Journalism means digging, it means making hundreds of phonecalls, doorstepping if necessary, to get your story. It means operating on hunches, chasing leads, not stopping until you've got what you want."²⁵⁰

This implies that journalists need to be ambitious and driven to get good stories.

Working at a local newspaper is not described as glamorous but as being rather boring and dull. In contrast working for a glossy magazine is portrayed as being glamorous, chic and special:

"The type of women who work on glossy magazines are pencil-slim. They have highlighted hair, and hard faces covered in too much make-up. They always wear designer black, and always, like Geraldine, have sunglasses pushing their hair off their faces. They go out for long liquid lunches, and network every evening in the trendiest bars in town."²⁵¹

249 Green, 1998, p. 328.

250 Green, 1998, p. 118.

251 Green, 1998, p. 119.

Moreover, getting a job at a glossy magazine is proclaimed to be easy when one has the right stories:

“You're a journalist, JJ. Money is the least of your worries. First of all, I can get the feature editor at the magazine to commission you. [...] You can write a piece for the magazine about good-looking bastards. [...] There are thousand of pieces you cloud be writing out here and filing back to magazines and newspaper in London. [...] It's as easy as that.”²⁵²

Even more exciting and appealing than working for a glossy magazine is working in television. However working in television has many drawbacks. One has to work hard to get into television at the first place. Then it is not a secure job and keeping one's boss and the audience happy can be stressful; ratings are a constant reminder to work even harder. Even popular presenters can have problems to get good stories or interview partners: “For the last three months one of the producers on the show, Simone, has been trying to arrange an interview with [...] the hottest actress in Hollywood.”²⁵³ Another drawback is “the lack of privacy”²⁵⁴ and the “press invasion [...] As soon as you are on screen you become public property, and that means newspapers have licence to dig up as much dirt as they can.”²⁵⁵ Nevertheless working in television is described as being the dream of almost every journalist.

In contrast to television which has many appeals and where the job satisfaction is generally high, working for local newspaper is not so satisfying. Both, Jemima and Ben do not really appreciate their job at the *Kilburn Herald*. Jemima is bored with writing the Top Tips column and Ben sees the local newspaper as a stepping stone for his future career.

The work ethic is a very extensive topic in *Jemima J*. Unethical ways are employed in order to get jobs, promotions, certain (beauty) product and stories. Connections and friends are always very important to foster careers. Almost as important as connections and talent are good looks. Good-looking people are more successful than others; they are hired because of their looks and are more often promoted than less attractive people: “[...] Geraldine started as a secretary, but who's the one who gets to write features first? Exactly.”²⁵⁶

Particularly Ben benefits from his good looks when he applies for a job in television: “All

252 Green, 1998, p. 395-396.

253 Green, 1998, p. 361.

254 Green, 1998, p. 149.

255 Green, 1998, p. 149.

256 Green, 1998, p. 9.

right then, Ben Williams. I won't say you're in 'cos I don't know what you look like on screen, but our viewers would fucking love those pretty-boy looks of yours, [...]."²⁵⁷ In addition he has an excellent CV and letter of application, which Jemima wrote for him: "Of course I would!" I laugh, because I've been dying to since I read the first sentence, and grabbing a pen out of my bag I turn the letter over and start scribbling on the back."²⁵⁸ Finally he "was clever. Ben addressed his envelop directly to Diane Macpherson, so his application bypassed Personnel and ended up on Jackie's desk."²⁵⁹ Even better is that he is interviewed by a women: "You're being interviewed by a woman? You're in. All you have to do is charm her socks off and boom, you're on television."²⁶⁰

Geraldine benefits from her good looks as well. Although she is not talented she is a feature writer and needs Jemima to rewrite her pieces in order to submit professional work:

"Geraldine knows I can write, Geraldine wouldn't be anywhere if it weren't for me because whenever she has a deadline I'm the one she comes running to asking for help. At least once a week I sit in front of my computer reading Geraldine's haphazard copy, before ripping it apart and putting it back together again, so it makes sense."²⁶¹

Not only good looks but also affairs with the boss are portrayed as career-enhancing: "Jackie laughs, for the last pretty boy in the office went on to become the presenter of his own chat show, thanks to his affair with Diane."²⁶² However having an affair with boss can lead to certain dilemmas: "[...] much as he didn't want to sleep with her, he didn't want the sack either, [...]."²⁶³

Unethical behaviour of a different kind is the private use of the internet and the phone for long-distance calls in the office. Ben and Jemima "explore the sex sites"²⁶⁴ on the internet in their lunch hour. Jemima chats to people in a virtual café: "Maybe I'll go back to the *LA Café*, at least I know how to find the bloody thing"²⁶⁵ and writes emails to Brad and later makes long-distance calls to California from the office: "Okay, Okay, [...] I'm phoning him.' I dial the number without really thinking of what I'm doing, just laughing as

257 Green, 1998, p. 164.

258 Green, 1998, p. 121.

259 Green, 1998, p. 145.

260 Green, 1998, p. 148.

261 Green, 1998, p. 26.

262 Green, 1998, p. 147.

263 Green, 1998, p. 298.

264 Green, 1998, p. 47.

265 Green, 1998, p. 86.

Geraldine, who's pulling faces as me as she disappears down the office.”²⁶⁶

Also controversial is taking home products from shots: “[...] a pair of large, tortoiseshell Cutler & Gross sunglasses. 'These were used in a fashion shot a couple of weeks ago and I lost them.’”²⁶⁷ or getting “freebies [...] I phoned the company and told them I was writing a piece about their product so they sent me the whole range.”²⁶⁸

The last controversial topic is the way journalists use confidential information; they do not respect the wish for privacy but make every detail public.

As Jemima and Geraldine work for the feature section of the *Kilburn Herald* the topics written about are mostly entertaining: “how to keep your man, how to spice up your sex life, how to spot if he's being unfaithful”²⁶⁹ and “dating again after you get divorced.”²⁷⁰

Ben Williams as a news editor deals with more serious subjects such as “a story about kids downloading porn from the Internet on to disk, then selling it as St Ursula's.”²⁷¹

The novel is set in the middle of the 1990s and, therefore, portrays an odd mix of methods of communication. On the one hand rather old fashioned things like filing “the story straight to the copy-takers from a payphone”²⁷² are mentioned. On the other hand the internet and computers are available. The internet makes Jemima's daily work easier and computers allow journalists to work faster and more efficient. Texts and attachments can be emailed, data can be saved on floppy disks and pictures can be worked on. Apple Macs are fashionable and scanners, printers, fax machines and phones are a standard equipment at the office of the *Kilburn Herald*.

The five most important journalists in *Jemima J.* are Jemima Jones, Ben Williams, Geraldine Turner, Diana Macpherson and Lauren.

At the beginning of the novel Jemima Jones is twenty-seven and likes to eat. She is fat with “enormous breasts [...], [a] large, round stomach [and] thighs that rub together.”²⁷³

Despite her weight she likes her light brown hair, her green eyes and her full lips and she always makes an effort with clothes. Nevertheless she hates being fat: “God, I wish I were thin. I wish I were thin, gorgeous, and could get any man”²⁷⁴ and often

266 Green, 1998, p. 152.

267 Green, 1998, p. 228.

268 Green, 1998, p. 228.

269 Green, 1998, p. 1.

270 Green, 1998, p. 83.

271 Green, 1998, p. 47.

272 Green, 1998, p. 92.

273 Green, 1998, p. 3.

274 Green, 1998, p. 1.

daydreams about her life after losing all the weight. However as all the fat protects and eating comforts her she does not really make an effort to lose weight until she meets Brad on the internet and sends him a digitally enhanced picture of her slim self. This picture finally motivates Jemima to go to the gym and to go on a diet. Jemima Jones is a person of extremes and while she was addicted to food before she then gets addicted to exercise and becomes skinny. Only in the end Jemima learns that being slim does not guarantee happiness and finds a healthy mediocrity between being fat and being “merely obsessed, which is definitely equally unhealthy, and possibly nearly as dangerous.”²⁷⁵

“Jemima Jones is no longer skinny, no longer hardbodied, no longer obsessed with what she eats. Jemima Jones is now a voluptuous, feminine, curvy size 12 who is completely happy with how she looks.”²⁷⁶

Jemima Jones is a “bright, funny, warm, caring and kind”²⁷⁷ person. She cares for her friends and is very loyal to them. Due to her weight she has no self-confidence; she does not like to be out much and spends most of her time reading or, later on, on the internet. Another very prominent characteristic is her “thirst for knowledge.”²⁷⁸

Her social life is very restricted. She has two flat mates, whom she does not particularly like. Her only friends at the paper are Geraldine and Ben and going out with them is the highlight of her week: “There's a really nice bar up there. [...], why don't we go for a drink?”²⁷⁹ This changes when she meets Brad on the internet and starts sending long emails to him. Finally her social life is further restricted when she starts to spend all her free time at the gym; she even goes there before and after work.

When Jemima conforms to the ideal of beauty she gets lots of attention from men: “She is constantly meeting people, or should we say people, men, are constantly meeting *her*.”²⁸⁰ She enjoys this attention but never encourages it as she by then is Brad's girlfriend. However, she is not really happy and “the only person I desperately want to see looking like this is Ben, but Ben, as you already know, seems to be long gone, and Brad, I suppose, is the next best thing.”²⁸¹ In the end everything falls in place for Jemima and after a short relationship with Brad she meets her all-time sweetheart Ben and finally gets together with him: “But fairytales can come true, and just like Jemima Jones,

275 Green, 1998, p. 223.

276 Green, 1998, p. 450.

277 Green, 1998, p. 3.

278 Green, 1998, p. 21.

279 Green, 1998, p. 32.

280 Green, 1998, p. 308.

281 Green, 1998, p. 220.

or Mrs Ben Williams as she's known outside the glossy magazine where she now works [...]."²⁸²

Jemima started work as a journalist after university at a graduate trainee and now works at the *Kilburn Herald*. There she writes the Top Tips column:

"she has spent the day making phonecalls. She has discovered the best way of drying your nail varnish quickly [...], the best way of keeping lettuce fresh [...] and the best way of storing tinned foods in the cupboard [...]."²⁸³

However, she thinks that she is too talented for her job at the paper and hates her job. As she is "an expert of words"²⁸⁴ and "should be going for a job at a woman's magazine."²⁸⁵ This is exactly what Jemima wants and she would kill to work for such a glossy magazine. She is bored at her workplace: "Boring as hell"²⁸⁶ and does not work very hard. Her Monday to Friday routine is the following:

"Your mornings are spent sorting out letters, and watching the clock until 11.30 a.m., when it's time for tea. [...] And then at 1 p.m., every day, you head back down to the canteen for lunch. [...] The afternoon is spent writing up your Top Tips, before nipping down again at teatime. [...] And finally at 6 p.m. Your day is over."²⁸⁷

Besides writing her column she sometimes is allowed to write features or some PR stuff. Her work life brightens when she attends a computer course. Not only does she enjoy finding out about the internet but she also gets closer to Ben through their shared interest in the World Wide Web.

Not only her private life but also her professional life changes when she is thin. She finally gets a promotion to features: "The reason I wanted to talk to you was because I think you are destined for greater things. [...] I think we're ready to move you on to features"²⁸⁸ and is allowed to do interviews: "For the first time last week I was sent on an interview, and not just a crappy, boring interview, I was sent to interview the new star of a London soap [...]."²⁸⁹ She can easily take three months off when she agrees "to do a weekly page on Los Angeles. I want our readers to get some Hollywood gossip firsthand. I want to know who's doing what, where, with whom."²⁹⁰ This is the first piece of writing she really enjoys and she is eager to meet her deadline and to do a good job. However, she does not really go star-spotting but "managed to cobble together stuff

282 Green, 1998, p. 450.

283 Green, 1998, p. 78.

284 Green, 1998, p. 5.

285 Green, 1998, p. 118.

286 Green, 1998, p. 117.

287 Green, 1998, p. 20-21.

288 Green, 1998, p. 223.

289 Green, 1998, p. 222.

290 Green, 1998, p. 333.

from the local papers, together with a review from the Pepper, and as she finishes reading it she decides that actually it's quite good.”²⁹¹

Encouraged by her new friend Lauren Jemima realizes how easy working for a glossy magazine can be and how many stories she can write. In the end she is “going to fulfil that dream, working on a glossy magazine”²⁹²

Ben Williams is one of the male protagonists and “the office Lothario.”²⁹³ He is tall and handsome with a highly toned body. He has light-brown hair, perfectly arched eyebrows, blue eyes, very white teeth and dimples when he smiles. He knows about his attractiveness and knows how to use it. He “can intrude on any social scene by virtue of his looks”²⁹⁴ and once was a member of London's it-crowd: “Ben met heiresses, minor aristocracy, Eurotrash, minor celebrities.”²⁹⁵ “Of course he is well aware of the effect he has on women, but underneath all the schmooze beats a heart of gold [...]”²⁹⁶

He comes from a wealthy background but is determined to make it himself. Due to his ambition to make a career he has no time for a relationship: “Ben is far too busy thinking about his career to think about women.”²⁹⁷ He has, however, many explicit proposals and even has an affair with his boss at *London Nights*. In the end he meets the slim Jemima and falls deeply in love: “You're bloody in love with her, aren't you?”²⁹⁸

Despite his reluctance on a relationship he knows many people; he is liked by his colleagues and spends his evenings and weekends with his friends from outside work.

He is ambitious, driven and very dedicated to his “dream of being a television presenter.”²⁹⁹ At university he has developed a career plan and sticks to it. He knows about the importance of a solid background in journalism and so joined a local paper as a junior reporter after university. From the local paper he would move to regional television “and from regional television he would move to network television. He would be an anchorman. He would present the news.”³⁰⁰ The job as deputy news editor “at the Kilburn Herald is merely a stepping stone to the heady world of television presenting”³⁰¹ and when the chance arises he changes to television. As a deputy news editor at a

291 Green, 1998, p. 367.

292 Green, 1998, p. 449.

293 Green, 1998, p. 7.

294 Green, 1998, p. 112.

295 Green, 1998, p. 112.

296 Green, 1998, p. 8.

297 Green, 1998, p. 78.

298 Green, 1998, p. 440.

299 Green, 1998, p. 43.

300 Green, 1998, p. 44-45.

301 Green, 1998, p. 37.

small paper he has to work irregular hours: “I’m going to be here all night”³⁰² and has to do all kinds of work: he does interviews: “interviewing a local woman whose thirteen-year-old son has just stabbed a schoolteacher”³⁰³, writes stories and edits stories: “I’ve just been given a story to do on edition.”³⁰⁴ The pay is very moderate and he has to share a flat with two other guys.

When he sees an advertisement for a job as a news reporter at television he embraces the opportunity:

“This is it. [...] This is my big break. A reporter specializing in news and politics, this job has my name written all over it. He didn’t hesitate, because Ben, after all, is a doer rather than a thinker. He reached for his pen and scribbled down the first draft of a letter”³⁰⁵

and really gets a job as an entertainment reporter at London Nights: “We’d like to offer you a year’s contract on London Nights as the chief showbusiness reporter.”³⁰⁶ Unfortunately, this is not really the job he wanted but “all it took in television was to get your foot in the door.”³⁰⁷ This turns out to be true and “just a few months down the line, Ben is well and truly established. No longer is he a mere reporter, he is now a presenter. *The presenter.*”³⁰⁸ He is very famous and has to live with the advantages and disadvantages of being London’s favourite television presenter. He is asked for autographs and is the new media darling.

His job is described as very glamorous and exciting: “And now his life is work, parties, launches, interviews.”³⁰⁹ However, Ben is not completely happy with his new fame and “he hates doing publicity.”³¹⁰ Still he gets the most exciting stories and interviews. He is sent to LA to do an interview with a Hollywood star. On the flight he “got upgraded because you’re famous”³¹¹, he gets to stay at the most beautiful hotel and to enjoy the beach. Moreover, he learns lots about celebrity life. However he has to wait over an hour for the interview and is constantly stressed to discover new details about his interview partners: “there’s very little chance of him finding out some fantastic fact about her, something guaranteed to make the front page of every tabloid.”³¹²

302 Green, 1998, p. 99.

303 Green, 1998, p. 78.

304 Green, 1998, p. 99.

305 Green, 1998, p. 93.

306 Green, 1998, p. 178.

307 Green, 1998, p. 179.

308 Green, 1998, p. 294.

309 Green, 1998, p. 295.

310 Green, 1998, p. 301.

311 Green, 1998, p. 375.

312 Green, 1998, p. 402.

London Night's is not Ben's last step on the career ladder but "he's been offered a far better job with another TV station [...]."313

Geraldine Turner is the complete opposite of Jemima. She is size 10 with a perfect figure, a gleaming blonde bob and fashionable clothes. However, she feels insecure and needs other people to tell her how wonderful she is and looks:

"[...] but she is pleased because, like all the girls who are perfectly groomed, below the perfection is a writhing mass of insecurity, and she likes to hear that she's beautiful. It helps her to believe it."314

Although she is a bit superficial she becomes friends with Jemima and turns out to be a "fairy godmother like myself to keep your best interests at heart."315 Firstly, she shows Jemima a picture of how she could look like and so inspires her to lose weight. Then she provides Jemima with a total makeover: "I've been dying to get my hands on you for days. What you need, now that you are losing all this weight, is a serious makeover, and tah dah!"316; she pays for a new haircut and takes her shopping. She also provides her with a kit for flying. Finally she gets things in order when Jemima does not know what to do about Ben: "As usual Auntie Geraldine has come to your rescue [...]."317

Geraldine herself is admired by lots of men but she herself only goes out with rich older men. She has been with her latest boyfriend for eight months but ends the relationship when he wants to spend more time with her. She meets a younger but still very rich man at a Ben's leaving party and the two become an item: "I don't believe this Geraldine. You're in love!"318

Geraldine started as a secretary at the Kilburn Herald but because of her good looks was soon promoted to features. However she is totally untalented and "can't write to save her life."319 Fortunately, Jemima does not mind rewriting her pieces without anyone noticing. Still, Geraldine "is very talented, just not at writing. [...] You haven't got that instinct, but Geraldine has. I know she's not a news reporter, but she could be."320

Diana Macpherson is a career woman. She is a forty-one year old bleached blonde who dresses too sexy for her age. She is single and likes to have fun with pretty young boys. She even has affairs with her employees: "I could do with a pretty boy around the office

313 Green, 1998, p. 430.

314 Green, 1998, p. 27.

315 Green, 1998, p. 144.

316 Green, 1998, p. 189.

317 Green, 1998, p. 443.

318 Green, 1998, p. 331.

319 Green, 1998, p. 118.

320 Green, 1998, p. 118.

again.”³²¹ After having sex with Ben “she thinks she has fallen in love”³²² and “started fantasizing of late about relationships, marriage, babies.”³²³

Diana Macpherson is a strong, successful and scary woman. She is an executive producer on a big television show and “is famous in the media world.”³²⁴ She has worked her way up from a council estate by winning a scholarship to a good girl's school and going on to university. She is so driven because she is scared of ratings and of losing her top position. However she does not need to worry about her job as she is a tough woman and very good at her job. She immediately sees Ben's potential and takes him on as a presenter:

“I just knew he had that star quality the minute he walked in the door. [...] Presenters like Ben are few and far between, and it's my job to spot them, then develop them and realize their full potential.”³²⁵

She generally wants what she cannot have: “And she wants Ben Williams, not only because he's gorgeous, but because he's shown no interest in her whatsoever.”³²⁶ She behaves very much like a man: “Diana Macpherson is well used to bedding rising stars, wannabe celebrities who hang on her every word, feed the aura of power that surrounds her”³²⁷ and is condemned for things that are tolerated in males.

Lauren and Jemima meet at “a large, bustling restaurant called the Broadway Deli”³²⁸ in LA and the two women get along instantly. As they both are a bit lonely they decide to meet up again and soon become close friends.

Lauren came to LA because of a man but “it's all gone horribly wrong and I can't face going home again because I told everyone this time I'd met The One, so I'm stuck here [...]”³²⁹ However, everything turns out well when she meets an other man and their relationship seems “to be going strong, and I've got a feeling she may well stay out there after all [...]”³³⁰

Lauren is “so open, so friendly, so natural”³³¹, warm and loyal and helps Jemima when she leaves Brad. She offers her a place to stay and convinces Jemima that she can

321 Green, 1998, p. 147.

322 Green, 1998, p. 299.

323 Green, 1998, p. 363.

324 Green, 1998, p. 191.

325 Green, 1998, p. 300.

326 Green, 1998, p. 295.

327 Green, 1998, p. 295.

328 Green, 1998, p. 308.

329 Green, 1998, p. 311.

330 Green, 1998, p. 447.

331 Green, 1998, p. 312.

easily work for a glossy magazine as well. Lauren is also from London and is taking a “three-month sabbatical”³³² from her job as a style editor at a top glossy magazine. She loves her job, which is portrayed as very easy and relaxed: “when we're not working, which will be most of the time”³³³ and seems to earn quite a lot of money “because I've got more than enough for both of us.”³³⁴

Sushi for Beginners³³⁵

Sushi for Beginners is the most voluminous book with 564 pages. It was written by Irish best seller author Marian Keyes. It was first published in 2000. Marian Keyes was born in Limerick in 1963 and has lived in Cavan, Cork, Galway, Dublin and London. She studied law and accountancy and started writing short stories in 1993. Her first novel *Watermelon* was an instant success and her many other novels could follow up her initial triumph. Her books have been translated into thirty-three languages and she not only writes novels but also short stories and articles for various publishers. Marian Keyes now lives in Dún Laoghaire with her husband.³³⁶

Sushi for Beginners is about the development and the launch of a new woman's magazine in Dublin, Ireland. Lisa Edwards, instead of being promoted to New York, is sent to Dublin as editor of the new Colleen magazine. She is utterly disappointed but in the course of the novel arranges herself with her situation and succeeds with her job.

Sushi for Beginners refers to a wide range of media and it is the only text from the sample which features a big media cooperation. Randolph Media is a major publishing house with offices in America, the UK, Ireland and even Australia and incorporates print media and broadcasting media. In Great Britain Randolph Media publishes *Femme*, while their major American publication is the *Manhattan* magazine. The Irish portfolio of Randolph Media includes *Hibernian Bride*, *Celtic Health*, *Gaelic Interior*, *Irish Gardening*, *Celtic Knitting*, *Celtic Cars*, *Spud*, *DIY Irish-style*, *The Hip Hib* and *Keol*. “Randolph Media also owned the small but growing television station, Channel 9, and a highly commercial radio station[...].”³³⁷

Other specific – mainly glossy – magazines mentioned are *Femme*, *Marie-Claire*, *Manhattan*, the *New Yorker*, *Elle*, *Red*, *New Woman*, *Company*, *Blake*, *Cosmo*, *Vogue*,

332 Green, 1998, p. 314.

333 Green, 1998, p. 396.

334 Green, 1998, p. 395.

335 cf. Keyes, 2001.

336 cf. <http://www.mariankeyes.com>

337 Keyes, 2001, p. 18.

the (Irish) *Tatler*, *Sweet Sixteen*, *Girl*, *Chic*, *Chic Girly*, *Froth*, *Bloke*, *Loaded*, *Arena*, *Bella* and *Hello!*.

As *Sushi for Beginners* portrays the stylish world of women's magazines, newspapers like the *Sunday Times*, the *Irish Times*, the *Evening Herald*, the *Sunday Independent*, the *FT* and *Ireland on Sunday* are described as being “so boring and depressing.”³³⁸

Broadcasting media only plays a minor role in *Sushi for Beginners*; only *RTE* broadcasting *The Dukes of Hazzard* and *Channel 9* are briefly mentioned.

Colleen magazine itself is supposed to be “young, feisty, funky, sexy [...] Especially sexy [...]. And nothing too clever”³³⁹; “a sexy, sassy read for Irish women aged eighteen to thirty. It should be open-minded, sexually overt and fun.”³⁴⁰ As *Colleen* is actually described as a “dumbed down magazine” the topics which feature in *Colleen* are rather cliché: “a regular piece about meeting men in Ireland”³⁴¹, “a celebrity letter [...] A thousand words, about flying first-class, going to parties with Kate Moss and Anne Friel. Risqué and glam”³⁴², “an *uncelebrity* letter [...] I'm an ordinary girl, I got really pissed last night, I'm two-timing my boyfriend, I hate my job, I lifted a bottle of nail varnish from Boots...”³⁴³, “a regular piece by a man [...] a kind of A-Z of how a man's head works”³⁴⁴, “a problem page with a difference [...] we get a psychic do to the an[s]wers, instead of a counsellor”³⁴⁵, “a fun feature [...] a review of the sexiest hotel beds in Ireland”³⁴⁶ and a “What's Hot and What's not 'list”³⁴⁷. The magazine finally has a “regular cookery feature”³⁴⁸, other “regular features – film, video, horoscope, health, columns”³⁴⁹ and regular “books, film, music, video and net pages”³⁵⁰.

What is especially interesting are the differences between the Irish and the British magazine world. While Britain is a top location for magazines, Ireland is described as “the magazine version of Siberia.”³⁵¹ This main difference being in scales.

In Ireland everything is smaller than in Great Britain: the office itself: “[...] Randolph

338 Keyes, 2001, p. 34.

339 Keyes, 2001, p. 7.

340 Keyes, 2001, p. 66.

341 Keyes, 2001, p. 66.

342 Keyes, 2001, p. 67.

343 Keyes, 2001, p. 67.

344 Keyes, 2001, p. 67.

345 Keyes, 2001, p. 119.

346 Keyes, 2001, p. 123.

347 Keyes, 2001, p. 412.

348 Keyes, 2001, p. 189.

349 Keyes, 2001, p. 317.

350 Keyes, 2001, p. 411-412.

351 Keyes, 2001, p. 9.

Media Ireland only took up one floor - the London offices filled an entire twelve-storey tower"³⁵², the number of employees: "Is that it? Five members of staff? Five?' [...] At *Femme* her secretary had had a secretary."³⁵³, the budget: "Then Jack showed Lisa her freelance budget, but something was wrong with it – it seemed to be missing a nought. At least one"³⁵⁴, the circulation figures: "*Thirty thousand*. Lisa was appalled - if the circulation of *Femme* dropped below three hundred and fifty thousand, heads rolled"³⁵⁵ and the number of publications per year: "Are they weekly or monthly publications?' [...] 'No, twice a year, mostly. The *Catholic Judge* was weekly, but everything else comes out in Spring and Autumn."³⁵⁶

Another difference is how magazines are made in Ireland. At Randolph Media lots of journalists work on more than one publication or one single person is responsible for a whole magazine: "Dervla O'Donnell, pleased to meet you. [...] I'm *Hibernian Bride*, *Celtic Health* and *Gaelic Interiors*."³⁵⁷, "And I'm Kelvin Creedon. [...] I'm *The Hip Hib*, *Celtic Car*, *DIY Irish-style* and *Keol*, our music magazine."³⁵⁸ and "And this is *Spud*, our food magazine. [...] Shauna Griffin edits that as well as *Gaelic Knitting* and *Irish Gardening*."³⁵⁹

Magazine journalism as such is described as being a hard and difficult job:

"Not being able to stay the pace was the worst crime in magazine publishing. Worse than hitting the burgers hard and becoming a size twelve, or telling the world that short hair was in when everyone else's money was riding on shoulder-length locks. Working on the principle that there was only so much endurance knocking around, magazine folk joyously embraced the news that a colleague was 'taking a long, well-deserved rest' or 'spending more time with their family'."³⁶⁰

Although one can get into journalism via normal job interviews, contacts are important when wanting a job. People need to be flexible: "*Two weeks?* But that gives me almost no time..."³⁶¹ and job offers need to be taken, whenever they occur even if one is not really interested in the offered position: "'We've already filled your current position.' [...] Lisa realized that this was *fait accompli*. She had no choice at all."³⁶² Moreover, people are not allowed to fail as the "magazine world is a small one and one needs to make a

352 Keyes, 2001, p. 61.

353 Keyes, 2001, p. 65.

354 Keyes, 2001, p. 69.

355 Keyes, 2001, p. 69.

356 Keyes, 2001, p. 62-63.

357 Keyes, 2001, p. 62.

358 Keyes, 2001, p. 62.

359 Keyes, 2001, p. 63.

360 Keyes, 2001, p. 85-86.

361 Keyes, 2001, p. 7.

362 Keyes, 2001, p. 7.

success before being hired ever again.”

Journalism is a tough job and not everyone can do it and even successful journalists may realize that they cannot cope with working at a magazine any longer:

“Clambering up the greasy pole, humiliating others and taking credit for their work no longer held the appeal it once had. Nor did the vicious rivalry between magazines. Or the savage internecine warfare which existed within the ranks of a title.”³⁶³

Meeting magazine deadlines is stressful: “It's the twelfth of May today [...] The board want the first issue on the stands for the end of August. That sounds like a long time [...], but actually it's not. It's going to be a lot of hard work.”³⁶⁴

One needs to get in contact with designer and cosmetic manufacturers; problems to make the advertising must be solved: “We're not making the advertising [...] Nobody's biting. We're only up to [...] twelve percent of what we'd projected”³⁶⁵ and various issues must be worked on simultaneously: “Even so everyone was working rapidly on the September issue, Lisa had begun to work flat-pan for October, November, even the December issue.”³⁶⁶

All this means long working hours: “It was eighty-thirty before Ashling left the office”³⁶⁷, working at weekends: “Ashling, Trix and Mercedes, cancel Friday night, we'll all be working on Saturday”³⁶⁸ and coming “in early to make up the time.”³⁶⁹ However, most people do not want to work on weekends and bank holidays: “[...] she couldn't go into work on Monday because the building wouldn't be open”³⁷⁰ and it is “impossible to organize any appointments for the weekend.”³⁷¹

This free days also help to keep up the staff's morals as do other special treats:

“Lisa [...] looked at her staff. They'd worked so hard over the past three weeks and Colleen was shaping up to be not a total disaster. She'd just remembered how important it was to keep morale up among workers. 'Ahem, [...] would anyone care for a glass of champagne? [...] To all of you. Well done for all your hard work over the past three weeks.’”³⁷²

363 Keyes, 2001, p. 542.

364 Keyes, 2001, p. 68.

365 Keyes, 2001, p. 120.

366 Keyes, 2001, p. 341.

367 Keyes, 2001, p. 427.

368 Keyes, 2001, p. 342.

369 Keyes, 2001, p. 516.

370 Keyes, 2001, p. 266.

371 Keyes, 2001, p. 266.

372 Keyes, 2001, p. 240-241.

Not only is being a journalist a stressful job but it is an insecure job as well: “you're only as good as your latest ABC audit.”³⁷³ In addition magazines are sometimes closed down: “The Catholic Judger is about to fold. [...] Sales figures are way down”³⁷⁴, it is easy to lose one's job because of relocation or simple mistakes: “Ashling's cock-up couldn't have come at a better time. Now they could just sack her instead of having to shell out redundancy payment.”³⁷⁵

Working for women's magazines is always described as a glamorous job. To a certain extent this is true. Journalists are invited to launches and presentations: “Daily, invitations to press launches arrived in the post – everything from new lines in eye-shadow to openings of shops [...]”³⁷⁶, get free samples and gifts: “The you get your goody bag [...]”³⁷⁷ and meet all kinds of interesting people. However, the job is actually “nerve-wracking!”³⁷⁸ “And to think that everyone thought editing a magazine was glamorous. It was the most terrifying, sleepless-night-inducing job, with no certainty, no respite.”³⁷⁹

Although everybody seem to dream about working at a magazine, nobody is really happy with the job and job satisfaction is generally rather low: “‘Two wonderful years,’ Lisa confirmed, fighting back the urge to stick her finger down her throat and gag.”³⁸⁰ However, this is not only true of the print media but seems to be common in the whole media business: “Like many companies in the Western world, Randolph Media rewarded hard work with poor pay, increasing workloads, demotions and on-a-second's-notice redundancies.”³⁸¹

The work ethic is *Sushi for Beginners* is rather low and the whole media business is described as being vain, shallow and superficial.

Keeping up appearances and pretending are the most important things. A glamorous and trendy appearance is necessary in order to work at a glossy magazine:

373 Keyes, 2001, p. 85.

374 Keyes, 2001, p. 6.

375 Keyes, 2001, p. 14.

376 Keyes, 2001, p. 136.

377 Keyes, 2001, p. 137.

378 Keyes, 2001, p. 101.

379 Keyes, 2001, p. 121.

380 Keyes, 2001, p. 5.

381 Keyes, 2001, p. 5.

“He took one glance at the dark-haired woman in the black trouser-suit and immediately decided against her. She just wasn't glamorous enough for Colleen. He didn't know much about girls' hair, but he had a feeling that it was usually more elaborate than this one's. Wasn't it normal to have a kind of interfered look to it? Surely it shouldn't just hang there on the shoulders, being brown? And fresh-faced is all very well when you're a milkmaid, but not when you're an aspiring assistant editor of a sexy women's magazine [...].”³⁸²

People who do not live up to a certain standard are rarely found in the magazine industry.

People think themselves much more important than they actually are: “Lisa was kept waiting outside the boardroom for twenty-five minutes. After all, Barry and Calvin were very important men.”³⁸³ “Rule number one – never be in time. Everyone knows that! You're too important”³⁸⁴ and “playing I'm-busier-and-more-important-than-you game”³⁸⁵ is common practice.

Networking: “Lisa was on a crash-course to infiltrate the movers and shakers of Irish society”³⁸⁶ is of major importance. Just as important is being in the spotlight oneself: “The following day both the *Irish Times* and the *Evening Herald* ran a front-page picture of the Tara and Lisa clinch”³⁸⁷ and knowing everybody: “[...] Lisa's encyclopaedic knowledge of almost everyone in the room.”³⁸⁸ Networking is so important because personal relationships can always be used to get what one wants at the job: “Lisa had even, at the eleventh hour, secured a celebrity letter. The new boy-band Laddz had just broken through and Shane Dockery [...] remembered Lisa.”³⁸⁹

Unethical is the practice to get free stuff. This can be shoes: “But free Patrick Cox stilettos were free Patrick Cox stilettos”³⁹⁰, haircuts: “Free because she kept plugging the salon in the 'Ones to Watch' section of the magazine”³⁹¹, clothes: “The fashion department at *Femme* had taken up an entire room. Crammed with samples from all the high-street shops, it meant that Lisa hadn't had to buy new clothes for several years”³⁹² and much more. It is also common practice to keep clothes: “The clothes were only a loan but more than once they'd got 'lost' after a shot”³⁹³ and shoes from fashion shoots

382 Keyes, 2001, p. 20.

383 Keyes, 2001, p. 3.

384 Keyes, 2001, p. 138.

385 Keyes, 2001, p. 200.

386 Keyes, 2001, p. 89.

387 Keyes, 2001, p. 144.

388 Keyes, 2001, p. 142.

389 Keyes, 2001, p. 439.

390 Keyes, 2001, p. 4.

391 Keyes, 2001, p. 4.

392 Keyes, 2001, p. 61.

393 Keyes, 2001, p. 68.

or to use prizes donated for quizzes for oneself: “(Kept that way by a year's supply of Rembrandt toothpaste which had been donated for a reader competition, but which Lisa had thought would be much more appreciated in her own bathroom.)”³⁹⁴

Another unethical practice is the method of taking revenge on people you do not like via the magazine: “An Angry Young Man novelist, who ditched her rather nastily, and whose novel she subsequently ensured got vitriolic reviews”³⁹⁵ or, “And a piece Mercedes wrote about a beautician got suddenly binned when they over-plugged Lisa's eyebrows on Wednesday lunch time.”³⁹⁶

Unethical is also to taking someone else's idea for a feature and presenting it as your own: “*Just a minute*, Ashling thought, her brain bruising with shock, *that was my idea...* [...] *You bitch*, Ashling thought.”³⁹⁷

Especially Lisa acts sometimes rather ruthlessly and unethically in her position as editor. She gets to choose the launches she wants to go to: “Lisa, as editor, got first refusals”³⁹⁸ and the best freebies. Moreover, she is

“extra-sweet to Trix. It was a power-generating technique she'd used in the past – divide and conquer. Select a pet, shower them with intimacy, then suddenly abandon them in favour of another. Rotating the position engendered love and fear.”³⁹⁹

Although *Sushi for Beginners* portrays a modern media cooperation, methods of communication and technical equipment are limited: telephones and answering machines ensure personal communication. Photo copiers, computers, the internet and emails are means of electronic communication.

The major six journalists in *Sushi for Beginners* are basically the staff of Colleen magazine: Lisa Edwards, Ashling Kennedy, Trix, Mercedes, Gerry Godson and Jack Devine.

Lisa Edwards is twenty-nine and a very successful woman. She comes from a poor working-class background and “she'd been desperate to escape the mean narrow confines of her home.”⁴⁰⁰ Her qualifications do not come from a proper education as

394 Keyes, 2001, p. 4.

395 Keyes, 2001, p. 171.

396 Keyes, 2001, p. 318.

397 Keyes, 2001, p. 125.

398 Keyes, 2001, p. 136.

399 Keyes, 2001, p. 94.

400 Keyes, 2001, p. 81.

“from the age of thirteen she'd been bunking off school and taking herself up to London to shoplift. [...] At sixteen, as soon as she'd got the business of failing her O-levels out of the way, she left home and went to London for good.”⁴⁰¹

However, Lisa simply is “scarily smart”⁴⁰² and always “knew what was in, what was on its way out, who was worth knowing, and she always looked spectacularly, astonishingly, just-this-minute fashionable.”⁴⁰³ Looks are very important to Lisa and she is constantly concerned with her appearance: “[...] Lisa went to the ladies' to do her hourly check on her appearance.”⁴⁰⁴ She is well-groomed with “caramel-coloured hair, showing her free highlights to their best advantage”⁴⁰⁵ and takes being beautiful to extremes:

“in her natural state – not that she's been in that for a very long time – she was a pretty enough girl. But with huge amounts of effort she knew, she'd upgraded herself from attractive to fabulous. As well as the usual attention to her hair, nails, skin, make-up and clothes, she popped huge amounts of vitamins, drank sixteen glasses of water a day, only snorted cocaine on special occasions and ever six months had a botulism injection to her forehead.”⁴⁰⁶

Furthermore, she is obsessed with her weight and her life is a constant diet: “For the past ten years she'd been constantly hungry. So hungry that she barely noticed it now.”⁴⁰⁷

Lisa is very ambitious, driven, though and not liked by her colleagues and employees: “We'll miss you [...] - Like a hole in the head.”⁴⁰⁸ She is treacherous and ruthless, always wants to appear as the best and, therefore, does not stop at stealing ideas, humiliating colleagues and expecting impossible things; she is a slave driver. She is a survivor, who never shows any weakness or disappointment: “Lisa tried to put a gloss on it. She'd never admit she was disappointed”⁴⁰⁹ and resents people catching her in a bad moment: “'I'm not usually like this.' Lisa's face was hard. 'I don't want it mentioned again.’”⁴¹⁰

Until now her career has always been perfect. She was a junior at *Sweet Sixteen*, moved on to features at *Girls*, became an assistant editor as *Chic* and now has been with *Femme* for nearly four years, two years as editor. For her career she has sacrificed

401 Keyes, 2001, p. 81-82.

402 Keyes, 2001, p. 84.

403 Keyes, 2001, p. 84.

404 Keyes, 2001, p. 306.

405 Keyes, 2001, p. 4.

406 Keyes, 2001, p. 95.

407 Keyes, 2001, p. 95.

408 Keyes, 2001, p. 9.

409 Keyes, 2001, p. 8.

410 Keyes, 2001, p. 70.

everything:

“She'd paid her dues at *Femme*, and made sacrifices that even *she'd* never intended to make: starting at seven-thirty most mornings, doing twelve, thirteen, fourteen-hour days, then going to press does when she finally switched off her computer. She often came to work on Saturdays, Sundays, even bank-holiday Mondays.”⁴¹¹

Even her marriage broke up because of her unreasonably long working hours.

However, when she does not get promoted to deputy editor of Manhattan magazine in New York but to editor of a new Irish magazine she is heavily disappointed and cannot really cope with the idea of relocating to Dublin: “Now that she was actually here, the shock hit her with unprecedented force. How had her life gone so horribly wrong?”⁴¹²

As editor of *Colleen* she is responsible for the whole magazine: features, articles, advertisements, the appearance of the magazine and the circulation numbers. She needs to go to (evening) press does, launches and comedy gigs. It is also her right to go to the fashion shows but *Colleen* cannot yet afford this luxury.

As she is “a slave-driver with huge visions for the magazine”⁴¹³ she manages to make *Colleen* “a dazzling achievement”⁴¹⁴ and although “the magazine was great, [...], the party was a triumph”⁴¹⁵, she does not feel triumphant because “it was only a thirty k circulation in a backwater. What was the big deal?”⁴¹⁶

During her stay in Ireland her perspective on her life changes. She gets “softer, kinder, better”⁴¹⁷, remembers her roots: “*You can take a girl out of the council house, but you can't take the council house out of the girl*, she half-laughed to herself”⁴¹⁸ and even manages to take her career not as seriously as before. She starts to relax, to spend time away from the office, to make friends and even gets back together with her ex-husband: “I have come to win you back. [...] Because you are the best.”⁴¹⁹

After her contract with *Colleen* magazine expires she decides to give up her job as a journalist and “to look for consultancy work”⁴²⁰ in London.

Ashling Kennedy is 31 and a rather nondescript looking woman: “She'd made

411 Keyes, 2001, p. 5.

412 Keyes, 2001, p. 33.

413 Keyes, 2001, p. 89.

414 Keyes, 2001, p. 439.

415 Keyes, 2001, p. 448.

416 Keyes, 2001, p. 448.

417 Keyes, 2001, p. 555.

418 Keyes, 2001, p. 512.

419 Keyes, 2001, p. 560.

420 Keyes, 2001, p. 543.

ordinariness into an art-form.”⁴²¹ She does not have a waist and hates her legs. Her hair is straight and brown and “even though she had lipstick on her teeth, at least she was *wearing* lipstick.”⁴²² She is insecure: “‘I’ve low self-esteem’”⁴²³ and very impressed by Lisa’s looks and style: “‘She is very beautiful [...] And thin and clever and has fantastic clothes.’”⁴²⁴

Her childhood was not happy because her mother suffered from depression and Ashling was put into the mother role: “‘Do your best to keep an eye on her.’ Ashling nodded gravely, and thought to herself, *He shouldn’t have said that to me, I’m only a little girl.*”⁴²⁵ Therefore she is very organised and ready for all eventualities. She carries around a big bag with Band Aids, Aspirins, a pen and notepad, a portable sewing kit, rescue remedy, tissues, Anadins, a mirror, umbrellas and safety pins; her very appropriate nickname is “‘Little Miss Fix-it’”.⁴²⁶

She is a good friend and tries to befriend her new colleagues and even the homeless man, who lives on her doorstep. In a relationship she is insecure: “A whole new terrifying vista opened up: perhaps it wasn’t just a fight, maybe it was The End”⁴²⁷ and devoted: “The desire to oblige made her voluble.”⁴²⁸ This only changes when she becomes an item with her boss Jack Devine.

In general she is a warm, caring, sympathetic and superstitious person, who has a strong sense of justice: “The homeless men. In the photo [...] Can we give them something? [...] A present or...something. For being in the photo and making it so good.”⁴²⁹

Her sensitive nature makes her prone to ear infections when she is stressed and depressions. When she discovers that her best friend has an affair with her boyfriend she has a nervous breakdown and can only overcome her depression with the help of drugs. Finally she finds true love in a fair and equal relationship with her boss, Jack Devine.

Ashling is “the most reliable, hard-working employee one could have.”⁴³⁰ She has worked at an Irish woman magazine for eight years but did not really enjoy it. The job

421 Keyes, 2001, p. 65.

422 Keyes, 2001, p. 23.

423 Keyes, 2001, p. 12.

424 Keyes, 2001, p. 75.

425 Keyes, 2001, p. 397.

426 Keyes, 2001, p. 108.

427 Keyes, 2001, p. 395.

428 Keyes, 2001, p. 396.

429 Keyes, 2001, p. 356.

430 Keyes, 2001, p. 14.

was boring and not very demanding: “[...] because *Women’s Place* was put together according to a very strict, tried-and-tested formula”⁴³¹ although she did basically the whole magazine herself: “Ashling had been fiction editor, fashion editor, health and beauty editor, handiworks editor, cookery editor, agony aunt, copy editor, spiritual advisor all rolled into one.”⁴³² She was fired because of a simple mistake.

At *Colleen* magazine she has the job as assistant editor. She “can produce tag-lines, headings and short pieces, I haven’t much experience of writing long articles”⁴³³; actually Ashling is not a “proper journalist: she was simply a good organizer, with an eye for detail”⁴³⁴ and therefore makes “a good second-in-command.”⁴³⁵

At *Colleen* she is more like a general dogsbody and her work chores include “copying several million press releases for distribution to every clothes designer and cosmetic manufacturer in the universe”⁴³⁶, to make a “list of the hundred most sexy, interesting, talented Irish people”⁴³⁷, “setting up a database for Lisa”⁴³⁸ but also going to publicity does and writing articles. However,

“her duties at *Colleen* still weren’t entirely clear. She feared she could be told to do *anything* and her stomach twisted into a knot as she waited to be told to do something that she wasn’t able to.”⁴³⁹

Trix, “my name is Patricia, but there’s no point calling me that because I won’t answer to it”⁴⁴⁰ is peach-pretty but though twenty-one year old woman. She is extremely fashionable and always wears little see-through dresses with high heels. She loves

“the glittery, luscious-sticky look of a devotee of the more-is-more school of slapplication. Her eyebrows were plucked almost into non-existence, her lipliner was so thick and dark she looked as if she had a moustache, and her entire head of blonde hair was caught up in dozens of tiny, evenly spaced sparkly butterfly clips.”⁴⁴¹

As she is still very young she likes to enjoy her life: she prefers going out and testing her luck to a serious relationship.

Formerly the receptionist at Randolph Media she gets promoted to Lisa’s PA:

431 Keyes, 2001, p. 12.

432 Keyes, 2001, p. 12.

433 Keyes, 2001, p. 21.

434 Keyes, 2001, p. 18.

435 Keyes, 2001, p. 22.

436 Keyes, 2001, p. 87.

437 Keyes, 2001, p. 89.

438 Keyes, 2001, p. 246.

439 Keyes, 2001, p. 101.

440 Keyes, 2001, p. 60.

441 Keyes, 2001, p. 18-19.

“I'd be the first to admit my typing isn't the best [...] But my lying is fantastic, easily sixty words a minute. I can say you're in a meeting to anyone you don't want to talk to and they'll never suspect. Unless you want them to suspect. I can do intimidation too, see?”⁴⁴²

Her main job is to know Lisa's diary and to arrange “breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea or dinner with [...] the movers and shakers of Irish society.”⁴⁴³, but she also has to type up articles and features. Trix loves doing a “shop run [...] twice a day, morning and afternoon”⁴⁴⁴ and “doing the lunch run, not because she wished to be of service to her colleagues, but because it ensured she got two lunch-hours.”⁴⁴⁵ Generally it seems that she does not work very hard or gets much work done but she is tough, reminds Lisa of her younger self and is sure to become a great editor in time: “Lisa had no doubt that one day Trix would edit a magazine – and so ruthless she'd make Lisa look like Mother Teresa by comparison.”⁴⁴⁶

Mercedes is the “quiet and extremely posh”⁴⁴⁷ fashion and beauty editor at *Colleen*. “Married to a rich fella, hangs around with a horsey crowd and I get the impression her job is only a hobby.”⁴⁴⁸ She is “sleek and silent, dark and sinuous as liquorice”⁴⁴⁹ and Lisa feels threatened by her lofty behaviour and attitude and does everything to humiliate Mercedes.

As fashion and beauty editor she organizes fashion shoots, interviews designers and goes to publicity does. Mercedes joined *Colleen* after working for *Ireland on Sunday* and leaves *Colleen* after the launch as “she's got a job in New York”⁴⁵⁰ at a teen magazine.

Gerry Godson is not really a journalist but *Colleen's* art director. He is quiet, good-humoured, welcoming and – very important in the hectic media world – an “oasis of calm, quiet reassurance, who never seemed to panic, no matter how seemingly obscure or difficult the request.”⁴⁵¹ He is also very good at his job. He is responsible for the cover, the layout and the general appearance of the magazine and “the mood he'd created was remarkably sexy and fun.”⁴⁵²

442 Keyes, 2001, p. 60-61.

443 Keyes, 2001, p. 89.

444 Keyes, 2001, p. 116.

445 Keyes, 2001, p. 387.

446 Keyes, 2001, p. 555-556.

447 Keyes, 2001, p. 108.

448 Keyes, 2001, p. 108.

449 Keyes, 2001, p. 66.

450 Keyes, 2001, p. 450.

451 Keyes, 2001, p. 214.

452 Keyes, 2001, p. 124.

Not directly working at Colleen magazine but responsible for it is “Jack [Devine], with his dark hair, dark eyes, dark-blue suits and dark mood”⁴⁵³ He is the Irish “Managing Director of a commercial television station, a radio station and several successful magazines at the age of thirty-two.”⁴⁵⁴

He comes from a middle class background and is very down to earth: “He’d love to be a humble craftsman, and do an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay.”⁴⁵⁵ He likes rustic homes, is a handyman, loves sailing, plays computer games, goes to the pub quite a lot and enjoys eating out. Most importantly, his job is just a job for him and he is overly ambitious or career minded, despite his six-figure salary. He

“left college with an MA in communications, did the obligatory Irish stint abroad – two years in a New York media group, four in San Francisco at a cable network – returned to Ireland just in time for the economic miracle, worked for a newspaper group, got the boot [...]. Then two years ago old Calvin Carter”⁴⁵⁶

offered him the job as MD at Randolph Media.

Although Jack is responsible for the print sector in Ireland as well, he actually prefers working at the television station to magazines and enjoys “negotiations with technicians at the TV station”⁴⁵⁷ the technician’s union or “negotiations with a US network to persuade them not to sell their award-winning series to RTE but to Channel 9 instead.”⁴⁵⁸ He is actually angry when he is “charged with setting up this stupid new magazine. The last thing the world needs is another women’s magazine!”⁴⁵⁹

However, he is a professional and does what is expected of him and even starts to enjoy his new responsibility. He has lunch with his employees, spends free time with them and really values them. He sends Lisa flowers when she is off work and he even visits Ashling during her depression.

What he is not aware of until almost the end of the novel is that he is attracted to Ashling. He behaves in a rather distant and unfriendly way towards her but nevertheless buys her cigarettes or helps her to wash her hair when she cannot do it because of an ear infection: “Come on to the bathroom till we wash your hair.”⁴⁶⁰

When his rather turbulent relationship with Mai ends, he is firstly attracted to Lisa but soon realises that he has feelings for Ashling: “I can think of nothing else apart from you

453 Keyes, 2001, p. 185.

454 Keyes, 2001, p. 202.

455 Keyes, 2001, p. 118.

456 Keyes, 2001, p. 203.

457 Keyes, 2001, p. 21.

458 Keyes, 2001, p. 21.

459 Keyes, 2001, p. 21.

460 Keyes, 2001, p. 434.

[...] It's affecting everything"⁴⁶¹ and the two become a couple in the end: "[...] their mouths met in a hard kiss."⁴⁶²

How Emily Got Promoted⁴⁶³

How Emily Got Promoted is a short story by Sarah Webb written in 2004 and published in the anthology *Irish Girls Are Back In Town*. The short story encompasses 25 pages. Irish author Sarah Webb writes for adults and children alike. She has published nine novels and various short stories in the chick lit genre. After studying Arts at Trinity College in Dublin she worked for various bookshops before writing her own novels. Besides writing novels she writes articles for various newspapers and magazines, reviews children books for the *Irish Independent*, organizes reading days and does workshops at schools and festivals. She lives in Dún Laoghaire in County Dublin with her partner Ben and their three children.⁴⁶⁴

How Emily Got Promoted is set in Ireland and tells how Emily, who is a freelance writer, secures an interview that changes her life. By pure chance she discovers the lesbian relationship between two women and can use this knowledge to get an interview with an Irish-born Hollywood star. Her editor is so impressed that Emily is finally offered a job as a staff writer at *Ruby* magazine.

The short story mostly mentions print media like newspapers, women's magazines, lifestyle magazines and travel magazines. The broadcasting media are mentioned only in passing and do not play an important role.

Specifically mentioned are the *The Irish Times*, *Dublin Today*, and the two women magazines *Joy* and *Ruby*.

As Emily works for women magazines the topics she writes about are mostly trivial: "[...] something glitzy and 'now', maybe an interview with a designer, something about shoes, sex..."⁴⁶⁵

How Emily Got Promoted portrays journalism as a difficult and stressful job: "Emily, bad news I'm afraid. [...] Rex is completely booked up for the whole day and night.' [...] What the hell am I going to do now? she thought."⁴⁶⁶ One needs to be ambitious and

461 Keyes, 2001, p. 545.

462 Keyes, 2001, p. 550.

463 cf. Webb, 2004.

464 cf. <http://www.sarahwebb.info>

465 Webb, 2004, p. 129.

466 Webb, 2004, p. 140.

driven to get to a top position: “[...] a string, ambitious women who, although three years younger than Emily, had clawed her way to the journalistic top and intended to stay there.”⁴⁶⁷

In order to get good stories or interviews contacts and friends are very useful: “Lou Lou Brady represents the publisher; I could give you her number”⁴⁶⁸ and “I probably shouldn't tell you this, but Rex O'Hara's new film is opening tomorrow night in the Savoy-----”⁴⁶⁹

Especially stressful is working as a freelancer.

“[...] freelancing is exhausting – no security – you were only as good as your last piece and you had to spend your life licking up to editors, in the hope that they would throw some decent work your way.”⁴⁷⁰

Moreover, certain parts of society are portrayed as being somehow wary of freelancers: “[...] that banks didn't look too kindly on freelancers.”⁴⁷¹

However working as a freelancer has good sides as well: “[...] that was the joy of working for yourself – you could go shopping whenever it was quiet and catch up in the evening.”⁴⁷²

Staff writers are in a more secure position than freelancers but even their jobs are not totally secure: “[...] ever since *Dublin Today*, the newspaper where she had been fashion editor, had gone belly-up.”⁴⁷³

While the job satisfaction of journalists is not that high in *How Emily Got Promoted*, journalism is still described as a glamorous and exciting occupation: “Emily's told me about your job, it sounds fascinating. Sit down and tell me all about it.”⁴⁷⁴ People envy Emily her job, although some would never admit it: “She's just jealous. She'd love your job, you know.”⁴⁷⁵

Work ethics are portrayed as being biased. Friends and contacts are very useful when trying to get a good story and journalists do not hesitate to call on their contacts: “Listen, I need your help, do you have a second?”⁴⁷⁶ In the media world this kind of behaviour is considered normal and acceptable: “Hi, Emily, how can I help you?’ Lou

467 Webb, 2004, p. 129.

468 Webb, 2004, p. 130.

469 Webb, 2004, p. 132.

470 Webb, 2004, p. 130.

471 Webb, 2004, p. 132.

472 Webb, 2004, p. 131.

473 Webb, 2004, p. 130.

474 Webb, 2004, p. 142.

475 Webb, 2004, p. 139.

476 Webb, 2004, p. 128.

Lou came straight to the point.”⁴⁷⁷ However outside the media world people do not always react kindly when asked for favours:

“‘In fact I was hoping to interview him for Ruby. Maybe you could ask him for me.’ [...] Millie stared at her. ‘Let’s just forget you said that, shall we, dear? So crass [...] Really, Emily. Have you no manners?’”⁴⁷⁸

When the need arises journalists do not mind blackmailing otherwise uncooperative informants: “‘Please don’t say anything, Emily. Please?’ Emily thought for a moment. ‘I might, then again I might not. It depends.’”⁴⁷⁹

There are only three characters in the short story that have a connection to journalism, the protagonist Emily, her friend Anita and Emily’s editor Kitty.

Emily is a career girl: “[...] her career came first at the moment [...]”⁴⁸⁰ She is in her late twenties and has work freelance for various magazine for three years and wants to get promoted to staff writer at *Ruby* magazine.

She has been with her boyfriend Harry for quite a while and generally has a very big circle of friends and acquaintances. A lot of her friends work in the media as well, but she also knows a lot of people from outside the media industry.

She works as a freelancer for various newspapers and magazines but really wants to be a staff writer. As a freelancer she can often choose her topics herself and, therefore, she writes about all kinds of things. She organizes fashion shoots: “‘I spent all morning shooting flat packs of shoes’”⁴⁸¹, writes 3000 word pieces and does interviews. As being a freelancer is very stressful Emily is a rather impatient person. She is always busy and on the run “‘then again, maybe Emily would always be manic.’”⁴⁸²

Emily is desperate for a job as a staff writer at *Ruby* magazine and does not even mind blackmailing an acquaintance into getting her an interview with an Irish Hollywood actor. Her ambition and cunningness not only get her the praise of her editor but also the desired promotion: “‘Emily, we’d like to offer you the staff job at Ruby if you’re interested. You have a good solid CV and you’re not afraid to go after big stories. We were most impressed with the Rex O’Hara interview.’”⁴⁸³

Anita is one of Emily’s best friends. She is “‘an ex-journalist’”⁴⁸⁴ and now has her own

477 Webb, 2004, p. 131.

478 Webb, 2004, p. 144.

479 Webb, 2004, p. 150.

480 Webb, 2004, p. 137.

481 Webb, 2004, p. 138.

482 Webb, 2004, p. 130.

483 Webb, 2004, p. 151.

484 Webb, 2004, p. 128.

fashion PR-company. She is ambitious and strong-willed and this makes her so successful.

Due to her job she knows a lot of people and has many useful contacts. She does not hesitate to help her friend brainstorm for ideas:

“[...] an interview with Steven Bailey [...] his new collection is creating quite a stir, [...] a feature on Bez Gogging's shoes, [...] the Fuchsia Pink Fashion Ball, [...] the new velour tracksuit from the Bebop range, [...] thongs, [...] glam celebrity chef [...]”⁴⁸⁵

and does not mind sharing her contacts with Emily.

Anita, like Emily is a career girl: “She had a PR empire to build up after all”⁴⁸⁶, who has a hectic social life but no serious relationship: “She was currently enjoying a rather fun flirtation with a much younger male model called Freddy.”⁴⁸⁷

Kitty is Emily's editor and only very briefly mentioned. Despite her young age she has a top position and did not get there by chance:

“[...] Kitty was the editor of Ruby magazine, a string, ambitious woman who, although three years younger than Emily, had clawed her way to the journalistic top and intended to stay there.”⁴⁸⁸

Cocktails For Three⁴⁸⁹

Cocktails For Three encompasses 301 pages, was written by Madeleine Wickham and published in Britain in 2000. Madeleine Wickham is better known under her alias Sophie Kinsella; author of the famous *Shopaholic* series and other bestsellers like *Undomestic Goddess*, *Can You Keep A Secret?* or *Twenties Girl*. She was born in London and studied Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford University. After university she worked as a financial journalist while writing her first novel at the age of 24. Today she is one of the most successful and best-known chick lit authors. A mother of two she lives in London with her husband.⁴⁹⁰

Cocktails for Three is set mainly in London and is about three women, who work at the same magazine, the *Londoner*. As Maggie, Candice and Roxanne are not only co-workers but also best friends the story focuses not so much on journalism but on the private lives of the protagonists. Nevertheless the novel portrays journalism and the workings of an editorial office at a magazine.

⁴⁸⁵ Webb, 2004, p. 129.

⁴⁸⁶ Webb, 2004, p. 131.

⁴⁸⁷ Webb, 2004, p. 131.

⁴⁸⁸ Webb, 2004, p. 129.

⁴⁸⁹ cf. Wickham, 2000.

⁴⁹⁰ cf. <http://www.sophiekinsella.co.uk>

Cocktails for Three mentions the two typical kinds of media: the printing press with newspaper and various magazines and the broadcasting media. However only very few explicit media products are mentioned: the *Londoner*, the *New York Times*, the *Evening Standard*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *Radio Three*. What is interesting is the mentioning of Fleet Street, London's former printing press centre.

As *Cocktails for Three* deals with a middle of the road magazine the topics are rather diverse and cover a wide range of interest: “[...] London transport in the summer”⁴⁹¹, the opening of a new hotel in Cyprus, detox diets, safaris in Africa, holiday fashion, “the plight of the elderly in London's hospitals”⁴⁹²

Again *Cocktails for Three* portrays journalism as a difficult job. Getting a job at a newspaper and a magazine is very difficult or practically impossible without recommendation: “Maggie, you know Heather hasn't got a chance unless you recommend her”⁴⁹³ and “How many jobs are got through nepotism? How many people drop names and use contacts and pretend they're better than they are?”⁴⁹⁴

Journalism is not portrayed as being a particularly stressful job: “[...] the room was full of mid-month, Monday morning lethargy. Until the eleven o'clock meeting, no real work would be done”⁴⁹⁵ and “She arrived at the editorial office a little after nine-thirty [...]”⁴⁹⁶ However, this is not always the case: “[...] on press day it was usually mayhem”⁴⁹⁷ and not true for every member of staff: “[...] Maggie, as editor of the magazine, often had to stay for meetings later than the others. On the whole “it was a sociable, relaxed company.”⁴⁹⁸ Despite this relaxed attitude people know that journalism is not a particularly secure job: “[...] the future was uncertain for everybody. [...] No-one could afford to take any chances.”⁴⁹⁹

Successful and good journalists are portrayed as being very disciplined at their job. Good journalists are hard-working: “[...] she went into work early and sat, patiently working through the pages Heather had been given to correct”⁵⁰⁰, do whatever is needed to be done: “Come on, this is silly! I'll do some of this work. It won't take me

491 Wickham, 2000, p. 58.

492 Wickham, 2000, p. 281.

493 Wickham, 2000, p. 28.

494 Wickham, 2000, p. 131-132.

495 Wickham, 2000, p. 76.

496 Wickham, 2000, p. 94.

497 Wickham, 2000, p. 76.

498 Wickham, 2000, p. 52.

499 Wickham, 2000, p. 232-233.

500 Wickham, 2000, p. 143.

nearly as long”⁵⁰¹, work on a wide variety of topics and do not mind doing work below their qualifications. Besides they have a certain amount of talent and really love their job: “[...] staff tended to join Allsopp Publications and stay for years.”⁵⁰²

Those who are not described as hard-working (e.g. “I brought these pages home to work over the weekend, and I forgot to do them”⁵⁰³) are not really successful and do not achieve much in the long run. They might be well-liked and important for a little while but will not get the approval or promotion they want. They are portrayed as being lazy: “I got behind [...] Alicia gave me a load of stuff to do, and I...I don't know, maybe I'm not as quick as everyone else”⁵⁰⁴, stupid, pompous, self-important, keen on appearances and generally not satisfied with their job.

Cocktails for Three describes journalism as being a rather glamorous dream job. Journalists are invited to all sorts of events: “It had been at the first night of a star-laden visiting production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Barbican”⁵⁰⁵ and get great gifts: “[...] free gifts from a reception she's once attended sponsored by Bollinger [...]”⁵⁰⁶ They enjoy many advantages and are highly satisfied with their jobs: “Candice had been there five years and had never considered leaving”⁵⁰⁷ and ““I feel so lucky to be working here.””⁵⁰⁸ Interesting is the work ethic that is portrayed in the novel. While certain characters do not mind doing unethical things others are totally opposed to it.

In *Cocktails for Three* unethical methods are not used in order to get stories or pictures but to gain jobs. Candice goes behind her editor's back in order to help Heather to get a job and even provides a piece of her own writing for her as a sample: ““It's a short piece I wrote a few months ago.””⁵⁰⁹

Heather uses her good-looks and pretended friendliness to make friends: “[...] a wonderful new friend”⁵¹⁰, to get a place to live and a job: “Candice look at everything you are doing for me. A job, a place to stay...”⁵¹¹

Justin does not investigate the accusations: ““I'm talking about claiming false

501 Wickham, 2000, p. 143.

502 Wickham, 2000, p. 52.

503 Wickham, 2000, p. 142.

504 Wickham, 2000, p. 142.

505 Wickham, 2000, p. 113.

506 Wickham, 2000, p. 69.

507 Wickham, 2000, p. 52.

508 Wickham, 2000, p. 95.

509 Wickham, 2000, p. 58.

510 Wickham, 2000, p. 73.

511 Wickham, 2000, p. 66.

expenses.”⁵¹² against Candice properly but simply suspends her from her job. Even worse is that Justin believes Heather although he has known Candice for much longer. Furthermore, Justin works very hard to get Maggie's job as editor of the magazine and does not mind going behind Maggie's back to further his own career: “Justin turned at the sound of Maggie's voice although he'd been scalded. As he saw her, his face fell spectacularly – then, just as spectacularly, repositioning itself in an expression of delight.”⁵¹³

However unethical behaviour does not get Heather or Justin anywhere but honesty, loyalty and hard work are rewarded.

The staff of the *Londoner* works in the editorial office

“a long, large room with windows at each end. It held seven desks-six for the members of editorial staff and one for the editorial secretary, Kelly. At times it could be a loud and noisy place to work, an press day it was usually mayhem.”⁵¹⁴

The technical equipment and modes of communication do not play a big role in the novel. The editorial office has phones, computers and a copy machine, and the characters use to keep in touch by phone or emails.

The six major journalistic characters in *Cocktails for Three* are Candice Brewin, Roxanne Miller, Maggie Phillips, Heather Trelawney, Justin Vellis and Ralph Allsopp. They all occupy various positions at the *Londoner* and feature more or less prominently in the novel.

Candice Brewin is in her late twenties but looks younger. She has a childlike face with wide trusting eyes and glowing skin. She has short cropped hair and wears suits to work. She comes from a middle class background and had a safe and luxurious upbringing until her father died and large debts were discovered. She is well-educated and visited a public school, took a gap year “[...] history of art lessons in Florence followed by trekking in Nepal”⁵¹⁵ and went to university.

Although she does not particularly care about money she is rather well off; she has lived in a two bedroom flat in a Victorian house for the past two years near Highbury and Islington. She has recently broken up with her boyfriend Justin Wellis, a co-worker and new editor of the *Londoner*. Her best friends are Roxanne and Maggie, who she meets

512 Wickham, 2000, p. 226.

513 Wickham, 2000, p. 284.

514 Wickham, 2000, p. 76.

515 Wickham, 2000, p. 39.

once a month for Cocktails: “And so the monthly cocktail club had been born.”⁵¹⁶

She works as a staff writer at the *Londoner* and is very happy with her job: “I treasure [...] my job. I love my job. But not for the money”⁵¹⁷ She has been with the *Londoner* for quite a long time and when being fired decides to fight for her dream job: “I want my job back. [...] I'm not waiting for the hearing. I want my job back, Ed.”⁵¹⁸ She is very good at her job: “Everything Candice writes is on the nail.”⁵¹⁹ and writes about a variety of topics.

As she is a very kind and generous person people trust her and she is specially known for her good interviewing skills. She is also very trusting, emphatic and cannot say no: “And I feel so bad, saying no.”⁵²⁰ She wants to do good and make the world a better place: “That's the world. [...] Like it or slit your wrists. Or try to change it.”⁵²¹ Although those are generally good character traits they nearly cost Candice her job as she is set up by Heather.

Roxanne Miller is 33 years old and not always happy with her age. She is very attractive with good cheekbones, blue eyes, a long slightly crooked nose, bronzy blond hair and a tan. She is very thin and always looks glamorous: “a glossy, materialistic girl – bright and talented but with no real depth.”⁵²² However, this is not Roxanne's real character. She is very tough at the outside and fools everyone with her brazen behaviour. She drinks: “I'm not an alcoholic. I'm an alcohol-lover”⁵²³ and smokes, pretends to have many lovers and toyboys all around the world and pretends to be very cool about her affair with “Mr Married with Kids.”⁵²⁴ In reality she is nice, loyal, insecure: “[...] she'd felt a sudden cold fear of being left alone”⁵²⁵, loves deeply: “[...] when the love of your life was a married man”⁵²⁶ and wants to be loved in return: “Does he realize, she thought, that what I have just described is a honeymoon?”⁵²⁷

She has an affair with her boss Ralph: “Hey, I'm kissing the boss”⁵²⁸, is madly in love with him and even dreams of a life together. Because of him she has turned down

516 Wickham, 2000, p. 8.

517 Wickham, 2000, p. 116.

518 Wickham, 2000, p. 292.

519 Wickham, 2000, p. 130.

520 Wickham, 2000, p. 16.

521 Wickham, 2000, p. 43.

522 Wickham, 2000, p. 113.

523 Wickham, 2000, p. 180.

524 Wickham, 2000, p. 14.

525 Wickham, 2000, p. 205.

526 Wickham, 2000, p. 50.

527 Wickham, 2000, p. 119.

528 Wickham, 2000, p. 114.

various exiting job offers: "She would mention job opportunities in Scotland, in Spain, in America – some genuine, some fabricated. [...] to make him realize that she was choosing to be with him [...]"⁵²⁹ She is devastated when he ends their relationship: "Through a sea of pain, Roxanne watched him go; heard the front door shut"⁵³⁰ and flees the country. When she learns about her lover's death from a newspaper she suffers a nervous breakdown: "Pain hit Roxanne like a hammer. She stared at his picture and felt herself to start shudder, to retch [...] Tears began to course down her face in hot streams"⁵³¹ and cannot image how to cope every again: "Grief was like a grey fog that permeated every move, every thought; that made everything seem pointless."⁵³² However, his death also sets her free and she finally takes up her perfect job in Cyprus.

She works as a freelancer for the *Londoner* and her job involves constant travelling. She mostly writes travel features and has been to the Caribbean, Antigua, Cyprus, Nice, Nairobi and many other destinations. She is an experienced traveller and spends most of her time on jobs. Therefore she is seldom in the office: "[...] and at times only seemed to use the office to make long-distance calls, arranging the next foreign jaunt."⁵³³ Her job contributes to her mysterious and glamorous aura.

Because of her job she has many useful contacts and friends: "Gerhard, the general manager, was an old friend and, after, a quick call to the hotel group's publicity department, had managed to find her a spare room at a vastly reduced rate"⁵³⁴ and "[...] a friends at the Hilton. A week at half-rate and concessions on a two-week safari."⁵³⁵

Roxanne's job is by far the most glamorous as she gets to stay at hotels and to enjoy their luxury: "A Mediterranean paradise of blazing sun, blue waters and five star luxury."⁵³⁶ As a freelancer she can work whenever and wherever she wants. The downside is of course that she has to work on a wide variety of topics to satisfy all the demands her various employers have: "[...] two-thousand-word piece for the *Londoner* on holidaying in Cyprus. [...] a comprehensive survey for the property pages of one of the national newspaper. And for their rivals, under a pseudonym [...] a light-hearted

529 Wickham, 2000, p. 149.

530 Wickham, 2000, p. 152.

531 Wickham, 2000, p. 208.

532 Wickham, 2000, p. 243.

533 Wickham, 2000, p. 8.

534 Wickham, 2000, p. 204.

535 Wickham, 2000, p. 207.

536 Wickham, 2000, p. 71.

diary-type piece on living in Cyprus as an expatriate.”⁵³⁷ Although her job is described as being perfect, she has to work hard to make enough money and there is no security whatsoever.

Maggie Phillips is thirty-two and expects her first child. She is married to Giles, a rather rich banker and spends her days in their country mansion. Before maternity leave she was the editor of the *Londoner*. She is a very successful woman and even “[...] was voted Editor of the Year?”⁵³⁸

She is “clever, organised and always on top of things”⁵³⁹. As she is the editor of the *Londoner* her job differs slightly from that of a staff writer or freelancer. She is in charge of hiring people, has to attend early and late meetings and is generally more concerned with administration than with actual writing: “I know about page layout, and editorial ratios and commissioning budgets.”⁵⁴⁰ She is “used to being the boss [...] running the show”⁵⁴¹ and is not afraid of speaking her mind and of standing up for her beliefs: “I would say, Justin, that not only have you shown a partisan and improper haste to get rid of a talented employee, but that your lack of judgement has cost the company substantially in terms of lost time, disruption and damage morals.”⁵⁴²

Although she is so successful in her job she is terrified of being a mother: “It’s that clear to the world that I [...] have barely ever touched a baby. Let alone given birth to one. [...] Oh God, What am I doing?”⁵⁴³

She does not want to think about the baby and cannot enjoy her maternity leave: “She closed her eyes and thought, with a pang, of her office at the *Londoner*. Her organized, civilized office, full of grown-ups; full of wit and sophistication and not a baby in sight.”⁵⁴⁴ She is utterly disappointed when motherhood is not as easy as she thought. She nearly has a nervous breakdown as she wants to do everything herself and feels like a failure when she cannot: “[...] I do everything so... [...] badly.”⁵⁴⁵

She is miserable in the country and, finally, persuades her husband to move back to London in order to get back to her job because “she adored her job and her staff, was well paid, and felt that there were still things she wanted to achieve in her career.”⁵⁴⁶

537 Wickham, 2000, p. 84.

538 Wickham, 2000, p. 37.

539 Wickham, 2000, p. 182.

540 Wickham, 2000, p. 10.

541 Wickham, 2000, p. 56.

542 Wickham, 2000, p. 287.

543 Wickham, 2000, p. 10.

544 Wickham, 2000, p. 62.

545 Wickham, 2000, p. 219.

546 Wickham, 2000, p. 35.

Heather Trelawney is a few years younger than Candice and looks very pretty and innocent. She has fair wavy hair, a snub nose and grey eyes. When she was fourteen her family lost everything because of Candice's father. She went to a comprehensive school and dropped out at sixteen. She attended a creative writing course without finishing it and works as a cocktail waitress but "I'd love to do something like you. Do you write for a newspaper?"⁵⁴⁷

When she and Candice meet by chance both see a chance to change the past. Candice feels guilty and wants to help Heather: "'I always used to wonder what happened to Heather. [...] And now I know. Another life ruined.'"⁵⁴⁸ She organises a job interview and helps Heather to become the new editorial assistant. She also offers her a room and pays for her living costs. Heather wants revenge: "Now you know what it was like for me. Having everything taken away, with no warning."⁵⁴⁹ She lies to Candice, uses her and steals her ideas: "She came to me with an excellent idea for a feature the other day [...] Late-night shopping."⁵⁵⁰ Heather seems very nice but in reality she is a "bit sickly sweet"⁵⁵¹ and jealous of everyone who is better off than she is and especially of Candice: "With her nice haircut, and her good job, and money for cocktails every night."⁵⁵²

Heather is not really interested in the job and does not take her work seriously: "I forgot all about it [...] I completely forgot."⁵⁵³ Although the job as editorial assistant is "[...] pretty low-ranking, and the money's not great [...]"⁵⁵⁴, "[...] it's a start in journalism"⁵⁵⁵ and many other young people would kill for such a job: "[...] leaves me with two hundred bloody CVs to read."⁵⁵⁶

Justin Vellis is a rather unlikeable character. He is attractive with curly dark hair neatly glossed back and dark eyes. He is vain, very keen on appearances and likes to wear smart suits. He is the feature editor and also acting editor while Maggie is on maternity leave.

"He had arrived at the *Londoner* fresh from a year's experience on the New York Times,

547 Wickham, 2000, p. 21.

548 Wickham, 2000, p. 26.

549 Wickham, 2000, p. 237.

550 Wickham, 2000, p. 146.

551 Wickham, 2000, p. 130.

552 Wickham, 2000, p. 23-24.

553 Wickham, 2000, p. 141.

554 Wickham, 2000, p. 27.

555 Wickham, 2000, p. 27

556 Wickham, 2000, p. 47.

with a reputation of a huge intellect and a barrage of impressive connections.”⁵⁵⁷ Although Justin seems to be highly qualified for the job of acting editor, he is already stressed out at the very first day: “But I’m having problems enough as it is today”⁵⁵⁸ and will “never be half the editor Maggie was.”⁵⁵⁹

He likes exerting power over others, is very ambitious and seems to be perfect for a top position: “He gets a bit of temporary power, and suddenly he thinks he’s running the whole bloody company.”⁵⁶⁰ However he really is “just a self-opinionated pompous show-off”⁵⁶¹, who is easily impressed by compliments and does not have “the first idea about people.”⁵⁶² To foster his career he goes behind people’s back: “I see. And nobody thought to consult me?[...] No I’m not angry, Justin. I’m livid.”⁵⁶³, he takes things at face value and does not admit mistakes. He is also hypocritical and reproaches people for things he does himself as well.

Although he tries very hard and pretends to be up to the job a editor, his bosses are not satisfied with his performance: “What a bloody fiasco. Justin I think the two of us need to have a little talk. [...] Right now. Upstairs in my office.”⁵⁶⁴

Justin believes in very traditional and stereotypical role models. Women are not really supposed to have a career and he does not like working for a woman. He thinks that women are inferior and should take care of men. He himself cannot cook or clean and does not intend to change his behaviours.

Ralph Allsopp is the publisher of the *Londoner*. He is tall, in his fifties but still energetic, with dishevelled greying hairs and gleaming eyes. He is married and has grown-up children and one small boy still at school. He also has had an affair with Roxanne for over six years. He loves her but does not want to get divorced until his youngest son is 18.

He is legendary at the *Londoner*. He is an old-school journalist who values character and uniqueness: “He was famous for hiring people with initiative rather than qualification; for admiring people not afraid to admit ignorance; for prizing and nurturing talent. He admired dynamic, energetic people, prepared to work hard and take risks.

557 Wickham, 2000, p. 45.

558 Wickham, 2000, p. 78.

559 Wickham, 2000, p. 144.

560 Wickham, 2000, p. 247.

561 Wickham, 2000, p. 45.

562 Wickham, 2000, p. 144.

563 Wickham, 2000, p. 265.

564 Wickham, 2000, p. 289.

The worst crime a member of his staff could possibly commit was to be feeble.”⁵⁶⁵

Although he loves his job and is very dedicated to the newspaper, he announces his retirement. This, however, is only a pretence as he has advanced cancer and dies shortly after leaving: “The whole building had been silenced by the news that Ralph had died only two weeks after being admitted to hospital.”⁵⁶⁶

565 Wickham, 2000, p. 51.

566 Wickham, 2000, p. 209.

5.2. Answers to the Research Questions⁵⁶⁷

After the descriptive representation follows the answering of the five research questions. Before doing so it needs to be clarified that all information has been taken from the textual research corpus described above. Therefore, indirect quotations will not be explicitly marked. Direct quotations are of course marked as such.

RQ 1: Which media are portrayed in chick-lit?

Chick-lit portrays a variety of media although certain types of media are more often the focus of attention than others.

The most obvious media dealt with are the printing press. Quality and tabloid papers, local newspapers and various glossy magazines are mentioned or play a major role in the narrative texts discussed. However, there is no character that works at a quality newspaper. *Jemima J* portrays the working life at a local newspaper, which is “boring as hell”⁵⁶⁸ and both main characters work hard to get promoted and by this to change to another medium. *Jemima* finally works for a woman magazine and Ben Williams becomes a television presenter.

Trashed depicts the workings at a tabloid paper and working at a tabloid is described as nothing to be proud of. Simon Glass, the main protagonist, eventually leaves her tabloid magazine and starts to work at a major publishing house.

Three texts (*Sushi for Beginners*, *Cocktails for Three*, *How Emily Got Promoted*) of the sample mainly deal with journalists working at (women's) magazines. This kind of journalism is described as the most desirable one. Working for magazines is glamorous, exciting and those fortunate enough to work there are apparently envied by everyone.

The broadcasting media features in a few of the texts discussed. While there are public broadcasting services and commercial broadcasting services the five sample texts only feature the commercial part of broadcasting.

Jemima J. and *Sushi for Beginners* both feature television as the main medium. However, television is not the only focus of these books. In *Jemima J.* Ben Williams realises his dream by becoming a famous television presenter at an early evening show. In *Sushi for Beginners* Jack Devine, the managing director in Ireland, has to deal with the printing press as well as with the broadcasting media. However, he prefers working

⁵⁶⁷ cf. Gaylin, 2008, Green, 1998, Keyes, 2001, Webb, 2004, Wickham, 2000.

⁵⁶⁸ Green, 1998, p. 117.

at the television station to working at the magazine section and the reader only gains a shallow knowledge of the workings at a television station. However, the term broadcasting media not only describes television but also radio. Radio plays absolutely no role in the sample and is only briefly mentioned but never in relation to any serious career or work.

The third modern medium is the internet. Interestingly the internet features only marginally in the sample. Only in *Jemima J.* is it mentioned but not as a medium on its own or as a potential employer for journalists but simply as a means of communication and a tool for finding information more easily.

It is also remarkable that there is no character who works in the news sector, although some might aspire to do so. All characters in all five sample texts work in the entertainment media; (women) magazines are considered to be mostly entertainment or - maybe - infotainment, local and tabloid newspapers are factoid and the mentioned television shows mainly answer the purpose of entertainment or - at best - infotainment.

RQ 2: How is the media world portrayed in chick-lit?

The media world portrayed in chick-lit is basically divided into two categories; major media cooperations and smaller independent publishing houses.

Sushi for Beginners sketches out the workings of a big media cooperation. Randolph Media is an international publishing house with the headquarters in New York and offices in Great Britain, Ireland and Australia. It incorporates print and broadcasting media. The print media are mainly magazines, while the broadcasting media are “the small but growing television station, Channel 9, and a highly commercial radio station [...]”.⁵⁶⁹ Randolph Media cooperation is hierarchically structured with managing directors in every country, who are responsible for all kinds of media in their respective countries. Working at a major publishing house enables the employees to move between various publications or even media types. While this is certainly an advantage, working at a big media cooperation company also has drawbacks: “Like many companies in the Western world, Randolph Media rewarded hard work with poor pay, increasing work loads, demotions and on-a-second's-notice redundancies.”⁵⁷⁰

In contrast *Cocktails for Three* sketches out the workings at a smaller publishing house. Allsoop Publishing is a small publishing house in family hands and only publishes one

⁵⁶⁹ Keyes, 2001, p. 18.

⁵⁷⁰ Keyes, 2001, p. 5.

magazine in London. It is based in London and does not have offices anywhere else. Although Allsopp Publishing is not a global player working for a smaller employer seems to be preferable: “[...] staff tended to join Allsoop Publications and stay for years.”⁵⁷¹ Other small and independent media products are the *Kilburn Herald* in *Jemima J.* and *Ruby* magazine in *How Emily Got Promoted*.

In between those two extremes are publishing houses with offices across the country. The *Asteroid* in *Trashed* is a national tabloid with offices across the United States. Therefore, similar media products can be successfully produced with different backgrounds and varying resources.

RQ 3: How are journalists presented?

It is important to mention that the sample presents a wide variety of journalists and not one is like another, although all journalists have certain basic qualities:

“Journalism means digging, it means making hundreds of phone calls, doorstepping if necessary, to get your story. It means operating on hunches, chasing leads, not stopping until you've got what you want.”⁵⁷²

They need to be curious, ambitious, stubborn, not afraid of taking risks and of offending and they need to be interested in everyone and everything. Differences occur in relation to gender, education, media, job profile and personal characteristics.

Top position in all sample texts are held by men. The publishing houses are managed by men like Ralph Allsoop and Jack Devine and chief editors are commonly male, like Nigel Bloom. However, a growing number of women become editors in chief, like Lisa Edwards, Diana Macpherson, Greta Glass, Maggie Phillips or Kitty, are not that common. Successful women like Lisa Edwards, Diana Macpherson and Kitty are described in rather unfavourable terms and are often endowed with male characteristics, like being career minded, ambitious, strong, demanding and tough. Kitty, for example, is a “string, ambitious woman who, [...], has clawed her way to the journalist top and intended to stay there.”⁵⁷³ Lisa Edwards is described as a strong, successful, ambitious, treacherous and ruthless slave driver. “Diana Macpherson is a tough woman, as she would have to be to reach the position of executive producer on a show as big as *London Nights*.”⁵⁷⁴ She is strong, successful and “everyone is terrified of

571 Wickham, 2000, p. 52.

572 Green, 1998, p. 118.

573 Webb, 2004, p. 129.

574 Green, 1998, p. 146.

her”⁵⁷⁵ However, there are also women at top positions who are more likeable, Maggie Phillips and Greta Glass are successful in their jobs and still likeable.

As one moves further down the career ladder more and more women are employed in journalism. They are either staff writers or freelancers, although freelancers only play a minor role in the sample texts. Roxanne Miller and Emily work as freelancers and while Roxanne enjoys the freedom and glamour of her job, Emily is desperate to be promoted to staff writer. Staff writers at the print media are mostly female and not necessarily trained journalists. Jemima Jones is described as “an expert of words”⁵⁷⁶, Ashling Kennedy is not a “proper journalist: she was simply a good organizer, with an eye for detail”⁵⁷⁷ and Trix actually works as a PA but still has to write articles or help at fashion shoots.

Very interesting is the division that is made between the different kinds of media. While newspaper and tabloid journalists are not expected to fulfil a certain profile, journalists at (woman) magazines and on television are expected to correspond to a certain type of person. People in television are expected to be good looking with the air of “the office Lothario”⁵⁷⁸, and people working at women's magazines are supposed to be a certain type as well.

“The type of women who work on glossy magazines are pencil-slim. They have highlighted hair, and hard faces covered in too much make-up. They always wear designer black, and always, [...], have sunglasses pushing their hair off their faces. They go out for long liquid lunches, and network every evening in the trendiest bar in town.”⁵⁷⁹

This, however, is just a stereotype and although certain people like Lisa Edwards, Diana Macpherson, Roxanne Miller, Mercedes, Jack Devine, Ben Williams, Geraldine Turner, Kitty and Lauren live up to this stereotype just as many others do not.

There is not a single type of journalist, and although they are working in similar conditions, they differ in looks, character and priorities.

RQ 4: How do journalists go about their work in chick-lit?

Generally, all journalists have to obtain information from various sources, do interviews and write articles, features and various other texts. Nevertheless there are certain

575 Green, 1998, p. 146.

576 Green, 1998, p. 5.

577 Keyes, 2001, p. 18.

578 Green, 1998, p. 7.

579 Green, 1998, p. 119.

differences according to the respective media.

Ordinary newspaper journalists like Jemima Jones write their regular columns and features and sometimes do interviews. Senior newspaper journalists do interviews, write stories and also edit stories and features.

Magazine journalism is totally different from newspaper journalism. Working for magazines is described as glamorous and exciting, with the chief editor having the most glamorous working life. Lisa Edwards regularly attends evening press does, goes to publicity does and launch parties, “everything from new lines of eye-shadow to openings of shops.”⁵⁸⁰ An important part of her job is networking and knowing everybody. She is also the one who has the privilege of going to the fashion shows in Milan and Paris. However, the job as editor is not just glamour and fun but also stress; she is responsible for the whole magazine. Not only the editor but also the staff writers seem to lead glamorous lives. Ashling, Mercedes and Candice attend publicity does, need to be at fashion shots, do interviews, write features, articles and regular pieces on various topics. Especially Ashling is the general dogsbody and her job is not really exciting but stressful. Freelancers need to be even more flexible and open minded about their work as they are expected to write about a whole range of topics. Roxanne Miller, for example, is an all-rounder and writes

“a two-thousand-word piece for the Londoner on holidaying in Cyprus. [...] a comprehensive survey for the property pages of one of the national newspapers. And for their rivals, under a pseudonym [...] a light-hearted diary-type piece in living on Cyprus as an expatriate.”⁵⁸¹

Emily as well is an all-rounder and writes articles about anything from thongs to celebrity chefs. But while Roxanne loves her job Emily is anxious to become a staff writer.

Writing for a tabloid newspaper is again totally different. Simone Glass and her colleagues write articles, background files and side pieces, do interviews and general research, go to press conferences, follow up leads, look for people, observe places and people but also have to do more unusual things. Actually Simone and Kathy are not classified as journalists but as insiders. They infiltrate “funerals, [...] A-list charity benefits, [...] weddings”⁵⁸² and pretend to be whoever their boss expects them to be.

580 Keyes, 2001, p. 136.

581 Wickham, 2000, p. 84.

582 Gaylin, 2008, p. 34.

Moreover, they “pick through some soap's starts used Kleenex.”⁵⁸³

Working for the broadcasting media differs from working at a newspaper, magazine or tabloid. In television looks are most important and a combination of looks and talent can foster and speed up careers. Ben Williams and Greta Glass a television presenters; Ben of a London night's show and Greta of a criminal law show. Ben's job is very glamorous and “his life is works, parties, launches, interviews.”⁵⁸⁴ His job has only marginally to do with real journalism as he has a team behind him. Greta similarly is “*only reading of a teleprompter*”⁵⁸⁵ but still television journalists are highly valued and “nominated for a Glory Award [...] one of journalism highest honors.”⁵⁸⁶

Not really journalistic work but nevertheless valuable work do the managing directors of the various publications. Jack Devine is responsible for the print sector as well as the broadcasting sector of Randolph Media and his main job is to negotiate between various interest groups at the broadcasting branch of the cooperation.

Also connected with the job specifications of journalists is unethical behaviour. Unethical behaviour can be noticed in job creation, in getting ahead or in getting information and stories. Finding a job in journalism is difficult and applicants often use contacts or insider knowledge to get an interview. Heather Trelawny only gets her job because Candice gets behind the editor's back, applies directly to the publisher and recommends Heather to Ralph Allsopp. Ben Williams becomes a television presenter because he sends his application directly to the executive producer. Lisa Edwards rose up the career ladder so quickly because she and a friend always tipped each other off when a position was vacant. Neither Heather nor Lisa mind stealing ideas from colleagues and presenting them as their own. Furthermore, it is rather common in all types of media to use questionable methods in order to gain information or stories. This is most prominent in *Trashed*, where reporters pose as someone else, infiltrate, go through waste and generally do not mind lying. However, also Emily in *How Emily Got Promoted* does not shrink back from blackmailing in order to get an interview. Lisa Edwards flirts with every man to get information or a story and good-looks in general are an advantage; Jemima Jones is instantly promoted when she corresponds to the editor's taste in women.

Generally there is not a clear cut job profile for journalists and every journalist has to

583 Gaylin, 2008, p. 19.

584 Green, 1998, p. 295.

585 Gaylin, 2008, p. 58.

586 Gaylin, 2008, p. 129.

adapt to his/her employer and the demands the media has.

RQ 5: How do the findings concerning the questions above correlate with the real media world?

As this sample consists of texts set in various countries this research question will be answered in three stages according to setting.

Cocktails for Three and *Jemima J* are set in London and the findings will therefore be related to journalism in Great Britain.

Cocktails For Three depicts the working at *The Londoner*, a regional weekly magazine; weekly regional newspapers / magazines employ about 10% of all British journalists. Although freelancers are not included in Henningham's study, Roxanne Miller is included in this comparison. Four of the five staff writers at *The Londoner* enjoy their job, although they agree that the job sometimes is stressful. This mirrors the general work satisfaction; 96% of all British journalists are satisfied with their job but nevertheless more than half feel at times stressed. While real journalists rate pay, career options and benefits very highly, the characters in *Cocktails for Three* are not overly ambitious and career minded. Candice loves her job but not because of the money. Justin and Maggie are more ambitious than the others and like to get ahead in the company, while Roxanne really enjoys the benefits of her job. Unethical practices as mentioned in Henningham's study are not mentioned in the novel, although other questionable practices do play a role. Contrary to reality women journalists dominate *Cocktails For Three*. This, however, correlates with the fact that more women than men work for magazines. It is also true that female journalists are younger than their male colleagues; Candice, Roxanne, Maggie and Heather are in their late twenties or early thirties, while Justin and Ralph are older. In reality 71% percent of British journalists are in a relationship (29% with an other journalist) and 24% live alone. In *Cocktails for Three* Maggie is married, Roxanne has a relationship with a fellow journalist, Candice is in a relationship and Justin and Heather are single. Their social contacts are often work related and this correlates with reality where 40% of social contacts are with people connected with media. *Cocktails For Three* does not discuss the reasons for becoming a journalist, although it is clear that Heather is drawn to the profession because of the perceived glamour. Although 42% of British journalists have a degree only Candice seems to have attended university. Justin and Heather were trained on the job, like 30% of all British journalists. All six main characters in *Cocktails for Three* belong to the

upper middle class or the middle class and are white. Again correlating to reality is the fact that all six characters are not specialised in any particular department.⁵⁸⁷

Jemima J. is also set mainly in London and is therefore also compared to Henningham's study on journalists in Great Britain. Jemima Jones works at a local newspaper, like approximately 44% of all British journalist. Local newspapers are usually the first employers of journalists and both Ben Williams and Jemima Jones use the Kilburn Herald as a stepping stone for their future career. Ben and Jemima are not satisfied with their jobs, like about 4% of all British journalists but their job satisfaction increases when they change to another media. All five characters in *Jemima J.* do not rate money as an important factor but four of the five characters do want to get ahead in their jobs (more than the average 45% of British journalists) and all appreciate the benefits connected to the job. Unethical practices as described in Henningham's study do not play a role in *Jemima J.*, although other kinds of unethical practices are mentioned throughout the novel. *Jemima J.* is the only novel that mentions technical innovations as improvement of journalistic work. In *Jemima J.* females dominate the media scene and four out of five are about thirty or younger. Typically young British journalists work for regional weeklies or broadcasting. Three out of the five characters are single and in the end Jemima and Ben become a kind of power couple in the media world. All characters socialize with other journalists but also with people not connected to journalism. The reasons for becoming journalists are rather diverse: Jemima loves working with words, Ben always wanted to be a television presenter and Geraldine became a journalist by accident. Ben, Jemima and Diana attended university and then worked their ways up. Geraldine actually started at the *Kilburn Herald* as a secretary and received her training on the job, like about 30% of all British journalists. Three of the five characters come from a middle class background, while Ben comes from the upper class and Diana Macpherson worked her way up from the working class. In *Jemima J.* a certain specialization of journalists can be found: Ben is specialised in politics (like 4% of British journalists) and Lauren is a style editor.⁵⁸⁸

Sushi for Beginners is actually set in Dublin and should therefore be compared with Irish statistics but as Lisa Edwards is British, she needs to be compared to British journalists. Lisa Edwards has, typically female, always worked for women's magazines. She is satisfied with her job although she finds it stressful at times and knows that the work

587 cf. Henningham, 1998 & Wickham, 2000.

588 cf. Henningham, 1998 & Green, 1998.

load is increasing. With this she corresponds to the majority of British journalists. She rates a good salary as important (like 62%), wants to get ahead in her organisation (like 45%) and enjoys the benefits she is entitled to because of her job (like 10%). Unethical behaviour as found in Henningham's study does not play a role in *Sushi for Beginners* but Lisa Edwards does not mind using unethical behaviour to promote herself and to get what she wants. *Sushi for Beginners* is again dominated by female journalists and Lisa, as editor in chief, is a women in a top position. She is 29 (younger than the average female British journalist), is still married to a fashion photographer but is about to be divorced. She mostly socialised with people employed in the media business, although in the course of the novel she finds friends from outside her profession. Lisa became a journalist because she has a natural talent and received her training on the job; she worked her way up from a working class background. As she is the editor she has no specialisation but is knowledgeable in all areas relevant for women magazines.⁵⁸⁹

Sushi for Beginners and *How Emily Got Promoted* are set in Dublin and will be compared to the findings of the survey on Irish journalists. Ireland's print sector, with national and regional newspapers, has always been strong although *Sushi for Beginners* claims that Ireland is "the magazine version of Siberia."⁵⁹⁰ Interesting is the influence of Britain on the Irish media market. This is mirrored in the fact that a British editor is appointed editor in chief of a new women's magazine. Only 25% of Irish journalists have studied journalism, while the rest receives the training on the job. This is nicely mirrored in *Sushi for Beginners*. Jack Devine has an MA in communications, while Ashling, Trix and the other employees of *Colleen* are trained on the job. As no other socio demographic statistics in journalists in Ireland are available a more detailed comparison is not possible.⁵⁹¹

Finally *Trashed*, which is set in Los Angeles, will be compared to the findings of Weaver's study on American journalists in the 21st century.

Trashed is set in Los Angeles and depicts the workings at a supermarket tabloid, which is owned by a larger company. Women in the US are more likely to work at a news magazine or at television; Greta is a successful cable TV news anchor. Job satisfaction among American journalists is lower than in other professions but in general the characters in *Trashed* are fairly satisfied with their jobs. What is especially interesting is

589 cf. Henningham, 1998 & Keyes, 2001.

590 Keyes, 2001, p. 9.

591 cf. Foley, 2010 & French, 2004 & Keyes, 2001.

that *Trashed* depicts nearly all questionable practices that Weaver mentions in his survey. The use of insiders, which is justified by 54% on American journalists, the bugging of unwilling informants (justified by 52%), the use of personal documents without permission (justified by 41%), paying for information (justified by 17%), pretending to be someone else (justified by 14%) and the use of hidden cameras and microphones (justified by 60% of American journalists). Corresponding to reality is also that Simone leaves her job at the tabloid after a year to work as a copy editor at a major publishing house. 21% of female journalists change to another occupation after approximately five years. In contrast to Simone, Kathy and Neil have been working in the profession for at least ten years. The typical American journalist is male, about 40, married and is likely to hold a bachelor's degree. This is not entirely true of the journalistic work force portrayed in *Trashed*. There are just as many male as female journalists. Simone, Kathy and Greta are between twenty-seven and forty-one and work either for a tabloid newspaper or television. The male journalists are ageless and all work for tabloids. Throughout most of the novel all six characters are single and socialise mostly with colleagues or informants. Simone became a journalist because she never wanted to do anything else, while Greta became a journalist by accident (like about 10% of American journalists). Simone has a master's degree in journalism, which is rather unusual; approximately 36% of American journalists have a college degree in journalism. All six characters have a middle class background and are white; Nigel is actually British but not much is revealed about him in the course of the novel. The pay is moderate with some earning more than others according to experience and employer.

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Generally all five sample texts portray a rather authentic picture of the journalism in regard to the statistics presented in chapter 2.3 and when reading these texts one will gain an actual insight into the media.

5.3. Theses

After answering the research questions the formulation of general theses is the last point when using qualitative content analysis for the research project. The theses are generalisations which are deduced from the findings of the research project and summarize the most important points of the research.

592 cf. Weaver, 2007 & Gaylin, 2008.

Thesis 1: A large number of chick-lit books are formulated according to the guidance “Make Your Own Chick-Lit Novel!”

All five sample texts correspond - at least to a certain extent – to the “Make Your Own Chick-Lit Novel!” formula. The main character is always a young woman living in the city, who works or wants to work in journalism. Other main characters work either in journalism, publishing, advertising or in public relations. All these characters worry for example about their body, their sex life, their annoying mother, men, an addiction or a crappy salary. The only major digression from the success-formula is the city in which the story takes place. Typical urban settings are New York, Manhattan, Gotham or London. Three sample texts, however, are set in Dublin and Los Angeles, while only two novels are partly set in London. Nevertheless, the chick-lit formula seems to guarantee a best-seller and authors stick to it.

Thesis 2: A great number of chick-lit authors have a background in the communication business.

Four out of five authors of the sample texts have a background in journalism and their experience is certainly visible in their works. Jane Green worked as a journalist at the Daily Express, Alison Gaylin worked for a supermarket tabloid, Madeleine Wickham was a financial journalist and Sarah Webb studied arts and worked in the book industry. Only Marian Keyes has no journalistic background.

Thesis 3: Chick-lit authors are aware and use the positive connotation of journalism as a glamorous dream job. However, they do point out that journalism is an exhausting and stressful job. Still all characters love their jobs and cannot imagine working outside the media and/or communication business.

All five sample texts describe journalism as exciting and glamorous. Future journalists are anxious to get employed by media and people outside the media world envy and admire journalists. However, all five sample texts depict journalism as a stressful and demanding job as well. Even if characters decide to end their career in journalism they tend to stay in the media and communication business and commonly switch to media consultancy work or to public relations.

Thesis 4: Chick-lit texts are set in a very limited media milieu. The characters all work in the entertainment or infotainment sector of media like magazines and/or television.

All characters analysed in the sample corpus either work in magazines, tabloids, local papers or television. All these media products are not generally considered quality media. This background in the entertainment media goes hand in hand with the light-hearted tone and attitude of chick lit texts.

Thesis 5: Chick-lit texts are dominated by female journalists. Nevertheless the few male journalists hold the high or even top positions.

All managing directors in the texts are male and females only can rise as far as editors in chief. Nevertheless journalism is dominated by females and most staff writers and freelancers are women.

Thesis 6: Chick-lit texts convey an authentic picture of journalism and journalists relating to the statistics presented in chapter 2.3.

All five sample texts convey a realistic portrayal of journalism. Findings of various scientific studies are mirrored in the fictional texts. Both socio-demographic data in journalists and work related data in chick lit texts correlate to a large extent to data from reality.

6 Summary

This last chapter reflects on the whole thesis. It tries to position the findings of the research in the scientific background and provides a critical reflection of the research questions, the theses and generally the whole thesis.

6.1. Positioning of Results in the Scientific Background

This part of the last chapter will draw the line from the findings of the content analysis to the theoretical approach discussed in chapter two.

All five sample texts are classic chick-lit texts but all five texts can also be classified as sub genres of chick-lit. Features of Bigger Girl Lit, Mommy Lit, Working Girl Lit and Mystery Lit can be found in at least one of the texts.

Moreover, all five sample texts are contemporary romances or more precisely women's romance fiction as all provide, at least to some extent, a romantic plot. All samples can also be considered Novels of Manners as all depict the "code of behaviour"⁵⁹³ of an – admittedly – small part of society. This part of society are journalists but also other people; *Trashed* is set in the celebrity milieu of Hollywood, in *Jemima J.* the Californian fitness industry features heavily and *How Emily Got Promoted* and *Cocktails for Three* provide an insight into the world of full-time mothers and wives. The sample texts can also be classified as Coming of Age Novels; they observe the protagonists' development for a certain time. Especially *Jemima J.* and *Sushi for Beginners* are Coming of Age Novels; Jemima changes from a fat unhappy girl to the woman she always wanted to be and Lisa Edwards changes from a career woman to someone with a proper work-life balance.

Like any other works of literature, chick lit novels can be read with certain literary theories in mind. Three theories have already been discussed in chapter two and now will follow an attempt to link the results of the study to feminist criticism, Structuralism and Marxist criticism.

Feminist criticism⁵⁹⁴ looks at how women are portrayed in literature. Chick lit texts are gynotexts (written by women) but are not looked upon favourably by feminist critics, as the protagonists are only concerned with finding happiness with the man of their

⁵⁹³ Baldick, 2008, p. 63.

⁵⁹⁴ cf. Barry, 2002.

dreams. However, this view on women in chick-lit is too narrow and the novels portray a great variety of images of women. Nevertheless, women in chick-lit are often judged by their looks although most are far from perfect and only averagely pretty. They are generally well educated and work hard to support themselves or their families although they do not always enjoy their jobs and only very few have top positions in companies. It is true that they are expected to give up or cut back their jobs for the family but most protagonists in chick-lit texts believe in the compatibility of family and career and manage to achieve their goals. As the main focus of the analyses was not on the representation of women in chick-lit as such, the above are only examples and a more detailed analysis with an emphasis on female characterisation will reveal considerably more useful data for a purely feminist criticism.

Structuralism⁵⁹⁵ reads texts in connection with other texts in order to find similar structures. Chick-lit texts all share not only a similar structure but also similar themes and characters. This is also true of the five sample texts. The girl-meets-boy-and-finally-gets-boy structure features in four of the sample texts. Joint themes in all the texts are, for example, love, friendship, family, happiness and work. Similar characters in all texts are the career girl (Lisa Edwards, Greta Glass Lauren and Maggie Phillips), the woman who yet has to make a career (Ashling Kennedy, Emily and Simone Glass), the bad guy (Marcus Valentine, Brad and Justin Vellis) and the good guy, who turns out to be the perfect man (Jack Devine, Ben Williams and Neil Walker). All these structures, themes and characters are typical of chick lit and help to make up the genre.

Furthermore, Structuralism argues that the writers reflect what they see as reality and that their experiences and views enter into their work. This, however, is not necessarily a bad thing. As the majority of authors from the sample has a background in journalism their work experience certainly is visible in their texts. Especially Alison Gaylin has first hand knowledge of working at a tabloid as her first job was working for one. This makes the novels and short stories more vivid and realistic. Furthermore, the perception of the authors does not seem to be clouded or perverted as their representation of journalists basically corresponds to real-life statistics. The only exaggeration might be the glamour factor of the job. However, this is justified as people do not really want to read about ordinary everyday life. They do want to read about life they know and which is similar to their own reality but they want to read about life with a bit more excitement, fun and glamour.

595 cf. Barry, 2002.

Marxist criticism⁵⁹⁶ gains an insight into society by reading texts closely. Chick-lit texts, therefore, are supposed to help to understand modern society; they basically are social surveys. This thesis is only concerned with the journalistic world and only provides a journalistic reality that is constructed by analysing the five sample texts. The constructed reality is not so different from the authentic reality as the comparison of the findings with statistics suggests. However, other analyses of chick-lit novels with different research interests will certainly provide a comprehensive picture of modern society. Such research interest could be concerned with men-women relationships, working life, family life, stereotypes and many more.

Marxist criticism also pursues the question of why a certain type of literature is popular at a certain time. However, this question could not be answered in the course of the research project. Satisfactory results on this can only be achieved by a more elaborate survey, which combines various scientific approaches and methods.

6.2. Critical Reflection

This final critical reflection of the whole paper serves two purposes. On the one hand, it will identify any difficulties encountered during the research and suggest possible improvements to avoid such problems in the future. On the other hand, it will point out positive revelations and points that were well considered in the course of the study.

In general the whole research was well planned and thought out. The theoretical background was appropriate for the research interest and the methodological realization was practicable. Particularly helpful for the data collection was the detailed analysis tool, with proper examples for each category. Generally the research instrument was well chosen and implemented. The sample was well selected as each text truly dealt with journalism and journalists in an adequate manner and enough data concerning the research questions could be abstracted from all five sample texts.

However certain problems did arise in the course of the research project.

The first major problem was the anonymity of the main unit. As the main unit was unknown a rather unconventional approach for defining the sample had to be applied. This, however, did not affect the research and its outcome in a negative way as the sample texts contained enough data for answering the research questions sufficiently. Another problem was the size of the sample. In the course of the research and

⁵⁹⁶ cf. Barry, 2002.

particularly when answering the research questions the sample size seemed to be too small. However, as chick-lit texts are all similar to some extent the sample size might still be representative. As whole chick-lit is not particularly diverse the small sample size does not seem to be problematic and the outcome may still be considered representative.

Totally unanticipated was a problem with the statistics on journalism and journalists in Ireland. Such statistics do not exist and only very basic information on journalism in Ireland is included in the thesis.

Another problem arose when answering the research questions. Although they have been carefully considered their answering was not as easy and precise as anticipated. Especially research question three and research question four were formulated too generally to allow specific answers. This shows how important not only the wording of the research questions is but also how important a well considered analysis tool is. The last, and probably most predictable, problem was the tight schedule of the thesis. Especially the collection and evaluation of the data took much longer than anticipated. The descriptive presentation of the results is rather elaborate as well and took much more time than was originally scheduled for it. However, this certain problem with timetable changes are common and were already a bit considered in the planning of the whole thesis and a certain amount of buffer time was fortunately allowed from the beginning.

On the whole, however, the researcher and author of this thesis is satisfied with the design, the realization and the outcome of the research project.

6.3. Research Questions and Theses

Basically all five research questions could be answered in the course of the research. However, not all can be answered adequately. The answers to research question 1 and research question 2 are detailed, informative and satisfying. The answers to the third and fourth research questions are not as detailed and informative as intended. As already mentioned above the questions themselves are worded too vaguely and are too broadly defined. Therefore, the answers are imprecise and not always to the point. More meaningful answers were expected but those failed because of the formulation of the research questions. The answer to the fifth research questions is satisfying but incomplete. Socio demographic statistics on Irish journalists are unavailable a complete

and detailed comparison of the findings and the reality.

The six theses, which are derived from the findings, are satisfactory and sum up the findings briefly and sufficiently.

It again needs to be mentioned that the results of the research and the theses are not representative and universally valid but are only applicable for the sample considered.

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8 Appendix

8.1. Analysis Tool



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ANALYSIS TOOL:

“Journalist Chicks!

***Journalism in Selected Contemporary English/American/Irish
Chick-Lit Novels and Short Stories”***

Verfasserin:

Mag. Sophia-Elvira Pichler

Wien, 2011

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 343

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Anglistik & Amerikanistik

Betreuer:

ao. Univ. Prof. Mag. Dr. Franz Karl Wöhrer

This analysis tool is for the use of both, researchers and readers. On the one hand, it gives the researcher a tool to which s/he can hold on to and which can be consulted during the course of generating data and throughout the whole study. On the other hand, it gives the reader the opportunity to understand why and how certain data were noted and evaluated and, therefore, helps to understand the outcome of the research project.

1 Units

In this first part of the analysis tool it will quickly explain how the individual units for the analysis are chosen.

1.1 Sampling Unit

The sampling unit is chosen from a main unit (all books and short stories which somehow are concerned with journalism/journalists) by simply choosing books and short stories which are easily available and workable. This is not a strictly scientific way of determining the sample but as the main unit is unknown and subject to constant change this seems to be the only possible way. If the reader keeps in mind that this survey does not aim to represent reality this form of sampling is justifiable.

The sampling unit eventually consists of four books and one short story:

- Gaylin, Alison. *Trashed*. London: Little Black Dress, 2008.
- Green, Jane. *Jemima J*. London: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Keyes, Marian. *Sushi for Beginners*. London: Penguin Books, 2001.
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- Wickham, Madeleine. *Cocktails For Three*. Margate: Black Swan. 2000.

1.2 Recording Unit

The recording unit simply consists of each book or short story. This means that the whole book/story will be analysed.

Coding unit can be everything from a single word to whole sentences or even paragraphs. It is the analyser's task to decide what is relevant for the survey and, therefore, needs to be noted in the survey sheet. As so much responsibility lies with the

researcher it is important to make sure that the researcher knows exactly what is expected to be noted and that the reader can understand how the data are imposed. To make the analysis more understandable the analysis tool will be now described in greater detail.

2 Analysis Tool

This analysis tool was developed with the theoretical background of the paper in mind, is essential for analysing the sample and is responsible for all results generated through this survey.

Formal Categories

The formal categories are raised in order to be able to identify the individual samples and to assign results to sources.

Title of the book/short story

The full title of the book/short story is noted.

e.g. Mr Charism

Author of the book/short story

The author of the book/short story is noted.

e.g. Yasmin Boland

Number of pages

The number of pages of the sampling unit is recorded.

e.g. 23 pages

Textual Categories

The textual categories are the most important part of the analysis. Therefore, their survey and analysis are vital for a successful research paper. The textural categories and sub-categories, which were developed while keeping the theoretical background in mind, are now listed and explained in greater detail. As this is a qualitative content analysis it is essential to keep in mind that the categories are only examples and that during the course of the survey new sub-categories can be identified and taken into account. The analysis tool at hand can be subject to change and does not impose completeness.

Moreover, it needs to be mentioned that coding units are not always easily matched to one category. It is possible that units fit more than one category. If this is the case it is not so important under which (sub)category the unit is noted but rather that it is noted at all. As all the results will be put together to answer the research questions a very strict division is not necessary.

Media

It is noted what kind of media are mentioned, which specific names are mentioned and how the media landscape is portrayed in general.

- Kind of media

Noted is which media types are mentioned in the text.

e.g. broadcasting, print media, ...

- Names of certain media

Names of individual media are noted.

e.g. Vogue, Hello!, Teen Magazine,

- Media landscape

Connections between different media, mergers of media and everything that is somehow connected to the media is noted.

e.g. "Our Irish portfolio is an impressive one [...]. We have Hibernian Bride, Celtic Health, Gaelic Interiors, Irish Gardening, The Catholic Judger,..." ⁵⁹⁷

Journalism

Everything to do with journalism and how anything is archived in this field of work is noted in this sub-category. As every detail concerning working in journalism is noted, this general analysis of journalism is likely to generate a large amount of data.

- job creation

It is noted how jobs are gained.

e.g. "[...] or a personal recommendation, at least." ⁵⁹⁸

- job discipline

⁵⁹⁷ Keyes, 2001, p. 6.

⁵⁹⁸ Wickham, 2000, p. 28.

It is noted how discipline and hard work are rated and valued.

e.g. *"I brought these pages home to work over the weekend, and I forgot to do them. How can I be so stupid? [...] I got behind [...] Alicia gave me a load of stuff to do, and I...I don't know, maybe I'm not as quick as everyone else."*⁵⁹⁹

- job satisfaction

It is noted how satisfied the protagonists are with their jobs.

e.g. *"Lisa was finding it hard to catch her breath, but she had to resist the urge to run to the ladies' and scream into her hands [...]"*⁶⁰⁰

- work ethic

It is noted which methods are employed to get the job/assignment done, how careers are fostered and which methods are used to get a good story or ahead of one's colleagues.

e.g. *"I had no idea late-night shopping was such a big thing. You know, I might suggest to Justin we do a piece on it."*⁶⁰¹ *"She came to me with an excellent idea for a feature the other day, [...] Late-night shopping"*⁶⁰²

- work topics

Topics of relevant pieces are noted.

e.g. *"[...] holidaying in Cyprus [...]"*⁶⁰³, *"[...] an in-depth piece about the UN [...]"*⁶⁰⁴

- method of communication

It is noted how communication is conducted in the office and which means of communication are generally used and how up to date modes of communication are.

e.g. *"Georgie had long decided on e-mail as being the only way to communicate."*⁶⁰⁵

Journalists

Anything to do with the journalists in the books/short story is noted. Important is that every journalist is analysed individually. Therefore, this category is supposed to

599 Wickham, 2000, p. 142.

600 Keyes, 2001, p. 65.

601 Wickham, 2000, p. 115.

602 Wickham, 2000, p. 146.

603 Wickham, 2000, p. 84.

604 Kelly, 2000, p. 155.

605 Holden, 2000, p. 186.

generate a considerable amount of data. As the amount of data will be unworkable if data to every journalist are generated, only the first six journalists according to importance will be looked at in detail.

- name/gender of the journalist

Names and gender of the characters are noted.

e.g. “[...] I, Jemima Jones [...]”⁶⁰⁶

- age

It is noted how old the character is or was at different career stages in his/her life.

e.g. “*And you are only twenty-nine*”⁶⁰⁷

- relationship/social life

It is noted if the character lives in a relationship in the course of the story. Furthermore, it is noted with whom the protagonists spent time in their free time.

e.g. “*Yes, she had Tim, which in the great scheme of things was good.*”⁶⁰⁸

e.g. “*I’m single.*”⁶⁰⁹

- ethnicity / class

Information about the ethnicity or class of protagonists are noted.

e.g. “*Lisa had a flash of déjà vu. [...] It was just like her own home in Hemel Hempstead. [...] How on earth did I end up back here?*”⁶¹⁰

- education

It is noted where the character was educated and which additional qualifications s/he has.

e.g. “[...] I had my heart set on journalism in Cardiff [...]”⁶¹¹

- country of residence/job

It is noted where the character lives / where the media actually is.

606 Green, 1998, p. 2.

607 Keyes, 2001, p. 5.

608 Holden, 2000, p. 189.

609 Keyes, 2001, p. 5.

610 Keyes, 2001, p. 506.

611 Kelly, 2000, p. 154.

e.g. “[...] her decision to move to Los Angeles [...]”⁶¹²

- position/scope of work

It is noted where the character works and what the position of the character is in the media.

e.g. *“I’m deputy feature editor in Your Kind of Women (YKOW) which is a middle-of-the road women’s magazine”*⁶¹³

- workplace

It is noted what the character's personal working place looks like.

e.g. *“[...] I had a tiny little office with a window and she was stuck out there in freelance Siberia where everyone shared desks in that horrible hot-desking system [...]”*⁶¹⁴

- working day /working hours

The working day is described in detail and the working hours are noted.

e.g. *“From Monday to Friday Jemima’s routine is as follows: she wakes up at 8.45 a.m. [...], you leave your flat at 9.25 a.m.[...] your mornings are spent sorting letters, and watching the clock until 11.30 a.m., when it is time for tea. And then at 1 p.m. [...] you head back down to the canteen for lunch. The afternoon is spent writing up your Top Tips , before nipping down again at tea time. And finally at 6 p.m. your day is over.”*⁶¹⁵

- job specification

It is noted what the character actually does.

e.g. *“In the two years I’d been at the News, my rapidly rising star seemed inextricably linked to my apparent paparazzi prowess.”*⁶¹⁶

e.g. *“[...] while Jenny spent her days writing pleading letters requesting face-time with various celebrities, of the moment, Georgie actually got to go and interview them [...]”*⁶¹⁷

- (earned) income

It is noted how much the characters earn and how they manage to live by it.

612 Gaylin, 2008, p. 9.

613 Kelly, 2000, p. 157.

614 Kelly, 2000, p. 158.

615 Green, 1998, p.18-21.

616 Boland, 2000, p. 352.

617 Holden, 2000, p. 187.

e.g. *"I love my job. But not for the money [...] I don't care about the money."*⁶¹⁸

e.g. *"My job as a PR might not be the highest-paying job in the universe, but it pays the bills, pays the mortgage, and leaves me just enough for the odd bit of retail therapy"*⁶¹⁹

- career

Everything to do with the career of the character is noted here: the character's ambitions, promotions, job changes and so on.

e.g. *"She'd paid her dues at Femme, and made sacrifices that even she'd never intended to make."*⁶²⁰

e.g. *"!What about the position of deputy editor at Manhattan?!"*⁶²¹

e.g. *"Who was voted Editor of The Year?"*⁶²²

- lifestyle

It is noted where and how the characters live, how they get around, what they do in their free time and everything else that seems to be important.

e.g. *"As a receptionist on a completely crappy salary Jo really shouldn't be able to afford the clothes she wears every day, but luckily for her she has extremely wealthy parents who never seem to think twice about giving her money for her wardrobe [...]"*⁶²³

e.g. *"My flat is tiny. [...] It's in a basement in Ladbroke Grove [...]. But if it hadn't been for my parents, bless them, I'd never have been able to afford to buy somewhere."*⁶²⁴

- appearance

It is noted how the character looks and if any changes occur. It is also noted how the character dresses.

e.g. *"She smoothed back her caramel-coloured hair, showing her free honey highlights to their best advantage. [...], she tucked her Patrick Cox-shod feet neatly around each other. The shoes were a size too small [...]. But free Patrick Cox stilettos were free Patrick Cox stilettos."*⁶²⁵

618 Wickham, 2000, p. 116.

619 Green, 1998, p. 1.

620 Keyes, 2001, p. 5.

621 Keyes, 2001, p. 7.

622 Wickham, 2000, p. 37.

623 Green, 1999, p. 131.

624 Green, 1999, p. 9.

625 Keyes, 2001, p. 4.

3 Survey Sheet

Number:	
Researcher:	
Date of Survey:	

Formal Categories:

Title:	
Author:	
Overall pages:	

Textual Categories:

Media:	
Kinds of media:	
Names of certain media:	
Media landscape:	
Journalism:	
Job creation:	
Job discipline:	
Job satisfaction:	
Work ethic:	
Work topics:	
Methods of communication:	
Journalists:	
Character 1:	
Name /gender:	
Age:	
Relationship / Social Life:	
Ethnicity / Class:	
Education:	
Country of residents/job:	

Position / scope of work:	
Workplace:	
Working day / working hours:	
Job specification:	
(Earned) income:	
Career:	
Lifestyle:	
Appearance:	
Character 2:	
Name /gender:	
Age:	
Relationship / Social Life:	
Ethnicity / Class:	
Education:	
Country of residents/job:	
Position / scope of work:	
Workplace:	
Working day / working hours:	
Job specification:	
(Earned) income:	
Career:	
Lifestyle:	
Appearance:	
Character 3:	
Name /gender:	
Age:	
Relationship / Social Life:	
Ethnicity / Class:	
Education:	

Country of residents/job:	
Position / scope of work:	
Workplace:	
Working day / working hours:	
Job specification:	
(Earned) income:	
Career:	
Lifestyle:	
Appearance:	
Character 4:	
Name /gender:	
Age:	
Relationship / Social Life:	
Ethnicity / Class:	
Education:	
Country of residents/job:	
Position / scope of work:	
Workplace:	
Working day / working hours:	
Job specification:	
(Earned) income:	
Career:	
Lifestyle:	
Appearance:	
Character 5:	
Name /gender:	
Age:	
Relationship / Social Life:	

Ethnicity / Class:	
Education:	
Country of residents/job:	
Position / scope of work:	
Workplace:	
Working day / working hours:	
Job specification:	
(Earned) income:	
Career:	
Lifestyle:	
Appearance:	
Character 6:	
Name /gender:	
Age:	
Relationship / Social Life	
Ethnicity / Class:	
Education:	
Country of residents/job:	
Position / scope of work:	
Workplace:	
Working day / working hours:	
Job specification:	
(Earned) income:	
Career:	
Lifestyle:	
Appearance:	
Notes:	

4 Evaluation Sheet

The following evaluation sheet was designed independence on Mayring.⁶²⁶ It was, however, adapted to the needs of the survey at hand.

	Original text	Reduction	Generalisation
Number:			
Researcher:			
Date of Survey:			

Formal categories:

	Original text	Reduction	Generalisation
Title:			
Author:			
Overall pages:			

Textual categories:

	Original text	Reduction	Generalisation
Media:			
Kinds of media:			
Names of certain media:			
Media landscape:			
Journalism:			
Job creation:			
Job discipline:			
Job Satisfaction:			
Work Ethic:			
Work topics:			
Methods of communication:			
Journalists:			
Character 1:			

⁶²⁶ Mayring, 2008.

Name /gender:			
Age:			
Relationship / Social Life:			
Ethnicity / Class:			
Education:			
Country of residents/ job:			
Position / scope of work:			
Workplace:			
Working day / working hours:			
Job specification:			
(Earned) income:			
Career:			
Lifestyle:			
Appearance:			
Character 2:			
Name /gender:			
Age:			
Relationship / Social Life:			
Ethnicity / Class:			
Education:			
Country of residents/ job:			
Position / scope of work:			
Workplace:			
Working day / working hours:			
Job specification:			
(Earned) income:			
Career:			
Lifestyle:			
Appearance:			

Character 3:			
Name /gender:			
Age:			
Relationship / Social Life:			
Ethnicity / Class:			
Education:			
Country of residents/ job:			
Position / scope of work:			
Workplace:			
Working day / working hours:			
Job specification:			
(Earned) income:			
Career:			
Lifestyle:			
Appearance:			
Character 4:			
Name /gender:			
Age:			
Relationship / Social Life:			
Ethnicity / Class:			
Education:			
Country of residents/ job:			
Position / scope of work:			
Workplace:			
Working day / working hours:			
Job specification:			
(Earned) income:			
Career:			

Lifestyle:			
Appearance:			
Character 5:			
Name /gender:			
Age:			
Relationship / Social Life:			
Ethnicity / Class:			
Education:			
Country of residents/ job:			
Position / scope of work:			
Workplace:			
Working day / working hours:			
Job specification:			
(Earned) income:			
Career:			
Lifestyle:			
Appearance:			
Character 6:			
Name /gender:			
Age:			
Relationship / Social Life:			
Ethnicity / Class:			
Education:			
Country of residents/ job:			
Position / scope of work:			
Workplace:			
Working day / working hours:			
Job specification:			

(Earned) income:			
Career:			
Lifestyle:			
Appearance:			
Notes:			

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8.2. Abstract

Chick lit has gained enormous popularity in the last decade. Hundreds of books are published every year and enormous amounts of money can be earned with stories mostly about young women struggling to organize their lives while trying to find the perfect man. As many of the protagonists work in journalism the following cognitive interest has arisen:

How is journalism presented and how are journalists portrayed in chick lit?

The thesis is based on a theoretical background in literary theory, with a focus on Feminist Criticism, Structuralism and Marxist Criticism. In addition an interdisciplinary approach ensures the link between fiction and reality. Based on the theoretical background five research questions have been formulated. Those have been answered through a qualitative content analysis based on Mayring. In order to gain satisfactory results five chick lit texts by British, American and Irish authors have been analysed. The sample was chosen because of the focus on journalism in the respective texts. The content analysis not only made it possible to answer all five research questions but also allowed the formulation of six theses.

Thesis 1: A large number of chick lit books are formulated according to the guidance “Make Your Own Chick-Lit Novel!”

Thesis 2: A great number of chick lit authors have a background in the communication business.

Thesis 3: Chick lit authors are aware and use the positive connotation of journalism as a glamorous dream job. However they do point out that journalism is a exhausting and stressful job. Still all characters love their job and cannot image working outside the media and/or communication business.

Thesis 4: Chick lit texts are set in a very limited media milieu. The characters all work in the entertainment or infotainment sector of media like magazines and/or television.

Thesis 5: Chick lit texts are dominated by female journalists. Nevertheless the few male journalists hold the higher or even top positions.

Thesis 6: Chick lit texts convey an authentic picture of journalism and journalists relating to the statistics presented in chapter 2.3.

8.3. Zusammenfassung

Chick-Lit erlebt einen wahren Boom seit der Veröffentlichung von Bridget Jones's Diary im Jahre 1996. Seitdem werden jedes Jahr eine Vielzahl von neuen Chick-Lit Romanen publiziert und nicht selten werden die eher seichten Geschichten über junge Frauen, die versuchen ihren Alltag zu meistern und nebenbei noch den Traummann zu finden, zu Verkaufsschlagern. Da ungewöhnliche viele Protagonistinnen von Chick-Lit in der Medienbranche arbeiten, ergibt sich folgendes Forschungsinteresse:

Wie wird Journalismus in Chick-Lit beschrieben und wie werden Journalisten dargestellt?

Aufbauend auf einem theoretischen Hintergrund aus der Literaturtheorie und einem interdisziplinären Ansatz mit der Medienforschung werden fünf Forschungsfragen zu diesem Erkenntnisinteresse formuliert. Diese Forschungsfragen werden durch eine qualitative Inhaltsanalyse einer Stichprobe aus britischen, amerikanischen und irischen Chick-Lit Texten beantwortet. Neben der Beantwortung der Forschungsfragen ermöglicht die qualitative Inhaltsanalyse nach Mayring auch die Bildung von sechs Thesen.

These 1: Eine Vielzahl von Chick-Lit Texten folgt im Aufbau der "Make Your Own Chick-Lit Novel!" Anleitung.

These 2: Die Mehrzahl der Chick-Lit Autoren haben selbst einen beruflichen Hintergrund in der Medienbranche.

These 3: Chick-Lit Autoren bestärken die Vorstellung der Allgemeinheit, dass Journalismus ein aufregender, jedoch auch anstrengender Traumjob ist. Allerdings lieben alle Charaktere ihre Karriere und können sich einen Job außerhalb der Medienbranche nicht vorstellen.

These 4: Chick-Lit Texte spielen in einem sehr eingeschränkten Medienumfeld. Die Charaktere arbeiten alle im Unterhaltungs- oder Infotainmentsektor von Magazinen und/oder Fernsehen.

These 5: Chick-Lit wird von weiblichen Journalisten dominiert. In höheren oder Toppositionen finden sich hingegen fast ausschließlich männliche Journalisten.

These 6: Chick-Lit vermittelt ein authentisches Bild von Journalismus und Journalisten im Bezug auf die im Kapitel 2.3 vorgestellten Statistiken.

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