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1. Introduction

The Depiction of the Irish Countryside in Irish Film focuses on Irish feature films that are set in rural Ireland and made in the last twenty years. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the depiction of the Irish countryside in Irish films addressing five themes that are linked to rural Ireland. These films have the significant features of many Irish films set in the countryside; both tradition and modernity, landownership, landscape, village community and gender role. Each of these themes forms one of the five main chapters (Chapter 2 to Chapter 7). Each chapter is divided in two main parts, an introduction to the themes and analyses of at least two films. The introductions provide interdisciplinary background information of each theme prior to the analyses of the films. These introductions are directed to anyone who is interested in Irish culture and Irish Film Studies regardless if the reader is already familiar with Irish studies or not.

The introductions of each chapter are followed by the analyses of an average of two Irish films. The first film *The Field* (1990), directed by Jim Sheridan, (an adaptation of John B. Keane's play with the same title,) is used in every chapter and is compared and contrasted with other Irish films. This means that *The Field* provides the arch over all chapters. In this way, the treatment of each theme is analysed through *The Field* giving a detailed insight into the depiction of the Irish countryside in Sheridan's film. Simultaneously, the examination of a second film contrasts and compares Sheridan's depiction of rural Ireland and gives another example of how a specific theme is represented by another filmmaker. The films that were selected to provide this contrast include; Cathal Black's *Korea* (1995), Ken Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006), Kirk Jones' *Waking Ned Devine* (1998), John Sayles' *The Secret of Roan Inish* (1994), Neil Jordan's *Ondine* (2009) and Pat O'Connor's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1998). Additionally to these films, other motion pictures contribute to the analysis of the main films as well, such as the one- and two-reelers by Sidney Olcott's Kalem Company of 1910, Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934) or John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952). They play an important role because they were the first significant films that depicted the Irish countryside and have had an influence on later depictions of Ireland in motion pictures. Gillespie even goes so far as to claim that *The Quiet Man* set all the themes for films taking

place in the Irish countryside and that these themes have been more or less repeated by subsequent filmmakers with hardly any originality (see Gillespie 137). This might be true in some aspects, however, as in the case of Sheridan's *The Field* which reflects elements of *The Quiet Man*, (such as the character of the returning Irish American, the widow or the enraged farmer) *The Field* also addresses other aspects such as the 1990s (when the film was made) in disguise of the 1930s. In other words, although Gillespie is right when he argues that certain themes are copied from *The Quiet Man*, every main film in this thesis adds a distinct element that distinguishes itself from John Ford's Irish-American film.

When taking a closer look at each of the five main chapters, in Chapter 2, the focus lies on the theme of "tradition and modernity" in Jim Sheridan's *The Field* and Cathal Black's *Korea*. Here modernity is in contrast with tradition which is often associated with rural Ireland. In both, *The Field* and *Korea* traditional Irish rural life is disturbed by modernity that changes the routine of the fathers in the films. This tension is also expressed through the father-son relationship. The intention of the chapter is to introduce the reader to different aspects of "tradition and modernity" in Irish cultural discourse and connect them to the films. Following on, in Chapter 3 certain aspects of Chapter 2 are linked with another important theme, namely the question of landownership.

The first section of Chapter 3 presents a historical overview of the landlord-tenant relationship in the Irish countryside. This leads on to the Bull in *The Field* and his perception of his field in relation to property rights. The second section shifts from a rather local approach of land to a national one, namely the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War and its representation of rural Ireland in Ken Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*.

In Chapter 4 the main focus is on sociological aspects of Irish country life, namely the village community and how certain characters in *The Field* and Kirk Jones' *Waking Ned Devine* trigger different group dynamics. This chapter also includes stereotypes of Irish village people and whether the films challenge them.

Chapter 5 focuses on the natural elements of rural Ireland, namely different perceptions of the Irish landscape (in particular of the Irish West) and how these perceptions are reflected in *The Field*, John Sayles *The Secret of*

Roan Inish and Neil Jordan's *Ondine*. Here the focal point is on the romantic views of the Irish rural landscape expressed by Irish nationalists, and British and Americans visitors, and how these views affect the films.

Chapter 6 is concentrated on Irish country life and gender roles in the 1930s and how the main characters in *The Field* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* perform the gender roles that are imposed on them. The main focus is especially on the rural life of women. Finally the last chapter (Chapter 7), the conclusion summarises the main chapters and their outcome.

The five main chapters (Chapter 2 to Chapter 6) interconnect with each other because they are not isolated studies, this means that in some chapters certain elements are referred to only briefly but are explained in another chapter in more detail. In *The Depiction of the Irish Countryside in Irish Film* the main aim is to give an in-depth analysis of different aspects of the Irish countryside and country life and relate them to several Irish films. It draws a detailed picture of rural Ireland from an interdisciplinary perspective with a focus on Irish Film Studies.

2. Changing: Tradition and Modernity in Jim Sheridan's *The Field* and Cathal Black's *Korea*

2.1. Introduction

Tradition and modernity play an important role in the depiction of the Irish countryside in film. This is because rural Ireland is often seen as “traditional”. In contrast, “modernity” is associated with urbanity, which is sometimes represented as a foreign influence (such as Britain or the US). However, these terms are more complex and are filled with different meanings depending on various perspectives, such as Irish cultural nationalism and the British or Irish-American conceptions of Ireland. Thus, following section will introduce several aspects of the theme of “tradition and modernity” that are relevant to the analysis of Jim Sheridan's *The Field* and Cathal Black's *Korea*. These films show a strong link to tradition and modernity in so far as the main characters live through a time of change, an arrival of modernity in rural Ireland that is denied and rejected by the fathers, the Bull McCabe and John Doyle. This creates a generational conflict for both Tadgh and Eamonn who seek a different lifestyle from their respective fathers. In order to become men they are forced to confront them. This means that “tradition and modernity” appear on several layers: the themes of tradition as a symbol for rural Ireland, and the characters' struggle with change or generational conflict.

2.2. The Origins of the Theme of “Tradition and Modernity”

The etymology of the term “tradition” can be traced back to the Latin word *traditio* which means “handing over” (see Siddiqui 49) and refers to the action of “handing over” or transmitting something material from one generation to the next without changing (see “Tradition” def. 1). In contrast, the term “modern”, developed from the Latin word *modo*, translates “in fashion”, “current”, and therefore, opposes tradition (see Siddiqui 49). According to the OED “modern” means “[o]f or pertaining to the present and recent times, as distinguished from the remote past; pertaining to or originating in the current age or period” (“Modern” def. 2a).

In an Irish context, the idea of tradition and modernity was already mentioned by Irish novelist William Carleton in 1845 at the time of the Famine. He wrote about the changes of Irish life, the disappearance of tradition and glorified the past. Also William Wilde (Oscar Wilde's father) noted that Irish people had loved to laugh but now these days of cheerfulness were over and, therefore, the Irish had to find a new identity. After the Famine especially the rural population had a feeling of barred access to their history, a "loss of identity and deprivation of history" due to the coloniser and a lack of education. A new awareness of the past began to evolve and became a prerequisite in the construction of a future identity (see Maignant 22-28). Two important figures contributed to this new awareness, namely Michael Davitt, founder of the Land League in 1879, and Michael Cusack, founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884, who belonged to a generation whose aim was to redesign the future of Ireland by challenging the present and reinstating historical moments that had been forgotten or neglected before. This movement, shortly after the Famine, is known as radical memory and is marked by a longing for a future that would reflect an idealised image of the past and the "rememoration" of history (see Whelan 137-152). There are two models of memory induced by the post-Famine generation, namely the "individualist, self-obsessed, disabling one, which internalises damage as melancholia, and a culturally induced enabling form, which seeks wider explanations and political strategies" (Whelan 152). While the first model encourages nationalist nostalgia, the second form historicises memory in the public space and functions as a healing process (see Whelan 152). As a result of this new awareness, especially school teachers became important channels for the distribution of the study of (Irish) history, which contained the discovery of heroic ancestors but also nationalist elements (see Maignant 28). The aim of Irish nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the "regeneration of the historic community [...] the re-creation of their distinctive national civilization" (McLoone, *Irish Film* 10) and to teach and make the Irish people aware of their common heritage. Irish nationalists wanted to create a distinctive culture and rejected practices different from theirs in order to distinguish them from Britain. However, "[n]ational culture is removed from history and rendered as a mystical process" (McLoone, *Irish Film* 10). Thus, national identity is constructed, a product of modernisation and

demonstrates the desire for self-sufficiency. Although Irish nationalists intended to create a future for Ireland different from British colonialism, one important element of Irish cultural nationalism was an emphasis on history, the revival of tradition and the past at the cost of the new and the modern. Therefore, this led to a paradoxical radical conservatism. In other words, although the nationalists' aim was modernisation, the way they "modernised" the country essentially led backwards to a "dim past" (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 10-13). It can be said that, "cultural revivals change the traditions they attempt to revive" (Handler, and Linnekin 276). This paradox between tradition and modernity is also reflected and recurring in Irish cinema (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 13).

Radical conservatism was also influenced by Irish Catholicism which had altered during the Famine. In the early nineteenth century, religion had been mainly informal, this was slowly changed by the Church. For the peasantry, religion had been a ritual which was now transformed to a more public and institutionalised church. This contributed to the "modernisation" of Irish society and increased the Catholic Church's power into the twentieth century. However, the changes made could even be called the "invention of a tradition" (see Whelan 138-139). "Catholicism invaded the vacated cultural space and solved an identity crisis by offering a powerful surrogate language of symbolic identity in which Irishness and 'Catholicism' were seen as reciprocal and congruent" (Whelan 139). Also, by becoming more involved in politics, the Church and the nation became unified (see Whelan 140). Thus, the Church contributed to the preference of self-sufficiency of the rural community in the 1930s which was associated with self-sacrifice, the rejection of popular culture, especially from Britain and the US (such as jazz dance music), and censorship, in particular of American films (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 25-27).

Furthermore, the Irish country life became a paradigm for nationalist ideas because

[c]ountry people [were viewed] as an essential component of the Irish society, and especially the poorest among them, were honoured not only as the last class which remained faithful to the traditional costumes and language but also through the embellished past they were granted – in which the reproduction of behavioural patterns was turned into historical continuity. (Maignant 28)

However, this interest in the Irish peasants had already begun in the late eighteenth century, when on the one hand, the landowners and Catholic middle-class viewed the Irish language as the language of the past and the poor (especially the peasants), and on the other hand, some members of the elite started to be interested in the Irish language. This coincided with the development of the political ideology of Irish nationalism known as “Celtic Revival” (see Ó Tuathaigh 42-43). In the late 19th and early 20th century writers such as William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory and John M. Synge were inspired by Irish folklore, known as Celtic Literary (see Chapman 387-389).

However, when it comes to Irish nationalism the interest in folklore, peasant culture and history has various reasons. In particular the

cultural history associated with a nation's identity often derives from more recent interpretations tailored to particular political needs. In the nineteenth century, for instance, national identities were shaped by history teaching in national education, the institution of public holidays and rituals, and the picturing of national landscapes through art, architecture, and statuary. All contributed to the emergence of national “imagined communities”. (N. C. Johnson 551)

The main aim of Irish nationalism was to create a distinct culture that was different from Britain. Since Britain was seen as the most urban and industrial society and British culture was rejected by Irish cultural nationalists, Irish nationalists stressed their imposed image of rural “otherness” as induced by Britain. Moreover, compared to Britain, the US or other European countries, Ireland was relatively underdeveloped because in 1921 more than 50 percent of the Irish population worked in agriculture (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 18). “This commitment to a rural economy was, in a real sense, a flight from modernity itself, understandable, perhaps, if modernity was associated only with the colonial exploitation of British imperialism, as it inevitably was in post Famine Ireland” (McLoone, *Irish Film* 19). Thus, Irish urban centres such as Dublin or Belfast were almost excluded from nationalist culture. As a result, Irish cities started to appear in Irish film as a main setting only from the 1970s onwards, while the representation of the Irish countryside in film had already been popular in the 1910s, such as the two-reelers that were shot in Killarney by the American Sidney Olcott Kalem (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 19).

Interestingly, the nationalist commitment to tradition and the past reflects on the common “outsider” (in particular Britain and the US) perspectives of Ireland. While the positive views represented Ireland as a rural utopia that was free from the negative impacts of urban industrial modernisation, the negative ones referred to the violence of the Irish people that was traced to their “backwardness” (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 33-34). These images were influenced by myth and romanticism due to Ireland’s colonial history and position on the edge of Europe (see Gibbons 194).

In particular, by referring to the notion of backwardness, the British wanted to set themselves off from their colonies by viewing them as primitive in order to demonstrate their superiority. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the representation of a romantic primitivism became part of Irish nationalism in order to appear different from the coloniser (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 35-37). In other words,

the images and language of the coloniser became the weapons to overthrow him and the imaginings of the centre became internalised at the periphery. [...] In accepting and promoting a romantic rural sense of Irish identity, therefore, cultural nationalism ironically accepted one of the great stereotypes of Ireland produced by imperialism. In doing so, it came to reject not only the imperial definition of urban, industrial modernity but also the very notion of modernity itself. (McLoone, *Irish Film* 37)

Also in the second half of the twentieth century the binary idea of tradition and modernity was still significant. To give an example, Michel Peillon analysed three different forms of discourse, namely Catholic letters of the Catholic Hierarchy (1975, 1977, 1980), short stories and novels by Flann O’Brien, Frank O’Connor and Sean O’Faolain and the Annual General Meeting of the Irish Congress (1979, 1980, 1981), that describe Irish society. Among these texts he also found the dichotomy of “tradition” and “modernity”. While tradition is evaluated positively in the texts and connected to the nation, conformity to nature, religion and idealism; modernity is seen rather negatively and associated with cosmopolitanism, interference with nature, profanity and materialism (see Peillon 46-47). Thus, in the 1970s and the 1980s tradition and modernity were still viewed from a perspective that mirrored particular ideas of Irish cultural nationalism.

Regarding films, Irish cultural nationalism has had an enormous impact on the representation of Ireland in cinema as well, such as the aspects that the Irish nation and culture is Gaelic, Irish-speaking, has a strong connection to Catholicism, is rural, historic and self-reliant (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 12). Films like Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* reinforced the idea of primitive romanticism and reflected Eamon de Valera's ideas of cultural nationalism. For years Robert Flaherty's depiction of Irish peasant life was regarded as the true picture of Irishness but in fact the practices shown in the motion picture were already outdated when the film was made (see H. Kennedy 8). This again echoes Irish nationalism's fear of modernisation and its adherence to nostalgia.

Furthermore, John Ford's *The Quiet Man* mirrors the contrast between tradition and modernity, as Sean Thornton is portrayed as a man who escapes the urban "hell" of the US and finds peace in rural Ireland where he meets Mary Kate, a woman of nature and tradition. In the film, while Ireland is associated with the rural, nature, leisure and heaven, the US is connected to the urban, industry, work and hell. Consequently, when Sean Thornton looks at his mother's cottage he sees it from a nostalgic Irish-American perspective while Michaelleen refers to it as "nothing but a humble cottage" (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 38-40). Here, the film reflects the romantic image of Ireland that can be found in many Irish films that were produced by Hollywood.

Even in the 1990s, the theme of "tradition and modernity" is still an interesting subject for films such as *Korea* by Cathal Black or *The Field* by Jim Sheridan. In these films this theme can be analysed from several perspectives. First, from the angle that addresses the effects of modernisation within Ireland, such as industrialisation. Second, through the issue of the outsider that represents modernity. Third, tradition and modernity is represented by the gap between two generations, namely between father and son. In these films especially, the father figure symbolises a nationalism that is "[e]ngaged in an endless quest for his origins [...] he acquired a vision of time which necessarily excludes him from a tradition which he yearns to hold back, while freeing from it" (Maignant 29).

2.3. Tradition and Modernity in *The Field*

Jim Sheridan's *The Field* (1990) is a film adaptation of John B. Keane's play of the same name. *The Field* is probably Keane's best known work and was first produced by the Olympia theatre in 1965 and performed in the Abbey theatre in 1987 (see Herr 8). Sheridan's version of Keane's play is set in the 1930s and was filmed in Leenane, Connemara. The film has an undefined approach to the past (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 39) which makes it interesting for an analysis of tradition and modernity in connection with the characters. Here it is the Bull McCabe, a tenant farmer who has a strong attachment to the land and the field. He gets prepared to pass on his land to his son Tadgh but the Bull only rents his piece of land and when the landowner, a widow, decides to sell the field by public auction a rich American bidder appears who threatens the Bull's rights to the land.

From the start of the film the audience is introduced to the Bull's traditional Irish farm life which he teaches his son Tadgh, such as gathering seaweed. Here the Bull instructs his son to take over the land in the future. The Bull stresses the family tradition by saying, "Our father's father's father's father dug that soil with their bare hands, made those walls. Our souls is [sic!] buried down there. And your son's son's son's son's sons will take care of it, boy." However, when he says that, he contradicts himself because in another scene the Bull explains it was him and his father who made the field. Nevertheless, the phrase emphasises the Bull's attitude towards tradition and the land (see Herr 57-58). By contrast, his son only reacts to this announcement by nodding until the Bull continues, "Guard it well." This statement made by the Bull refers to his notion of rootedness to the homeland and an ongoing tradition that is linked to the field. It is a tradition that favours continuity rather than change and, therefore, the Bull intends to pass on this "sacred" duty to his son. This notion of the land mirrors a scene of Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* when he documents the making of a field by a peasant family. The family (the man, his wife and his son) is presented in front of the horizon carrying seaweed, exercising the tradition of fieldwork. These low-angle shots of the family against the sky are cross-cut with high-angle shots of the threatening waves. Thus, the scene suggests that the son will continue his father's work in an endless circle (see

McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland* 7). Moreover, it is indicated that the tradition of seaweed gathering or working on the field is passed on to the next generation. It is a routine, a habitus the father hands over to his son. Comparably, in *The Field*, the Bull's obsession with the land reinforces his established behaviour which is emphasized by enacting routines as working on the field (see Herr 31-33).

Usually fathers had enormous power over their sons, made all decisions and the son had to obey until marriage which was often arranged by the father as well (see Brody 109-110). When the Bull explains that he will leave the field to Tadgh, he makes his son dependent on him. For the Bull, father, son and land are one, whereas the field is a heritage that must be passed on, and maintained (see Martin Jr. 24). "Due to the family history of the field, the Bull feels entitled to the "law of the land" which "grants him moral supremacy. Such a 'law' is founded on customs and generational struggle: the field is the child he has given birth to and must defend" (Cavanagh 95). Simultaneously, taking care of the field and continuing the tradition is also the burden of being a son and a father of sons (see Cavanagh 95). The Bull belongs to the post-Famine generation who stayed on their land which means that his parents were among the farmers who developed a new way of life that refused to continue the old system of sub-division (which had contributed to the lack of crops during the Famine). The farmers were not willing to sub-divide their field anymore and passed on the land to only one male heir (see Brody 59-60) and dowered one daughter. The other children were forced to leave the farm (see Arensberg 79).¹ As the Bull was the oldest son, and therefore, the privileged one, he feels obliged to continue the "tradition" of farming. However, the tradition of this particular field only started with the Bull's father with whom he made the field. Thus, the Bull's earlier claim, "Our father's father's father's father dug that soil with their [sic!] bare hands, made those walls. Our souls is [sic!] buried down there. And your son's son's son's son's sons will take care of it, boy", is highly exaggerated. Nevertheless, the field is his burden, as he explains in his speech to the American and the priest, because he was the heir and, therefore, had the duty to work on the field with his father. Furthermore, his mother died in the

¹ A more detailed description of the post-Famine generation can be found in Chapter 3.2. and Chapter 4.1.1..

process and made a man of him. He stresses that by telling the two men, “My father looked at me with tears in his eyes. He knew I would take care of the land.” His duty to his parents is to continue nurturing of the field and since the Bull is a cattle breeder and “landowner” at the same time, he is a “spokesperson for indigenous attitudes sanctioned by history if not administered culture” (Herr 11). In other words, since his father passed the land on to him, it is his obligation to continue the tradition and his responsibility that his eldest son will face the same fate. Initially, this would have been Tadgh’s elder brother Séimí, who committed suicide at the age of thirteen. By adding Séimí, Sheridan refers to the mandatory responsibility of the younger generation for the older, by persuading the viewer that Séimí killed himself to help his younger brother in order that Tadgh would not have to leave the land (see Herr 60). The director depicts “the archetypal father-figure who, whether he was aware of it or not, tried to own the desire of the young while demanding their sacrifice” (Herr 63). It seems as if Séimí broke under his father’s pressure and obsession with tradition and now the duty of taking over the land is passed on to the son next in line, namely Tadgh, who seems rather unfit for this responsibility. His insecurity is presented right in the first scenes of the film. While the Bull walks easily uphill, Tadgh struggles to keep up with his father, stumbles and is literally being driven into his father’s passion for the land. Also when the Bull prays, his son seems rather indifferent and hardly interested (see Herr 56-63). Tadgh feels forced to continue the duty of self-denial that is connected to the tradition of tending the field and, therefore, he is incapable of keeping up with his father when he climbs the hills. He is unable to continue the tradition which mirrors the political and cultural situation of the time when the film was made (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland* 8). Tadgh’s behaviour in the film “symbolises a continuing cultural debate in Ireland – the relationship between a prosperous contemporary Ireland and the memory of its oppressed and poverty-stricken past” (McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland* 8).

Sheridan was influenced by the increasing awareness of Irish cultural traumas such as colonisation, the Troubles, the loss of land and of language, the Famine and its impact on migration. This awareness is also connected to the term of “the postcolonial personality” as introduced by psychotherapist Vincent Kenny in 1985. According to him “the postcolonial personality” is

characterized by a neurotic response to the environment, a shame at being Irish which can be seen in the character of Tadgh (see Herr 54). Moreover, by being the son of an authoritarian father who mirrors the patriarch of a country that is obsessed with land, Tadgh as well as his actions become volatile. He represents a new generation that is highly unstable and dangerous (see Haynes 88). In fact, it is Tadgh who triggers the auction of the field because he harasses the widow, who after ten years of torture decides to “draw the conclusions”. At first, the Bull is certain that he will get the field anyway but as he visits the local pub and challenges the locals, “Who would insult me by bidding for my field, here in Carraigthomond?”, Flanagan, the publican, indicates that there could be outsiders interested in the field as well. The Bull’s reaction already refers to his strong ties to the past because the only possible outsiders he sees are the British colonisers,

Outsiders! Are these the same outsiders who took the corn from our mouths? [...] Are these the same outsiders who took the meat from the tables while we lay in the ditches with the grass juice running green from our mouths? Are these the same outsiders who drove us to the coffin ships and scattered us to the four corners of the earth? Are these the same outsiders who watched while the valley went silent except of the cries of the last living child?

Flanagan retorts that the English are gone but the Bull answers that it was him and his “kind that drove them out” and that they were still “not forgotten”. Here the Bull refers to the Famine and blames the English for the Irish diaspora. Thus, he clearly suffers from the trauma of the post-Famine period. Furthermore, by saying that it was him and his kind that ended British occupation, he refers to the strength of his family line that shall continue with Tadgh. He believes that through his position and the “law of the land”, the field is *his* anyway, however, the involvement of the American at the auction, is about to shatter his belief in tradition.

The arrival of the American is emphasized by a cross-cutting between the American, who is driving a car, and the Bull, Tadgh and the Bird working in the field. While the three villagers represent traditional peasant life in the Irish countryside, living in harmony with their surroundings, the American and his car appear like aliens who enter their world and interrupt the peasants’ lunch with

the sound of the car's motor. The Bull, Tadgh and the Bird turn around and watch the vehicle and are shocked by the changes that are coming. However, the Bull tries to continue everything as it used to be and together with the local matchmaker arranges to find a wife for Tadgh, whom he shall meet at the local dance. While the Bull utilizes the event to practice the tradition of matchmaking, the American attends the dance to go back to the roots of his ancestors. Here tradition and modernity meet but are about to clash as well. The dance represents the traditional custom of the community that is challenged, because most people who dance there are about to emigrate the next day. Moreover, the attendance of the traveller woman is a threat to the community because she is a nomad and not bound to the village. Another threat is the American (modernity), who defeats Tadgh (tradition), a native Irishman, at the local dance. It is Tadgh who loses control and runs away in shame, something that is a repetitive pattern in his life (see Herr 43). On the whole, the scene highlights that

this rural townland [sic!] has to work harder and harder to keep its fundamental practices in focus. What may at times appear elegant and spontaneous execution of the old ways – whether matchmaking, tangling, dancing or allocating land is literally spinning out of control and thereby unleashing dark forces previously only barely reined in by traditional behaviours and familist social organization. (Herr 43)

Tadgh's defeat at the dance is the beginning of a breakdown of tradition. Simultaneously, the Bull wants his son to overpower the American by exposing him as an outsider and demonstrate to him that they are better. This is emphasised by the Bull because he views the American as a successor of the generation of the Irish who emigrated during the Famine (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 49). He sees them as weaker and notes, "When the going got tough, they ran away to America, they ran away from the Famine, but we stayed". This reaction reflects his attitude towards the "betrayers", the American.

The film portrays the Bull's need to preserve traditions and, therefore, becomes "a testimony to the often unrecognized power of social practices" (Herr 76). Thus, at the dance, the Bull yells to encourage his son, "The McCabes live forever!" He challenges the American and adds, "Faster! Faster!" and finally, "Stop!" When Tadgh's dance partner falls, he looks at her embarrassedly and runs away (see Haynes 92). Here Tadgh represents the

loss of tradition that is beaten by modernity (the American). The farmer refuses to obey modernity and holds on to the old way of life (see Herr 26). In this scene “Tadgh becomes nothing to Bull but a strategy for defeating the American and keeping the tinker's daughter away, a woman whose dangerous promiscuity foretells the irrevocable loss of his son and, consequently, the loss of his land” (Haynes 92). Tadgh is torn by the needs to impress his father by beating the American and by impressing the tinker girl. When Tadgh bolts away, the Bull only watches him ashamedly (see Haynes 92). The Bull is embarrassed by Tadgh's weakness and experiences the same shame as for Séimí once again. This shame refers to Ireland, which is often described as having a “shame culture” where public humiliation is one of the worst experiences that can happen, which is also represented by the Bull, who tries everything to avoid the humiliation of losing his land (see Herr 61-65). This is even more emphasised in the next battle between two young men at the river. Here the dancing scene is repeated but more drastically, namely in a fist fight between the American and Tadgh. Although Tadgh tries to impress his father at the fight against the American once more, he loses and feels the disappointment of the patriarch. Even though Tadgh is on the ground, the Bull pulls him and the American up to force them to continue. This behaviour also refers to the Bull's possible treatment of his sons Séimí and Tadgh when they were children (see Herr 64). Moreover, in various scenes it is hinted that the American and Séimí become one in the Bull's imagination. This can be particularly observed when the Bull holds the dead American in his arms and mumbles, “Thirteen years, six months, twenty-four days”, which refers to Séimí's age when he died. This indication appears again in another scene, when the American's dead body is pulled out of the lake, the Bull observes this and calls out, “Séimí!” Thus, it can be read that the younger generation has to die because a tyrannical father figure drives them to death. It is also their weakness that kills them especially when it comes to Tadgh, who is a liar, harasses women and is a fool according to his father (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 57). In addition, when the Bull murders the American, he shouts, “You tried to shame me. In front of my village. In front of my son. In front of God himself. Well, you'll not shame me, shame me, shame me, shame me, shame me, shame me, shame me.” This speech fuses the Bull's and Séimí's shame (which was probably improvised by Harris because it was not part of the

screenplay) and, therefore, by killing the American, the Bull goes slowly insane (see Herr 65). His obsession with the land amplifies the old wounds of his first son's death for which he blames himself.

When the Bull suffers from a nervous breakdown, after years of no communication, Maggy, his wife, speaks to her husband and indicates that Tadgh would be lost if he gave up and "if you break, Séimí will have died for nothing. [...] You've been living with a dead boy for eighteen years. It's crippling Tadgh." Tadgh knows if he - the new generation wants to survive - he has to leave his father and confront him. Thus, he returns to the house with the traveller woman and she is called "a whore" by the Bull. Eventually, Tadgh challenges his father for the first time and warns him, "Don't call her a whore. If you call her a whore again, I'll kill ya." The Bull stops and sees a conviction he has never seen before in his son's eyes. Tadgh continues, "You're the only one who cares about the field! What do you want me to do? Stay here and hang myself like my brother Séimí?" He understands that the memory of Séimí troubles the family and develops a new understanding and power (see Haynes 95-96).

Right after Tadgh has left, the Bull observes the dead body of the American that is pulled out of the water by calling out, "Séimí." He staggers back to his house, walks in circles like "a lion in a cage" and mumbles, "It's all gone. The kingdom is gone. Tadgh is gone. Séimí is gone. The land is gone, destroyed." He stops to pick up a shovel in order to walk to Séimí's grave but is stopped by his wife. Suddenly the Bull becomes aware of his routines that he has continued for years and never questioned (see Herr 33). He mumbles, "Damn my mother and my father, for slaving me to the [...] famine field and breaking me for it." Consequently, he swings the shovel and breaks the plates in the house; however, his wife stops him by confronting him with a mirror. Before he looks at himself he continues, "No, no, curse myself for cursing my mother to hell to get the field." Here he refers to his burden as the eldest son of his family and guardian of his parents' tradition. Eventually the Bull sees himself in the mirror which reflects his mental conflicts and speaks, "Are ye there, Bull? Are ye in there, Séimí?" The Bull looks directly into the camera and, therefore, to the audience and reveals his mania and the loss of social identity (see Herr 65). "All along, The Bull has been in denial over death, whether Séimí or his

mother's or the American's. He views the field's continuation in his family as recompense for these lives and a charm against future loss. It is therefore inevitable that he will create precisely what he fears most – the collapse of his family line" (Herr 65). Thus, when the Bull destroys everything, his cattle and his son Tagh, "the film undergoes a Yeatsian dreaming-back. The virtual dreamer is Irish culture, and the images that unravel before us are stock images from the cultural tradition" (Herr 73).

In *The Field* history is seen as circular and repetitive and discards the humanist idea of progress, the idea that humans learn from their mistakes. In Sheridan's film history repeats itself and all generations are trapped in a cycle of violence. This is reinforced by the movie's beginning and ending, which both include the sea. Water symbolizes death: in the first scene Tadgh and his father push the donkey into the lake, then the two men meet the American at the waterfall where he is killed, and in the end Tadgh is run over by the cattle and is pushed down the cliffs. The circle meets the beginning, when the Bull fights the sea and realises the vicious circle of history (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 47). In contrast to that, a rather similar scene is shot in *Man of Aran* where the battle with waves draws a romantic picture of tradition and the fight between nature and man (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland* 7). The Bull was entrapped by his parents as he tried to entrap his son, passing on the field to the next generation and now has eventually broken the tradition by wiping out his family line. Although the Bull's tradition is destroyed, history is doomed to repeat itself.

The Field indicates that Irish Independence has hardly changed anything. "The film's refusal to anchor itself more convincingly in the era in which it is ostensibly set may indeed enhance its dialogue with myth but militates against the achievement of any specific critique of post-independence nationalism" (Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 48). Turning to the depiction of Irish history in the film,

[b]y making the villain American and placing the action firmly in the past, the focus of this anger is shifted, and the meaning of the conflict changed and perhaps weakened. It was certainly felt to be the case by some in Ireland, who regarded this alteration as a serious distortion of reality. (Byrne 123)

This means that John B. Keane's historical context is simplified in the film because the Irishman who wants to purchase his land with English money becomes an American (see Pettitt 125). There is a lack of historical specificity and Sheridan also avoids a nostalgic pastoralism, which was typical for the 1930s. *The Field* is a film about myth, the myths of the past in Irish culture. There is barely any indication of the Civil War, Partition or Éamon de Valera. The American's intention of modernising his ancestor's country and the arrival of neo-colonialism and multi-national companies are more accurate for the 1960s. Thus, Sheridan's intention is criticising national orthodoxies in the past and in the present rather than representing the 1930s (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 41-49). Moreover, the American embodies a man who barely understands the Bull's obsession with the land and represents capitalism that changes traditional Irish life. He is a symbol for the displacement of tradition and modernity which reached a peak in the 1980s. Setting *The Field* in the 1930s attempts to intensify the contrast between the traditional life at the time the film is set and how Sheridan experiences Ireland in the nineteen eighties. Thus, he depicts a rural Ireland of the nineteen thirties but actually focuses on Ireland of the nineteen eighties and radical decrease of traditional practices (see Herr 52-76). The American's greed for money and modernisation emphasises the forgetting of tradition and the loss of the appreciation of the Irish landscape. In one scene the American drives onto the Bull's field with Father Dorian to demonstrate the "potential" of the land. He gets out of the car, points at the mountains and says, "Look at that." However, instead of admiring the beauty of the landscape, he only sees the concrete that he could use to build roads "all over Ireland". When they drive along a shabby road, the priest mentions, "Aren't these hills beautiful, Peter?" Nevertheless, the American answers rather bored, "Yeah, they're beautiful, father. Kind'a sad too." Then they stop in front of the river and Peter mentions that he plans to build an electrical power station to provide jobs for the local people. He certainly does not understand the land and intends to force it into modernisation. This also reflects John B. Keane's awareness of the ongoing transformation of Irish society in the second half of the twentieth century. For Keane, who was inspired by a real murder case when writing *The Field*, the incident represents the pressure of modernisation in rural Ireland (see Herr 25), "What was happening there at the time was that a way of

life was changing, *not* from rural to urban, but a change within the rural community itself. And I was a witness to that change. [...] [The people of the community] dragged themselves out of the past and into the present, I fear rather too hastily..." (qtd. in Herr 25). This view mirrors Ireland's recent history as seen by Sheridan as well.

Whereas in the 1980s recession hit the country and Irish people suffered from a high unemployment rate and emigration, the economic situation changed drastically in the mid-1990s when Ireland's economic growth became one of the fastest in the world (see Ó Riain 158). It was the arrival of the "Celtic Tiger", a name inspired by the economic success of Eastern Asian countries, the East Asian Tiger (see Kirby, *The Celtic Tiger in Collapse* 2). In 1999, the Irish filmmaker Bob Quinn described the situation of Ireland as, "Now that the country has shed its antediluvian religious beliefs, its national identity, its sense of personal and communal responsibility, its ethical inhibitions, its political sovereignty, even its own currency, all those things that retarded it for so long, the future glows with promise" (qtd. in McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland* 19). Although Quinn's remark sounds positive, he voices his concerns because since Ireland has become a part of global capitalism and consumerism, the suicide rate and alcoholism have increased drastically (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland* 19-20).

One reason for Ireland's economic growth was an increasing networking with information technology industries. Simultaneously, American export-oriented computer companies such as Microsoft, Novell or Symantec have settled in Ireland which has transformed the country into the European centre of the American computer industry (see Ó Riain 158, 168-169). Ireland's

success, based on a profound internationalization of social and economic life through flexible state institutions, turns out to be the major threat to its sustainability as these multiple globalizations generate an inequality and enormous political tensions that the decentralized state institutions have great difficulty containing (Ó Riain 183).

Since 1958 social inequality has increased in Ireland and the country has become economically depended on the variability of the international market (see Douthwaite 276-277). This dependence became apparent when Ireland was dramatically hit by the global economic crisis of 2008.

The Celtic Tiger is declared dead today and while it may be like a feast and famine, all is far from lost but the illusion that the free lunch had been invented, has also crashed to earth.

The forecast of a recession in 2008 by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), coming in the aftermath of the Lisbon Treaty rejection, is a deep psychological blow to Ireland Inc., on the world business stage. The confluence of an inevitable bursting of a housing property bubble with the international credit crisis and both the UK and US economies on the brink of recessions, together with rising inflation that will result in interest rate hikes, is the perfect storm. (*Recession Ireland 2008*)

The recent developments in Ireland reinforce Sheridan's depiction in *The Field*, in which, Ireland is trapped in a vicious circle of history. No sooner had Ireland freed itself from British colonialism, it was caught in the neo-colonialism of multinational companies and hit by a serious recession.

2.4. Tradition and Modernity in *Korea*

Although *Korea* tackles various themes, most elements can be connected to "tradition and modernity" which are predominant. The film is set in County Cavan (see Byrne 165) in 1952 (see Barton, *Irish National Cinema* 139). The historical setting of the film is shortly before to the period from 1959 to 1963 when the modernisation of Ireland began and major changes started to appear in Irish society (see Flynn, and Brereton 208).

The beginning of *Korea* is comparable to Sheridan's *The Field* because establishing shots also introduce the audience to the traditional life of father and son and the landscape that surrounds them. The father, John Doyle, passes on his skills (eel-fishing) to his son but differently from *The Field*, the son, Eamonn, acts as a narrator who explains his relationship, "It was always me and my father, ever since I can remember." Again, the passing on of traditions mirrors *The Field*, however, Eamonn is more active than Tadgh and aware of changes, as he continues, "We were the last to fish the freshwater for a living." It is something they have done for years but is in danger of disappearing. By narrating, Eamonn's voice-over leads to the film's sense of loss and death because it is also the last summer with his father before he will leave him to find

work (see Barton, *Irish National Cinema* 139). Moreover, changes in their surroundings are already introduced by the worker of the Rural Electrification Scheme. Eamonn and Doyle pass him while carrying boxes of eels. By showing only the worker's feet wearing climbing gear, he almost seems like an alien who intrudes into traditional Irish rural life (which is comparable to the American in *The Field*). The climber's business is only revealed by Doyle's contemptuous remark, "Electricity." In 1946 about 90 percent of Irish towns and cities were electrified, however, only two percent of the Irish countryside was provided with electricity. In comparison to other countries, in Holland about 98 percent of the rural population had access to electrical supply, in Denmark and Sweden about 75 percent and in the United States it varied from 90 percent in New Jersey and 6 percent in North Dakota. At that time, electricity would mean a new freedom for the Irish peasants especially regarding manual labour (see Keenan 611).

However, this probable freedom is not appreciated by John Doyle because for him, changes are hardly connected to progress (see Flynn, and Brereton 208), which is introduced by the following scene, which leads into the Doyles' home where they listen to the radio but still use battery instead of electrical power. Eamonn suggests applying for the electrical power but John Doyle refuses this idea because he sees no advantages in electricity. His son seems rather bothered by his father's rejection of modernity and refers to the photo of Doyle which shows him in a Republican uniform of the Irish Civil War, "They had said that family fought against family, father against son, brother against brother, neighbour against neighbour." Here Eamonn already indicates the feud between his father and his neighbour Ben Moran and gazes at his father's pistol which will play an important part in the film later. While walking to the village with the battery of the radio, Eamonn continues to explain, "His Civil War gun had been on the wall for years. As a reminder, he said, of a country he had fought for but was stolen from him." However, this reminder entraps John Doyle in the past and with him his son.

John Doyle's loyalty to Republicanism has hardly helped him since it is de Valera's party, the Fianna Fáil government, that is about to take away his fishing licence. His romantic image of an Ireland that would emerge after the war is no longer seen possible, as he is betrayed by the side he fought for (see Flynn, and Brereton 208). A symbol of this betrayal is his neighbour Ben Moran,

who fought on the other side of the civil war as a Free Stater. John Doyle represents a man who clings to the past of a sparse and simple life while Ben Moran supports a modernisation of Ireland that enters the international market (see Byrne 166). “The old men are on opposite sides of the 1950s political fence, just as they were thirty years ago” (Byrne 166). While Moran seems to have moved on, Doyle still lives in the past. Furthermore, what contributes to the conflict is Moran’s power over Doyle because he is responsible for Doyle’s fishing licence which he will lose because of the tourists who come to the village to fish. John Doyle blames his neighbour for these changes. Moran, on the other hand, is a modernising force who wants to provide the lake for tourists to fish while Doyle opposes that because his livelihood depends on eel-fishing and threatens the tradition of his occupation (see Pettitt 266).

Another incident disturbs the routine of the village when the dead body of Moran’s son Luke is sent back from the Korean War. At the same time Moran’s daughter, Una, and Eamonn get to know each other and begin to have feelings for each other. The arrival of the dead Irish-American reminds Doyle of his own Civil War past triggered by his photo on the wall. A flashback leads the audience back to his honeymoon, which is followed by images of the Civil War and the execution of two men. Every few seconds, the film cross-cuts between the colourful landscape during the honeymoon and the gloomy bluish shots of a prison, accompanied by “restless” violin music. Two men are shown standing in front of a wall as suddenly Doyle’s flashback is interrupted by him waking up.

The following day, Eamonn and John Doyle attend Luke Moran’s funeral and join the family in their home. However, John Doyle rather than pitying the family despises them because he hears about the compensation money and says, “I’ll not let my son going to America like Ben Moran, sending him out to be shot [...]. No, no Doyle will die fighting in Korea”, and adds, “We didn’t fight for our country to have our sons sent to Korea.” When Ben Moran approaches Doyle to thank him for coming, Doyle offends him and his family.

In the meantime, John Doyle begins to blame Ben Moran even more because of financial envy. Although Doyle was on de Valera’s side in the Civil War, he hardly benefits from it and feels even more betrayed by the country and the ideals he fought for (see Barton, *Irish National Cinema* 140). One evening he even reveals to Eamonn that his deceased wife wanted them all to emigrate

to America but died before they had the chance and continues, “that boy didn’t give his life that day for us all to quit the country. [...] That boy gave his life that day for this.” This again expresses his disappointment at the development of Ireland but also refers to his traumatic experiences during the Civil War and the murder of a young boy he observed. Doyle still lives in the past, this is reinforced by the image of the eels that are trapped in an underwater cage (see Barton, *Irish National Cinema* 139), but with him he also imprisons his son who explains in one scene, “Sometimes I feel so old like as if I’ve lived too long in my father’s world.” Once Eamonn tries to find out more about his father’s past but Doyle only answers, “Your education is over.” Slowly Eamonn loses his spirits and not even the encouragement from his beloved Una gives him the strength to confront his father.

The situation deteriorates when John Doyle receives a letter and moans, “There was a time Tom, when all I wanted to see was a harp on an envelope instead of a crown”, which is again a reference to his ideals during the Civil War. For him, fishing is all that is left from his old way of life but as he reads the letter, he discovers that Ben Moran would truly not prolong his fishing licence. He storms out to face his neighbour, who explains, “John, I tried to stop them but this is the way they see the country going. Fishing. Tourism.”

In the 1950s due to an economic recession and political force from abroad linked to Marshall Aid and Ireland getting closer to Europe, Ireland changed its import-substituting industrialisation into an export orientated industrialisation. This led to radical free-trade, radical free enterprises and foreign industrial domination (see O’Hearn 579). After a phase of heavy emigration, in the 1960s and 1970s the standards of living increased, influenced by the rural electrification, piped water supplies and car ownership. New employment opportunities were offered, tourism expanded and the manufacturing industry multiplied (see Horner 34). However, John Doyle sees the developing changes differently since it destroys his livelihood of eel-fishing and, therefore, he becomes “collateral damage” for the modernisation of Ireland. For him there are many issues in Ireland that need to be tackled that modernisation such as the Electrification Scheme would not be able to change. Furthermore, he is still haunted by the Civil War, a continuing division that is represented by Moran, “You got everything, Ben Moran, by being on the side of

the traitors but now, but now you sold everything, everything!" Doyle has lost all he cared about and he has not even been able to keep the promise to his wife that he would never leave the lake and stop eel-fishing. This probably refers to John Doyle's guilt that he feels for not having left Ireland for America because he believes that the weather and the lake were responsible for his wife's death. Although he sentimentalizes the relationship with his deceased wife, this happiness was probably untrue as Una Moran indicates by mentioning that he neglected his wife (see Barton, *Irish National Cinema* 139).

Nevertheless, Doyle takes the first step towards a healing process when he informs his son about the bad news and speaks about his experiences in the Civil War for the first time: His squad was caught in an ambush by Ben Moran's men who brought them to a building where the Free Staters decided to execute two Republicans. One of them was only seventeen years old. When the boy was shot, the buttons of his tunics flew in all directions. This is comparable to the pods of flowers that were blossoming at the cliffs where Doyle spent his honeymoon. For Doyle "it destroyed the day". After this "confession", Eamonn and his father seem to become closer, however, when John Doyle discovers that Una and his son are a couple, he suddenly changes his mind completely by telling Eamonn about sending him to the US, "America. Without the licence there is no future here for you. [...] America is where the opportunities are." Unexpectedly, Doyle becomes the one who stresses that things need to change and that the future is in America.

Doyle loses the fishing licence and also control over his son, which reflects his failure and contributes him changing his mind. By sending Eamonn to America he is about to regain power and control over his son. Doyle did not die a martyr's death during the civil war and, therefore, wants to sacrifice his son in order to take advantage of the Korean War, such as possible compensation money (see Holland 194). "His son's death offers an alternative if perverse opportunity for him to resurrect his own association with the spoils of war and to make good his thwarted attempt to gain personal authority through association with nationalist struggle" (Holland 194). Byrne's interpretation states that money and the feud against his neighbour Ben Moran (who were on different sides during the Civil War) are the main reasons for John Doyle's actions. Thus, Doyle would prefer his son killed rather than seeing him marrying

Una Moran, Ben Moran's daughter (see Byrne 165). However, the film indicates several motifs such as a combination of his greed, his conflicts with Moran, power over his son and his personal role during the Civil War and its traumas.

John Doyle's change of mind and favouring of emigration is not surprising since emigration has been an important part of Irish history. The Irish had already emigrated in great numbers before the Famine; however, emigration reached its peak between 1845 and 1855 (during the Famine) when about two million people left Ireland primarily for the US. Especially in the West, emigration had become an institutionalised way of family planning and was part of the Irish experience. About half of the Irish people born after 1920 left the country and although there are over five million people in Ireland, 70 million dwell abroad and are part of the Irish diaspora (see Whelan 196-197). By sending the young away to emigrate, rural societies expected their children to send money back home (see Byrne 166-167). Especially in the 1950s over 400,000 Irish people emigrated and the low and late marriage rates were extremely high. More than 66 percent of the men and more than half of the women in their late twenties were single. It went so far that 33 percent of the men and 25 percent of the women in their early forties were unmarried (see Horner 35). Between 1948 and 1959 rural Ireland was becoming more and more depopulated because life there was seen as lonely, dull, unattractive and disadvantaged (see Brody 70).

Although emigration was high at the time the film is set (the 1950s), it is quite striking that John Doyle changes his opinion that drastically since it was always his wife's wish to go to America which he opposed. Since he is not able to fish the lake anymore it would be rather senseless to maintain his old view. He does not see a future in Ireland anymore, which he calls a "fool of a country", and, therefore, he has to find a prospect elsewhere. By doing so, he disregards his son's wishes, who prefers to stay in Ireland and is already haunted by dreams about the Korean War. He fears that he will face the same fate as Luke Moran and return to Ireland in a coffin wrapped in the American flag. Eamonn gets sick, which reflects his mother's fate, emphasised by a close-up of her photo in Eamonn's bedroom. Again his father's reaction is neglect, as he ignores his son's condition, buys the ticket to America and again he disrespects the wishes of a loved one. Moreover, the death of Doyle's wife can

be compared to the death of Séimí in *The Field* as John Doyle and the Bull suffer from their guilt.

When Doyle goes out fishing one last time, he waves at other fishermen who turn out to be only a hallucination which disappears. He has to recognize that he is the only one left who is trapped in the past, as the eel is trapped on the hook (as the next shot reveals). He is the only one, who has not entered the present because when the arrival of rural electrification is celebrated in the village and Ben Moran is praised for helping Ireland to sweep away its “inferiority complexes”, Doyle observes this spectacle with resentment and comments again on the Civil War, “it wasn’t for streetlamps we fought.” The next day he goes to the dock where he suffers from another flashback which reinforces his trauma.

When a person lives through a tremendous experience that is connected with the threat of one’s life, a trauma (or post-traumatic stress disorder) can evolve (see *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*). A psychological trauma is “Überforderung des seelischen Systems” (Kühner 49), an experience of absolute powerlessness. The result is loss of power which triggers reoccurring memories, flashbacks or dissociation. People’s reaction to traumatic experiences can show various symptoms. However, there are two major ones, intrusion and denial. On the one hand, intrusion means that the traumatic experience haunts a person through nightmares, anxiousness or flashbacks. On the other hand, a person makes an effort to deny the traumatic events until he or she fails to feel anything (see Kühner 40-50). This is also the case in John Doyle’s behaviour, who constantly refers to the Civil War but only one time he speaks directly about his traumatic experience with the boy that was assassinated. However, it is not only him who suffers from his trauma but also the people around him, especially his son. Often the victim does not show a symptom directly after or during the traumatic experience but the symptoms can arise a long time after. This phenomenon is called latency which often affects the next generation (see Kühner 43-44). Eamonn knows that in order to survive and maintain Una’s love he has to confront his father. Thus, when they go fishing for the last time, Eamonn tells his father that he refuses to go to America which is not accepted by Doyle. Consequently, the son pulls out his father’s weapon and commands his father to either toss it in the lake or use it on him.

Here Eamonn helps his father to overcome his past and by removing the handgun they symbolically put to rest personal conflicts, the national past and the trauma (see Barton, *Irish National Cinema* 140). The conflict with his son and the threat to part as “enemies” forces John Doyle to cope with his past and come to terms with the present (see Flynn, and Brereton 209). He even accepts Una Moran as his son’s girlfriend as he calls her by her first name. The incident is described by Eamonn, “I’d never had felt so close to him before. [...] Each move he made I watched closely, as closely as if I too had to prepare myself to murder.” Since Eamonn eventually confronts his father with his own wishes and his trauma, he supports his father’s healing process. In contrast to the Bull in *The Field*, John Doyle overcomes the past and is ready live in the present. He learns from his mistakes and receives redemption, which simultaneously affects Eamonn.

2.5. Conclusion

The Field and *Korea* share several features that are connected to the theme of “tradition and modernity”. In both films a dominant father figure clings to the past and suffers from a trauma. While the Bull repeatedly mentions the Famine and refers to his burden as the eldest son of the farm, John Doyle still suffers from his experiences during the Civil War. Additionally, both men have lost a close family member and are ridden by guilt, but they have not learned from their mistakes. They suppress their sons by forcing them to live a life they have chosen for them. Tadgh and Eamonn are rather different characters because while Tadgh is quite dim and violent, Eamonn is sensitive and shy. Nevertheless, both men are encouraged to confront their fathers by the love for their girlfriends and eventually win. In spite of this, whereas John Doyle understands that he has to leave behind his past, the Bull goes insane due to his family burden and kills his cattle and everything that stands in his way, including his son. Thus, while Cathal Black draws a positive picture of the future, Jim Sheridan sees only the repetition of a vicious circle of history. Both films reflect the current “conflict between the maintenance of a ‘traditional’ Ireland and the increasing pressures of modernisation, which are leading to a redefinition of the countryside in Ireland” (J. McDonagh 73).

3. The Land Question in Jim Sheridan's *The Field* and Ken Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

3.1. Introduction

The perception of a tract of land depends completely upon one's relationship with that land. When looking at a bog, for example, a farmer may long to drain it so that it could become nice and tidy, ready to grow grass, a biologist will view it as a treasure-trove of biodiversity or an archaeologist might locate some ancient organic remains that enlighten us about the material culture of ancient times. The farmer has to make his/her living off the land, while the latter two are interested in keeping it ecologically pristine, for aesthetic and scientific reasons. (Crowley 130)

When we view Crowley's different perceptions of land from a more political perspective, it can be referred to the land question in Ireland, which is linked to British colonialism in Ireland. Different views of the land do not only set Irish perceptions apart from foreign (i.e. British or American) perspectives but also divide the Irish themselves as the depiction of the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War in Ken Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* demonstrates.

In the first part of this chapter, I will primarily deal with the land and tenant question in connection with Sheridan's *The Field* and relate the film to its historical background. The main aim is to explain the Bull's strong attachment to his land and how the effects of the land question are still present today. In the first section of this chapter the focus will lie on land and the Bull's field. However, topics such as tradition or the rural community are related to the theme "land" as well but are dealt with in more detail in 2.3. and 4.2. and, therefore, are left out in this chapter in order to avoid repetition.

In the second part, I will focus on Ken Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* which addresses the land question on both a local and national level, namely the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War. It depicts these wars from the perspective of Irish country people who participated in the wars as volunteer fighters and hold different opinions after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921.

3.2. *The Field*

“Since the displacement of the old clans from the traditional holdings by English planters to make tenants of them on their ancestral soil, the struggle to regain control of the land has been a key component of Irish nationalism” (Gray 191). This struggle has also been an important matter in the political and social history of Ireland (Aalan, Whelan, and Stout 212).

The Irish countryside had already been affected by colonisation under Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and Cromwell, who viewed Ireland as a rich and attractive territory. The relationship between England and Ireland became more complex when Ireland was viewed as a possible threat to the power of England (see Brody 46-47). In the late sixteenth and seventeenth century English and Scottish Protestants landlords established plantations in the east and north of Ireland. Often, they replaced the old aristocratic successors of the original of the Anglo-Norman settler colonies (see Aalan, Whelan, and Stout 213). By removing the power and wealth of Catholics, a Protestant English-speaking ruling class was established (see Brody 48). In contrast to the east, in the poorer west the native Irish people dominated because there were fewer settlers from Britain (see Aalan, Whelan and, Stout 213) who had little influence on the culture of the peasants. This means that in the eighteenth century, the poor Irish farmers were almost the only ones left who represented Gaelic society. At that time there were two major changes the peasants experienced, namely a drastic growth of population and the sub-division of farmland and, therefore, the poorest people were crammed in the poorest parts of the land. However, the suitability of the potato for boggy and rocky soil (as it was common in the West) intensified the productivity of the land. In particular “lazy-beds”, rows of earth mixed with seaweed allowed the cultivation of potatoes and became the staple diet in the West. As the population grew, families were forced to sub-divide the land to amongst the male heirs and divide the rent for their landowners as well. The sub-division encouraged early marriages which again contributed to a growth of the population and further sub-divisions (see Brody 49-50). Other reasons for the population increase were a better transport system for food to rural areas and a decreasing death-rate which resulted from improved hygiene and medicine such as vaccination for smallpox. Although the

potato was planted in other countries as well, hardly anywhere was it eaten in such great amounts as in Ireland. The potato was perfect for the western Irish climate which coincides with the fact that “the food value of an acre of potatoes is greater than that of an acre of any grain crop” (Mitchell, and Ryan 331). While in 1603 about 750,000 people lived in Ireland, in 1841, 8,175,000 inhabited the island. This is even more remarkable because the number of people who left Ireland was high². From 1815 to 1845 approximately one million people emigrated to the United States alone (see Brody 53).

In the first part of the nineteenth century the social pyramid in the Irish countryside consisted of the landowner on top, followed by the tenant-farmers and the landless labourers at the bottom. While many landowners lived in mansions, tenant-farmers dwelled in simple farmhouses that consisted of a small room with a partition and an open chimney. The niche behind this partition was used as a bedroom and storeroom (Mitchell, and Ryan 332). The drastic increase of the population before the Famine and the resulting decrease of living conditions also contributed to the formation of secret societies such as the Whiteboys or Ribbonmen who focused on agrarian terrorism. In their infancy, these societies would provide the foundations for political organisations such as the land league in the late nineteenth century (see Maignant 22-23).

[T]hey exclusively sought to redress the limited grievances of their communities and never aimed at reforming society as a whole. Their only ambition was to put an end to excesses within the frame of the social system as it stood. These societies, which seem to have been the expression of poor people’s discontent in a changing economic environment, may also be seen as one aspect of the country’s move towards a new phase of its development. (Maignant 22)

In 1846 the potatoes were hit by the potato blight. Initially it was not viewed as devastating; however, when the blight returned every year until 1851, it led to the disaster of the Great Famine. People had to live five years with barely any potato harvest and although some areas could live on fish, it hardly eased starvation. The Famine was intensified by hard winters which led to additional starvation and deaths from cold (see Brody 56-59). Although some Irish claimed that the Famine was plotted by the British to destroy the threat of a

² Emigration had been part of Irish life since the Tudor invasion (see Brody 53).

growing Irish population, the disastrous effects of the Famine were due to misfortune, bureaucratic incompetence and England's ignorance of what was happening in the western areas of Ireland (see J.H. Johnson 71).

When the Famine hit Ireland in 1845, Sir Robert Peel, the British Prime Minister offered employment and thought that the Irish peasants could buy American maize with the extra wage, however, he also ordered that the Irish should proceed to export their grain. The following year the blight destroyed the potato crop again, and a new government was established under Lord John Russel, who introduced a *laissez-faire* policy that privatised food supplies which raised the food prices enormously. When the government realized that the situation had changed to the worse they offered more public employment, which was attached to numerous bureaucratic rules (see Magnussen 84-87). The British thought that by offering work they would increase the money, improve the markets and, therefore, would stop starvation. The wages hardly covered the expenses of the pricey government-supplied grain and the government decided that reducing prices would damage the economy even more. Moreover, since workers were needed for public projects, the agrarian economy was neglected. This meant that alternative crops were not planted (see Brody 57-58). Many landlords tried to help their tenants such as the Marquess of Waterford, who set up soup kitchens for his tenants. Again other people provided their aid by raising private charity such as the Quakers (see Magnussen 89-90). Still, from 1848 to 1851 one and a half million died of hunger or diseases caused by the Famine conditions and one million people left the country (Brody 59). "The heart was knocked out of Ireland and the population continued to fall from a maximum of eight million without interruption until 1930, when it was only four million and Ireland was one of the emptiest countries in Europe" (Mitchell, and Ryan 338).

After the Famine the Irish landscape was badly damaged "almost destitute of any woody growth with the fertility of much of its soils grossly depleted by endless repetitions of potato crops. Those people in whom any element of *élan vital* had survived had only one goal – to seek a higher standard of living elsewhere" (Mitchell, and Ryan 338). The Irish peasants who stayed developed a new way of life which contributed to a new consciousness of landlord-peasant relationships and changed the system of sub-division.

Farmers refused to sub-divide their field and reduced their inheritance to a single male heir. Thus, the marriage rate dropped to one of the lowest in the world because the marriage of the sons who would inherit the field was postponed in order that the family would not lose a helping hand. After the Famine most peasants did not decide to emigrate because they wanted to leave the land but because the autocratic father refused to sub-divide the field among his other children (see Brody 59-68). The number of tenants who were not able to pay their rents increased and, therefore, they were consequently evicted by the landlords. The landlords felt the falling numbers of tenants and several estates had to be left and were overtaken by new landlords. Especially the West suffered immensely, as many people preferred seasonal work in Britain rather than emigrate and, therefore, the number of people living in the West was still too high for the local food supply (see Mitchell, and Ryan 338-339). Although secret societies also existed after the Famine, they had changed in the 1850s in so far as while before cottiers and labourers targeted tenant farmers, now the tenant farmers revolted against landlords which made their grievances a national distress. These actions became gradually more political and were seen to be associated with issues concerning national territory as a whole (see Maignant 23). Nonetheless, the situation improved for tenant-farmers in 1870 when the Land Act was signed and ensured that if the tenant left and had improved the land, the landowner had to acknowledge this and pay for the improvement. In addition, if the tenant intended to buy his land, it would be possible to borrow money from the state (see Mitchell, and Ryan 339).

In the same decade (1870s) crops failed, further tenants were evicted (see Mitchell, and Ryan 339) and the tension between landlords and tenants increased again. The revolutionary Michael Davitt used the peasants for his nationalist ideas and established the militant organisation, Irish National Land League. Since the tenant-landlord question was a very sensitive issue in Ireland in the nineteenth century, Charles Stewart Parnell and Davitt cooperated with the Land League and the landless Irish against the old system to strive for lower rents and return the land to the natives (see Magnussen 102). In 1879, the Land War broke out, which lasted until 1882 and was marked by demonstrations against evictions, boycotts and support for relatives of evicted tenants (see Magnussen 102-103). Prime Minister William Ewald Gladstone, who had

already been an important personality for the first Land Act, introduced the second Land Act of 1881 that contained “the three Fs” of “Fair rents, Fixity of tenure and Free sale” and encouraged the transfer from landlord to tenant. The Land Acts were followed by more acts in the 1890s. The West was still very poor and became a target for projects such as the Congested Districts Board to build roads and increase tourism. In 1903 another project was installed that aimed to protect and restore the Irish woodland, and in the same year the Wyndham Act was signed which (see Mitchell, and Ryan 339-342)

made the completion of Gladstone’s ambitions possible. Entire estates, not just piecemeal holdings, could now be offered for sale and very generous financial terms made easy purchase possible. When the possibilities of the Wyndham Act had worked their way through the system, Ireland was indeed a land of small farmer proprietors [...] When the transfer of land was complete, all vestiges of early and of feudal Ireland had disappeared. In their stead authority was represented by institutions of government, both at national and at local level and the land was held by farmer proprietors who clung with a vice-like grip to their small units of inefficiently worked fields. (Mitchell, and Ryan 342-343).

After the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War (which will be dealt with in 3.3.) the Land Act of 1923 by the Irish Free State ensured that even the poorest tenants would become owner-occupiers (see Brody 57).

In *The Field* the Bull has apparently not benefited from these Acts because he is still a tenant and forced to bid for the field which is beyond his financial budget. The Bull is also confronted with a person from outside Ireland, an American, who wants to take away the land from him. Here John B. Keane’s historical context of neo-colonialism is simplified in the film because the former Irishman, William Dee, who wants to purchase the Bull’s land with English money becomes an American (see Pettitt 125). Moreover, it is not made clear when the film is set because there is hardly any mention of the Civil War, partition or Eamon de Valera. The American’s ambitions to modernise rural Ireland symbolises the arrival of neo-colonialism and multi-national companies which are more accurate for the nineteen-sixties. Sheridan’s intention is to critique national orthodoxies in the past and in the present rather than representing the 1930s (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 41, 49). The only reference

that links the Bull to the War of Independence is his remark that the English are, “[g]one because I drove them out, me and my kind. [...] Gone but not forgotten.”

Since the Bull constantly speaks about the Famine, he seems to be stuck in a post-Famine time because he grew up with the new way of peasant life that avoided subdivision and this has marked his life. After the Famine property became more valuable for the farmers and was identified with “land”, “blood” and their status in the community (see Arensberg 99-100). The Bull was the oldest son in his family and he had the privilege and honour to have the field passed on to him to continue the family line. This honour is connected with duties he feels towards the land: “For the ‘blood’ and the ‘land’ are identified as well. The social mind is not content with half-hearted inclusions. [...] A particular ancestral line is inseparable from a particular plot of earth. All others are ‘strangers to the land’” (Arensberg 83). In other words, since his family has lived in Carraigthomond for generations, it is his birthright and responsibility to own the land, nurture it and pass it on to the next generation. The Bull stresses this attitude, when in the opening of the film he looks with Tadgh down at the field and announces, “Our father’s father’s father’s father dug that soil with their [sic!] bare hands, made those walls. Our souls is [sic!] buried down there. And your son’s son’s son’s son’s sons will take care of it, boy. [...] Guard it well.” The field carries many meanings for the Bull such as hope, a possible future and the past. The Bull’s field is better kept and “greener” than the surrounding fields and signifies the nation of Ireland or the Celtic West as the real Ireland that is threatened by modernity (the American). The field is the Bull’s child, Mother Ireland and the symbol for the victory of the Republic over the English (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 46). Although the Bull has this strong connection to the land, he does not own it, which is the source of his anxiety when his landlady, the widow, decides to sell the field by public auction. When the American arrives in Carraigthomond and intends to bid for his field, the Bull sees himself entitled to enact the “law of the land” which is earned by hard work and sacrifice and contravenes the law of the Irish state (see Pettitt 125). This means, since he is a native to the land, he has every right to keep this position and defend it against outsiders such as the widow (who came to the village through her husband), the American (a successor of the Irish who fled during the Famine and “betrayed” the land), the priest and the garda. For him there is no option to

leave the land, because as he demonstrates with the dandelion, without the Irish people, Ireland would be empty and barren; however the Bull misrepresents the dandelion because although the flower looks bare, the seeds are spread and will create new flowers (see Haynes 90) such as the Irish American who returns to Ireland with the intention to modernise it.

The Bull's idea of home, land and blood is extremely nationalistic. The traditional Irish territory can be split into either "soil" or "land". While soil belongs to the community, land is possessed by an individual person (see Cavanagh 94).

Soil is prior to land. It is actual and symbolic because of its claim to sheer materiality. The romantic-nationalist conception of soil, its identity with the nation, its ownership by the people, its priority over all the administrative and commercial systems that transforms it into land, is the more powerful because it is formulated as a reality that is beyond the embrace of any concept. (qtd. in Cavanagh 95)

Sheridan repeats this romantic-nationalist notion of soil by explaining that the Bull's obsession with the field is in connection with his dead son Séimí, who disclaims the field in order to pass on the land to his younger brother Tadhg. The Bull's guilt explains his fixation on the field and, therefore, he perceives it as "soil" (see Cavanagh 95). Furthermore, he is so obsessed with his burden to continue his parents' tradition and lifestyle that he ignores his son's wish to leave the land. The Bull's attempt to intimidate the American which results in his murder causes him to realise his obsession.

The Bull mirrors Magnussen's comment that "in Ireland, as someone has said, history is a pack of tricks which the dead play on the living" (Magnussen 143). The Bull is a product of centuries of colonialism when most native inhabitants of Ireland were tenants of their own land. He represents a peasantry that is affected by the past, especially the Famine, the following struggles for the land, the War of Independence and the Civil War, which have contributed to a fear that all the accomplishments might be taken away again. "The rights of ownerships, only achieved by most Irish farmers at the beginning of this century, are still covetously prized; and in the minds of many people there is still a strongly rooted belief in the rights of individuals to use their own land as they see fit" (J.H. Johnson 61). Even today the Irish country people are politically tied

to the principle of private ownership and the land which is an element of post-colonial Irish society that still commemorates the collective memory of fighting for land ownership. Thus, it can be difficult for farmers to accept the influence of organisations from outside as pollution prevention actions taken by the EU in the shape of Natural Heritage Areas or Special Areas of Conservation. Many rural farmers feel ill-treated by the state and the EU and complain that control is taken away from the local people as it was in the nineteenth century. Also, the increase in tourism and the selling of rural Ireland to the “tourist gaze” have had an impact on farmers and their land. In Ireland there are about 3000 km of marked trails across the countryside, while Britain has more than 225,000 km of these ways. Although Britain’s surface is larger than Ireland, the main point is that Britain has a law that ensures the “right to roam”. This means that hikers are permitted to walk everywhere on the land, even on farmyards. Contrary to Britain, in Ireland landowners have the right to evict people that trespass on their properties. This attitude is in particular opposed by urban interest groups such as Keep Ireland Open, who fight for better access to the Irish countryside (see Crowley 135-146).

3.3. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

Several films have been made about the Easter Rising, the Irish War of Independence or the Irish Civil War such as *Mise Éire* (1959), *Saoirse?* (1960) and *Michael Collins* (1996). In contrast to these motion pictures focussing on urban centres, the events shown in Ken Loach’s *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* are located in the Irish countryside. The film is set in the southwest of Ireland and even though the characters are fictional (see Ó Drisceoil 9), the historical background is well-researched and woven into the film. However, in order to connect the film with the land question and the history of Ireland, the following analysis will include historical elements that are relevant for the film and the theme of “land”³.

³ Here the aim is not to analyse the Irish War of Independence or the Irish Civil War, as that would go beyond the scope of the discussion. Instead the intention is to examine certain scenes in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* from a historical perspective.

Although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century “[t]he old power of the landlord was forever taken away, and the system of dual ownership was born” (Magnussen 104), the Land League wanted to achieve more (see Magnussen 104). Conflicts within the classes were reduced in the second half of the nineteenth century which contributed to a sense of belonging to a group that had the same dilemma in common. This shared experience strengthened a national consciousness that was connected to a growing interest in nationalist claims (see Maignant 24). After Parnell’s death in 1891, a new revolutionary atmosphere developed, which consisted of two main nationalist branches, namely a “cultural” one, the Gaelic League, and a “physical” one, the Gaelic Athletic Association, which was interested in revitalising Irish sports and opposed Anglo-Saxon culture. At the beginning of their establishment both branches were non-political, which changed in 1915, when the Gaelic League claimed an independent Ireland. A few years before, in 1908, the political organisation Sinn Féin (translates as “We Ourselves”) was established by journalist Arthur Griffith, who pursued the independence of Ireland. When the First World War weakened Britain, three private armies existed in Ireland, the Irish Volunteers, the Citizen Army, and the IRB, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (see Magnussen 114-128). The IRB, whose aim was to gain the full independence from Britain by using violence, held the opinion that (see Ó Drisceoil 6) “England’s difficulty was Ireland’s opportunity” (Fanning 27) and was certain that a rising had to take place, which was set for Easter 1916 (see Magnussen 131-132). On Easter Monday, 1916, the IRB, the Irish Volunteers, and the Irish Citizen Army stated an insurrection in Dublin and declared an Irish Republic (see Ó Drisceoil 6). However, several unfortunate incidents occurred such as weapons ordered from Germany that never arrived. Patrick Pearse, one of the leaders of the Easter Rising achieved the blood sacrifice he had glorified and longed for because 450 civilians and 116 soldiers were killed in Dublin during the Rising and fifteen were sentenced to death, among them Pearse. First viewed as extremists, the fighters became heroes and martyrs in the eyes of many Irish (see Magnussen 132-135). The executions contributed to a change from a moderate nationalism to the separatist movement of the Sinn Féin party, a new Irish Volunteers group and a growing Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union in 1918 (see Ó Drisceoil

6). In December 1918, Sinn Féin won the general elections for the Westminster Parliament in Ireland and founded a National Assembly, Dáil Éireann, in Dublin in 1919, where Irish Independence was announced. Eamonn de Valera, who had already played an important role in the Easter Rising (see Magnussen 138), became its leader. However, this was disregarded by Britain and resulted in the criminalisation of the Dáil and other Irish nationalist groups (see Ó Drisceoil 6). This historical event is mentioned in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* by Damien, who is imprisoned after Black and Tans attacked his flying column. In prison he is asked for his name by a British commander, who calls him “a murdering gangster who shoots young men in the back”, because the volunteers killed Black and Tans in a pub. Damien demands to be treated as a political prisoner because he views himself as a Democrat and continues to speak about the election and Britain’s failure to recognise Sinn Féin: “Your government, which suppresses our government, which bans our papers... Your presence here is a crime, a foreign occupation. You tell me what I am supposed to do as a Democrat?”

After Sinn Féin was declared illegal, the Irish Volunteers went underground and changed into the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Volunteers, who joined the IRA belonged mostly to the lower classes such as farmers’ sons, rural labourers or transport workers who were between eighteen and thirty years old. Others were veterans from the First World War or professionals such as Ernie O’Malley, who influenced the creation of the character of Damien, a young doctor. Most of the men who participated became engaged in the war via their relations, friends, neighbours or sports clubs such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). This is illustrated at the beginning of *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* when a hurling match is shown; most of whom participating belong to the freedom fighters’ “flying column” in the film (see Ó Drisceoil 6-7).

Sinn Féin aimed to secure independence by passive resistance but the volunteer force could not be stopped because they already fought successfully against the Royal Irish Constabulary in the Irish countryside (see Magnussen 139). On 21 January 1919 the Dáil had its first public session which coincided with the assassination of two members of the Royal Irish Constabulary by volunteers and started the War of Independence (see Hopkinson, “Struggle for Independence” 685). The British government reacted by sending the “Black and

Tans", who attacked the volunteers by using brutality and terror (see Magnussen 139). The Black and Tans were mainly demobbed soldiers from the First World War who were sent to Ireland in the 1920s to support the Royal Irish Constabulary, the armed police force which was weakened by the I.R.A.. They acted against the I.R.A. by terrorising communities that supported them. In the film this is demonstrated after the opening of the film, when Damien's neighbour Michael is killed because he refuses to say his name in English and speaks in Irish. Such incidents and growing arrests triggered the establishment of the "flying columns" that attacked the British primarily through ambushes in the countryside (see Ó Drisceoil 7). Thus, the I.R.A. answered the Black and Tans with counter-attacks and although Sinn Féin attempted to influence the situation politically, the I.R.A. hardly reacted to the Dàil's decisions (see Magnussen 140). The British looted and burned down houses, villages and arbitrarily murdered civilians, arrested and tortured activists, this again intensified the violence of the war (see Ó Drisceoil 7). The film shows that the violence on both sides was dirty, but Loach focuses more on the Irish side as a speech by a flying column leader indicates (see Ó Drisceoil 7-8): "Mercenaries! That were paid to come over here to make us crawl, and to wipe us out. We've just sent a message to the British cabinet that will echo and reverberate around the world! If they bring their savagery over here, we will meet it with a savagery of our own!"

Loach focuses on the character development of Damien, who is about to leave Ireland for England to work as a doctor and refuses to join the flying column because he is certain that the British are stronger and will defeat the Irish easily. After Michael's funeral, Damien's brother and the volunteers enumerate innocent victims of the Black and Tans and hope for Damien to change his mind. "Michael was a real Irishman, Damien", his brother remarks, followed by another comment by Ed, who calls Damien a coward. Damien replies promptly, "I'm a coward and you're a hero. Isn't it, Ed? You gonna take on the British Empire with your hurling, isn't it, Ed?" Loach and Paul Laverty include another incident that eventually convinces Damien to help his countrymen, namely when the Black and Tans assault a train driver and a dispatcher who refuse to take military members, weapons and supplies on their

train. Here Loach refers to an important element of the Republican crusade, namely the labour movement (see Ó Drisceoil 8).

Damien returns to his home and swears an oath to be faithful to the Dáil and “fight against all enemies, foreign and domestic”. The oath which he takes represents his new commitment to Republican ideals. This plays an important part in Loach’s film when it comes to the question whether to accept the Peace Treaty or not. The director indicates that Damien’s inability to accept the treaty stems from the very oath he has given as a Republican. Damien’s initiation into the I.R.A. is narrated through several training scenes located in the Irish countryside.

In the exterior scenes, the south-western Irish landscape in particular, becomes a place where the volunteers belong, which is their home. The cinematography in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* focuses on depicting the locals of rural Cork as one with their surroundings and represents the Black and Tans with their different accents and clothes as intruders that stand out. This is emphasised by Sinead’s cottage, the I.R.A. “safe house”, which functions as a symbol for transgressions British colonialism in Ireland, in particular when the house is burned down by the Black and Tans (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 13). “It is a scenario that taps into the very heart of Irish nationalist discourse and Loach’s radical anti-imperialist message is here inscribed into the very landscape that he creates” (McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 13). However, at the beginning of their training, even the volunteers (especially Damien) have to learn to become one with their surroundings. Here one of the volunteers is accused by one of the drill-sergeant of concentrating too much on not ruining his shoes rather than focusing on the task to attack the British. The longer the men are part of the flying column the more nationalist they become and the more willing they are to do everything necessary to achieve their goal.

The scene in which Teddy is tortured demonstrates their growing solidarity immensely because their war becomes more and more personal as they lose some of their comrades due to a traitor amongst themselves, namely Chris Reilly. Although Chris is a member of their own community, they decide to execute him and justify the decision with the martial law. Simultaneously, Loach uses the situation with Chris to portray an Anglo-Irish landlord, Sir John, and

illustrates how the Irish upper class did not identify themselves with Irish nationalists (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 14). Moreover, Loach illustrates certain class tensions and uses the common image of the landlord who exploits his tenants and labourers. Sir John is clearly faithful to the British crown because he enjoys a high position in Ireland which he owes to the Empire. These class tensions are suggested by Sir John referring to the Irish volunteers as “a trumped up bunch of rustics, shop hands and corner boys with delusions of grandeur” in his letter to the royal police. Teddy reacts to these words as well by emphasising the beauty of Sir John’s office and adds that a screaming man would not be heard. He continues that despite his education Sir John is still too “stupid” to understand the reasons for their fight against the British. When the landlord notes, “God preserve Ireland if ever your kind take control. [...] A priest infested backwater”, he refers to his opposition to Catholicism and Communism because both would endanger his position in society. It was the aim of Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. to reduce these tensions, however, at the same time they depended on the support of rich farmers and merchants and, therefore, the labour movement had to accept that “labour must wait”. These class conflicts within the independence movement are addressed when another landlord, who is accused of extorting an old woman before the Dáil court, is protected by Teddy and his men (see Ó Drisceoil 8). Here a first discussion evolves about the ideals of the War of Independence which divide the Irish. While Teddy and his men justify their action by explaining that they need the landlord on their side to fund weapons, his brother Damien and several other people view Teddy’s attitude as violating the rights of the Dáil and, therefore, the ideals of Ireland. Teddy and his men only have the victory against Britain in mind, and consequently for them the ends justify the means. One of Teddy’s men justifies his actions by saying it is done “in the name of god”. However, an opponent to this opinion states drastically, “So we paint the town republican-green but underneath we’re still the same as the English.” He continues that the I.R.A would use the labourers as fighters but still work together with the landlords and have dinner with them. Here the first conflicts among the Irish volunteers are portrayed by Loach and he also addresses the behaviour of the leaders of the movement. They never appear in person and only contact the flying columns via messages that are transferred by women

and children. The only person who seems to be in contact with I.R.A. headquarters is Teddy who benefits immensely after the Treaty is signed because he becomes a powerful leader himself.

In the southwest in particular the peasants were integral to the guerrilla actions against British troops in the Irish countryside (see Brody 57). In 1920 the guerrilla war was most intense in the southwest of Ireland, especially in Cork (see Ó Drisceoil 8). As mentioned before the volunteers of the flying columns mostly belonged to the lower classes and were sons of farmers or landless workers (see Villar-Argáiz 194) but also women were involved (the Cumann na mBan), who worked for communication, propaganda and the running of the Dáil courts. (see Ó Drisceoil 7). In the film, women do not only play an important part in communication but provide a hiding place for the I.R.A. as well. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*'s portrayal of female characters is in contrast to the stereotypical image of Ireland as a powerless woman. Three generations of women live in the I.R.A.'s "safe house", namely Peggy, Bernadette and the youngest, Sinéad. Through them female perspectives and female involvement in the Civil War are demonstrated (see Villar-Argáiz 194). Furthermore, the administrative staff at the court are mostly women, who are ignored by Teddy and his men, who support the merchant. This already suggests the role of women in Ireland after the Civil War (see Ó Drisceoil 8). Although the film portrays strong women who stand up against men, land and landscape are politicised and suggest the common allegory of woman and Ireland. In many Irish films women are equated with the land in the depiction of landscape and, therefore, Ireland becomes a female allegory. This is most obvious in the safe house where the three women live and a number of British acts of violence occur (see Villar-Argáiz 183, 194-195). Since the house is inhabited by women, the "colonial allegory of Ireland as a female victim of imperialist rule" (Villar-Argáiz 195) appears. Their house is a target for British male violence twice and for Irish male violence once, namely when Black and Tans kill Michael, when Sinéad is terrorised by the Black and Tans and when the women are harassed by Free Staters. Since several attacks occur in the same setting, a reference to the repetition of Irish history is suggested because British violence is repeated under the Free State and can be connected to the repetitive representation of women and Ireland. For example, the attack on

Sinéad is full of sexual connotations that symbolise the terror against Ireland by England, which acts as the male rapist who attacks female Ireland (see Villar-Argáiz 195). “By violating Sineád’s body, the Black and Tans assert their position as colonizers/conquerors of Ireland” (Villar-Argáiz 195). When the Free State soldiers break into the women’s house as the Black and Tans did before, the remark of the man in the court, “So we paint the town republican-green but underneath we’re still the same as the English”, becomes reality in the film.

In contrast to the film, which focuses on class conflicts, Hopkinson argues that the main conflict among the Irish was whether independence should be accomplished peacefully (as represented by most members of Sinn Féin in particular de Valera) or by using violence (as represented by the volunteers). Sinn Féin had limited control over the volunteers who were led by their own commanders. When Britain outlawed the Dáil it became more difficult for its members to meet and the power of the I.R.A. grew. Although the I.R.A. headquarters in Dublin led by Michael Collins gave instructions to the local I.R.A. they were distant from many areas in Ireland. The secrecy of the guerrilla warfare made communication between the groups difficult and many areas did not know what was happening in others. They were mainly independent in their decisions. For instance, in Co. Kerry the I.R.A. had great administrative difficulties and conflicts within their local group. The cooperation between the GHQ and local military leaders decreased and led to confusion and disorder after the Treaty of 1921 was signed. The GHQ’s control over the groups got more and more out of hand. The groups acted on their own behalf and different opinions concerning independence increased the conflicts within the groups. (see Hopkinson, *Green Against Green* 2-16).

A stalemate between the Irish and British troops led to negotiations in London (see Laffan 92). De Valera sent a delegation of five members, led by Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith’s, to Britain, and after about one month of negotiations they were confronted with an ultimatum that they had to sign the Treaty or provoke an “immediate and terrible war”. Eventually the Treaty was signed on 6 December 1921 (see Coogan 32-34).

This [the Treaty] created an Irish Free State with dominion status in the British Commonwealth. The Free States consisted of twenty-six counties, the other six having already been established as the Unionist-dominated

state let of Northern Ireland in June 1921, which remained within the United Kingdom. Ultimate power over Free State affairs remained with the British. (Ó Drisceoil 8)

In the film, the Truce is celebrated by the country people and the Treaty is also welcome but when they realise that their “freedom” is attached to various conditions, their enthusiasm fades away.

The Treaty divided the Irish Cabinet and the Dáil. Those who opposed it (in particular De Valera) viewed the Treaty, the partition of Ireland and its dominion status, as a betrayal of the ideals of the independence movement. (see Laffan 92). In *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* Teddy represents the view of Michael Collins, which is pro-Treaty, and argues that nothing better could have been accomplished and that another conflict with Britain would mean another war that could be worse for Ireland than the Treaty (see Ó Drisceoil 9). The conflict rising amongst the Irish is illustrated by another discussion in court and explains the different views of the Irish to the audience. Again, Damien opposes his brother by saying, “If we ratify this Treaty we will destroy the two most precious gifts that we won with this last election: One, being a mandate for complete freedom... not a compromised freedom. The second’d be a democratic programme, which in... which is enshrined the priority of a public welfare over a private welfare”. He argues that the rich and powerful would continue to oppress the poor, which again stresses Loach’s focus on class conflicts, which is emphasised in a later scene when Damien is asked by a peasant woman to help her son who is about to starve to death. Here Loach also indicates that the Free State government have nothing done so far to ease the struggles of the poor.

“The Treatyites took state power with the support of the British state and the Irish establishment, including business leaders, the press, and the churches” (Ó Drisceoil 9). In *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* this is indicated by the priest who speaks angrily to the opponents of the treaty (see Ó Drisceoil 9), threatens them with excommunication and reads a Republican pamphlet that contains some communist ideas. Damien and a few other Republicans react to the priest’s preaching and accuse the Catholic Church of “siding with the rich”. After Damien and Sinéad have left the church, Teddy runs after them to persuade Damien to work for him on the side of the Free Staters. This is the

point in the film when the brothers' conflict increases in intensity and Eamonn's description of the Irish Civil War in *Korea* becomes reality, when "family fought against family, father against son, brother against brother, neighbour against neighbour." The two brothers split and Damien leaves Teddy with the words, "This Treaty makes you a servant of the British Empire. You have wrapped yourself in a fucking Union Jack, the butcher's apron."

A civil war broke out which eventually divided the new Free State. In contrast to the Free Staters, the Republicans, although with more followers, lacked a unified goal and military experience. They were suppressed by the Free Staters (see Ó Drisceoil 9). In the film, Teddy is shown making decisions after Rory, one of his former comrades, carries out an armed robbery and shoots Free Staters in the process (also former fellow volunteers). Teddy, the new commander of the Free Staters in his area, announces his drastic decision namely, "If they take one out, we take one back. To hell with courts. [...] If we don't stop them, the Brits will be back." However, when his own brother becomes a member of the Republicans and is caught in an ambush, he regrets his decision because he cannot make exceptions and is forced to implement the death penalty. Although he tries everything to convince Damien to work for him (and betray the other Republicans in order to rescue him), Damien is committed to his principles. He makes reference to Chris Reilly, the betrayer he shot, and that he would not do the same as Reilly because otherwise Chris' death would not have been justified. He writes to Sinéad, "I tried not to get into this war and did. And now I try to get out and can't. [...] Dan once told me something I've struggled with all this time. He said, 'It's easy to know what you are against... quite another to know what you are for.' I think now I know and it gives me strength." This means that when Damien shot Chris, he was not sure what he believed in because before he performed the execution, he said to a comrade, "I hope this Ireland we're fighting for is worth it." Now, he knows what he wishes for Ireland and he is ready to die for it. "By introducing the notion of what the fight might be for, rather than just what it was against, Loach and Lavery are doing history a service, capturing an underlying energy of these years and widening our understanding of the tragedy that the death and destruction in both the war of independence and the civil war brought" (Ó Drisceoil 12).

The film was considered controversial because it depicted British history from an Irish point of view and addresses Britain's colonial past (see Epinoux 177). This illustrates that the effects of British colonialism are still relevant and are a sensitive issues for both an Irish and post-Imperial British audience. Ken Loach himself says about *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, "Our film is a little step in the British confronting their imperialist history. Maybe if we tell the truth about the past we can tell the truth about the present" (Ó Drisceoil 5). In British reviews in particular the film was seldom analysed from its artistic perspective but instead the focus lay more on historical controversy. Many conservative papers and politicians emphasised negative elements of the film. While about 300 copies were marketed in France, only 40 were ordered in Britain which demonstrates a kind of censorship measure against Loach, who was dismissed by some British reviewers as an extreme Marxist who made an anti-British film (see Epinoux 178-182). Nevertheless, Ó Drisceoil states that films like *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

can contribute to historical understanding by humanizing history through their dramatic portrayals and characterizations — putting flesh on textual historical bones and animating them in a way that people can relate to. And, because of the mass popularity of cinema, far more people will be exposed to these crucial historical questions. The film makes large historical and political themes understandable through making them live in believable characters in a recognizable society. The creation of empathy and understanding also helps people relate to contemporary world events. (Ó Drisceoil 10)

3.4. Conclusion

Both films, *The Field* and *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, tackle the land question in Ireland from different perspectives. While Sheridan presents the Bull's field as a metaphor in Ireland and simultaneously addresses the relationship between tenants and landlords in Ireland, Ken Loach depicts the actual fight for Ireland, namely the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War. The two films refer to different issues concerning Ireland such as colonialism and post-colonialism, different ideas how the Irish could rule their native land or questions of guilt. The Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in 1921 and the Irish Free State only lost its dominion status of Britain in 1949 when the

Republic of Ireland was declared. Centuries of colonialism have had an enormous impact on the Irish but also on the British and their role as colonisers. The reactions of certain newspapers that dismissed *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* as anti-British emphasise that it will take a long time to come to terms with history.

In the Historiographical Revolution, Irish historians are slowly defusing Irish history on both sides of the Border [Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland] as sacred writ to be cited as a categorical imperative to act in a certain way. We can only hope that eventually we will all learn to play the right emphasis on history as history, on mythology as mythology – and on today as today. (Magnussen 143)

Several recent attempts have been made to come to terms with the past such as the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (see *CAIN*), David Cameron's apology for Bloody Sunday (see *BBC News - Bloody Sunday Killings 'Unjustified and Unjustifiable'*), or the Queen's visit to Ireland in 2011, when she went to the Garden of Remembrance to commemorate the Irish people who contested British rule (see *Queen*).

4. The Community and Characters in *The Field* and *Waking Ned Devine*⁴

4.1. Introduction

Notions of close-knit communities, where everybody knows and interacts with each other; considerable homogeneity in social traits, language, belief, opinions, mores and patterns of behaviour; family ties, particularly those of the extended family, and the importance of religion. [...] While some of these traits can be recognised in rural Ireland, this model of an ideal type of rural (as opposed to urban) society is far too simple and seems to utilize all the positive traits, disregarding the mounting problems and deprivation which faces both rural and urban areas equally. (J. McDonagh 54)

The depiction of community in *The Field* and in *Waking Ned Devine*, engages with various aspects of village life in rural Ireland. Themes such as kinship, emigration, and “the law of the land” are integral to the livelihood of the characters. In order to understand the depiction of the respective community in these films, a historical but also a sociological background will serve as a basis to analyse certain patterns of behaviour within rural communities. Moreover, since some characters in the film influence their communities in different ways, a detailed examination of the main characters will contribute to a broad and detailed analysis of village communities and characters in *The Field* and *Waking Ned Devine*.

4.2. The Village Community in *The Field* and *Waking Ned Devine*

Although the communities in *The Field* and *Waking Ned Devine* distinguish each other - the first film is set in the 1930s and the second in the 1990s - both motion pictures were made in the 1990s and reflect the time of their production. Nevertheless, Jim Sheridan, a Dubliner, views the Irish countryside differently from Kirk Jones, who is British and while *The Field* is a drama, *Waking Ned Devine* is more of a satirical comedy. In order to gain access to Irish rural life in

⁴Two different titles exist in the English versions of the film. While *Waking Ned* is the British version, *Waking Ned Devine* refers to the US release. (see *Waking Ned Devine*) I have chosen to use the American version because it plays with the homophones “divine” and “Devine”.

the films, several historical, sociological and cultural accounts will explain certain group dynamics and lifestyles in the villages and their representations in the two motion pictures.

4.2.1. The Community in *The Field*

The village of Carraigthomond in *The Field* is inhabited by a community that represents Irish rural life of the 1930s rather than as in John B. Keane's play, the 1960s. Brereton and Flynn describe the villagers in the film

[A]s in many classical Irish narratives, from the *The Quiet Man* to *Ryan's Daughter*, the local community functions as passive recipients, waiting for things to happen, with no apparent work ethic. At the same time reminiscent of a theatrical chorus, they actively affirm the attitudes, values, and pleasures of the society by endorsing the "common law" of nature in particular and of what is right and who deserves to be demonized. [...] [This again] activates a conventional reaffirmation of colonial and national solidarity, evoking victimhood and the rise of a common enemy. (Flynn, and Brereton 119)

Flynn and Brereton's analysis of the community is sharp but they disregard certain factors. In my analysis I will focus particularly on aspects of group dynamics and the village as a close-knit community in the 1930s.

The majority of the villagers in *The Field* represent a generation whose ancestors are survivors of the Famine. Especially in the West, many poor tenant farmers depended on the potato harvest which was severely reduced by the potato blight. The Famine divided Irish society, forced about one and a half million Irish people to emigrate and approximately a million people starved to death. Nevertheless, many Anglo-Irish landlords exported crops (other than potatoes) such as wheat and expelled tenant farmers from their land if they were not able to pay their rent. Many of these people started to travel the roads, became travellers and were viewed suspiciously by the villagers who stayed. A gap between the people, the "haves and have-nots" developed. During the Famine even the Church tended to be on the side of the landlords, although many poor people were forced to emigrate to America or England and had to leave their family members at home. The villagers of Carraigthomond are descendants of those who did not starve to death or emigrate (see Byrne 120-

121). Thus, the village community shares a grievance of collective memory such as dispossession, the Famine or emigration (see Cavanagh 96).

It is the Bull McCabe in particular, who belongs to a group of small post-Famine tenant farmers who was not part of the improvements of land ownership between 1879 and 1903 (the Land War to the Wyndham Act). As a result the Bull trusts in the “law of the land” (instead of in the state), which one deserves if he or she works hard and is willing to make sacrifices. It is superior to the law of the Irish state of the 1930s, which is embodied by Father Dorian and the policeman (see Pettitt 125). In other words, for farmers, laws from outside were less important than the conception of landownership within the rural community. Even the Irish word for region, *ceantair* has two meanings, namely that a community owns the land on which it lives and that this land is undividable from its native territory, which means that identity with the land is unbreakable (see Herr 11-12).

Self-sufficiency was a very important part of life in the countryside. Since peasants often lived far away from towns, they had developed a self-maintaining system. Every household was independent and labour was shared within these households (the family). However, absolute independence had its difficulties because assistance could be needed any time especially during the harvest season. Therefore, the system of mutual aid developed, which meant that if a neighbour needed extra help and another family was able to offer it, this family could demand help from the neighbour in the future (see Brody 131-136). The strongest network of mutual aid could be found within the extended family and was known as kinship. A man could be related from twenty up to more than one hundred inhabitants of the village. Kinship was a system that involved rights but also duties and concerned male and female members of a village (see Salazar 39). “Within one’s kindred or neighbourhood there is a specific set of rights and obligations that does not apply to outsiders” (Salazar 129-130). These family members were even called “friends” and could be subdivided into “close friends”, who belonged to the “close family” (such as sisters, grandparents or cousins), and the “far-out friends”, who would be less closely related such as second cousins. Together they shared “the one blood” (see Salazar 39-40). The closer a family member the more important was the kinship, and therefore, a brother would have provided help more likely than a

cousin (see Arensberg 84). This system preserved the household against difficulties. Nevertheless, farmers enjoyed to demonstrate the strength of their household by indicating that they hardly ever needed mutual aid (and therefore were self-reliant). At the same time, they would boast that other family units owed them and that they could always find help (see Brody 137). In other words, “on the one hand he [a farmer] is proud of his independence, on the other hand he is proud of the interdependence to which he is party” (Brody 137).

Arensberg argues that farmers had a strong connection to the next town as well because normally only one son in the family inherited the land and one daughter was married. The other children were forced to leave; however, it was the father's duty to send them into the towns to shops where they would learn a profession or become members of the clergy. Although they lived in the towns they still had a strong tie to the family and became part of the extended family, the kinship system (see Arensberg 79-81). Thus, the shops were connected to the hinterland but at the same time to the outside world as well. There existed a symbiosis between the shopkeeper and the countryman. In order to survive, the shopkeeper had to develop and maintain bonds with the peasants. This could be by marriage (the farmer would dower his daughter) or by employing a son of the farmer as an assistant for the shop who would probably become a shop-owner himself.⁵ At the same time, his father paid an apprentice bond and, therefore, an exchange and a bond between the town and the country was secured. The bond between the two parties was more intricate because it involved the exchange of merchandise and the distribution of rural and urban products. Connected to that was the “credit system”, which meant that the farmer was permanently in debt to his shopkeeper, also known as the “gombeen-man”. It seemed that the shopkeeper had an advantage but the farmer was a valuable customer even if he only earned money seasonally and therefore owed money. That collaboration went even so far that if the debt was declared nil, the reciprocal bond between the peasant and the shopkeeper would have been over. Not only would the shopkeeper have lost a customer but

⁵Thus, many town-people claimed that the peasants would extinct the town-people. However, it belonged to a social pattern (see Arensberg 152-155).

also a friend (see Arensberg 149-173). Even if the shopkeeper tried to benefit from his “superior” position, Arensberg notes,

the farmer’s ‘name is on the land’. A whole kindred and the whole community with which the kindred is related become his bitter and dangerous enemies. [...] The countryside can bring its whole traditional scheme of attitudes to bear upon the offender; it can justify the forces of social and personal action in the realm of the awesome mysteries of belief before which all must bow. (Arensberg 174)⁶

The preceding quotation represents the idea of the Bull’s “law of the land” and reflects the reaction of the villagers’ after the murder of the American as well. The kinship system was an economic but also a social and political one. The political aspect is very interesting in connection (see Salazar 39) with *The Field* because relatives were important for power relationships within the communities. In other words, a “man’s kindred are expected to support him in his feuds and to withdraw cooperation from anyone who has seriously and unequivocally injured him – for to slight one member of the kindred is to slight them all” (Salazar 39).

While the Bull in Sheridan’s film speaks of the “law of the land” and is more accessible to an Irish audience, John B. Keane’s *Bull McCabe* addresses the power of his kinship openly when he mentions that most of the villagers are related to him. This he demonstrates after Mick, the publican has noted that the local solicitor is involved in the auction and the law of the state should be enacted. However, the Bull indicates his power in the community by saying, “There’s a few old grand-uncles of mine with will to be made. One of’em could be dyin’ that day, couldn’t he? Oul’ Nesbitt wouldn’t want to fall out with our clan” (Keane 20). One kinsman, Dandy, appears in Scene Two of Act Two, whom the Bull involves in his plan to confront the stranger who wants to “steal” his field (see Keane 43). By contrast, in the film, kinship is hardly explained; however, the Bull’s control over the villagers is obvious. When the Bull announces that he will “frighten” the American, he informs all the men in the pub

⁶Arensberg tends to idealise the life of country people and sees a harmonious system in them. Historian Joseph Lee also criticizes Arensberg’s perception of a non-changeable static society that is isolated from modern society (see Herr 28). Nevertheless, Arensberg’s accounts of rural life are significant for *The Field* and a deeper look at mutual aid and the Bull’s mentioning of the “law of the land” may lead to a better understanding of the villagers’ reaction towards outsiders.

except the Bird, whom he sends out. Therefore, the male villagers are aware that the Bull is responsible for the stranger's death and even support him after the priest's speech (that attempts to appeal the villagers' conscience) when McCabe suspects the Bird of being an informer. While the Bull interrogates the Bird in the pub, the other men watch the doors and seem ready to assist the dominant farmer.

Here another element of country life can be identified, namely that the older men of the family had the power in the community and made decisions of everyday life while the young had to keep silent. When the community had dealings with the world outside, the elder men acted as "politicians" and (see Arensberg 122-123) "represent[ed] the interests of the community, before priest, schoolmaster, merchant, cattleman and government official" (Arensberg 123). Younger men had to wait until they were needed by the older men (see Arensberg 122-123). This system is described by Arensberg in greater detail when he refers to his case study of a small community in North Clare, Rynamona, where old men gathered, held meetings and were called "Dáil" (house of assembly). It consisted of a group of men, who shared a similar status and interests. The most powerful one, O'Donoghue, the "judge", was well regarded and enjoyed great power in the community. O'Halloran, the "drawer down" was the one who gathered information for the men's sessions (as the Bird). They discussed topics such as agriculture but also issues that concerned the community's relations to the world outside of peasant life (see Arensberg 125-137). Although the film does not refer to such a "Dáil", the Bull reflects the position of O'Donoghue in his village because he seems to be one of the eldest men in Carraigthomond. Of course, the Bull and the "Dáil" in Rynamona only share a few similarities because the Bull prefers a dictatorship rather than a house of assembly. However, in both villages an older man enjoys great power in the community and is a representative of the "law of the land" that does not apply to outsiders.

In this respect, although the widow, Maggie Butler, owns the land, her position in the community is lower than the Bull's because she is childless, and therefore, cannot pass on the field to anybody. It seems she has no extended family in the community and thus no kin who would support her (see Herr 14). This can be explained by the common custom that women usually moved to

their husband's village. There the women had to make friends with other kinless members of the community (see Salazar 30) such as the priest, in the widow's case. According to the law of the land (the community's law), she would be forced to sell the field to the Bull and not anyone from the outside. Free sale was often seen as co-possession between the tenant and the landlord, which means that it was mostly normal that the tenant had the right to pass on his land to his successor. Moreover, the farmer usually added value to the field by working on it. In 1870, the Gladstone Land Act acknowledged the peasants' efforts by stating that the tenant should be waged for improving the land. This scheme was even more developed by the Land Act of 1881, where a joint ownership of landlord and tenant is addressed and encouraged after the 1880s. This explains even more the Bull's outrage because the widow does not even consult him that she intends to sell the field. According to Oliver MacDonagh the price of the land was not only influenced by the open market but also by the community and it was usually common that the local clergy supported the peasant (see Herr 13-14). As the priest in *The Field* is apparently new in the community – he does not know all the villagers, as the dancing scene reveals – he is not aware of local customs. What probably adds to his unwillingness to help is that he is aware of the Bull's ongoing harassment of the widow; this encourages him to support her.

Tadgh's terror has probably led to the widow's revenge. However, when she enters the pub to announce the auction of the field, members of the community inform her, "You have no right to sell the field!" Still she demands the auction, passes the local publican the necessary papers and leaves. After she has left the pub, the men remark, "It's the Bull McCabe's field by right. Nobody will bid against the Bull." Here again "the law of the land" is pointed out not only by the Bull but by his fellow villagers as well. Although the Bull is protected by it, his law does not stop him from being haunted by Séimí's death.

"The law of the land" also reflects aspects of Irish nationalism such as self-sufficiency or the rejection of outsiders. As mentioned before "the law of the land" only includes people who are members of mutual aid schemes and excludes those who are considered outsiders. Moreover, "the law of the land" does not justify murder which eventually destroys the Bull and the whole community, which is damned by the local priest, "Among you, there is a

murderer and through your silence you are sharing his guilt. You're all murderers!" In the end the Bull's actions cannot be justified by the "law of the land" as he recognizes his obsession and loses his mind.

4.2.2. The Community in *Waking Ned Devine*

The story is set in the fictitious Western Irish village of Tullymore in the 1990s. In comparison with Jim Sheridan's *The Field*, director Kirk Jones portrays the contemporary Irish countryside of the last decade of the twentieth century. Considering sociological and historical accounts, from the 1930s to the 1990s, Irish rural life changed significantly. To illustrate this alteration I would like to refer to a case described by Hugh Brody, who observed the Irish community of Inishkillane in the early 1970s:

Eleven farmers lived next to a road, which they privately shared and owned. Since the road needed repairing, the priest of Inishkillane parish found out that if each owner signed, the county would repair the lane. When an English family purchased two of the farms at the end of the road and began to modernize them, the farmers believed that the family had bought the access to their houses as well. Many of the locals started to build high fences and some even demonstrated hostility towards the English family. When a holiday home in another part of western Ireland was burned down, the community remembered that a similar incident had happened in their parish before, namely in the 1920s. At that time, the house of an English couple was burned down which enraged the priest so immensely that some witnesses even claimed that he cursed the community. Although the story was known, six farmers still refused to sign and discuss the issue with the other villagers. Hence they had to accept the poor condition of the road (see Brody 146-148).

Although the case mirrors slightly the encounter between the villagers of Carraigthomond and the American because the farmers of Inishkillane also view outsiders of the community suspiciously, the repairing of the road mostly fails because the farmers were not willing to speak with each other. This development can be attributed to the declining rural population which is also connected to the behaviour of the Tullymore's villagers of *Waking Ned Devine*.

While in 1842, 5.5 million people lived in rural areas of the Republic of Ireland, only 1 million resided in cities and towns. However, a big change can be noticed when these numbers are compared to 1961, when only 1.5 million people inhabited the Irish countryside and 1.3 million the urban areas. Therefore, it can be noted that while the population has significantly declined in the countryside, the figures have slowly grown in the towns. In contrast to Ireland, in other European countries the urban population has grown drastically such as in England, where the urban population of 8.9 million in 1851 changed to 35.3 million in 1951. Emigration is the main reason of the Irish population decline in the countryside. While in many other European countries migration happens inside the country (the country people move to the city), in Ireland many rural inhabitants even leave their country (see Brennan 32-41). In the Irish countryside emigration has been common (especially since the Famine) but the reasons for emigration have changed. Initially, emigration emerged from the necessity to maintain the family farm and avoid sub-division. Later, the more contemporary concept is characterised by people's comparison and critique of their home to the outside world (see Brody 13). This development began in the 1930s, when country people started to feel that emigration would bring a better life. This feeling increased with the result that in the 1970s the majority of country people who lived in remote areas viewed living in rural Ireland as a burden, because they compared it with another way of life that seemed better (see Brody 72). Many people were aware of the benefits of a life abroad and decided to move away. Also, in media such as magazines or the cinema promoted the advantages of the city which were connected to the image of opportunity and the possibility to lead a "good life" if "you worked hard enough for it" (such as the American dream) (see Brody 9-11). Thus, in the last decades, the agricultural workforce has decreased. While in 1950, 500,000 Irish people were full-time farmers, by 1980 the number had been reduced to 200,000. This can be explained not only by emigration but also by different employment opportunities such as the manufacturing industry or tourism. While the population increased in Ireland between the 1960s and the 1980s, remote rural areas with a population of less than five hundred inhabitants were faced with a vast decline (see Horner 34-36). The decrease of the rural population, the remoteness of many farms and the lack of young people has led to the

disappearance of the mutual aid system as described in the community of *The Field*. Moreover, Brody observed that in the 1960s and 1970s children sent money back from abroad which reduced the shortage of money at home. Some emigrants also supported their relatives when there was a lack of labourers and returned home in summer. Since the households were now more isolated than before, a strong emphasis on privacy developed. Some villagers suspected that one neighbour might receive more money from their family members than others. Many villagers were interested in their fellows' income and their activities, which led to the "hobby" of watching each other. In the case of Inishkillane in the 1970s, every activity was discussed, in particular in the village shop or local pub and every member of the community could be the target of a rumour monger (see Brody 139-153).

In the 1970s, about 50 percent of the farmers in Inishkillane who frequented the local bar were bachelors and used the pub as meeting point of community life and discussed current topics. Most people who visited the bar were farmers, who had decided to live a peasant life, a life on the land. Women were least likely to go into the pub and therefore met in the shop where they talked about community issues (see Brody 160-167).

From the 1970s to the 1990s enormous developments were taking place in Ireland that also affected the countryside such as immigration, new consumer practices, commercialisation, further population decline, radical changes in traditional farming practices, the influence of the EU on rural affairs or opening up to international markets. In the 1990s farmers belonged to a minority in the rural community (see J. McDonagh 50-60). Nowadays many western areas are mostly affected by "closed and disintegrating" communities which show features such as population decline, poor services (facilities) and a feeling of apathy and powerlessness. In contrast to that, in the past, rural communities were mostly "closed and integrated" and defined as such as inward looking, self-sufficient and following a traditional and locally autonomous value-system that was reinforced by religion and traditional leadership (see Horner 42). The latter describes in particular the community of *The Field* while the former refers to today's communities in the West such as the village of Tullymore.

Nevertheless, McLoone claims that nowadays, it is questionable whether the binary construction between country and city is even significant. The media,

tourism and travelling have incorporated the inhabitants of the Irish countryside into the global economy and society. The common images of the city as future and the country as past lead to a problem because it omits the present, and therefore, creates a gap between city and country (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 202). McLoone refers to the vanishing difference of the two opposites by drawing attention to the increasing incorporation of the Irish countryside into the rest of the world. However, does this view also apply to Kirk Jones' Tullymore?

Waking Ned Devine is set in the time of the Celtic Tiger, which is characterised by an immense economic growth due to the investment of multinational corporations (Kirby, *The Celtic Tiger in Distress* 2, 14). While the Irish elite benefited from the Celtic Tiger other members of Irish society hardly profited or were even more affected by inequality. In 2000, Ireland was the second wealthiest of the OECD countries with the highest level of inequality (see Kirby, *The Celtic Tiger in Distress* 55, 68). There were also regional inequalities such as the Border, Midland and Western Region which were more deprived than the Southern and Eastern Region, especially Dublin. They suffered from lower growth, productivity and incomes (see Kirby, *The Celtic Tiger in Distress* 64-65). Tullymore could represent one of these areas, which is indicated by the scene in which the priest asks the only boy in the village whether the locals would leave Tullymore if they got the money. Maurice, however, answers that they would stay and would only spend it in the pub. This illustrates that the village is not as harmonious as assumed at the beginning of the film and indicates that beneath the surface there are tensions within the community. Only a few people are younger than sixty, and therefore, Tullymore mirrors a village that has apparently not benefited from the Celtic Tiger (see Gillespie 45). This neglect is even more emphasized because the phones in the village are broken due to a storm and apparently nobody comes to Tullymore to repair the phone line (however, it is not indicated how long there has been no connection to the phone line). Furthermore, right at the beginning of the film, bird's eye view shots reveal the remoteness of the village to the rest of Ireland because Tullymore is set on a rather small island. However, although Joeckl claims that indoors the colours are dark as if to indicate that electrical light has hardly found its way to the village (see Joeckl 161), the villagers are clearly connected to the outside world via television. By filming indoors and using dim

light, cinematographer Henry Braham intended something different rather than referring to a possible backwardness of the village. That is, he was influenced by Rembrandt's self-portraits, which are dark in the background but warm lit faces in order to emphasize the characters' personality (see Pfefferman 12). Nevertheless, the film was criticized for trading "on a blatant recycling of outrageous clichés and on rehashing old myths about rural Ireland" (McLoone, *Irish Film* 126), which is probably true in some aspects. Other critics also dismiss the motion picture because it was filmed on The Isle of Man, directed by an Englishman, starred by a Scot and included French and British funding (see Gillespie 44). It raises the question whether *Waking Ned Devine* is entitled to be called an Irish film or not and questions the meaning of Irishness as well.

As a detailed discussion on Irishness not within the parameters of this chapter, it will instead focus on *Waking Ned Devine* as a satirical comedy that plays on stereotypes and exaggerates them to create a comical effect. The film utilises the same slapstick humour as the Marx Brothers did in the 1930s (see Gillespie 46-47). "In every motion picture of this type, the story line follows a familiar narrative arc, and the action often plays on the viewer's emotions. What creates a distinguished film is the ability to add complexity to these expectations" (Gillespie 47).

Initially, Kirk Jones got the idea for *Waking Ned Devine* when he read a newspaper article about a village whose inhabitants believed that their postmistress had won the lottery. He spent three months in Ireland to write his script and observed the rural ways of life of Southern Ireland where he also developed possible characters for the motion picture. He intended to make the film there and sought the right village for the film. "There were plenty of tiny villages, but they tended to be spread out along a road, which would have been difficult to capture in one shot" (qtd. in Pfefferman 10). When the producers were offered tax benefits by the representatives of the Isle of Man, they decided to shoot there. On the Isle of Man Jones found a museum village called Cregneash, which he saw as (see Pfefferman 10), "a cluster of incredibly charming barns and cottages set on a hill with the sea as backdrop. I thought, 'This is it. This is what I had in mind.'" (qtd. in Pfefferman 10). By choosing a museum village representing a contemporary village for his film, Kirk Jones already departs from authentic modern-day western Irish villages. They "are

typically small, and situated near each other within the [...] landscape. Isolated houses can also be scattered between settlements, and in some cases it can be even hard to tell where one village starts and another ends. Usually the old core of a village is compact and formed along the village street” (*The Disappearance of the Village* 18). Although Kirk Jones made the film on the Isle of Man he intended to transform the museum village into a typical Irish village as he viewed it when he visited the southwest. This went so far that cinematographer Henry Braham even painted the whitewashed village buildings with a green paint and plastered the inside with typical 1970s wallpaper (see Pfefferman 12).

Combining all these accounts, it can be said that *Waking Ned Devine*, on the one hand, contains elements that can be named as Irish stereotypes of rural life such as the lack of modernity but on the other hand, exaggerates these elements and includes features of contemporary rural Ireland such as population decline or television. However, how can these features be connected to the community of Tullymore? As mentioned before, the village in *Waking Ned Devine* is inhabited by a majority of people aged over sixty who have probably lived in Tullymore all their lives (such as Ned Devine). They seem to be removed from the outside world and represent a rather “closed and disintegrated” community of very diverse individuals. Thus, it is only when Jacky reads about a possible lotto winner in the village that his curiosity turns towards inhabitants he usually is not interested in and tries to become friends with them. For example, this is suggested when Jacky and his friend Michael O’Sullivan invite Pig Finn for a pint which they would usually never do. Also Jacky’s wife ingratiates herself to the shop owner, Mrs Kennedy, whom she suspects of being the lotto winner. This goes so far that the three friends invite all the lotto players of the village to a big feast. The villagers become suspicious and believe Jacky to be the lotto winner but then only Jacky and Michael find out the truth about the departed lotto winner, Ned Devine. However, what starts with a rather selfish tactic widens to involve the whole village due to the lotto official from Dublin, who wants to ensure the true identity of Ned Devine (alias Michael O’Sullivan). Ned Devine’s death and the lotto official’s return activate the villagers to reintroduce the system of mutual aid in order to be able to collect the lotto money. By signing and taking a shot of whiskey, they seal the contract in order that the whole community benefits from the fraud. Jacky transforms Ned

Devine into a “divine figure”, a “hero”. Nevertheless, Annie points out that if the villagers came to sign, it would not be for Ned Devine but for the money. Despite that, they work together to trick the Dubliner, who clearly stands out from the community due to his hay fever and manners. It seems that he is also the only character, who is not drawn to alcohol. Although the community has decided to work together and Maggie even renounces her full claim to the money, there is one member of the community who openly declares herself as a possible informer, namely Lizzy Quinn. Lizzy Quinn is probably one of the poorest or rather avaricious villagers which is indicated by her scarce interior and her refusal to pay for bread or a repaired toaster. She clearly prefers pure selfishness rather than collaboration and fulfils her role as “the witch”, as Michael calls her. He also adds that, “if the village finds out she’ll burn.” Right after that, a fade and zoom-out shows Pat lighting a cigarette and watching Lizzy’s house accompanied by dramatic music almost referring to Salem’s witch-hunt. However, the leader of the operation, Jacky, arrives with the other villagers and stops Pat. What follows is not the lynching of a traitor but their attempt to bribe her with small items such as a repaired toaster, cat food or coconut creams. Annie even tries to awaken her conscience and threatens her at the same time by saying, “Oh Lizzy, how could you bear live [sic!] in the village if you did a thing like that?” “The whole lot of us would be in prison”, Michael adds and hopes for her change of mind. However, her plan is to have a million rather than 1/52 of about seven million by blackmailing them.

When the villagers attend Ned Devine’s funeral, the lotto official returns and goes from house to house to find the villagers and “luckily” he “magically” does not knock on Lizzy Quinn’s door. The villagers receive the check, and the lotto official returns back to Dublin. Meanwhile Lizzy Quinn makes her way to the telephone booth, the closest working phone, to report the fraud while the others celebrate their win. Finally an accident triggered by the lotto official and “carried out” by the local priest, who returns from a journey, kills Lizzy Quinn. The phone booth with her inside is pushed down the cliffs and mirrors the fate of the Bull’s son Tadgh in *The Field*. It seems that in both films the informer has to face death. However, in contrast to *The Field*, the villagers of Tullymore are not faced with a moral dilemma because they are not directly responsible for Lizzy Quinn’s death. The fact that the priest kills her satirises the incident as the

work of “divine” intervention. As if Ned Devine’s ghost had influenced the villager’s fate and eliminated the informer. The hint of divineness is enforced by the repetition of the sky’s colours. When Jacky dreams about his last encounter with Ned, the sky is illuminated with an orange sunset. Ned explains that he has “to go to the light” to find peace, however, at the beginning of the funeral the sun rises and turns the clouds into the same orangey colour as in Jacky’s dream. It is as if Ned rose from the dead in order to assist the villagers. Moreover, after a night of partying Jacky, Michael and a few others thank Ned for the “inheritance” of his lotto money. Again the sky glows in orange colour when they stagger to the cliffs where Jacky gives a solemn speech. Thus, Ned has rescued the village and reinstated the system of mutual aid in a close-knit community. In contrast to *The Field*, the villagers are not cursed owing to complicity in murder but they are rewarded by breaking the law and reinstalling something that is similar to the “law of the land”.

4.3. Characters: Stereotypes and Archetypes

When it comes to reviews of the characters in *The Field*, some critics claim that the film is too theatrical, such as Jay Carr, who writes in the *Boston Globe*, “Practically everything in this movie... is freighted with symbolism – just about the only thing that’s missing is a white whale” (qtd. in Haynes 86). Terry Byrne also refers to the theatrical touch that can be detected in Sheridan’s film and states:

[T]his story tends towards the melodramatic, and away from character depth or complexity. Bull is a force driven by singleminded [sic!] obsession, and the other characters likewise tend to exhibit a single characteristic rather than any great complex mix of personality traits. None of them grows in any significant way either; to the end, they persist in their single traits, each characterized by a significant fatal flaw which brings on the tragic end. (Byrne 123-124)

However, Ruth Barton sees more in the characters and connects them to Irish culture by arguing:

Sheridan draws on a range of archetypes from other fictional representations of Ireland. This set of references brings with it another

history, of symbolic figures. In particular the Bull's family of silent mother, violent, impotent father, dead son, and rebel son, is constructed in a manner that readily offers itself to an analogous reading. (Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 55)

While according to these quotes the characters of *The Field* are described as either too theatrical or archetypes⁷ that are weighed down with a high amount of symbolism, many scholars and critics see the presentation of Irish characters in *Waking Ned Devine* as flimsy stereotypes.

What *Waking Ned* creates is a view of eccentric but down-to-earth rural people that consume large amounts of alcohol, enjoy playing music and gossip. Rural life is romanticised as being closer to human needs, using existing benevolent Irish stereotypes to depict the supremacy of rural life over the bureaucratic nature of city life. (Joeckl 162-163)

Many critics see *Waking Ned Devine* as a film that represents Irish rural life as idyllic, intending to attract an American audience and portraying the Irish characters in a stage-Irish fashion (see Joeckl 160). Gillespie also mentions Hugh Linehan, who writes in his essay *Myth, Mammon, and Mediocrity: The Trouble with Recent Irish Cinema* about a number of contemporary Irish films which he dismisses as stereotyping and mocking Irish identity (see Gillespie 39-40). Films such as *Waking Ned Devine* were made by filmmakers outside of Ireland, shot abroad as well (on the Isle of Man) and represent the whimsy that goes back to Victorian stereotypes (see Linehan 46). At the same time, Linehan begins to categorize as well, and tries to define Irishness and Irish identity in a generalizing manner (see Gillespie 40). Many critics also neglect to explain what they exactly mean by Irish stereotypes and others mention stage-Irishness and Victorian times. Thus, I would like to address some versions of Irish stereotypes in order to demonstrate that the characters in *The Field* and *Waking Ned Devine* are more complex than many critics claim.

The stereotypical image and the satirical caricature of the Irishman were particularly wide-spread in Victorian times. It originated from a British representation of Ireland which was influenced by myth and romanticism due to its colonial history and position on the edge of Europe (see Gibbons 194). This

⁷While according to the OED an archetype is a prototype, "the original pattern or mode from which copies are made" ("Archetype" def. 1), a stereotype is the copy of an archetype that is repeated without variation (see "Stereotype" def. 3a) which would be stereotyping.

image reflected the colonizer's view of the landscape of Ireland, which was connected to the "otherness" of the natives that inhabit it, who again were influenced by their surroundings in so far as they reflected the landscape's personality. In other words, since the Irish landscape is mostly described as wild, hostile, treacherous and almost primitive, the characteristics of the Irish people share the same features as their landscape (see Kettemann 153).

There are two prominent images of the "primitive", concerning the inhabitants of Irish villages (or Irish in general) which can be described, namely the "uncivilised beast" who is involved in violence and the "noble savage" (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 36). The "noble savage" is given almost childish attributes combined with "weakness, vice, violent temperaments, and a stubborn, sly lawlessness" (Kettemann 154) and lack of intelligence. Irishmen are mostly represented as fishermen, peasant farmers, pub owners or clergymen who cling to the old patriarchal system that involves hard labour, pious Catholicism and drinking. They are portrayed incapable of managing their land and therefore, need a "higher civilization", the coloniser to take them "by the hand" (see Kettemann 154). "[T]he Irish peasant or rebel tended to be depicted as part of an undifferentiated community or criminal gang, lacking the psychological complexity which distinguishes the individual personality" (Gibbons 211). This image was amplified in the late nineteenth century when many Irish moved to English slums and Irish nationalist movement grew and was often represented as a non-human figure such as the primitive Frankenstein or the peasant Caliban (see Hirsch 1119). In contrast to the "uncivilised beast", the image of the "noble savage" is especially characterized as a "simple, musically gifted, loquacious and happy (if quarrelsome) peasantry" (McLoone, *Irish Film* 36) who inhabit the Garden of Eden, Ireland. A travel book of the 1830s contains both images (the "uncivilised beast" and the "noble savage") in one and describes the Irish people in further detail:

We imagine we can trace in the chequered character of the Irish people a reflection of the varied aspect of the country. Their exuberant gaiety, their deep sadness, their warm affections, their fierce resentment, their smiles and tears, their love and hatred, all remind us forcibly of the lights and shadows of their landscape; where frowning precipices and quiet glens, wild torrents and tranquil streams... are all blended by the hand of Nature

beneath a sky, now smiling in sunshine, now saddening in tears. (qtd. in Gibbons 211)

Interestingly the image of the “noble savage” was utilised by the nineteenth-century Irish nationalist movement as well, and became internalised by Ireland itself and was used as a weapon against the British. By doing so, Irish nationalists rejected the imperial notion of industrial and urban modernity which was synonymous with Britain (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 37). “In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the Irish peasant was a figure deeply encoded with social, political, and literary meaning” (Hirsch 1118). The Irish peasants were viewed as representing authentic Irishness (see Hirsch 1121). Moreover, Yeats used the image of the “noble savage” to describe the character of the Irish peasant and compared him to the Irish countryside as well, because he lives with the seasons and is gifted with innate nobility. Thus, he becomes the noble savage who is protected from the stain of modernisation, possesses mystical powers and is the guardian of the past (see Genet 141-143). This glorified image of the Irish peasant was attempted to be demythologised by writers of the twentieth century such as Patrick Kavanagh who inspired Northern poets in the 1960s such as Seamus Heaney, James Simmons or Derek Mahon (see Hirsch 1128-1129).

When turning to film, most motion pictures about Ireland have been produced by American or English companies and therefore they have mainly created the cinematic image of Ireland and its inhabitants that draws upon the colonial perspective (see Kettemann 153). One of these films is Flaherty’s *Man of Aran*, which was well received by Irish nationalists because it opposed the Victorian image of the Irishman as a drunken swindler and gunman. De Valera praised the film because *Man of Aran* reflected the nationalists’ image of rural life in the Irish west (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 38). For years Robert Flaherty’s *Man of Aran* and his depiction of the Irish peasant were regarded as the true picture of Irishness but in fact the practices shown in the film were even old-fashioned at the time the motion picture was made (see H. Kennedy 8).

After referring to all these different versions of Irishness it can be questioned, whether it is constructive to define *the* Irishman or Irishwoman. Is it possible to categorize the characters of *The Field* and *Waking Ned Devine*

according to these definitions of Irish stereotypes? Interestingly, many critics such as Hugh Linehan, who dismiss *Waking Ned Devine* as “paddywhackery” fall into the same trap of categorisation by the attempt to define Irishness and Irish identity (see Gillespie 40). *The Field* and *Waking Ned Devine* may contain characters that share certain features that can be described as stereotypes, archetypes or stage-Irishness; however, the following analysis will reveal a more detailed picture of the main characters in both motion pictures.

4.3.1. Characters in *The Field*

The characters in *The Field* can be distinguished into two major groups, namely the villagers, who stayed after the Famine, and the “outsiders”, who include the travellers, the widow, the priest and the American. Since these groups are not homogenous, a more detailed analysis of significant individual characters will be conducted in the following section.

4.3.1.1. The Village Community

The Bull McCabe:

Sheridan's, the Bull McCabe is the main character of *The Field*, a small tenant farmer in the West of Ireland, who represents different groups including the western Irish peasantry and Irish nationalism. Since the character is rather complex, in this section the main focus will be on the Bull's character traits and his role in the community of Carraighthomond.

The Bull McCabe is played by Richard Harris, who dominates the screen and was even nominated for a second Oscar for this role (see Gray 193). “Harris hogs each and every frame of the film in which he appears, dwarfing everybody and everything in sight except for the awe-inspiring Connacht landscape around Leenane and Killary Harbour where *The Field* was shot” (Gray 193). The Bull's physical appearance (the long beard, white hair and stick) mirrors Old Testament figures such as Moses, Abraham or God. The Bull also represents King Lear's mania with inheritance or Yeats's Cuchulainn, who fights against the waves (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 42) and was forced to kill his

son (see Herr 70). Kennedy even compares the Bull with an elemental force (see H. Kennedy 7), “a force of nature growling out runic prophecies under a cloud of white hair” (H. Kennedy 8). He is portrayed as being one with nature and the land he nurses. In contrast, the American feels no connection to the land and wants to industrialise it (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 60). This contrast supports the idea of the Irishman influenced by the landscape. Thus, in the last scene, when the Bull fights the waves, the farmer’s rage and the sea’s power become one.

As regards McCabe’s nickname, it can be connected to the agricultural aspect (he as a farmer depends on nature because he works with it) but also to his personality and physique. His nicknames often illustrate the success of one’s ancestors, and therefore, put a person into a special position in local history and his or her social hierarchy. In addition, cattle always played an important role in Celtic culture dating back to prehistory. The Irish word for cow is *bó* which means that the Bull’s name is comparable to the Bull’s status as well. Patrick Wallace, director of the National Museum of Ireland, even goes so far as to state (see Herr 10), “The key to the understanding of Ireland – Irish history, Irish archaeology, Irish culture, the great sagas – [is that] everything is based on cattle. Cows are everything and everywhere” (qtd. in Herr 10). In the community of Carraigthomond the “Bull is a leader with a strong hold on the local men, almost a chief, but with a fanatic drive for land and power that maims and consumes those around him” (Kettemann 158). Also the meaning of the Bull’s name and his obsession with the land symbolize the destructive power of extreme nationalism.

The Bull as well as nationalists try to promote the community and support local traditions. They reject influences from outside and distinguish themselves and their culture/community from others. An imagined community is created in order to defend themselves from possible threats and emphasise self-sufficiency, which is an important element of Irish nationalism as well (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 10). This nationalism is reflected by the villagers’ and especially the Bull’s suspicions, and rejection of, influences from outsiders which are amplified when the American intends to buy the Bull’s field. The Bull acts like an autocratic ruler who is feared by the other villagers. He exploits the mutual aid system and “the law of the land” in order to demonstrate his power

and superior position in the community. Although he does not approve of his son killing the donkey, he uses the animal as a metaphor for other possible trespassers on his land, "The next time a tinker's donkey breaks the wall into my field I'll kill the owner not the poor dumb animal." This threat is put into action when the American comes into the village to bid for the field. His car ("his donkey") literally steps into the field and, therefore, the Bull carries out his threat. Furthermore, the farmer simply ignores other figures of authority such as the policeman, a representative of the state, and the priest, the moral power in the village, which he reinforces in his speech in the rectory which is visually emphasized by a close-up of the Bull, "No collar, uniform or weapon will protect the man that stands in my way."

Bull is an obsessed dynamo, and his character drives the dramatic conflicts throughout. The other villagers are afraid of him, as is his family, and neither the priest's castigation from the pulpit nor the local garda (police) sergeant – nor even the American's money – can weaken the hold he has over them. (Byrne 121)

The Bull's autocratic position in the village is also emphasized by various low angle-shots such as in the scene when the travellers claim their blood money for the dead donkey. The Bull McCabe steps onto his cart in order to appear taller and announces to the villagers, travellers and the priest that he will take care of the problem himself. Moreover, in another scene, before Sunday mass, the farmer is positioned on the highest step in front of the church and criticizes the Church's greed for the money of the poor people. Later on in the film, after the priest's accusative speech and his dismissal of the parishioners, the Bull openly accuses the priest of such greed. His reaction is also used as a defence against the priest, who knows of the murder and the murderer which is highlighted by the cinematography: while Father Dorian speaks about hunger, land and murder, a tracking shot captures all the villagers in the church and stops exactly in front of the Bull as if to indicate the exposure of the murderer. Thus, the Bull's aggressive reaction towards the priest in front of the church after the sermon, almost acts as a reflex in order to keep the villagers on his side.

The Bull McCabe also demonstrates a more other humane side. However, Sheridan himself wanted the Bull to be

less sympathetic than Richard [Harris] wanted him to be. That was an argument between us. And that comes over when the plot point turns in the first act. I think Richard thought that when he gives out to the Priest and the American that you suddenly see his reason for it. And I only wanted to see his mania. I wanted that moment when you know you are in the control of a psychopath. (qtd. in Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 49-50)

Nevertheless, the viewer feels sympathetic for the Bull at certain times because he is also portrayed as an honourable and respectable man; almost like a western hero. This is particularly demonstrated in the villagers' behaviour towards the widow. When she announces that there is a reserved price for the field, a villager throws dirt at her. The Bull takes her side, warns them to treat a woman with respect and leads her to her cart. (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 49-50) Then he announces, "Of all the wars we fought here, we've never ever laid our hands on a woman in Carraigthomond and we never will." These values he teaches his son Tadgh as well and reminds him that he should never harm an animal or a woman. He even admonishes him that he went too far with the donkey and even pays the blood money to the travellers.

At the same time he treats the villagers like his cattle and yells at them several times, "Move!" in order that they depart. Furthermore, when he walks to the auction they follow him like a herd. The Bull is simultaneously the farmer and the alpha bull of a herd of animals and a group of people, the villagers of Carraigthomond, whom he feeds pints of Guinness when he needs them as an alibi.

Tadgh and Maggie McCabe:

Within the community, Maggie McCabe is hardly ever seen and is mainly connected to the home where she refuses to speak to the Bull. The only other villagers, outside from her family that she meets are the local matchmaker, who greets her when he approaches the house to visit the Bull, the Bird, the priest and the tinker's daughter. Technically she is hardly part of the village community and is only connected to it via the Bull and Tadgh. Only in the end, when the Bull is about to lose his mind she speaks to him and shows some influence on the Bull's behaviour and, therefore, on the community. However, she seems oppressed by her husband because she does not even have "the

decency to leave him”, as the priest points out. Thus, her major role lies within the home and the family which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

As with Maggie McCabe, the character of Tadgh is also most complex when it comes to the family history of the McCabes. In public he appears rather dim and passive, always “attached” to his father who tries everything to find him a good wife (see Herr 44). Sean Bean, who plays Tadgh seems to be upstaged by Richard Harris, who fills the screen (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 50). His role in the community is that of being the Bull McCabe’s son and the tinker’s daughter even points out, “They say you’re following your father like a calf” (again there is the reference to cattle). Everywhere the Bull goes, Tadgh goes with him and his actions against the widow and the donkey make him an uncontrollable character in the community. At the same time he appears as the Bull’s puppet, who suffers from his father’s oppression. Nevertheless, in the end it is Tadgh, who betrays the Bull and flees to the traveller woman. According to the Bird, it is Tadgh’s fault that the priest and the policeman know about the murder.

The Bird:

The Bird can be compared to the typical the stage Irishman, namely the local trickster, who seems dull but is sharp and part of the Irish community. He is active in society collecting and providing information and creating partnerships (see Herr 21). Even in contemporary drama, attributes of the stage Irishman remain popular, such as the character of Johnnypateenmike in Martin McDonagh’s play *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. Apparently his daily life is determined by gossip as he always visits the other villagers and announces the news such as, “How is all? Johnnypateenmike does have three pieces of news to be telling ye this day...” (M. McDonagh 4). However, the character of the Bird is rather different because at the auction he acts as a tangler, a go-between who helps the Bull bid for the field. From the late nineteenth and early twentieth century tanglers were usually rural workers without land who went to markets and interfered with deals in order benefit from them (see Herr 18). He also distinguishes himself from the villagers as he wears merely rags and becomes the Bull’s unfaithful “pet dog”, who follows him like Tadgh.

The Bird, a close member of the community, is double-minded and involved in various activities. His key role is to gather and trade information by betraying the Bull such as telling the travellers about the death of the donkey (see Herr 48). When the Bull discovers that the Bird has been disloyal to him, the farmer and his son interrogate him playfully and laugh about the Bird's dishonesty. Although the Bird is sneered at by the community, the Bull is aware of the "village idiot's" power when it comes to gossip. Thus, when the Bull talks to the villagers to ensure his alibi, he excludes the Bird from the gathering and sends him away to wait outdoors. Nevertheless, he follows Tadgh and the Bull and witnesses the murder of the American, which later leads to the Bull's suspicion that the Bird betrayed him and the community. However, during the interrogation, the Bird confesses that Tadgh went to the tinker's daughter and told her about the killing. As a result, she gave the news to her father, who notified the priest. This statement causes a plot point in the film because the Bull storms out to find his son. A few minutes later, when Tadgh decides to leave with the traveller woman, the Bird runs after him to give him the message that his father is going mad and adds innocently, "He thinks you betrayed him". Here he triggers the last plot point which causes the tragic ending of the film.

4.3.1.2. The "Outsiders"

The Travellers:

Today about 25,000 travellers live in Ireland and the general belief is that they were tenant farmers who lost their land during the Famine, but other accounts state that they originated before that period. They have a strong bond to their families and community, are strict Catholics and work mostly as horse dealers, scrap collectors or are involved in other short-term occupations. Many travellers even speak their own dialect which is known as Cant. They are nomadic and, therefore, they travel through Ireland and live only temporarily in selected areas, sometimes illegally along the road. Although many of them have become settled they are still faced with prejudice and mistrust from local communities. In many Irish films they are represented as "the Other" who are in conflict with the settled community, as seen in *The Field* (see Flynn, and Brereton 356). Here, the

travellers represent a group, which neither belongs to the village community nor to the group that incorporates the priest, widow or American. They are even poorer than the farmers and beg for money, as the scene reveals when the widow approaches the village and passes them by. They camp at the bridge entering the village and every time they spot the Bull, they claim their blood money for their donkey's murder in a rather violent way by threatening him. Since the Bull is in a protected area, he merely ignores them but nevertheless he agrees to pay (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 60).

The tinker's daughter is the most important representative of the travellers in the film. She mirrors the binary image of the "tamed" or "untamed" woman and the beautiful girl with wild red hair that seduces young men who are too shy to dance with her (see Kettemann 159). In *The Field's* screenplay women (at least the tinker's daughter) are portrayed as supernatural beings, as witches who are sexualized (see Herr 70-71). Tadgh feels particularly attracted to the traveller woman because she represents a different life that is despised by the Bull. The travellers are not connected to the land as the villagers are. However, her life is not as free as it appears because her father always seems drunk and beats her, as a conversation with Tadgh indicates.

The Priest and the Widow:

The village community dislikes the priest and the widow because during the Famine many tenant farmers were expelled from their land by Anglo-Irish landlords when they were unable to pay. At that time even the Catholic Church tended to be on the side of the landlords. The widow played by Francis Tomelty, represents the land-owning Anglo-Irish aristocracy, an outsider of the community who has never worked on the land herself. Moreover, the priest, Father Dorian, lives in a big and well-kept house, in contrast to the rather humble houses of most villagers (see Byrne 121). Especially the Bull realises and criticises the power of the Church and refers to the Church's conduct during the Famine. "No priest died at the time of Famine only poor people like us", he claims (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 46). The farmer also indicates a repetition of history because the priest is on the side of the American and even invites him to his house rather than supporting his parishioners. Father Dorian is unfamiliar with the customs of the village and believes in the benefits of progress which

the American might bring. He sees new chances and possibilities in roads but at the same time he is aware of “the people’s thin veneer of Christianity that is painted over them”.

In the West, Catholicism and peasant culture became an important element of Ireland’s resistance of British colonialism, because Catholicism opposed British domination. When in the nineteenth century Catholics were denied political influence, the parish priest enjoyed great importance in the communities and had an impact on social phenomena like late marriages or celibacy (see Brody 176). This altered after the Famine because

the church had least success in assisting changes required in the western districts, where the situation was worst and the peasantry was least able or willing to alter the shape of their holdings. Indeed, the Church always found difficulty in innovating or straining against the farm practice of the parishioners [...] And in truth the communities of rural Ireland have always been widely dispersed, with a majority of the population living a long walk from church or priest. The economic practice in the countryside was therefore relatively immune to the watchful eye or concerned interest of any priest bent on change. (Brody 176-177)

Nevertheless, the community attended the services regularly, donated their surplus money to the church and encouraged their children to become priests or nuns. However, religion rather than the priest was an important part in peasant life (see Brody 177-179). The same attitude towards religion can be applied to the Bull, who criticises the Catholic Church and the priest by telling him, “You’re just passing through here father. Leave us to our ways.” Here he stresses that the priest is not part of the community and does not understand it either. At the same time, the Bull is very religious, which is demonstrated in the first scene when he prays in an old ruin. In the context of the 1930s

[t]he Bull may be the product of centuries of dispossession but he is also enchained by an inert society that has failed to transform itself into the nation imagined by the visionaries that formulated independence. A Free State it may now be, but under its surface hides a thinly submerged feudal structure, where ownership of the land lies not with the peasantry but with the new Catholic bourgeoisie (the Widow), and its guarantor (the Church). (Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 46)

The widow is part of this bourgeoisie as can easily be recognised by her mourning clothes that are certainly more valuable than the clothes of the other villagers. When she passes in one scene the begging travellers she ignores them and is observed suspiciously by the villagers. By selling the field by public auction, she breaks the “law of the land” and is treated with contempt by the community, which she is not part of. This hatred is demonstrated openly when the widow appears from her hiding place in the pub, and announces the reserved price. In response a villager throws a ball of mud at her; however, she is protected by the Bull, who wants the field but at the same time understands her vulnerability as a woman who lives outside the close-knit community.

The American:

In comparison to John B. Keane’s version, in the film the British Irishman who returns to Ireland is replaced by an Irish American (see Byrne 123). Tom Berenger was probably cast for the film to attract American distributors and a wider audience, especially the American one (see Pettitt 126). The image of the American outsider has appeared in previous films such as *The Quiet Man* (1952), whose portrayal of Sean Thornton shows similarities to the rather stiff and wooden American in *The Field* (see Herr 51). However, in *The Quiet Man* the American Sean Thornton represents western modernity that rescues a girl from the old ways by experiencing certain traditions and becoming part of the community. In *The Field* the American does not get this chance and is killed (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 59). Moreover, the scene with the Yank’s motorcar and its flat tires mirrors a scene in *The Luck of the Irish* (1948), where the American’s car sinks in a river (see Herr 51).

By the Irish themselves, the returning emigrants are usually viewed as “an Puncan mor ramhar” (“Returned Yank”), who wants to demonstrate his or her successful life abroad. In *The Field* the character of the American mirrors the archetype of the “Returned Yank”, who wears expensive clothes and drives a car. He distinguishes himself strikingly from the villagers, who are dressed in rags and still travel by horse cart (see Byrne 121-122).

From the Bull’s perspective the American is a successor of the generation of the Irish who emigrated during the Famine (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 49). Thus, when the Irish-American wants to buy the Bull’s field the

poor tenant farmer complains, "When the going got tough, they ran away to America, they ran away from the Famine, but we stayed. You went to America to make your few dollars and then you think you can buy the land?" On the other hand, the American is a man who barely understands the Bull's obsession with the land and represents capitalism that changes traditional Irish life (see Herr 52). The clash of two different worlds is even more emphasized when the American and the Bull meet at the auction the first time. After the solicitor has postponed the auction, the American announces that he is "prepared to go higher". His clothes, his accent and his car expose him as an outsider who is clearly distinct from the villagers. When the Bull approaches the foreigner and threatens him that he could "be inviting a lot of trouble for himself", the American only asks rather surprised who that could be. The Bull continues that it is his field the Yank intends to buy. The American, unaware of the Bull's power, smiles bemusedly at the old man and retorts triumphantly, "Well, we'll see about that won't we?" He wants to modernize western Ireland which is hardly appreciated by the Irish people because he disturbs their way of life.

Richard Harris dominates the screen and Tom Berenger as the American could potentially act as an antagonist but seems more like a "bystander that walked onto the set" (see Gray 193). Tom Berenger himself interprets his character as a man who has family in the area of Carraigthomond but at the same time he is a businessman who needs concrete to build highways and lend-lease ships. Additionally, he does not particularly need this field which creates the main problem for the character (see Herr 52).

Although the American works together with the local priest and feels rather safe, he is still not aware of the power of the community. When at the beginning the Yank seems rather unimpressed by the Bull's attempts to threaten him, this changes in the scene near the river, where the young man is physically attacked. There he becomes aware of the Bull's obsession when he witnesses how he treats his son Tadgh (see Kettemann 158). Simultaneously, it is the first scene that suggests that the American and Séimí (the Bull's older son) become one in the Bull's imagination (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 50). In this scene the farmer kills Séimí a second time.

4.3.2. Characters in *Waking Ned Devine*

The characters in *Waking Ned Devine* can be distinguished into the main characters Jack, Annie and Michael. Other minor (but still important) characters are the love-triangle Maggie, Finn and Pat, the local priest and the boy Maurice, and the individuals Lizzy Quinn and the lotto official. All before mentioned characters represent contrasting interests which lead to various different dynamics in the film.

4.3.2.1. Main Characters

Jacky, Annie and Michael:

Jacky, Annie and Michael can be combined because they share in particular one “feature”, they know about the death of Ned Devine and take advantage of this knowledge. One character, who plays an essential role in the film, is Jacky O’Shea.

[He] stands out as a cunning, ruthless, and determined rural character not too distant from those individuals whom we see in motion pictures such as *Travellers* or *The Field*. The fact that he appears in a comedy seems superficially to soften his nature. However, the overt sentimentalism of the film is cynical as any technique that Jackie himself would use: it shows how an unscrupulous manipulator can play on emotions to gain ends. (Gillespie 52)

Jackie seeks to gain advantage from others and sees almost every situation as a game. In the first scene he tricks his wife Annie to get his apple tart, and therefore, the first minutes already reveal his skill to manipulate others in order to achieve what he wants. Thus, before he has found out who has won the lottery, he tells his friend Michael that they should make sure to be best friends with the winner, when he or she cashes the jackpot (see Gillespie 48). In order to benefit from this knowledge, Annie, Jacky and Michael try to find the winner by flattering and questioning the “suspects”. All three of them play the game and even invite all the lotto players of Tullymore to a chicken dinner. By feeding them alcohol, they find out everything about their fellow villagers apart from who the winner is. Michael, who has known Jacky for many years, even suspects him to be “the one” and says, “I think it’s you and I think you’re having us all on.”

Although Michael seems to be rather innocent at first sight, he sees through Jacky and plays with him too. Nevertheless, it is Jacky, who influences his friend by referring to his dream especially when they discover Ned Devine's death. Here Jacky's unscrupulous side is highlighted: first he persuades Michael to become his accomplice and, second, he treats Ned's body rather irreverently by hiding the evidence. Although Michael suggests stopping the fraud, Jacky convinces him again to continue playing the game and calls the lotto service.

In the meantime, the lotto official arrives on the island with a helicopter which emphasizes his urban background. Concurrently Jackie and Michael bathe nude in the sea at the beach. Cars are hardly ever present on the island, only when Finn "looks after" his relative's car and when the Dubliner drives along the narrow roads with a "hot rod". In contrast to that, Michael and Jackie's old motorbike seems much more down to earth (see Joeckl 162). When the lotto official encounters the elderly men, he sees Jacky first and asks him for the way and Michael is forced to impersonate Ned Devine, which apparently is more difficult for him than for Jacky. In contrast to his friend Jacky, Michael has to drink whiskey in order to be able to lie. Meanwhile, Jacky demonstrates his playfulness by leading the lotto official up the garden path. However, when Annie finds her husband hiding and listening behind Ned Devine's house, she worriedly points out, "Jacky, he's [Michael] never told a lie in his life." However, Jacky retorts good-humouredly, "But he's making it up now, I hope so." This scene particularly shows that, for Annie, Jacky has gone too far and she almost appears as a mother figure. She blames Jacky for his recklessness and the exploitation of his friend Michael and argues, "But if anything happens to Michael, then God help you Jacky; for he will suffer." She also tries to reason with him by asking him, "How much am I worth to you, Jacky? How much? How much for Michael, for the farm? For God's sake, what are you going to do with seven million pounds?"

Nonetheless, Jacky still "believes" in his dream (or uses it as an excuse) but he becomes more realistic and admits, "Ned doesn't want us in prison but I don't think he wants us to be multimillionaires either." However, he still utilises the dream as a justification for his actions when he announces Ned Devine as a hero in front of the whole village. Moreover, he is not so much interested in the

money as in manipulating others (see Gillespie 50). “Jackie displays an adept skill at turning the conversation towards winning and at making himself seem the most openhanded [sic!] of men. However, this routine unfolds as more than a broad portrayal of good-natured if canny country fellow” (Gillespie 49). In his speech to the villagers Jacky becomes the leader of the community who speaks in the name of Ned and persuades them that his intentions were almost always good. Eventually, even Annie changes her mind and becomes part of the plan as well in order to protect Jacky and Michael from going to prison. Although Jacky is sometimes cool and calculating, he also has some “good sides” as he stops the others from lynching Lizzy Quinn by telling them, “Don’t mind her”, and probably rescues her, which again reveals his positive character traits.

Nevertheless, the scene when Jacky gives another speech at Ned’s funeral is ambiguous because it appears sentimental on the surface (friendship) but the real purpose of the speech is to trick the lottery official and please Michael. Simultaneously, the villagers know the truth and support the fraud by not informing the lotto man (see Gillespie 51). Here the community acts like Carraighthomond’s community in *The Field*, which has a comparable church scene. In addition, Jackie’s ambiguous personality is also revealed when Maggie confesses that Ned Devine was her son’s father and offers her to take all the money. However, he gambles again by telling her that it would be more important for her son to have a father (Pig Finn) rather than millions of Pounds (see Gillespie 51).

Jacky can be compared to the type of the trickster like the Bird in *The Field*, who likes to play and manipulate others, but at the same time his charm is loveable and people forgive him. Thus, Jacky is neither completely bad nor is he good, and therefore, becomes more complex than the character of the Bird. Furthermore, it is he who transforms Ned Devine into the village hero and appears as a rather selfless person on the surface.

When it comes to Michael, at first he appears rather innocent which changes as he becomes an active part of Jacky’s plan and not only a puppet that is manipulated. However, he is not as unscrupulous as his friend.

Annie, the most sensible of the three, shares Jacky’s playfulness but has her limits which are revealed when her husband goes too far. She seems to be Jackie’s moral guide but becomes a victim of her greed for money as well (see

Gillespie 52). Nevertheless, she also intends to save the two men from prison by being part of the fraud.

4.3.2.2. Minor Characters

Maggie, Finn, Pat:

The scene at the river, which indicates the subplot of the relationship between Maggie and the farmer Pig Finn, alludes to the first meeting between Sean Thornton and Mary Kate Danaher in *The Quiet Man* because it is accompanied by soft music and evokes the pastoral ideal (see Joeckl 161). However, the film makes fun of this sentimentality by exaggerating the romantic moment and destroying it by Maggie's sober observation of Finn's smell of pigs.

Maggie's game with Pig Finn draws a rather bright picture of single motherhood; however, a closer look uncovers her true considerations because at first she prefers Pat Mulligan whom she hardly feels attracted to, rather than the pig farmer. This has mainly financial reasons because when the lottery money is divided amongst the villagers, she chooses Pig Finn as her partner (see Gillespie 45-46). In the end, however, she prefers love to money when she reveals to Jacky that Ned was her son's father. She is content with a "nest egg" rather than the entire winnings in order that her son may have Pig Finn as a father (because Finn assumes that he is the boy's father). By doing so she also contributes to the new harmony in the village. Nevertheless, she also has a darker side because she encourages Finn that he is Maurice's father with the intention that her son grows up with a male role model.

The Priest and the Boy:

The friendship between the foreign priest and Maurice, the only boy in the village is rather interesting because the two comment on activities in the village. Especially the boy's questions about religion are worth mentioning, such as "How can you work for somebody you've never seen?" Joeckl criticises this part of the film and states, "By letting an 'innocent' child pose this question, the film evades a critical interrogation of religious issues and reduces them to a juxtaposition of the noble, pagan savage and the foreign priest" (Joeckl 161). By questioning the customs of the village, the boy demonstrates a critical mind and

precociousness that other villagers lack. He even comforts the priest who feels rather rejected by many people in Tullymore by telling him, "Well, you'll be missed. You've done well. No matter what people say." After the villagers decide to trick the lotto official, the priest and Maurice discuss what the villagers would do with the lottery money and whether Father Mulligan would approve of the fraud. Again, Maurice has an answer and refers to the collection money in church. Here the boy mirrors the opinion of the Bull, who also criticises the Church's obsession with money and refers to Christ's disapproval of markets in temples; however, the boy sees it not as dramatically as the Bull. Furthermore, Maurice explains that the villagers would spend their money in the pub and the next scene reveals that they actually do what he assumes. Thus, Maurice and the priest uncover critical aspects of the apparently idyllic Irish countryside.

The enormous consumption of alcohol in the village could be seen as an Irish stereotype that is carried to extremes but contains some truth because in Ireland the rate of alcoholism is 20% higher than in other European countries (see *Overview of Alcohol-related Harm Facts and Statistics*).

The average amount of alcohol consumed by every person in the country aged 15+ was 12.4 litres [sic!] of pure alcohol in 2008. This amounts to 490 pints or 129 bottles of wine or 46 bottles of vodka per adult. When we consider the above statistics alongside the fact that one in five adults in Ireland don't drink alcohol, it means that those who do drink are consuming much more than consumption statistics show. (*Overview of Alcohol-related Harm Facts and Statistics*)

Certainly, not all Irish people can be labelled as alcoholic but the level of alcoholism also reveals that the depiction of alcohol consumption in the film is not only an Irish stereotype but also part of the reality of Irish life. However, the matter is highly exaggerated in *Waking Ned Devine* as even Maurice is given a glass of whiskey in the last scene of the film.

Lizzy Quinn:

Lizzy Quinn, or the witch, as she is called by the other villagers, does not want to be part of the community. Right at the beginning of the film she is introduced as a resentful old woman, who is unwilling to pay for the reparation of a toaster or for an old loaf of bread. Money seems to be at the centre of her life, which is

even more stressed when she interrupts Jacky's speech in order to find out the amount of the lottery money. Thus, it is evident that she becomes the one person who opposes the villagers' plan with the intention to have one million Pounds for herself, which is more than the other villagers share. In the end, her greed is punished rather drastically, namely by a fatal accident. This reflects the fate of the informer, as it is also illustrated in other Irish films such as *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (however, there the informers are assassinated).

The Lotto Official:

Jim, the lotto official, emphasises the difference between the "harmonious" countryside and the modern city life which also serves as a source of humour in the film. The outsider or foreign intruder that enters the rural community is a common theme in Irish films such as in *The Quiet Man*, *Ryan's Daughter* (1970) or *The Field*. In *Waking Ned Devine* the outsider appears as the lotto official who arrives on the island by helicopter, which emphasises his urban background. Since the lotto official is unfamiliar with Tullymore, he is easily tricked by the villagers. His hay fever even more indicates his remoteness from country life and sets him apart from the villagers (see Joeckl 162). In contrast to the foreigner in *The Field*, the lotto official appears as a friendly man who engages with the villagers, although he is not part of them. He does not intend to change them nor does he try to buy their land but befriends the villagers and when he leaves he calls them by their first names. Thus, the villagers seem to be fond of him as a person rather than his job as lotto official. However, it has to be added that they trick him, and therefore, it is questionable whether their hospitality is sincere. Probably, their main interest is the money which he brings.

4.4. Conclusion

The communities presented in *The Field* and *Waking Ned Devine* are different; this can be explained by the different periods in which the films are situated, but also by the different genres. While *The Field* is a drama, *Waking Ned Devine* can be described as a satirical comedy. Nevertheless, certain similarities can be detected such as the villagers' behaviour towards people who are not part of the community. In both film the communities work together to defend their interests

against “intruders” and are betrayed by a member of the community. However, while *Waking Ned Devine* ends happily, *The Field* is a tragedy which finishes disastrously.

In both films several critics dismiss the characters as Irish stereotypes. In particular, Jacky in *Waking Ned Devine* is connected to the typical stage Irishman, however, a deeper look has revealed a more complex character. Certainly the characters in the film share familiar features with other Irish films and comedies in general, but I would claim that the main aim of the film is to exaggerate certain images of Irishness satirically. Furthermore, the motivation of the film has to be included as well. As Kirk Jones decided to take a museum village as the set for his film and create mostly quirky characters, it was probably not his intention to reflect a true picture of Ireland but rather a satirical one. By ridiculing stereotypical images of Ireland, he emphasises their fabrication. Nevertheless, *Waking Ned Devine*’s intention is surely to be a “feel-good” movie with an ending that makes (almost; apart from Lizzy Quinn) “everybody happy”. Since the film was successful at American, British and also Irish box-offices (see Joeckl 163), people apparently enjoyed it, which indicates that the film was accepted by many Irish people as well.

When speaking about the characters of *The Field*, this chapter mostly refers to them within the village community. They are rather complex as they symbolise various interest groups and historical elements that are strongly connected to Irish culture. Thus, the main characters (such as the Bull, Tadgh or Maggie McCabe) in *The Field* are dealt with in other chapters as well but from different angles.

5. Landscape and Romanticism in Jim Sheridan's *The Field*, John Sayle's *The Secret of Roan Inish* and Neil Jordan's *Ondine*

5.1. Introduction

Landscape is a significant aspect of Irish films that take place in the Irish countryside. Not only does it provide the setting for the films but it is also laden with meaning. The Irish landscape, the West in particular, has fascinated and inspired artists, tourists, Irish nationalists and members of the Irish diasporas for centuries. They have contributed to different images of Irish landscape which have also influenced Jim Sheridan and John Sayles, who utilise the Western Irish landscape to create distinct images of Irish rural life. John Sayles romanticises the West; depicting it from an Irish-American perspective as a pastoral refuge from urban modernity isolated in a timeless past. Jim Sheridan, in contrast, deconstructs the idea of the safe haven that represents the Bull's Irish nationalist ideals. Here, I will compare the Bull's and other characters' perception of the Western landscape with Irish nationalists' use of Paul Henry's landscape paintings. Subsequently I will contrast the aspects of romanticism and landscape in *The Secret of Roan Inish* to Neil Jordan's *Ondine*. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the complex interpretations of landscape and romanticism of rural Ireland, in particular the West and its significance for contemporary Irish films.

5.2. The Depiction of Landscape and Romanticism: An Overview

The French geographer Vidal de la Blache said that people and the landscape they inhabit are closer "than a snail and its shell" (see Aalan, Whelan, and Stout 4). "[T]hat reciprocal relationship between culture and nature is worked out and embodied in the landscape. Human interaction with the environment of Ireland has produced a wide range of characteristic landscape features and a rich variety of distinctive rural landscapes, reflecting both the cultural complexity and natural diversity of the country" (Aalan, Whelan, and Stout 4). Almost every part of Ireland has come into contact with human society; this leaves hardly any

“natural landscape” that has not been affected by humans. In other words, the Irish landscape carries cultural meaning and is almost completely humanised (see O’Connor 8). Consequently Ireland has a “cultural landscape” where layers of cultural and natural history are interwoven and although the Irish grassland seems natural it is a product of generations of farming. Landscape changes over time and since it is a product of the interaction between humans and their environment, when a society or its habitat changes so does the landscape (see Aalan, Whelan, and Stout 5-6). Thus, landscape carries memories of the past as described in Seamus Heaney’s poem *Belderg*. In *Belderg* Heaney views the bog as part of the Irish landscape that contains history (see Kneafsey 136-137).

To lift the lid of the peat
And find this pupil dreaming
Of neolithic wheat!
When he stripped off blanket bog
The soft-piled centuries

Fell open like a glib:
There were the first plough-marks,
The stone-age fields, the tomb
Corbelled, turfed and chambered,
Floored with dry turf-coomb.

A landscape fossilized,
Its stone-wall patternings
Repeated before our eyes
In the stone walls of Mayo.
Before I turned to go
(Heaney 13)

The landscape of Ireland is interpreted in the form of heritage centres that present a mythical, historical, ecological or archaeological perspective. This plays a role in constructing place and identity as symbolic and cultural icons. Travellers, tourists and cultural nationalists have had a determining influence on the interpretations of landscape (see Kneafsey 136). The landscape of the West of Ireland became important because it reflected the Irish nationalist’s self-image and symbolised what was fundamental and pure Irish identity. However, romantic depictions of Ireland go beyond Irish cultural nationalism and can be recognised in European and British attitudes (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 20) of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (see Gibbons 203), that were

reacting to increased industrialisation and urbanisation, and viewed areas on the periphery of Europe from the perspective of the “tourist gaze” (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 20). This created a romantic image of the Irish countryside that was seen as representing a pre-industrial era. For example, Lady Morgan’s novel *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) stresses the differences between the ordered English landscapes and the mysterious and wild Irish landscape seen from the “tourist gaze” (see Gibbons 204-206). What this demonstrates is an interpretation of landscape that juxtaposes images of the civil and the savage environment. This interpretation is central to colonial concepts of land, where the untameable environment is romanticised (see Kettemann 153).

[O]ne could almost speak of an antipastoral vision that is imposed onto landscape that resists the intrusive gardener/colonizer. Moreover, like most colonialist visions the imagery of landscape tends to focus on the rural, to the extent that it fixates Ireland as a slow-moving almost timeless place, negating the presence of urbanization, modern technology, and industrialism. (Kettemann 153)

The coloniser’s view of landscape is connected to the “otherness” of the natives that inhabit it and who are influenced by their surroundings in so far as they reflect the landscape’s personality (see Kettemann 153). In particular “[t]he West combined scenic sublimity and remoteness from the metropolis, both of which Romantic aesthetics identified as desirable primitive” (Ryle 74).

According to D.W. Meinig, every mature nation has created symbolic landscapes that belong to elements of nationhood that connect people. In Ireland landscape became an important part of Irish nationalism in the nineteenth century (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 9). McLoone explains in his book *Irish Film* that the portrayal of landscape is a significant element of the crisis over Irish identity because although it is a natural phenomenon it is a cultural signifier of everyday life and therefore an aspect of “banal nationalism”. This means that landscape is a material experience of national identity and nationhood that is lived by the people’s everyday lives and habits. McLoone continues that Catherine Palmer argues that, thus landscape can (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 207) “evoke feelings, generate emotions and provide causes” (McLoone, *Irish Film* 207) and acts as a mechanism that divides the domestic from the foreign. Thus, to protect the

landscape means a culture's or state's defence against the influence from outsiders (see Palmer 194-196).

Irish nationalists viewed the West of Ireland as the repository for traditional Irish culture that had maintained its 'true' identity and had not become corrupted by the coloniser (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 11). Interestingly, there is also a difference between the climate of the East and West. While in the western peninsulas the annual rainfall averages between 1200 to 2500 mm, in the area around Dublin the annual rainfall is less than 800mm. Additionally, ever-present wind has shaped the west coast and reduced tree growth which results in deformed tree shapes. This again has an impact on the landscape as well as on people's lifestyle, in particular on the branch of agriculture (see J.H. Johnson 16-19). "The West of Ireland landscape, in other words, came to symbolise the very essence of Irishness and its harsh beauty and traditional ways became a source of both escape and regeneration" (McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 12). Also in James Joyce's *The Dead*, the East is viewed by Dublin nationalists (such as Miss Ivors) as "West British" and culturally influenced by Britain in contrast to the West, which is referred to as truly Irish (see Ryle 64-65).

During the Irish cultural revival, accompanied by growing nationalist sentiment, the West became important for writers such as J.M. Synge or W.B. Yeats but also painters like Jack B. Yeats or Paul Henry. The literary revivalists were especially interested in the harmony and link between the rural (ancient) population and the haunted western landscape, which would serve them as a source of strength for the individual, but also for the nation (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 12). In particular in Yeats' poetry, landscape is connected to traces of meaning (such as history and language) rather than only referring to the beauty of the scenery. The Irish landscape of the West symbolises a sense of communal identity which serves as a shelter from loneliness of the self through humans' empathy with nature and, therefore, was one of the main reasons why Yeats visited the West of Ireland (see Gibbons 208-210). "Given the history of Ireland's colonial past and especially the memory of its Famine trauma it is hardly surprising that the land and the landscape carried profound political, cultural and emotional resonances" (McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 12). Moreover, the Irish landscape

often contains two layers, namely “one which conforms to a realist, pictorial aesthetic and which represents the vantage point of the outsider, and the other which refuses instant or immediate access and the kind of transparency which is integral to the tourist and colonial vision” (Gibbons 210).

When it comes to the portrayal of Ireland in film, landscape plays a very important role ideologically and politically. This concerns in particular the landscape of the West of Ireland because as already mentioned, it reflects the Irish nationalists' self-image and symbolises fundamental and pure Irish identity (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 19-20). The first romantic images of the Irish landscape in film appeared in the one- and two-reelers by Sidney Olcott's Kalem Company of 1910, which were shot in Killarney and intended to address an Irish-American audience. In one of these films, namely in *Rory O'More*, the shots of the landscape almost intrude into the story and make it influential to the plot (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 15). “Landscape has tended to play a leading role in Irish cinema, often upstaging both the main characters and narrative themes in the construction of Ireland on screen” (Gibbons 203). However, Olcott's films already contain stereotypes and elements of Irish nationalism such as rural life, romantic landscape, the parish priest, the beautiful colleen or the fight for freedom. In other words, this combination of nationalism, religion and nostalgia, have become the prototype for Irish cinema (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 16). “Olcott and his Kalem Company captured the minds and imaginations of many in the early part of the 20th century, with his evocative and raw representations of nature and landscape, which were excavated, to connect with an image-hungry diasporic Irish community in America and elsewhere” (Brereton 9). The Irish diaspora and Irish-themed films became an important part of Hollywood motion pictures because the audience of Irish-Americans were interested in their roots. Many Irish-Americans worked for Hollywood productions such as Mack Sennet, John Ford, Colleen Moore or Mary Pickford. These productions are marked by various Irish stereotypes which are most commonly depicted in American and British films. Since 1900 more than 2000 Irish-themed films have been made of which only a few were in fact produced in Ireland in the last decades (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 33).

Although many of these films portray an idyllic and romantic picture of Ireland, it has to be noted that romanticism does not only focus on the positive sides but also on the darker ones such as misery or suffering. J.M. Synge, for instance, focused on the aesthetic elements of the lives of the poor people in the Irish country side. Also cultural nationalists such as Douglas Hyde or Patrick Pearse were fascinated by the hard life of Irish western peasants during the Literary Revival, rather than the beauty of the landscape. The portrayal of hardship can also be found in one of the most famous Irish-American films, namely in *Man of Aran* (1934), which depicts the hard life of the inhabitants of the Aran Islands. The film contains a mythic element as the daily heroic fight between man and nature, where nature becomes an enemy. This portrayal and relationship to landscape and nature can be termed “hard primitivism”. In other words, the representation of the Irish countryside often follows two different directions namely “soft primitivism” and “hard primitivism” (see Gibbons 196-201). While “hard primitivism” focuses on the romantic view of hardship without comforts, “soft primitivism” refers to the romantic image of innocence and happiness (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 43). This “soft primitivism” is portrayed in *The Quiet Man* (1952), where Sean Thornton flees to the Irish countryside of Inisfree, which he describes as “another name for heaven”. Here people seem to live a happy and untroubled life that is far from the struggle of survival because they spend most of their time singing, drinking and fighting. When in one scene Sean Thornton sees Mary Kate Danagher for the first time she represents the pastoral ideal as she walks with her sheep in the woods and is in harmony with nature. (see Gibbons 199-200) Here Sean Thornton even questions his own senses by exclaiming, “Hey, is that real? She couldn’t be”. Furthermore, in the opening scene, Sean Thornton leaves the railway station and shots of the Irish landscape are shown which mirror a “postcard Ireland” that is full of traditions and secluded from the pressures of the modern world (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 53). Thus, *The Quiet Man* represents the Irish-American dream of Ireland (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 16) that has reappeared in other films. “The cumulative weight of years of representation has given Irish landscape a set of connotations that reflect not only native aspirations but also the prejudices of colonisation, the nostalgic longings of exile and the more general romantic impulses of urban modernity”

(McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 16). Generally these ideal images were produced by non-indigenous filmmakers and were questioned in the 1970s by native filmmakers who began to deconstruct known cinematic portrayals of the Irish landscape (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 16).

Although Ireland has changed in the last decades and has been modernised, the image of the rural utopia is still apparent, especially in relation to tourism in Ireland (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 201). One important element of Ireland's recent economic success (before 2008) can be traced back to the blooming tourist industry which promoted Ireland's landscapes to attract inhabitants of cities who wanted to flee from modernity (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 19-20). Tourism can be so powerful that it remodels culture and nature to its own needs by framing history, nature and tradition ideologically. In regard to the heritage industry, landscape can be important to regain the past which is reinvented for tourists to maintain it in the future and by creating signs that are "consumed" by the tourists (see N. C. Johnson 551-553). The Irish Tourist Board even utilises Irish stereotypes such as the mysticism of the Irish landscape to market Ireland to visitors (see Brereton 3). Especially the Irish countryside and its "rural uniqueness" have become increasingly "packaged" and sold to a specific audience. The growing wish of Irish-Americans to visit their ancestors' country has also influenced Irish tourism and Irish rural heritage (see J. McDonagh 48-63). An example from the webpage of *Discover Ireland US* of 2011 illustrates this.

Perched on the northwest tip of Europe, this is the one place in the world where even time getting lost will be worthwhile... With ancient myths and legends to uncover, amazing landscapes to explore and locals who will be more than happy to reveal our hidden gems, just go where the island of Ireland takes you. Guaranteed, you'll return home with memories that will last a lifetime. (*Discover Ireland*)

Selling this image has contributed to Ireland's economic growth and is also significant for films shot in Ireland such as *Braveheart* (1994) in which Ireland's landscape stood in for medieval Scotland (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 201-202). Also other big productions were filmed in Ireland such as *King Arthur* (2004), *Excalibur* (1981) or even the Second World War film *Saving Private Ryan*

(1998), where the Irish landscape served as a double for France (see Brereton 2). Furthermore, there has also been an increasing number of people who buy holiday houses in the West to experience the “real Ireland”, which has increased the prices and, therefore, properties can hardly be afforded by locals anymore (see J. McDonagh 67). Although Ireland has benefited from its fast economic growth, it has also contributed to increase of consumerism, decline of Catholicism and encouraged the image of the romantic western Irish landscape (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 19-20). However, interestingly, “[f]or most Irish people, the ordinary everyday landscape is something given and such may be glimpsed at rather than thought about” (O’Connor 7). Some people of the countryside hardly share the romantic views of many writers and Tomas O’Crohan even explains (see Kneafsey 138) that “real peasants don’t spend their time lost in wonder at the beauty of the mountains” (qtd. in Kneafsey 138). This view is also shared by Michaleen in *The Quiet Man*, who is always the one who sees his surroundings from a “sober” perspective⁸ in comparison to Sean Thornton. Of course, this does not mean that the Irish country people do not appreciate their landscape but they experience it on a day-to-day basis. However, I would like to give an example for an Irishman from western Ireland who has dedicated parts of his life to (the beauties of) the Irish landscape, namely the contemporary painter Mike Flannery (Fig. 1, artmike.jane), who portrays the western seascape from his perspective:



(Fig. 1)

⁸ although he is an alcoholic and always intoxicated

I find that it is only when one is truly immersed in their surroundings that one is free to enjoy what is all too often taken for granted. [...] My paintings are the result of an obsessive compulsion to explore the beauty and solitude of Nature. Hours spent walking over rough terrain along with the constant falls, cuts, bruises and near drownings serve as battle scars and only add to the exciting memories of my adventures. I feel a great desire to capture on canvas the very essence of the sea when words alone fail to do justice. (Flannery)

These interpretations of the Irish landscape also influence contemporary Irish film and therefore the following sections will focus on the depiction of the Irish landscape in the motion pictures *The Field* by Jim Sheridan (an Irish director from Dublin) and *The Secret of Roan Inish* by John Sayles (an American director).

5.3. Landscape and Romanticism in *The Field*

The West of Ireland has the reputation of a natural beauty that can provide respite from the troubles and anxiety of modern society. It provides an escape, encourages creativity and the possibility to enter deeper philosophical truths. (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 5). However, Leenane, Connemara, where the film *The Field* was shot (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 40), is one of the least densely populated areas in Europe, due to the Famine that forced many inhabitants to emigrate. Tim Ecott, a writer at *The Guardian*, observes that the Connemara landscape still echoes the ghosts of the past (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 5). These “ghosts” of the past are also an important element of the film *The Field* as the aftermath of the Famine influences the Bull’s life and emphasises his connection to the landscape and the land. Sheridan’s attitude towards the representation of Irish culture is that the picture of a romantic Ireland should be (see Herr 38). In order to do that, he also utilises two famous films in Irish cinema, namely John Ford’s *The Quiet Man* and Robert Flaherty’s *Man of Aran* which, as mentioned before, represent “soft primitivism” in the case of *The Quiet Man*, and “hard primitivism” in the case of *Man of Aran*. Sheridan challenges *The Quiet Man* and turns a rather harmonious ideal community into poverty-stricken villagers who reject outsiders

(see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 59). The director uses elements of the story of John Ford's motion picture rather than Ford's outsider depiction of the Irish landscape. By changing the character of the Irish-British William Dee to Peter, the returned Yank, Sheridan clearly refers to the character of Sean Thornton in *The Quiet Man* and the romantic ideas of Irish-Americans who return to Ireland. However, in contrast to Sean Thornton, Peter hardly notices the beauty of the landscape and instead of becoming part of the community he uses his ancestors' land to make a profit. He does not view Ireland as a pastoral or romantic place where he can escape from the US but he wants to change Ireland's image of the rural utopia in order to turn it into an industrialised country like the US. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the American is a man who barely understands rural Ireland and represents capitalism that changes traditional Irish life, which again symbolises the displacement of tradition and modernity which was dominant in the 1990s (see Herr 52).

When it comes to *Man of Aran*, Sheridan utilises several images of the representation of seascape for *The Field*, such as the scene of seaweed gathering. In *Man of Aran* the family is presented against the horizon carrying seaweed, continuing the tradition of the field. They have barely escaped from rescuing fishing nets from the sea, as they walk along the shore and are shown in low-angle shots against the sky, which are cross-cut with high-angle shots of the threatening waves. This scene is mirrored in *The Field* when the Bull fights the waves after Tadgh's death. *Man of Aran* draws a hard primitive romantic picture of tradition and the fight between nature and man. It reflects Irish nationalism of the 1930s, an image of Ireland that was welcome at the time because it represented the harsh beauty of peasant life. The seascape scenes in both films refer to the continuity of the family line, however, in Sheridan's film the family line is broken. Thus, although Jim Sheridan echoes elements of *Man of Aran*, he views it from the perspective of the 1990s (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 8). However, in particular the cinematography of the landscape in *The Field* reflects the "hard primitivism" of Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran*, because it emphasises the Bull's hardship. He is the central figure in the landscape and, therefore, presents his environment to the audience because his experience stands for the experience of the nation and its struggles (see Cavanagh 96). The Bull embodies Irish nationalism of the 1930s in several

ways because he symbolises the ideal Irish peasant who lives in the West of Ireland and in harmony with nature and the land he nurses. The scene near the waterfall where the murder of the American occurs also connects the Irish temperament with nature. The Bull is a symbol of the romantic discourse of nationalism and becomes a true tragic hero (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 60) that can be compared to Paul Henry's painting of Cuchulainn fighting the sea (see Cavanagh 96).

Paul Henry was probably the most important landscape painter of the twentieth century who captured the Western Irish landscape in a unique manner. He responded to what he saw and avoided romance and narrative. Thus, he stood out from his contemporaries and his simple elegance still impresses the viewer today (see S.B. Kennedy 5). "Paul Henry introduces a number of issues – national identity, the West as somehow the quintessential Irish landscape, the nature of our relationship to the land – which continue to influence attitudes towards that landscape even now" (S.B. Kennedy 5). The development of landscape painting reflects also social and political movements, but in contrast to many writers, Paul Henry was less political (see S.B. Kennedy 5-6). He was inspired by the Western landscape and described it as the "very soul of Ireland" and although Henry avoided political commitment, it is striking that many of his paintings of the West were made in the 1920s and 1930s and were also utilized to attract tourists at that time (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 11-13). One work of art by Henry was even printed in the introductory pages of the Irish Free State Handbook of 1932. In Paul Henry's paintings of cottages, bog, mountains and peasants Irishness as described by Irish cultural nationalists can be read (see McCormack 335).

It is not only the scene at the sea that mirrors one of Paul Henry's works but the cinematography of *The Field* itself echoes his landscape paintings of Connemara, where the film was shot. In particular the first few minutes of the film reflect Paul Henry's use of colours such as the brown grass in front and the greyish-blue mountains in the back accompanied by fog and spectacular clouds. The interpretation of his works, in particular the Connemara landscape, illustrates the same hard primitivism as it was favoured in the 1930s, the period in which *The Field* is set. However, Henry himself saw the Irish landscape as, "What always strikes me about the Irish landscape [...] is its other worldliness.

There's an air of mystery about it – quite unlike Scotland or England or France. You feel about it that anything may happen in round the corner" (qtd. in S.B.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Kennedy 5). He even described his own life as “an escape” from industrial Belfast to Western Ireland (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 12). Thus, he viewed the Irish Western landscape from a romantic perspective that mirrors the positive outsider's view of Ireland but at the same time shared

aspects Irish cultural nationalism personified by the Bull as well. I would like to illustrate the connection between the Bull and his view of the Connemara landscape and the nationalists' perception of Paul Henry's landscape paintings (such as in the Irish Free State Book of 1932) by comparing Paul Henry's *A Road in Connemara* (Fig. 2), painted in 1943 (see S.B. Kennedy 130), with a high-angle panoramic shot in *The Field* (Fig. 3, 04:41 min). The shot and the painting show hardly any differences when it comes to the landscape, except that Henry took a straight-on angle rather than a high angle, painting from the perspective of the road. In the film, a high-angle shot illustrates a similar landscape from the perspective of a hill. In the scene the Bull emphasises his position as the guardian of Irish traditional life and the embodiment of Irish cultural nationalism. By stating, "God made the world and seaweed made that field, boy", the Bull stresses the importance of the field and compares himself to God as a self-empowered figure (see Haynes 89). A following close-up reveals the Bull's admiration for his land and a cut to the high-angle panoramic shot of the landscape presents the precious green field that stands out in the surrounding less colourful grey and brown of the hills and bog land. The field distinguishes itself from the rather wild and uncultivated landscape and is proof of human existence. Moreover, the panoramic shot also shows a road winding through the landscape that vanishes in the hills in the back. Bringing the field and the road in an Irish context, the field would symbolise home and the road would signify emigration and rootless wandering. It distinguishes the settled community and the outside world. It represents English colonisation and the dislocation of the Irish people of their land due to colonial dispossession and emigration and, therefore, contrasts a coming and going which is reinforced by the Bull blowing the seeds from dandelion at the beginning of the film (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 6-7). For the Bull, leaving the land would be unacceptable because without the Irish peasants of the West Irish traditional culture would be gone as well as the distinct Irish landscape and so he does everything to teach Tadgh his nationalist values. This again reflects the attempts of Irish cultural nationalism to use Paul Henry's landscape paintings as icons for Irishness which the Bull attempts to embody. In another scene, when the Bull, Tadgh and the Bird drive back home after being informed that an outsider might bid for the field, a similar panoramic shot reveals the mountains

and the road when the Bird, the Bull and Tadhg stop with their cart to look at the valley. A crane shot follows and presents their perspective of the field. Now a close shot of the Bull's face and a subsequent panoramic shot of the field are shown and combined with the Bull's speech to his son. "Our father's father's father's father dug that soil with their [sic!] bare hands, made those walls. Our souls is [sic!] buried down there. And your son's son's son's son's sons will take care of it, boy. Do you get my meaning?" Again the Bull stresses his notion of rootedness to the home and an ongoing tradition that are linked to the field. It is a tradition that favours continuity rather than change and, therefore, the father intends to pass on this sacred duty to his son (see McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture* 7).

Other scenes that are set in the surroundings of Carraigthomond and contain panoramic shots of the Connemara landscape are mostly utilised to emphasise traditions and peasant chores such as work in the bog or seaweed cutting. These images have been part of several other Irish films such as *Man of Aran* (1934), *December Bride* (1991), *The Secret of Roan Inish* (1994), or even in *Nothing Personal* (2009). In *The Field*, the scene of Tadhg, the Bird and the Bull working and resting in the bog is employed to highlight the difference between the country people, who live and work with nature, and the rich American, who interrupts this harmony by driving through the landscape with his car.

As Paul Henry captured the landscape and traditional life of the West of Ireland, images of turf (cutting) also appear in his paintings as in *An Irish Bog* (1919-1920) or *The Bog at Evening* (1922-1923) (see S.B. Kennedy 93, 101). In particular the scene, when the Bull and Tadhg help to load the boats with turf, and the boatmen make their way to the sea, mirrors one of Paul Henry's most famous paintings, *Launching the Curragh* (1910-1911) (see S.B. Kennedy 50). However, in the scene of the film, landscape is not only shown to illustrate the Bull's traditional way of life but carries additional meaning. When the Bull and Tadhg climb the cliffs and leave the boatmen, they hear them praying for the deceased Séimí. A long shot shows Tadhg and the Bull standing on top of a cliff which might already indicate Tadhg's destiny, namely his death by falling from the cliffs. Here Sheridan connects landscape with the Bull's dead son Séimí and the Bull's following "murder" of his second son, Tadhg. By doing so, Sheridan

utilises another form of romanticism which links male violence to the forces of nature (see Gibbons 233). Thus, in *The Field* landscape is used in various ways. First, an establishing shot introduces the Connemara landscape to the audience, second, other scenes and shots emphasise the Bull's obsession with his field and his ties to Irish cultural nationalism, thirdly they reinforce the character's life with and in the landscape and the traditional routines at the time and fourthly, Sheridan uses nature also as symbols of male violence which also refers to the destructive power of extreme nationalism.

5.4. Landscape and Romanticism in *The Secret of Roan Inish*

The Secret of Roan Inish, directed by John Sayles, is situated in Ireland after the Second World War and contains several elements that can be seen as soft primitivism, such as innocence, happiness (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 43) and harmony with nature. The director filmed *The Secret of Roan Inish* in Donegal during the summer, built a cottage near a beach and recruited Oscar-winning cinematographer Haskell Wexler to capture the Western countryside (see Flynn 187). The film is based on Rosalie K. Fry's book *Child of the Western Isles*, which is originally set in Scotland, but which Sayles relocated to the north-west coast of Ireland (see Whyte 67). "[I]n using Irish culture and storytelling in order to propose a need for myth in contemporary society, Sayles has been criticized by Irish viewers and academics" (Whyte 69-70). In particular the trailer suggests a combination of childhood and Ireland with a feeling of nostalgia and depicts Ireland as a rural utopia to attract a universal international film market. The image of a romantic rural Irish landscape appears already in other motion pictures such as Sidney Olcott's Kalem company films or *The Quiet Man*. Moreover, the representation of Ireland as a place of myth, magic and romantic landscape has been an important element of children's films that take place in Ireland such as *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* (1959), *The Johnstown Monster* (1971) or *Flight of the Doves* (1971). The trailer of *The Secret of Roan Inish* illustrates the "tourist gaze" perspective of Ireland (see Whyte 70). Scholars such as Martin McLoone contrast *The Secret of Roan Inish* with contemporary Irish motion pictures made by Irish filmmakers that have tried to deconstruct the romanticism of the Irish landscape, such as *The Butcher Boy*

(1997), *Hush-a-Bye Baby* (1990) or *December Bride* (1991), and argue that there are still many films, in particular Hollywood productions that do not share this reconsideration of romantic Irish images, such as *Far and Away* (1992), *Into the West* (1992), or *The Secret of Roan Inish* (1995). McLoone continues, John Sayle repeats various well-known images and stereotypes of Ireland. Thus, the main characters eventually go west to return to the past of a “magical” world of traditions (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 207-210).

The film thus works to restore a primitive balance to the lives of the displaced islanders of Roan Inish, establishing a simplistic view of Irish modernity that would do credit to the wilder imaginings of nineteenth century cultural nationalism. [...] As metaphors for the nation these two films [*The Secret of Roan Inish* and *Into the West*] offer exceptionally traditional remedies to an old problem and mobilise the ancient myths of Ireland for an essentially regressive ideology. (McLoone, *Irish Film* 210)

Matthew Fee even goes so far as to claim that *The Secret of Roan Inish* represents an Ireland that is fantastic, where the child Fiona contributes to a

representational tradition promoted by discourses of both British colonialism and the Literary Revival of Irish cultural nationalism, in which children and childhood memories articulate certain dimensions of Irishness, whether that involves the need to be ‘parented’ by a colonial power, or the contrast of Irish innocence with English corruption. (Fee 125)

Hence according to Irish critics such as McLoone or Matthew Fee, the film supports the idea that returning to and restoring the past of the Irish countryside is a solution to the flaws of the Irish cities (see Fee 125-126). These rather negative views of the film are connected to the interest in deconstructing Irishness which was popular in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger era in the mid-1990s. While the Irish economy and tourism at the time encouraged international production companies to settle down in Ireland, several Irish filmmakers and intellectuals focused on a rather critical view of modern Ireland and attempted to deconstruct stereotypical images of traditional Irishness. Films that reflected a romantic Irish past were looked at critically. However, Sayles attempts to portray the idea of loss and return in Ireland rather than representing “real” Ireland (see Whyte 71). The film offers “a complex multi-layered representation of myth and folklore that intertwines aspects of a cultural

and personal past. [...] Sayles interweaves concepts of both Ireland and childhood as sites of origin in a contemporary global culture" (Whyte 67).

At the beginning of the film, the girl Fiona stands on board a ship which can be compared to other films that depict Irish emigrants usually leaving Ireland such as in *Titanic* (1997) or *Far and Away* (1992). However, in contrast to these films, in *The Secret of Roan Inish* Fiona returns to Donegal that she departed from a few years before. In this scene she experiences a flashback of her early life on Roan Inish and her mother's funeral. A pan captures gravestones on the island which refer to the death and the vanishing of life on Roan Inish (see Whyte 71-72). "It symbolizes not only the mortal death of the individual, but also the end of a culture and way of life on the island which, as is revealed later in the film, is caused by emigration and mass evacuation" (Whyte 72). It indirectly suggests Ireland's history of emigration and addresses the subsequent generations of the Irish diaspora. Sayles refers to the Irish-Americans and their culture of leaving something behind such as their national independence, their language or their family. He incorporates this sense of loss in the loss of Roan Inish (see Whyte 69-72). Another flashback on the ship shows Fiona's troubled father who laments the death of his wife and decides to send his child Fiona to her grandparents in the West of Ireland. The differences between the East (the city) and the Irish West are highlighted by the perspective of the child because the camera is set at the eye-level of the girl in the pub where she searches for her father. The barmaid even suggests that it would be good to send Fiona back to the countryside in the West. Here the girl serves as a symbol for a lost past (see Flynn, and Brereton 328). She is returning to this past because when she approaches Donegal, a seagull and a seal which reappear later in the film, already observe Fiona and welcome her home. This return home is even more emphasised by her relative Tadhg, who is "one of the dark ones" and tells her the story about the selkie side in their family. He even adds, "Welcome back, Fiona Coneely. We've been waiting."

When Fiona arrives at her grandparents' cottage, establishing shots introduce the Donegal landscape to the audience. Fiona is accompanied by non-diegetic traditional Irish music, a feature that reappears always when Fiona explores the landscape and countryside on her own. It reinforces her connection with the former inhabitants of Roan Inish, who lived in harmony with

nature and in particular with the sea. However, at the beginning of the film, there is an imbalance between nature and culture as Fiona's grandparents live in a cottage far away from their home Roan Inish. Their love of a rural life is stressed by their criticising the cities and towns and stressing the benefits of the country life. However, the myth of the Irish west as an idyll is challenged when Tess notes that "the east is our future and the west is our past" (see Whyte 73). Nevertheless, the characters long to go back to Roan Inish as Fiona's grandfather tells her about the evacuation. He mentions that when they decided to leave Roan Inish, nature reacted to this "betrayal". They were attacked by seagulls and Fiona's brother Jamie was kidnapped by the tide and seals. Thus, the islanders were convinced that nature had punished them because they had left their home, Roan Inish (see Flynn, and Brereton 328). While the film tackles the romantic images of the Irish countryside of the West and addresses a global or primarily Irish-American audience, it could also be viewed from a national perspective, namely as the "myth of the west" (see Whyte 72). "Fiona's move from the urban to the rural can initially be read in terms of the Gaelic nationalist romantic traditions that idealized the west and rural Ireland in opposition to the industrialized urban centres" (Whyte 72). This is also mentioned by Matthew Fee; however, Fiona's grandparents are convinced that it is highly unrealistic to return to Roan Inish (the West) since they are too old to survive on the island on their own. Simultaneously, they live a hard life on the Irish mainland and are threatened to be expelled from their house in order to make room for tourists. In other words, to reduce the film to the binary system of modern-urban versus traditional-rural would disregard the complexity of the film. The Cooneelys desire something in between traditional (meaning cultural nationalist) and modern Ireland which is strongly connected to the Celtic folklore of selkie myths, which eventually becomes reality. The Cooneelys favour an Ireland that is older than the traditions reintroduced by cultural nationalism such as paganism (see Whyte 73-74). This is emphasised by the stories about the Cooneelys' ancestors and how they had lived in harmony with nature and the sea for generations.

The main character Fiona, who is a child and researches the family history, symbolises the ideas of origins and of the past. By listening to stories, Fiona is connected to her ancestors and creates a combination of personal and

cultural identity. After the encounter with her brother, Fiona tries to convince her grandparents of Jamie's reappearance and is only able to find a believer in the teenager Eamon, who is in between childhood and adulthood. Thus, there is a generation gap, because the grandparents, Hugh and Tess, belong to a generation that lived with myth everyday but are convinced that it is impossible to return to that way of life. However, they relearn due to their grandchildren's persistence and become aware of the importance to be close to nature again. In the film, children and child-like characters are often connected to nature, especially to the sea, landscape and fauna such as Tadhg's skill to catch fish with his bare hands or Jamie, who was adopted by seals. Also the family history is connected to nature as some family members are descendents of a selkie (a hybrid creature that is both human and animal) and are called "the dark ones". This reinforces the idea that humans and nature should work together, as Tadhg mentions, "Man and beast lived side by side sharing the wealth of the sea". Here again Sayles emphasises the importance to return to a life that is marked by living in harmony with nature (see Whyte 74-76).

One of the main ideas of the film is that children are wiser than adults (see Byrne 182). Fiona comprehends more than her grandparents and has a different perspective on life. "Childhood, like Ireland, is not a realistic representation but an imagined idea that is used to explore links with a mythic past. The association of childhood with the other worlds of myth and folklore is a common trait in many stories" (Whyte 76). It represents the idea that children have an unspoiled and spontaneous reaction to the world as the children in *The Secret of Roan Inish* connect fantasy to the real world. Thus, Fiona helps her grandparents to regain access to the world of myths because they have lost this "sixth sense" (see Whyte 76-77). This sixth sense of children has also appeared in other films such as *Just Like Heaven* (2005) or *Hook* (1991), where adults relearn their belief in magic and phantasy. Furthermore, Fiona's belief is rewarded by nature, especially by the seagull and Jacks, the seal, which kidnap her boat and bring her to Roan Inish. Only by trusting nature, does Fiona get her chance to find her brother Jamie. This scene in particular amplifies a mythical atmosphere of the seascape that is surrounded by fog which slowly disappears when she arrives on Roan Inish. As she walks on the island to search for Jamie, she lies down in a meadow full of bluebells, which reflect the

light blue of her dress. She seems to be at one with nature but when she encounters Jamie he still runs away from her. Desperate she calls out to the sea," If we came back, would you give him to us? If we came back here to Roan Inish? Is that what you want?"

Fiona knows what she has to do next. By repairing the cottage, the girl and Eamon create a new beginning on the island. Superstition turns into reality in the film and only via Fiona can the grandparents become believers in their folkloric traditions. At the end of the film, Jamie's return to the family might function as a notion of hope (see Whyte 77). The harmony between nature and humans is restored when they move back to the island. (see Flynn, and Brereton 329). The utilization of myths and stories in the film addresses a universal audience to present to them alternatives in the world such as the notion that myths are the world's dreams that tackle humans' troubles. The director enables the audience to find a place in the modern world through myth and provides an alternative to capitalism namely self-sufficiency. However, the option to flee modern society might be a dead end as the film finishes with the family that lives on Roan Inish by themselves where they are not able to continue their family line. Thus, the alternative life on the island is only a moment of fantasy which cannot be continued (see Whyte 77-78). "The film suggests that the answers to modern-day ills do not lie in the myths of the Irish west, but somewhere beyond the west coast, a liminal space where myths are part of the reality of living" (Whyte 74). As *The Secret of Roan Inish* was released in the same year (1994) as the Celtic Tiger was declared, the film reflects the changes in Irish culture at that time when Ireland was torn between traditions of a Catholic country and modernising globalisation.

Joseph Campbell claims that myth can give balance to the human psyche and according to Eugene Halton the weakening of myth encourages the increase of capitalism and individualism and, therefore, the loss of traditions. Thus, myth can provide humans with an identity which would help them to cope within the modern world (see Whyte 74). This longing for myth is also represented in a more recent film, namely in *Ondine* (2009) by Neil Jordan. The motion picture is set in the fishing town of Castletownbere in County Cork, in the Irish West. The main character of Syracuse, a recovering alcoholic called "Circus, the Clown", catches a woman, Ondine, from the sea. Syracuse and in

particular his intelligent but sick child Annie, start to think that Ondine is a selkie because they seek a cure for their miserable lives. Annie even collects evidence that proves that Ondine is a selkie which is reinforced by the coincidence that she seems to bring them luck by singing and to increase Syracuse's fish and lobster catch. Thus, Annie hopes that Ondine can heal her sickness as well (see Maio 219-220) and as in *The Secret of Roan Inish*, she is a child that convinces an adult that there might be a world of magic. However, in contrast to *The Secret of Roan Inish*, Neil Jordan presents Ondine as a woman that is far from being a fairy-tale creature, namely a Romanian drug smuggler. Although their hopes are destroyed, Syracuse decides to rescue and marry her and, therefore, the very ending of *Ondine* becomes as fairy-tale-like as the ending of *The Secret of Roan Inish*. Furthermore, the two films also share another characteristic namely the mythic representation of the Irish Western landscape as a possibility to escape civilisation, hence Ondine flees from the police by diving into the sea and Syracuse views the sea as a possible place to be free himself from the problems and prejudices he faces in his town. Also Annie hopes to find a refuge in a creature from the sea, a selkie. Urszula Antoniak's *Nothing Personal* (2009) also addresses the Irish landscape as a form of escapism. As in *Ondine*, in *Nothing Personal* a female protagonist flees from her past and hopes to find a new home in Ireland.

The viewer personifies the land which means that the landscape becomes a character in the story. While looking at the landscape pleases the spectator, the landscape's mysterious atmosphere influences the narrative as well (see Brereton 5). *Ondine* is a film that uses romantic Irish images and simultaneously deconstructs them and as a result, Neil Jordan combines the two strands (hard and soft primitivism) of Irish filmmaking mentioned before.

5.5. Conclusion

The Field and *The Secret of Roan Inish* belong to two different strands of films because their representation of romanticism and landscape distinguish each other in various features. *The Field* is an indigenous Irish film that deconstructs common romantic images of the Irish countryside and mirrors a depiction of rural Ireland that can be mostly described as hard primitivism. Moreover, I have

compared several scenes of *The Field* with paintings by Paul Henry because his works were used by cultural nationalists to function as icons for Irishness. In *The Field*, this exploitation of the landscape as a nationalist image is highly criticised by Sheridan because he uncovers the Bull's false idealised idea of the Irish Western landscape by exposing his mania. Thus, Sheridan deconstructs romantic images of the Irish countryside and addresses the destructive dangers of nationalist ideology. In contrast to that, *The Secret of Roan Inish*, which was written and directed by the American John Sayles, views the Irish landscape from the perspective of soft primitivism. Here, the Irish West is "mythicised", romanticised and serves as a refuge from modernity. It promotes a life in harmony with nature which is achieved by returning to an ancient past. Although the film has been criticised for using an image that reflects partly nationalist romanticism and common outsider perspectives of Ireland, *The Secret of Roan Inish* is more complex than its trailer might suggest. It also addresses other themes such as loss, emigration, childhood and the search for one's roots. A more recent indigenous film, *Ondine*, by Neil Jordan, utilises traditional romantic images of rural Ireland but simultaneously deconstructs them. Although the beauty of the Irish landscape is combined with the mythic woman Ondine, the film also uncovers this myth, tricks the audience and destroys the magical fantasy by returning to reality. Neil Jordan's film merges the two typical strands of Irish films set in rural Ireland and their depiction of landscape. He criticises nostalgic representations of Ireland by pointing out that romantic delusions can negatively affect the understanding of reality, but simultaneously cherishes the beauty of the Irish land- and seascape.

6. Gender Roles in Rural Ireland of the 1930s in Jim Sheridan's *The Field* and Pat O'Connor's *Dancing at Lughnasa*

6.1. Introduction

In the following chapter the focus is on how gender roles were viewed in Ireland in the 1930s and how the main characters in Jim Sheridan's *The Field* and Pat O'Connor's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (an adaptation of Brian Friel's play of the same title) perform gender and live up to society's expectations. In the Irish constitution of 1937 Éamon de Valera considered the family as part of his "traditional" model of Irish life, where the man was the main provider and the woman the family member who stayed at home and reared the children (see McCormack 615). In Article 41.1 of the Constitution of 1937 "family" is defined as:

1. 1 The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law. (*CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND – BUNREACT NA hÉIREANN*)

As regards farm-life in the early twentieth century in particular the chores of men and women were divided (see Brody 20). Brody describes the typical daily routine as follows:

the woman got up first in the morning to lay the fire and prepare the first cup of tea of the day. She then had to see the children, feed them and make them ready for school. After that came milking. Meanwhile the husband had taken his breakfast and set out for the fields. He returned during the day for his dinner, which was prepared and served him by his wife: they did not sit at table together. The same applied to the tea in the evening. After the men had eaten, the wife fed the children and completed jobs about the house and yard. Typically, the husband would be out visiting neighbours or have some neighbours sitting with him at his own fireside. Husbands went to bed before their wives, who last thing each night would damp out the fire and prepare the kitchen for the morning. (Brody 112)

A similar life-style could be found in the local shops where the whole family worked (see Arensberg 151).

While the farming family in *The Field* leads a traditional farm life at least on the surface, the Mundy sisters in *Dancing at Lughnasa* are all single women

who share a household together and are connected to men who do not lead a traditional Irish life either.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the conventional gender roles of rural Ireland in the 1930s and contrast them with the main characters in both films. This again will contribute another aspect of the depiction of the Irish countryside in film.

6.2. The Role of Women in the 1930s

In the Ireland of the 1930s, de Valera's Fianna Fáil government decided to turn towards economic self-sufficiency, a society that was dominated by inward-looking nationalism, the Catholic Church and censorship. After Irish independence, oppression against women rose, and this was often promoted by the state. In 1923 the "marriage bar" was established which affected married women because from then on they were only allowed to work in certified occupations (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 11-12). The main aim of the marriage bar was to provide more jobs for unmarried men and women because it was assumed that the husband would be the breadwinner anyway. This increased the hostility against working women who were married. The main problem with de Valera's policies concerning women in Ireland was that he assumed that all women led the same "domestic" life; however, their lives were diverse, which is often disregarded by historical commentary as well. In the years between 1932 and 1948 women's rights were increasingly reduced (see Clear 107, 114). It was required that a woman would dedicate her time to domestic food production (in the case of farm wives) and household chores. It was demanded that she would be content to be a mother and housewife, which was even reinforced by the Church and the constitution of 1937 in Article 41. 2 (see Redlich 86-87):

2.1. In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2. The State shall therefore endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home. (CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND – BUNREACT NA hÉIREANN)

This resulted in many women denying themselves promotion or attractive professions because they believed they would take away men's jobs (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 10-13).

The Catholic Church's control over the role of women in Irish society was connected to the cult of Virgin Mary (see Kilfeather 105). Virtues such as modesty, chastity and self-denial were the strict expectations placed on Irish women. Irish Catholicism stressed morality by introducing shame and guilt to control the sexuality of the Irish, especially of women (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 22-23). Also modernity and its products, such as jazz or motor car, were viewed by the Church and state as endangering the morals of Irish people. These restrictions mainly affected women because they were viewed as sexually passive, dim and corruptible. Thus, bishops were nervous about young women who might mishandle motor cars (see McCormack 616). The Catholic Church also contributed to the Censorship of Publication Act of 1929 which only permitted traditional Irish dance and banned foreign music genres such as jazz and rock'n'roll because they were viewed as sinful. This control was amplified by the Public Dance Hall Act of 1935, which required the permission of public dances by District Justices (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 43-44). The Catholic Church had also a strong influence on other laws such as the Criminal Law Act of 1935 (the ban to import and sell any form of contraception), Article 41.3.2 of the Constitution of 1937, which outlawed divorce, and the Factories Act of 1955, which regulated the number of working hours for women. All these provisions had an impact on women's lives in Ireland which were controlled by a male-dominated parliament, the Church and the media (see Robinson 61-62). In order to achieve a better life many women emigrated (see McCormack 616). In the years between 1871 and 1971 the number of women who left the country was even higher than male emigration. In contrast to Ireland, where approximately as many men emigrated, the gender ratio of European emigrants was two thirds male to only one third female (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 15).

Moreover, in Ireland women who had illegitimate children were viewed as shameful. Many emigrated or were sent to homes such as Magdalene Laundries, which were ecclesiastic institutions managed by nuns (see Dean,

Dancing at Lughnasa 15). Women in these institutions were rejected by their families and their babies were taken away from them to be put up for adoption (see McCormack 616). Often disabled and abused women were sent to Magdalene's Laundries where they were treated like prisoners, were exposed to hard labour, hours of prayer and were denied their individuality. Many of them were even buried in close-by cemeteries without receiving a proper burial. Although this was made public in 1993, the last Magdalene Laundry was not closed until 1996. This dark side of Irish history was reflected in the film *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002) by Peter Mullan, which was shown for the first time at the Venice Film Festival in 2003. *The Magdalene Sisters* shocked its audience but facts reveal that the conditions were even worse than depicted in the film (see J. M. Smith). Although films have been made that portray feminist issues in Ireland, primarily by writer and director Pat Murphy (see Flynn, and Brereton 372), the typical Irish Catholic mother as a powerful figure in the domestic sphere still appears in many films (see McLoone, *Irish Film* 22). One example is Mrs Brown in Jim Sheridan's *My Left Foot*, where the character represents the "sainted" mother of Irish literature and modern-day folklore whose sons have a strong attachment (see Dolen 149). Mrs Brown is the matriarch, the one who holds the family together and, therefore, is the measure of the nation. She mirrors the Mother of Christ, who yet again is used as a popular theme in art as the ideal of Irish womanhood (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 24). "She is also Mother Ireland, the earth/mother to whom generations of emigrant sons will always return for nurture, if not in body at least in mind" (Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 24). Many Irish films combine the woman and the land in the depiction of the landscape. This establishes the image of "Ireland as woman and woman as Ireland" (see Villar-Argáiz 183-184). The representation of Mrs McCabe in Jim Sheridan's *The Field* is comparable to the before mentioned image and can be distinguished from Pat O'Connor's women in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, which portrays various female characters.

6.2.1. *The Field*: A Woman's Life on a Farm

The portrayal of women in Sheridan's *The Field* is very different from Keane's play because Keane depicts rather standard theatrical types of female

characters and stays with the patriarchal hierarchy but Sheridan complicates their social roles. The widow becomes a tortured and resentful woman, the traveller girl is provocative, and the Bull's wife shows a combination of goodness and strength. The way in which Sheridan depicts women in *The Field* can be seen as a combination of misogyny and acceptance (see Herr 44-45, 70). Although Sheridan creates new characters and adds meaning to them, the role of women is fairly reduced in the film. Sheridan, for instance, removes the publican's wife Maimie, who addresses various injustices against women in the 1960s, such as being beaten in her home by her husband. Sheridan focuses more on the character of the Bull and so do most scholarly texts about the motion picture. Even though there are other female characters in minor roles such as the widow or the traveller woman I would like to focus on the Bull McCabe's wife, Maggie. She represents a farm woman of the 1930s and it would be interesting to compare and contrast the depiction of her character with traditional farm life at the time.⁹

Life for a girl on a farm was very different from boys, because she was raised by her mother where she stayed until she was married. Her father would pay a dowry to her groom, and after marriage the girls usually lived at their husbands' family home. Women were not entitled to own property. They did not participate in social centres of the community such as pubs (see Brody 110). The main task of the young wife was to produce children, however, if there were no signs of her expecting a child, the parents-in-law would pressure her. It would be a shame for her but also for her husband if they failed to continue the family line and pass on the land to a son. A woman from Inagh, County Clare, explained to Arensberg (see Arensberg 89-90), "No matter how much money you have [...] no matter how good-looking you are, if you don't have children you are no good" (qtd. in Arensberg 90). If the wife was not able to fulfil her role as a "child bearer", it could even lead to a so-called "country divorce" where an "infertile" young wife was "returned" to her parents. The husband would not be able to marry again but would share his land with his brother, who would marry and give him his dowry. This ensured that the land would not get out of the hands of the family (see Arensberg 91).

⁹ More about the other female characters can be found in 4.2..

Apart from the farm wives' duties in the household and the rearing of children, they also took part in activities of agricultural production such as milking, feeding piglets or poultry production. Their part in agriculture gave them a slight feeling of independence because they were in charge of the process of production (see Duggan 54-57). However, their influence on the community was reduced to the home, because "women had at least to appear to be without authority just as they were in practice without possessions" (Brody 111). Their wisdom was only appreciated when they had grown old. Nevertheless, they played an important role in the resistance of landlords and rent-collectors (see Brody 110-111). In *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* Ken Loach illustrates that women played an important role during the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War.

The Bull's wife Maggie McCabe fulfils the role of the typical farm woman at the time because in every scene she appears, she works in or around the house but she does not seem to socialise with anybody from the village. She lives a secluded life in silence because for eighteen years now, after Séimí's death, she has refused to speak to the Bull. This decision has not only affected her husband but also her son Tadhg, who suffers from the disturbed relationship between his parents. In the scene after the Bull has paid the widow's rent, the McCabes sit together and eat dinner. Nobody speaks and quietly they shovel their food into their mouths. A certain tension and silence is in the air which is only interrupted by Maggie looking at a photo on the wall that shows her together with her sons Séimí and Tadhg as children. The photo and Séimí's absence at the dinner table is the only indication for the family's estranged relationship (which later in the film becomes a key element). Maggie seems to remove herself mentally from the current situation by thinking of a different life when her family was still intact but is taken back as she is suspiciously observed by the Bull who senses her pain but fails and avoids addressing the issues. Tadhg also feels the tension and leaves quietly to release the pressure he experiences at home on the widow he harasses. The Bull and Maggie stay and sit together in silence sharing their pain until the Bull without a word leaves the kitchen table as well. It is the Bull's refusal to speak about Séimí and Maggie's decision not to talk anymore that places strain on the family and leads to its destruction, worsening the Bull's anxiety which gradually

results in madness. Moreover, probably by living a life of silence the Bull's wife also resists his power and his patriarchal violence (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 56), which he demonstrates in the village. Simultaneously, when she finally speaks to the Bull because he is about to lose his mind, she explains to him that Séimí's death was not his fault. Thus, she does not seem to blame and punish her husband for Séimí's death but rather gives up on the world. In the scene that shows her speaking again it is suggested that it was the Bull's will that Séimí's name was not mentioned in the house and, therefore, her silence and refusal to converse with her husband is her protest against him. However, it is not primarily patriarchy that forces her decision but her grieving for Séimí's suicide because in contrast to Keane's Bull McCabe, Sheridan creates a tenant farmer who would not harm women. Though the Bull does not physically oppress women, in his role as a patriarch, he still demonstrates psychological oppression and articulates views of a sexist society. Nevertheless, Maggie McCabe's reasons to refuse to speak could also result from the reaction of the priest and the community eighteen years before which is indicated in the conversation with Father Dorian, who accuses her of not leaving the Bull. She reacts rather aggressively and argues that the Church "refused to let him [Séimí] lie in consecrated ground with his grand-father". It seems as if she has decided to abandon society and the Church as she is never seen at church services either. At the same time, before her decision to speak again, she apparently talks to people apart from her family but close to her home, as she greets the local matchmaker who approaches the house to visit the Bull. Thus, her real motives seem rather unclear and are hardly explained in the film.

Although the Bull is the patriarch in the family, her silence provides her a source of power and weakness at the same time. For years the refusal to speak has coincided with the refusal to contribute to the Bull's and her son's activities in the community. She appears rather passive and seems to disregard certain developments for a long time such as her husband's obsession with land and his treatment of Tadgh. By doing so she passively contributes to the evolving tragedy of her second son because she only gets involved in the Bull's actions after the murder of the American (which symbolises a second "murder" of Séimí). Now that the Bull is completely immersed by his sorrow she is strong enough to confront him about Séimí's suicide, which has been denied for years

and has “crippled” Tadgh. Maggie attempts to influence the Bull in order to help her son. Tadgh, who eavesdrops on the conversation, finally becomes aware of the reason for his parents’ behaviour decides to change his life. In other words, Maggie McCabe’s decision eases the tension and finally helps her son to free himself from his father’s grip. However, Maggie’s efforts to change the Bull come too late and she is unable to prevent the following tragedy. In the last scene she witnesses her second son’s “murder” which only leaves her to pray together with the traveller woman. The two women witness the downfall of the traditional patriarchal system (see Herr 74) by watching the Bull’s pathetic behaviour. The story makes “an effort to honour the survival of the female characters, and to sever the connection between shame and femaleness which the Bull has projected onto the women of this world” (Herr 75). In the case of Maggie McCabe, the suffering woman eventually defeats male patriarchy. She could be viewed as a god-like figure that after years of oppression gets the chance to restore an old system of matriarchy.

6.2.2. *Dancing at Lughnasa*: The Mundy Sisters

Dancing at Lughnasa “is securely and tellingly rooted in the harsh realities of Irish life, especially for women, in the 1930s” (Dean, “Opening the Peasant Play” 144). The producer, Noel Pearson describes the film’s interest for the viewer as, “nearly everyone [in Ireland] has a sister or aunt who lived like that. The provincialism of the story also makes it universal so I think it will appeal further afield than Ireland” (qtd. in Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 2).

Right after the opening sequence, each sister is introduced by Michael’s voice-over, who mentions some of the Mundys’ attributes. He describes his mother Christina as the baby of the family, Maggie as the one who smokes and “takes life lightly”, contrasts her to the strict and uptight teacher Kate, followed by the “deep” Agnes, who hardly ever speaks, and Rose, the slow and simple sister. Here Kate played by Meryl Streep already stands out as the head of the family who tries to impose the values of 1930s society on her sisters even if they are in their private sphere, at home. She acts as the strict school teacher who suffers from a longing to control every family member, which has given her

the nickname “the old gander” at school and at home. Kate attempts to silence her sisters in particular when they utter swear words and permanently tries to heighten the Mundys’ status in the village community by demanding modesty and the denial of enjoyment. She also prohibits them to go to the harvest dance and refuses to dance with her brother Jack by reminding him (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 42), “You are an ordained priest. You do not dance.” Although the family leads an unconventional life, the fact that all of the sisters are unmarried was quite common in 1936 because at that time 67 percent of women and 89 percent of men between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine were single (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 16). Nevertheless, their life-style, including the youngest sister’s illegitimate son and their cleric brother, who has “gone native”, challenges the rural Irish society of 1936 (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 42), and, therefore, Kate tries to reduce their position as outsiders in Ballybeg. Here even the way landscape is presented in the film reflects the isolated position of the Mundys in their society (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 30). This is especially indicated by the Mundys walking along a country road to the town centre of Ballybeg. The empty space of the road surrounded by bog showing no sign of any neighbours, emphasising that the Mundys are divided from Ballybeg.

In one scene she blames her younger sister Christina for having an illegitimate son and tries to protect her from Gerry, Michael’s father. Christina already feels shameful within her family because as mentioned before (in 6.2.), unmarried pregnant women were often sent to homes or had to emigrate. However, while in 1933/1934 the non-marital birth rate only reached 3.6 percent, in 2001 over 40 percent of Irish women had non-marital births. Here the director probably intended to connect the contemporary viewer with the Ireland of the 1930s (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 14-15).

Kate’s strictness evolves from her role as a teacher, a public position which requires her to be more socially integrated in Ballybeg. She is the breadwinner of the family and depends on the “good-will” of her supervisor, Father Carlin, who watches the family closely and in particular her returned brother Jack. Although she knows that Jack has “gone native” and believes more in the Ryanga religion than in Irish Catholicism, she denies it and often asks him to prepare a sermon for them or reminds him what a priest is supposed to do. She

is afraid to lose her position as a teacher, one of the few occupations a woman was allowed to take on. Mostly pupils got the opportunity to become educators in their teenage years when they were selected by their teacher. The status of teachers was usually lower than that of nurses mainly because they were locals in contrast to nurses. Female teachers were especially preferred in small schools in the Irish countryside of the West of Ireland. They were paid less than men and worked mostly up to the age of thirty or until they married and if they stayed single they would often be traded for a younger teacher as it would be cheaper for the parish (see Ó Hógartaigh 204-214). Since Kate is employed by the Catholic Church she is expected to lead a Catholic life and teach her pupils Catholic values as well. Father Carlin is convinced that after the return of her brother Jack, the Mundy family is less pious and an unsuitable representative for the Church. When Kate is confronted by Father Carlin at school she loses her authoritative position because he treats her with disrespect. He is certain he “know[s] everything about him [Jack]” although he only met him once (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 31). After years of working as a teacher, Kate loses her position for a reason that she has always feared, namely because of her family’s reputation in society. However, her efforts to uphold the moral ideas of the 1930s are neither appreciated by her sisters, nor by her pupils at school. In one scene, shortly after the arrival of Jack, the priest is introduced to his illegitimate nephew Michael as well as Rose’s wish to wed, Danny Bradley, who is already married. After their brother has left the room, Kate complains about her sisters’ immoral behaviour towards their brother, a Catholic priest. In order to defend herself Rose blurts out, “Gander! Gander, that’s what you’re called in your classroom. You’re not even a woman. You’re called the gander.” Kate is hurt and responds, “I am woman enough to know what Mother’s Day is. A woman’s Mother’s Day is everything”, and leaves the room. This probably refers to Kate’s secret wish to marry and have children on her own. In one scene she even blushes when she hears about the marriage of a former lover and almost flirts with the shopkeeper in Ballybeg. This means that Kate also longs for a man who loves her, similar to the desires of her sisters. However, Kate sees the danger of men and is eager to protect her family by demanding her sisters to repress their sexuality. Men jeopardise the Mundy sisters’ position in the village because they reveal the sisters’ sexuality (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 14).

Kate represses her sexuality and requires that from her sisters as well which leads to another conflict when Kate speaks negatively about Gerry and even calls him a “creature”. Agnes reacts promptly by referring to Kate as a “bitch” and leaves the room. Shortly after that Maggie, who is in the same room as Kate, starts to sing a pagan song which again causes Kate to reprimand her sister this scene also draws attention to Kate’s habit of criticising others. Although she is aware of her “addiction” to control everyone, it is difficult for her to change and see things more lightly. Here in particular, the film portrays a claustrophobic world that is marked by social and sexual restrictions (see Gillespie 130). In order to escape from the pressure of society the sisters look at an old photo album and remember their first loves. Even if they are hardly allowed to live their sexuality they can dream it and speak about their longing to go to the harvest dance and feel young again. Although it is socially not acceptable, Christina continues her relationship with Gerry, and Rose secretly meets with Bradley and goes with him to the harvest festival of Lughnasa, dedicated to the god Lugh, a festival of dance, songs and stories (see Smyth 91-92).

Since the Mundys are outsiders in their community, they are not supported by them. Thus, one of the only connections to the outside world is the radio which is called Lugh by Rose. (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 20). Lugh is one of the most significant Irish gods, Cuchullain’s father and the god of light, arts and crafts (see Ellis 153-154) and can be compared to the Greek god Dionysus (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 51). Radio, music and dance offer the women freedom although certain dances and types of music were viewed suspiciously by the church at the time. Dance offered a physical expression of individualism and sexuality which was different from language. In *Dancing at Lughnasa* words fail to communicate the characters’ needs. This is highlighted by Jack’s inability to remember certain English words, Rose’s repetitiveness or the gossip in Ballybeg (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 41). “Dance [...] is one of the central tropes of Irish expression. In the twentieth century, even Irish politicians employed images of dance to evoke their image of Ireland. De Valera’s ‘happy maidens’ conveyed an image of feminine beauty and chastity in an idyllic land” (Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 38).

For the Mundy sisters dance has another meaning that is presented in the final quarter of the film. When Gerry is repairing the radio Irish traditional music is played in the Mundy house. The rhythms of household chores, the familiar movements of the sisters, are interrupted by the outburst of a joyous dance, in which even Kate joins. The dancing is different from the controlled Irish step dancing which hinders the movement of their arms. When the music stops, they reduce their speed, smile and return to their household work. This moment can be compared to a valve that releases pressure, such as carnival or the harvest feast of Lughnasa which provides liberty and exuberance for a short moment in their lives. (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 47-48). As Michael describes, “dancing that had surrendered to movement... dancing as if language no longer existed because words were no longer necessary”.

In *Dancing at Lughnasa* “the pagan accommodates the human need for ritual, which can destabilize and destroy those who would deny that need” (Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 66). Kate slowly learns to become more “easy-going” and leaves the restrictive pressures she has experienced for most of her adult life. Irish Catholicism, personified by Father Carlin, represses pagan rituals and views Jack’s “going native” as a threat. Ritual has been exchanged for religious obligations imposed by Catholicism, which has lost its sense of social ceremony (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 69). The sisters’ dance provides them a moment of escape from the troublesome realities such as Kate losing her job, the establishment of a wool factory or Garry’s departure for Spain. It is the moment before their lives will change forever, mostly due to the putting in action of Agnes and Rose’s “big secret”, who want to immigrate to England to support their other sisters. However, they leave them with worries and sorrow, because Agnes and Rose end up leading a miserable life in poverty. This change in their lives is also indicated by the murder of Rose’s rooster by a fox. At the end of the film the female strength of the Mundy household is immensely weakened as it is narrated by Michael who describes that the “family had changed forever” and that he was only waiting to become a man to leave Ballybeg.

6.3. The Role of Men in the 1930s

Traditional Irish farm life was marked by a patriarchy where the head of the family, the farmer-father had the final word, “made all decisions about the land” and married off his children (see Brody 109). After the Famine it was common that he could only pass on the farm to one of his sons and only one daughter would be married off by match-making. The others had to emigrate (see Arensberg 79). The fathers were immensely dominant, and in some cases the oldest son would not even be allowed to own money or make deals at fairs. For instance writer Pat Mullen, who was born in Kilronan, Inishmore, Aran Islands, had a difficult relationship with his father Johnny Mullen, who had made himself the “king of the island” and is still known as an “island character” in many stories (see McGuire, and Quinn 762). Mullen also illustrates his father’s power in *Come Another Day* (see Brody 109):

My father, after a few kingly turns back and forth the floor, to show everybody that he was the lord and master in his own home, left, as was usual with him, the tinker to my mother’s care, and saying to them, ‘Let ye not feel strange...’ stepped out and glanced hastily up and down the road, looking for new worlds to conquer. I, a boy of ten, stood by the wall, admiring his greatness. (qtd. in Brody 109).

Before confirmation a son was raised by his mother and had hardly any contact with his father, however, when he was able to contribute fully to work on the farm he came under total control of his father. To become a man the son had to inherit and marry which happened hardly ever before the age of twenty-five (see Brody 110). When the son finally got married and the land was passed on to him, his parents retired from the status of the heads of the house but their power was only slowly handed over to their son. Arensberg even describes a young married man who would still ask his retired father for advice and what he should do during the day (see Arensberg 85-87). Older men of the family had the power in the community and made decisions of everyday life while the young had to keep silent. When the community had dealings with the world outside, the elder men acted as “politicians” (see Arensberg 122-123) and “represent[ed] the interests of the community, before priest, schoolmaster, merchant, cattleman and government official” (Arensberg 123). While the old men spoke, the young men had to listen, because the younger men had to wait

until they were needed by the older men (see Arensberg 122-123). Also in the Irish constitution of 1937, Éamon de Valera considered the family as part of his “traditional” model of Irish life where the man was the main provider (see McCormack 615).

6.3.1. *The Field: The Bull and Tadgh*

The Bull is an autocratic figure, who belongs to a generation that experienced the fight for independence; he knows about the centuries of dispossession and realises that the feudal structure has hardly changed (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 43). The Bull tries everything to keep what he views as true Irish traditional life. Sheridan depicts “the archetypal father-figure who, whether he was aware of it or not, tried to own the desire of the young while demanding their sacrifice” (Herr 63). Declan Kiberd addresses the connection between post-colonialism and the male psyche as it is represented by the Bull. He argues that in a patriarchal society where the man is impotent in the society outside (due to colonialism) he focuses on his own family and seeks mere control there. However, this autocratic father is often represented as the weakest male of all (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 55-56). “Patriarchal values exist in societies where men, lacking true authority, settle for mere power” (qtd. in Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 56). The Bull represents a culture that transforms men into brutes. As he lacks true authority he has to act the patriarch in order to maintain his position, but in the end he fails to achieve what he wants (see Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 56). The Bull realizes that he has lost everything he fought for and that his obsession with the land has led to the death of his son (see Kettemann 160).

In many of Sheridan’s films father-son relationships play an important role such as in *The Field*, *My Left Foot* or *In the Name of the Father*, where it becomes the central issue of the motion picture. Sheridan himself explains his interest in father-son relationships as follows:

Societies and religions are structured around father images. England became a kind of father figure whom the Irish have been trying to confront for a long time. I believe that England’s centuries of domination over Ireland have undermined the Irish father’s authority. The children of weak or compromised fathers are often forced to escape – if they can –

or face becoming the very thing they despise. (qtd. in Barton, *Jim Sheridan* 78)

In *The Field* this happens in the case of the Bull's youngest son Séimí, who takes his own life to escape his father's power in order to give Tadgh the opportunity to inherit the field. Tadgh tries to fulfil his role as the inheritor of his father's land but is unfit to do so. As the son of an authoritarian father, who acts as a patriarch of a country that is obsessed with land, Tadgh becomes unpredictable in his attempts to impress his father (see Haynes 88). He is responsible for the death of the donkey and the harassment of the widow which is probably triggered by the Bull's expectations regarding him. The Bull's obsession with the land turns Tadgh into a son who tries everything to gain his father's admiration. Both, the donkey, which trespasses the Bull's field, and the widow, who owns the Bull's land, pose a threat to his father and the field, which the Bull adores like a child. Tadgh is aware of the Bull's "relationship" with the field and eliminates any possible dangers to the field. Another threat appears, when the American arrives in Carraighthomond to "steal" his father's field and his father forces Tadgh to compete with the intruder in a fist fight which Tadgh loses. Although Tadgh tries to impress his father during the fight with the American, he loses and feels the disappointment of the patriarch (see Herr 63-64). Tadgh learns little from his father about being a man unless he speaks about women. For instance, he mentions never to hit a woman or how to find a good wife. The Bull only teaches his son how to work on the field and how to harass people in the pub and, therefore, Tadgh neither respects himself nor admits defeat; he only knows self-pity (see Martin Jr. 25). Also, the Bull's and his mother's refusal to talk about his brother's death and the continuous silence in the house does not contribute to Tadgh's development as a man. The Bull is aware of his son's mental issues and in one scene asks for the Birds' advice, "What's wrong with him, Bird? [...] The land, he has no appreciation of the land. [...] Do you think there is a bad strain in him?" Though he seems concerned initially, he continues as before and forces his son to fight against the American instead of reflecting on his own behaviour. It is only his wife who addresses the Bull's behaviour and main problem, which is the Bull's guilt over Séimí's death. Tadgh, who overhears this conversation, becomes aware of the family secret

and he, who is confronted with a weak father who has oppressed him for years, decides to escape because he does not want to die like his brother. Tadgh seeks a father figure different from the Bull; however, he is restricted because there is no alternative male role model in his family and in his community. Tadgh wants to become a man and live his own life but he is killed in the end by his father's cattle (see Moser 89-90). "Indeed, 'manhood' here is identified with futility and impotence, as we last see the Bull furiously striving to beat back the encroaching tide. [...] In the world of *The Field*, the past consumes the future, the sins of the father are visited on the son and successive generations *ad infinitum*" (Moser 90).

6.3.2. *Dancing at Lughnasa*: Men on the Mundy Property

The men in *Dancing at Lughnasa* lead a life that is different from de Valera's idea of the traditional Irish family. In the film there are three important men in the lives of the Mundy sisters, namely their brother Jack, Michael and (for Christina) Gerry. Although Michael is a boy at the time the film is set, he narrates the family story as an adult in the form of a voice-over and introducing and concluding the film. He also introduces his uncle Jack, a priest, who is loved by his sisters and has been supported by them in every possible way. Michael and Jack are a "blessing to the family", but they also threaten the sisters' position in society because Michael is born out of wedlock and, therefore, a reason for gossip in the village, and Jack has "gone native", which triggers Kate's dismissal by the parish priest (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 14). This is highlighted in the scene at the bus station when Kate speaks to the local chemist, who hints that Father Jack functions as a figure to be proud (not knowing yet that he has "gone native") for the family but Michael as shame. Also, Father Carlin joins the Mundys while they are waiting for Jack but avoids speaking to them. He seems to be more interested in Jack and observes that he might have "gone native", which is indicated by the contents of Jack's suitcase (such as a mask and a hat from Ryanga), which fall on the ground and are exposed to the villagers (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 30-31). Jack appears confused not knowing where he is and gasps, "Mother is dead. She's not here." In particular Kate's hope in Jack to improve the position of the family in their

community fails as he prefers Ryanga culture to the Irish. He refuses to fulfil his moral role as a Catholic priest as he wants to dance, postpones his church mass and is not shocked by Christina having an illegitimate child. Jack even calls Michael a “love child” and hopes that the other sisters would have love children too. He emphasises this by speaking of the Ryanga women (see Dean, *Dancing at Lughnasa* 14-15), “In Ryanga women are eager to have love-children. The more love-children you have the more fortunate the household is thought to be.” Kate reacts by claiming that the Pope would not approve of this attitude, and Jack responds, “Yes he would, but he has never lived in Africa.” Jack feels alienated to his former home, culture and religion, remarks that he has “come home to die” and simultaneously longs to go back to Africa.

Gerry, a Welshman, also refuses to live the life that is expected in Irish society of the 1930s and avoids acting as the breadwinner. Although he has a child, he has not asked Christina to marry him and still enjoys the freedom as a bachelor who travels the world. Moreover, he is a dance teacher at a time when jazz music is treated as a threat to the Catholic Church and decides to fight against Franco, who is supported by the Church. All these aspects disturb Kate extremely because she remembers Gerry’s previous disappearance and Christina’s suffering. Also his lack of responsibility annoys her because he has never financially supported his son Michael. In any other circumstances, without the support of her sisters, Christina would have been confronted with a Magdalene’s laundry or emigration. Gerry is a dreamer who avoids responsibility and mostly decides to fight against Franco to get away to Spain but justifies it by referring to it as a “good cause”. He neglects his own family and tries to win Michael’s affection by promising him a bike which he never buys him. Once he even thinks about marrying Christina and asks Jack for advice, who responds that it is “better to leave her single than leave her married”. Here Jack addresses Gerry’s unreliability and explains that it would be preferable for Christina to leave her single in order that she might have the opportunity to find a “decent” man who would support her at a time when illegitimate children and their mothers were not socially accepted.

6.4. Conclusion

The way gender roles are performed in *The Field* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* differ in various aspects. In *The Field* the Bull McCabe exploits the patriarchal position in his community and at home by oppressing the villagers, his son and his wife by imposing his ideas of traditional Irish life on them. These ideas share several elements with Irish nationalism at that time such as the hierarchy of the Irish family or the Bull's attitude towards land. Although the Bull appears powerful, he is a weak character who is a victim of cultural oppression and the displacement of his identity as he realises that his obsession with the field is not shared by his sons and eventually not even by himself. The characters who are most affected by his obsession are his wife and his sons. This is most evident in Séimí's suicide, which haunts the Bull throughout though he denies it. This denial has negative effects on his second son Tadgh and Maggie McCabe, who decides to refuse to speak. She lives a life reduced to the farm outside the community and according to the expectations of her time. However, beneath the surface of leading the "perfect" traditional Irish life a trauma is buried which is awakened by the intruding American who reminds the Bull of Séimí and reawakens the past.

The life-style in *Dancing at Lughnasa* is completely different from de Valera's idea of a traditional Irish life because five sisters share a household together and one of them has an illegitimate son, whose father shows hardly any sense of responsibility. The sisters have learned to live together without being dependent on a man and attempt to enjoy their life. One sister, Kate, however, tries everything to bring the family closer to society's expectations by demanding modesty and the denial of enjoyment. This is threatened by two men the Mundy sisters adore, namely Christina's illegitimate son Michael and their brother Jack, a priest who returns from Africa and who raises Kate's hopes to that the Mundys may become included in town life of Ballybeg. These hopes are destroyed when Jack demonstrates that he feels alienated from Catholicism and Irish culture and prefers the African Ryanga traditions. Kate has to accept that she will lose her job and her position as the breadwinner of the family, which helps her to become more tolerant towards her loved ones. She gets the chance to learn to enjoy life more, or at least for some minutes when the sisters

experience an outburst of dancing together. However, this moment quickly fades away when Rose and Agnes leave the family to emigrate.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis, *The Depiction of the Irish Countryside in Irish Film*, I have addressed several aspects of Irish cinema regarding the representation of rural Ireland. The five main chapters dealt with the themes of tradition and modernity, the land question, community, landscape and gender. The aim was to contribute to a detailed analysis of rural Ireland and its depiction by various directors from Ireland, Britain and the United States.

As Chapter 2 demonstrates, in both films, *The Field* and *Korea* different layers of tradition and modernity are interwoven such as the change from tradition to modernity in rural Ireland that affects the lifestyle of fathers who cling to a nostalgic past which again influences the next generation, namely their sons. The impact of the past on the following generations is also an important element in Chapter 3 because *The Field* and *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* tackle aspects of Irish history such as the landlord-tenant question, the Famine, the Irish War of Independence or the Irish Civil War. All these historical moments are still relevant today, and therefore, have an impact on the before mentioned films as well. They can be linked to Ireland's contemporary landowners, the proceeding development of the Celtic Tiger when *The Field* was made or the treatment of post-colonialism in the 2000s. Again the land question also plays an important role in Chapter 4 where the focus is on the sociological aspects of close-knit village communities in the 1930s, in *The Field* and the 1990s, in *Waking Ned Devine*. Here an interesting aspect is the reaction of the community towards outsiders that threaten to change traditional Irish rural life. Furthermore, it is also undertaken how certain characters contribute to plot points in the films and how they both repeat yet challenge tropes of Irish stereotypes. Fading (to use the language of film) from the rural population to their environment that surrounds them, landscape and romanticism are the main aspects in Chapter 5. Various perceptions of the Irish rural landscape, in particular the Irish West are tackled which also influence the depiction of landscape in the films *The Field*, *The Secret of Roan Inish* and *Ondine*. Again the chapter is also connected to other themes such as nationalism (the land question) or tradition and modernity. Chapter 6 addresses that the nationalist ideas of a traditional rural Irish life are imposed on gender

roles of the 1930s and have a great impact on Irish women. *The Field* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* portray how the main characters deal with their society's expectations and how the performance of their gender roles is influenced by their society. This is interesting because in the 1930s, Irish rural societies were viewed as the ideal Irish lifestyle by nationalists such as Eamon de Valera, and had an effect on the Irish Constitution of 1937. This again ties in to Chapter 2 where these rural traditions are challenged by changes, namely modernity, and questioned by the filmmakers Cathal Black and Jim Sheridan. All the main chapters are interconnected and hopefully lead to a "bigger picture" of rural Ireland and its depiction in Irish film

The aim was to extend certain points made by film scholars such as Martin McLoone, Ruth Barton, Terry Byrne or Michael Patrick Gillespie, add different elements of Irish Cultural Studies and contribute my own analysis of selected Irish motion pictures. I hope that the intention of every chapter is clearly pointed out to the reader and leads to a thorough and interesting paper about the Irish countryside and its depiction in the above named films. Certainly there are many more Irish feature films but also short films and documentaries that are not addressed. Moreover, there are other themes concerning the Irish countryside which could be explored such as a comparison between Irish indigenous films and international productions or the question, whether recent Irish films (from 2000) show a new development. Regarding this, it is interesting to note that films such as *Nothing Personal* or *Ondine* portray female immigrants from the European continent that explore rural Ireland and become part of it. In other words, *The Depiction of the Irish Countryside in Irish Film* raises questions that would go beyond this thesis, and therefore, leave room for further discussions.

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8.4. Filmography

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9. Appendix

9.1. Zusammenfassung

In meiner Diplomarbeit, *The Depiction of the Irish Countryside in Irish Film*, setze ich mich mit irischen Spielfilmen der letzten zwanzig Jahre auseinander, die das irische Landleben widerspiegeln. Die fünf Hauptkapitel behandeln jeweils ein Thema, welches relevant für das ländliche Irland ist; nämlich Tradition in Konflikt mit dem Modernen, Landbesitz, Landschaft, die Dorfgemeinschaft und Gender. Das Ziel meiner Diplomarbeit ist, eine vielschichtige, interdisziplinäre Analyse des irischen Landlebens im irischen Film zu bieten. Die Abhandlung richtet sich an all jene Leser, die sich für Irish Studies, aber auch Filmwissenschaften interessieren.

Jedes Kapitel führt den Leser in eines der oben genannten Themen und in die Art und Weise wie sich Filmschaffende mit diesen Themen auseinandersetzen, ein. Dies bildet die Grundlage für die genaueren Analysen der gewählten Filme. Das Hauptaugenmerk liegt auf Jim Sheridan's Film *The Field* (1990), welcher sich über alle Kapitel erstreckt, sich quasi wie ein Bogen über die gesamte Arbeit spannt. In jedem Kapitel wird *The Field* mit einem weiteren Film, der eine andere Sichtweise des Themas vertritt, verglichen.

Das erste Hauptkapitel (Kapitel 2) „Tradition and Modernity“ setzt sich mit *The Field* und Cathal Blacks *Korea* (1995) auseinander. In beiden Filmen geht es um die Moderne, welche das traditionelle Landleben bedroht. „Tradition and Modernity“ haben eine große Bedeutung in der irischen Kultur und Kapitel 2 geht dieser Gewichtigkeit aus der Perspektive der Filmwissenschaft auf den Grund. Kapitel 3, das *The Field* und Ken Loachs *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006) miteinander vergleicht, schließt thematisch an das vorige Kapitel an: Es beschäftigt sich in erster Linie mit der Frage des Landbesitzes, der vor allem im ländlichen Irland eine große Rolle spielt. Hier liegt der Fokus auf der Geschichte Irlands als ehemalige britische Kolonie und wie diese Vergangenheit die Figuren, aber auch die Regisseure der beiden Filme beeinflusst. Dieser Einfluss setzt sich in Kapitel 4, in dem es vor allem um die Dorfgemeinschaft und Figuren in *The Field* und Kirk Jones' *Waking Ned Devine* (1998) geht, fort. Kapitel 4 betrachtet vor allem, wie die Dorfgemeinschaften in

den Filmen auf Veränderungen reagieren, ob die Figuren gewisse irische Stereotype widerspiegeln und wie ihre Handlungen Plot Points auslösen. Im Gegensatz zu Kapitel 4, bezieht sich Kapitel 5 auf die eher nichtmenschlichen Elemente des Ländlichen, nämlich auf Landschaft in *The Field*, John Sayles' *The Secret of Roan Inish* (1994) und Neil Jordans *Ondine* (2009). Hier steht das Romantisieren und Politisieren der irischen Landschaft (vor allem Westirlands) und ihre Bedeutung im Film im Vordergrund. Kapitel 6 beschäftigt sich schließlich mit traditionellen Geschlechterrollen im ländlichen Irland bzw. mit der Art und Weise wie die Figuren in *The Field* und Pat O'Connors *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1998), die ihnen zugewiesene Rolle des jeweiligen Geschlechts verkörpern. Alle Kapitel sind einerseits untrennbar miteinander verwoben, andererseits erstellt jedes für sich eine eigenständige, detaillierte und interdisziplinäre Analyse des irischen Landlebens im irischen Film.

9.1. Lebenslauf

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