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Exploring Joseph O'Connor's Narratological Approach in
"Star of the Sea" (2004) and "Redemption Falls" (2007)

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. The Postmodern Historical Novel.....	6
2.1. (Post-)Modern	7
2.2. Pastiche and/or Parody	8
2.2.1. Characteristics of Pastiche and Parodies.....	11
2.3. Features of Postmodern Fiction	12
2.3.1. Intertextuality.....	13
2.3.2. Fragmentation.....	17
2.3.3. Metafiction.....	19
2.4. The Postmodernist Approach to History	23
3. About the Author of the Novels	26
3.1. <i>Star of the Sea</i> (2002)	28
3.1.1. Plot.....	28
3.1.2. Setting and Background.....	31
3.2. <i>Redemption Falls</i> (2007)	33
3.2.1. Plot.....	33
3.2.2. Setting and Background.....	36
3.3. Connection between the Novels.....	39
4. Postmodern Devices in O'Connor's Novels	40
4.1. Hypertextuality – Allusions to Individual Texts	41
4.1.1. Allusions to Charles Dickens and His Novels.....	41
4.1.2. Allusions to Margaret Mitchell's <i>Gone with the Wind</i>	44
4.1.3. Allusions to Daniel Defoe's <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>	46
4.1.4. Allusions to Emily Bronte's <i>Wuthering Heights</i>	49
4.2. Similtextuality – Allusions to Literary Genres	50
4.2.1. The Victorian Novel.....	50

4.2.2. Crime Fiction	54
4.2.3. Gothic Fiction	57
4.3. Paratextuality	60
4.3.1. Illustrations	61
4.3.2. Epigraphs	64
4.3.3. Footnotes	68
4.4. Metafiction	71
4.4.1. Relationship between the Past and Present	72
4.4.2. Postmodern Fiction's Constructiveness	75
4.4.3. The Writing Subject	77
4.4.4. Second-Person Narration	79
4.5. Fragmentation	81
4.5.1. Newspaper Articles	81
4.5.2. Prayer	84
4.5.3. Historical Documents	86
4.5.4. Interview Transcripts	88
4.6. Intermediality	90
5. Conclusion	94
<i>Bibliography</i>	99
<i>Index</i>	105
<i>Appendix</i>	107

1. Introduction

The Great Famine in Ireland as well as the American Civil War has been most fundamental in shaping the developments of Ireland and The United States Of America in the nineteenth century. In any country national traumata inflicted on the collective memory have always triggered artistic outputs with the aim of coping with the present situation and to account for the past. However, especially literary efforts trying to depict traumatic experiences from a short distance always run risk of presenting biased views or a very narrow sketch of a complex whole.

Now, over hundred fifty years later since the peak of the Great Famine, writers may have finally found ways of presenting the Great Famine and the American Civil War that may mirror the multidimensionality of these historical events. In his historical novels *Star of the Sea* (2002) and *Redemption Falls* (2007) Joseph O'Connor reflects to the events with complex literary measures that, on the one hand, resemble the intertwingularity of Irish and British (un)intended failures, ultimately leading to the death of one million and causing even two million of emigrating Irish people, on the other, mirror the ambiguous participation of Irish expatriates in the American Civil War, serving for both, The Confederacy as well as The Union. Although both books became best-sellers and were shortlisted for several renowned prizes, very few scholarly studies have been published to date. Basing his books on thoroughly conducted research, inspired by materials, ranging from academic studies to authentic documentary from the nineteenth century, the books of O'Connor are worth investigating solely because of their historicity. Some scholars have dealt with historical issues found in *Star of the Sea*, albeit only in a way that does not do justice to the book. Scholarly articles on *Redemption Falls* have barely been attempted to date.

What makes the novels worth investigating also from a critical literary standpoint is O'Connor's use of postmodern narratology in the two novels, allowing the author to artistically play with the events barely found in any other literary text dealing with The Great Hunger or the American Civil War. Therefore, labeling the novels just as historical fiction would be misappropriated, as there are numerous and most diverse intertextual allusions, one of the most common features of postmodernist literature. Besides intertextuality the novels make use of a fragmented

approach interspersing the main story with different other text types, extending, delaying or advancing the plot. These incorporated texts are most diverse in terms of form and function, including personal letters, posters, songs, but also. This allows O'Connor to paint a panoramic picture of the middle of the nineteenth century, letting most diverse people speak up to tell their side of the story. Adding yet another voice and dimension to the two novels, O'Connor also left traces of his own persona in the texts employing metafictional elements, reflecting the act of writing. Combining these features it will be argued that the novels could be classified as *Historiographic Metafiction*.

The innovative style of the novels, the importance of the novels' topics, together with the lack of scholarly studies hitherto published on both texts, it seems evident that O'Connor has created pieces of literature that are worth investigating within the framework of a diploma thesis. As the title suggests this thesis aims at shedding light at O'Connor's narratological approach in the two novels, trying to analyze the two texts according to their postmodern elements. Although there are numerous other literary devices that would be worth investigating, this thesis concentrates mainly on the features of intertextuality, further exploring different genres found in the two texts, fragmentation, taking a look at the different text types, and metafiction. Texture

Therefore, before analyzing the novels along these lines, a theoretical backdrop is needed to fully understand O'Connor's quite complex approach. The second section of the thesis draws on multiple sources on the state of postmodern historical novels and their characteristics. When exploring intertextuality and metafiction, various approaches developed by established literary scholars will be presented in order to appropriately explore two of the most fascinating devices in today's literature. Having set out the proper fundament for further analysis, the thesis will be focused on the texture of the novels in the third section. After giving a short introduction to the author and the plots, the background and setting that served as basis for the novels will be discussed. The centerpiece of the diploma thesis is the analysis of the novels, applying the theoretical framework of section 2 to O'Connor's texts. How can O'Connor's novels be classified within a literary genre? Which different kinds of intertextuality can be found in the novels? Which are the intertextual allusions drawn from different genres (e.g. Crime Fiction, Western, Robinsonade, Gothic Fiction just to name a few) that are interwoven in an overall historical

structure? How are the genres represented? How does O'Connor subvert the genres? How does he make use of a fragmented approach and how does this influence the plot? What role does metafiction play in his novels? These are the main questions this diploma thesis seeks to answer. The last section then sums up the most important findings of this diploma thesis.

2. The Postmodern Historical Novel

On a most basic level postmodernism is a cultural movement following modernism after the Second World War. The political upheavals in the middle of the twentieth century led to a rethinking in the arts, a reevaluation that contested traditional modes of representations. In a world that has become more and more pluralistic and multicultural artists faced a dilemma, in which old schemata of mirroring the world did not live up to the complex conditions found in their environment that has become “an anarchic landscape of worlds in the plural” (McHale, 36). A radical paradigm shift seemed inevitable:

Postmodern ist ein Denken, das sich dem Verlust der alten Zentren und Sicherheiten stellt und Mehrdeutigkeiten zulässt (sic), ohne die freigesetzte Vielfalt in Ordnungen und Schemata zu pressen. Postmodern ist das lustvolle Akzeptieren des Bruchstückhaften, Dezentrierten, Gemischten, Chaotischen. (Kopp-Marx, 13).

Considering above quote, artists felt completely detached from established forms and traditions. In postmodern texts an easy categorization in terms of literary genres has become impossible, as there are numerous allusions to and combinations of multiple genres, creating a hybridization of genres. Furthermore, the claim to objectivity was lost, resulting in the loss of omniscient narrators and in the celebration of the fragmented, the subjective and the polyphone. People at the periphery of society are given the chance to tell their side of the stories, reflecting the complex social reality with its different classes, religions, sexes etc. Unsurprisingly, the task to live up to the complexities of society necessarily found expression in art forms that make it more difficult for theorists of the respective branch to analyze a piece of work than has been the case for previous cultural movements with their affinity to neat categories.

Summarized, postmodernist art “does hold the mirror up to reality; but that reality, now more than ever before, is plural” (McHale, 39).

However, postmodernism is not that radical as it may seem at first glance. It is not revolutionary in creating whole new branches of literature for instance; instead it is more concerned with reworking, selecting and compiling bits and pieces of traditional texts, infused with new elements, from which something genuine arises. This complicated interplay between tradition and innovation is perfectly exemplified in postmodernism’s relationship with the movement it has supposedly tried to wholly leave behind, namely modernism.

2.1. (Post-)Modern

Postmodernism is a variety of Modernism and simultaneously it is not. Judging from the term’s affix it seems inevitably that Postmodernism comes after modernism. At first sight it might be argued that postmodernism therefore has to be the radical departure of its predecessor to be recognized as own movement. However the relationship between the two terms is more complicated than it seems, which is already indicated in the term postmodern itself. If the term would not be inextricably linked to the former movement, literary theorists might have come up with different labels, underlining its supposedly radical character.

Post-Modernism is fundamentally the eclectic mixture of any tradition with that of the immediate past: it is both the continuation of Modernism and its transcendence. Its best works are characteristically double-coded and ironic, because this heterogeneity most clearly captures our pluralism. (Jencks, 7).

Therefore, Postmodernism creates something new through resorting on the arts of the past. Hassan characterizes modernist literature as relying on a certain purpose as well as belonging to a genre, as opposed to postmodernists, who choose a playful character of their works over purpose, defying a clear affinity to a certain literary genre, instead giving prominence to intertextual allusions to numerous genres¹. Although a juxtaposition of Modernist and Postmodernist traits might be helpful in

¹ Cf. Hassan, 1987, 6. In his work *The Postmodern Turn* (1987) Hassan contrasts 33 characteristics of Modernism and Postmodernism in a list, however he also acknowledges the fact that the “differences shift, defer, even collapse; concepts in one vertical column are not all equivalent; and inversions and exceptions, in both modernism and postmodernism, abound.”

theorizing the two terms, it has to be remembered that purpose, genre as well as other typical characteristics of Modernism can also be subsumed under the postmodernist label.

The most fundamental difference in literature for McHale² is the reading strategies that are applied by the recipients, contrasting between Modernist's epistemological approaches, while postmodern reading strategies can be regarded as ontological. According to his understanding the former approach circles around questions of knowledge on the side of the characters, in consequence the recipients and how this knowledge is gradually gathered; the latter is (also) concerned with the (de)construction and interplay of texts within the body of a literary work. The word *also* in the last sentence is vital for understanding Postmodernist approaches, since both modes, epistemological and ontological, can be found in postmodern texts. The modes, however are not given equal prominence in postmodernism, as "epistemology is background, as the price of foregrounding ontology" (McHale, 9). Emphasis is not so much given on content and how a text "can tell us *about* something" rather it is placed on form and "what the work itself *does* to us" (Nicol, 2003, 135).

To work in both ways postmodernist literature has to be double-coded³. Thus it can be read on two levels, as it refers to forms and codes of the past, while simultaneously subverting these traditions in its postmodern vein. This approach is best embodied in the form of parody or pastiches, in which double-codedness represents its defining characteristic.

2.2. Pastiche and/or Parody

With the advent of Postmodernism the notion emerged that uniqueness in the arts is a thing of the past⁴, meaning "the end of the distinctive individual brush stroke" (Jameson, 15). If every original style has been invented and used before, then artists have no space of coming up with unexplored creative vehicles. Artists, in turn, would have no other way than to draw on tradition, in best, creating something that is hardly reminiscent of past cultural endeavors or at least something genuinely recycled, in

² Cf. McHale, 9.

³ Cf. Allen, 188.

⁴ Cf. Nicol, 2002, 134.

other words cutting and pasting from already existing works of art. This somewhat radical standpoint can surely be questioned in two ways, since on the one hand artists of the past also heavily relied on their predecessors of their craft, on the other, the innovativeness of some writers, musicians, etc. cannot be denied. However, looking at the state of literature over the past fifty years, it cannot be denied that authors love to resort to former writers and literary conventions of the past or genres. The reasons for it are numerous and are far from solely attributing it to the authors' lack of originality and imagination. Quite on the contrary, writers have created most astounding works by re-writing the literature of the past in their pastiches, devoid of a "disappearance of the individual subject" and the "unavailability of the personal style" (Nicol, 2002, 26).

"Pastiche", as for so many other terms in the realm of Postmodernism, is hard to define, because of its complexity and diverging understanding of the term by literary scholars. What seems evident to most in the field is the pastiche's close connection to parody. While parody can be defined as "a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work or works, ridiculing the stylistic habits of an author or school by exaggerated mimicry" (Baldick, 248), pastiche can be defined as "a literary work composed from elements borrowed either from various other writers or from a particular earlier author" (Baldick, 249). Taking a rather negative viewpoint, Jameson, therefore, argues for viewing pastiche as a "blank parody" (Jameson, 17), as "the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion (Jameson, 18). This view strongly contrasts with Linda Hutcheon's notion of pastiche and parody, as she does not see the latter as "ridiculing imitation of the standard theories and definitions" (Hutcheon, 1998, 26), but proposes to view "parody as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity" (Hutcheon, 1998, 26). She ultimately defies the notion of a blank parody, stating that "irony and play is *never* necessarily to exclude seriousness and purpose in postmodernist art. To misunderstand this is to misunderstand the nature of much contemporary aesthetic production" (Hutcheon, 1998, 27). Hutcheon, therefore, does not distinguish between parody and pastiche, as her definition of parody subsumes the two terms.

Of course the borders for honoring and ridiculing, in other words parody and pastiche when following Baldick's definitions, are blurred depending on the "extent and closeness of the imitation, the degree of hostility, and the play between 'high'

and 'low'" culture (Dentith, 19). For the sake of clarity, however, it might still be worth distinguishing⁵, "between works that imitate to make fun, mock, ridicule or satirise (parody) and those that do not (pastiche)" (Dyer, 240), or between two forms of parody, also suggested by Dentith:

On the one hand, it has been seen as conservative in the way that it is used to mock literary and social innovation...On the other hand, there is another tradition which celebrates the subversive possibilities of parody as its essential characteristic (Dentith, 20).

For many scholars, the second tradition in Dentith's proposition would be regarded as pastiche, while the first one would likely be identified as parody. In short, depending on the view one might find more plausible, pastiche can be viewed as parody (Hutcheon), as the terms are inextricably related to each other, as a form of parody (Jameson), carrying an almost negative connotation, or as literary device on its own, yet closely linked to parody (Dyer, Dentith).

Taking this a step further, if one follows Dyer's argumentation⁶, parody and pastiche can both be seen as textually signaled imitations, differing only in the recipients' evaluation. While pastiche is free from evaluation, stimulating the reader's own judgment in deciphering the author's attitude towards the former text(s) he or she imitates, parody may be evaluatively predetermined, as the author guides the reader, as it were, towards an evaluation, e.g. ridiculing a former text. While there is no other literary device that is textually signaled and evaluatively open besides pastiche according to Dyer, he also characterizes, among others, homage, travesty, burlesque or mock epic as textually signaled and evaluatively predetermined literary devices. All of these genres or approaches to literature share three factors: likeness, deformation and discrepancy⁷. It is these factors' function and relationship to each other that determines if a text is to be viewed as a pastiche or as a parody⁸.

⁵ Even though Hutcheon's line of argument is convincing, given the fact that postmodern texts mostly cannot be categorized as either pastiche or parody, i.e. parody or blank parody, the two terms will still be used in this thesis according to Baldick's and Dyer's definition, since distinguishing between them might lead to further insights into the postmodern narratives of O'Connor. The close relationship of the two concepts, however, will be paid attention to when analyzing the intertextuality of the two novels in question.

⁶ Cf. Dyer, 24.

⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 59.

⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 54.

2.2.1. Characteristics of Pastiche and Parodies

Ridiculing or not, the reliance on earlier texts is an indispensable characteristic of pastiches and parodies. Without them there would be no basis to mock or to imitate. In order to be recognized as parody or pastiche an author's text has to bear some resemblance to a piece of already existing literature, sharing some of the characteristics with the imitated text. Only copying a pre-existing text, however, would not result in a pastiche or in a parody, as a "pastiche is formally close to (its perception of) what it pastiches but not identical to it; very like, but not indistinguishable from" (Dyer, 55). As an example, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) is easily recognizable as a historical movie set in the Middle Ages, reproducing features typical of its genre, such as the Holy Grail and the King Arthur motif.

Although certain features have to be similar to the pastiched text(s), they also have to subvert, transform and deconstruct this very likeness to some degree. In the second stage an author "selects, accentuates, exaggerates, concentrates" (Dyer, 56) features that seem fundamental for a genre or a specific text. In the Monty Python movie countless features could be depicted that underline Dyer's thesis. First and foremost the comedians selected and exaggerated features of the historical genre to subvert them for a humorous purpose, such as showing scenes of killing, or dead people without involving any emotional attachment, or ascribing typical chivalric virtues to each of the protagonists without conforming to them.

The last step in creating a pastiche or parody is to include some sort of discrepancy with the imitated model. This can be achieved, for instance, by the use of anachronisms or deviations from the patterns found in the model text. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* is notorious for such subversions. Police cars, a dialogue about the invention of nylon, as well as animated clips can be found, although the action is primarily set in the Middle Ages.

The range of the deformation and subversion makes it impossible for the viewers to regard *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* as a pastiche. By highly exaggerating movies set in the Middle Ages, combined with the unusual interruptions this movie is clearly to be classified as a parody.

2.3. Features of Postmodern Fiction

Having characterized postmodern arts as a challenge to represent a pluralistic society, the literary devices used to stand up to the complexities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are equally sophisticated. Pastiche and parody works well for postmodernists, since the compiling of traditional elements, mixing them with postmodern features to create something new, symbolically represents recent trends in culture and society as a whole. The question remains by which actual features a postmodern text is characterized and how these features can be implemented into the overall structure of a novel.

Pastiches and parodies also depend on the literary device of intertextuality, the allusions to former texts. At the same time fragmentation breaks with the literary dogma of linearity and, simultaneously, is a necessity to give multiple voices a chance to tell their side of a story conditioned by their specific societal status. With these two features postmodern authors certainly did not reinvent the wheel, but it is the extent and sophistication to which intertextuality and fragmentation are applied that make them indispensable for postmodern literature. Attending these two features is metafiction, which is abundantly used in postmodern texts.. These three features, which will be analyzed further at a later stage, are the core of typical and most interesting postmodern devices. It should be noted that the three characteristics do not stand on their own, as one tool is highly intertwined with the other ones. For the sake of clarity they will be treated consecutively, bearing in mind that the complexity of postmodern literature is mirrored by the interaction of intertextuality, fragmentation and metafiction.

Of course other elements are also prominent in postmodern literature, such as the use of irony. Although irony is an ancient classical rhetorical device, it is the postmodern authors' approach of treating serious topics in an ironical manner that seemed contradictory before. This approach goes along with a heightened critical awareness on the side of the authors and society as a whole, challenging established maxims of reality:

we may be the pawns of the political machine, we may be divorced from the real, but at least we know we are...reality is always already manufactured, an ideological illusion...Irony is therefore not just cynical, not just a way of making fun of the world. It demonstrates a knowingness about how reality is ideologically constructed. (Nicol, 2009, 12-13).

Irony as well as other features (intertextuality, fragmentation, metafiction etc.) provided postmodernists with tools that are concerned with the construction and simultaneous deconstruction of texts and, as a consequence, of realities. Thus, authors adhere to conventions of the past and at the same challenge these traditions. It is this interplay of expectation and disruption that presents readers with a “challenge: instead of enjoying it passively, they have to work to understand it, to question their own responses, and to examine their views about what fiction is” (Nicol, 2009, 224). On a more theoretical level the readers equally engage in questioning what reality is, by which factor it is shaped, and how these factors influence our ways of thinking about the world.

2.3.1. Intertextuality

“Thus I discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told” (Eco in Allen, 19-20). Such were the thoughts of Umberto Eco when reflecting on his writing process of his most renowned novel *The Name of the Rose*. Clearly, without the literary device of intertextuality Eco’s fictional works as well as most of postmodern literature would not exist. Novels like Coetzee’s *Foe* or Fowles’ *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* would simply have no textual foundation. Both extensively rely on allusions to earlier texts, with the former reworking a specific piece of literature, *Robinson Crusoe*, while the latter rewrites and deconstructs a whole genre and its literary conventions of a specific time, *Victorian Romance*. As has already been indicated in previous sections these intertextual works result in what is commonly termed pastiche or parody.

Much attention has been given to intertextuality over the past thirty years. Many scholars have attempted to theorize about this literary phenomenon, ranging from creating a more general framework to painstaking classifications of intertextual allusions. Obviously, they all seem to agree on the fact that intertextuality is hard to grasp, which may be attributed to its manifold manifestations, leading to quite different perceptions about its characteristics and functions. Generally speaking, one can speak of intertextuality “whenever we recognize the relations among two or more

texts, between specific texts and larger categories such as genre, school, period” (McHale, 57).

As a basic principle one can distinguish between two parameters, as can be found in Broich’s study on intertextuality, between references that relate to an individual text and the ones alluding to a literary system⁹. In the first category the most common instances of intertextuality are those that hint at literary works by other authors. However, a writer referring to his or her own former works or to other texts connected to his or her literary work, including reviews, interviews, etc., are also intertextual allusions. In novel series with recurring personas self-reference is one of the most fundamental characteristics¹⁰, allowing authors, amongst other functions, to develop the character traits of their protagonists. Texts including allusions drawn from prior texts, termed pre-text according to Broich often overlap with the latter category, the system references:

Der Prätext, der dabei ins Spiel kommt, ist nicht mehr ein individueller Prätext, sondern wird von Textkollektiva gebildet oder genauer von denen hinter ihnen stehenden und sie strukturierenden textbildenden Systemen. Da diese sich aber in Texten manifestieren und nur über Texte greifbar sind, erscheinen auch bei diesen abstrakteren Relationen die Begriffe >Intertextualität< und >Prätext< angebracht, ohne daß (sic) man sie dabei metaphorisch überstrapaziert. (Broich, 53).

In novel series like *James Bond*, the readers find abundant references to earlier literary outputs of the same series, yet simultaneously also allude to a certain genre, thus to a literary system, in that case to the spy novel. Authors adhering to conventions and characteristics, through codes and norms of literary genres also trigger a certain kind of allusion on the side of the readers. The recipients know what to expect when confronted with a crime novel or science fiction, since authors of a specific genre turn to former writers of their craft. Through a lineage of authors, alluding to certain features of their respective predecessors they carry on certain characteristics that over time become established as a distinct genre¹¹. Distinguishing between these two types of references is surely adequate to approach the phenomenon of intertextuality on the surface. However the concept lacks in fully capturing the complex nature of this literary device.

⁹ Cf. Broich, 1985. In his study *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien* Broich uses the terms “Einzeltextreferenz” and „Systemreferenz“.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 48-52.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 68-69.

G rard Genette was one of the first literary theorists who provided a meticulously precise framework with his own nomenclature to account for most of the forms and shapes intertextuality can take. In his highly influential work *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1982) he presents a detailed description of intertextuality that goes beyond what is usually understood by the term¹². On the outset he proposes to rename intertextuality into transtextuality¹³, subsuming “all the sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed” (Genette, 1997a, 1). He then divides paratextuality into five subcategories, further exploring the relationships between texts. Leading to much confusion, he titles his first subcategory as intertextuality, representing “a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts” (Genette, 1997a, 1) and “the actual presence of one text within another” (Genette, 1997a, 2). This category consequently includes citation, plagiarism as well as allusion to other texts. Metatextuality, his second category, is concerned with literary criticism, including reviews or commentary. “It unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it” (Genette, 1997a, 4). Architextuality refers to the reception of the readers regarding to a specific text. If the readers know while reading a text – this can already happen prior to the actual reading of a story, as the cover of books often state their genre in a subtitle – to what literary system, genre, they belong to, they will approach the texts with certain expectations. Thus, “[t]he architextual nature of texts...includes generic, modal, thematic and figurative expectations about texts” (Allen, 103). While these three categories remain rather sparsely defined Genette devotes his attention to the last two categories, paratextuality and hypertextuality.

After having briefly characterized transtextuality and its five subcategories in *Palimpsests*, Genette for the major part of the book describes manifestations of hypertextuality. This form of transtextuality can be found in “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary” (Genette, 1997a, 5). Therefore, this category would include pastiches, parodies, more generally speaking, texts that could not exist without relating to specific former

¹² Cf. Genette, 1993, 1-10.

¹³ Since Genette’s overarching term of transtextuality could not compete with the established term intertextuality, which represents just a subcategory according to Genette’s classification, the traditional term intertextuality will be used in this thesis synonymously with transtextuality, taking into account the nuances of Genette.

texts. Genette also believes that the hypertext can successfully be read without knowing the hypotext, which other literary scholars strongly contest¹⁴.

In his analysis *Paratexts: Threshold of Interpretation* (1997) Genette dedicates almost four hundred pages to this subcategory of transtextuality. "Paratexts are those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader"(Genette, 1997b, i). Considering this quote paratextual devices – epigraphs, chapter titles, forewords just to name a few - within a book are numerous, which barely have received attention as having intertextual characteristics prior to Genette's classification. In short, paratextuality deals with all texts in a book that are not part of the actual story. Considering the sheer amount of different paratextual and hypertextual forms and their functions it would make no sense of highlighting individual ones. Instead they will be related to Genette's framework at a later stage when encountered in the texts that are subject to analysis in this thesis.

Although his theory seems at times confusing, given his terminology that characterizes intertextuality as a subcategory, whereas traditional approaches use the term to refer to the phenomena in all its facets, it has still proven influential. With his work Genette definitely broadened the horizon of what can be understood by intertextuality, or to stick with his term, by transtextuality. He expanded the more traditional notions, which would include Genette's categories of intertextuality, hypertextuality, by adding the dimensions of architextuality, metatextuality and paratextuality.

As a sign of its significance literary theorist Peter Stocker (1997) took Genette's theory as a basis for his own model, expanding on, but also excluding some of his ideas, leading to a clearly structured framework of intertextuality¹⁵. Stocker retains the traditional term of intertextuality, consequently does away with the notion of transtextuality. To eradicate the confusion revolving around Genette's subcategory of intertextuality, he simply renames it to palintextuality, yet keeping the subcategory's characteristics. The category of metatextuality is by and large adopted, diverging in fine nuances that will not be touched upon here. He introduces the category of similtextuality, putting it on the same level alongside Genette's notion of hypertextuality. For Stocker hypertextuality refers to a specific text, while

¹⁴ Cf. Allen, 114.

¹⁵ Cf. Stocker 49-72.

similtextuality alludes to a specific literary system, such as genres, similar to the distinction found in Broich's study on intertextuality. Also alluding to literary systems are his last categories of themetextuality and demotextuality. These self-reflexive types of intertextuality differ only in that the former addresses the characteristics of literary systems within the body of a text, while the latter demonstratively applies said conventions. Paratextual features are omitted from Stocker's framework, as he does not regard as bearing intertextual traits.

2.3.2. Fragmentation

Over the past fifty years historiography has undergone dramatic changes in portraying events gone by. Traditional historical depiction relied on hard facts, on history made by powerful and influential men. This approach led to a historical picture of society, in which the lives of a few white, wealthy and heterosexual men were in the center, while the portrayal of others devoid of this classification found no voice in historiography. Nowadays this view is contested by several other histories with quite different foci. Women's history, Black History or LGBT History¹⁶ are all part of presenting a different angle compared to traditional depictions of former times. Also the rise of oral history presented a shift in representing history, as this approach highlighted the fates of ordinary individuals. These alternatives should not be seen as competing versions of history, but complementary to historiography of the past.

Analogues to the new historical awareness, developments in postmodern literature led to a more colorful picture of the past but also of the present, lending a voice to those unheard in former texts. For years it has been common that authors seek to rewrite Victorian novels from a postmodernist standpoint with crucial differences compared to Victorian standards. Usually the protagonists of Victorian novels belonged to wealthy upper-class families, whereas in novels like *The French Lieutenant Woman* the heroine, Sarah Woodruff, originated from the middle class. Therefore Fowles, like other authors, includes "voices of the forgotten or the marginalized" (Gutleben, 141) painting a more colorful picture than it has been the case with original Victorian novels.

¹⁶ The History of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Peoples and Culture
<<http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/lgbt-rights>>.

What also distinguishes these Neo-Victorian novels from their paragons is the narrative situation. For decades it had been common to present a story from one point of view with a “single narrative authority which guides the readers from the beginning to the end of a narrative” (Gutleben, 138). Nowadays it is common to find multiperspectivity in novels that are highly subjective and non-linear, highlighting the fact that “no narrator has a full knowledge of the events, each account represents only one in an infinite number of possibilities” (Gutleben, 140).

In the disruption of the unique, authoritative instance lies postmodernism's main strategy of rewriting history, an alternative or apocryphal version of history: '[a]pocryphal history contradicts the official versions of two ways: either it supplements the historical record, claiming to restore what has been lost or suppressed; or it displaces official history altogether'. (Gutleben, 141).

The loss of a narrative authority has a crucial impact on the novels' organization, hence the plot of postmodern fiction often seems somewhat chaotic in their fragmented approach, since several characters tell their side of the story. This approach lays bare the subjectivity of history and how it is shaped through the accounts of individuals. Telling a past event through the lens of several persons necessarily breaks with the usual linearity found in traditional Victorian novels.

Besides breaking with the tradition of linearity, postmodern texts, particularly found in recent historical novels, are also characteristic for their play with intermediality, which barely has been analyzed thus far by literary scholars¹⁷. Multiperspectivity and intermediality in one and the same text inevitably has led to the intertextuality already described, and, as a consequence, genre blurring, as the accumulation of most different elements would not fit in one particular genre type:

Die verbreitete Tendenz zu Genreüberschreitungen erschöpft sich aber nicht darin, daß (sic) die Grenzen zwischen verschiedenen Gattungen und Textsorten durchlässig geworden sind oder daß (sic) in ein und demselben Werk Merkmale unterschiedliche Genres verwendet werden. Charakteristisch für innovative historische Romane der Gegenwart ist vielmehr ein dialogisches Spannungsverhältnis, das innerhalb eines hybride Werkes zwischen den Konventionen verschiedener Gattungen und Medien erzeugt wird. (Nünning, 341).

Pictures, songs, letters as uncountable other media types belong to postmodernism's repertoire to portray past and present events. Including several media in one and the same novel further fragments the plot, yet allows authors to paint a panoramic picture

¹⁷ Cf. Nünning, 342.

of an epoch. Not only the written word says something about history, but also other materials such as pictures or songs account for the conditions of a specific time. In short, by implementing different types of media postmodern authors acknowledge the difficulties of representing the past that would do justice to the actual picture found in the Victorian age as well as in all other periods of mankind's civilization.

Die Komplexität historischer Prozesse und unterschiedlicher Geschichtserfahrungen werden dadurch angemessen wiedergegeben, daß (sic) die kaleidoskopische Vielfalt der Themen mit einem entsprechend breiten Spektrum an Darstellungsformen vermittelt wird...Sowohl die Historizität der Medien, in denen sich das kulturelle Gedächtnis der dargestellten Gesellschaft manifestiert, als auch die mediale Bedingtheit der Aneignung und Tradierung historischen Wissens wird veranschaulicht. (Nünning 350-353).

Therefore, postmodern authors include different media not only for the sake of coming to terms with the complexities of presenting history, but also to question these very media and their relationship with the knowledge of history. Through fragmenting their plots, authors are able to capture a richer compendium, including individual, unheard voices as well as most different kinds of media, all carrying information of past events, unable to find in the works of their predecessors.

2.3.3. Metafiction

Before the rise of postmodern literature readers adhered to "a willing suspension of disbelief" (Coleridge, 6), which allowed them to embrace a fictional world no matter how contrasting this artificial entity was in contrast to the condition of the realm outside a text, the "real world". To get the most enjoyment out of a literary work it was believed by authors as well as their recipients that the readership had to be fully absorbed by the fictional world, as if the constructed world would be true. Postmodernists completely broke with this somewhat romantic perception by breaking the fictional frame through the device of metafiction. Although early examples, dating back to at least Don Quixote, can be found that have already implemented metafictionality, it is the extent and sophistication of this device that represents a major characteristic in the works of postmodern authors.

While the definitions of several other literary terms are heatedly debated, as has already been indicated by the diverging conceptions of intertextuality and

parody/pastiche in this thesis, there seems to be a consensus among literary scholars, of course differing in fine nuances, about what metafiction fundamentally is.

Metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion. In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. The two processes are held together in a formal tension which breaks down the distinctions between 'creation' and 'criticism' and merges them into the concepts of 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction'. (Waugh, 6).

Whether one follows Hutcheon's view explaining the term as "fiction about fiction...fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic entity" (Hutcheon in Ommundsen, ix), or Boyd's comment on the metafictional novel "that systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice and that by so doing probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality" (Boyd in Ommundsen, ix), they agree on Waugh's line of argument. On a more abstract level metafictional texts do "not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction; they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (Waugh, 2). In short, metafiction is a self-reflexive and self-referential tool¹⁸ for authors to contemplate the process of creating fictional realities, sharing their thoughts about it within the framework of said reality, hence in a text, which on a more metaphoric level says also something about how the world outside of the text is constructed.

This pondering about the constructions of realities can take most different forms in texts. As a consequence, scholars have attempted to further characterize and categorize forms of metafiction. Waugh proposes three different forms of metafiction, including firstly "particular conventions of the novel to display the process of their construction", secondly "the form of parody, comment on a specific work or fictional mode" and, thirdly, an "attempt to create alternative linguistic structures or to merely imply old forms by encouraging the reader to draw on his or her knowledge of traditional literary conventions" (Waugh, 4-5). Clearly, Waugh's second and third form makes it hard to concentrate on the sense of metafiction described by Hutcheon or Boyd at the outset of this section, meaning fiction about fiction, without taking into consideration the features of genre and intertextuality.

¹⁸ Cf. Nicol, 2009, 35.

At its core the most pertinent classification is made by Hutcheon¹⁹, in which she distinguishes between overt and covert metafiction. Overt metafictional elements present themselves obviously to the readers, for instance, in the shapes of “explicit thematization-through plot allegory, narrative metaphors, or even narratorial commentary” (Hutcheon, 1980, 23). The author guides the readers towards the novel’s play with fictionality, ranging from bluntly addressing the reader to state something about the artificiality of the text to more subtle ways (e.g. allegories, metaphors). Or by contrast, covert modes are interwoven within the text, leaving the recognition of metafictional elements solely to the readers. Covert modes would include allusion to other genres, earlier literary texts but also jokes, puns and anagrams sharing the characteristic of being harder to grasp for the readers than their overt counterparts²⁰. Distinguishing the two modes further, Hutcheon adds a narrative and linguistic dimension to them, which has resulted in some confusion on the side of literary scholars, who criticize Hutcheon for implementing inappropriate categories, as they mostly overlap or even contradict one another (Lins, 8) (Ahlers, 190).

A different and more convincing approach to metafiction is put forward by Wolf basing his view on the following assumption:

[T]he term is a hypernym denoting all sorts of self-reflective utterances and elements of a fictional narrative that do not treat their referent as apparent reality but instead induce readers to reflect on the textuality and fictionality of narrative in terms of its artifactuality. (Neumann and Nünning, 2012).

Wolf’s broad definition of metafiction and his claim that the concept is also applicable to other art forms leads him to his term “metareference”. He distinguishes between four dimensions of metareference, with each level being represented by opposing pairs²¹. Similar to Hutcheon’s overt and covert difference, Wolf discerns between explicit and implicit instances of metareference. Self reflective elements can be made by a character and/or a narrator explicitly and can therefore easily be traced by the recipients, whereas implicit instances may be realized through metalepses or other devices that lay bare the artificiality of the text.

¹⁹ Cf. Hutcheon, 1980, 23.

²⁰ Cf. Jablon, 8-10.

²¹ Cf. Wolf, 40-44.

Metafictional comments can be explicitly uttered by a character of the narrated world or by the narrator when reflecting on the fictional nature of the text (mode of telling). Alternatively, they can be conveyed implicitly through formal means, e.g. through contradictory and highly implausible elements which disrupt the mimetic illusion (mode of showing). (Neumann and Nünning, 2012).

Because of its concealed presence implicit metareference is susceptible to be overlooked by the readers, which may be the authors' reason for their overproportional use of explicit elements compared to their implicit counterparts.

Wolf's second category relates to the origin from which the metareference is drawn, divided into intratextual and transtextual references. By way of metareference, an author can comment on his/her own work (i.e. intratextual), for instance, when he or she states something about the fictionality of its characters, or more indirectly, he or she can draw from other literary works and other sources (i.e. transtextual) to say something about his or her own work. For Wolf parodies or travesties belong in the latter category, as the implementation of allusions to former texts also carry the fundamental characteristic of metareference of breaking with the illusion of an artificial reality.

In his third dimension Wolf characterizes *fictio* against *fictum* metareferences, which both at their core refer to the fictionality of a text. The difference in this category is that *fictio* metareferences point to remarks relating to "Gemachtheit und Artifizialität des literarischen Textes bzw. der Kunstfertigkeit des literarischen Produzenten" (Müller-Zettelmann, 204), whereas *fictum* metareferences thematize the invented status of a text, for instance the author laying bare the inventedness of his or her characters, as can be found in Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

The last category is termed as *critical* as opposed to *non-critical* metareference. While the former consists of comments, mostly on behalf of the narrator, convincing the readers that they read an authentic text, the latter breaks with this illusion, stating the fictionality of a work.

Some of the typologies are beyond question more confusing than helpful in exploring metafiction. On top of that even convincing approaches are limited in their usefulness, since the modes of metafiction, or metareference to stick with Wolf's term, are far from being clear cut. Whether one finds Hutcheon's, Wolf's or other literary scholar's characterization of metafiction more plausible, they are all illuminating, since they may provide readers with tools to identify self-reflexive phenomena that otherwise could only be vaguely described.

2.4. The Postmodernist Approach to History

The urge for new ways of capturing a post World War Two society by postmodernists does not necessarily imply that former artists were able to represent conditions of the past to a satisfying degree. Besides coming to terms with recent societal challenges, authors also direct their attention to past events that may not have been depicted in a manner that would reflect the complex situations of a specific period. Prior to the engagement of postmodern authors with historical topics, writers usually sought to present a picture that tried to capture past events as accurately as possible, as if the world described in historical novels were real. This claim to historical authenticity is fully rejected by the postmodernist dogma of the impossibility to present past events authentically, since history is always constructed.

Without any doubt the engagement of postmodern authors with historical events usually results in literary works that can hardly be classified, which, for the most part, can be attributed to the extensive employment of intertextuality, fragmentation and metafiction. Nevertheless, Linda Hutcheon has characterized postmodern historical novels as historiographic metafiction, referring to “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensively self-reflexive and yet lay claim to historical events and personages” (Hutcheon, 1998, 5). This results in historiographic metafiction’s somewhat paradoxical relationship with history, as its dual function seeks to fulfill self-reflexivity and an enjoyable portrayal of the past:

we can say that historiographic metafiction is fiction which uses metafictional techniques to remind us that history is a construction, not something natural that equates to ‘the past’. History is not ‘the past’, but a narrative based on documents and other material created in the past. (Nicol, 2009, 99).

For Hutcheon, therefore, historiography and fiction is very much alike, as both make use of “selection, organization, diegesis, anecdote, temporal pacing, and emplotment (Hutcheon 1998, 111), leading to the conclusion that the two can never depict an authentic picture of reality in the sense of objectivity, may that be past or present. As both make use of materials of the past they can present “*truths* in the plural, and never one Truth” (Hutcheon, 1998, 109).

Whether it be newspaper accounts, diaries, military reports, parliamentary documents, private letters, or any of the vast array of historical documents the historian must depend upon, history is only available to the contemporary historian through a network of prior

texts, all infused with the traces of prior authors with their own ideological agendas, presuppositions and prejudices. History exists as a vast web of subjective texts, the new historical account being one more author's struggle to negotiate a new way through an intertextual network of previous forms of representations. (Allen 192).

Therefore, the shift of realistic historical novels of the nineteenth century to postmodern renditions of the past is paralleled in the upheaval concerning the authors' claim to historical authenticity. Where novelists once sought to present a picture that would capture a historical period most accurately – or at least one that would conform to the official history, they now seek to present a plausible version of history that could have happened. These versions are far from foreclosing other alternatives to history, instead embracing the notion that more versions of one and the same history lead to a richer and probably even more authentic picture than it is the case with the traditional approach to history.

Hutcheon's work on historiographic metafiction was and is undoubtedly very influential in the field of postmodern fiction, which can be seen in the numerous scholars referring, criticizing or extending her concept. While her work is vital for taking the first step in analyzing the broad spectrum of postmodern literature, it falls short of recognizing that there are considerable differences between individual postmodern authors' engagement with the past. It is true that the interplay of metafiction and history can be found in most postmodern texts dealing with past events, yet the range of postmodern writers is considerably broader than that. As a consequence measuring these texts by the same yardstick, giving them all the etiquette of historiographic metafiction, might be right, but the definition does not capture the full scope of their approach and the vast differences found in these texts.

This need for further classification is also highlighted by Ansgar Nünning, who proposes to split up contemporary historical fiction into five categories²²: The Documentary Historical Novel, The Realist Historical Novel, The Revisionist Historical Novel, The Metahistorical Novel and Historiographic Metafiction, ranging from "realistic and seemingly 'factual' presentations of historically documented characters and events on the one hand, and predominately metafictional reflections on the possibilities and limits of historical knowledge on the other" (Kotte, 46). Nünning therefore views Historiographic Metafiction as simply one form of today's historical fiction. While the first two categories can be ignored for the purpose of this study, as

²² Cf. Kotte, 46-56.

they represent traditional approaches to historical fiction, the last are relevant in that they have postmodern traits.

The Revisionist Historical Novel reflects the recent trend in historiography of engaging with the lives of ordinary people, with individuals belonging to a social group that has been neglected before in writing history, at a specific time and space. It is also the first type that does not commit itself to historical “realness”, instead it embraces “apocryphal history, creative anachronism, historical fantasy”²³ (McHale, 90). Thus, it challenges and simultaneously complements traditional approaches of portraying history²⁴ from above by giving voice to ordinary people, telling their side of the story, which often goes together with a fragmented, non-linear plot. While fragmentation and the ordinary protagonists found in this type of historical fiction might be an indicator for postmodernism, it does not contain elements that could be regarded as self-reflexive. The Revisionist Historical Novel therefore contains elements of both, traditional and postmodern approaches to history.

One of the most fundamental differences compared to the first three categories in Nünning’s classification is already revealed by the name of the fourth one, the use of metafiction in the Metahistorical Novel. While still being concerned with past events in this category, the perspective from which the plot is told mostly shifts to the present. By doing so, postmodern elements enter the stage with the aim of questioning recollections of the past and how subjectivity of the narrating instance can influence depictions of history. The Metahistorical Novel completely does away with the notion of objectivity, celebrating the awareness that all histories are constructed and biased by those who tell them. Problematic aspects of presenting past events are interwoven in these novels through, for instance, improbable versions of history that have to be deduced as such on the parts of the readers. On a more stylistic level Metahistorical novels are characterized by their richness of diverse intertextual allusions underlining the inextricable link between the present and the past.

The definition of the “Metahistorical Novel” also applies to the last category, Historiographic Metafiction, with the exception of metafictional elements not being used implicitly, but explicitly. In this type the readers need not infer implausible renditions of the past themselves, because of the narrators’ metafictional guiding,

²³ McHale uses the term apocryphal history to refer to versions of (fictional) history that either supplement or contradict traditional conceptions of history, “the official history”.

²⁴ Cf. McHale, 22.

which is highly skeptical of portraying history objectively. It is the narrators who decide what, when and how to share their knowledge of the past with the audience, occasionally commenting on their omnipotence in the fictional world of a historical novel. First and foremost narration then becomes playing and constantly breaking with the expectations of the readership.

It goes without saying that complex historical novels like those by Joseph O'Connor still cannot be classified as belonging to any one of the five categories, as they bear traces of more than one category. Nevertheless, Nünning's proposed typology is still helpful in two ways. First it revises Hutcheon's notion of Historiographic Metafiction and thus questions the issue if subsuming every new fictional account of the past under one label really makes sense, which he clearly negates. Second, his typology provides literary scholars with a well argued tool to further differentiate and analyze literary works in the increasingly expanding landscape of historical fiction.

3. About the Author of the Novels

In 1963 Joseph O'Connor²⁵ was born in Dublin, Ireland, where he still resides. He graduated with an M.A. in Anglo-Irish literature at the University College of Dublin. Prior to his successful career as an author he was a journalist contributing to the Irish broadsheet newspaper *Sunday Tribune* and US men magazine *Esquire*. He still pursues his journalistic career with features on *Drivetime*, an Irish radio news program. His literary career began with *Cowboys and Indians* (1989), which was already shortlisted for the Whitebread award. Several literary efforts followed, including novels, short stories and stage plays.

Being Irish himself, it seems natural that his literary efforts for the most part circle among past and present Ireland and its residents. He expressed desire to create an Irish-American trilogy of novels that are loosely connected, representing his latest novels. These novels laid the foundation for being honored with the renowned Irish PEN Award for outstanding contributions to literature in 2012. With the first book

²⁵ Information is taken from his official website. For a more detailed biography see <http://www.josephoconnorauthor.com/about-long.html>.

of the trilogy *Star of the Sea* (2002) O'Connor finally had his breakthrough. The book was shortlisted for several important prizes and became an international number one bestseller. *Redemption Falls* (2007), the second installment of the trilogy, was in no way inferior to *Star of the Sea* in terms of success and literary complexity. Both novels saw the author to engage in complex literary experiments in reworking events of the past in a postmodernist manner that resulted in two of the most aspiring novels of the past decade. The last piece of the trilogy and latest novel of O'Connor *Ghost Light* (2010) leaves the playful path of its predecessors, following a more conventional, straightforward style of narration and plot.

Although all of his novels are of high literary quality, it is *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls* that can be seen as exceptional in O'Connor's career due to their complexity and uniqueness. Besides their literary qualities they are important examples of accounting for the past and remembering tragic events as effectively as possible within the framework of a fictional work. Referring to *Star of the Sea's* approach O'Connor comments

I believe we need those stories, whether we know it or not. They are part of the process by which insight becomes at least possible. There is a profound human need to remember authentically, and, for me, that requirement can sometimes be met in the intimate space of fiction. So the task, when writing about disaster, is to confront all the technical challenges that any writer must try hard to overcome-provide variety of tone, an involving narrative, believable characters, music in the prose, rhythmic counterpoint, a range of voices, a formal aesthetic that can support the wider aim-while not misappropriating or simplifying historical pain. And that is not easy. (Estévez-Saá and O'Connor, 163-164).

Given this self-imposed task when writing about disaster, it seems inevitable that his novels result in complicated, not uncommonly nerve-wrecking literary efforts for the readers. In trying to authentically depict two of the greatest disasters of the nineteenth century with its multitudinous factors and facets, O'Connor had to refute portraying said calamities from a one-sided or even romantic view. Instead, he chose to cover a wide spectrum a wide array of characters and media.

3.1. *Star of the Sea* (2002)

3.1.1. Plot

The eponymous coffin ship *Star of the Sea*, a former slaver, sets sails for the last time in her history. Following her on the supposedly 26 day journey from Queenstown, Ireland to New York City during the height of the Irish Famine in 1847 the novel revolves around some of the characters aboard the ship that could not be more diverse in terms of class, religion and origin. "We have thirty-seven crew, 402 ½ ordinary steerage passengers...and fifteen in the First-Class quarters or superior staterooms" (O'Connor, 2003, 3), whereby each of these groups are represented by one or several major characters.

Needless to say, there is a vast difference of comfort and living conditions for these groups on the *Star of the Sea*. While the First Class resides in luxurious cabins, the ordinary passengers, located in the steerage, carve out a miserable existence with a plethora of them famishing to death along the way. This fact creates numerous instances, in which these two worlds clash at each other, with the First Class Members not uncommonly commenting on the ordinary travelers in a condescending tone, to say the least. For instance, when some steerage passengers loudly lament the death of their compatriots, Cpt. Lockwood remarks in his logbook that "First Class passengers were complaining about the disturbance. Lady Kingscourt, in particular, was a little concerned that her children might be distressed by the queer proceedings" (O'Connor, 2003, 34).

The main plot takes place aboard the vessel, yet the readers also get to know some of the characters' backgrounds - therefore also about the conditions before and during the Famine - and their development in flashbacks. It "dramatises the complicated and intertwined histories of England, Ireland and the United States as a relationship defined by unavoidable circumstance, colonial exploitation and personal struggle and trauma" (Beville, 13). The novel itself is a book within a book, with one of the major characters Dixon, an US - American journalist and would-be novelist, telling the story of the voyage entitled "An American Abroad: Notes of London and Ireland in 1847". As the ship farther explores the Atlantic Ocean, the reader also gradually gets to know the characters and their underlying motives for the journey and their behavior on board. During the course of the voyage it also becomes clear that almost all of the protagonist's lives were already intertwined before the voyage.

Through the gathering of written evidences of some of the major characters, Dixon is able to present different angles in “his” book. Immediately at the beginning the reader is confronted with the fact that there will be a murder on board and who will be involved in this treacherous plot. Although several interwoven storylines are presented, the question throughout the novel, first and foremost, remains and is still unsolved when the anchors are dropped in the USA, will the murder actually happen and will it involve the predestined characters?

In the first flashbacks the readers are confronted with the past lives of Mary Duane and David Merridith. Both grew up together in Connemara, Ireland, yet to quite different conditions. While David is the son of a wealthy landlord, the Lord of Kingscourt, Mary’s mother is the former nanny and housemaid at the mansion of the Merridiths. Mary and David’s friendship at some point turns into a romantic relationship, which the landlord severely disapproves of. At the request of his father David ends the relationship to become married to a neighboring landlord’s daughter. With the prospect of a pre-arranged marriage he decides to upset his father’s plans, as he recently met another woman, Laura Markham he feels drawn to. Infuriated by David’s subsequent marriage with Laura, Lord Kingscourt expels his son, who settles down in London. After an initial happy wedded life and the birth of two sons, the couple becomes estranged. While Laura starts an affair with Grantley Dixon, the narrator of the story, her husband regularly visits brothels at the East End of London. The family life is shattered even more when David receives a letter by his father’s tenant, complaining about the continuously increasing taxes. Unable to pay their taxes they threaten to harm his father. David fails contacting his father, as Lord Kingscourt consequently rejects his son’s letters. At the notice of his father’s impending death he rushes to the mansion of his family in Connemara, where the father dies in his son’s arms. Now being the sole heir of the mansion, David learns that the former wealth of his family is entirely gone. To liquidate his father’s debts David and his family have to give up their home in London. As so many others in that period they seek to establish themselves in the New World to start afresh.

Another major character of the book, Pius Mulvey, also originates from Connemara. When his parents die rather early, he has to struggle through life with his brother Nicholas at a time when food is already scarce in Ireland. At first Pius is presented as caring for his brother, he even “feign[s] lack of appetite, hoping Nicholas would take what he left” (O’Connor, 2003, 93). Pius finds solace in music,

as he becomes a balladeer, playing in local pubs to make ends meet. There the fates of Pius and Mary clash, quickly becoming lovers. Pius' life takes a decisive turn, as he learns of Mary's pregnancy and his brother's decision to enter the priesthood. Unable to cope with these factors, adding up to the already drastic situation, he secretly leaves Connemara for London, abandoning Mary Duane and their unborn child.

Under a new name he quickly becomes a skilled fraudster among the streets of England's capital, "earning his bread by swindling and robbing" (O'Connor, 2003, 183) for the next two years, to an extent that makes other swindlers angry. Being snitched on by one of his colleagues, he finds himself in Newgate Prison, one of the harshest jails at that time, serving a seven year sentence of hard labor. After a spectacular escape during which he bestially kills a guard, he, among other professions, becomes a teacher, assuming the identity of William Swales. At first Swales accompanies Pius, forming a friendship, however, when he realizes the potential of taking on Swale's identity, he kills him instantly. At school he is reminded of being a father himself, who has not seen his child once. Due to feelings of guilt and the impending discovery of his true identity he heads back to Connemara, where he finds Mary married to her brother living in terrible conditions. Nevertheless, jealous Pius refuses to help the starving family, leaving no other option for his Brother Nicholas than to kill himself and his child.

Traumatized by the events, Mary relocates to Dublin, despising Pius for what he has done to his family. In Dublin she works as a prostitute, among whose clients happens to be David Merridith. Unable to recognize his former lover, he offers her to work as a nanny at their home in Dublin. Together with Merridith's family she leaves Ireland for good, but before she embarks the ship she sends a note to a criminal organization called the Else be Liabes, a group of upset tenants of Irish landlords, revealing Pius Mulvey's deeds that should have him murdered. However, the organization has other plans, for they inform Pius Mulvey they would spare his life, if he accomplishes to murder David during the voyage on the Star of the Sea for not adequately helping the tenants.

As the anchors are dropped the murder finally happens, though involving other protagonists than the readers might have expected given the do or die situation of Pius Mulvey. David is not killed by Pius, but by Grantley, the narrator of the story, because of his love for David's wife. The passengers of the first class disembark in

New York harbor, while the steerage passengers have to be quarantined to curb danger of infection.

3.1.2. Setting and Background

Perhaps the most striking difference compared to other novels depicting the Great Famine is *Star of the Sea*'s setting. Although an estimated "one and a half million left Ireland" (Ward, 93), there has not been a novel playing on a so called "coffin ship" during the crossing of the Atlantic. Those vessels were mostly ill-equipped and overtly overcrowded with passengers in the steerage, causing high death rates during the voyage, hence the name "coffin ships" or "fever ships".

Aboard, the "life in steerage was miserable at best...space, food, air, and sanitary facilities were at a suffocating minimum as shippers crammed in as large a human cargo possible" (Wakin, 28). In his take Joseph O'Connor describes the drastic situation of the coffin ship *Star of the Sea* during the height of the Great Famine in 1847 on board as follows

One lavatory was cracked, the other clogged and overflowing; the cubicles infested with legions of hissing rats. By seven in the morning the ammoniac stench, constant as the cold and the cries of steerage would have invaded that floating dungeon with savage force [...]. Rotten food, rotten flesh, rotten fruit of rotting bowels, you smelt it on your clothes, your hair, your hands; on the glass you drank from and the bread you ate. Tobacco smoke, vomit, stale perspiration, mildewed clothes, filthy blankets and rotgut whiskey. (O'Connor, 2003, xv).

Such are the conditions most of the characters, namely the steerage passengers, have to endure in *Star of the Sea*. Considering O'Connor's drastic picture of the conditions aboard, the miserable circumstances inevitably led to endemic waves of diseases among passengers of such ships:

The first symptom was generally a reeling in the head, followed by a swelling pain, as if the head were going to burst. Next came excruciating pains in the bones, and then a swelling of the limbs, commencing with the feet, in some cases ascending the body, and again descending before it reached the head, stopping at the throat. The period of each stage varied in different patients; some of whom were covered with yellow, watery pimples, and others with red and purple spots, that turned into putrid sores. (Whyte, 44).

Above quote describes symptoms typical of the number one death cause during the voyages on such coffin ships, typhus. Given the immigrants' conditions, the destined locations were not too keen on accommodating them with the prospect of spreading diseases among their new homes. With approximately eighty percent of all immigration countries²⁶, most of the Irish fled to the United States that were now forced to either help the poor Irish while simultaneously running the risk of spreading diseases in their country or to refuse the ship to dock onto their harbors, which would lead to the certain death of most of the passengers.

In New York City, the *Star of the Sea's* destination, the former scenario proved to be disastrous when in 1847 20% of recorded infections were attributed to secondary spread in the city, the other percentage were infections caught on board²⁷. Therefore, passengers mostly could not disembark immediately – also due to the sheer amount of ships waiting to dock in -, but had to wait until they were granted passage into the harbor, where they were then treated in quarantine stations. Therefore, “[a]nyone with fever was removed to the quarantine station on Staten Island and the ship itself was quarantined for 30 days” (Irish Potato Famine). Evidently, even more immigrants died during this process that could last up to weeks²⁸. Those who managed to stay alive at last were safe from starvation and the hardships of the voyage. For those who finally could set foot on dry land soon also had to realize that the United States of America was not the Promised Land, as “Irish immigrants were disliked for a number of reasons: they were feared as carriers of diseases, as potential burdens on the local taxes and, of particular worry to the native laboring population, as competition for jobs” (Kinealy, 303).

Although the main plot of the book takes place aboard the ship during the famine, in flashbacks the protagonists' background, and their lives in Connemara, Ireland prior to the famine is also portrayed. In 1847 the conditions could not have been worse, as the estimated produce of potato crop in Ireland had shrunk nearly to an eighth compared to pre-famine standards²⁹. The already poor tenants simply could not afford to pay their rates to their landlords or agents, who in turn had to pay the loss of their debtors to the British. Therefore, landlords started to mass evicting

²⁶ Cf. Ward, 93.

²⁷ Cf. Gelston and Jones, 813.

²⁸ Cf. Emigration, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/ashorthistory/archive/intro186.shtml>.

²⁹ Cf. Bourke, 11.

their tenants as a consequence of the poor potato production³⁰. Under armed protection the landlords drove their tenants from their homes. The combination of these factors must have made emigration inevitable, yet the Promised Land often did not turn out as the Irish had hoped for.

3.2. *Redemption Falls* (2007)

3.2.1. Plot

At its core the plot in Joseph O'Connor's *Redemption Falls* takes place at an eponymous town in the Northwest at the end of the American Civil War in 1865. In flashbacks the readers get to know about the past of the protagonists, whose fates now meet in the town of Redemption Falls in the war ridden United States of America.

James Con O'Keeffe grows up in Dublin in a time that sees the country in dire straits. During the time of the Great Famine O'Keeffe publicly speaks out against the Crown's policies attributing "Irish Famine to English misrule" (O'Connor, 2008, 332). At the calamity's peak in the mid 1840s he is even suspected of having planned an armed rebellion against the English Government. Being accused of treason he is sentenced to death by hanging, which is only commuted due to his influential father. Nevertheless, he is punished by having to work at one of the most remote parts of the kingdom then, on Van Diemen's Land. There he also enjoys privileges, eventually even planning on raising a family with his newlywed wife, a prospect which is shattered when his daughter, aged two months, dies. During an identity crisis O'Keeffe decides to leave his wife and flee from the island due to "love of country, which is second only to the love felt by some for the Maker". (O'Connor, 2008, 413). In a turbulent getaway in a simple rowboat with three fellow convicts he escapes the island only to be washed up as sole surviving member at an uninhabited island resembling "the size of a Connemara's patch" (O'Connor, 2008, 81) during the flood. After weeks of desolation he was found almost losing his mind by a ship crew.

A time leap later in the early 1850s O'Keeffe is a well-known orator and lecturer, named "The Blade", praised as the "greatest orator in the United States at the present hour...that only Mr. Dickens can run him a race" (O'Connor, 2008, 48).

³⁰ Cf. Litton, 95.

He earned himself fame by retelling his story of rebellion against the government and his life on Van Diemen's Land and on the aforementioned island. Especially Irish expatriates are attracted to the charismatic orator, lauding him for his political endeavors at their home country. At one of his speeches he meets his future wife Lucia-Cruz McLelland, with whom he has a troubled marriage.

At the dawn of the American Civil War he calls his compatriots to arms in favor of the The Union, although having southern sympathies - he is open to slavery, but only if the slaves are kept under good conditions-, even becoming the brigadier general of his regiment. Having fought at all the major battles in the war he is stripped of rank for slapping General Sherman, for O'Keeffe accuses him of inappropriate strategies used in the battles.

After this incident he is commissioned to be governor at a newly inhabited territory in the Northwest of the USA at a town called Redemption Falls. He lives there with runaway slave Elizabeth Longstreet, who now serves as his housekeeper. With the Civil War having left his mark on O'Keeffe's psychology he reluctantly controls his territory, making it easy for criminals and a self-proclaimed vigilante, led by revolutionary Cole Mc Laurensen, a southern rebel and also Irish expatriate, to cause trouble without having to fear consequences. At a crime scene of gruesome murder again inflicted by a criminal gang, O'Keeffe and his sheriffs discover a presumably mute boy, named Jeddo Mooney, who seemed to have witnessed the murder. Shortly afterwards an overchallenged O'Keeffe writes to his wife, begging her to come to the territory to support him.

Lucia-Cruz McLelland, an aspiring author, is still in New York at the novel's outset. Being left alone by her husband she finds it hard not to engage in an adulterous relationship with Allen Winterton, yet ultimately declining his desires. Finally arrived in the territory she has a hard time in coping with her new environment. First, the locals despise her for her noble appearance, as she originates from a wealthy European family, second O'Keeffe seems indifferent with her arrival in the territory, and third she cannot bond with the mute boy, whom her husband wishes to keep. She decides to leave the territory, yet is prevented from doing so as her husband restricts all passengers to depart, wishing to keep her in Redemption Falls.

The mute boy sneaked into the confederate army for unknown reasons now finding him displaced in the town as the war draws to its close. His escapes from O'Keeffe's house are a daily fare, from which he however always comes back,

gradually accepting O’Keeffe as a father figure. Over time they form something like a friendship. Although the boy became mute during the war, he is sometimes heard singing during night times by the house servant.

Eliza Duane Mooney is the sister of the mute boy, who starts walking across half the continent in search of him after receiving a letter containing his approximate whereabouts. During her march she is physically and sexually abused by Cole McLaurenson’s vigilante in the absence of their leader, eventually becoming pregnant from Cole’s brother. As Cole realizes the crime he executes the culprits of his gang, including his brother. He decides to marry Eliza and serve as the baby’s parent, since Cole believes “[n]o McLaurenson child will enter the world a bastard” (O’Connor, 2008, 274), eventually informing her that her brother is in the custody of the territory’s governor. In a cloak and dagger operation they abduct the boy from the governor’s house. On O’Keeffe’s notice about the boy’s kidnapping Lucia returns to her husband willing to support him in the search of the boy.

At this stage Lucia’s would-be-lover Allen Winterton from New York enters the scene, who in reality is a government spy coming to Redemption Falls to confirm rumors about O’Keeffe’s laissez faire policies as governor as well as his assumed alliance with Cole Mc Laurenson and his gang. Not solely motivated by his professional mission, but also by the prospect of finally winning Lucia over, he, passing himself off as a cartographer, informs O’Keeffe of the government’s plan of mapping the territory. When secretly addressing Lucia in the territory he is again rejected by her.

Accidentally, Allen witnesses the boy’s kidnapping by Cole and Eliza, which he follows to a secret location outside of Redemption Falls. Allen wants to inspire confidence, proposing to mediate between the parties. Eliza trusts him and hands him a letter addressed to O’Keeffe that would reveal Eliza as the boy’s sister and, therefore, explain the reason for the crime. Allen informs O’Keeffe about the boy’s location, but withholding Eliza’s letter. At the same time he informs Lucia and Cole that the governor is destined to take the boy away from Eliza, warning them of O’Keeffe’s impending revenge.

In the last chapter Allen’s game of playing both ends against the middle, probably motivated by his rejected love, seems to turn out perfectly, the two parties’ face off ends in the death of most participants. They blindly shoot at each other, resulting in the death of Cole and Eliza. Unbeknownst to O’Keeffe that he killed the

boy's sister, he in turn gets killed by the boy in an act of infuriation. Of the main protagonists only the boy, Lucia, Allen and Elizabeth survive the shooting.

In the epilogue the narrator who collected all the materials reveals what became of the survivors of this tragedy, informing the readers that the boy got adopted by Lucia's relatives and was taken to New York. On the last page it is revealed ultimately that the editor of the book and collector of materials revolving around the involved persons found in the book is "silent Jeddo Mooney, a boy who changed his surname, whose silence is broken by having been your narrator" (O'Connor, 2008, 457).

3.2.2. Setting and Background

How does a nation cope with its unbending will for expansion, while simultaneously being revolutionized by a Civil War that threatens to divide of what ought to be United States? In newly established areas, such as the Montana territory, founded in 1864, a lack of organization and political stability seems only inevitable. Given the future state's birth date "[a]mid the chaos of the closing months of the Civil War and Lincoln's assassination , Montana was largely forgotten in Washington and key federal positions remained unfilled" (Malone, 100). Although President Lincoln appointed a governor, Sidney Edgerton, in 1865 the power was handed over to Thomas Francis Meagher, the secretary of the territory, as Edgerton left Montana for Washington, seeking to raise funds for the territory³¹. This year also marks the beginning of Redemption Falls' main story line.

Said secretary would become governor of Montana twice, with his second term being cut short due to his mysterious death in the Missouri River. The vita of this person is more than astounding:

He was born in Waterford, Ireland, in 1823. He was educated and trained in law. By the time he was twenty-two he had become deeply involved in Irish agitation against the English, and the French Revolution of 1848 fed the fires in him. He was arrested and convicted of sedition, and he was sentenced to be hanged. This sentence, however, was changed to banishment in 1849, and he was shipped to Tasmania³² and, via Brazil, landed in New York. Here he found himself in his element...and lectured throughout the

³¹ Cf. Malone, 100.

³² In the novel the protagonist is shipped to Van Diemen's land, Tasmania's original name. The British Empire used the island as a penal colony, in which convicts had to labor for free settler or serve in public works. After their sentence convicts could leave the island for good or settle on the island.

east. The Civil War gave the mercurial Meagher a further opportunity in action. He organized an Irish brigade and became general...But then the war ended, and the excitement was over...Meagher sought further adventure in the West. (Toole, 100-101).

Needless to say, the protagonist of *Redemption Falls* James Con O'Keefe is closely based on Meagher. Bits and pieces are added to, or are left out from, Meagher's biography for dramaturgic reasons, yet the resemblance of both lives cannot be denied. Even the protagonist's name is a hint at the historical person, as Meagher used to publish articles in Harper's *New Monthly Magazine* under the pseudonym Cornelius O'Keefe³³.

Meagher was arrested for taking part in a failed Irish nationalist uprising, known as the Young Irelander Rebellion of 1848, the Famine Rebellion or Battle of Ballingarry. As a consequence, Meagher served a sentence on Tasmania, from which Meagher and fellow rebel John Mitchel escaped seeking shelter in the USA. In the American Civil War they fought on opposite sides. The complicated relationship between these two men, though dramatized, can also be found in the novel with the character of John Fintan Duggan mirroring Mitchell.

Further similarities are his nickname acquired by his orations, "Meagher of the Sword" (Athearn, 5), resembling "O'Keefe of the Blade" in the novel. His disdain for General Sherman resulted in a letter, ranting against Sherman's military tactic, whereas in the novel he even personally slaps Sherman³⁴. Heavy drinking at work and problems arising from his alcohol abuse can be found in both biographies³⁵. Having a try at becoming an author to depict his adventures in the Civil War is also not fictional, yet as "so many of his other projects, this one was laid aside before it could be complete" (Athearn, 138).

Examining the life of Meagher it becomes clear that the war torn and depressed mental state painted in *Redemption Falls* does not fit with the actual persona. He is characterized as "truculent, noisy, brash, verbose...restless, high strung and eager for adventure and change" (Toole, 100). While Meagher seemed to be an engaging character that sought to improve the conditions in Montana, often requesting help from Washington³⁶, the governor in the novel is mostly indifferent to the drastic situation in the newly established territory. However, in both cases they seemed to be unable to establish peaceful conditions in the territory that can be

³³ Cf. Athearn, 163.

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 96.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 124.

³⁶ Cf. Toole, 124.

mainly attributed to the chaotic circumstances the USA found themselves after the war, however, the governor's reluctance in Redemption Falls further adds fuel to the fire. In short, O'Connor took Meagher's biography as a backdrop, exaggerating, inventing stages of his life to further dramatize the plot.

This also means that O'Connor necessarily had to reproduce or rather refurbish the circumstances in territorial Montana to render the plot plausible. At that time Montana could be seen as melting pot for Unionists and Confederates, with both parties being split up in radical and moderate fractions.

The first census taken in the territory, which was registered in 1870, reported a non-Indian population of 20.595...7.371- came originally from the northern states. Another 2.272 were western born, and 7.979 hailed from other countries. A total of 891 came from the states of the Confederacy, and, 2.060 were from Missouri and other border states. (Malone, 97)

A peaceful coexistence seemed therefore difficult, as the question of slavery almost tore the nation into halves. Now nevertheless these opposing fractions found themselves in one and the same state. Although the number of "confederate sympathizers never came near gaining a majority of the Montana vote...they sometimes raised enough hell to give observers that impression...powerful enough to challenge the Unionists" (Malone, 98). This constellation is also mirrored in O'Connor's plot, in which vigilantes instill terror in Redemption Falls, demanding to maintain the southern course, including keeping the system of slavery.

However the division of Unionists and Confederacy was more complex and far from clear cut, especially when the governor of a territory was Irish. The major part of Irish expatriates fought for the Unionists, as they mostly immigrated to the Northern States of America. For the Confederacy, though significantly fewer, Irishmen also went to war, often leading to inner disunity among them. Irish expatriates of course had affinities for fellow compatriots, which then came amiss with siding for either one or the other side of the US-American conflict. The Unionist O'Keeffe, in other words Meagher, had southern sympathizers for the sake of origin, while, at the same time, paradoxically being confronted with extreme hatred among Irish expatriates for not joining their side³⁷.

³⁷ Cf. Malone, 101.

3.3. Connection between the Novels

Apart from the narratological similarities, which will be discussed in section 4, the novels are also loosely linked in their plot. As it is stated in the description on the back cover of *Redemption Falls* the plot sets in “1865. Eighteen years after the Irish famine-ship *Star of the Sea* docked at New York”. The author incorporated “a daughter of its Journey, Eliza Duane Mooney” into the novel, immediately establishing hypertextual links to his earlier work. Although never stated directly, it can easily be deduced that Eliza must be the daughter of *Star of the Sea*’s Mary Duane, considering the information on the cover as well as the information in the book, describing Eliza as “[o]nly daughter of Mary Mooney, of Connemara, Ireland; missing, presumed deceased, in Louisiana” (O’Connor, 2008, 275). Apart from that reference the readers do not get more information on the lives of the other survivors of *Star of the Sea*.

In addition to this lineage of characters, O’Connor often alludes to his former work, especially in the scenes dealing with Eliza. She often remembers her roots in Connemara³⁸ and her mother’s fate, as “[t]hey came over on the coffinships with the keening and the jig steps”(O’Connor, 2008, 9). At one instance Eliza thinks of her mother and begins to pray, when she is already on her way in search of her brother, reciting, although modified, Christian hymn, “Mother of Christ, *Star of the Sea*. Mary, my mother, pray for me” (O’Connor, 2008, 7).

On the contrary, though debatable if intended, in *Star of the Sea* O’Connor already foreshadows some of the aspects dealt with in *Redemption Fall*’s plot, such as the expansion further westwards on the American continent as well as the Irish participation in the American Civil War:

By the time *Star*’s survivors were permitted finally to come into Manhattan, every hospital, shelter and almshouse on the island had been overwhelmed. Anti-immigrant feeling was strong and growing. Thousands of new immigrants were simply paid by the authorities to get out of the city and move west. No doubt some were among the 80,000 native Irishmen who would fight for the Union in the Civil War. And others were among the 20,000 of their countrymen who would take up arms for the cause of the Confederacy; for the legal right of a freedom-loving white man to regard a black man as a commodity. (O’Connor, 2003, 387).

³⁸ Cf. O’Connor, 2008, 5.

These allusions and links however are kept on a low level so that *Redemption Falls* can be read without knowing *Star of the Sea* entirely. It seems as if O'Connor wanted to give his loyal readership an extra treat, for knowing *Star of the Sea* creates another intertextual layer that further increases an enjoyable reading experience.

4. Postmodern Devices in O'Connor's Novels

Given the complexity and innovativeness of Joseph O'Connor's novels, this thesis can only provide a short compendium of postmodern devices, illuminating some of the most interesting aspects from a theoretical literary viewpoint. Referring back to the theoretical part of the thesis, the novels will be analyzed according to three criteria that are typical of postmodern literature, especially of historical novels, that are intertextuality, fragmentation (of history) and metafiction. The following section, the centerpiece of this diploma thesis, seeks to explore in which ways O'Connor employed the three devices.

Examining intertextuality this thesis mainly follows Stocker's framework for reasons of clarity, as it will be worth distinguishing between hypertextual allusions, referring to individual texts and authors, and similtextuality, hinting at literary genres. While the first set of references will be mainly analyzed according to how and why O'Connor incorporates allusions to earlier texts, exploiting them by means of pastiche or parody, the latter seeks to unravel in which ways O'Connor follows, but also subverts literary genres of the Victorian period. Although excluded from Stocker's study on intertextuality, paratextual features as defined by Genette will also be investigated, when analyzing some of the aspects framing the main text, such as illustrations, epigraphs and footnotes. As O'Connor heavily fragmented the two historical novels, the corresponding subsection directs its attention to the different voices and text types, discussing some of the most outstanding forms of chapters that diverge from traditional narratological patterns. Metafictional elements and their diverse appearances will be the focus of the last subsection. It will give answers to questions, as such as how O'Connor incorporated also his voice and his views regarding to crafting novels and literature as a whole into the text. Above all, the

three devices will be scrutinized in how far they contribute to the overall structure of the texts and how they shape the readers' understanding of the two novels.

4.1. Hypertextuality – Allusions to Individual Texts

4.1.1. Allusions to Charles Dickens and His Novels

Critics have compared *Star of the Sea* to novels of the nineteenth century, especially linking O'Connor's books to Dickens's works, referring to "the scope of the social issues and strata it addresses, the constant shift between comedy, pathos and suspense, and the truculence of its characters" (Poulain, 2007), which also applies to *Redemption Falls*. When asked about his influences and attitude towards novelists of the nineteenth century, O'Connor states:

I love and dislike Dickens's work, in fairly equal measure. I think it often embodies contradictions which work against its own purpose. Consider, for example, the hero of *Oliver Twist*. Here is a child whose mother died in labor, leaving him to be brought up by bullies in a workhouse, subjected to extraordinary cruelty and abuse, later raised by professional thieves and prostitutes-but he talks like a little member of the British royal family. He is so utterly well-mannered that the novel, though it is a triumph of technical storytelling, fails to convince on a psychological level. And of course, as the novel progresses, we learn why Oliver is so eerily courteous. Our hero is revealed to be secretly the son of a gentleman, and Dickens simply can't bear to have him be as ordinary as the child of a laborer. Thus the novel functions by precisely the snobbery that it sets out to subvert. (Estévez-Saá and O'Connor, 166-167).

O'Connor's ambiguous relationship with Dickens is also captured by the two novels in question, in which references are drawn to his work, but also to the persona of Dickens itself, even incorporating him as minor character into *Star of the Sea*. Referring to O'Connor's criticism of *Oliver Twist*'s credibility of the protagonist's behavior, he takes up the motif of an orphan in *Redemption Falls*. In his rendition, however, the child is unable to cope with his surrounding, after having experienced traumatizing events, presenting a more plausible behavior of an orphan, who grew up in most harsh conditions.

Incorporating allusions to Dickens works in postmodern literature is certainly not an invention by O'Connor, as "Dickens is the emblematic figure of Victorian fiction, if not the Victorian era. As one might expect, many Post-Victorian novels write after, or against him (Letissier in Parey, 192). However, it is O'Connor's treatment of Dickens, at times embracing but also parodying Dickens's style that make these

allusions worth scrutinizing further. Thus implementing allusions to Dickens and his works allows O'Connor to artistically act out his attitude towards Dickens.

In *Star of the Sea* the readers are presented quite a biased picture of Charles Dickens through the lens of the narrator, Grantley Dixon, an unsuccessful writer. In several instances, fueled by being jealous of his success, Dixon paints a rather negative picture of "that idiot Dickens strolling along Oxford Street doffing his topper like a victorious general among the plebeians." (O'Connor, 2002, 122). Apart from some minor appearances, the allusions to Dickens rely mostly on his novels. As noted by Parey "[w]hen Dickens enters fiction, it is first and foremost in relation to his art. In fact, representing the man is always the occasion to pass judgments on the novelist's skills and creative power." (Parey 195). This notion is perfectly exemplified in *Star of the Sea* when Charles Dickens meets Pius Mulvey, whose ballads are admired by the novelist.

Charlie or Chaz or Charles or Dickens was a writer of stories in literary magazines. He had a great curiosity for the culture of the working man, he said, for the songs and sayings of the labouring classes of London. Anything authentic interested him greatly and he had found Mulvey's song fantastically interesting. Was it terribly old, he wanted to know? How had Mulvey come to learn it? (O'Connor, 2003, 190)

The readers then bear witness of how Dickens may have hit on the idea of what would become one of his most famous novels on the foundation of Mulvey's ballad. This approach of gathering information for his novels also ties in with the real Dickens, as "there is no doubt that on many occasions Dickens used certain salient characteristics of the people whom he met or knew...and then in his imagination proceeded to elaborate upon it until the character bears only a passing resemblance to the real person" (Ackroyd 1999: 126). However, Mulvey's story is far from being authentic. Since he is a turncoat, willing to adapt himself to any given situation if he can benefit from it, he tells Dickens a made-up story of the ballad's origins in order to be fed through the day. In fact, he rewrote the ballad with an Irish origin a few times, so that the lyrics fit the context of London society better. Thus, in terms of authenticity Dickens is duped by Mulvey, presenting him facts he want to hear.

He had learned it from an aged pickpocket who lived in Holborn, he lied, a Jew who ran a school for young thieves and runaways. It was indeed very old and extremely authentic. Charlie was fascinated; he kept writing down Mulvey's answers, and the faster he wrote them, the faster flowed the lies. Mulvey's ability to lie amazed even himself. Before long he almost believed he was telling the truth, so vivid was the picture of the chuckling,

sagacious Israelite, his artful little disciples and the voluble tarts who befriended them. When he ran out of inspiration he started stirring in details from Connemara ballads: the maiden betrayed by the false-hearted aristocrat, the girl of easy virtue murdered by her lover, the poor little waif sent into the workhouse. (O'Connor, 2003, 190)

Readers familiar with Dickens's work easily recognize the short summary of Mulvey's ballad as resembling the plot of *Oliver Twist*. This is further confirmed when inquiring about the Jew's name, which Mulvey reveals to be Fagan, mirroring the antagonist's name of *Oliver Twist*, Fagin, also called the "Jew". Therefore, O'Connor doubts Dickens's power of imagination, creating one of the best known novels of the nineteenth century on the basis of a fictional story told by a criminal. By doing so, O'Connor questions the skills and reputation of one of England's best known writers "in an act of resistance to the dominant cultural perspective" (Parey, 198).

However, at the same time the criticism should not be taken too seriously, as the characters of *Star of the Sea* often point out that "everything is in the way the material is composed" (O'Connor, 2003, 394). As a consequence, "facts did not matter: *that was the secret*. He wrote and scratched out; rewrote, refined (O'Connor, 2003, 102)", underpinning that the way stories are told in fiction is more important than facts, while sticking to plausible renditions of past events, which applies to both authors, Dickens and O'Connor. Of course, the readers know that this instance between Mulvey and Dickens did not factually happen, yet it could have occurred that Dickens got his idea from an opportunistic balladeer, would-be schoolmaster and murderer, which correlates with O'Connor's overall tenor of the book.

Similarly, in *Redemption Falls*, although not as character, Dickens's works are treated subversively at first glance. At the outset of a chapter, the readers find a metatextual reference in the form of a short review of another novel by Dickens, *Bleak House*, written by would-be novelist Lucia, rebuking him for implementing eye dialect in his dialogues:

An author should consider hard before spelling a character's dialogue phonetically. It is usually a failure of the imagination. He thinks his own pronunciation the standard from which all others deviate, are primitively charming, delightfully melodious, or shamefully inferior to the norm. But this is a matter of standpoint, not style...He is trying, perhaps unconsciously, to tell us something significant about his creations. That they are somehow not as human as their creator. He does not grasp that his own accent could be rendered phonetically too. To others – to his characters – to most of the world – what he speaks is a bizarre Creole.

Robert Oates Ellis [Lucia-Cruz McLelland-O'Keeffe]. From her review of *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens...*The Gramercy Quaterly*, Spring 1854 (O'Connor, 2007, 192)

In *Bleak House*, the readers might find sentences in dialogue as “there was other gentlemen come down Tom-all-Alone’s a-prayin, but they all mostly sed as the t’other wuns prayed wrong, and all mostly sounded as to be a-talking to themselves, or a-passing blame on the t’others, and not a-talkin to us.” (Dickens, 2011, 654), giving Dickens the chance to “suggest not only the personality, but the sex, age, education, occupation, geographic region, and general status of the characters” (Walpole, 191). Juxtaposing the review to an Irish song on the next page that depicts greetings of Irish expatriates in the USA to their home families, is certainly not a coincidence.

Dear Mammy, tis Danny, I’m in Alabamee,
An sendin a wee invitayshun.
Tis time you ship’d over, shure life her is clover,
In dis-here American nayshun
(O’Connor, 2007, 194)

Throughout the two novels O’Connor also makes use of eye dialect, indicating the attributes of his characters. One of the major characters, Elizabeth Longstreet, black and former slave, tells her side of the story solely through the medium of interview transcripts, in which O’Connor renders her supposedly uneducated, southern, black accent. Thus, implementing the criticism of the review might indicate that O’Connor is well aware of the subjective nature of phonetically spelling the songs, transcripts, dialogues, etc. and, therefore, is immune to being criticized. In short, the inclusion of eye dialect represents another example, in which his allusions to Dickens should be perceived as tongue-in-cheek rather than as being critical of him. In both novels he seemingly paints a negative picture of the writer, while subtly reproducing those aspects of Dickens he supposedly criticizes. Summarized, with regards to the allusion revolving around Dickens and his works, O’Connor “displays the blend of homage and challenge often to be found in the self-conscious rewritings of the past that historiographic metafiction are” (Parey, 198).

4.1.2. Allusions to Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind*

Setting a novel’s plot shortly after the American Civil War in a newly established territory, an author cannot avoid touching upon the problematic aspect of slavery, whose practice lasted much longer than the war it sought to abolish. Although playing

only a minor part in *Redemption Falls*, the readers get to know the individual characters' view on slavery. On top of that, black runaway slave Elizabeth Longstreet, who works as a housemaid for the protagonist, embodies the hardships and cruelties of the 'peculiar institution' best in the transcripts of her interviews. As she takes up recollecting the happenings revolving around the plot of *Redemption Falls* she tells her story of how she came to work for O'Keeffe, recounting her life at a Southern plantation:.

The mastuh lost my father playin cards in Marianna. My Father got took away for his debt. Some say he ended in Texarkana but no way to know it. Mississippi. Georgia. Any place...Life of a slave aint but death all day...And your dread for the coming of night. Mastuh a Irishman. O'Hara his name... Wolf got more nature than O'Hara...Do ever thing but kill you...Cause he paid for you, see. You a dollar to O'Hara...You was livestock...Want you in the lust; pick his harvest; tend his children; rawhide lash for the rest of it. (O'Connor, 2007, 45)

Several similarities between this instance in *Redemption Falls* and *Gone with the Wind* can be drawn. The bulk of Mitchell's novel takes place at a Southern plantation owned by Irish immigrants, the O'Haras. Pork, the first slave owned by the head of the plantation Gerald O'Hara, was won through a game of cards. O'Hara's "natural aptitude for cards and amber liquor [. . .] brought [him] two of his three most prized possessions, his valet and his plantation" (Mitchell in Moynihan, 2008, 364).

Mitchell earned much criticism for portraying slavery, the American South and its plantation system in a romanticized manner devoid of the cruelties slaves had to endure from their masters. "[S]lavery conditions are described almost as a social class-based system, with slaves being industrious and good when supervised by gentle masters" (Gómez-Calisteo, 89), resulting in an almost amicable relationship between the house slaves and their owners. In spite of its euphemistic depiction slaves and masters the novel's success seems to be undaunted:

The paradox of *Gone with the Wind*...is that though we know that slavery was not good-natured, still we tend to forget it and let ourselves be swept by the novel...*Gone with the Wind* is so effective as a piece of sociological propaganda because it does not attempt to explain the Civil War or slavery or the antebellum South, but simply presents, as Mitchell put it, a simple story. (Gómez-Calisteo, 70)

Critics characterized *Redemption Falls* as *Gone with the Wind* rewritten by a Dublin-born apprentice to Charles Dickens' (Lynch in Moynihan, 2008, 364), referring to the setting and scope of the novel. O'Connor's rendition of the American South of the

mid-nineteenth century also falls short of presenting in-depth information on the institution of slavery. However, in his short allusion to *Gone with the Wind* he parodies Mitchell, presenting slavery in a more proper light³⁹. While Mitchell's O'Hara gains a new slave through his gambling skills, O'Connor's version loses his slave, the father of Elizabeth Longstreet. Also the relationship between slaves and masters could not be more different. The master views her as commodity at his disposal, exploiting, beating and raping her, Elizabeth, in turn, regards him as beast-like creature. Thus, O'Connor entirely does away with the romantic notion of the American South by Mitchell, instead he parodies her text, illuminating the system of slavery for what it truly is, proposing the view that "[l]ife of a slave aint but death all day" (O'Connor, 2007, 45).

4.1.3. Allusions to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*

While travelling on a steamship to Redemption Falls to support her husband in the territory, would-be novelist Lucia attempts at capturing the events, revolving around her husband's escape and his subsequent life on an uninhabited island, in the form of a novel's chapter. "She began notes toward a novel...By the time they reached the Territory she had the bones of five stories, and one almost completed piece – she called it 'Demonland'" (O'Connor, 2007, 90). In the preceding chapter the readers are confronted with Lucia's, supposedly unpublished, text. The chapter takes up a popular motif in literature, commonly known as *Robinsonade*, which is why it is not possible here to discern between hypertextuality and similtextuality, as a whole genre arose from one and the same text. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* has fascinated readers ever since its publication. The picture of a civilized man, coping with an uncivilized world has perpetrated the minds of countless authors, rewriting and revising the original story to an extent that Defoe's texts serves as a basis for a whole genre. Usually Robinsonades circle around the themes of isolation, survival, exile and self-exploration.⁴⁰ These features can also be found in O'Connor's rendition of the motif.

³⁹ Cf. Moynihan, 2008, 364.

⁴⁰ Cf. Reckwitz, 638 – 642. In his study on Robinsonades Reckwitz meticulously investigates rewritings of *Robinson Crusoe*, drawing up diverse categories to further classify the numerous texts published on this genre.

You might live twenty years, or thirty, or fifty – there was water in the rock, there were fish in the sea – but nevermore set eyes on another of your species or hear an earthly voice not your own. Like swallowing a cannonball, so terrible the grief. A gun-stone made of ice. (O'Connor, 2007, 82)

Up to this point in the novel, another generic Robinsonade - except for the second person narrator - could be expected, easily recognizable for the recipients due to the hypertext's prominence. What makes O'Connor's rewriting of the motif exceptional is his metafictional treatment of *Robinson Crusoe*, textually acknowledging the fact that the protagonist's episode on the island resembles the fictional work by Defoe. While other Robinsonades allude to the hypertext covertly, reworking specific aspects of Defoe's text, O'Connor, additionally, refers explicitly to the fictional work, placing *Robinson Crusoe* and its author on a metafictional level.

As O'Keeffe's condition drastically worsens, the narrator states, "[t]here would come no Friday, no educable savage. No footprint. No sand for a footprint." (O'Connor, 2007, 82). Thus, with this phrase, the narrator puts forward the fictional character of *Robinson Crusoe*. Basing the story on the factual report of her husband, O'Keeffe seemed to lose all hope that could be drawn from knowing the plot of *Robinson Crusoe*, in which the protagonist gradually learns to cope with his new surroundings, eventually making friends with one of the natives found on the island. In O'Connor's version the protagonist is entirely alone on the island, at one time even subtly blaming Defoe for instilling false hope in him. "Crusoe. O Curse. Curs. Ruse. Sore. Defeat. Defoe. These words you formed of the wet black stones. You would soon be an anagram of yourself" (O'Connor, 2007, 83).

O'Keeffe's desperation can also be attributed to his knowledge about the events that inspired Defoe to write his text:

Crusoe. The slaver. You knew the truer story. Because Pappy had told you the truth. He ruled his acre of sand as the crown its empire: measuring, imperturbable, unpanicked. But the Scotsman on whom he was modeled lost the power of speech, so appalling the self-confrontation. (O'Connor, 2007, 83)

Alexander Selkirk, the Scotsman the narrator is referring to, is often cited as major inspiration for Defoe's text. His real events on an uninhabited island, in fact, resembles O'Connor's version more closely than they are alike compared to *Robinson Crusoe*, as both protagonists never see another human being during their stay. Although it can be doubted that Selkirk really lost his speech, since he daily

prayed aloud⁴¹, he also fought desperately against the aspects of isolation and survival. Selkirk and O’Keeffe both become famous after their rescue for sharing their experiences with the public – Selkirk through written accounts⁴², O’Keeffe due to his public orations. O’Connor takes the usual pattern of Robinsonades, usually ending with the rescue of the stranded, a step further, showing how the protagonist is unable to cope with the trauma of solitude despite the overwhelming public success of his story.

They cheered you in the good years. Roared your name from the gods. They lifted up their children to see you. The hero who returned from the island of the damned...They did not know your truer story. There were nights, moments, when you wanted to tell them...No globe will ever know what happened in that latitude: the visions, the voices, the nights of rabid terrors, the spasm of abject screaming, the compacts with the devils. Kill anyone I love, only I beg you let me live. Any crime I will do. Any evil you command. (O’Connor, 2007, 84)

With this passage O’Connor subverts, while simultaneously criticizing the genre of Robinsonades in two ways. First, Selkirk and Crusoe both find solace in reading the bible, with Selkirk stating that “[h]e was a better Christian while in solitude than ever he was before, and feared he would ever be again” (Steele quoted in Howell, 70). Similarly, Crusoe gradually accepts Christianity throughout his stay on the island, believing in God’s providence that will rescue him from his misery. Reversing the notion of Christianity, O’Connor’s irreligious protagonist is even willing to pact with the devil only to be rescued from the island. This may be attributed to O’Keeffe not having the chance to read the bible, or, and more realistically, to the fact that as time wears on, with the prospect of eternal solitude even the most religious human being abandons all hope he or she has built upon God’s providence. Second, above citation also questions the plausibility of Robinsonades in their depiction of the life in solitude and the consequential psychological damage arising from it. Being unable to tell the whole side of a traumatic experience, Robinsonades may fail in capturing the life on the respective island accurately, although most of the texts in this genre claim that they rely on factual reports. In short, O’Connor revised the Robinsonade, adding metafictional nuances and a more realistic picture to it concerning the tormented psyche of the stories’ castaways, that cannot be found in that genre before.

⁴¹ Cf. Howell, 80.

⁴² Cf. Woodes Rogers: *Cruising Voyage round the World: First to the South Seas, thence to the East-Indies, and Homewards by the Cape of Good Hope*. London: Andrew Bell, 1718.

4.1.4. Allusions to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

In *Star of the Sea* O'Connor alludes to Brontë's novel, originally published under the male pseudonym Ellis Bell, in various different ways, not only bearing traces of hypertextuality, but also of palintextuality and metatextuality, and above all, *Wuthering Heights* also plays an active role in the plot during the course of the novel. Scrutinizing the two texts they share a similar formal style. In an interview O'Connor stated that

...the structure of, say, *Wuthering Heights* is actually very sophisticated and brave...But no nonacademic reader remembers these formal aspects of those novels, and this, it seems to me, is the true triumph of those authors. They devised structures which are an intrinsic part of the appeal of their novels, but art lies in concealing art. (Estévez-Saá and O'Connor, 169).

Following in the steps of Brontë, O'Connor also makes use of a disjointed narrative, accumulating the accounts of various characters⁴³. Apart from formal similarities, *Wuthering Heights* is mentioned several times throughout *Star of the Sea*, commencing with Dixon trying to read the novel aboard. In the following quote, O'Connor combines palintextual and metatextual reference to the novel, as he cites Brontë's work succeeded by an evaluation of it through the biased lens of the would-be novelist:

I have no pity! I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails!

Sweet Christ.

How could yet more of this sludge be pumped into the world when his own carefully constructed pieces had been rejected?...It was confused, improbable, disjointed, vague. Precisely the quality for which he had striven in his own writing.

(O'Connor, 2004,127)

Similar to the references drawn to Dickens's work he superficially savages her work. However, at the same time, Dixon's criticism is mitigated by the aspects he disapproves of, as they also characterize his, in consequence, O'Connor's work. Whenever Dixon slanders other authors, it cannot be taken at face value, since he secretly strives for their success, while his works are rejected again and again. Instead, his ramblings can be understood as playful homage to the writers of the nineteenth century, which is undermined by O'Connor's attitude towards these authors, saying that "Dickens, the Brontës, and Trollope were such brave writers, not

⁴³ Cf. Fegan, 332.

afraid to use large casts of characters, real historical events, epic settings, and sometimes quite daring techniques of narration” (Estévez-Saá and O’Connor, 169).

Concerning the plot of *Star of the Sea*, Bronte’s novel plays an important role, unfolding after Merridith has also read the book, which was left behind by Dixon on board. Merridith mistakes the pseudonym Ellis Bell for one of Dixon’s, believing that he incorporated his wife into the novel, of whom he knows she has an affair with Dixon. “We both know whom your heroine is based on. A remarkably loving portrait; I thought so anyway. You’ve captured her quite uncannily” (O’Connor, 2004, 139). The clarification of the situation on Dixon’s behalf further deteriorates the already complicated relationship between the two men. Also the murder plot is influenced by the character’s reading of *Wuthering Heights*. As Mulvey is more and more pressed into killing Merridith by the criminal gang, the *Else-be-Liables*, he gets a note, saying “GET HIM RIGHT SUNE. Els Be lybill. H.”, which, in fact, turns out to be an anagram of the title page of *Wuthering Heights* Dixon and Merridith have read. Thus, the reader could have already guessed who created the note, if he/she had noticed the word play consisted of “WUTHERING HEIGHTS by Ellis Bell. With the ‘M’ in ‘get him’ an inverted W.” (O’Connor, 2004, 394-395). Merridith’s, and in turn O’Connor’s credo that “everything is in the way the material is composed” is also exemplified in this scene. “His raw material was the novel I had given him” (O’Connor, 2004, 395), Dixon summarizes, pointing at the playful character of *Star of the Sea*, utilizing Bronte’s work in these few instances for unexpected twists and turns in the plot.

4.2. Similtextuality – Allusions to Literary Genres

4.2.1. The Victorian Novel

Since the readers of *Star of the Sea* supposedly read an authentic novel (“An American Abroad” by Grantley Dixon), crafted in the middle of the nineteenth century, O’Connor necessarily adheres to literary conventions of that period, hence he “imitates a high Victorian novel, one that actively historicizes its subject while questioning the very process of historicizing” (Conley, 7). Although the narrator of *Redemption Falls* recounts the story from a 1937 perspective, O’Connor uses the same high Victorian style as in his previous book. Apart from formal aspects, he also

includes typical Victorian gender motifs into his plots, concerning the rigid social roles that had been ascribed onto the nineteenth century man and woman.

In portraying women of the Victorian age, the most common and often stereotyped varieties of representation, the *Angel in the House*, the *Fallen Woman* and the *New Woman*⁴⁴, which can all be found in O'Connor's books. The three motifs are embodied by one or more heroines of his rich cast, diverging in their rigidity to transcend into one of the other two respective roles. The *Angel in the House* is characterized as a "domestic saint, a priestess whose moral purity and fine sensibilities preserved the sanctity of the middle-class domestic space from the corruption of the outside world" (Archibald, 5). As noticed by Logan the *Angel in the House* in Victorian literature needs not to be restricted to the domestic sphere, as the heroines' purity can even shift into the public, becoming the "angel in the town"⁴⁵. This is exemplified, and may also be attributed to her upper class origin, by David Merridith's mother, Lady Verity, whose name already hints at her noble character. Although she is not portrayed in connection to her husband, Lord Kingscourt, she is indeed the *Angel in the Town* of Kingscourt:

His mother was the most graceful human Mary Duane had ever seen. Immaculately dressed, willowy and poised, elegant as the blossom of an English Bramley, she seemed to Mary and her sisters to glide around...Lady Verity was beloved by all tenants of Kingscourt...She visited the sick, the older people especially. She set up a laundry for the use of the tenant women...Every year on her birthday, the seventh of April, she gave a party...It was known among the people as Verity Day. When potato murrain struck Connemara in 1822, Lady Verity herself ran the Model Farm soup-kitchen...(O'Connor, 2004, 55).

The saint like descriptions stand in stark contrast to O'Connor's other characters, which are far from being portrayed as black or white. Instead most of them fight their inner demons, arisen from past traumata, or cannot come to terms with the drastic conditions they find themselves in, evoking a general mood of despair and sadness throughout the novels. A character with positive traits only does not fit his overall realistic depiction of mid-nineteenth hundred Ireland. His short reworking of the *Angel of the House* or *Angel of the Town* motif, therefore, can only be understood as parodying the lopsided portrayal of women destined to fulfill the needs of her family, or in this case the whole town, only without paying attention to her own needs.

⁴⁴ Cf. Vera Nünning, 19.

⁴⁵ Cf. Logan, 46.

In contrast to the first, stereotyped picture of Victorian women, the latter two motifs are more prominently elaborated in *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls*. The notion of the *Fallen Woman*, polarizing to the *Angel in the House*, is represented by Mary Duane and her daughter Eliza Duane Mooney, exemplifying “any woman who had lost her chastity: the common prostitute, the ‘kept’ woman, the woman whose prostitution supplemented an insufficient wage and the innocent victim of a single seduction...regardless of the finer identifiable personal and social differences between each group” (Mothersole, 189). The depictions of their fate after the seduction were influenced by the author’s own attitude towards women that strayed from the path of angelic virtue, generally promoting the idea of either eternal condemnation or evoking sympathy on the side of the readers in portraying the *Fallen Woman* as victim of social conditions⁴⁶. 150 years later, in which the strict attitudes towards moral and gender roles of the Victorian age have greatly diminished in Western societies, readers can only sympathize with the picture of an unmarried Mary Duane, who got left behind by her lover with their illegitimate child. Both, Mary Duane and Eliza Duane Mooney, are portrayed as being the victims of harsh social conditions, in which they turn to prostitution, the only available source for them to make money. Their loss of innocence through prostitution, from which some of the stereotypical women in Victorian literature are not able to recover to be reintegrated into society again, does not pose a problem for the heroines in O’Connor’s books, as Mary finds a job as nanny, while Eliza is married to Cole. Their societal rehabilitation is not linked to repentance or good deeds, as common in Victorian novels; instead by accident and for dubious reasons – Merridith being Mary’s client as prostitute, making her his nanny out of sympathy, Cole marrying Eliza, as she is pregnant from being raped by his brother – the two male characters improve the situation of their *Fallen Woman*. The ending also fits the unromantic, realistic tone of O’Connor with Mary’s fate being unclear, surviving the voyage on the *Star of the Sea*, while her daughter in the succeeding novel dies in a gunfight.

In the 1880’s, on the verge to modernism, a new way of depicting women had found its way into the Victorian novels, reflecting the social and economic upheavals at that time. The rise of industrialization and the growing number of women entering the workforce saw them to declare their rights to take part in public life, from which

⁴⁶ Cf. Kjartansdóttir, 16-17.

they had been excluded due to Victorian values restricting a woman's role to the domestic sphere:

Voting rights, education, standards of morality and conduct, all surfaced again and moved to the center of public discussion, but this time with a decidedly gendered point of view. Among specific New Woman issues were appropriate or "rational" dress for women, contraception, the social purity movement...occupations for women, women abstaining from marriage, and the extension of the franchise to women (Childers, 167).

The notion of the *New Woman* of the late nineteenth century, although the novels are set thirty to forty years earlier to the origin of this concept, is mirrored by the characters of Laura and Lucia. Laura, married and the affair of the narrator, and Lucia, wife of O'Keeffe and also engaged in adulterous adventures, are self-assured women willing to cheat on their husbands or even disband their marriage because of their husbands' neglect. Interestingly, the author concentrates on elaborating a sympathetic view of their misbehavior by focusing also on their husbands' shady sides, justifying the *New Women's* actions. Apart from their relationships to their husbands, the two women are characterized by their educated background and intellectual interests. While Laura is described as woman who "spent the morning reading *The Times*" (O'Connor, 2004, 159) and who "knew about paintings, sculptures, books" (O'Connor, 2004, 229), Laura even attempts at becoming a writer, although under a male pseudonym.

In contrast to the likeable description of female characters, men in *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls* are human wrecks across the board. The typical gentleman of the nineteenth century, who is chivalric in his behavior with women and willing to sacrifice for his family⁴⁷, is omitted from O'Connor's version of Victorian literature. Instead, they solely concentrate on their own benefits, stopping at nothing to reach their goals. In *Star of the Sea* Merridith is sick of syphilis due to his nightly visits at shady brothels, Dixon is willing to murder his affair's husband, and summarizing Mulvey's bad deeds would go beyond the constraints of this chapter. In *Redemption Falls* Allen instigates a murder plot to seek revenge for unrequited love, Cole menaces the town to impose his political views onto it, O'Keeffe, due to his alcohol abuse arisen from war traumata, seems to be indifferent to his former beloved wife.

⁴⁷ Cf. Vera Nünning, 19.

Judging from this short overview of gender depictions and relations found in the two novels, it should be evident that O'Connor mostly plays, parodying or modernizing them, with Victorian stereotypes. The *Angel in the House* motif rewritten from a twenty-first century viewpoint is an easy target for ridiculing Victorian morals, given the reevaluation of gender roles during the last 150 years. The *Fallen Woman* is given a sympathetic depiction by showing the drastic situation that made them turn to prostitution, while simultaneously casting their suitors in a negative light. The *New Women* Lucia and Laura could also be characters from today with their self determined appearance, giving these two characters even more freedom compared to *New Women* of authentic Victorian texts. In short, O'Connor revisited the gender relations of the Victorian past, defying the notions such as *The Angel in the House* and the condemnation of the *Fallen Woman* that would be regarded as unethical nowadays, while heightening the independence of the New Woman. In contrast to Victorian literature, reversing the gender roles, the men are shown as fallen with no prospect of a better life, with a few being able to escape from a horrible death in the end.

4.2.2. Crime Fiction

Besides labeling *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls* as a high Victorian Novel, both books also allude to several other literary genres as typical of postmodern literature. Especially in *Star of the Sea*, O'Connor makes use of two other genres that also became immensely popular during the Victorian age. Already at the outset of *Star of the Sea* O'Connor foreshadows an impending murder, although this only happens in the last pages, and the persons presumably involved. Thus, the instances circling around this theme stand in the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe or Agatha Christie, hence standing in the tradition of crime fiction. Typical of this literary genre are two elements: "that of the crime and that of the investigation" (Martens, 201). In *Star of the Sea* the first element is one of the major themes in the book. Being acquainted with the knowledge of the preface to "An American Abroad" the readers, at the beginning, are engaged in the question as to whether Mulvey is able to carry out the murder to save his own soul. The second element, however, is omitted, deviating from the usual formula of crime fiction. With the actual crime happening in

the last few pages, none of the characters investigate, since, for the most part, they are not privy to it. Knowing the supposed murderer and victim from the beginning, O'Connor builds up suspense by bringing the perpetrator gradually nearer to its victim. Therefore, the most pressing question for the readers shift from the usual 'who has committed the crime', to when and how the murder will take place. Equally untypical, the built-up tension does not rise in a linear manner. Almost every second chapter digresses from the main plot, providing the reader with background information of the characters. Only Dixon's, and in part, Captain's Lockwood point of view, take the crime story further. Until the revelation of the murder and its protagonists the story of the crime takes multiple twists and turns, underlining that

[i]n detective fiction the criminals resemble the authors in that they plot first their crimes, and then false stories of the crimes, by eliminating clues or planting false ones that initially lead the investigator(s) and the reader to construct a logical but wrong plot. (Martens, 202)

With Dixon being both the author and the murderer, this is perfectly applicable to *Star of the Sea*. Throughout the novel Dixon makes the readers believe that they know the murderer and its victim, constantly leading the recipients astray by focusing on the rising tension between Mulvey and Merridith aboard. Without revealing himself as the murderer in the end, the readers probably would not have guessed Dixon to be the culprit. Although he has a clear motive, because of his affair with Merridith's wife, who declines Dixon's wish to leave her husband, the author cleverly directs the readers' attention elsewhere.

As Merridith is finally murdered in the last few chapters, O'Connor leaves his readers in the dark about the killer's identity. Thus, the last chapters have traits of and circle around the question of *whodunit*, eponymous for the literary subgenre of crime fiction. Usually in this genre "the detective works to assemble the clues, like a jigsaw puzzle, and to move towards a final summation when all falls into place" (Gorrara, 4). Since there is no detective on board, it is the readers who slip into the role of the investigator. Up to this point, the readers draw the conclusion, by being directed by Dixon's account of the story, that either Seamus Meadows or Pius Mulvey could be the murderers. At the end the reader realizes that all clues were misleading, revealing Dixon as the true murderer.

Apart from the murder plot happening during the crossing of the Atlantic, in the chapters dealing with Mulvey's criminal past, O'Connor pays homage to another

subgenre of crime fiction, popular in the mid nineteenth century, the Newgate novel, depicting “adventures and escapes of independent, courageous criminals” (Pykett, 20). In these chapters the readers are informed about Mulvey’s stay in Newgate Prison, one of London’s most notorious jails at that time, and his subsequent escape from it. During his escape he kills the prison guard who made Mulvey’s life a living hell while serving his sentence. Due to the inhuman treatment, the readers begin to side with Mulvey, addressing a somewhat problematic aspect of the Newgate novels identified by critics, as these texts

romanticized and glamorized crime and low life, and invited sympathy with criminals rather than with the victim of crime by making their criminal subjects the haunted object of a case, by focusing on their motivation or psychology, and by representing them as the victims of circumstance or society. (Pykett 20)

Among other popular English novelists, Dickens in *Oliver Twist* also adheres to what has been stated in the citation above, attributing crimes to the drastic social conditions of the criminals⁴⁸. This is also true of Mulvey’s deeds, at first. Out of poverty he begins to cheat and steal, for which he is sent to prison. After portraying the harsh treatment in Newgate, the revenge taken upon the guard is welcomed by the readers, as it seems justifiable for Mulvey to do so. However, later in the novel, he adopts crime as his lifestyle, praising himself for his wicked abilities.

Although being far more than a conventional story of murder and investigation, O’Connor interspersed *Star of the Sea* with features commonly found in crime fiction. By implementing these attributes in the text, the readers actively engage in deducing the truth on the basis of logical reasoning, inferred from Dixon’s account. By stating the persons that would be involved in the murder, but withholding the information until the very last chapter, he plays with the expectations of the readers, which might be considered as overdrawn by some readers, given the novel’s length. All in all, with his text he pays homage to the classics of crime fiction, yet also bringing something new to the table. For the readers familiar with the genre of crime fiction, *Star of the Sea* represents a plot that deviates but also adheres to the usual patterns of crime and investigation, making it also attractive for readers that may neglect the historical context.

⁴⁸ Cf. Newman, 463.

4.2.3. Gothic Fiction

Another literary genre to be found in O'Connor's novels, which is similar to crime fiction became immensely popular during the nineteenth century: tales of Gothic horror. The fascination with the genre depicting the uncanny and supernatural has been unbroken ever since. Whether in more sophisticated novels like O'Connor's or in young adult novels as to be found in the *Twilight* series, Gothic elements seem to appeal to a very broad audience, all commonly enjoying the overall creepy atmosphere and the protagonists' inhuman traits, be it ghosts or vampires:

Authors of such novels...made plentiful use of ghosts, mysterious disappearances, and other sensational and supernatural occurrences; their principal aim was to evoke chilling terror by exploiting mystery, cruelty, and a variety of horrors. The term "gothic" has also been extended to denote a type of fiction which lacks the medieval setting but develops a brooding atmosphere of gloom or terror, represents events which are uncanny, or macabre, or melodramatically violent, and often deals with aberrant psychological states.... (Abrams, 117-118)

In the preface to *Star of the Sea* the readers get to know O'Connor's "ghost". While clearly being an ordinary human being, his character is mysterious and horrific, leaving most of the passengers awestricken. While reading the opening scenes on board Mulvey may remind the audience of one of Gothic literature's best known characters. "And then darkness would descend again. He would rise from his flea-ridden heap of stinking bedding and devour his ration like a man possessed" (O'Connor xviii). With the strange nightly behavior and the overall setting, a clear link can be drawn to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as he wanders the decks at night on his way to London. Unlike *Dracula*, Mulvey does not rise from a casket and his "ration" does not consist of crew members. Nevertheless, "Lord Ugly", as he is called sometimes by the steerage passengers, still is feared among them due to his deformed body and his strange behavior. Even somewhat supernatural traits are attributed to Mulvey at this stage as a "malicious fetor oozed its way around steerage, a steaming, noxious, nauseating vapour that stung the eyes and inflamed the nostrils. But that choking effluvium of death and abandonment was not baneful enough to wake the ghost" (O'Connor xv).

The picture of a vampire-like creature drastically changes, informing the readers about the true motive of Mulvey's activities at night. He "could not be around the women...it pained him to see their emaciated faces" (O'Connor 25). Mulvey does

not wander the decks due to his eccentric disposition, but “[h]e would walk the ship all night to avoid them, and sleep all day to avoid them” (O’Connor 25). Apart from this reason “he would wait for his chance. Perception was clearer in the absence of daylight, in the starlit cold of the decks after dark” (O’Connor 30)”. Thus, with the image described in the epilogue O’Connor sets his readers on the wrong track, evoking the delusion that Mulvey is a supernatural character. Giving psychological insight into Mulvey’s mind, his activities can be rationally explained, and therefore, divert from traditional Gothic imagery⁴⁹.

Another Gothic aspect can be seen in *Star of the Sea*’s description of nature, especially that of the sea. The novel fits the overall tone – in the instances addressed above - of mid-nineteenth century Gothic novels, in which nature is often portrayed as uncanny. Pictures of “clouds [that] hung oppressively low” or of “white trunks of decayed trees” (Poe 76) create a gloomy atmosphere that usually is intended to evoke terror on part of the readers. On top of that, master of this genre as Edgar Allan Poe or Emily Bronte used horrid descriptions of landscapes also for more subtle functions, such as linking nature with allusions to the plot and its characters:

So verbindet man mit dem Begriff der Gothic Novel sogleich Vorstellung wilder, nächtlicher Stürme, man denkt dabei an Wuthering Heights...Eine bemerkenswerte Gemeinsamkeit dieser Naturschilderungen besteht darin , daß (sic) sie immer in der einen oder anderen Weise mit dem Romangeschehen, mit den Befindlichkeiten und Stimmungen der Romanheldinnen und –helden in Beziehung treten. Schilderungen von Landschaften und meteorologischen Phänomenen scheinen durchweg eine Bedeutung zu tragen, die über das jeweilige Phänomen selbst hinausgeht. (Kullmann 1)

Multitudinous accounts of nature can be found in the book that agree with the above statement by Kullmann. In a passage depicting the sea at night underlines this hypothesis. In the following passage, on one level, the function of nature is to create a creepy atmosphere on part of the readers, while more subtly, it also alludes to the plot, foreshadowing something horrible happening. “The sea was knife grey, flecked with eddies of blackness. Dusk was creeping down on the fourth day out of Cobh. A thin crescent moon like a broken piece of fingernails was visible through the rolling, charcoal clouds, some in the middle distance pouring bright streams of sleet” (O’Connor 24). The scene can be linked to the murder plot aboard with the “knife grey” color possibly alluding to the blade hidden inside Mulvey’s coat, while the

⁴⁹ Cf. Hall, 32.

“broken piece of fingernail” may be taken, as *pars pro toto*, for Merridith’s impending death.

During the voyage in multiple instances “a very strange and horrible smell about the ship” (O’Connor, 2004, 153) is noticed by the passengers unable to identify the origin. When the source is finally discovered, O’Connor combines hypertextual and similtexual references, alluding to the most prominent example of star crossed love, but reworking the motif with a Gothic aesthetic:

Bosun Abernathy had rope-climbed down the hull with some of his crew when he saw a very large infestation of monstrous rats which had congregated in the sewerage-gulley channel leading from the First-Class quarters...Thinking to discover the source of the odour on the ship of late, he approached with some of the men to make an investigation. A piteously sorry sight was soon met. The badly decayed remains of a youth and a girl were lying in the drainway; side by side; still enfolded in each other’s embrace...The lad was about seventeen yrs; the girl perhaps fifteen. (O’Connor, 2004, 278-279).

Given the age and the position in which the two characters are found, O’Connor alludes to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. In both texts, drastic, although very different, social conditions lead to the death of two young lovers. Even the possible reconciliation between two feuding parties triggered by the death of the couple is indicated in O’Connor’s text, as “these children of God; of Ireland or England”, resembling the rivaling families of Rome and Juliet, “each of whom was child of a mother, and each of whom was beloved by the other, may find their safe home in the arms of the Saviour” (O’Connor, 2004, 278). Thus, with this short revision of *Romeo and Juliet* O’Connor uses the reference as metaphor for the complicated relationship of England in Ireland at that time, while fitting the overall Gothic tone he set out already in his prologue.

In *Redemption Falls* Gothic allusions are limited to a few instances only. Abraham Lincoln is referred to as having an “acid-etched face. Pockmarked, blistered, like something out of Poe; as though the digs and scratches of the engraver’s burins had already gone to work on the icon”(O’Connor, 2007, 181). Similar to descriptions of landscapes in *Star of the Sea*, the Montana Territory is characterized in a most dreadful manner, so that “Death Valley would seem a Parisian garden beside it, the wastes of Alaska a pleasure dome.” (O’Connor, 2007, 286). When Winterton seeks to meet the governor, the inhabitants try to scare him away through their stories of the governor, which reads like a hodgepodge of poor stories taken from penny dreadfuls:

The Governor 'drinks blood'. He 'lay with a savage – woman' at Tasmania. An 'Houngan', a druid of the voodoo cult, schooled him in Louisiana to call the dead from their graves. He is an eater of Hashiesh. His presence sickens livestock. He is 'Grand Cyclops' of a sect of behooded apostles, which congregates on Gallows Mountain to chant 'the black Mass'. A cyclopedia of spookery the Governor has inspired: County Wexford's most infamous warlock. (O'Connor, 2007, 288)

Clearly, with the excessive Gothic imagery in this scene, Winterton, cartographer and secret spy for the government, makes fun of the uneducated, rural people in the territory for being superstitious. In a sense, the above quote subverts Gothic elements, typically used to evoke terror among the recipients, hence on Winterton, parodying it in a comedic manner through the quick succession of horrible images ascribed onto the governor.

Overall the genres of Crime and Gothic fiction are used to create suspense in the novels, evoking an atmosphere of suspense, in which the readers want to find out more about the motives of the characters. Reading the two novels from this angle, the historical framework fades into the background. Although noticing the importance of presenting a plausible version of a particular time and space, O'Connor believes that

the reader needs to be drawn into a novel through its language and atmosphere, through the struggles of recognisable characters, their choices and rejections, and should only absorb whatever it has to say about history through a kind of unnoticed osmosis. First and last, a novel must be an involving read (Estévez-Saá and O'Connor, 170).

Whether one finds it more engaging to unravel a murder plot, or allows oneself to be intrigued by the Gothic imagery, the author has created two novels that can also be read when neglecting the historical content, appealing to the academic reader as well as to fans of popular fiction, which is also reflected by the novels' large number of sales.

4.3. Paratextuality

Paratextual features are not new to the scene of historical fiction. Classics of the genre such as *The French Lieutenant's Woman* or *Midnight's Children* used the devices before. As Hutcheon points out:

What all these texts do is to self-consciously focus on the processes of producing and receiving paradoxically *fictive historical* writing. They all raise the question of how the intertexts of history, its documents and traces, get incorporated into an avowedly fictive context, while still somehow retaining their historical documentary status. The modes of this paradoxical incorporation are frequently those of paratextuality: footnotes, subtitles, prefaces, epilogues, epigraphs, illustrations, photographs, and so on. (Hutcheon, 1986, 302).

Throughout his novels, O'Connor makes heavy use of paratextuality, including the varieties mentioned by Hutcheon. Postmodern authors do not restrict themselves in passing on knowledge of the past by a traditional narration. Instead they draw from most diverse sources available, not uncommonly passing this very knowledge on to the readers by also incorporating various forms of authentic, or supposedly authentic, written accounts. By giving credit to otherwise neglected carriers of historical information, they "problematise the entire notion of historical knowledge" (Mikowski, 189).

4.3.1. Illustrations

Apart from the different textual layers, O'Connor also makes use of non-verbal devices reminiscent of Victorian literature. The reduction of costs, caused by inventions in the field of printing techniques correlated with the rise of illustrations of novels in the middle of the nineteenth century⁵⁰. Most Victorian authors serialized their tomes in newspapers chapter after chapter, adding illustrations to each of them. First tentative steps were made by using randomly chosen graphics that were added to the text, hardly corresponding to the plot⁵¹. However, during the peak of the Victorian novel in the middle of the nineteenth century, writers and illustrators began to work closely together to achieve a most harmonious interplay between text and illustrations. Therefore, illustrations became purpose-built according to a specific text, gaining more and more importance throughout the century to a point where

...the relation between text and illustration is clearly reciprocal. Each refers to the other, in a back and forth movement mimicking the experience of the reader in which his eye moves back and forth between illustration and text. By incorporating two different kinds of signs, linguistic and graphic, the illustrated novel created an apparent bridge between the

⁵⁰ Cf. Brantlinger, 407.

⁵¹ Cf. Alexander, 40.

fictive and real worlds. In successful novel illustrations the connection is such that neither element can be said to have priority: the pictures are about the text; the texts is about the pictures. (Alexander, 40).

Unlike his Victorian predecessors O'Connor cannot draw from nineteenth century illustrations specifically made for his story line. Instead, he opted for incorporating a variety of authentic pictorial materials, mostly obtained from sources of the public media. Finding pictures that perfectly fit the two novels is, of course, impossible, yet he chose illustrations closely related to the actions in the corresponding plot, underlining the point made by Alexander concerning the purpose of the illustrations. O'Connor also adheres to adding illustrations to the beginning of each chapter beginning, together with inserting of epigraphs, making full use of the relation between text and picture.

In *Star of the Sea* the majority of illustrations are taken from contemporary newspapers and magazines, diverging vastly in their attitude to illustrating the Irish people and the Great Famine. A plethora of images were taken from the *Illustrated London News*, a declared neutral newspaper, whose view on the famine did not necessarily agree with the one of the British parliament. In fact, the newspaper was quite critical of the British policy in regard to the Famine in Ireland. In the issue of 13 February, 1847 they partly blamed the British government for the miserable situation of the Irish, saying that "[t]here was no laws it would not pass at their request and no abuse it would not defend for them." The attitude towards the Great Hunger inevitably influenced the way in which the respective newspaper illustrators chose to depict the Irish. Given the *Illustrated London News*' criticism on the failed policy of the British government, it seems logical that the images of this paper represent the conditions in Ireland more authentic than compared to a gazette uncritical of the British policies. Therefore, the *Illustrated London News* included graphic illustrations of starving Irish peasants living in horrible conditions.

The illustrations taken from the American political magazine *Harper's Weekly* and British humor and satire magazine *Punch* stand in stark contrast to the ones found in the *Illustrated London News*. Appealing to a middle class audience, these two magazines captured and fostered the stereotypical depiction of the Irish people in the wake of Darwinism and the scientific racism following in its wake:

In much of the pseudo-scientific literature of the day the Irish were held to be inferior, an example of a lower evolutionary form, closer to the apes than their "superiors", the Anglo-

Saxons. Cartoons in *Punch* portrayed the Irish as having bestial, ape-like or demonic features and the Irishman, (especially the political radical) was invariably given a long or prognathous jaw, the stigmata to the phrenologists of a lower evolutionary order, degeneracy, or criminality. (Wohl).

Supporters of the pseudoscience of phrenology claimed that through “the measurement of skulls and other bodily features” (Barkan, 3) human races could be differentiated. At the outset of the novel, the readers are immediately presented with such unflattering Irish stereotypes, in the form of an illustration from *Harper Weekly's* that should demonstrate the human hierarchy. While *The Anglo-Teutonic* skull includes ordinary facial features, *The Negro* as well as *The Irish-Iberian* are portrayed as having ape-like traits.

Stereotypes of Irish people had a long history in the British Empire. However, during the time of the Famine, in which the British Empire refused to give full aid to Ireland, these illustrations seemed more than inappropriate. Picturing Irish people as ape-like or pig-like creatures might have facilitated to turn a blind eye to the topic of adequately supporting the Irish. Compared to the emaciated faces of the Irish in the *Illustrated London News*, probably evoking compassion and sympathy on the side of the British readers, the cartoons in *Punch*, although satirical and *Harper Weekly's*, surely did not contribute to overcome the tensions between the Irish and English people.

In terms of their purpose, O'Connor uses “illustrations which accompanied the part of publications of both Dickens's and Thackeray's novels, which frequently amplified a storyline, or gave pointers as to the dominant metaphorical and thematic strands in the text (O'Gorman 30)”. In general, adding illustrations gives the novel a more authentic touch, supporting the readers' imagination by evoking the setting of the plot graphically. Thus, nineteenth century Ireland comes to life not only through texts, but also through pictures, intertwining fact and fiction. The juxtaposed epigraphs and illustrations in almost each chapter also fulfills the function of foreshadowing. For instance, the illustration accompanying the chapter in which the readers are informed about the horrible circumstances of the ordinary passengers aboard the ship, depicts the class below deck while eating. Concerning the chapters in which *Punch* cartoons are placed in front, their illustrations serve the purpose of “[e]xaggerating physical characteristics of the mentally and physically grotesque on the one hand and over sweetening the sentimental on the other,...illustrations amplify textual characterization”(O'Gorman 30). It is remarkable that most of these chapters

are dealing with the character of Pius Mulvey, an evil person whose life is characterized by committing crimes. One could see Mulvey as a personification of evil features, attributed to Irish people in the eyes of the English, and partly influenced by the cartoons of *Punch* magazine. Furthermore, the *Punch* cartoons also fulfill a didactic function, as they “are there to remind us that at the time the English press resorted to the discourse of racial determinism to explain the Famine” (Mikowski, 191).

By employing most different visual ways of representing the Irish people, O'Connor reflects the diverging perception of that time, creating a colorful atmosphere of mid-nineteenth century England that acknowledges the complexities circling around the topic of the Great Famine in Ireland. At the same time he highlights the subjectivity of illustrations and the media in general, which shape the memory of historical events.

In *Redemption Falls* the use of illustrations concentrates on the medium of Daguerreotype. At the outbreak of the American Civil War people discovered photography, the medium that supposedly could capture a moment in time authentically. Again, as in *Star of the Sea*, the photos serve either to underline the incidents described in the plot of the respective chapter(s), or to foreshadow future events. By including authentic photographic material the novel is even more authentic than *Star of the Sea*.

4.3.2. Epigraphs

Another typical feature of Victorian literature, apart from illustrating a novel, is the use of one or more epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter. Those were used to function as “aesthetic ornaments and authorative thematic announcements” (Gutleben, 111). In his study Genette defines four functions of epigraphs, of which only the most prominent function applies to O'Connor's work:

The second possible function of the epigraph is undoubtedly the most canonical: it consists of commenting on the text, whose meaning it indirectly specifies or emphasizes. This commentary may be very clear...More often the commentary is puzzling, has a significance that will not be clear or confirmed until the whole book is read.(Genette, 1997,157-158).

What is even more striking about O'Connor's use of epigraphs is their number and their diverse authors. In front of almost each chapter or part of the books he presents one or several epigraphs. Before Dixon commences his narrative the readers of *Star of the Sea* are presented with four quotes on the topic of the Great Famine in Ireland, diverging considerably in their views. As far as the function of these quotes are concerned, "the introductory epigraph corresponds...to the initial voice which gives the tuning" (Gutleben, 18). By juxtaposing most divergent opinions about the Famine, the initial epigraphs set the tone of the novel, hinting at the complexity of portraying different aspects relating to the Irish Famine, thus avoiding to capture the situation one-sidedly. Naturally, the standpoint whether the blame is to be given to the Irish or to the English concerning the impact of the Famine diverges vastly according to the quoted person's background. On the one hand, the Irish nationalist John Mitchel, who features as a character in *Redemption Falls*, claims that

England is truly a great public criminal. England! All England!...
She must be punished; that punishment will, as I believe, come
upon her by and through Ireland; and so Ireland will be
avenged...The Atlantic ocean be never so deep as the hell
which shall belch down on the oppressors of my race. (O'Connor, 2003, vii).

While on the other hand, the English position is represented by Charles Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary of the British Empire, who sees this from an entirely different angle, saying that "[The Famine] is a punishment from God for an idle, ungrateful and rebellious country; an indolent and un-self reliant people. The Irish are suffering from an affliction of God's providence" (O'Connor, 2003, vii). In this way, the complex situation is further elaborated by the epigraphs throughout the novel.

Unlike Victorian authors, who quoted famous people of the past, mostly authors, in order to pay tribute to them, O'Connor's sources are far more diverse. In *Star of the Sea* a large portion of the novel's epigraphs are authentic quotes taken from letters by Irish emigrants, which mostly idealize their new US-American home:

...the Irish in America are particularly well recvd. And looked upon as Patriotic republicans, and if you were to tell an American you had flyd your country or you would have been hung for treason against the Government, they would think ten times more of you and it would be the highest trumpet sounded in your praise. (O'Connor, 2003, 86)

Complementary, and in stark contrast to the euphoric depiction of the USA there are also letters from Irish peasants, addressing their relatives in their new home, desperately reporting about the horrendous conditions in Ireland:

I can't let you know how we are suffering unless you were in Starvation and want without a friend or fellow to give you a Shilling But on my too bended Neese fresh and fasting I pray to god that you Nor one of yers may [neither] know Nor ever Suffer what we are Suffering At the present. (O'Connor, 2003, 32)

At the beginning of some chapters the picture of the Promised Land and the misery in Ireland are even placed next to each other by including an illustration, depicting the Famine in Ireland, while inserting an epigraph, addressing the USA as praised home for the Irish⁵². This combination of “an ironic paratextual juxtaposition may suggest a paradigm for the novelistic text” (Bowen quoted in Shastri, 123), underlining the novel's overall tone of the complex situation of the Famine, O'Connor has set out by the introductory epigraphs. In contrast to the conflicting content of illustration and epigraph, commenting on the overall approach of the novel, the two devices can also be combined in order to amplify a storyline, as can be seen at the beginning of chapter xviii. An illustration with an ape-like Irishman entitled ‘Three Irish Affections: Force Folly and Fraud’⁵³ is placed below an epigraph, focusing on:

Gaelic Mental Characteristics. – Quick in perception, but deficient in depth of reasoning power; headstrong and excitable; tendency to oppose; strong in love and hate; at one time lively, soon after sad; vivid in imagination:...

‘Comparative Anthology’ by David Macintosh,
The anthropological Review, January 1866

(O'Connor, 2003, 173)

In the chapter in which Mulvey tries to get near his victim through trickery to finally accomplish the murder. The illustration and epigraph, therefore, ties in with Gutleben's notion of a “thematic announcement” by focusing on the wicked nature of the Irish, which is then reflected by Mulvey's actions.

So far the epigraphs under consideration have been taken from authentic texts of the nineteenth century, which applies to the bulk of epigraphs found in *Star of the Sea*. In *Redemption Falls* O'Connorsolely, except for the last one, relies on epigraphs from texts that the protagonists of his story seemingly had produced, or on written

⁵² Cf. O'Connor, 2004, 86.

⁵³ Cf. O'Connor, 2004, 407.

accounts concerned with the characters of the story. The introductory epigraphs are a perfect example of how this device can be applied in order to puzzle the reader:

The speeches fine – now riven shreds –
Despatches frayed – the statues shatter'd –
The maps are burnt to flakes of ash –
The General's paper, rent and scatter'd

Letters home from fear-drunk boys –
In rags of banner, disarrayed –
The anthems torn to silent leaves –
Of these, the Book of War is made.

Charles Gimenez Carroll
(pseudonym of Lucia-Cruz McLelland-O'Keeffe)
'Lines on the Rebel Surrender at Appotamox'
From *American Verses*, 1867

...It no body... got no ken... how it go for woman that time...
in especial she poor...you ain a thing but a beast...cause a
poorman gwine care for what beast he got...but a woman...
just the stones on his road...

Elizabeth Longstreet, formerly a slave. Recorded 1928.
Transcriber unknown.

(O'Connor, 2007, 2)

Given this part's title on the previous page of the book, "THE END OF WAR", the poem could be seen as thematic announcement for the book, as it refers to the American Civil War drawing to a close, while the transcript focuses on the role of black women at that time, an aspect also found in the following chapters. This does not seem to be unusual. However at a later stage, the readers realize that the seemingly authentic texts were actually produced by two of the characters. In that sense, the introductory epigraphs are not thematic announcements for the book, but in a sense prepare the readers for the disjointed narratives, consisting of transcripts, poems, etc., in the book. Songs and ballads, interspersed throughout the novel, in which aspects of the story are reflected by the songs' lyrics, is also a prominent feature in the novel. They are used as epigraphs or as independent chapters. Concerning the reasons for including such a large number of songs in the novel, O'Connor's protagonist gives the answer in another epigraph, citing a passage from O'Keeffe's seemingly abandoned memoir, saying that "[n]othing reveals the dreads and desires of a nation as does the song of her common people" (O'Connor, 2007, 192).

Whether to prepare the readers for the next chapter's subject matter, to foreshadow certain aspects of the plot, to puzzle the readers by inserting epigraphs that seemingly do not fit at first glance, or to comment about formal and narrative techniques found in O'Connor's novels, he uses the device of epigraphs for various reasons. Adopting this literary device from established traditions found in Victorian literature, he adds versatility to the use of epigraphs rarely to be found even in today's postmodern literature. By doing so, he achieves a wide variety of reactions on the side of his recipients, triggered by the epigraph itself, the interplay between several epigraphs or between illustration and epigraph or by the device's relationship to the main text.

4.3.3. Footnotes

Another aspect that *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls* share is the narrative situation. Both narrators were not only involved in the respective plot, telling their side of the story as seemingly objective; they are also the editors of the books. Dixon, as well as McLelland, state in the epilogue that they in fact got hold of all the documents, adding their own accounts, and assembled it to the book the recipients supposedly read. "My pursuit has been to collect as much as I can nose up of James O'Keeffe and he boy Jeddo Mooney,..., who somehow contain in themselves, so it seems to their collector, everything larger of war" (O'Connor, 2007, 442), states McLelland. As the readers of *Star of the Sea* supposedly read a revised version of Dixon's book entitled *An American Abroad*, he even provides the readers with information on how the book was received by the public on its first release.

Both editors are in control of the assembled material, including personal letters, diaries, etc., who pass on the written evidence to the readers as authentic material. As is typical of editing historical accounts, they engage in making these documents as accessible as possible, clarifying details, citing certain sources, translating unknown vocabulary, by the use of footnotes. However, the fake editor's goals in postmodern novels are more ambiguous than just to give readers a better understanding of the material they are engaged with:

History-writing's paratexts (especially footnotes and the textual incorporation of written documents) are conventions which historiographic metafiction both uses and abuses,

perhaps parodically exacting revenge for some historian's tendency to read literature only as historical document. Although, as we have seen, the validity of the entire concept of objective and unproblematic documentation in the writing of history has been called into question, even today paratextuality remains the central mode of textually certifying historical events, and the footnote is still the main textual form by which believability is procured. (Hutcheon, 1998, 80).

Apart from the footnotes that should underpin the authenticity of the documents interspersed in the two novels, there are also instances where the editors, at first glance, also just provide background information on the document or to the persons involved in it. On closer inspection these footnotes represent highly subjective paratexts discrediting the image of the author of the document or the involved person, thus abusing the original function of footnotes. As a consequence, they influence the readers in their perception of the characters in question through the seemingly objective notes by the editor.

Aboard the *Star of the Sea* it is no secret that David Merridith and Grantley Dixon are not very fond of each other. In various scenes they quarrel verbally in public. Their disdain is triggered by their opposing views on the Irish Famine, but more obviously, by Dixon's love affair with Merridith's wife, which even results in Dixon murdering him. While reading personal letters and diary entries by Merridith that can be found in *Star of the Sea*, Dixon's hatred of Merridith filters through by the editor's use of footnotes. In a personal letter written by Merridith to his sister, Dixon makes fun of Merridith's ignorance about a song's origin, correcting him by stating that “*Lord Kingscourt might have been disconcerted to learn that the tune is a traditional Irish march entitled ‘Bonaparte Crossing the Alps’. – GGD (O'Connor, 2004, 117)”. While in this scene he more or less harmlessly taunts him by the use of the footnote, in the next instance he creates a loathsome image of Merridith. In the chapter “THE MARRIED MAN” he focuses on Merridith's nightly visits to shady brothels at London's East End. Using Merridith's diary as the basis for this chapter, he describes Merridith's habit of portraying prostitutes. Concerning the painting's whereabouts Dixon writes:

*At the time of revising the present edition of the book (1915) Lord Kingscourt's executors still insist that the drawings may never be published...Mysteriously, one of his drawings appeared in a pornographic work published autonomously in London...The daybooks in which the Whitechapel drawings were made are kept under lock and key at the ‘Secretum’ or Secret Museum for Obscene Works...London – GGD (O'Connor, 2004, 235)

Clearly, the additional information provided in the footnote has nothing to do with the plot. Relating these pictures to 'pornographic works', in which they supposedly appeared, as well as to the 'Secretum' Dixon wants to underline the nasty picture of Merridith he creates throughout the novel. In the same chapter he addresses Merridith's fake alibis found in the personal diary. Merridith invented them to excuse his nightly absence in front of his wife, including "long accounts of entirely fictional conversations. A gathering of the friends of the Bethlehem Asylum. A committee meeting of a charity for 'Fallen Girls' (O'Connor, 2004, 237)". Dixon comments:

*Though he was never a committee member of any such body, he appears to have made regular financial contributions to one: a society established by Dickens and his friend Angela Burdett-Coutts (of the banking family) 'to rescue betrays and unfortunate girls'. – GDD (O'Connor, 2004, 237)

By juxtaposing the image of the suitor throughout the chapter and the man caring about 'Fallen Women' in the footnote Dixon creates a hypocritical image. Again, the footnote contains no aspects that would enrich the plot, except to bring Merridith into bad repute.

Similarly, in *Redemption Falls* McLelland, the editor, is prejudiced in treating Allen Winterton's diary caused by his personal feelings towards him. While reading it is revealed that Allen and Lucia had a romantic affair. Taking into consideration that in the story O'Keeffe and Lucia became Jeddo's, in other words McLelland's parental figures, it might be attributed to this constellation that the diary of Allen includes footnotes showing his disdain for him. In an ironical manner he comments on Allen's digression in describing the town of Redemption Falls, even reducing his account. In the corresponding footnote he explains that "There follows a great deal more of this sort of material, in essence pointing out that the Mountain Territory is mountainous. (O'Connor, 2007, 289)". In another instance Allen describes that some of the town's inhabitants are "on the lam from something troublesome. In this I do not condemn them. Nor do I differ from them. It is an American entitlement, to go where one will" (O'Connor, 2007, 290). Allen's allusion to his own trouble is further elaborated by the respective footnote:

*Winterton's empathy with the desire of certain of his fellow citizen to 'go where one will' may have been deepened by the fact that he had left gambling debts of almost twenty thousand dollars in New York at the time he wrote the journal. (O'Connor, 2007, 290)

Both footnotes treat Allen's diary in a satirical manner. Analogical to the footnotes revolving around Merridith these paratexts serve the sole purpose of shedding a bad light on these two men. Triggered by the editors' personal feelings, they abuse the original sense of the footnote to paint a biased picture of some of the characters.

The implementation of footnotes and their various functions is a good example of how postmodern literature works. In one way it adheres to conventions of the past, using footnotes in a traditional way to cite, clarify or to inform the readers with the aim of being as objective as possible. In another way it subverts the usual function of footnotes by including highly subjective descriptions of persons disliked by the editor for personal reasons in the respective paratexts, influencing the reader's attitude towards these characters.

4.4. Metafiction

According to Nünning's typology of five different categories concerning recent historical fiction⁵⁴, the only way of discerning between the two most postmodern manifestations, The Metahistorical Novel and Historiographic Metafiction, is the latter group's use of overt metafictional elements. Several anachronisms and uses of metalepsis can be found in O'Connor's novels, which would also qualify them as being labeled as Metahistorical Novels. However, it is the abundant use of explicit instances of metafiction that are really worth analyzing further. The metafictional elements are quite diverse in their content. Some of them comment on the plausibility of presenting present and past events, as typical for Historiographic Metafiction. Others address O'Connor's style he chose for his two novels, stating something about the writing process of *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls*. Linked to these instances, are passages that focus on the writing subject, for example observing some of the characters while trying to commit their ballads, novels or other types of written accounts to paper. The last group of metafictional elements, this chapter seeks to analyze, devotes its attention to passages in which the readers are directly addressed.

⁵⁴ Cf. Kotte, 46-56.

4.4.1. Relationship between the Past and Present

The similarities between historiography and fiction have led to Hutcheon's thesis that the two can never convey an authentic, objective picture of the past⁵⁵. Although O'Connor's books are well-researched, including references to ample documentary sources in the novels' appendices, reminiscent of historiography that seemingly inspired and shaped the the plot of *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls*, he still adheres to the postmodern credo that it is impossible to recapture the truth of the past:

Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a true claim, both by questioning the claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from identity. (Hutcheon, 1988, 93)

O'Connor makes use of various written accounts, ranging from academic sources to songs and ballads depicting the past, as his background, therefore, relying on traditional ways of presenting the past. He then mixes these "facts" with fictional elements, creating a combination of historiography and fiction. Furthermore, he addresses "the problematic nature of the past as an object of knowledge for us in the present...The past really did exist. The question is: *how* can we know that past today – and *what* can we know of it?" (Hutcheon, 1988, 92). Either through epigraphs, statements by his characters or the narrator, O'Connor finds several ways to question the plausibility of portraying past events. If introductory epigraphs have the function of setting the tone of one's novel⁵⁶, it can be argued that inserting the paratext in front of the epilogue might serve to sum up or to conclude the novel's approach, in this case, to history. In the epilogue's epigraph to *Star of the Sea* Merridith states that:

'History happens in the first person but is written in the third.
This is what makes history a completely useless art.'

David Merridith, from an essay written while an undergraduate at
New College, Oxford, Michaelmas term, 1831, on the theme:
'Why is history useful?' (O'Connor, 2003, 386)

⁵⁵ Cf. Hutcheon, 1988, 109-111.

⁵⁶ Cf. Gutleben, 18.

Similar to this quote, the final epigraph from *Redemption Falls* also questions history's significance, citing Walt Whitman that "[t]he real war will never get in the books" (O'Connor, 2008, 439). Both epigraphs contest traditional notions of viewing history as the authentic depiction of the past. Firstly, although every person sensed past experiences differently, historians viewed and some still view their discipline as something that can be portrayed as universally valid. Responding to Merridith's essay task, one could argue that history indeed is useful in telling one version of the past, a version that could have happened. However, it can never depict past events as authentically experienced by people from a specific period. Whitman's quote refers to the same problem and, more specifically, challenges capturing the American Civil War in a "real" way. No other topic in US-American history has been given so much attention by historians of the USA. The foci of their works might differ, however, in regard to authenticity they all more or less fail. A tragedy as multi-faceted and dreadful as this war cannot be translated into a written account that would do justice to the cruelties the ordinary soldiers had to endure. In the past, accounts of any war mostly focused on the lives of notable military personnel. Nowadays, although these accounts are few and far between, historians also try to show the lives of ordinary people in those desperate times. The omission of common people from history is also noted by the narrator of *Redemption Falls*:

But most were...small and unmemorable, devoid of authority, only significant for the matters they link, never worth quoting or immortalizing in a place-name, because those are the ones that will always do the dying when it comes a time of war. And you wouldn't really miss them until you tried to speak, at which point you would find yourself struck by the absence that is felt between those who love or hate, or sensed in the oceans of the self: the wanted word is somehow not here. It was murdered; edited out of inheritance. What you say, instead, is what you know how to say, and not what you would like to: the truth. (O'Connor, 2008, 5)

When neglecting the experiences of the ordinary soldier, the picture of a war is mostly reduced to experiences of a few powerful men. However, not forgetting written documents by the ordinary soldiers themselves, it might be argued, at first glance, that these autobiographical accounts might paint a more accurate picture of the past. Nevertheless, filtering history through a personal lens creates the effect of distorting past realities according to the autobiographer's disposition and attitudes. As Dixon looks back at his written account about the happenings aboard the *Star of the Sea*, he questions the reliability of his own story:

I would like to think I am objective in what I have put down, but of course that is not so and could never have been. I was there. I was involved. I knew some of the people. One I loved; another I despised. I use the word carefully: I did despise him. So easy to despise in the cause of love. Others again I was simply indifferent to, and such indifference is also part of a tale. And of course I have selected what has been seen of the Captain's words in order to frame and tell the story. A different author would have made a different selection. Everything is in the way the material is composed. (O'Connor, 2003, 397).

Although Dixon writes as a journalist, supposed to be as objective as possible, his rendition of the past is highly subjective in regard to some of the main characters. Dixon underlines Hutcheon's thesis when she claims that postmodern historical novels contest the "implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality and transparency of representation" (Hutcheon, 1988, 92). Both, fiction and historiography are characterized by the individual approach of historians or authors to compose his or her material. In a scene following Mulvey's escape from Newgate prison, in which he encounters his own mug shot, this individuality and therefore subjectivity of historians as well as fiction authors is addressed by O'Connor:

Posters materialized on the streets of London offering twenty pounds' reward for his capture or shooting. The sketch which appeared on them showed the face of a murderer, a narrow-eyed, ape-chinned, sneering Beelzebub, but Mulvey could see in it the ghost of his own. The artist had merely done what the ballad-maker does; what is done by the historian, the General and politician, and by everyone who wants to sleep with an easy conscience. He had embellished some details and understated others. You couldn't really blame him for doing his job. (O'Connor, 2003, 205).

In short, literature and historiography are "textual constructs", relying on texts and their implied conventions of the past. Both are "unavoidably ideologically laden" (Hutcheon, 1988, 112) through the individual author's use of the material on which he or she bases the writing upon. "The man who put together could also take apart. There was nothing such a wizard could do" (O'Connor, 2003, 99), comments Dixon.

Of course, the instances addressed in this section might undermine the importance of historical depiction at first glance. On closer consideration and given the fact that O'Connor chose two historical topics for his novels, it shows that postmodern authors still value the significance of historical literature, but depicting past events with a heightened consciousness that is highly skeptical towards an approach to history that claims to be realistic and authentic, found in the texts by their predecessors.

4.4.2. Postmodern Fiction's Constructiveness

Apart from problematising how history is and can be represented, historiographic metafictional novels also question their very own origination process in terms of narration. Through the second group of metafictional elements in question, O'Connor addresses his "own constructing, ordering, and selecting processes...It puts into question, at the same time it exploits, the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real" (Hutcheon, 1988, 92). Throughout the novel the readers find many instances that also apply to crafting a novel, such as "[h]e writes like one who knows how to hurt. It is rarely what you say, but what you omit, that hurts. Hurt is a matter of editing" (O'Connor, 2008, 150). This ties in with O'Connor's overall attitude towards writing, commenting: "For me, writing is more or less constant process of rewriting. You sculpt and hone each sentence until you know it's right" (O'Connor, 2008, 470).

Even more interesting are the passages that devote whole paragraphs to the (de)construction of literature. As Eliza sets out in search of her brother across half the American continent, the readers simultaneously learn about O'Connor's overall writing approach of the two novels:

And on like that; each stride of the story a punctuation of her steps on the road. And the story never ends. It spindles out like a web, a netting of filigrees twisting into a petticoat. It trails a way back to Baton Rouge, Louisiana: an egg-sack waiting to burst. And you could never smirch paper with the words of this story, because a bookstory must be straight and true as a ballad, where a life is not like that, not sliceable into stanzas nor even truly capable of narration in one tense. The past is not over, so it seems to Eliza Mooney, and the future has happened many times. (O'Connor, 2008, 6).

In this passage he clandestinely attacks traditional forms of historical fiction with its pretence of representing the truth of past events. At the same time he comments on his own style that "spindles out like a web", referring to his many narratives all somehow intertwined found in one web, hence in one and the same novel. Especially in the beginning, starting with Eliza in Baton Rouge, the readers are puzzled by the "egg-sack waiting to bust", which includes many storylines that only gradually make sense in terms of their interconnectedness. Thus, this instance can be read like a status quo of the plot, foreshadowing some aspects the recipients will encounter during the reading experience. Similarly, a few chapters later, O'Connor again comments on the overall progression of the plot. At the time when Lucia travels aboard a steamship that takes her to Redemption Falls "[s]he began notes toward a novel, then a collection of tales, working long, lamplit hours locked away in her cabin.

By the time they reached the Territory she had the bones of five stories, and one almost completed piece – she called it ‘Demonland’” (O’Connor, 2008, 90). Clearly, in this scene Lucia reflects O’Connor working on the novel. On page 90, O’Connor also has introduced multiple narratives, resembling the “bones of five stories”, while the “completed piece” by Lucia is fully incorporated into the book as independent chapter preceding the one that includes above quote.

In the epilogue to *Redemption Falls* the readers encounter a passage that can be read as summing up the writing process of the novel with the narrator mirroring O’Connor’s approach:

My pursuit has been to collect as much as I can nose up of James O’Keeffe and the boy Jeddo Mooney, those long-forgotten actors from America’s Civil War, who somehow contain in themselves, so it seems to their collector, everything larger of war. I have articles, memorabilia, broadsides, maps, etchings, sketches, balladry, photographs. I believe I own a copy of every text that ever mentioned them in the public prints of the United States. And I have other materials, too, of a more private nature. Journals. Personal writings. Correspondence and so forth. Even highly secret papers, classified documents. (O’Connor, 2008, 442)

Since O’Keeffe is based on a real person, O’Connor indeed collected as much as he could about this character and even adapted minor details of Meagher’s life into his plot. Jeddo Mooney never existed, yet through meticulous research O’Connor presents a boy that actually could have lived at that time in Montana. Of course, the material interspersed in the book, to which the narrator refers to, is mostly invented by O’Connor himself, or closely based on historical material. One of the most prominent features in both books, taken from this supposedly authentic material, is the inclusion of songs and ballads. During the reading process the recipients might be surprised by the amount of songs and ballads encountered that distract from the main narrative. Gradually, through comments by the narrator, the importance of songs and ballads are made clear with statements such as “[i]n a place where reading was almost unknown they carried the local memory like walking books...Without them, Mulvey sometimes felt, nobody would remember anything, and if it wasn’t remembered it hadn’t truly happened” (O’Connor, 2003, 98). Marking songs and ballads as legitimate carriers of historical knowledge this instance may serve to justify the number of lyrics and ballads included in the novel.

4.4.3. The Writing Subject

In terms of their content one of the major themes of metafictional devices revolve around an author creating a story. As pointed out by Waugh, metafiction essentially is “the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion” or “to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction” (Waugh, 6). In order to be able to problematize this dichotomy, it seems only natural that many of postmodern literature’s protagonists are authors of some kind. “The use of writer figures confers a self-reflexive dimension to these postmodern novels that question their own representations of the past and of its characters” (Parey, 189). In *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls* the readers encounter multiple characters having a try at becoming a writer. The former novel presents Dixon as a would-be novelist, failing to achieve fame until publishing his account of the *Star of the Sea* plot; Mulvey is shown as a gifted balladeer, who is able to adapt his creations to most different contexts. In the latter, Lucia publishes poetry under a male pseudonym as was typical for women at that time and even attempts at writing a novel, O’Keeffe cannot come to terms with his past and scraps his memoir, while McLelland is the supposed author and editor of *Redemption Falls*. By including multiple writing characters the readers can look over their shoulder to witness some of the characters’ creative processes, which in turn also exposes O’Connor’s approach to some of the texts. Thus, the following instances do not only show the characters struggling with the act of writing, but also reflect O’Connor’s conflicts when crafting a new novel. While crossing the Atlantic, Dixon is trying to come up with a piece of literature that would finally make him successful:

He had taken down the box containing the manuscript of his story collection. Opened it, half wishing it might have disappeared. Removed the block-like slab of paper. Read the first line aloud to himself. *Galway is a place in love with sorrow*. Now he saw that beside the phrase Newby had inked three small red question marks. Perhaps he had a point. The sentence wasn’t a good one...He ripped out the page and threw it away. Opened his notebook and tried to write. All afternoon he had sat at the desk, drinking Bourbon County whiskey and trying to write. When his candle started to flicker, he lit another on the end. But his metaphors were useless: stale insulting...Dixon was facing an undefeatable reality. The Famine could not be turned into a simile. The best word for death was death. (O’Connor, 2003, 128-129)

Above quote is laden with information that could also apply to O’Connor’s own person. When asked about his approach to writing he states that it “is a more or less

constant process of rewriting. You sculpt and hone each sentence until you know it's right. (One way I test its rightness is to read material aloud when I think it's finished.)" (O'Connor, 2008, 469-470). The approach of reading aloud the sentences clearly links the supposed author with the real one. Apart from that, the struggles with editors, the notion of a writer's block and the conclusion that The Great Famine cannot be depicted by a simile, hence a traditional narrative all link Dixon's approach to O'Connor's.

In another passage, Mulvey's skills as balladeer stand in the focus of attention. Through a whole chapter the readers get to know how he got the idea for his ballad, the various stages of production and how he adapts the traditionally Irish song to most diverse audiences:

The songs intersected like springs through the lowland. You saw shadows of some of them flit across others; lines borrowed, phrases improved, verses polished and moved around; events edited or left improved, verses polished and moved around; events edited or left intact but told from a different point of view. As though once there has been only one great song from which the songmakers kept drawing; a hidden holy well. (O'Connor, 2003, 93)

Bearing in mind that O'Connor also used traditional songs as a source and adapted them to better fit his context, above quote embodies his writing style. While crafting his first ballad, Mulvey argues that "[n]obody would ever know the facts anyway...the main thing in balladry was to make a singable song. The facts did not matter: *that was the secret*. He wrote and scratched out; rewrote, refined" (O'Connor, 2003, 102). With such instances O'Connor clearly "celebrates the art of the story teller, asserts his supremacy over facts and simultaneously challenges its own account" (Parey 198). While Mulvey gains fame through his skills as a balladeer, Lucia struggles with the creative process of her poetry.

The poems from these months are imitative; showy. She had not yet found a way of seeing the world. Metaphors, some striking, stud the stanzas like jewels, as though to reward, as though to reward the patient readers for remaining on board; but the dazzle fades quickly and what is left is the feeling that she is almost always writing the wrong poem. All the years of reading, the endless hours of study, those descents into the caverns of imagination; but the light she deploys is too narrowly focused. What is illuminated, at times brilliantly, is not worth seeing, while around you, in the darkness, some krakenlike creature stirs. And then came the day when she entered his study in search of a ream of paper. (O'Connor, 2008, 93).

For an author that predominately writes prose, crafting poetry for his two novels must have been quite challenging for O'Connor. In a way the artistic obstacles encountered by Lucia may also mirror his own.

4.4.4. Second-Person Narration

Directly addressing readers is not a postmodern invention, but it perfectly reflects the movement's "aesthetics according to which it is the reader who produces the text" (Fludernik, 45). In the two novels this device is sparsely employed, puzzling the recipients all the more when encountering it in the few instances. Second Person Narration, as identified by Fludernik, has a dramatic impact on the readers in comparison to more traditional, first or third person narrative styles. "Whereas the typical story-telling mode allows the reader to sit back and enjoy a narrative of another's tribulation, hence instituting a basic existential and differential gap between the story and its reception, second person text...breach this convention of distance, seemingly involving the real reader with the textual world" (Fludernik, 32).

It is only in the epilogue that Dixon directly addresses his readers, reflecting on the fate of some of *Star of the Sea's* characters. He reminds the reader that the *Star of the Sea* was just one vessel among thousands that barely made it across the Atlantic Ocean, carrying Irish immigrants in search of a better life.

Here was a story of three or four people. The reader will know that there were many other stories...101,546 wretchedly poor immigrants entered the teeming port of New York. Of that number 40,820 were Irish. It is not actually known how many lost their lives within sight of what they themselves often called 'the Promised Land'. Some say the figure may be as high as two thirds. (O'Connor, 2003, 386).

Using the second person Dixon lends weight to the seriousness of the topic. Although having been quite unreliable in many instances, the second person combined with the tone employed in the epilogue reinforces Dixon's credibility as narrator that was shattered throughout the story, telling the story through a rather subjective lens. Furthermore he "openly, metafictionally, invent[s] the addressee's experience" (Fludernik, 32), assuming that the readers already possess the knowledge on the statistics of Irish immigrants entering the New York harbor. Although they

probably do not know this figure beforehand, Dixon avoids lecturing them; instead he opts for a rather charming way of conveying the facts.

The use of the second person in *Redemption Falls* differs in terms of its function. Apart from one instance, which is not part of the main narrative, it is again only in the epilogue that McLelland openly addresses his audience:

Et tu, respected Reader: what do you collect? Books, do you tell me? My wife likes those. But I do not share her enthusiasm for the invented story; its neatness, its pretenses, its want of contradictory grain. Twain, the great contriver, put it remarkably well. Little wonder the truth is stranger than fiction: Fiction has to make sense. (O'Connor, 2008, 442)

With McLelland's disdain for fiction he paradoxically supports the supposed authenticity of the fictional novel. In above as well as in the following quote the importance of fictional literature is questioned:

In any case, if the Reader will indulge a digression: a truly companionate marriage is rare as the platypus, that mixed metaphor of impish Lady Nature, and possibly as doomed to the museum. Should you be blessed with such alliance, her is what to do. Cease, now, with these time-wasting lines, shred the volume into halves, then cast them into the hearth and fly to the lips of your tolerant conspirator to ask if there is anything you can do. For who among us would not rather be making love than reading? Indeed, what is the point of reading, if not to help us love on another better? If only O'Keeffe had understood what words are for, instead of always what they are against. (O'Connor, 2008, 149).

However, the seriousness of the passage, hence the employment of the second person can be doubted as the narrator warns his audience that this chapter originates "[f]rom a very poor book" (O'Connor, 2008, 141), which he does "not especially recommend" (O'Connor, 2008, 451). Above all, the readers know that they do not read an authentic novel of the nineteenth century, and therefore embrace these instances of Second Person Narration as clearly surprising, but not as something that should be taken too seriously. The few passages' content simply underlines O'Connor's playful approach to his literature as well as to fiction as a whole, in which he intersperses humoristic devices in novels that are otherwise thoroughly serious and sad.

4.5. Fragmentation

Although the plot of *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls* are held together by a main narrative, there are lots of other, most diverse, narratives embedded in the novels' overall structures. As the stories wear on, the readers come across written accounts or fragments of documents such as the Captain's logbook, a journal article, personal letters, ballads and songs, surveillance reports, medical reports, private correspondences, a chapter of an abandoned novel, to name a few. These documents are depicted as authentic, having the effect of presenting themselves "as one possible narrative among others, placing fiction on the same level as other documents and archives" (Mikowski, 190). This approach also reflects the author's view on the core themes of the two novels, The Great Famine and the American Civil War. "[T]hrough his fragmented approach to articulating the famine, O'Connor demonstrates that the tragedy which so deeply affected both Irish and English people is something that cannot be explained by charts, maps, and dietetic studies alone. More evidence of famine is better evidence of the famine (Conley 7)". Similarly, the American Civil War and the Irish participation in the same is something so complex that could not be explained by a single narrative. O'Connor's fragmented approach found in *Redemption Falls* is also explained by the lopsided depiction found in past and present war novels.

I confess to disquiet about some novels of war, which too often offer the perspective of only one character. Every story has two sides, but a war story has many more. A novel that doesn't reflect this runs the risk of using war as a backdrop, an engine for driving a plot. I wanted my story to be multifaceted and noisy, with jostling voices and perspectives...a book of war should read as if it were somehow stitched together from the torn, scattered fragments of many other books. (O'Connor, 2008, 463)

The following section of this paper is dedicated to illuminate a selection of different types of incorporated texts, the characteristics of each text type and which functions these texts serve in the overall structure of *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls*.

4.5.1. Newspaper Articles

In both novels O'Connor makes use of supposedly authentic newspaper articles, adhering to usual conventions in terms of layout and content found in the press,

including typical fonts, headings, subheadings, advertisement and the arrangement of the pages in columns. While in *Star of the Sea* the readers are presented with a whole article by Dixon for the *New York Tribune*, the one found in *Redemption Falls* is a short comment that was seemingly printed in a local press, the *Redemption & Edwardstown Epitaph*.

Published on the third day of the journey, when Dixon is already on his way home to the USA, his article deals with the grievances in Ireland and their origins. Responding to a comment by Merridith also found in the *New York Tribune*, he rants about Merridith's view as an Irish landlord in regard to The Famine. Through the early application of this article in the novel, the tense relationship between these two men is addressed for the first time, making the readers aware that some of *Star of Sea's* characters have met before. Apart from the information that adds depth to the interconnectedness of the characters, the article in question also serves the function of giving the readers, who might not be too familiar with that topic, background information on the Irish Famine. While Dixon partly blames the English for not adequately helping their tenants, saying that the situation in 1847 in Ireland can be attributed to the combination of four factors: "Natural disaster, crushing poverty, the utter dependency of the poor on one susceptible crop, and the utter indolence of their Lords and Masters...It is not an accident, but an inevitable consequence" (O'Connor, 2003, 18). The vastly diverging standpoints of the two men already hint at Dixon being an unreliable narrator in the instances that deal with Merridith.

On top of that, the article also focuses on the media landscape, depicting quite different views on the Irish Famine. By conveying the opinions of the *Illustrated London News* and *Punch Magazine*, from which O'Connor mostly draws his illustrations, applied throughout the novel, he gives the readers a chance to actively interpret his approach considering this paratextual feature. With Dixon's information given in this chapter on both gazettes, the readers can draw more adequate conclusions about the illustrations. Juxtaposing the two newspapers Dixon argues that "[a] look through the *Illustrated London News* for the last several years will reveal how hunts, balls, and other fatiguing diversions of elegant country living have merrily continued in disaster-struck Ireland, while the hungry have the temerity to die on the roadside. (O'Connor, 2003, 21)", while *Punch* magazine proposes "[a]n enforced scheme of mass emigration had been advocated in a recent number of the journal punch (an-anti-American rag whose editor has been a frequent guest in Lord

Kinscourt's own home" (O'Connor, 2003, 21). To put it in a nutshell, the article helps to better understand O'Connor's approach by introducing the readers to the complicated relationship of some of the main characters, to some of the problematic aspects revolving around the Irish Famine and simultaneously allowing the reader to engage in inferring meaning concerning the illustrations.

At the end of the chapter, next to the article, an advertisement can be found, praising an offer for a sea voyage:

SAIL THE SILVER STAR LINE
MOST LUXURIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS
ELEGANT SERVICE: FINE DINING AT SEA
NEW YORK TO LIVERPOOL: DAILY SAILINGS
\$120 RETURN for CHAMPAGNE CLASS
RESPECTFULLY SOLICITING RESERVATIONS
(O'Connor, 2003, 22)

Taking into account that the *Star of the Sea* also sails for the *Silver Star Line*, the character of Dixon becomes even more ambiguous through this advertisement. On the one hand, he criticizes Merridith for not helping the poor Irish as their landlord. On the other hand, Dixon himself enjoys a "most luxurious accommodation" with "elegant service" aboard the ship, while Irish emigrants are suffering from starvation and diseases one deck below. The juxtaposition of his attitude established in the article and the advertisement, further shatters Dixon's reliability concerning his depiction of Merridith, but also towards his self-perception. Throughout the story it becomes more and more clear that his disdain for Merridith does not lie primarily in their diverging views on the Famine, but can be attributed, first and foremost, to personal reasons, as Dixon has an affair with Merridith's wife.

The anonymously published article found in *Redemption Falls* serves the purpose of giving voice to the enemies of the protagonist, expressing their views towards the governor. Since O'Keeffe chose to wage war on the side of The Union, the Irish expatriates in the town of Redemption Falls that served for the Confederacy sense implacable hate for the governor. They reek that "[a] STENCH has been noted up that end of town, yet queerer than the usual cesspit effluvium of drunken Hibernian disappointment. It is the stink of Yankee hypocrisy fermenting in the guilts." (O'Connor, 2008, 126). The rest of the article continues in that manner. More subtly, the article embodies the hardships of such newly established territories after The American Civil War, as people with profoundly diverging attitudes found

themselves in one and the same melting pot, who now had to get along with each other.

From a narratological point of view the article serves another function as well. On the whole the book is told from O’Keeffe’s view and by those who are close to him. Therefore, the struggles in the town, especially the conflicts with McLaurenson’s gang are told through the lens of the governor. For the opposing views, O’Connor chooses to circumvent a traditional narrative, instead of opting for different types of media all characterized by their impersonality. Cole Mc Laurenson is solely introduced to the readers through songs and ballads, praising his outlaw existence. In contrast to the depiction of O’Keeffe, whose tormented psyche is addressed again and again, the inapproachable accounts, including the anonymous article addressed above, of Cole and his gang, who constantly menace the town of Redemption Falls, make them even more horrifying.

4.5.2. Prayer

As Eliza commences her search for her brother, she begins to pray, citing “Mother of Christ, Star of the Sea, Mary, my mother, pray for me”. (O’Connor, 2008, 7) Said Mary could be seen, of course, as her mother, Mary Duane, the character from the previous book, but also as the Virgin Mary. More interestingly, another parallel can be drawn between the two novels, as the character from both books invokes the mother of Jesus by one of her ancient names, Star of the Sea. “Maria in Catholic tradition is, from the Hebrew, Stella Maris, or ‘Star of the Sea’. Since ancient times, this name assumes the Virgin as a protector of travelers and sea-farers” (Beville, 14). This information is vital when adequately interpreting one of the most striking text types found in *Star of the Sea*, as chapter XXVII sets itself apart in terms of creativity and uniqueness. In the preceding chapter, the steerage passengers come to know that once they finally reach their destination, and therefore consider themselves safe from the horrible conditions on board, they might not be allowed to dock at New York Harbor due to the sheer amount of ships already waiting. Captain Lockwood observes that out of despair “they commenced to pray aloud, in that fervently incantory manner they have, the many strange names they give unto the Mother of Jesus” (O’Connor, 2003, 268), among them the title Star of the Sea. After that, when

Lockwood lies in bed, he dreams he sees “the ship as from a terrible height, its body crying out for mercy to the Queen of High Heaven” (O’Connor, 2003, 268).

As the readers turn the page, they might be puzzled by the form of the next chapter. Reminiscent of well-known religious pattern poems, such as George Herbert’s *Easter Wings*, in which “form comes to mirror content in an openly suggestive way” (Beville, 13), the chapter takes the form of a pattern poem or also called concrete poetry:

In its simplest definition concrete poetry is the creation of verbal artefacts which explode the possibilities, not only of sound, sense and rhythm – the traditional fields of poetry – but also of space, whether it be flat, two-dimensional space of letters on the printed page, or the three-dimensional space of words in relief and sculptured ideograms. (Draper, 329).

Beville argues that “the novel has as its literary focus an effort to bring together opposing cultural forms, to transcend different, and to generate an “other space” whence the author’s expostulations on history can be viewed. Here in the ship-shaped passage, this effort is manifested both thematically and structurally” (Beville, 14). On a most basic level, the chapter⁵⁷ combines the prayer of the steerage passengers and the dream of Captain Lockwood, since the prayer’s text is assembled as to match the outlines of the ship viewed from above. At a more subtle level, the silhouette of the prayer could also be seen as somewhat entirely different. Taking into consideration the illustration placed in front of the chapter, which resembles a statue of the Virgin Mary, the form of the chapter could also be seen as her silhouette, which, again, links Mary to her aforementioned ancient name, Star of the Sea. Therefore, O’Connor might also allude to “the image of the famine ship as a uterine or womb-like vessel that carries its refugees” (Beville, 14), whose embryos face an uncertain outcome. The picture of Mary then “[s]uggests protection and carrying but also, significantly, rebirth. It is a pre-nascent phase before the establishment of new borders of identity” (Beville, 15). The most convincing approach to interpret the chapter is probably to adhere to the connectedness of Mary and her role as protector of sea-farers, caring for the steerage passengers while en route until their new identity, hence their new life in New York, is secured.

This chapter perfectly displays O’Connor’s creativity and the uniqueness in dealing with the highly sensitive topic that is unmatched with any other attempt to

⁵⁷ Cf. O’Connor, 2003, 270.

capture the Irish Famine. The interplay of text and form is laden with metaphors and allusions that actively engage the readers in inferring meaning and serves as a prime example of what O'Connor wants to show: the complexity of the Famine and its entangled factors.

4.5.3. Historical Documents

One of the most prominent features in terms of interspersed texts are documents such as reports of various nature, including police reports, surveillance reports, testimonies, protocols etc. A characteristic they all more or less share is their telegram style, making use of short sentences that should only record the most basic facts, usually devoid of any emotion on part of their authors. This stands in stark contrast to the main narrative, which often focuses on the psychological aspects of the main characters. However, the reports give an account of events which are otherwise left out of the main narrative or present different angles to it. Although presenting facts in a rather objective manner, they are still gripping for the readers. In a surveillance report the observer notes a “[v]iolent quarrel audible from within the house. Insulting words exchanged between subject and his wife” (O'Connor, 2008, 135), which makes the readers even more keen to get to know the next perspective of the main narrative, focusing on the deteriorating relationship between O'Keeffe and his wife. Overall, the reports add a more neutral position to the otherwise emotional, unreliable main narrative. Thus, these documents reinforce the authenticity of the two novels.

The commander of the *Star of the Sea*, Captain Lockwood, also has to fulfill the duty of writing a report that records the events during the voyage. In terms of frequency of all reports found in the two novels Lockwood gets the most attention. He unscrupulously jots down nautical details and his overall impression of almost each day of the journey in his logbook. Concerning the purpose of such logbooks Huang notes:

Logbook, also termed as deck log voyage or ship's log book, is a log of all events which occur in the process of voyage, an original recordation reflecting ship's transportation, production and operation, a legal document necessary for a ship, an important content which may be inspected by port authority on ships importing and exporting the port, and

is also a crucial evidence of accumulating information, analyzing and summarizing navigation experience, estimating and disposing marine accident. (Huang 1).

In each of Lockwood's accounts of the voyage he starts off with putting down nautical details, such as information about the weather (wind direction and speed, information on the sea) or the ship's position (longitude, latitude, actual Greenwich Standard Time, heading) on the journey. After that his actual report begins, usually referring first to the people that have died during the previous night. In an unemotional manner he lists the number of dead people and gives further details about the steerage passengers:

"This dreadful day fourteen steerage passengers died, making a total of thirty-six...and were buried according to the rite of the sea. Four of those who expired today were infants...a fifteenth passenger, a poor fisherman of Leenaun whose brother fell asleep in Jesus yesterday, lost his reason and took his own life by drowning...Eight suspected of Typhus...One suspected of Cholera" (O'Connor 79).

He closely adheres to the style of a logbook. Lockwood rather dutifully records the events, instead of mourning the death of an infant. In contrast to Dixon, who often is biased in his description of certain characters and, therefore, becomes unreliable, the Captain, as well as the other authors of reports, can be considered as the only reliable narrators of the stories, since they do not let their emotions interfere with the notes of their respective reports.

As Lockwood commences his logbook he claims, in regard to the nature of his report, "I attest it on my solemn honour a compleat and true account of the voyage, and neither has any matter pertinent been omitted" (O'Connor 1). Mostly, Lockwood accomplishes to adhere to this work ethic, yet in the course of the journey the experienced navigator is overwhelmed by the terrible conditions of the steerage passengers, whose numbers are decimated vastly along the way. After the discovery of two corpses, whose foul stench had been noticed, but could not be traced for a long time during the journey, and the murder on the ship, the captain is unwilling to fulfill his nautical duties any longer, as he records in his final logbook entry. "I hereby tender my resignation from command of this ship, also from the employment of the Silver Star Shipping...to be effective from debarkation" (O'Connor 377). Although Lockwood pillories the condition of the steerage passengers several times and even provides some accommodation for them, it is at the very end that the readers can grasp how deeply Lockwood was affected by the deaths of the Irish, making a lasting

impression on him so that he is even willing to devote the rest of his life to those in need.

Upon my return home to Dover I mean to devote the remainder of my days to some endeavour which will assist the suffering of the poor of some place, be it Ireland or England or some other nation. What it can be, I know not; but I must do something. The country of the poor can be abandoned no longer. (O'Connor 381)

The shift in tone from neutral, reliable narration to emotionally gripping descriptions adheres to the overall approach of O'Connor, viewing history as something that is impossible to be portrayed as authentic. Traumatizing events cannot be put down in an objective manner, even though the supposed author tries to do so.

4.5.4. Interview Transcripts

For a long time historians could only rely on written accounts to investigate the past. With the technical advancement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century they could also resort to pictorial and oral modes of representation. Having already analyzed illustrations and photographs in section 4.3.1. and how they shape our understanding of history and fiction, O'Connor also makes use of what can be regarded as fictional oral history. 9 out of 78 chapters in *Redemption Falls* devote their attention to transcripts of interviews conducted by the editor and narrator of the story. A look into the Acknowledgments section of the book reveals in which ways the reproduction of the oral language was influenced: "The Works Progress Administration recorded interviews with former slaves in the 1930s; *The Emergence of Black English*: text and commentary, eds. Bailey, Maynor, Cukor-Avila, includes transcripts. Some orthographic elements of the transcripts appear in the recollections of Elizabeth Longstreet" (O'Connor, 2008, 457). Mostly focusing on Elizabeth when applying the medium of interview transcripts, O'Connor necessarily had to reproduce aspects of Black English and features of spoken language in contradistinction to the main narrative told by an educated, white and wealthy person:

...An I come up to the Territory first time sixtyfour. Was a scrub on a steamboat out of St Lous...No it wadn too many steamers yet that time...Dangerous plying, the Missouri that time. Cause the river all choke-up with tress and all kind...Water like a tarpit. Missouri tougher plyin than the Mississipi iny how. Got the whirlpools an cataracts, and rapids ever

bend. It maelstrom and sandbank an the most of it perilous shallow. It virgin river then.
(O'Connor, 2008, 63).

In the transcripts, therefore, the readers find short and simple sentences, fillers, pauses, hesitation marks, denoting the spoken mode. Since the interviewed person, a black slave, has a poor, uneducated background, the language is adjusted to these characteristics, using a most basic vocabulary as well as mistakes in terms of grammar and idiom. Like with the other material found in the novel O'Connor tried hard to make the historical documents look authentic, adhering to the conventions of the respective time and medium. As recording an interview is susceptible to diverse kinds of distractions, he even included some of these into the transcripts, further underlining the authenticity. When reading them one may find, for example, distractions that can be attributed to either inaudibility, caused by a "[unintelligible remark]"⁵⁸ or a "[dog barking]"⁵⁹, or to technical failures, ("[Acetate disc is scratched here. Eleven seconds indecipherable.]"⁶⁰).

The Postmodern view that it is impossible to render history as objective is all the more true of oral history, which inevitably embraces subjectivity. However, matters are complicated even further by the nature of memory, which simultaneously holds possibilities for historians. Citing a pioneer in the field of oral history, Alessandro Portelli, stating "what is really important is that the memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings (Portelli quoted in Thomson, 78)". Leaving aside the notions of oral history being an unreliable medium of delivering historical truths, interviews, for instance, indeed hold the potential of depicting the past in an adequate manner, as long as the historian sets out to interpret these oral accounts of history⁶¹. In chapter 45 the readers get the chance to slip into the role of the historian in terms of inferring meaning on the basis of multiperspective interviews. The whole chapter comprises "transcripts of field-recordings from surviving Redemptionites" (O'Connor, 2008, 244), focusing on their opinion about Jeddo Mooney. Ranging from descriptions that are highly preoccupied in their stories ("I'll tell you right now, that child had evil in him. It was the way he had of looking at you. Not a screed of human shame...Get the shudders to think of it yet.

⁵⁸ Cf. O'Connor, 2008, 44.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 235.

⁶¹ Cf. Thomson, 91.

Devil's own child"⁶²... "My brother told me he seen that child's ghost in the streets last winter...Still the size he was then...With a saw in his hand"⁶³.), to voices that criticize these biased views ("They tell you that yarn?...They didn't even move her till seventy-two! Never seen that child in their life, sir"⁶⁴), to more positive recollections of the boy ("Heard ever thing they said. I dunno how it come that way...I never once saw him do no cruel thing. Just a boy never got him no chance is all...He was an alright boy. I never saw nothing amiss with that boys...He was a most beautiful singer, this I remember."⁶⁵). The quite diverging perception of one and the same person helps to "[u]nderstand the ways in which memory stories have been shaped by the particular circumstances of the event and the complex processes of remembering" (Thomson, 91). Since most of the inhabitants of Redemption Falls disdain the governor, they also dislike one of his closest associates. Now, viewed from a critical distance, it might be argued that their biased picture has receded behind a description that would do justice to the boy, hence present a truer picture. Even though the interviews take place in 1927, 62 years after the occurrences the surveyed persons refer to, their memories are still entangled in their preoccupied view of the governor and the boy.

Therefore, in line with the ethics of the historian, it is the task of the readers not to be taken in by an individual account. Instead, it will be most fruitful to question the background of the interviewee's in terms of their relation to the governor and the boy, exposing their views as heavily biased. Through this approach, combined with a synthesis of most different voices and opinions, a truer picture might be revealed through oral history for the historian as well as for the engaged readers of fiction.

4.6. Intermediality

Apart from heavily relying on intertextuality, the novels in question are also characterized by their use of intermediality. So far, the relationship between intertextuality and intermediality has led to many different perceptions among literary scholars⁶⁶. Some scholars' views consider one of the two phenomena as a

⁶² Cf. O'Connor, 2008, 257.

⁶³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 251.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 253.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶⁶ Cf. Wolf, 1999, 46.

subcategory of the other, while others view them as distinct devices. For the purpose of this analysis, it might be best to embrace intertextuality and intermediality as intertwined features that cannot be analyzed adequately when viewed detached from another. Generally, intermediality is defined as a “particular relation...between conventionally distinct media of expression or communication: this relation consists in a verifiable, or at least convincingly identifiable, direct or indirect participation of two or more media in the signification of a human artifact” (Wolf, 1999, 37). In his analysis Wolf (1999) addresses numerous manifestations, resulting in a complex typology of intermediality⁶⁷. By linking the phenomenon to Broich’s study on intertextuality, clear analogies between the two terms can be made⁶⁸ that are helpful in discerning most basic forms of intermediality:

Like intertextuality, intermediality can comprise relations between, or references to a) specific works (in intermediality: works that [normally] are transmitted by another medium; this constitutes a parallel to what in German intertextuality theory is called “Einzeltextreferenz”..., or b) specific genres (in intermediality: of another medium)... In addition, intermediality can, however, also appear in the form of a general involvement of more than one semiotic system in a given work (which would roughly correspond to “Systemreferenz”..., that is, to another medium without further specification. (Wolf, 1999, 46-47)

Although Wolf, in his analysis, takes this a step further, creating terms for various intermedial relationships, the distinction taken from the above quote is appropriate enough to shed some light on the intermediality applied in *Redemption Falls*.

The implementation of intermediality is quite diverse in their applications, ranging from references to products of other types of media, hence “Einzeltextreferenzen”, incorporating the referenced medium into the novel, (symbolically) transforming one type of medium into another. In one entry of Winterton’s journal the readers come across a passage, saying „[w]ish to Christ redeemer I had something to read. But have just now remembered: I do (O’Connor, 2008, 320)”. Beginning on the succeeding page, the chapter’s subtitle informs the readers that they are now presented with “*Winterton’s reading material – A biography of sorts*” (O’Connor, 2008, 321), a classified document by the US-government, recording the misdeeds of O’Keefe. While this case of intermediality could also be regarded as a hypertextual relation between the mentioning of the reading material

⁶⁷ Cf. Wolf, 1999, 37-50.

⁶⁸ Cf. Section 2.3.1.

and including the same, the next passage in question qualifies to be labeled as intermedial and in part metatextual.

When Lucia enters the territory she presents her husband with an enormously expensive painting. After their relationship deteriorates further and further, with Lucia even leaving the territory, O'Keeffe decides to destroy the painting, metaphorically speaking, their marriage. "He tugged the axe from the woodblock...He was frightened..., and he wished she were here to observe the sacrilege. He would scatter its shred to the winds. *Our Heroic Frontier* by Edward Fairfax Chapel. Its destruction would give him pleasure"(O'Connor, 2008, 19). The fictional painting is again addressed over a hundred pages later, presenting the readers with a metatextual reference to the painting. Supposedly taken from a "catalogue for 'Sale of Important American Art', Knoedler & Co., New York, February 1865." (O'Connor, 2008, 156), the whole of chapter 27 is a description of *Our Heroic Frontier* seemingly found in aforementioned catalogue.

In another instance the use of intermediality is composed of an interplay between text and picture. Early in the novel Eliza encounters a lifeless soldier, carrying "a letter from a sweetheart in the dead man's clutch-sack, scrawled on the back of a torn-out flyleaf. She scans it and blushes" (O'Connor, 2008, 11). The next page includes an illustration⁶⁹ of the flyleaf, which, in fact, is the torn title page of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* with a hangman dangling "[f]rom the gibbet of a curlicue" (O'Connor, 2008, 12). Once again, this instance focuses on O'Connor's ambiguous attitude towards Dickens⁷⁰. While it could be considered a sacrilege to scribble on the title page of one of Dickens's masterpieces, converting it into a letter, judging from the overall impression of his treatment of Dickens and his work in the two novels, the reader has to acknowledge that O'Connor's references to popular authors of the past should be perceived first and foremost as tongue in cheek. Therefore, the instances addressed above do not play significant roles in advancing the overall narrative, but are manifestations of O'Connor artistically playing with literary conventions and devices with the aim of puzzling the reader, while underlining the authenticity of the referenced medium by including it in the overall structure of the book. This ties in with Wolf's claim that "[o]ne important impulse for transgressing traditional medial boundaries is certainly the meta-aesthetic curiosity of modernist as

⁶⁹ Cf. O'Connor, 2008, 12.

⁷⁰ Cf. Section 4.1.1.

well as postmodernist authors to explore, and possibly to find a means of expanding the limits of given media” (Wolf, 2002, 22). Clearly, judging from above instances O’Connor is willing to explore the possibilities of intermediality in the written medium, as the importance of advancing a plot in these instances recedes behind his approach of including intertextuality and intermediality. In other words, he “foreground[s] the nature of artistic media by employing an unusual, defamiliarizing kind of intermediality which ‘goes against the grain’ of the original medium” (Wolf, 2002, 22).

Apart from playing with conventions of a medium, the application of intermediality has also more subtle functions. Probably the most elaborated instance of intermediality found in *Redemption Falls* starts with chapter 61, entitled “ON LOOKING AT A PHOTOGRAPH BY MR O’SULLIVAN” (O’Connor, 2008, 345). The entirety of this chapter is a poem written by Lucia, supposedly influenced by a war photograph.

~~The Finishing~~

November snow benedictions the boy.
In the chill gray smoke, the lost stallion ~~seems~~ ghostlike,
[...]
Look on him General. See where he lies.
Unchained, at last, of battle’s hot nightmares.
The son you had not. Your body. A boy.

~~The son you refused me. My body. A boy.~~

(O’Connor, 2008, 345-346)

Crossing out words or even whole lines suggest that the version found in the novel can be considered as a first draft. Interestingly, the last line seems to deviate from depicting the horrors of war that focuses on a fallen boy, as it refers to her situation with her husband. Shifting into a personal perspective might have been considered as inappropriate, given the overall tone of the poem, and therefore was scored out by Lucia. The question as to why the title is also deleted is answered by Lucia in the next chapter in which the poem is again addressed:

The poem about the photograph has taken her two days. The form is difficult. Even now, she is not certain the piece is finished. Strange, the word ‘finished’, for it means completed but also dead; or doomed to die, or sentenced. Or the climax of sexual pleasure. It is not completely bad – not care for in its tone. A want of absolute clarity. A vagueness that sinks it. A poem should be like a snow-grain, clear and cold; unique, worth looking at again. Or a root-strand of the poet’s hair in a phial. It has business to exist if those standards are met. But her efforts are only rearrangements of things already said. Mirrors held up to mirrors. (O’Connor, 2008, 348).

Thus, the interplay between poem and self-reflective comment can be regarded as instance of intermediality and metatextual reference, reviewing aspects of the poem that were given earlier in the novel. As Wolf points out, incorporating different types of media in a fictional text, even though the above example only relies on an interplay of two different modes of written accounts, holds the potential of self-referentiality and as a consequence self-reflection⁷¹. “In many cases the aesthetic self-referentiality...does not remain in the state of an implicit laying bare of the constructedness and the principles of construction of a particular work of fiction, but reaches a high degree of self- or meta-reflexivity” (Wolf, 23, 2002). Further elaborating on her thoughts, the next quote in question combines reflections about the poem and the photograph that inspired her:

The boy in the photograph, did he he know what he was fighting for? Had anyone ever told him? Where there moments when he realized? It occurs to her now that perhaps he himself could not read. Can his parents read his tombstone, if he has one?...At the hotel, she reads over the poem again. It seems drained of any life it ever had. My poem about a corpse is a corpse, she feels. As she goes to tear the page, she happens to look out of the window. (O'Connor, 2008, 351-352).

On page 379 the intermediality between poem and commentary is expanded further by inserting the said photograph under the heading “THE FINISHING”, reusing Lucia’s original title of the poem. In short, these few examples, touching upon various types of media that heavily rely and refer to each other, underline that intermediality may “engage the reader,...by means of explicitly metafictional passages, in an active reflection on the nature of fiction,...or art in general” (Wolf, 2002, 23).

5. Conclusion

On the basis of a theoretical framework concerning postmodernist literature in general, and, more specifically, postmodern historical novels, this diploma thesis has analyzed two novels by the Irish author Joseph O'Connor, *Star of the Sea* (2002) and *Redemption Falls* (2007). Narrowing down the narratological exploration to three

⁷¹ Cf. Wolf, 2002, 22.

specific aspects of postmodern literature, the two novels in question are prime examples of how postmodern authors use the devices of intertextuality, alluding to, rewriting, and revising literary efforts of the past, thus, creating a pastiche of former texts, fragmentation, through which a multiperspective view on complex topics is made possible, lending a voice to ordinary people usually marginalized in traditional accounts of history, be it fictional or not, incorporating most diverse text formats into the novels that underline the materiality and authenticity of the book, and metafiction, giving insights into O'Connor's creative processes.

With the social upheavals during and after the Second World War, authors found themselves in need of finding new ways of adequately depicting pluralistic societies, living in increasing complex conditions. Questioning traditional modes of representations, postmodernism sought and seeks to overcome these obstacles by literary devices that mirror the social realities. This new dogma, of course, also affected the way in which authors come to think of history and how it could be depicted more adequately. Once seen as inextricably entangled with historiography, as found in the realist historical novel of the nineteenth century, postmodern authors refuse to turn to this type of written account, the official history of the past only. Instead, embracing all sorts of sources and resources of historical knowledge that would inevitably result in different manifestations compared to traditional modes of representing history, postmodern writers found their way through the application, among other typical devices, of intertextuality, fragmentation and metafiction that question history, the knowledge thereof and how it can be incorporated into a work of literature, while scrutinizing their very own approach to the past within their novels.

As regards intertextuality, this paper used a combined approach based on both Genette and Stocker to present a wide range of intertextual forms and functions. As can be seen in the respective chapters, O'Connor revised literary classics for various purposes. Whether he artistically plays with some of the texts to act out his admiration for Emily Bronte, or his love-hate relationship with Dickens, paying homage to the writer through implementing similar characteristics of the novelist into his own works and simultaneously criticizing the novelist through incorporating him as a dubious character into *Star of the Sea*; or entirely reworking whole motifs of popular literature, as found in a chapter of *Redemption Falls*, in which he pays tribute to *Robinson Crusoe* and Alexander Selkirk, creating a psychologically more convincing picture of a castaway tormented by isolation; or alluding to some of the socially

problematic aspects found in the classics of literature, pillorying the romantic attitude towards slavery found in *Gone with the Wind*, reworking this aspect of O'Hara's story in a more authentic manner.

Similarly, he adheres and subverts conventions of different genres, among them the Victorian Novel, Gothic Literature and Crime Fiction. Using the usual gender stereotypes of Victorian literature gives O'Connor the chance to put away with roles that were inappropriate even in their time of origin, ridiculing the notions of *The Angel in the House*, painting a more sympathetic picture of women who turned to prostitution caused by harsh conditions, the *Fallen Women*, that can be reintegrated into society according to O'Connor's version. The *New Woman*, by contrast, is given much prominence with the characters of Laura and Lucia that could also be regarded as a woman of the twenty-first century in terms of her self-determination and confidence. In comparison to the male protagonists, who are anything but reminiscent of Victorian gentlemen, these two women are markedly superior to their husbands in regard to their ethics as well as intellectually, and, therefore reverse the gender roles typically found in Victorian literature. Elements of Crime Fiction and Gothic are interspersed in the novels to create suspense and to appeal to a wider readership. By altering the conventions of these two genres, such as revealing the murderer and the victim from the start, the author plays with the expectations of the readers, puzzling them with every twist and turn in the plot.

Also features that lie on the threshold of the narrative, paratexts, are worth investigating. The interplay of epigraphs and illustrations, some taken from nineteenth century sources, increase, at first glance, the authenticity, but also reveal the subjectivity of the historical material. Although focusing on the same topic, the depictions in illustrations and epigraphs diverge considerably according to their creator's attitude towards the portrayed events. This holds also true for O'Connor's employment of footnotes, of which some stray from the conventional path of aiding the reader's understanding of the text, objectively clarifying details or giving further information. Instead, some footnotes are highly subjective in their content, influenced by the narrators' personal feelings when commenting on documents written by, for their part, despised characters.

The fragmentation of the novels allows O'Connor to present storylines devoid of an authorial narrative instance. Instead, he embraces the subjective and unreliable, giving voice to many ordinary people, mostly unheard in traditional

depictions of history. Apart from that he also included most different types of incorporated texts. These texts present themselves as authentic pieces of writing, which is underlined by the respective characteristics of each of the texts' formats and content. By doing so, he is able to paint a panoramic picture of the mid nineteenth-century that is entertaining, varied, simultaneously being complex and sophisticated. In terms of their function, quite different purposes can be found. While official reports seek to underline the authenticity of the novels, interview transcripts highlight the subjective nature of individual accounts. Furthermore, they are used for purely artistic reasons, as can be seen in the form of a pattern poem, or, as in the case of the newspaper articles, can give the readers background information on the conditions the mid-nineteenth-century, aiding the readers in their understanding of the plots.

Through metafictional devices O'Connor directly addresses the problematic aspects of representing history in a fictional account. Furthermore they allow the readers to bear witness of how the author constructed his overall approach of the novels, how he struggled with some of the parts of the novels in the disguise of comments that, on the surface, relate to his writing subjects, but on closer enquiry, could also mirror his attitude towards crafting some of his character's texts, as well as thoughts in regard to the nature of being an author, or, more generally, an artist. Foregrounding the artificiality triggered by metafictional devices, while simultaneously declaring authenticity, is carried to extremes in passages characterized by the use of intermediality. These few instances also push the boundaries of what is possible by means of the interplay between different types of media within the frame of a novel.

Undoubtedly, Joseph O'Connor did not choose easy topics for his two postmodern historical novels. The tragedies of the Great Famine and the American Civil War were and still are hard to address, and will be so in the future, since personal attitudes always interfere with an objective picture of a past reality. Apart from that, the reconstruction of historical events, owing to a large number of entangled factors and most diverse standpoints, reveals that historical accounts can only manage to provide a sketch of a multifaceted whole of a historical reality. Taking this fact into account, O'Connor sought to meet the complex challenge of depicting the past with an equally sophisticated manner that does justice to the two great calamities of the nineteenth-century that are in the focus of attention in *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls*. The author wanted to write novels about probable versions of the past and not a textbook depicting statistics and numbers on famine

and war, which he splendidly achieved. His novels stand out in the canon of more or less authentic Famine and American Civil War literature for being the most elaborate literary effort of its kind to date in terms of creativity and range. Embracing the subjective nature of historical depictions, while thematizing the problematic aspects thereof, he paradoxically creates a more authentic picture of the past than a realist historical novel could ever have achieved. Although “the real war never gets into the books”, as stated by Walt Whitman, “everything is in the way the material is composed”, citing a character of *Star of the Sea*, which also appears to have been O’Connor’s approach to his two postmodern historical novels.

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Index

- American Civil War* 4, 33, 34, 37, 39, 44, 64, 67, 73, 81, 83, 97
anachronism 25
Angel in the House 51, 52, 54
architextuality 16
Baldick 9, 10
Black English 88
Bleak House 43, 44
Boyd 20
Bram Stoker 57
British 4, 32, 36, 41, 62, 63, 65
Broich 14, 17
Bronte 49, 50, 58
Christie 54
Coetzee 13
concrete poetry 85
Confederacy 38, 39
crime fiction 54, 55, 56, 57
Defoe 46, 47
demotextuality 17
Dentith 10
Dickens 2, 33, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 49, 56, 63, 70, 92, 95, 99, 100, 101, 102
Dracula 57
Easter Wings 85
England, 28
epigraph 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 72, 73
epistemological 8
eye dialect 43, 44
Fallen Woman 51, 52, 54
fictio 22
fictum 22
Fludernik 79, 100
Foe 13
footnote 40, 61, 68, 69, 70, 71
Fowles 13, 17, 22
fragmentation 5, 12, 13, 23, 25, 40
Fragmentation 17
fragmented 5, 6, 18, 25, 40
Genette 15, 16, 40, 64
George Herbert 85
Ghost Light 27
Gone with the Wind 44, 45
Gothic 6, 57, 58, 59, 60
Gothic Fiction 6, 57
Great Famine 4, 31, 33, 62, 64, 65, 78, 81, 97
Gutleben 17, 18, 64, 65, 66
Harper Weekly's 63
Hassan 7
historiographic metafiction 23, 24
Historiographic Metafiction 5, 24, 25, 26, 71, 101
historiography 17, 23, 25, 72, 74, 95
Hutcheon 9, 10, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 60, 61, 69, 72, 74, 75, 101
hypertextual 16, 39, 40, 59
hypertextuality 15, 16, 46, 49
hypotext 15
Illustrated London News 62, 63, 82
illustration 61, 63, 66, 68
intermediality 18, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 97
intertextual 4, 5, 7, 13, 14, 16, 17, 24, 25, 40
intertextuality 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 23, 40, 90, 91, 93, 95, 107
intratextual 22
Ireland 4, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 39, 51, 59, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66
irony 9, 12
Jameson 8, 9, 10
Lincoln 36, 59
McHale 6, 7, 8, 14, 25
Meagher 36, 37, 38, 76, 99
metafiction 5, 12, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 40, 68, 71, 72, 77, 95, 107
metafictional 5, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 47, 48, 71, 75, 77, 94, 97, 107
Metahistorical Novel 24, 25, 71
metareference 21, 22
metatextual 43, 49, 92, 94
Metatextuality 15
Mitchel 37, 65
Mitchell 37, 44, 45, 46
Modernism 7, 8
Modernist 7, 8
Montana 36, 37, 38, 59, 76, 101, 103
New Woman 51, 53, 54
Newgate 30, 56, 74, 103
Newgate Prison 30, 56
Nünning 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 51, 53, 71, 102, 104
O'Connor 2, 4, 5, 10, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 109
Oliver Twist 41, 43, 56
ontological 8
oral history 17, 88, 89, 90
palintextuality 16, 49
paratext 71, 72
paratexts 68, 69, 71
paratextual 16, 40, 66, 82
paratextuality 15, 16, 61, 69
Parey 41, 42, 43, 44
parody 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 20, 40
pastiche 9, 10, 11, 13, 20, 40
pattern poem 85, 97
Poe 54, 58, 59
Portelli 89
postmodern 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 40, 41, 54, 68, 71, 72, 74, 77, 79, 94, 95, 97, 106
Postmodern 6, 7, 12, 40, 61
postmodernism 6, 7, 8, 18, 25
Punch 62, 63, 82
Redemption Falls 1, 2, 4, 27, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 46, 50, 52, 53, 54, 59, 64, 65, 66, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 88, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95, 97, 102, 106, 108, 109
Robinson Crusoe 13, 46, 47
Robinsonade 5, 46, 47, 48
Romeo and Juliet 59
Second-Person Narration 3, 79
Selkirk 47, 48
Shakespeare 59
Sherman 34, 37
Sidney Edgerton 36
similtexuality 16, 40, 46

Similtextuality 50
Star of the Sea 1, 2, 4, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 62, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73, 77, 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 94, 95, 97, 99, 100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 109
Stocker 16, 40
The Confederacy 4
The French Lieutenant Woman 17
The French Lieutenant's Woman 13, 60
The Realist Historical Novel 24
The Revisionist Historical Novel 24, 25
The Union 4, 34
The United States Of America 4
themetextuality 17
transtextual 22
transtextuality 15, 16
Union 39
Van Diemen's Land 33, 34
Victorian 13, 17, 18, 19, 40, 41, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 61, 62, 64, 65, 68
Waugh 20
whodunit 55
Wolf 21, 22, 45, 90, 91, 92, 94, 103
writing subject 71
Wuthering Heights 49, 50, 58

Abstract

In his two novels, *Star of the Sea* and *Redemption Falls*, Irish author Joseph O'Connor mirrors recent trends of how postmodern authors approach historical fiction. As scholarly articles are scarce on these two novels, this thesis seeks to explore some of the most fascinating aspects of postmodern historical literature, focusing on three characteristics, intertextuality, fragmentation and metafiction. Applying established literary frameworks, found in studies of recognized literary scholars, onto O'Connor's novels, these postmodern devices are approached. First and foremost the aim is to shed some light on these phenomena in terms of their contribution to the overall plot and the effects they have on the side of the recipients. More specifically, it will be investigated how the author follows, but also subverts literary traditions, exploring some of the allusions made to specific texts of past authors, as well as to references to whole literary genres. Fragmenting his plots in the two novels in question, it will be considered how subjectivity is incorporated and how it shapes the understanding of history. As O'Connor made use of metafictional elements, it will be revealed how these instances state something about his creative processes and his overall view in regards to literature and history.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die Große Hungersnot in Irland sowie der Amerikanische Bürgerkrieg sind zwei der schlimmsten Katastrophen des neunzehnten Jahrhundert. Aus künstlerischer Sicht sind die Nachwirkungen dieser beiden Ereignisse dahingehend spürbar, indem sich zahlreiche Autoren den zwei Themenkomplexen widmen, um so, zum einen, das kollektive Trauma der Vergangenheit zu bewältigen, zum anderen, um die gegenwärtige Geschehnisse, in den durch die Hungersnot und den Bürgerkrieg betroffenen Ländern zu verstehen. Bis zur Anbruch der Postmoderne versuchten Schriftsteller deshalb einen vermeintlich authentischen Blick in die Vergangenheit zu gewähren, indem sie ihre fiktionalen Handlungen auf historischen Quellen basierten. Diese stark mit Historiographie verbundene Herangehensweise an Literatur erhob den Anspruch des Objektiven, des Authentischen. Nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg und den folgenden Umwälzungen sahen sich Autoren gezwungen sich nach neuen Repräsentationsmitteln zu bemühen, da sich die zunehmend komplexen Gesellschaftsstrukturen sowie die Schrecken des Krieges sich jeglichen bekannten Herangehensweisen entzogen, um adäquat dargestellt zu werden.

Mit der Postmoderne hielten neue Maxime der geschichtlichen Darstellung Einzug, die es nun erlaubten, den schrecklichen Ereignissen wie der Irischen Hungersnot und dem Amerikanischen Bürgerkrieg gerechter zu werden als dies noch bei Autoren der Moderne der Fall war. 150 Jahre nach den Geschehnissen gelingt es dem irischen Autor Joseph O'Connor mit seinen Romanen *Star of the Sea* und *Redemption Falls* sich den zwei historischen Themen anzunähern, indem die ausgeklügelte literarische Vorgehensweise die Komplexität der Vergangenheit reflektiert. Basierend auf verschiedensten historischem Material, gelingt es O'Connor ein Panorama an Stimmen und Stimmungen des neunzehnten Jahrhundert einzufangen, die vor allem auf drei postmoderne Kunstgriffe, Intertextualität, Fragmentierung sowie Metafiktion, zurückzuführen sind. Die Diplomarbeit versucht O'Connors Romane auf diese drei Aspekte zu untersuchen, um den daraus resultierenden Bedeutungsgewinn für den Leser und der Gesamtstruktur der Romane zu ergründen.

Durch intertextuelle Bezüge zu einzelnen Werke und Genres gelingt es dem Autor Konventionen des Literaturbetriebs zu subvertieren, wobei die Referenzen

stets zwischen Hommage und Parodie pendeln. Die fragmentierte Erzählstruktur ermöglicht O'Connor unterschiedlichste Personen zu Wort kommen zu lassen, ansonsten ausgeschlossen aus der offiziellen Geschichte, der Historiographie. Die Synthese aus angesammelten subjektiven Erfahrungen gewährt somit ein vollständigeres Bild der Vergangenheit, als es ein allwissender Erzähler präsentieren könnte. Gleichzeitig verweist O'Connor mit paratextuellen Bezügen auf den manipulativen Charakter der Geschichtsdarstellung. Durch die Inklusion von Illustrationen, Epigraphen und Fußnoten wird versucht den geschichtlichen Objektivitätsanspruch zu dekonstruieren. Metafiktionale Bezüge untermauern diese These, die in der Regel die Unmöglichkeit vergangene Realitäten authentisch zu rekonstruieren thematisieren. Weiters entlarvt O'Connor, wie üblich in postmodernen Texten, durch Metafiktion die Artifizialität seiner eigenen Werke und räumt somit mit dem Paradigma eines „willing suspension of disbelief“ auf.

Kurzum, *Star of the Sea* und *Redemption Falls* sind exzeptionell im Kanon der Literatur betreffend der Irischen Hungersnot und des Amerikanischen Bürgerkriegs. O'Connor versuchte Romane zu entwerfen, die eine glaubhafte Version der Vergangenheit enthalten, fernab von lehrbuchmäßigen Historischen Romanen. Durch die multiperspektivische, subjektive Herangehensweise gelingt es O'Connor einen authentischeren Blick auf die Vergangenheit zu legen, als dies bei Historischen Romanen mit Objektivitätsanspruch der Fall ist.

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