

DIPLOMARBEIT / DIPLOMA THESIS

Titel der Diplomarbeit / Title of the Diploma Thesis

“Irishness in Selected Short Stories from
The Shelter of Neighbours (2012) by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne:
Texts for Teaching in the EFL Classroom”

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil)

Wien, 2016 / Vienna, 2016

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt / degree programme
code as it appears on the student record sheet:

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt / degree programme as
it appears on the student record sheet:

Betreut von / Supervisor:

A 190 344 313

Lehramtsstudium UF Englisch UF Geschichte,
Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung

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Declaration of Authenticity

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Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Ao. Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Wöhrer, who did not only introduce me to this remarkable Irish author, but has also provided helpful advice and constructive feedback while writing this thesis despite his high workload.

I am also heartily thankful to my friends, who made the course of my studies a real pleasure and who have always been very encouraging and truly understanding.

My most affectionate thanks are reserved for my family, who is always there for me and who is always able to put a smile on my face. I would particularly like to thank my dearest love, Bernhard, who has always supported me and believed in me and my skills. My very special thanks goes to my parents for their patience, continuous support, trust and love. Danke, Mama und Papa, für die vielen Möglichkeiten.

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List of Abbreviations

AHS	Austrian grammar schools (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule)
B&B	Bed and Breakfast
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BMBF	Austrian Ministry of Education and Women (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen)
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
GTM	Grammar Translation Method
IT	Information Technology
L2	Second Language

1 Introduction

Even though there have been accounts to promote the short story in Great Britain, such as the *National Short Story Prize* that has been awarded since 2005 (in 2008 it was renamed into the *BBC National Short Story Award*), its status in the early years of the twenty-first century, so approximately 180 years after its initial forms, remains ambivalent. Not only are novels favoured for the major literary prizes, but also among publishers. However, in Ireland the situation is somewhat different. There short fiction has been the most published and read genre throughout the twentieth century (Malcolm 20-21). Also various authors have highlighted the importance of the short fiction genre for the Irish people. One of them was Declan Kiberd, who wrote about this topic that “[f]or the past eighty years in Ireland, the short story has been the most popular of all literary forms with readers. It has also been the form most widely exploited by writers” (Kiberd 14). Also V.S. Pritchett sees the short story as a particularly Irish genre, when saying that it is this text type “in which Irish writers have traditionally excelled” (Pritchett 13 qtd. in Kilroy 1). Similarly Seán O’Faoláin obviously was of the opinion that the short story was the genre of the Irish and the Americans, as he states “the Americans and Irish do seem to write better stories” (O’Faoláin 43 qtd. in Kiberd 13).

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, short fiction underwent a renewed interest among the Irish, exactly at the same time “when the country was undergoing an unprecedented period of change and growth” (Ingman, *History* 10). For example, the amount of fiction by Irish women writers has tremendously risen since the 1990s. Similarly to this change of gender roles concerning Irish writers, a change in the Irish society as a whole can be identified. Irish society and with it the Irish identity has changed since the 1960s from very strict, conservative and Catholic values and morals to increasing liberalism, most notably regarding the status of females (Kilfeather 105-112). This also led to a change of interests within Irish feminist movements, which have more and more been concerned with Irish traditions:

This has involved a renewed commitment to the Irish language and to folklore and the oral tradition, but has also stimulated an interest in collecting and representing women’s narratives, in facilitating groups that had difficulty in gaining access to the public sphere - travellers, the economic underclasses, sex workers, survivors of violence, lone parents, recent immigrants - to develop and present their own interpretations of their needs and objectives. (Kilfeather 112-113)

This perfectly leads to Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, who is the author of those fictional works that are discussed in the present diploma thesis. As “one of the most significant contemporary Irish short story writers” (Ingman, *History* 250) and the winner of various awards, among them “The Bisto Book of the Year Award, the Readers’ Association of Ireland Award, the Stewart Parker Award for Drama, the Butler Award for Prose from the Irish American Cultural Institute and several Oireachtas awards for novels and plays in Irish” (Ní Dhuibhne, *Home page*), there have already been various studies about this writer¹ and her works². Her writings usually focus on the presentation of those widespread changes in Ireland’s society (Ingman, *History* 250), which implies that Ní Dhuibhne has to address the present as well as the Irish past (Tallone 176). Apart from using different time layers, Ní Dhuibhne also moves in places, setting her stories in urban, suburban as well as rural areas (Tallone 169), which allows her to present the Irish way of life and Ireland’s culture from different angles. Most importantly she is interested in the Irish language, which becomes evident, for example, in her deliberate use of her Irish name. Only when writing books for children, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne usually uses a pseudonym, which is Elizabeth O’Hara, and which is said to illustrate her “multiple creative identities” (Pelan, *Introduction* 15). Furthermore, Ní Dhuibhne has started to write some of her fiction in Irish since the 1990s (Ó Siadhail 197). Bríona Nic Dhiarmada states in this context:

All contemporary writers in Irish are bilingual speakers of English. That they write in Irish is a choice based on a constellation of factors not only linguistic but also concerned with the interplay of creativity and personal circumstance not to mention cultural politics, ideology and aesthetics. (Nic Dhiarmada 604)

¹See, for example: Ingman, Heather. *A History of the Irish Short Story*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009, 250-266; Harris, Jennifer. *Ní DHUIBHNE, Éilís Biography*. 28 April 2016 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3401500451.html>>; Moloney, Caitriona and Helen Thompson. *Irish Women Writers Speak Out: Voices from the Field*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2003, 101-115; Ní Dhuibhne, Éilís. *Home page*. 28 April 2016 <<http://www.eilisnidhuibhne.com>>; O’Rourke Murphey, Maureen and James MacKillop. *An Irish Literature Reader: Prose, Poetry, Drama*. 2nd ed. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2006, 453-463; Weekes, Ann Owens. *Unveiling Treasures: The Attic Guide to the Published Works of Irish Women Literary Writers*. Dublin: Attic, 1993, 255-256.

²See, for example: Balinisteanu, Tudor. *Narrative, Social Myth and Reality in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Women’s Writing: Kennedy, Lochhead, Bourke, Ní Dhuibhne, and Carr*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009, 206-250; Fulmer, Jacqueline. *Folk Women and Indirection in Morrison, Ní Dhuibhne, Hurston, and Lavin*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007; Pelan, Rebecca, ed. *Éilís Ní Dhuibhne: Perspectives*. Galway: Arlen House, 2009; Scheuringer, Carina. “Irish History and Other Aspects of Irish Culture in Midwife to the Fairies. New and Selected Stories by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne” Diploma Thesis. U of Vienna, 2004; Tallone, Giovanna. “Past, Present and Future: Patterns of Otherness in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne’s Fiction”. *Irish Literature: Feminist Perspectives*. Ed. Patricia Coughlan and Tina O’Toole. Dublin: Carysfort, 2008. 167-183.

This focus of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne on Ireland's past, changing society, culture and language makes her an ideal basis for studies of Irishness as represented in literary works. Put differently, "Ní Dhuibhne's work lends itself to serious analysis within a number of theoretical frameworks focusing on, for example, identity (gender, class and national) as fluid, unstable and socially-constructed rather than innate and constant; [...]" (Pelan, *Introduction* 11).

The central aim of this diploma thesis is to elaborate how Éilís Ní Dhuibhne addresses features of Irishness in three short stories of her most recent collection called *The Shelter of Neighbours* and, thus, constructs Irish national and cultural identity as well as Irish traditions. In order to be able to do such an analysis, an in-depth close reading of the short stories is necessary, as stated by Ansgar and Vera Nünning:

The descriptive models of narrative theory are more than a mere conceptual aid; they provide us with the 'tools' for giving a precise, systematic and intersubjective account of the composite elements and structures of narrative texts and are thus the foundation for the interpretation of narrative texts. (Nünning and Nünning 102)

Furthermore, this thesis explores whether the short stories under consideration are appropriate for use in an Austrian English as a second or foreign language (hereafter ESL and EFL respectively) classroom.

Before starting with the text proper a brief outline of the current thesis shall be provided. Basically, the thesis is divided into three parts. The first one aims at offering the necessary background information and theories for the text analyses that follow. This initial part introduces the genre of the texts analysed, which is short fiction, in particular Irish short fiction. This means that in the individual subchapters, the focus is on the historical development of the short story in general, on the specific Irish short story and on attempts to define this genre respectively. Before coming to the main part of this diploma thesis, which is an analytical investigation of the primary texts, a theoretical introduction of the concepts of Irishness, national identity and cultural nationalism will also be provided.

The second part contains the findings of my close reading of the short stories. For each short story a summary of the plot, an analysis on the story level, which includes a discussion of the spatial and temporal setting, the characters and the themes and motifs as well as on the discourse level, where the narrative situation, narrative de-

vices, issues regarding the language and style and intertextuality will be examined. In addition, the features of Irishness that occur in this particular short story will be presented. In this regard, it needs to be said that the same features often occur in more than one short story. In order to avoid repetition and to look at Irish identity from various angles, the attempt was to focus on a variety of different aspects, however, there are, of course, overlaps between the individual short stories.

After that, the third part of this diploma thesis explores the didactic potential of the short stories under consideration. In this context, firstly, a general discussion of the purpose of teaching literature, and in particular the usefulness of teaching literature that is related to Ireland in the Austrian EFL classroom will be offered. The following pages are dedicated to the pedagogic potential of each of the short stories, i.e. the possibilities and advantages when used for teaching in the Austrian EFL classroom will be illuminated. This subchapter does not only take into account the guidelines of the curriculum of Austrian grammar schools, but also the topics for the standardised, competence-oriented, oral *Reifeprüfung* and it will be revealed how students can benefit if literature, and in this particular case the three short stories “The Shelter of Neighbours”, “The Sugar Loaf” and “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here”, is used when teaching English as a second or foreign language. Finally, a conclusion will round off this diploma thesis.

2 Genre: The Short Story

2.1 Historical Development of the Short Story

The fictional texts that are to be analysed in this diploma thesis can be referred to as short stories, which are often seen as inferior than novels and short story writers are often claimed to be not as talented as novelists or dramatists. Furthermore, throughout history the short story developed in relation to the novel. However, in England, for example, the short story was accepted as a distinguished text type only at the end of the nineteenth century (Shaw, V. 1-4). On the other hand, it is argued that the beginnings of the short story as “brief episodic narratives” actually “are as old as the primitive realm of myth” and as such they preceded “later epic forms, which constitute the basis of the novel” (May, *Short Story* 1). May further claims that the modern short story still shares many features with its mythic origins (May, *Short Story* 1). Like him, also Feddersen asserts that storytelling is as old as language itself and short tales have always served as a way for explaining and preserving human experiences as well as a kind of entertainment, whereby he emphasises that short narratives were dramatically transformed during the eighteenth century, also due to the modernised publication technology. Therefore, it is common ground that the short story – as it is seen today – emerged in the nineteenth century (Feddersen xv-xvii). In line with this assumption, the present, brief outline of the historical development of the short fictional genre will start in the first half of the nineteenth century and will subsequently focus on the most crucial periods within this development until the present.

2.1.1 The Early Short Story in the Nineteenth Century

Frank O'Connor and other authors, following him in his claim, decided on “The Overcoat” written by Nikolai Gogol in 1840 to be the first short story. In America, the beginning of the short story is usually dated back to the first half of the nineteenth century with works written by Nathaniel Hawthorne or Edgar Allan Poe. Their texts can be seen as “the transition from older forms of romance and folk tales to the tightly woven structure and psychological plausibility of the modern story form” (Ingman, *History* 8). Even though already Washington Irving’s tales at the beginning of the nineteenth century indicate this shift from the folktale towards the short story in that elements of old myths are presented in realistic details, Poe, Hawthorne and Gogol were better able to transplant romantic and folk elements into a realistic world of fiction. Moreover, because Irving’s texts lack that taut construction and since they do not show such an economical use of language, they are more likely to be considered as

tales (Feddersen xvii-xviii).

In the course of the nineteenth century, there happened a general shift from romanticism towards realism ending up in impressionism at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Whereas the novel was favoured by realists, the short story proved to be the ideal text form for impressionists (May, *Short Story* 9-12). Nevertheless, also the short story became increasingly realistic throughout the nineteenth century and moved towards the “as-if-real” story, as exemplified in Herman Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener”, albeit it has maintained its tendency towards the mythic more than the realistic novel (Feddersen xx). The difference between romanticism and realism is explained as follows: “For the romantics what was meaningfully real was the ideal or the spiritual, a transcendent objectification of human desire; for the realists what mattered was the stuff of the everyday physical world” (May, *Short Story* 10). Put differently, objectivity was important in realism, while romanticism had focused on subjectivity (May, *Short Story* 12). In fact, realistic writing, being stimulated by the technological changes in the middle of the nineteenth century, is marked by a presentation of average people, often coming from the middle-class and using their normal, everyday speech (Henderson and Hancock 493-494).

This shift towards realism produced two results. Firstly, the “local color movement” took place in short stories coming from America. This means:

[F]or the more a writer focused on the external world, the more he or she emphasized particular places and people, complete with their habits, customs, language, and idiosyncrasies. Whereas it seldom mattered where in the physical world the stories of Hawthorne and Poe took place. (May, *Short Story* 10)

Secondly, the tendency towards more realistic literary works resulted in a shift in focus, from form to content. May explains:

For the romantics, pattern was more important than plausibility; thus, their stories were apt to be more formal and ‘literary’ than were the stories of the realists. By insisting on a faithful adherence to the stuff on the external world, the realists had to allow content – which was often apt to be ragged and random – to dictate form. (May, *Short Story* 11)

According to May it is because of this shift that the short story became less important by realists than the novel, since the latter “is better able to expand in order to create

an illusion of everyday reality” (May, *Short Story* 11). The impact of realism on the short story resulted in objectivity, highly plotted stories and a focus on clear details in the second half of the nineteenth century. Consequently, these finely crafted stories became stereotyped and formulaic (Feddersen xxi).

Whereas in America the short story was already established as a distinct genre towards the middle of the nineteenth century (Malcolm 3), in Great Britain it is appropriate to discuss the short story as a separate, and seriously accepted form only from the 1880s onwards (Malcolm and Malcolm 9). Although various authors have argued that the short story in Great Britain existed already before 1880, this genre was rather neglected by writers and readers (Malcolm and Malcolm 8). The main reason for this is seen in the dominance and prestige of the long British novel of the Victorian era (Feddersen xxi), which, at that time, was usually published in installments in magazines or newspapers (Law 15-16). However, this changed during the second half of the nineteenth century:

Most scholars agree that, in the 1880s, technological change, changes in periodical publishing, the development of a much larger reading public as a result of education reform, and the exhaustion and automatization of the traditional three-volume novel, produced circumstances in which the short story would become widely written, published and (at least more than earlier) discussed. (Malcolm and Malcolm 9)

Frank O'Connor argues that the short story began to flourish in England only at the end of the nineteenth century when a kind of fragmentation in society began, because – according to him – the short fiction genre is most popular “in a fragmented society” (May, *Short Story* 12-13). This means, the modern society’s fragility is best reflected in the modern short story’s open-endedness or lack of closure and, thus, of completeness. Moreover, due to the short story’s shortness it is particularly suitable to be read in a modern world with increasing time pressure (Hunter 46).

Valerie Shaw claims that there is a close connection between the increase of popularity of English short fiction and the fading of Victorianism together with the beginnings of modernism (Shaw, V. 4). While earlier writers, such as Charles Dickens, had not considered the short story to be a distinct literary genre, but only as “little more than a highly condensed novel”, modern writers began to experiment with the shortness of the short story (Hunter 7). Hunter continues:

Instead of shrinking down novelistic tropes and conventions, they experi-

mented with more artful methods of omission, compression, aperture and ellipsis. Out went traditional methods of plotting and characterization, and in came a new roster of narrative concepts: implication, ambiguity, suggestion, dilation and, above all, plotlessness. (Hunter 7)

2.1.2 The Modern Short Story

The heyday of the modern short story is roughly set between the 1920s and the 1940s (Lohafer 303), albeit the rebirth of the short fiction genre started already around the turn of the twentieth century and was mostly affected by impressionism (May, *Short Story* 12). Instead of statically describing every detail as in classic realistic writings, in impressionistic texts the focus is on the revelation of the most inner thoughts and feelings of the characters. Because such impressions are always changing and in flux, common impressionistic techniques among modernist writers are the use of "broken speech and rapid shifts in thought" (Henderson and Hancock 487).

Anton Chekhov was one of the early modern authors who strongly influenced following modern writers, such as James Joyce or Katherine Mansfield, who are amongst the most prominent representatives of literary modernism that developed in the early twentieth century. Other than the realistic novelists, Chekhov used a fragmentary presentation and an impressionistic technique and freed himself from the norms of finely crafted plots and well-made stories (May, *Short Story* 15). Chekhov's contribution regarding short fiction can be seen as an effort to stimulate this text form that had previously declined. On the one hand, he looked back towards nineteenth century romanticism and the beginnings of the short story as his use of tone might suggest, and, on the other hand, he introduced new techniques and changes in structuring stories (Feddersen xxiii). The innovation concerning the short fiction genre that was introduced by Chekhov is explained as following:

The Chekhovian shift to the 'modern' short story is marked by a continuation of the shift from the romantic focus on projective fiction, in which characters are functions in an essentially code-bound parabolic structure, to an apparently realistic episode in which plot is subordinate to 'as-if-real' character. (May, *Short Story* 52)

It is crucial, however, that characters in the Chekhovian short stories are not presented like in realistic novels, where characters are created by means of "multiplicity of detail and social interaction", because of the short story's shortness. Most importantly, Chekhov was the first to present details of a character in order to express the

complexity of the inner feelings and thoughts which was later perfected by James Joyce (May, *Short Story* 52-53). The publishing of Joyce's *The Dubliners* in 1914 is usually seen as the starting point of the modern short story proper (Hunter 44). Nevertheless, Joyce's achievement for the development of the genre will be discussed in more detail in a separate chapter on the history of the Irish short story. Generally speaking, the modern short story is characterised by the following aspects:

1. reaction against Victorian values, morality, and sense of order;
2. emphasis on subjective rather than objective experience;
3. experimentation in styles and techniques, such as non-linear narratives and multiple perspectives;
4. interest in psychology and rejection of religion;
5. creation of a new artistic self-consciousness, resulting in theorizing about art and in movements like Impressionism, Imagism, and Surrealism.

(Henderson and Hancock 490)

According to Suzanne Ferguson, these elements, which basically constitute the modern short story³, and which were brought with the impressionistic movement, influenced both the short story and the novel (Ferguson 219). Furthermore, she claims that because the point of view is usually limited to that of one character it becomes most important to explore the issue of a story's subjectivity and to present the inner feelings and experiences of the characters in the modern short story. Consequently, the modern short story is usually presented either by a first-person point of view, or through the "central intelligence" as developed by Henry James⁴. The most common themes in these literary narratives are "alienation, isolation, solipsism, the quest for identity and integration" (Ferguson 220). Another result is the focus on epistemological questions, such as questions about truth or knowledge about the world and reality (Ferguson 220).

Since the focus in many modern short stories is on the presentation of the protagonist's inner thoughts, a common technique in such narratives is the "stream of consciousness" (Childs 35). This term was originally coined by William James, the

³Ferguson adds another characteristic, namely the "limitation and foregrounding of point of view" (Ferguson 219).

⁴This is a variant of the third-person narrative situation. Other than the omniscient narrator who can easily move from one character to another one, the restricted omniscient narrator is a third person narrator who is "restricted to the consciousness of one character [...], usually the protagonist", and according to Henry James, the character whose perspective is portrayed is called 'central intelligence' (Henderson and Hancock 493).

brother of Henry James, in 1890 (Childs 52). In his *Principles of Psychology* he wrote about consciousness: “[I]t is nothing jointed; it flows. A ‘river’ or a ‘stream’ are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. [...] [L]et us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness” (James 239). Regarding fictional texts, the stream of consciousness technique is used to represent “the movements of thoughts and impressions as they flow through the mind” (Childs 211). James Joyce is one of the first and most prominent writers using this technique (Childs 170). Randall Stevenson suggests in this regard that the increasing use of the stream of consciousness technique has to be seen as part of a more general development at the beginning of the twentieth century, in which the focus was shifted from objectivity towards an emphasis on subjectivity (Stevenson 40). Harry Shaw establishes a connection between the use of the stream of consciousness method and the genre of ‘slice-of-life’ stories, which he defines as “[t]he unselective presentation of life – life the way it is, without neat beginning and ending, with extreme realism” (“Slice of Life”). He explains this relationship as following: “In the slice of life technique, a novelist or dramatist opens a door for the reader, permits him to see and hear characters, and then closes the door without comment or observation. This method is related to that of stream of consciousness” (“Slice of Life”). The notion of linking the slice-of-life story with the stream of consciousness technique seems to fit ideally for Ní Dhuibhne’s short stories, in which the lives of the protagonists, and their daily routines are often presented realistically and their inner thoughts are expressed by way of the stream of consciousness technique.

The most essential feature of the modern or impressionistic short story, according to Ferguson, is the omission of events, as she points out:

The deletion of expected elements of the plot – from any ‘slot’ in the story – is the hallmark of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century short story. There are two basic methods of deletion: that in which elements are simply omitted, which results in what I call ‘elliptical’ plots, and that in which unexpected, dissonant existents or events are substituted for the omitted elements, which yields ‘metaphoric’ plots. (Ferguson 221)

In this respect, Valerie Shaw pinpoints to the similarities of modern short fiction and impressionist art, both of which are said to be “complete” and “unfinished” at the same time. Moreover, both art forms require the readers’ active participation in the communication process between the artistic work and its creator. Individual events are not clearly described, on the contrary, such elaborations are consciously omitted (Shaw, V. 13). In order for the reader to understand such elliptical or incomplete

representations, one has to construct something like a “hypothetical plot”, by which the missing gaps are filled and, thus, the literary text becomes meaningful. However, without a certain knowledge of the composition of traditional plots and how they work, this would not be possible (Ferguson 222-224).

Another important characteristic of the modern short story is the detailed description of the setting. However, unlike in realistic writing the presentation of such details usually aims at reflecting symbolically the characters’ feelings. Furthermore, settings in impressionist short fiction have to be analysed metaphorically, since they are often used “to substitute for representation of action or analysis” (Ferguson 225). Modern short story writers, though increasingly abandoning realism, maintained using various other realistic elements, such as the focus on everyday situations, instead of extraordinary events (Feddersen xxiv).

Many modern authors also produced what are now called short story cycles or sequences. In such collections, the individual stories are more or less interrelated, but do not constitute a novel yet and, thus, provide a cumulative effect. For example, the individual short stories of such a cycle might all deal with characters coming from the same city or community (Feddersen xxvi). In this regard, also *The Shelter of Neighbours* can be seen as a short story cycle, since one part of the stories is connected through the overall theme of writing, and another part is related because the characters all live in the same suburb and neighbouring community, which is Dunroon Crescent.

2.1.3 The Contemporary Short Story

Another shift concerning the history of short fiction started in the 1960s with the emergence of the contemporary short story (Lohafer 303). Even though it is argued that postmodern literature is not simply a synonym for contemporary fiction (Nicol 1), other researchers such as May directly link the “contemporary renaissance” of short fiction – as he calls it – with postmodernism (May, *Short Story* 83-84). In the present outline, the main focus will be on postmodern short fiction, since Éilís Ní Dhuibhne is commonly referred to as a postmodern writer, because of her experiments with the genre, with nonlinearity of chronology, with open-endedness, with a lack of reliability of her narrators and with ironic style of writing (Ingman, *History* 250).

The terms ‘postmodern’ or ‘postmodernism’ lack a precise definition and are rather

vague⁵. It is exactly the attempt to define and specify something that the concept of postmodernism aims to reject (Malpas 4). Beyond that, it is rather striking that these concepts also refer to different time periods by various critics⁶. However, it is certain that the modern short story still played an important role among writers of the postmodern period (Hunter 96). However, it is not clear whether postmodern writers tried to free themselves from modernism and, thus, this movement has to be seen as a clear break, or if postmodernism is an extension of modernism (Feddersen xxix). It is claimed:

Although notoriously difficult to define, postmodernism in literature may reflect – and even pursue – some of the goals of modernism, but rejects such assumptions as the authority of the author, univocal (one-voice) perspectives, unifying narratives, and other ‘absolutes.’ In their place, the postmodern often stresses plurality, possibility, and play. PM [Postmodern] short fiction tends to focus on the intense ‘moment’ or ‘instant’ [...] since the future is uncertain. Because this moment is constantly changing, writers simultaneously balance uncertainty, disruption, and innovation with new images and clever wordplay. (Henderson and Hancock 493)

Besides, there is some ambiguity concerning the terms postmodern, postmodernism and postmodernity in that they are commonly used to refer to certain time periods and are additionally used to classify movements within philosophy or culture (Rickard 15-16). Regarding the postmodern, however, there exists a distinction between ‘postmodernism’ as referring to a particular type of literature, art or culture and ‘postmodernity’ referring to a specific time period. Following Ihab Hassan’s dichotomous list, which aims at differentiating modernism and postmodernism⁷, Malpas concludes that while modernism is more likely to be characterised by closure, postmodernism is more open (Malpas 8-9). In this respect, Brian McHale suggests seeing modernism and postmodernism not as two consecutive periods in literature:

[M]odernism and postmodernism are not successive stages in some inevitable evolution from less advanced to more advanced aesthetic forms,

⁵See for example Bran Nicol, who calls the terms “slippery and undefinable” (Nicol 1), or Simon Malpas, who claims that “finding such a simple, uncontroversial meaning for the term ‘postmodern’ is all but impossible” (Malpas 4).

⁶Adrian Hunter, for example, discusses “post-modernist stories” roughly between the 1930s and 1980s (Hunter 96); Eric Henderson and Geoff Hancock define postmodernism as “[e]merging in the 1980s” (Henderson and Hancock 493); Barry Lewis in the *Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* uses the adjective ‘postmodern’ for literature that was published between 1960 and 1990 (Lewis 121).

⁷See, for example, in Malpas (7-8).

but rather alternative contemporary practices, equally ‘advanced’ or ‘progressive’, equally available, between which writers are free to choose. (qtd. in Baker 7)

Similarly, Iftekharrudin does not see postmodernism as a further development of modernism, but rather as a questioning of the existing ways of thinking and strictly formal conventions (Iftekharrudin 1). In other words, he sees postmodernism as a “reaction” to modernism and postmodern literature as embracing heterogeneity, while modern literature as striving for homogeneity. Moreover, postmodern literature, as often being fragmentary, parodying and self-reflexive mirrors the increasingly fragmented and violent societies. Besides, the fragmentation of today’s life is also indicated by the use of non-linear plots in many postmodern literary texts (Iftekharrudin 5-9). In the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms Online* it is argued that postmodern literature abandoned the modern idea of fiction as being artistically coherent:

[W]here a modernist artist or writer would try to wrest a meaning from the world through myth, symbol, or formal complexity, the postmodernist greets the absurd or meaningless confusion of contemporary existence with a certain numbed or flippant indifference, favouring self-consciously ‘depthless’ works of fabulation, pastiche, bricolage, or aleatory disconnection. (“Postmodernism”)

Especially the use of pastiche is said to be a characteristic of postmodern literature. This term refers to the practice of borrowing various elements from other writers when writing a text, but in doing so the reference text is not mocked at like in a parody, but rather “imitation [is used] as a form of flattery” (“Pastiche”). This technique of mixing existing styles is used by many postmodern writers since it is hard to find new themes, subjects or styles for story writing, resulting in frustration among many artists (Lewis 125-126). The concept of pastiche actually is a variation of a wider phenomenon called intertextuality, which means that texts usually refer to other texts, or are referred to and, hence, establish a relationship between the two (“Intertextuality”). Especially when it comes to postmodernism, where it is argued that there cannot be any more innovation and uniqueness in arts and literature and that literary works always relate to other texts or art forms and is never completely independent, intertextual investigations become crucial (Allen 1-6). Also Éilís Ní Dhuibhne uses many intertextual references in her fiction (Ingman, *History* 250). In the collection *The Shelter of Neighbours* Ní Dhuibhne draws upon various fictional works written by different authors, e.g. John McGahern’s *Amongst Women* in “The Sugar Loaf” (Ní Dhuibhne 141), but also refers to popular culture, such as the TV series *Upstairs, Downstairs* in “The

Taboo” (Ní Dhuibhne 48). Besides, Ní Dhuibhne has frequently used Irish folktales as sources for inspiration and has embedded and interwoven them into her own stories, as for example in “Midwife to the Fairies” (Ingman, *History* 251-252). The individual intertextual references that occur in Ní Dhuibhne’s compilation and their importance for an in-depth understanding of the stories will be elaborated in more detail below.

Another crucial characteristic in postmodern fiction is metafiction, which is defined as follows:

Metafiction is fiction [...] which is ‘self-conscious’, that is, aware of itself as fiction (as if it has its own consciousness), or ‘self-reflexive’ or ‘self-referential’ fiction, that which reflects on or refers to itself as a work of fiction rather than pretending it is offering the reader an insight into the real world. (Nicol 35)

Artists increasingly became aware that the real world itself may be constructed and, therefore, literary texts tried to show that they are constructions as well, i.e. that they are artificial (Rohrberger 7 qtd. in Feddersen xxix). Two important examples in this respect are *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* by John Fowles and *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore* (*If on a winter’s night a traveller*) by Italo Calvino. In both cases their status of being fictional texts is made clear through various comments and interruptions (“Metafiction”). Besides, also Éilís Ní Dhuibhne’s “Illumination”, published in *The Shelter of Neighbours*, may be mentioned as a metafictional short story since the characters talk about fiction and about postmodernism (Ingman, *Female Writer* 274-275):

We discussed, then, interesting questions that had been bothering me for many months. I wondered if it was possible to make new fiction, by which I meant, find a new template, a new mould, and also a new subject, and still create something that was, to use his word, beautiful. Post-modernism had failed, I said to him. The idea of the fractured universe, mirrored in the fractured novel or work of art, was interesting, valid at the level of thought, but it had failed artistically because a fractured narrative is not enjoyable – it just does not work. But what is the point of continuing to write using the pre-modern template? (Ní Dhuibhne 38)

This concept of metafiction is closely linked to Linda Hutcheon’s concept of “historiographic metafiction”, which is “a self-conscious mode of writing, a writing that meta-fictionally comments on and investigates its own status as fiction as well as questioning our ideas of the relation between fiction, reality and truth” (Malpas 26). Unlike

traditional fictional novels, Hutcheon argues, historiographic metafiction – as a product of postmodern literature – “plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record”, for example, when falsifying various real historical events (Hutcheon 114). Barry Lewis calls this key characteristic of postmodern literature “Temporal Disorder”, meaning that in postmodern fiction past events are often rendered or re-written in a unique way (Lewis 124). According to McHale, in postmodern fiction there are three ways of how history can be deliberately distorted (Lewis 124). First, it is possible to use the strategy of apocryphal history, which means that the official and accepted version of historical events is contradicted, either by supplementing or displacing them. Second, the past can be distorted through “creative anachronism” that is projecting contemporary worldviews, mentalities, attributes, ideology or the like back into the past and, finally, through blurring the line between history and fantasy (McHale 90-94). Éilís Ní Dhuibhne can be called such a literary historian who investigates the past of the Irish and goes beyond the established norms when writing her fiction. Other than scientific historians, Ní Dhuibhne has the possibility to discuss past events that have traditionally been cut out of the official history of Ireland and, thus, contributes in filling some of the gaps of the official version. At the same time the texts of literary historians play an equally important role in processes of identity formation as those written by historiographers (Scheuringer 17-21).

McHale’s most crucial contribution regarding postmodernism is a comparison between modernism and postmodernism, where he sees the difference between the two as a matter of dominance. While he believes epistemology to be the dominant factor of modernism, ontology – according to him – is the dominant factor of postmodernism. As already mentioned, epistemology is characterised by questions of how to interpret the world or of knowledge about the world, and as such McHale considers the genre of the detective story as the classic example that raises epistemological questions. In order to deal with such questions and themes in a literary text, various typical epistemological, i.e. modern, devices are used, e.g. “the multiplication and juxtaposition of perspectives, the focalization of all the evidence through a single ‘center of consciousness’ [...], virtuoso variants on interior monologue [...], and so on” (McHale 9). In an ontological context, however, questions such as the following ones are raised:

What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence

of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured?
And so on. (McHale 10)

After this overview of the historical development of the short story in general, an outline of the history of the Irish short story follows in the subsequent chapter, since this thesis is concerned with the short stories of an Irish author.

2.2 Historical Development of the Irish Short Story

Frank O'Connor decided on George Moore's *The Untilled Field*, which was published in 1903, to be the first truly modern Irish short story collection (Ingman, *History* 8-9). Even though the Irish short story is commonly associated with modernism, its origins in the nineteenth century should not be neglected (Schirmer 22). Kilroy, for example, considers *Castle Rackrent* by Maria Edgeworth as the very beginning of the Irish short story, mostly because of the "sharply defined" narrator, who is able to present the story vividly (Kilroy 3). Also Declan Kiberd sees the roots of the Irish short story in the tradition of oral story-telling when claiming that "[t]he short story is the natural result of a fusion between the ancient form of the folk-tale and the preoccupations of modern literature" (Kiberd 14). Equally, Ní Dhuibhne highlights the importance of both tradition and modernism for the short story and uses old legends and myths and translates them into the contemporary world (Scheuringer 11-13). However, Kiberd also outlines the difference between the folktale and the short story:

It is this scope for self-expression which distinguishes the short story from the folk-tale. The folk-tale was impersonal, magical, and recited to a credulous audience in a public manner. The short story is personal, credible, and written in private for the critical solitary reader. (Kiberd 19)

2.2.1 The Irish Short Story in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Following the above mentioned authors and Heather Ingman, who states that short story writing in Ireland began at a time when printing and the English language were increasingly introduced and imposed upon the Irish, which led to changes concerning the social structures and modes of thinking (Ingman, *History* 15), this thesis will also start with the beginnings of the Irish short story in the nineteenth century. This is also appropriate when looking at the wide range of magazines of that time which already published short stories, such as the *Dublin University Magazine* (Malcolm 22).

Major turning points in nineteenth century Ireland included, for example, the Act of Union (1800), the Catholic emancipation and the Great Famines in the middle of the century. It was at that time that Irish writers and scholars began to gather Irish folkloristic texts. Short fiction about Ireland that appeared from the 1850s onwards were at least partly produced for an English audience and, as a result, these nineteenth century tales differed in form and content from its modern successors, since they primarily aimed at defending and explaining the Irish way of life to the English. Regarding the form they could include everything from a short sketch to the Victorian, three-volume novel (Ingman, *History* 15-16).

Due to such nineteenth century writers as William Carleton, or Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, the short fiction genre in Ireland was already a recognized text form by 1880 (Loneragan 52). Although it has been argued that Irish nineteenth century short fiction, with its “annoying didacticism, purple prose, weak characterization, uncertain narrative line, and a general disregard for aesthetic form” (Schirmer 43), does not share many features with the modern short story, it should not be ignored as a predecessor (Ingman, *History* 48-49). Ingman further claims:

Nevertheless, despite the strain of an increasingly turbulent political situation, as the century wore on, Irish authors began to pay attention to structure, tension and psychological development in a way that intermittently foreshadowed the short story of the twentieth century. Somerville and Ross anticipated the Irish short story’s openness to European influences, Gerald Griffin has been seen as a precursor of Moore and Joyce, whilst Le Fanu’s tales of political and psychological hauntings were to inspire Elizabeth Bowen, and his portrait of Dublin streets, Joyce. (Ingman, *History* 49)

Irish short fiction saw then a literary revival between 1898 and 1926 when authors like Synge or Yeats became internationally famous (Loneragan 51). At that time two different focuses in short stories were developed. Firstly, stories which were based on oral storytelling, such as myths and legends and, secondly, stories that presented the everyday life of Irish people in a rather straightforward and plain manner. The latter were influenced by the works of the Russian authors Turgenev and Chekhov (Malcolm 23), whereas the former was conveyed in many works of writers of the fin de siècle, e.g. through dreams or symbols (Ingman, *History* 79). Ingman further states, in this respect:

The tension in this period [at the turn of the twentieth century] between

modern literary impulses, often influenced by foreign models, and the impulse towards the past and the local inspired by the Gaelic Revival, is complicated by the fact that in turning back to the Irish folk tale, Irish Revivalist writers anticipated modernist writers in abandoning the nineteenth-century realist mode that in any case had mostly failed to take purchase in Ireland. (Ingman, *History* 56)

According to Lonergan this resulted in a dramatic shift of Irish fiction in the first two decades of the twentieth century also due to the political circumstances, such as World War I (Lonergan 58). Therefore, the Irish literary revival was an important period, in which the Irish short narratives were transformed into the modern short story, even though it is most famous for the production of dramatic and poetic works (Ingman, *History* 84). In general, at the time of the literary revival the strengthening of Irish identity was a major aim, because Ireland had been in a state of depression since the famines in the nineteenth century (Ingman *History* 56).

2.2.2 The Modern Irish Short Story

As already mentioned, writers of the modern Irish short story, such as James Joyce or George Moore, were primarily influenced by international authors, mostly coming from Russia (Turgenev or Chekhov) or France (Flaubert or Maupassant). This influence resulted in an increased attention to stylistic issues in the modern Irish short story. Shortness, a focus on a single moment of revelation and plotlessness became important (Ingman, *History* 84-85). Besides, Irish short story writers followed their foreign, modern colleagues by avoiding an authorial narrator and, instead, favoured the uses of free indirect discourse⁸ (Ingman, *History* 85).

Probably the most famous modern short story writer from Ireland is James Joyce:

[N]ever before had there been such an artistically unified collection, nor one that in matters of style so clearly broke with the Gaelic tradition of storytelling. Yet *Dubliners* is not entirely without links to other Irish writing. The theme of the fragility of identity recalls Le Fanu [...], while the

⁸“Put simply, FID [free indirect discourse] is a technique for rendering a character’s speech or thought. FID does this ‘indirectly’ in the sense that it transposes pronouns and tenses into the pronoun/tense system of the narrative’s ordinary narrative sentences (for instance, it may shift a first person into a third person, and the present tense into the past). But there are no quotation marks, and often any identification of speaker or thinker (he said, she thought etc.) is also dropped. As a consequence, there is often no formal difference between FID (reporting a character’s speech or thought) and a plain narratorial statement“ (Jahn ch.1.23); Nünning and Nünning also highlight in this context, that free indirect discourse „attempts to convey the illusion of offering an immediate insight into the perceptions and internal processes of a character“ (Nünning and Nünning 125).

publishing history of the collection is linked to the Irish Revival. (Ingman, *History* 94)

Nevertheless, Joyce's collection was too controversial at his time for it was only published in 1914, even though it had been finished already by 1907. Unlike the works that were produced during the literary revival, in which Irish nationalism was romantically supported, Joyce wrote about the poor, the depressed and the emigrated and, thus, realistically portrayed life as it was in post-famine Ireland. However, the short stories in *The Dubliners* are not realist texts, but most outstanding for their heavily symbolic language, their free indirect style and their ellipses, which subsequently led to the demand among readers to suggest and interpret in order to construct and complete the meaning of a text (Ingman, *History* 95-97). In addition, Joyce's use of so-called "epiphanic moments" in his short stories has remained an essential feature in both writing as well as interpreting short narratives (Malcolm 114). Epiphanies are commonly used in modern short fiction, usually for the purpose of explaining incidents in which the protagonist experiences a sudden, deep awareness or realisation, which subsequently leads to a personal, inner change of this character. As such it is often the climax of a story (Henderson and Hancock 484). Joyce himself coined this term in his *Stephen Hero*, in which he defines 'epiphany' as "a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself" (Joyce 417). To put it another way, Joyce defines epiphanies as "the recognition in an ordinary event of an extraordinary meaning not perceived before" (Henderson and Hancock 484). All in all, through his heavily symbolic language, his use of epiphanies and intertextuality and the necessary requirement among his readers to actively participate in order to understand his texts, James Joyce transformed and revolutionised the modern Irish short story (Ingman, *History* 107).

Irish writers following Joyce returned to the nineteenth century realism (Ingman, *History* 107). The reasons for this can be seen in various political events in the first two decades of the twentieth century, such as the Easter Rising in 1916, the War of Independence between 1919 and 1922 resulting in Ireland's independence in 1922 and the following Civil War that lasted until 1923 (Malcolm 26). Furthermore, in the period after Ireland's independence the Catholic Church gained more and more influence on political and social affairs within Ireland, which had a largely negative and repressive impact on the population. Besides, Ireland's economy was not in a good condition, emigration rates were huge and, additionally, the young Irish Free State enthusiastically introduced literary censorship, which included most – also the

greatest – of the former and contemporary Irish works. At the same time a very rigid notion of so-called truly “Irish” literature was developed (Lonergan 59). An example of this notion is *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* written by Daniel Corkery in 1931, in which the author elaborates on the issues that must be included in a genuinely Irish literary text, namely “land, nationalism and religion“ (Malcolm 27). In this context, Ingman also claims:

The stress on art as ‘unifying’ and on the purpose of art as giving expression to a set of national values is entirely in keeping with the homogeneous society that emerged in Ireland after independence, an Ireland that was to be rural, inward-looking and dominated by a conservative Catholic ideology. (Ingman, *History* 113)

Although the themes in short fiction that appeared in post-independence Ireland were often narrowed down to Corkery’s three crucial topics, this period saw some of the greatest Irish short story writers, for instance, Frank O’Connor or Seán O’Faoláin (Lonergan 59-60). Kiberd calls these writers the “‘risen people’ – [...] writers of the emerging Catholic bourgeoisie who hailed from regional towns”, unlike the Anglo-Irish authors of the literary revival, and argues that they were simultaneously influenced by contemporary literary works and oral folk (Kiberd 14-15). Both their stories do not only break with the nationalism proposed by Corkery, but they also illustrate how disappointed they were with the development of the Irish state after its independence, which they originally had been involved with (Ingman, *History* 133). The focus in these realistic short stories of post-independent Ireland, therefore, was on the weaknesses and imperfections of the young state (Ingman, *History* 116).

2.2.3 The Contemporary Irish Short Story

The development of Irish short fiction roughly between World War II and the present is usually divided into three twenty-year periods, each reflecting the socio-cultural circumstances of that time (Winston 264). After Ireland’s independence the country was internationally isolated due to the Anglo-Irish Trade War and this was even further strengthened during World War II because of its neutrality (Lonergan 59). This isolation was also taken up as a major theme in Irish short fiction that was published at that time (Ingman, *History* 151). Many people lost all their hope they formerly had gained due to Ireland’s independence and became disillusioned. Especially in the years of Eamon de Valera’s presidency, so during and after World War II, Ireland’s prospects were daunting:

Ireland [returned] to an austere, pastoral state in which the Catholic Church held moral sway. The church's special position in the *Constitution* also gave it control of the Censorship Board [...]. Away from literary and artistic circles, the de Valera regime meant continual deprivation for many, especially in the countryside. [...] Economic limitations were accompanied by social bitterness and political disillusionment. (Winston 266)

The short stories that were produced during that time often aimed at questioning the current situation that was caused by de Valera's government and the highly influential Catholic Church. Apart from Frank O'Connor and Seán O'Faoláin, who were most successful during World War II, but continued writing and publishing in the post-war period, writers such as Mary Lavin, Bryan MacMahon, or Michael McLaverty became famous for their short fiction (Winston 265-267). Clair Wills argues, in this regard, that Ireland's isolation and rigid censorship, which also affected international competitors, led to a flourishing of the arts and culture within Ireland (Ingman, *History* 151). Additionally, the Irish reality of large-scale emigration is reflected in the common theme of the lonely emigrant (Ingman, *History* 178).

Generally, this post-war period can be seen as "one of the heydays of the Irish short story" and as the time in which the idea of the genre as "the predominant Irish literary form" was consolidated which was at least partly due to its successful publishing in the United States (Ingman, *History* 184). For example, Frank O'Connor's texts were regularly published in various US magazines, like *Harper's Bazaar* or *The Atlantic Monthly* (Winston 266). With the 1960s, the economic situation in Ireland began to improve and alongside this also the number of bookshops, summer schools and literary magazines increased (Ingman, *History* 190). This modernisation was also incorporated in the works by such authors as John McGahern or Edna O'Brien (Winston 271).

The 1960s also brought female short story writers on Ireland's publishing scene, who focused on feminist themes, such as sexuality of women, or the women's struggle for liberation. Nevertheless, times were hard, especially for women, as Mary Dorcey comments the 1960s as following:

Silence. Repression. Censorship. Long dark winters. Poor food. Nuns and priests everywhere. Drab clothes. Censorship of books and films. Fear and suspicion surrounding anything to do with the body or the personal life. The near total repression of ideas and information. A Catholic state for a Catholic people. (qtd. in Ingman, *History* 200-201)

The Irish Women's Movement, which was founded in 1970, demanded various rights

for women, among them the same schooling and working chances as men and the right for a legal use of contraception. Unfortunately it lasted until the 1990s that women were successful concerning some of these issues. Nevertheless, during the 1970s the number of Irish female writers increased and with it the “feminist note” in Irish short fiction (Ingman, *History* 202). Some female writers also produced a new genre called “chick lit”. Usually considered to be popular literature, even these stories attempted to call into question female identity, which was primarily constructed in Catholic terms, and the narrow construction of the concept of the family (Ingman, *History* 231).

It was also in the late 1960s and 1970s that Ireland, in general, was confronted with “renewed sectarian tensions and paramilitary violence in the North”, which consequently led to an economic decline and high rates of unemployment (Winston 271). Again a tendency to look backward can be observed, while at the same time the Troubles “opened up the genre [i.e. the short story] to modernity, as the escalating violence attracted international attention and writers were presented with new and urgent themes” (Ingman, *History* 214). Towards the end of the 1970s this new tendency to be open to modernity became stronger and stronger in Irish short stories (Ingman, *History* 219).

Even though Ireland’s economy had been in danger of collapsing at the end of the 1980s, the country saw a dramatic rise in its economic development and standard of living in the following years, which is usually subsumed under the term “Celtic Tiger”, and which also led to a change in the perception of Irish identity (Winston 273). Likewise, Ingman argues:

Both gender identity and Irish identity have been increasingly interrogated, deconstructed and diversified in the short stories of this period, so that the key to these decades is transformation, of society, of the family and finally of the short story itself. (Ingman, *History* 227)

Due to the changes of Irish society and Irish identity also female characters in Irish short fiction were beginning to be portrayed differently. They are no longer presented as passive and restricted to motherhood, but rather forged “new identities for themselves” (Ingman, *History* 248-249). However, this change of Irish cultural and national identity during the Tiger years will be discussed in more detail at a later stage.

Recurrent themes in the Irish short story of the 1980s until the present are a focus on Northern Ireland in many short stories and on emigrants who return to the country

and are totally bewildered of the new circumstances in Ireland through which it is particularly emphasised how dramatically Irish society has changed (Ingman, *History* 237-239). Moreover, though Ireland had formerly been a country with a high emigration rate, it turned into one that is interesting for many immigrants since its prosperity in the 1990s. This situation also became a major theme in Irish short stories of this time (Ingman, *History* 247).

Irish short stories of the 1990s, however, also show some negative aspects of this time. Firstly, politicians frequently investigated “into financial impropriety” and, secondly, many cases of (sexual) child abuse committed by Catholic authorities and priests became transparent (Ingman, *History* 245-246).

All in all, Ingman argues that questions of identity and, especially, identity crisis have been an issue in Irish short stories since the nineteenth century. Furthermore, there are themes in Irish short fiction that have occurred again and again throughout history, which include: “exile, dislocation, dreams, memory, time, spirituality, death, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, childhood, the family” (Ingman, *History* 260).

2.3 Definitions of the Short Story

After this overview of the historical development of short fiction in general and the Irish short story in particular, the various attempts to formulate an appropriate definition for this text form shall be outlined in this chapter. Usually there is much disagreement among literary critics when it comes to defining genres (Kilroy 5). Genre basically means “grouping texts together on the basis of certain shared features”, which is practical for various reasons, such as for describing texts or for serving as a guide so that writers and readers know what to expect from a text (Pyrhönen 109). Hence, the concept of genre influences writers as well as readers in their encounter with texts (Pyrhönen 109). Classifying texts into genres according to some shared features, however, also always implies leaving out other features and, thus, it narrows the view on a literary text (Pyrhönen 113-114)

Especially in the case of the short story genre it seems very difficult to find a commonly shared and useful working definition, as Valerie Shaw claims that there exist “many different types of short story”, which is why there is no “universal definition” of this form (Shaw, *V.* vi). In other words: “Unfortunately, every time critics and

theoreticians reach a modicum of agreement, some writer apparently takes it as a challenge and invents a contradiction to disrupt our comfortable meeting of minds” (Pasco 115). It is also argued by some theorists that the short story should be referred to as a ‘form’ rather than a ‘genre’, since it already includes different genres, such as the detective story or the fantasy story (Malcolm 40-41).

Nevertheless, there have been attempts “to describe the essential structure, typical techniques, and intentions of the short story” and at least there is – according to Kilroy – some agreement upon the length of short fiction (Kilroy 5). The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms Online* defines the length of the short story in relation to novellas and novels:

A fictional prose tale of no specified length, but too short to be published as a volume on its own, as novellas sometimes and novels usually are. A short story will normally concentrate on a single event with only one or two characters, more economically than a novel’s sustained exploration of social background. (“Short Story”)

Even though the short story has, since its recognition as a distinct literary entity, been more closely related to poetry (May, *Chekhov* 214), it is common to define the short fiction form in relation to the novel. However, this has always been a major problem when discussing this text type, because scholars have argued that this relationship to the novel, “which is, historically, the dominant, normative genre” establishes a sort of dependency on the novel and a hierarchy between the two text forms (May, *Introduction* xv-xvi). The above mentioned definition of the short story taken from the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms Online* refers back to Edgar Allan Poe, who was the first to emphasise the difference between the short prose tale and the novel (May, *Introduction* xvi) and who defined some “basic principles for the composition of short prose narratives” in the nineteenth century (Shaw, *V*. 9). It needs to be stated at this point that the term “short story” was not used before the 1880s. Instead of this, terms such as “tale, sketch, fable, *conte*, novella, and *nouvelle*” were preferred for discussions of this genre (Malcolm 35). First of all, those principles worked out by Poe focus on the length of such fictional texts:

[I]n almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. [...] And, without unity of impression, the deepest effect cannot be brought about. (Poe 35)

He further claims that apart from poems, only short fiction that can be finished within a maximum of two hours can fulfil these criteria (Poe 35). Much later Valerie Shaw argues that the brevity of short fiction and also other characteristics, such as the use of dialogues or a first-person narrative situation, are not always only due to artistic considerations, but may also arise from the close connection between this text type and journalism where authors usually had to cope with a maximum length for short fictional texts (Shaw, V. 7).

Second, the definition of the short story in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms Online* mentions “a single event” on which the short story usually concentrates, which is again a reformulation of Poe’s theory. Poe states, in this context, that it is necessary for writers of short fiction to have this single idea in mind before starting to write the story and to arrange the incidents of a story in a way so that they all refer to the one main theme:

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents – he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. (Poe 35-36)

This idea of how to construct a short story became more clear at the turn of the twentieth century with the theories of Brander Matthews and, in the first half of the twentieth century, with B.M. Éjxenbaum’s studies (May, *Introduction* xvi-xvii). Matthews does not only reconsider Poe’s “single effect” (“A Short-story deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation. [...] Thus the Short-story has, what the Novel cannot have, the effect of ‘totality’, as Poe called it [...]” (Matthews 73)), but he also underlines the importance of a neat construction of short stories, since it “must always be logical, adequate, harmonious” (Matthews 75) and of a compressed style (Matthews 77). On the other hand, Éjxenbaum and other theorists and writers, such as Susan Lohafer or Anton Chekhov, argue that most emphasis in a short story is on the ending (May, *Introduction* xvii). Éjxenbaum elaborates on this topic as following:

The culmination of the main line of action [in a novel] must come somewhere before the ending. [...] The short story, on the contrary, gravitates expressly toward maximal unexpectedness of a finale [sic] concentrating around itself all that has preceded. In the novel there must be a descent of some kind after the culmination point, whereas it is most natural for a

story to come to a peak and stay there. The novel is a long walk through various localities with a peaceful return trip assumed; the short story – a climb up a mountain the aim of which is a view from on high. (Éjxenbaum 82)

About one hundred years after Poe, Elizabeth Bowen refers to Poe's theory on the single effect of a short story: "[I]t must contain no passage not aesthetically relevant to the whole" (Bowen, *Faber Book* 260). Apart from this, the author argues that short stories must evoke the imagination and thinking among the readers also when having finished reading it, and "emotional narrowness" and "over-simplification of characters" are unavoidable in this genre (Bowen, *Book of Short Stories* 131).

Similarly to Bowen, Julio Cortázar claims that all unnecessary information and incidents have to be eliminated in order to create an intense short story (May, *Introduction* xvii). This means, while novels rely on multiplicity and one event after the other is presented, short stories achieve their effects through compression, which is why active participation by the reader is required who will fill gaps of information from his imagination, or the given context (Ingman, *History* 7). In V.S. Pritchett's words this is the essential capability of readers of "seeing through", which means that the construction of a short story must be sufficiently logical and clear so that readers can infer the underlying meaning (Kilroy 5).

Another influential theorist and writer of short stories who argued in mid-twentieth century that the two narrative genres (the novel and the short story) are to be differentiated from each other, especially in ideological terms, was Frank O'Connor (O'Connor, *Lonely Voice* 182). His line of argumentation shows a shift that happened with the short story itself as it developed towards modernism. The solely formal characteristics of the short fiction genre as proposed by Poe or Matthews were no longer appropriate for modern short stories and, thus, new definitions were needed. Now other categories became central in these definitions, such as the subject of a short story (Winther et al. 137-138). O'Connor is of the opinion that the novel needs "the concept of a normal society" because it is necessary that readers can identify with the characters (O'Connor, *Lonely Voice* 181). In contrast to this, he describes the situation in short stories as following:

There is no character here with whom the reader can identify himself [...]. There is no form of society to which any character in it could possibly attach himself and regard as normal. In discussions of the modern novel

we have come to talk of it as the novel without a hero. In fact, the short story has never had a hero. What it has instead is a submerged population group [...] As a result there is in the short story at its most characteristic something we do not often find in the novel – an intense awareness of human loneliness. (O'Connor, *Lonely Voice* 182)

It was primarily his idea that led to the assumption that the short story particularly flourished in societies, which are characterised by a certain fragmentation and instability, such as Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Malcolm 48). Nadine Gordimer uses a similar argument when saying that the short story is the perfect medium for capturing “the present moment” and to deal with lives and circumstances in a modern and fragmented world (Gordimer 264-265).

Additionally, Frank O'Connor sees a short story's “attitude to Time” as a major characteristic. According to him the chronological sequence of events is most important in novels, while it is neglected by most short story writers (O'Connor, *Lonely Personal Art* 160). Charles May agrees with O'Connor's position concerning chronology in a short story (May, *Introduction* xviii). Besides, May is of the opinion that the short story has maintained its mythic origins (May, *Short Story* 1). This can be seen, for example, in the following comparison of the novel and the short story:

In their very shortness, short stories have remained close to the original source of narrative in myth, folktale, fable, and fairy tale. They, therefore, are more apt to focus on basic desires, dreams, anxieties, and fears than novels are and thus are more aligned with the original religious nature of narrative. Short stories are therefore more apt to embody a timeless theme and are thus less dependent on a social context than novels. Consequently, short stories are more likely to identify characters in archetypal terms and are more patterned and aesthetically unified than novels are. For this reason, short stories are more dependent on craftsmanship and exhibit more authorial control than novels, making them closer to poetry and thus more ‘artistic’. (May, *Introduction* xxvi)

The above mentioned definitions of the short fiction genre, all of which appeared before 1980, can be referred to as essentialist, in that they all outline a short story's most crucial features. However, with the development of the short story and its new forms as modern or more particularly postmodern, these definitions were not satisfying anymore which is why a new kind of definition was needed. Thus, so-called non-essentialist theories were elaborated. One of these is the idea expressed by Mary Louise Pratt that length or shortness of a text as a generic characteristic only makes

sense if it is related to something else (Winther et al. 136-140). According to Pratt such a relation is problematical because asymmetry between two text forms, i.e. between the novel and the short story, is necessarily confirmed (Pratt 96).

Other non-essentialist approaches were developed by Norman Friedman and Austin Wright (Winther et al. 140-142). Friedman emphasises the necessity to talk about tendencies when providing a definition or discussing a genre, such as the short story, and encourages applying “multiple differentiae”, which means using subdivisions within a generic characteristic (Friedman 16-17). Friedman exemplifies this as following: “[W]ithin our fixed definition of the short story as a short fictional narrative in prose, we find a range of possibilities regarding the size of the action, the manner or representation, and the nature of the end effect” (Friedman 30). Additionally, he emphasises that each text type consists of features that are necessary and exclusive and others that “are independent of the form”, or some that were accidentally associated with a particular genre and, therefore, it is not the short story’s brevity, for instance, that automatically results in the use of a specific theme (Friedman 30). Similarly to Friedman, Austin Wright suggests considering the concept of genre as a “cluster of characteristics”, which is – according to the author – more flexible and allows to distinguish between short stories which fully belong to this genre, and other short stories which show only some characteristics of this particular genre (Wright 48). Besides, the author proposes looking at definitions in terms of tendencies (Winther et al. 141). Wright then provides six tendencies that can be seen as flexible characteristics of the short fiction genre:

1. The short story tends to be between five hundred words long and the length of Joyce’s ‘The Dead’ [...].
2. It tends to deal with character and action in its fictional world [...].
3. This action tends to be externally simple, with few developed episodes and no subplots or secondary lines of action.
4. [T]he short story [...] tends to be more strongly unified than other short prose narrative forms.
5. [There is a] preference in short stories for plots of small magnitude, plots of discovery, static or disclosure plots, Joycean epiphanies, and the like [...].
6. [There is a] tendency, especially in modern stories, to leave significant things to inference. (Wright 51-52)

It is argued that Wright has succeeded in offering very flexible criteria and tendencies concerning the short fiction genre, though the characteristics of short fiction sum-

marised by him are neither new nor ground-breaking (Winther et al. 141).

In this chapter the text form of short fiction has been examined, i.e. its historical development in general, as well as in Ireland in particular, and some of its most important definitions have been provided. In the following chapter, the concept of ‘Irishness’ will be explored. The first section will clarify the term, hereafter the changing notions of this concept throughout Irish history will be elaborated.

3 Irishness and the Concept of Identity

3.1 What is Irishness?

The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* defines ‘Irishness’ as “[t]he fact or quality of being Irish; Irish character or identity” and its first use is dated back to 1804 (“Irishness”). Equally, George Watson claims that Irishness encompasses the identity of the Irish population and that it was especially during the years of the Celtic Twilight, i.e. around the turn of the twentieth century, that Ireland became increasingly self-conscious. Furthermore, the writers of the literary revival, such as Yeats or Synge, contributed much to this process since they all investigated and discussed what it means to be Irish, i.e. what the fundamentals of Irish identity are (Watson 13). Similarly Edna Longley describes political Irishness as “the ideology of identity”, which aimed at binding the Irish Free State after its independence from the United Kingdom in 1922 (Longley 1076).

Such processes of identification usually include “discourses of inclusion and exclusion” and identity is often defined by not being the hostile Other. In the case of Irish identity this often means not being British (Graham 14). Likewise, Michael Smith argues that Irishness basically is a tool of the Irish to distinguish themselves, i.e. the Irish from the English. According to him this includes “not being Protestant, not being English-speaking, not being (like the English in Ireland) possessed of economic power”, or in other words “being Catholic, dispossessed, oppressed and socially and culturally inferior” (Smith, *M.* 104). It is important to note, however, that when it comes to identification processes with a group as well as individually, apart from one’s nationality there are also other categories apparent, such as class, gender or ethnicity, in order to be excluded or included (Graham 15). Moreover, everyone can identify with various categories at the same time (Graham 12; Easthope 22). In this context, Sigmund Freud claims:

Each individual is a component part of numerous groups, he is bound by ties of identification in many directions, and he has built up his ego ideal upon the most various models. Each individual therefore has a share in numerous groups' minds—those of his race, of his class, of his creed, of his nationality, etc (qtd. in Easthope 22).

Nevertheless, since Irishness is a collective term for the “specific, essential national identity and culture” of Ireland (Rickard 13), the particular concept of national identity needs further consideration. At the end of the eighteenth century the term ‘nationalism’ occurred for the first time and it was equated with “the love of nation” (Easthope 36-37). According to Benedict Anderson nations are “imagined political communit[ies]”, because – as he puts it – “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 6). He further argues that nations are imagined as “communities” because despite all the inequalities that may exist, there is a “deep, horizontal comradeship” felt amongst its members (Anderson 7).

In defiance of various opinions on this matter in literature, John Hutchinson claims that cultural nationalism needs to be differentiated from political nationalism since the objective of the former is to re-establish a sense of community within a nation, while the latter primarily wants to create an independent state. It is further claimed that it is “historical memory” that is the principal driving force when it comes to the formation of a national community (Hutchinson 9). Moreover, some cultural nationalists tend to “reject foreign practices” because the aim is that the population should identify with the national culture (Hutchinson 16). Krishan Kumar argues in a similar way when stating that the cultural nation, as opposed to the political one, is the entity that “really binds people together: not the ‘superficial’ ties of political citizenship but the deep ties of history, language, literature and religion (Kumar 24). George Boyce and Joseph Lee likewise consider the factors of ethnicity, language and religion as important for nationalism and national identity (Lee 661; Boyce 16), but in the case of Ireland, Boyce adds “a strong sense of territorial unity and integrity” as an essential characteristic (Boyce 19).

Regarding national identity, Anthony Smith claims that it has to be seen as a “collective cultural phenomenon” (Smith, *A.* vii). For him, the most significant characteristics of a nation are:

1. An historic territory, or homeland
2. common myths and historical memories
3. a common, mass public culture
4. common legal rights and duties for all members
5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members (Smith, A. 14).

Based on these criteria, the concepts of nation and national identity, which clearly aim at uniting its members through “bonds of solidarity”, is different from the concept of the state, which simply encompasses public institutions (Smith, A. 14-15). One main function of national identity is that it offers individuals the possibility to identify within the world, to know who they are and where they belong to (Smith, A. 17). Smith further states that the language of a nation, or its symbolism are more important than the ideology of any nationalist movement when it comes to processes of identity formation (Smith, A. 73).

Antony Easthope argues that Anderson’s theory of nation as an “imagined community” and Smith’s idea of national identity as a “bond of solidarity” that connects the members are not enough in order to explain collective identity, which national identity belongs to and which expresses itself against the others (Easthope 16-18). When identifying with a nation individuals – in his view – simultaneously identify “with the idea of the nation” and with other members of the nation (Easthope 19).

The concept of identity, including national identity, always needs texts for legitimisation. They are used for definition and prescription of such identities in the process of its construction. In the context of Ireland this means that various sorts of texts, which defined a very rigid notion of Irishness, were produced by the Irish elites to show people what it means to be Irish. All official texts, which basically are all texts of the “administrative, religious and educational institutions” as well as the unofficial texts, i.e. texts arising from the media or advertising, had to follow the so-called foundational texts, which include, for example, the *Proclamation of Independence*, or the *Constitution of Ireland* (Kelly-Holmes 19). Interestingly, it is argued that the influence of the mass media, such as various TV programmes or the news, is much bigger than the official propaganda when it comes to spreading national identity among the population (Kelly-Holmes 19). Similarly, literary texts contribute to on-going discourses in society (Ryschka 13).

Since the concept of Irishness is something that “is always in transition, under con-

struction, and in tension with other definitions” (Rickard 15) and “[n]ational identity is created in particular social, historical and political contexts” (Graham 15), it seems appropriate to look at the historical development of Irishness, i.e. at the different notions of Irish identity that were constructed in the course of Irish history. This will be undertaken in the following section.

3.2 Historical Development of the Concept of Irishness

3.2.1 The Nineteenth Century

Even though attempts to create an autonomous Ireland were already articulated in the eighteenth century (Connolly 45), in this thesis the focus will be on the nationalist movements that emerged in the nineteenth century and later.

One of the most important movements that aimed at establishing a cultural and national identity of the Irish emerged in mid nineteenth century and it is called the Young Ireland movement. Thomas Davis, who was one of its leaders, was a Protestant and strove for a rather inclusive concept of Irishness, where differences concerning religion were resisted (Ryschka 26). The Young Irelanders demanded independence and they extensively used the Gaelic culture as a source for their propagandistic programmes (Connolly 49). Although Thomas Davis and the Young Irelanders did not consider religion as an exclusive category for Irishness, in general the collective identity of the Irish very much depended on Catholicism and Gaelicism. The theories of Davis and other Protestants were very much an idealisation “rather than a description of the actual” (Comerford 21).

Due to such negative experiences as the Great Famine between 1845 and 1848 resulting in a large-scale emigration to England or America, the aim in the following years was to provide the conditions for a positive identity formation with Ireland (Ryschka 26). As a result, “Irish nationalism described emigration as a consequence of British rule. And it used Irish American success stories as evidence that the Irish in a free environment were ambitious and enterprising” (McCaffrey 9 qtd. in Ryschka 26).

Also the leaders of the Irish literary and language revival at the end of the nineteenth century were predominantly Anglo-Irish Protestants. The reason why Irish Protestants, several of them coming from very religious families, became leaders in culturally and linguistically nationalist movements in a country that was predominantly Catholic was a change in their social status in the nineteenth century: In 1829

the Act of Catholic Emancipation was passed, leading to a power crisis among the Protestants, and in 1869 it was the end of the Anglican Church of Ireland (Pintér 6). It seems as if the sons, who were not able to follow their “fathers along traditional lines”, were searching for a new identity and so they ended up as the “nation’s cultural leaders” (Pintér 6-7). In this context, Richard Kearney argues that though the first who articulated wishes for the separation of the Irish from Britain were Protestants – mostly because the majority of the population that had access to higher education were Protestant – the basis of nationalist movements largely belonged to the Catholic Church since the end of the eighteenth century, and the same is true of their leaders since the beginning of the twentieth century (Kearney 7).

The three main areas in which the Protestants’ attitudes towards Ireland were shaped were “the Trinity College of Dublin, the Literary Revival Movement and the Gaelic League” (Pintér 7). Even though Trinity College was the centre of the English-Anglican culture in Ireland, Protestant leaders of the Gaelic Revival, such as Douglas Hyde, who very much contributed to the construction of Irish nationalism attended this university. It produced two different movements among “the Anglo-Irish elite”: On the one hand, there was the group that “centred around figures like Yeats or Hyde”, also labelled “national” and, on the other, there was “the circle of Trinity intellectuals” who were called “cosmopolitan” (Pintér 7).

3.2.1.1 Irishness and the Irish Literary Revival: The Gaelic Tradition

Unlike the cosmopolitans, who saw the Anglo-Irish as superior compared to the Native Irish, Yeats and the Literary Revivalists aimed at returning to the Gaelic past of the Irish and at rediscovering Gaelic literature. He hoped that Irish culture could be freed from British influence and with it of any segregation according to ethnicity or religion and he wanted to construct an Irish identity that embraced diversity and plurality. Although Yeats supported the idea that the Irish language and Gaelic culture was maintained in the rural West of Ireland, he believed that English could potentially serve as a kind of lingua franca, i.e. for communication with foreigners (Pintér 8-9). That the use of the English language is not completely condemned by the literary revivalists shows already that their notion of Irish nationalism is characterised by inclusion. This is further strengthened by the fact that they embraced both Catholicism and Protestantism (Ryschka 46).

Yeats and Synge very much drew on the myth of the West of Ireland as portrayed

in the romantic literature of the nineteenth century for their constructions of Irish identity (Duffy, *Writing Ireland* 56). It is a common strategy in contemporary nations to create national myths for identity formation (Kearney 108). Additionally, it has been suggested that particular places often play an important role in establishing a national identity: “The creation of hegemonic landscape narratives facilitates this process [of creating a national identity] by denoting particular places as centres of collective cultural consciousness” (Graham 15). Exactly this happened at the end of the nineteenth century with the West of Ireland. It became the “cultural heartland”, “an idealised landscape, populated by an idealised people [. . .], where the influences of modernity were at their weakest and which evoked the mystic unity of Ireland” (Graham 15-16). Even though, this area actually had to face poverty as well as high rates of emigration, it was portrayed as the representative of the real, and totally authentic Irish identity (Duffy, *Writing Ireland* 56-58). Rural Ireland as a strong feature in definitions of Irishness, does not only refer to the beauty of the landscape, but also to the way of life in these regions. Social bonds, comradeship, a sense of community and the family were extremely significant in these areas (Moffatt 9). This is an issue that is also taken up in Ní Dhuibhne’s title story “The Shelter of Neighbours”. In contrast to the myth of the West of Ireland, the city is not idealised in literature. Already in the construction of the myth of the rural, urbanity is implicitly rejected (Duffy, *Writing Ireland* 61).

Even though such romantic representations of the West of Ireland were largely idealisations, this myth continued to be articulated well into the twentieth century, as for example by Eamon de Valera, which will be discussed below.

3.2.1.2 Irishness and the Gaelic League: The Irish language

The Gaelic League was especially important because of its contributions concerning the Irish language as part of Irish nationalism (Comerford 31). It is commonly considered as “the Gaelic counterpart of Yeats’s Anglo-Irish literary revivalism” (Leerssen 133). Already at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the younger generations had preferred English over Irish, because it offered more opportunities. So the major reasons for choosing English as the vernacular were utilitarian in nature. Also when the national school system was introduced in 1831, English was further advanced, which, on the one hand, was serving a public will and, on the other, aimed at creating a cultural uniformity (Comerford 22-23). However, there existed not simply a preference for the English language, but at the same time there were real efforts to reduce the use of the Irish language or, even, to abandon it generally. The reasons for this were

the low prestige of the Irish language and the simultaneous attempt in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially by the Irish Catholics, to present the Irish as having “respectability and conformity in manners” (Comerford 23). It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that initiatives were raised to re-establish the Irish language in Ireland and this has to be seen as part of the general decolonisation process (O’Tuathaigh 46-47).

The Gaelic League was founded by Douglas Hyde in 1893 and developed into a mass movement across the whole country by the turn of the century. Hyde and the Gaelic League aimed at a restoration of the Irish language as the vernacular of the Irish, because they thought that national identity could not be enhanced and Irishness could not be authentically articulated through English, but only through the use of Irish on a general basis. Hyde was the son of English speaking Protestants, but also acquired Irish. In his view “Irish-Gaelic” was the basis for an essential Irish national identity and he believed that the formation of Ireland as a sovereign nation was only possible if it was “de-anglicized” (Pintér 10). This idea was subsumed under the movement of “Irish Ireland” and the aim was to liberate “Irish thought and mentality from a state of dependence on English culture” (Pintér 10). Since for Hyde the Irish language was “the binding force for the nation” a linguistic separation was the prerequisite for a cultural liberation and separation from England, or, put differently, “regained independence is symbolized by a revived Irish language” (Pintér 11). Therefore, the Gaeltacht, which are these areas where Irish is traditionally spoken and which are primarily situated in the west of the country, were romanticised and idealised (Connor 74).

The Irish Ireland movement fought for a more exclusive notion of Irishness than, for example, the literary revivalists, since they “defined nationalism through its roots in the past, including historical myths, folklore (e.g. storytelling), ancient tradition, Gaelicism, Catholicism and the Irish language” (Ryschka 46).

3.2.2 The Twentieth Century

3.2.2.1 Traditional Notions of Irishness

It has already been stated that several movements emerged before World War I which aimed at strengthening a new national and cultural identity in Ireland. Those were, for example, the above mentioned Gaelic League, the Irish Ireland movement and the Gaelic Athletic Association (Connolly 42). The latter – established by Michael Cusack in 1884 – aimed at spreading specifically Gaelic sports as opposed to British ones

and, hence, contributed in creating a unique and distinct identity of the Irish (Moffatt 15). To develop and reinforce a specific cultural identity was also a major objective during the creation process of the new Irish state between 1916 and 1923 (Connolly 42). The reconstruction of national identity in a positive way was continued during the decolonisation process, so after Ireland's independence in 1922 and the Civil War between 1922 and 1923. For this, nationalists again used the Gaelic heritage and, additionally, they constructed their identity in contrast to the former colonisers, i.e. the British (Ryschka 30).

With Ireland's independence the Roman Catholic Church increasingly became a key factor in Irish national identity until the 1960s (Moffatt 19-21), though Connolly points out that even since the 1880s it is reasonable to suppose that "religious and political loyalties could be taken as largely interchangeable" (Connolly 50). Especially during Eamon de Valera's presidency, Catholicism was widely distributed as a key aspect of Irishness (Ryschka 30). During his reign – basically from 1931 until 1959 – being Irish meant being Gaelic as well as being Catholic (Moffatt 2-3). Catholicism had, for example, a major influence on the Irish schooling system, especially regarding the teaching and learning of the Irish language (Ryschka 30). Already in 1910 the senate of the National University of Ireland voted for the Irish language to be a compulsory matriculation subject starting in 1913. Moreover, in both *Constitutions* of 1922 and 1937, the Irish language was decided to be the national or first official language, while English was considered the second official language. Several other strategies aimed at encouraging the Irish language in the years of the newly independent state. First, it was a prerequisite for employment in the public service. Second, it was promoted in the educational system, especially in primary schools. This included that Irish became a compulsory subject, and the language of instruction for teaching, which implied that much time was spent on the teaching of Irish itself, since not all children were fluent. However, in reality the majority of the population acquired too little competence in Irish so that actual usage after school was hardly possible. Even in the Gaeltacht the use of it decreased steadily (Comerford 35-39). Apart from the Church's role in education, their strict morals and values influenced the laws concerning "such areas as censorship, divorce, [and] contraception" and, thus, produced a "confessional state" and a rather "puritan and provincial Ireland" (McCaffrey 17). Additionally, this shift towards conservatism in the Irish Free State and after 1937 had a tremendous effect on the state of women. Basically the aim was to create a patriarchal society in which women were primarily treated as reproducers. They were excluded from the public sphere, which, for instance, became manifest in the perception that females should not

work outside home (Fletcher 377-378). One of the reasons for the restriction of the lives of females to the home was the assumption that they were not only responsible for the reproduction of the Irish race, but, through parenting, they were also responsible for the passing on of the Irish cultural and national identity (Smyth 64).

Alongside Catholicism and Gaelicism, also the myth of rural Ireland continued to be part of constructions of Irishness in the first half of the twentieth century, specifically during de Valera's reign, which additionally served as a further demarcation from British values and culture:

The Irish were portrayed as spiritual, simple people in opposition to the rational, complex English; ironically, that was exactly the kind of polar stereotyping forced on the Irish by British colonizers over the centuries. Previously negative connotations were now perceived as something positive (Ryschka 30).

However, reality proved to be much different. An economic recession in the 1950s led to mass emigration, especially from the rural areas in the West of Ireland. An improvement in economical and social matters can only be observed from the 1960s onwards. Even though during Eamon de Valera's reign processes of change and transformation were already perceptible, such myths as the rural west and concepts of traditional Irish identity and language were still prevailing and being circulated (Ryschka 30-31).

3.2.2.2 Changing Notions of Irishness

As already mentioned, from the 1960s onwards Ireland was increasingly transformed from a mostly rural country into an "increasingly developed [one] in terms of technology and industry" peaking in the 1990s as the so-called Celtic Tiger (Llewellyn-Jones 8). Although the Gaelic and Catholic rulers tried to keep foreign influences, especially from Great Britain or the United States, away from Ireland's population, this isolation was loosening up through returned emigrants and the mass media. In order to decrease the following immense emigration rates, industrialisation was stimulated in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to a shift in the concept of Irishness from a rural, Catholic Ireland to an urban and industrialised Ireland (McCaffrey 18-19). Due to advances, such as in communication technology, Ireland became increasingly globalised and its culture and identity internationalised (Kearney 100-101). Additionally, Ireland's joining of the European Economic Community in 1973 modernised social, political and economic circumstances in Ireland (Ryschka 31).

Also the renewed conflict from the late 1960s onwards between the North and South of Ireland, known as the Troubles, led to a renegotiation and reconsideration of Irishness among the population in the South, who – formerly having blamed the British for the partitioning of Ireland – now more and more realised that their Catholicism and Gaelicism have equally contributed to this situation. This resulted in various changes concerning the special status of the Catholic Church in the *Constitution of Ireland*, which was removed (McCaffrey 19). Besides, in the 1960s and 1970s the status of the Irish language was modified and changed. For example, it was no longer a necessary skill for employment in the public service. Additionally, its exclusive status in the schooling system was weakened. Despite these developments, however, the “basic attitudes have not changed”, which means, for example, that most nationalists still consider the Irish language to be an essential characteristic of their national identity and want it to be a compulsory subject in schools (Comerford 40).

Regarding the aspect of gender in notions of Irishness, it has already been said that the Irish feminist movement in the 1970s very much improved lives of women. For instance, married females were no longer excluded from the workforce. A liberalisation of the abortion laws, however, was not addressed by Irish feminists of that time. Nevertheless, in 1983 an amendment of the *Constitution* led to the equal right to life of the unborn and of the mother (Fletcher 379-380). Various factors, such as the impact of the Catholic Church or Irish nationalism, led to this heavily negative attitude towards abortion in Irish society. Fletcher even argues that “abortion is perceived to be antithetical to Irishness” (Fletcher 382). Eventually Irish pregnant women were adjudicated the right to travel to Britain in order to have an abortion which - according to Fletcher - transforms it to something that is practised by the British and which is understood as a threat to the Irish ethnicity. In this way, abortion-seeking women are excluded from Irishness and rather associated with Britishness (Fletcher 383-384).

In the 1980s Ireland still had to face high rates of emigration due to a poor economy resulting in large-scale unemployment (O’Kane Mara 63). Because of these high rates of emigration and the subsequently “diasporic” situation (“over seventy million [people worldwide] claim Irish descent”), Irishness can no longer simply be referred to the Irish population on the island (Kearney 99). Ryschka summarises the situation in Ireland in the 1980s as a “transition period” in which traditional and modern values existed simultaneously (Ryschka 31).

At the end of the twentieth century Ireland experienced an immense economic boom, now termed the ‘Celtic Tiger Years’ (Loyal 74). Apart from the term’s association with economic prosperity, the term also implies a newly developed liberalism, freedom and opportunity in Ireland and with it “cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism” (Loyal 89). Concrete changes during this period that are mentioned by Ingman include “the breakdown of the family unit, the questioning of traditional forms of Irish nationalism and the declining influence of the Catholic Church” (Ingman, *History* 227). It is also a new experience for the Irish during the Celtic Tiger Years that emigration is no longer seen as a negative aspect of Irish identity, as an act of desperation, but rather as a chance and new opportunities (O’Kane Mara 63). Additionally, the lives of Irish women were changed tremendously during the Tiger Years due to a shift in family structure and sexuality. For example, at the time Irish women increasingly started to work also when they had a family and children at home (Kennedy 95-96).

Due to this expanding of Irish identity, for instance, in terms of women’s rights, definitions of Irishness that had formerly been seen as fixed began to alter. A very crucial moment in this shift from traditional, Catholic and nationalist values to a more liberal and modern society was when Mary Robinson was elected the first female president of Ireland in 1990. It was shortly after her election that the legalisation of divorce, contraception or homosexuality was introduced (Ingman, *History* 243). However, it is still primarily on the agenda of women to care for children or look for childcare services, who now have to deal with the “double burden” of being responsible for childcare and at the same time working outside home. Thus, the Celtic Tiger brought contradictory experiences for women; on the one hand, they gained more freedom and, on the other, they have to deal with the difficulty of handling family and work (Kennedy 106-107).

In addition, Irishness, though becoming gradually dissociated from the Catholic Church and a negative attitude towards England, still relies heavily on Gaelic symbolism (Ryschka 32). Similarly it is claimed that reality in the early twenty-first century Ireland shows a very different picture than the idealised image of the Celtic Tiger, as having brought liberalism and freedom to Ireland, might suggest (Loyal 89). This can be seen, for example, in its handling of immigration. Ireland traditionally had to face high rates of emigration, but during the Tiger Years, it developed into one with high rates of immigration, which led to enormous shifts “in the ethnic and religious composition of Irish society” (Nordin and Llena 4). Always having been connected with Catholicism and whiteness, Irishness as a form of national identity creates a tension to the more and more globalised economy and multicultural society (Loyal 89),

thus, resulting in increasing racism, xenophobia and exclusive, nationalist rhetoric and movements (Loyal 74).

To sum up, one could say that the most significant aspects in traditional notions of Irish identity - i.e. basically until de Valera's presidency in the late 1950s - were rurality, Catholicism, and Gaelicism in terms of language and sports (Moffatt 8). This very narrow definition of Irishness was increasingly questioned from the 1960s onwards, when major economical, political and social changes took place. This resulted in a modern notion of Irishness, where the role of Gaelicism and Catholicism decreased steadily and at the same time plurality was noticeably embraced (Moffatt 23-24). Nevertheless, as has been mentioned above, traditional gender roles in Ireland are only slowly changing (Kennedy 106-107) and the unprecedented experience of large-scale immigration to Ireland has produced new tensions (Loyal 74).

4 Close Reading of the Short Stories

4.1 “The Shelter of Neighbours”

4.1.1 Plot Summary

In “The Shelter of Neighbours”, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne tells the story of Martha and her life in Dunroon Crescent. The story starts in the middle of a Sunday night with Martha suffering from insomnia and, thus, getting up at half past four. When recognising that the dustbins have to be brought out, she comes across a person on the street, who, at first, is strange to her. Martha is frightened and rushes back into her house from which she can see that the unfamiliar person actually is Siobhán, the daughter of her neighbour. A few days later, it is revealed that in this night somebody was murdered near Dunroon. Martha suspects Siobhán of having committed the murder for various reasons, and it is shown how Martha's belief is steadily strengthened throughout the story. However, it is not revealed whether she will tell the police. Apart from this main action, the anachronic structure of the story allows readers to gather relevant background information about Martha's life in Dunroon Crescent, her integration into the neighbourhood and the profound social changes in Ireland that were going on in the second half of the twentieth century. As the title already suggests the story's underlying theme is a critical investigation of neighbourly support, friendship and communal solidarity.

4.1.2 Analysis of the Story Level

When analysing the story level of the short story, its spatial and temporal setting, the characters and the themes and motifs are of central importance. The story is set in Martha and her husband's home in a fictional suburb of Dublin called Dunroon Crescent. Also other stories to be analysed in this diploma thesis are located on the same street. In the present short story, the neighbourhood is only referred to as "*rus in urbe*, between the mountains and the sea" (Ní Dhuibhne 109). The houses on this street apparently look rather similar; they are white and they all have an enclosed garden. It is said that the protagonist acquired this house together with her husband in the early 1980s. Back then its state was rather bad, being damaged by damp, even though it had been proclaimed to be in walk-in condition, very much due to the fact that it had central heating. Alongside the setting in Martha's home, the story also takes place in her neighbour's house, that of the Moriartys. It is described as a very big house, but nonetheless they have recently built an extension, like many others in Dunroon and like the protagonist herself. Their estate is also said to have a conservatory and a pool. Especially the Moriarty's kitchen is accentuated to be "enormous" (121) and to look like a newly interpreted country kitchen. In general, Dunroon is described as a rather unsafe place by the narrator, mostly because of its close proximity to Lourdes Gardens, which is a fictional "Corporation housing estate" (109), and the young, frightening men who live there. Apart from Dunroon Crescent and Lourdes Gardens, various other fictional as well as non-fictional place names are mentioned, including Mulberry Primary School and Ashfield Park as examples for fictional ones and Dublin, Portarlinton and Glendalough's farmer's market as non-fictional places. Therefore, Dunroon Crescent can be assumed to be in the south-west of Dublin.

Having discussed the locations of "The Shelter of Neighbours", the issue of time is equally necessary for a fundamental analysis of the short story's setting. The month in which the story takes place - September - is explicitly stated at the very beginning. Later it is also revealed that the story ends on the twenty-first of September, which is the protagonist's birthday. Furthermore, it is mentioned on the first page that the main action of the story takes place shortly after the Celtic Tiger Years, so towards the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, because it is talked about the "economic downturn" and that "public servants are parasites" (107).

After having completed the analysis of the setting of the short story, the individual characters will now be discussed. Such a characterisation includes the analysis of

direct representations of a character, i.e. descriptions made by the narrator or other characters, and indirect representations, which include the actions, speech and also the appearance of a character (“Characterization”). Furthermore, it is often necessary to differentiate whether a character is characterised by others, for instance by another character or by the narrator, or if he or she describes him- or herself. In addition, the reliability of a characterisation given in a narrative may be discussed (Nünning and Nünning 107). The protagonist in “The Shelter of Neighbours” is Martha, who is fifty-one years old and seems to be a rather worried person. First of all, she suffers from insomnia which does already suggest that she has to carry burdens with her. Second, the reader is informed that Martha is not happy living in Dunroon Crescent. As mentioned above, she thinks that it is not a very safe area, and she would prefer “living in the middle of the city” (Ní Dhuibhne 109). Already when moving to this neighbourhood Martha thought that she would only stay for a few years. As far as her personality is concerned, she is described as being rather different from the other women on Dunroon Crescent. Her neighbour, Eugene Moriarty, for instance, thinks about her the following:

He didn’t know what to make of her, he told her later, when they got to know each other better. She wasn’t - she isn’t - warm and chatty like most of the women on the road, and didn’t take care of her appearance, like Mitzy. (110)

Others call her “reserved” or “a cold fish” (115). This otherness becomes also visible in Martha’s external appearance and her way of dressing, which may be summarised as “hippyish”: “maxi skirts, flat sandals, and she wore her mop of curly hair parted in the middle and tumbling down any old way over her shoulders - no hairdresser got within a hairdryer’s roar of Martha in those days” (111). The self-characterisation of her external appearance is rather critical too, since she describes herself as being “short, [and] tubby” (109). Another huge difference between Martha and the other women on Dunroon Crescent is the fact that Martha has always worked outside home, as “a Higher Executive Officer in the Prisons Division” and, later, in “Family Law” (115), while the others have been housewives. This is remarkable, considering that the age gap only amounts to ten years. In fact there was actually no other option for Martha than to work. She never even thought of staying at home after college, as is highlighted in the following remark: “Mitzy and her peers would have felt guilty, and their husbands, too, if they had jobs. [...] But for Martha and her friends it was the exact opposite. They would have felt guilty if they’d stayed at home” (116). As a result of this situation Martha is hardly successful in becoming friends with her

neighbours. She is not fully integrated in their customs, for example, when they meet for a coffee occasionally in the mornings Martha cannot participate because she has to work. Additionally, Martha is a bit envious of the full-time mothers on Dunroon Crescent because they are able to spend more time with themselves and their children. Therefore, Martha, though she is portrayed as a modern Irish woman, who enjoys her freedom, is, at the same time, presented as being slightly backward-looking. Likewise, the comment that “[b]eing married gave her a sense of security” (118) shows that, despite Martha’s independence and modernity, she also has conservative outlooks.

The development of Martha’s personality and attitudes, especially during the Tiger Years, are particularly worth mentioning. Whereas before she and her husband used to stay in simple B&Bs when they went on holiday, they now used hotels and she increasingly demanded high standards. Her growing prosperity soon also affected her attitude towards working. During the Celtic Tiger, when Martha and her husband were beginning to have more money than they needed, she reduced her working hours and hoped to make finally friends with her neighbours:

After nearly eighteen years of full-time work, Martha decided to give herself a break and try the three-day week. So she was at home on Fridays and Mondays. She had time for herself - which she interpreted as time for the house and the garden, for Seamus and Robbie [...]. And for the neighbours.
(119)

It was especially during this time that Martha got to know her neighbour Mitzy much better.

Martha lives together with her husband Seamus, who works as a headmaster of a “rough school” (114) and who seems to be rather conscientious. Unlike Martha, he loves living in their house in Dunroon. His appearance as well as his personality is not described in much detail, it is merely said that he has “grey-black hair” and a “neat body” (108). Martha is already Seamus’ second wife and though, they have lived together since the early 1980s, they could only marry in 1996 because Seamus could not be divorced earlier. Moreover, Seamus has got a child of his first marriage called Shane, but apparently he does not live in Dunroon with Martha and Seamus. Also Martha and Seamus have got a child, Robbie, who is described as “a giant of a boy” (119). Martha and Seamus’ first son, Luke, had leukaemia and, thus, died when he was only aged two and a half. Regarding Martha and Seamus’ marriage, it can be inferred that Martha very much sees it as a confinement in which she has to make the

compromises. This is suggested when comparing Seamus with a seal caught in a net while he is sleeping. The net is a symbol of confinement, and deprived freedom referring to their marriage. Furthermore, Martha interprets her insomnia as a consequence of Seamus' fitful sleep. The comment, "She could move to another room but she knows he'd hate that, so she's hasn't suggested it. Yet." (108). This shows again her view of marriage being a confinement. Additionally, the fact that Martha does not feel safe in Dunroon Crescent and would prefer living in Dublin, while Seamus loves this place, which is why they have never moved, highlights Martha as the one who is ready to compromise. As far as their social background is concerned, they can be situated in the middle class since both of them are public servants. Besides, Martha and Seamus, obviously, are not very religious people considering that Seamus does not follow the laws concerning family and lives separated from his first wife. Furthermore, Seamus is claimed to be an atheist. Still, religion and the contention between Catholicism and Protestantism does play a role in their lives:

That business of sending your child to a Protestant school got his goat. (He was an atheist, something which of course he, as a schoolteacher, had to keep quiet about. His separation they could just about stomach, as long as he kept quiet about it. He was a Catholic atheist.) (114)

Another very important character in "The Shelter of Neighbours" is Mitzy Moriarty, who lives right next to Martha and Seamus, together with her husband Eugene and their children Siobhán, Conor and Lauren. They have lived in Dunroon Crescent even longer than Martha and Seamus and before that they lived in Boston for two years because Eugene had a job in an international bank there. When they came back to Ireland, he started to work as an actuary in a health insurance. Their social standing seems to be rather high, since the narrator calls Eugene "as something *significant* in health insurance" (emphasis added) (111). While Martha first thought that Eugene was unfriendly, "He had a way of examining Martha with a shifty look in his sharp green eyes - the eyes of a pet fox" (110), Mitzy was welcoming straight from the beginning which is illustrated in the act of offering the new neighbours self-baked bread.

Nevertheless, Mitzy's behaviour concerning neighbourly friendship is somehow ambivalent. On the one hand, Mitzy offered tremendous support when Martha and Seamus' son, Luke, was in hospital with leukaemia. Since Martha could not get time off work, Mitzy regularly visited Luke and stayed at the hospital with him. This offering

of help might be explained with Mitzy's rural background, which she comments with the words "I loved it [...]. There was a great sense of purpose to it. And you belonged not just to your family, but to a community. Everyone knew everyone. And looked out for them" (120). On the other hand, a friendship between Martha and Mitzy developed only much later when they introduced their Friday lunches. There "they talked about their families mostly, and the neighbourhood, and their houses. But also about themselves" (120). Yet, their friendship did not go so far as to tell each other about the most private issues and, thus, Mitzy tells Martha about Siobhán's attempted suicide only a couple of months later. According to Mary Pierse this is an expression of "suburban neighbourliness [which] in this case does not mean suffocating closeness or squinting windows" but is rather characterised by superficiality (Pierse 152). Furthermore, Mitzy and Martha's friendship was slightly impaired one week before the main action takes place. Mitzy insulted Martha, who herself is working in the public service as well as her husband, because she blamed the public servants for having caused the financial crisis. Even though Mitzy tries to diffuse and shuffle out of the situation, "I don't mean you,' she said quickly. She laughed. [...] 'I don't think of you in that light. I meant...' She paused. 'I meant, you know ... the mandarins who sit in offices all day drinking tea at the taxpayers' expense.'" (Ní Dhuibhne 124), Martha is furious.

Mitzy did not work for most of her life and she is portrayed as a typical housewife. Amongst other things, this image is highlighted through the mentioning of Mitzy's huge kitchen. Still she is skilled and well-educated, since she has got "a degree in science" (116) and, besides, the protagonist describes her as a smart woman having much common sense. Apart from the fact that Mitzy is a housewife, while Martha is working full-time, they also differ heavily in their appearance. Unlike Martha, Mitzy always looks neat, "as if she's just stepped out of a salon; she's as smart as the president of Ireland even when she's say, driving up to the shop for a bottle of milk" (111). In addition, Mitzy's personality and behaviour contributes to the image of her being the perfect housewife. She is described as having confidence and good manners, since she "always accepted invitations to tea, knowing that a refusal can be hurtful" (111) even if she is in a hurry. Due to this behaviour, Mitzy's way of dressing elegantly all the time and her way of speaking with a "posh accent" (120) made Martha assume that Mitzy comes from an urban and wealthy background. In fact, however, Mitzy grew up on a farm. Nevertheless, relatively late in her life, Mitzy does enter the workforce. Not only because her youngest child was in secondary school now, but also because she saw the years of the economic boom as major chance. This was the point when Mitzy entered the property market, which means that she started to buy old houses,

redecorated them so that they were in walk-in condition and then sold them again at a much higher price. As a result, “[b]y 2000, Mitzy was a millionaire twice over, and set to get richer” (120). However, in the following decade the business started to stagnate and, thus, “she bought and sold less and less” (120).

Mitzy and Eugene’s children are not characterised in detail. Only their daughter, Siobhán, is worth mentioning. She is more than thirty years old, and in order to emphasise Siobhán’s height and skinniness, the narrator compares her to a “young heron” (110). Siobhán, obviously, is mentally unstable, since she tried to kill herself after her boyfriend had left her for another woman. However, Mitzy assumes that there is “something deeper” and that this “was just the immediate cause” (121). This mental illness contributes to Martha’s suspicion that Siobhán killed the Polish woman in the Sunday night when she saw her coming home at 4.30 a.m. Besides, Martha’s son seems to know that the murdered woman had something to do with Siobhán’s ex-boyfriend who was the reason for her attempted suicide. Additionally, other minor hints that come to Martha’s mind strengthen her suspicion, for example, the fact that Siobhán wore a thick coat in that night, though it had not been cold. The murdered woman, who was stabbed to death, is called Katia Michalska and twenty-five years old. She lived in a suburb near Dunroon, which is Ashfield Park. Apart from Martha, the other residents on Dunroon Crescent believed the murderer to be somebody from Lourdes Gardens.

Next, a close look at the themes and motifs in “The Shelter of Neighbours” shall follow. A theme is defined as the “salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work’s treatment of its subject-matter” and other than the subject of a story “its theme or themes will be described in more abstract terms (e.g. love, war, revenge, betrayal, fate, etc.)” (“Theme”). Mostly the theme or themes are not stated explicitly in the text, but have to be encountered by the reader with the help of analysing the motifs (“Theme”). A motif is “[a] situation, incident, idea, image, or character-type that is found in many different literary works, folktales, or myths; or any element of a work that is elaborated into a more general theme” (“Motif”). One of the central themes in “The Shelter of Neighbours” is family and family life. In this respect, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne basically contrasts two different examples of Irish family life. On the one hand, there is the modern family as represented by Martha, Seamus and their children. There factors, such as separation and divorce, illegitimate offspring and a constant struggle with handling one’s own work-life balance determine the living together. Thus, the contemporary family is presented as being characterised by in-

stability and chaos, which, according to Seigneuret's *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs*, is common in twentieth century literature ("Family"). On the other hand, the Moriartys represent a traditional family in which the husband is the breadwinner, while his wife is a full-time mother. This theme of family life in a traditional way is supported by the 'angel in the house' motif, which was first used by an English poet, called Coventry Patmore in the middle of the nineteenth century, in a poem of the same title. Since then it has recurrently been used to portray "wives as meek, self-sacrificing angles" (Hayes Alvarez 46). This phrase, additionally, highlights "the boundness and limitation of the house as the place assigned to women" (Budge 289). Ní Dhuibhne manages to translate this motif into a contemporary setting, in which Mitzy represents this 'angel of the house', since she stays at home with her children, cares for the house and prepares meals for the family members, albeit she does enter the workforce later on. Above all, her motherly love is perfectly shown when staying at the hospital with Martha's son, Luke, because she had to be at work.

This leads to another prominent theme of the short story which is neighbourly friendship and a sense of community. This thematic aspect is directly addressed in the quotation of a common Irish proverb, "Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine" (Ní Dhuibhne 120), which is translated and explained in the text as "neighbours depending on one another" (121). In other words, this proverb means "Under the shelter of each other, people survive" ("Famous Irish Sayings"). This theme is especially emphasised by the choice of the title of this short story, "The Shelter of Neighbours", which is also the title of the whole collection. Although Martha heavily depended on Mitzy when her son was in hospital and she could not stay with him, it is not clear whether Mitzy can equally lean on Martha when Siobhán is suspected of having committed a murder. According to Mary Pierse, this illustrates that the title of the story "conveys a belief in such aid [neighbourly support] and collaboration while the detail of the story shows that although its benefits are valuable, its existence is dependent on individual decision and so cannot be guaranteed" (Pierse 152). In other words, friendship and support is not given automatically, but is rather influenced by active decisions of individuals. In the present short story, this idea is underpinned by the recurrent use of the window-motif:

They [windows] allow us to take the position of distant, secure observers gaining information about the world even if we are not able or willing to become a part of this world. Yet, the *aesthetic* position of observers does not turn us into passive, stimulated objects, but requires an active, creative

way of watching. We can only make sense of the chaotic world outside if we bring it into order, if we interpret what we see [...]. (Zocco 2)

Martha thinks that she is primarily an observer of the things going on in Dunroon Crescent, but, in fact, Martha is participating in that she interprets the various hints concerning the murder. Moreover, she could be even more of a participant if she informs the police about her suspicion and, thus, actively influences the further course of events. Apart from this interpretation of the motif of the window, it might also symbolise a “gateway to [...] knowledge” as described in de Vries’ *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (“Window”). Since Martha gains knowledge when she puts one and one together, using her detective skills, the theme of the detective as personified in Martha can be observed in “The Shelter of Neighbours”. This theme is further strengthened by the choice of the suspect’s surname, which is Moriarty and, thus, might be interpreted as an intertextual reference. Professor Moriarty is the name of the opponent of one of the most famous detectives in literary history, Sherlock Holmes (Nyman 67).

When characterising the heroine of the present short story it has been outlined that her life is very much filled with worries. Worries, according to Daemmrich and Daemmrich, are a constant companion throughout one’s life and, therefore, it “may almost imperceptibly color the representation of characters” (“Worry”). That Martha is haunted by memories becomes evident, for instance, in her insomnia. Also such comments as “Everyone has to get over things like that” (Ní Dhuibhne 122) when talking of tragic moments allude to her worries. In this regard, the motif of bereavement functions as an explanation for Martha’s state of mind and it can be assumed that she has never really overcome the loss of her first son. Apart from Martha, also Siobhán is a very worried character which is getting even to the point where she attempts suicide. This is primarily the result of yet another theme, which is unrequited love. Siobhán’s ex-boyfriend left her, because he had found a new girl.

4.1.3 Analysis on the Level of Discourse

Having finished analysing the story level, a detailed analysis of the discourse level will follow in the present chapter. In this context, initially it is important to discuss the narrative situation, before the narrative devices, the language and style of the short story and the intertextual references will be addressed.

When following Stanzel’s classic model of the three narrative situations, basically three constituents have to be considered, which are mode, person and perspective.

First, it has to be clarified by whom the story is told. Stanzel argues: “The answer may be: a narrator who appears before the reader as an independent personality or one who withdraws so far behind the narrated events that he becomes practically invisible to the reader” (Stanzel 47). In the case of “The Shelter of Neighbours” it is the latter technique, since a personalised narrator is largely absent. As a result, the narration is more like a “scenic presentation”, which is “the reflection of the fictional events through the consciousness of a character [...] without narratorial comment”, given by a reflector-character (Stanzel 48). This ideally describes the mode of presentation in “The Shelter of Neighbours”, where Martha functions as the reflector, directly presenting the events of the fictional reality. According to Stanzel, it is this existence of a character reflecting on the fictional world that already suggests that a figural narrative situation is used, because this is the domineering constituent of this narrative situation, subordinating the other two, person and perspective (Stanzel 55). Nevertheless, these shall briefly be addressed in the present section for the sake of completeness. Regarding the perspective an internal and external one can be differentiated, “[directing] the reader’s attention to the way in which he perceives the fictional reality” (Stanzel 49). When analysing the constitutive element of the person in a narrative situation, it is necessary to discern whether the narrator belongs to the fictional world of the other characters or not. So this is basically a question of “identity and non-identity of the realms of the narrator and the characters” (Stanzel 48-49). In “The Shelter of Neighbours” a third-person narrator is used and an internal perspective can be observed.

The use of a reflector-character leads to a “covert or dissimulated mediacy”, which creates an illusion of directness or immediacy (Stanzel 141). A covert narrator may be described as following:

[O]ne who neither refers to him- or herself nor addresses any narratees, one who has a more or less neutral (nondistinctive) voice and style, one who is sexually indeterminate, one who shows no ‘conative solicitude’ whatsoever, one who does not provide exposition even when it is urgently needed, one who does not intrude or interfere, one who lets the story events unfold in their natural sequence and tempo [...]. (Jahn ch. 3.1.4.)

Put differently, when a covert narrator is used like in the present short story, the “narrating instances take the form of anonymous voices” (Nünning and Nünning 119-120). This means that the reader believes to “[witness] the action directly - he feels he is perceiving it through the eyes and mind of the reflector-character” (Stanzel 147). In

Genette's terminology, a heterodiegetic narrator can be identified, which also means that the narrator is "outside of the story" (Genette 244-245).

The use of a figural narrative situation has several important implications. For example, the use of this narrative situation is correlative to the use of free indirect discourse (Stanzel 190-191). Especially the grammatical aspects of this concept, such as the change of tenses and personal pronouns, have been mentioned previously. Stanzel, however, highlights that in literature the use of free indirect style emphasises a dual perspective, "the essence of free indirect style lies in the dual view of the events from the perspective of the narrator and from that of a fictional character", which means that the personalised narrator as it is used in the authorial narrative situation and the narrator as a reflector in the figural narrative situation coalesce in free indirect discourse (Stanzel 191). An example for the use of free indirect style in "The Shelter of Neighbours" is the following passage: "How did she not recognise Siobhán's walk? Siobhán has that gait all the girls have these days when they're out on the town, dressed up (or down, because they got out in their underwear, it looks like). They mince along on their spindly high heels like blackbirds after a worm in the grass." (Ní Dhuibhne 110). Apart from the use of free indirect discourse, this extract clearly shows the stream of consciousness of the reflector-character, which often co-occurs with a figural narrative situation, mostly because of a highly covert narrator who makes it possible "to present a direct (i.e., both immediate and unmediated) view into the perceptions, thoughts, and psychology of a character's mind" (Jahn ch. 3.3.9.).

If the story is presented by a covert narrator, this usually implies that a story starts *in medias res* (Jahn ch. 3.3.9.), which is also the case in the short story under consideration. Right at the beginning of the story the readers are not provided with any background information about the characters, or the story's setting, i.e. there are no narrative preliminaries given in the text. As far as the ending of a story is concerned, Stanzel points out that "there exists a structural connection between a narrative beginning with a reflector-character or a reflectorized teller-character and an open ending" (Stanzel 163). Put differently, stories that start *in medias res*, especially those that display a figural narrative situation, usually show a lack of closure. The reader is neither informed whether Martha tells the police about her suspicion, nor if Siobhán is the murderer at all. Therefore, it remains unknown whether the overall theme of the story, namely solidarity and a sort of dependency on each other within a community, is experienced in Dunroon Crescent, or if the individual characters decide against it.

Turning now to the linearity and structure of the present short story it can be observed that the main action, which lasts a few days, starting with Martha's meeting of Siobhán in the middle of the night and ending with the interview of the Gardaí, develops chronologically in itself, though the overall structure is not linear, but heavily anachronic. It is exactly due to this anachrony in "The Shelter of Neighbours" that the whole plot covers approximately three decades. One such anachronic, narrative device is the flashback, or analepsis, which is used to explain incidents that happened before the main action and, thus, it "enables a storyteller to fill in background information about characters and events" ("Analepsis"). Several of those can be found in "The Shelter of Neighbours", but one is of special interest because it extends over several pages and aims at informing the readers about the time the protagonist moved to Dunroon Crescent together with her partner and about the differences between Martha and the other females in this neighbourhood. Additionally, this flashback reveals much about Ireland's history in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, its ongoing social and economic changes, for instance, regarding gender roles or the financial prosperity during the Tiger Years, and their impacts on ordinary people. Besides, there are also other, shorter flashbacks intertwined in the plot. Apart from these flashbacks, there are also instances that contain hints at future events and this narrative device is called foreshadowing, which is explained as following:

The technique of arranging events and information in a narrative in such a way that later events are prepared for or shadowed forth beforehand. A well constructed novel, for instance, will suggest at the very beginning what the outcome may be; the end is contained in the beginning and this gives structural and thematic unity. ("Foreshadowing")

When hearing of Siobhán's attempted suicide, which Mitzy comments on with the words that Siobhán will probably "never get over it", Martha's reaction is that, "[e]veryone has to get over things like that. [...] In the end, most people and animals get over everything, if you give them time" (Ní Dhuibhne 122). This suggests that Martha suffered from a similarly terrible experience, which is later revealed to be the death of her son. Additionally, it is mentioned that though Martha appreciated the improvements concerning gender roles and the lives of women, she was slightly jealous of the other women on Dunroon Crescent, because they had more time, "She envied them their chance to work on their houses and gardens and their hobbies, and, after a while, to be with the children" (117). This is again a reference to her son, Luke because later in the story it is explained that Luke had to stay in hospital for

a long time, but Martha could not stay with him because she could not get time off work. Therefore, these two examples may be interpreted as instances of foreshadowing. In general, the insertion of various time levels is a common narrative strategy in Ní Dhuibhne's fiction, "most stories repeat the retrospective pattern of interlacing past and present, memory and awareness" (Tallone 176). The reason for this is the underlying idea that individuals constantly have to face and deal with the past (Tallone 176).

If examining the author's style and language, it is crucial that "a writer's choice of words, his figures of speech, the devices (rhetorical and otherwise), the shape of his sentences (whether they be loose or periodic), [and] the shape of his paragraphs" are examined ("Style"). Generally speaking, the writer shows a tendency towards colloquialism, as her choice of words suggests. According to Stanzel, colloquial language is often a result of the use of free indirect discourse, in which the narrator's language is approximated to the language of the characters and it is more similar to spoken language, which is simpler, than to written language (Stanzel 194).

Ní Dhuibhne's language is also characterised by irony, as exemplified in the following remark, "Siobhán has that gait all the girls have these days when they're out on the town, dressed up (or down, because they go out in their underwear, it looks like)" (Ní Dhuibhne 110). Besides, the author uses metaphors, as for example in "[a] a breath of air comes into the room and kisses her face" (108) or when talking about public servants being parasites (107), as well as several similes, e.g. "On Dunroon Crescent, Martha was like a man or a child" (117). This simile aims at highlighting that Martha was somehow different to the other women in Dunroon, merely because she has a job in the city. Above all, the numerous comparisons between individual characters and different animals are worth mentioning because they often have symbolic meaning. Some of them, such as Seamus being compared to a seal caught in a net and Eugene's eyes looking like those of a pet fox have already been interpreted. Another simile and its symbolism, however, needs further consideration, namely that Siobhán is said to look like a heron. In fact, this bird does not only reflect her external appearance - both have long, skinny legs -, but particularly its long bill looks like a knife or dagger ("Great Blue Heron") and, thus, might symbolise this weapon. Considering that the Polish woman was stabbed to death, the bird's beak as symbolising the murder weapon also foreshadows this crime.

In addition, blackbirds are mentioned twice and it is most striking that Martha, when being interviewed by the Gardaí, remembers that she heard a blackbird singing

“Help you me, help you me, help you me” in the night of the murder (Ní Dhuibhne 126). The blackbird, according to de Vries, simultaneously symbolises “bad luck, evil, temptation” and “vigilance (its warning cry at approaching danger)” (“Blackbird”). This suggests that Martha is very convinced of Siobhán to be the murderer, though she cannot be absolutely sure. How Martha’s suspicion was steadily strengthened becomes also apparent in the following metaphorical comment, “You plant an idea and keep watering it on the airwaves, and very soon a myth is transmogrified into a fact” (Ní Dhuibhne 122). Originally meant to explain how public servants have been made the scapegoats for the financial crisis, it can equally be applied to show how Martha is increasingly convinced that Siobhán committed the murder. Therefore, this phrase provides a logical connection between these two happenings.

Another way to make the story more vivid is the use of repetitions, which the writer employs relatively frequently. Examples include “They must have felt like she did. Sick as dogs. Sick as dogs” (113) or “Many children recover from leukaemia and for most of that year Martha and Seamus and the doctor clung to the hope that he would be one of those, that he would pass through this nightmare and come out at the other side, delicate obviously, but alive. Alive. Alive. The thing you want most in the world, when all is said and done: your child, alive” (126). These two instances of repetition definitely serve as a means for emphasising the point to be made, while the passage “The train. Work. Sleep. The train. Work. Sleep.” (116) pursues a slightly different purpose. Here the monotony and daily grind of Martha during the first months in Dunroon, before the DART was introduced, should be expressed and made visible through the arrangement of the words itself. Therefore, this line may even be called slightly onomatopoeic. Onomatopoeia “is a figure of speech in which the sound reflects the sense” (“Onomatopoeia”) and the rhythm of this line aims at mirroring the motion, rhythm and monotony of a train. At the same time, this extract is an example of another rhetorical device heavily used by Ní Dhuibhne in “The Shelter of Neighbours” which are ellipses. Since ellipses are “the omissions, pauses, and interruptions fundamental to spoken language” (“Ellipses”), they emphasise the realistic style of writing of this short story and they also correlate with the stream of consciousness technique, because such inner thoughts may not always follow grammatically correct, syntactical rules. There can be observed yet another figure of speech, which is the juxtaposition of Martha and Mitzy in order to demonstrate the drastic social changes that were happening in Ireland in the second half of the twentieth century, specifically from the 1970s and 1980s onwards.

Intertextual references are rather rare in “The Shelter of Neighbours”. Only on the very first page of the story, a Sunday newspaper and its “‘Life’ section” is mentioned. This might be a reference to the *Sunday Independent*⁹ since it actually contains such a section. Historically, this newspaper aimed at a Catholic, middle-class readership and at farmers (Horgan 6). Besides, it is referred to the US-American sitcom *Green Acres*, in which a couple moves from New York City to a farm. Martha compares Mitzy to the female character in this sitcom, because she cannot really believe that Mitzy, being very posh and elegant, grew up on a farm. Apart from this, the intertextual reference to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* has already been addressed.

4.1.4 Features of Irishness

The most important aspect of Irishness that is transmitted in “The Shelter of Neighbours” is the emergence of the Celtic Tiger and the following economic recession and their consequences for the Irish population. Basically, Ireland’s economy started to be more open and modern since the 1960s. The essential driving force in this respect was de Valera’s resignation and, subsequently, Seán Lemass’ taking over as Taoiseach¹⁰ in 1959 (Ingman, *Twentieth-Century Fiction* 17-18). The following economic and infrastructural development in the second half of the twentieth century is exemplified in the present short story with the modernisation of the train in the 1980s. However, it was especially during the 1990s that Ireland saw an immense economic boom, called the Celtic Tiger which was primarily brought forward through “fiscal prudence in the late 1980s” and a new form of social partnership that was introduced in 1987 (Coulter 11). Besides, the flourishing US-American IT sector significantly contributed to the success of the Celtic Tiger because it sharply expanded into Ireland. This expansion by the USA came to an end by 2001, which also drastically affected the Irish economy (O’Hearn 34). In general, the phenomenon of the Celtic Tiger should rather be seen “as a speculative boom within a broader ‘bubble economy’” and as soon as the financial crisis in the USA became a global one, Ireland’s economy “imploded” by 2008 (O’Flynn, Monaghan, and Power 922-923). What then followed was neoliberal politics, which manifests itself in savings in the public service and in social welfare as well as in increasing taxes. Additionally, the elite, which includes bankers, businessmen and members of the government, aimed at finding scapegoats. These were found in such marginal groups as public servants, the workless, single mothers and immigrants (O’Flynn, Monaghan, and Power 923-925). “The Shelter of Neighbours” refers to this

⁹<http://www.independent.ie>.

¹⁰“The Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland” (“Taoiseach”).

historical context in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and its implications on individuals in various ways. The Celtic Tiger is mostly commented on as an era in which people extended their houses, in which unemployment rapidly decreased and in which working conditions improved. Additionally, the narrator observed the following development:

[B]athrooms were what changed most, she noticed, during the time of the prosperity, every year becoming bigger and more and more beautiful, until in the end they were the most palatial and ornate rooms in the entire land, nicer than any other part of the house or hotel - like the tombs of the Pharaohs (whose mosaics and carvings they often emulated. (Ní Dhuibhne 118)

Most importantly, the effects of the Tiger Years and also of the following economic downfall on individual people are explained on the basis of two families: Martha and Mitzy's families respectively. Martha is presented as benefiting from the economic prosperity in that she was able to reduce her working hours and that she and her husband now had more money than they needed, which led to a more luxurious lifestyle. However, in the following economic downfall, Martha, being a public servant, was treated as a scapegoat. Especially Mitzy uses this rhetoric when claiming that "“They're [The public servants] bleeding the economy dry”" (123). Also Mitzy saw the Tiger Years as a chance and, therefore, entered the workforce, i.e. the property market, and promptly became a millionaire. However, as soon as the economy started to stagnate, Mitzy lost a lot of money because of some dubious investments and she could not sell her houses anymore.

Ireland's modernisation and internationalisation in the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that led to this economic prosperity is, additionally, accompanied by social changes during this period. These are also addressed in "The Shelter of Neighbours" insofar as the changes concerning family life and gender roles are thematised. The relevant articles in the *Constitution of Ireland* in this regard are Articles 41.1 - 41.3. Concerning the family it does not only define it as "the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society" (*Constitution of Ireland* Art. 41.1.1), which has to be protected by the state (*Constitution of Ireland* Art. 41.1.2), but it also gives the concept of marriage, "on which the Family is founded" a special emphasis (*Constitution of Ireland* Art. 41.3.1). Furthermore, divorce, which was made legal only in the mid 1990s, is possible under certain circumstances (*Constitution of Ireland* Art. 41.3.2). In terms of gender roles, in particular the lives of women, the *Constitution*

says the following:

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

The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home. (*Constitution of Ireland* Art. 41.2.1-41.2.2)

In the short story discussed, these ideas concerning the family structure and duties of women as proposed in the *Constitution of Ireland* are experienced by Mitzy. In contrast, Martha lives a completely different life and has different views of these issues. For example, Martha and Seamus live together without marriage for more than ten years, because Seamus is still married to his first wife due to the former ban of divorce in the *Constitution*. Even though there is only an age gap of ten years between the two characters, their differences are summarised as following:

At the time Martha was doing the Leaving they [the other women on Dunroon] were busy getting married and starting their grown-up lives. By the time she had graduated from college they had had their first babies. [...] In the ten years that separated Martha from Mitzy all those rules had changed. Whereas before, you had to stay at home and look after your children, now you were supposed to go to work and find a childminder for them. Whereas before, you changed your name to your husband's, now you were expected to keep your own [...]. (Ní Dhuibhne 115-116)

This precisely summarises how the lives of women have changed since the latter part of the twentieth century, mostly due to a general liberalisation within Irish society and because of the emergence of Irish feminist movements. Thus, Ní Dhuibhne manages to present the time under consideration as a period of transformation and, above all, that changes were not implemented abruptly or immediately appreciated. This becomes especially apparent when Martha was not able to get time off work even though her son was in hospital:

When Martha explained the situation to the Personnel Officer, that person - a woman - made her feel that she was a malingerer, trying to cheat the system. She made her feel that she was the typical new type of public servant, the working mother, who now wanted the system to bend over backwards to grant her favours and privileges, which no public servant had ever had before, because until a few years ago there were no mothers, no married women, messing things up. (126-127)

Moreover, the fact that it was only Martha who had tried to reduce her working hours, while it was never even thought of that the father could take care of this issue, shows that it is still women who are responsible for caring, despite all the improvements concerning gender equality. Statistics show that today “women in dual-earner couples [have] a far higher overall work burden than [sic] those in male-breadwinner couples” (Canavan 24).

As a result of the Celtic Tiger, migrational experience in Ireland was reversed. As already outlined, Ireland, formerly having been a country of large scale emigration, turned into a country of inward migration during the years of economic prosperity. This resulted in increasing xenophobia and an “exclusionary nationalism”, even though Ireland has been increasingly presented as a country of freedom and liberalism since the Tiger Years (Loyal 74). The reason for this is a tension between the concept of Irishness as being considered with whiteness and Catholicism, and a multicultural society in Ireland due to globalisation and immigration (Loyal 89). This has been particularly intensified since the emergence of the financial crisis, because “immigrants who reportedly fly into the country to claim benefits before departing” lent themselves as convenient scapegoats (O’Flynn, Monaghan, and Power 925). This is perfectly illustrated in “The Shelter of Neighbours”. Mitzy, who is always friendly and elegant, suddenly starts using slang words when talking about immigrants, “Some tart from Poland got her mitts on him!” (Ní Dhuibhne 121).

As another feature of Irishness in “The Shelter of Neighbours” the sense of community in rural Ireland may be discussed. It has already been stated that rurality, especially the West of Ireland, has been idealised in traditional notions of Irishness. In this regard, not merely the beauty of the landscape is of importance, but also its construction as being characterised by “thick social bonds – which imply family, community, and cooperation” (Moffatt 9). First of all, this is illustrated in Mitzy’s behaviour towards Martha. She does not only welcome Martha with a self-made loaf of bread when she moves to Dunroon, but she also strongly supports her when Luke is in hospital. Secondly, this idea of neighbourly support and a sense of community that prevails specifically in rural areas is explicitly mentioned and appreciated by Mitzy. Besides, the importance that neighbours have to be able to depend on each other and need support is also emphasised with the short story’s title. In this regard, differences concerning rurality and urbanity, in which there often is a lack of such neighbourly support due to a higher degree of anonymity, become also apparent. Further prejudices about life in rural and urban areas and their consequences on individuals become

evident in the following extract:

She [Mitzy] had been born on a farm. [...] It was hard to imagine. Not because of her posh accent, or her clothes. But there was something about her face that looked quintessentially urban - classical, absolutely regular, with a tiny nose and large, slightly hooded eyes. She always looked made up, even when she wasn't. (Ní Dhuibhne 120)

This shows that prejudices about one's regional background - rural or urban - often go hand in hand with class prejudices, i.e. concerning one's social background.

Two aspects that have a long-standing tradition as features of Irishness are the Irish language and Catholicism. However, in the present short story both of them are addressed only marginally. Historically, the Irish language, which in "The Shelter of Neighbours" is only used in order to quote an Irish proverb, has a long-standing tradition as an important aspect in the Irish national identity. Even though its importance in the everyday life of the Irish has declined in the course of the twentieth century, it has still remained as an ideal (Hickey 3). Apart from the Irish language, also religion is addressed in "The Shelter of Neighbours". The fact that Seamus "had to keep quiet about" his separation from his first wife (Ní Dhuibhne 114) because he is headmaster of a school illustrates that religion influences a variety of businesses, social and political institutions and education (Inglis 59).

4.2 "The Sugar Loaf"

4.2.1 Plot Summary

"The Sugar Loaf" depicts a crucial moment in the life of Audrey Bailey, a teacher, who also lives in Dunroon Crescent. She lives alone in her house, since both her mother and her father died. Basically, only one and a half days in Audrey's life are presented, though through various, partly very long flashbacks the reader receives much background information about the protagonist. The main action starts *in medias res* with the weather forecast on a Saturday evening in October, on which a sunny Sunday is forecast. After getting up on the following day and doing some preparation for the next school day, Audrey decides to get in her car and drive around, which she apparently does on occasion, in the afternoon. Meanwhile she gets lost, which – as the reader is informed – is nothing unusual. Eventually Audrey spontaneously decides to walk up the Sugar Loaf, which is a nearby mountain, because she has not yet managed to climb it, although she has lived next to it for about fifty years. On her way up, she

suddenly meets Padraíg, her boyfriend forty years ago, which is presented as a very critical moment, i.e. an epiphany. The story ends with Audrey being on top of the Sugar Loaf, enjoying the view all over the sea and leaving a feeling of compassion for the protagonist in the minds of the readers.

4.2.2 Analysis of the Story Level

The story takes place in three major settings, which are Audrey's home in Dunroon Crescent, her car and the Sugar Loaf, presented in this chronological sequence. Audrey's home is in Dunroon Crescent, which has already been described in the analysis of the previous short story. It appears not to be a real place, however it is said that it is near Bray, which is an actual town in the county of Wicklow (Healy 13). Additionally, it is obviously not far away from the Sugar Loaf, since she can see it "from her front garden" (Ní Dhuibhne 142). The house seems to be rather large since it is called "a white [estate] built on the fields and farms all around the edge of the city", with "big windows", "bright rooms" and an "enormous, bare garden" (143). Audrey's house is described as a very chaotic and messy place, as can be seen in the following description: "She's sitting on the only chair in the kitchen that is not piled with newspapers, letters, schoolbooks, essays or exams by pupils, some still in Mulberry Manor and some long gone" (140). The same is true of the garden, as is illustrated in the following passage:

Nasturtiums climb over everything – the fence, the hedge, the trees, the lawn. [...] Bulbs, they are, which are great in a garden, they just look after themselves. Like weeds, which is what most of the garden is covered with – but weeds is just another name for wildflowers. Audrey's garden, once her mother's pride and joy, has been transformed to a nature reserve. Not appreciated by the neighbours, but beloved of hedgehogs, urban foxes, insects of all kinds. And mice and rats [...] (142).

The next location is Audrey's car, which is similarly described as the house and the garden, namely chaotic. Again, Audrey's untidiness becomes clear as, for example, in the following extract, "[T]here's an apple butt on the seat, and a packet of chicken liver pate she bought two years ago" (145). The last part of the short story takes place on the Sugar Loaf, which is a hill in the east of Ireland, i.e. in County Wicklow: "It rises from a nest of green hills, the Dublin Mountains and the Wicklow Mountains, a dramatic peak that looks like a volcano, although it has never been a volcano" (142). The Sugar Loaf is further described as a hill that "is five hundred metres high", with a "peak [...] [that] is about twenty square metres in circumference, at least [and]

[...] a little platform at the top of the stony scree” (147). Besides, it is said to have a “sandy peak” (146) and the area around the Sugar Loaf is referred to as “exhilarating” (146). As opposed to the chaos and instability in Audrey’s environment, the Sugar Loaf as a mountain symbolises “constancy, permanence, motionlessness, and its peak spiritually signifies the state of absolute consciousness” (“Mountain”). Thus, by using these different settings, Ní Dhuibhne contrasts Audrey’s chaotic surroundings with the mountain’s constancy. Another important setting that is mentioned in the short story under consideration is Powerscourt, though it is only mentioned in a flashback. Nevertheless, it is of importance since nowadays it is a famous tourist attraction. It is situated in the County of Wicklow, not far from the Sugar Loaf. Interestingly, though many estates of the Anglo-Irish Protestants were gutted by the Irish Republicans during the Irish revolution before its independence from the UK, Powerscourt was not affected. However, in 1974 it was completely destroyed due to a fire and was restored only in 1996 (“Powerscourt”).

Turning now to the temporal context, it can be said that already the first page reveals the exact month in which the story is set, which is October. Apparently the summer had not been very nice, but now the beauty of this season is highlighted, as the weather forecast is reported when recommending to “get out and enjoy the good weather tomorrow” (Ní Dhuibhne 139). Even the days of the main action are mentioned. The story starts out on a Saturday evening and continues on the next day. Additionally, it can be inferred that the main action is set in the twenty-first century, more precisely around 2010.

One of the main purposes of detailed analyses of time and place of a story is to infer information about the characters and their social and cultural background. Due to the description of the protagonist’s house as an estate with “big windows, [...] bright rooms [...] [and an] enormous bare garden” (143) it can be assumed that the Bailey family is situated in a middle class environment. This is further strengthened by the fact that the protagonist, Audrey Bailey, works as a teacher (140). In addition, descriptions of the setting also reveal information about the protagonist’s personality. It can be assumed that the chaos in Audrey’s house, garden and car reflect and emphasise the chaos and instability in the protagonist’s life. Thus, she is implicitly characterised as a very messy and chaotic person, who “can never find her notes” (140), or who “used to listen a lot to the radio, before she mislaid it” (142). In general, Audrey is characterised in both ways, explicitly through descriptions made by the narrator and implicitly, i.e. through her behaviour, appearance and actions. Audrey is in her late

50s, which is suggested when it is said that she has worked as a teacher “in Mulberry Manor for thirty-three years” (140). Audrey’s age is also mirrored by the season in which the story is set, which is autumn, and this often symbolises a middle-aged human being (“Autumn”).

Audrey is a single woman and lives alone in her house in Dunroon Crescent as various remarks indicate, for example: “it [her dressing gown] doesn’t look very attractive but nobody sees her, so what matter?” (Ní Dhuibhne 141). This sentence shows already that Audrey neither cares much about her appearance nor about her clothes and this image of the protagonist is increasingly strengthened throughout the story. Towards the end of the story, when meeting her former boyfriend, Audrey bemoans that she does not look “smarter”, that she has not combed her hair and that she is wearing a cardigan which is not only very old, but also dirty (153). This reinforces the idea that Audrey lets herself go and this goes hand in hand with her disorganisation in her house and garden. The image of Audrey’s life as a complete mess is further strengthened by the following comment: “To Audrey, other families have always seemed purposeful, in control of their lives, their Sunday afternoons” (146). Apparently, Audrey does not feel to be in control of her own life and probably she had originally planned to live a different life. In addition, the fact that she does not bother cooking dinner for herself evokes the feeling that Audrey is a lazy and depressed woman. This also becomes evident in the following thought:

All she could see was 6C sitting in their desks, like flowers in a bed of weeds, eager to get space and light, eager to escape from school and get started on life. Their big, kohled eyes full of contempt for people like Audrey, locked in the school forever. (144)

It seems as if Audrey is deeply frustrated and wallowing in self-pity, apparently unable to change something or take control of her own life. This is even getting to the point where Audrey’s pupils are insulting her as a result of a lack of respect. Two days before the main action Audrey was being late for her lesson in 4C. Meanwhile the girls were disrespectfully imitating Audrey as a teacher and ridiculing her: “Jessica Black was sitting on her teacher’s desk. She was draped in a big red coat, which looked just like Audrey’s coat, however she’d managed to get her hands on it. Her hair was pulled back into a bun and she had painted a big black moustache on her face” (155). They, additionally, called her “the ugliest woman in the school” (155). This incident clearly shows that Audrey has lost respect among her students, most probably due to her development into an unattractive, frustrated and lonely woman.

At the beginning of the story, Audrey indeed seems like a very self-confident and independent woman, who enjoys her freedom as an unmarried woman and without having any responsibilities: “Audrey really was very, very busy. [...] And she had her busy social life. She did salsa dancing. Drama. Belonged to a choir, although she wasn’t much of a singer. She had her piano lessons, too” (140). This can be seen as a hint that Audrey has got friends and a social life and does not regret being single. The reader also gets to know that Audrey was very happy as a child, as well. In particular Audrey’s memories of the jaunts with her father, for example, when he brought her to a climbing frame, or when the whole family went on a Sunday picnic, reveal that she enjoyed life as a child. In the course of time, however, the image of Audrey as a very sentimental and pessimistic person is conveyed, for example, it is said that she refuses “to throw anything out” (140), which may imply that Audrey needs her happy memories of the past as a compensation for her current, unhappy state. Especially the following passage clearly shows that Audrey is not at all that strong and independent, but that she is a very lonely and depressed woman:

Audrey had walked dutifully through the gardens, looked at a few unusual trees with labels on them, tripped across the tiny bridge in the Japanese gardens. The things everyone does at Powerscourt. But the grey day depressed her. In the pets’ graveyard she was overwhelmed with loneliness. A sense of being totally lost, abandoned, although there were people all around. (148)

The ultimate cause of Audrey’s unhappiness, the turning point in her life, was that Audrey did not go to America with her boyfriend of that time because “at the last minute she got cold feet” (152). This becomes clear after having met him on the Sugar Loaf. Her regrets are evident in the following passage:

His voice had always calmed her down, made her feel all right. He was the only person who could do that for her. Ever. She had loved him much more than her father or her mother or her brother or anyone she met in later life (two other men, including Brendan). The realisation, which should have come to her that summer all those long years ago, is like a light going on in her brain. A light that makes her feel very sick and very well at exactly the same time. (153)

This can be interpreted as a deep realisation and, thus, can be seen as an epiphany. This seemingly ordinary event, i.e. walking up a hill and unexpectedly meeting a person she had a relationship with a very long time ago, is of extraordinary importance,

in which Audrey realises that something went completely wrong in her life and that she has lost the only person she has ever really loved in her life. It also shows again that Audrey constantly wallows in memories and that she struggles with letting go of the past. This is also symbolised in the fact that Audrey dyes her hair, as mentioned in the following passage: “Her hair was always her crowning glory, the one beautiful thing she had, so she doesn’t want to let it go grey before she has to” (141). At the same time this dying of her hair, and hair being a symbol of “female seductions and physical attraction” (“Hair”), shows a certain degree of ambivalence in the protagonist’s behaviour, because otherwise she does not care about her appearance.

This psychological development of the main character, who, apparently, was rather sociable and attractive when she was younger and after the separation from her lover developed into a chaotic, disorganised and unattractive woman might be explained with the help of the Freudian theory of defence mechanisms. One of these mechanisms is ‘turning against one’s own person’ or ‘self-harm’ (“*Wendung gegen die eigene Person*”) (Freud 36). Audrey’s father did not want his daughter to go to America with her boyfriend at that time which resulted in a separation of the couple. Consequently, Audrey probably felt deep anger against her father, albeit at the same time loving him very much. According to Freud such an inner conflict may lead to this defence mechanism of ‘turning against one’s own person’ manifesting itself in feelings of inferiority and self-doubt, and harming oneself (Freud 37). In this particular context, feelings of hate for Audrey’s father are turned against Audrey herself in that she does not care about herself anymore, lets herself go and cannot establish a romantic relationship anymore. All in all, she does not enjoy life anymore. Another manifestation of Audrey’s self-punishment might be her astonishingly economical behaviour. She does not want to hire a gardener because - as she puts it - “[t]hey rip you off and what do you get for it?” (Ní Dhuibhne 142). Furthermore, the fact that Audrey does not let her hair dye by a professional because it would be more expensive or that she usually buys her clothes at “Penney’s” (141), which is an Irish fashion retailer that sells extremely cheap products (Finn), hint at her thrift.

Next, Audrey’s parents shall be examined in more detail. Even though both of them are already dead at the time of the main action, they are characterised directly and indirectly through Audrey’s memories. She had lived with her parents in Dunroon Crescent until her mother died about one year before the story begins - due to a heart attack - and her father ten years earlier. Neither Audrey’s father’s nor her mother’s name is mentioned, i.e. they are only referred to as mother and daddy. The fact that

Audrey consistently addresses her mother as ‘mother’ and her father as ‘daddy’ already alludes to the very close relationship with her father as against the rather difficult one to her mother. Moreover, it is mentioned that Audrey’s father often brought her to the climbing frame in Dunroon in order “to get her out of her mother’s hair sometimes” (Ní Dhuibhne 151) which shows that even when Audrey was a child the mother-daughter relationship was not a very close one. This complicated relationship to her mother is also illustrated in Audrey’s very hostile attitude towards her mother, when it is said, for example: “She [Audrey] snapped and snapped. But her mother didn’t mind. She was used to Audrey’s snapping” (149). Audrey’s resentment may be caused by her mother’s very caring, sometimes possibly even overprotective behaviour. Other than Audrey’s depressive behaviour, her mother’s joy, freedom and zest for life is highlighted, especially in her younger days:

She used to come here as a girl. Audrey’s mother. She had often talked about that. With her best friend, Myrtle, who worked with her in a grocer’s shop, she would cycle out to Enniskerry on Sundays. They would go to Powerscourt Waterfall, and stand under it, getting splashed all over with the water that cascaded down the side of the cliff. Then they’d have tea in a café in the village, if they had a shilling to spare. Myrtle and Audrey’s mother [...] laughed a great deal. There was a black-and-white snapshot of them on the mantelpiece, them and their bicycles with the waterfall behind, laughing their heads off. This was in the 1940s because by 1950 they were both married and no longer worked in the shop or cycle out to the country on their bikes. (151)

In this last sentence the reader is also informed that Audrey’s mother did not work outside home after marriage, as it was common at that time. In the end, Audrey’s mother was rather weak: “[s]he was old, she had a weak heart, and arthritis, and various other complaints” (143) and “she wasn’t able to do much herself” (141), which is why Audrey had to care for her (150). Besides, her life became very “monotonous” (149) and without much change.

In contrast, Audrey, apparently, got along quite well with her father, who was born in 1914. Apart from this, the reader is not informed very well about this character. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that he was a loving and caring father, which becomes clear through Audrey’s memories:

‘You’re my little monkey, you’re my little monkey,’ Daddy used to say. [...] ‘My monkey,’ he would say, catching her from the top of the frame and

swinging her, swinging her, in the crisp bright air, so her skirt flew out in the wind and she screamed with delight. (151)

This suggests that Audrey remembers her father in a very lively and happy way, even though he was the one who did not want her to go to America with Pádraig - “her mother was encouraging, but her father had reservations. The US. Anything could happen there. What if Pádraig abandoned her? What would she do then?” (152) - which then resulted in a separation of the couple. In order to find reasons for Audrey’s father’s hesitations concerning Audrey’s trip to America with Pádraig a contextualised reading may help. Given that Audrey was born in the early to mid 1950s, the decision to go to America or not was to be made in the first half of the 1970s. At this time the Catholic Church still had a major influence on Irish society especially regarding sexuality. Furthermore, patriarchal structures were still prevalent and issues, such as divorce or contraception, were still illegal (Smyth 64). Seen in this historical context, letting his daughter in her late teenage years or early 20s travel to America together with her boyfriend, obviously, was not an option for Audrey’s father.

Another very crucial character is Pádraig, since he is the one who triggers a moment of deep awareness-raising and an inner revelation, i.e. an epiphany, in Audrey and provokes a so far unknown desire and powerful emotions: “She wants to scream, stay, stay. She wants to grab him by the black anorak and keep him here on the side of the scree” (Ní Dhuibhne 153). His relationship with Audrey was between “10th March 1972, which is when she met him at a dance in college, till the 15th June 1974, when he went elsewhere” (152). When she meets him again on her way up the Sugar Loaf, he is described as being “long-legged, dressed all in black, like a spider”, he has dark grey hair (152) and a “trim body” (154). Apart from his appearance, Pádraig is characterised as being “successful and presentable and talkative” (154). Based on these descriptions it can be assumed that Pádraig, unlike Audrey, has successfully managed to live and enjoy his life and to keep fit. In addition to that it can be assumed that he is of another religion than Audrey and her family because when explaining why Audrey did not go to America it is said that “the religion thing [between Pádraig’s family and Audrey’s] was never mentioned. But it was there, nevertheless, unvoiced, like a huge mountain hidden in fog” (152). Consequently, these religious differences between Audrey, by implication apparently a Protestant, and Pádraig, a former Catholic, might also have contributed to Audrey’s father’s hesitations concerning her travel to America, especially when considering that Audrey was raised during the Troubles, in which religion became a particular potential for conflicts (Storey 2).

Two other, rather minor characters are Audrey's brother, Ben, and a colleague from the choir called Brendan. Ben is two years younger than Audrey and lives in England. It can be assumed that Audrey and Ben do not have a really close brother and sister relationship, since she describes him as being "incompetent" (Ní Dhuibhne 150). Moreover, it seems as if she resents him for not visiting them more often than once a year. She comments this with these words: "You'd think England was the far side of the moon" (141). Brendan is one of the three men that Audrey has dated in her life (153). He is described as being "fat" and having "big, sticking-out ears" (150). After going on a trip with him to Sicily, which turns out to be a total disaster, Audrey has never heard of him again.

After this detailed analysis of the short story's characters, its underlying themes and motifs shall be addressed. One of the main thematic aspects is star-crossed, or ill-fated love. The reader is informed that Pádraig was the only man Audrey has ever really loved in her life, in fact "[s]he had loved him much more than her father or her mother or her brother or anyone she met in later life" (153). This happy relationship was shattered by unfortunate circumstances, since Pádraig went to America, while Audrey listened to her father and acted reasonably and, thus, stayed at home instead of following her heart. Because of this situation their relationship came to an ending, Audrey lost her only true love and has not seen him again until she meets him on the Sugar Loaf. As already mentioned earlier this tragic situation led to a deep frustration and physical decline of the protagonist, who henceforth has been a lonely and worried person. According to Daemmrich and Daemmrich, the theme of loneliness often includes that the character roams around on his own and shows self-destructive tendencies ("Loneliness"). This definition of loneliness precisely fits Ní Dhuibhne's story, in which Audrey drives around in her car and walks up the Sugar Loaf all on her own. What is more, within forty years Audrey has not been able to establish another long-term relationship after the break-up from Pádraig. This directly links to the theme of spinsterhood that is addressed in "The Sugar Loaf". It is important to note in this context that Audrey is not unmarried by choice, but rather by circumstances. Audrey's existence as a spinster is the result of ill-fated love and her consequent downfall due to which she was not able to establish a relationship. Furthermore, this image of Audrey being depicted as an unattractive, chaotic and embittered old spinster is contrasted to Pádraig, who is portrayed as a very handsome, charming and successful man. Apart from Audrey's unattractiveness, Audrey is treated very disrespectfully and is despised by her students which makes her a despised member of a specific social

group. Consequently, this might be regarded as a variety of the Cinderella-motif. As a result, Audrey suffers from a lack of self-confidence which is shown, for instance, in the remark that the handsome men “always get pretty wives and if you’re not pretty, you just won’t do” (Ní Dhuibhne 154). This clearly shows that Audrey passes through an identity crisis and such an “instability of personal identity”, according to Ingman, has been a classic theme of the Irish short story (Ingman, *History* 264-265).

Another major theme is ageing and the various obstacles and minor ailments that come with it. Being in her 50s, the first signs of age are becoming visible when, for example, the protagonist needs to take a rest when walking up the hill. A motif that highlights this theme is the season in which the main action is set, which is - as said before - autumn. Audrey’s wish not to get older is also reflected in the act of dying her hair, because “she doesn’t want to let it go grey” (Ní Dhuibhne 141). Also the *carpe diem* motif, meaning “make the best of the present moment” because life is short (“Carpe Diem”), underpins the theme of ageing. Audrey follows the advice of the lady on the weather forecast to enjoy the nice weather in that she walks up the Sugar Loaf, which is something she has never done before, even though she has lived close to this mountain for the last fifty years. This might be explained with the fact that Audrey saw her mother ageing and getting weaker so that in the end she was not very agile anymore. Therefore, Audrey might have realised that life is short and, thus, she should start to enjoy it. In this context, this motif of *carpe diem* might be part of another theme, which is death. In various passages, the reader is confronted with this theme, for example when mentioning that both her parents are dead. Moreover, the themes of ageing and death, but also the gradual decline of Audrey’s beauty and attractiveness as well as the decay of the garden underline the *ubi-sunt*-topos, which means that everything on earth is transient (“Ubi sunt”), and thus evokes a feeling of nostalgia.

Also the complicated mother-daughter relationship is an important thematic aspect in “The Sugar Loaf”. According to Ingman this is closely related to such themes as memory and time since the characters are often confronted with the past when remembering events with their parents and often the daughters’ aim is to avoid living a life like their mothers (Ingman, *History* 205-206). Throughout the short story, the two characters are constantly contrasted: while the daughter is a workaholic and totally frustrated, her mother is a full-time housewife who used to enjoy life; while her mother loved working in the garden, Audrey completely neglected it; while her mother was married, Audrey is single. Despite all these differences that exist between mother

and daughter, Audrey - unlike her brother - is not fully successful in separating herself from her mother, since she never moves out of the family house. This family relation and the contrasting of Audrey and her mother, of the past and the present so to speak, allows the author to approach the broad social changes that were going on in Ireland during the time covered in the text.

4.2.3 Analysis on the Level of Discourse

Continuing with the discourse level, it is especially the narrative situation that is of central importance when analysing narrative fiction (Nünning and Nünning 110). Similarly to the previous short story, Stanzel's model of narratology will serve as the theoretical framework. Concerning the mode of presentation, it can be observed that "The Sugar Loaf" is primarily presented in a direct and immediate way by a narrator who is far in the background and can hardly be noticed. Therefore, the protagonist of the story, Audrey, may be called the 'reflector' who presents and reflects on the fictional world. With regard to the perspective, the story is presented from the internal perspective of the reflector. As far as the person is concerned, it is immediately noticeable that a "third-person reference (to the reflector-character)" (Stanzel 55) is used in "The Sugar Loaf". As a result, the narrative situation in "The Sugar Loaf" can be referred to as a figural narrative situation, in which the story's events are presented "as seen through the eyes of a third-person 'reflector' character" (Jahn ch. 3.3.7.). In other words, the figural narrative situation "gives the reader the impression of having direct insight into the sensory impressions and consciousness of the perceiving, thinking or feeling character" (Nünning and Nünning 113), who in this case is Audrey, the protagonist. When following Genette's model, the narrator can be called covert-heterodiegetic with internal focalisation (Jahn ch. 1.19).

Since "The Sugar Loaf" is narrated in the figural narrative situation with a heterodiegetic and covert narrator and internal focalisation, it attempts that Audrey's - as being the reflector - inner thoughts and feelings are presented. This can be seen in the following passage: "She knows she should go and offer to take a photo of them now that they are at the top of the mountain. Before and after. If she were a different sort of person, she would do that. It would be easy. It would be a kind and friendly act. But she doesn't" (Ní Dhuibhne 155). As can be seen here, the story shows heavy use of the stream of consciousness technique. In addition, it may be called a slice-of-life story, since not only one and a half day in the life of the protagonist is presented, but also because the plot covers about fifty years in the life of the protagonist and the

focus is on the presentation of the inner thoughts of the reflector-character. At the same time this extract shows that the consciousness is rendered in the form of free indirect discourse, which is again an attempt to provide insight into the consciousness of a character (Nünning and Nünning 125). Stanzel argues that the figural narrative situation can, in fact, be viewed as an “extended use of free indirect style”, or put differently, a figural narrative situation can be identified if authorial narration is largely replaced by the use of free indirect style (Stanzel 197). This idea seems to fit ideally considering that “The Sugar Loaf” is extensively rendered in free indirect style.

Even more than in “The Shelter of Neighbours”, the reader is immediately confronted with the main action of “The Sugar Loaf”, without any preliminary considerations concerning the setting or the characters of the short story. Thus, the story’s beginning might be termed *in medias res*: “Then the woman on the weather forecast says: ‘Try to get out and enjoy the good weather tomorrow.’” (Ní Dhuibhne 139). Since it starts with “Then” meaning ‘next’ in this context, it can be assumed that there happened something before which the reader is not informed about. Moreover, the reader does not know where or when the action takes place. Regarding the ending of the story, it can be classified as an open ending, whereby it can be assumed that a reunion of Audrey and Pádraig is very unlikely. The overall structure of the main action of this fictional narrative is chronological, albeit it is interrupted by flashbacks several times, which serve as a means to provide the readers with necessary background information in that they refer to past events. In the present short story the flashbacks are mostly concerned with childhood memories of Audrey, her parents, her life with her mother after her father was dead, or with her relationship with Pádraig. One example of such a flashback is the following passage:

When she [Audrey] and Ben were kids, their parents brought them out on a drive almost every Sunday. They’d drive to some field or beach. Then they’d eat tomatoe sandwiches and eat biscuits, drink sugary orange juice, in the back of the car or sitting on a rug spread on the ground at the side of it. (143)

A flashforward, or prolepsis, on the other hand, basically means the opposite, thus going forth in time (“Prolepsis”). A flashforward is used, for example, to tell the readers what Audrey is going to teach on the next day, “Tomorrow they’ll be doing John McGahern, *Amongst Women*. [...] She’ll ask them which characters they find most interesting. And they’ll say Rose or Maggie, Sheila or Michael. They’ll all pick a different one” (Ní Dhuibhne 141). Unlike a flashforward, which is an explicit statement

of what is going to happen in the future, foreshadowing is rather a vague suggestion of what is going to come. An incident of foreshadowing can be identified in the following statement, “Anyone can run away, but it takes real courage to stay there” (141). This might be an allusion to Pádraig who ran away from Ireland to America, but obviously came back, as is revealed towards the end of the story.

This leads to a discussion of the plot’s duration. As already said, the main action covers a time span of one and a half days. If, however, also the several flashbacks are taken into account, the whole story time covers approximately fifty years. While on the days of the action the protagonist is in her 50s, the earliest temporal detail that is mentioned in this short story is a memory of Audrey when she was four years old.

As far as the stylistic features in “The Sugar Loaf” are concerned, the author uses every-day language and various figures of speech. A few of them have already been broached, as, for example, the use of the mountain as a symbol of stability, or setting the main action in an autumnal month in order to emphasise the protagonist’s ageing. Also the steady decay of the garden has been mentioned before, but its symbolism needs a closer investigation. In fact, it can be related to the psychological development of the protagonist, who, apparently, was rather sociable and attractive when she was younger and after the separation from her beloved Pádraig developed into a chaotic, disorganised and unattractive woman. This development is reflected in the decay of the garden, which used to be “her mother’s pride and joy” (142) when she was still alive. However, after her death it “has been transformed to a nature reserve” (142). Besides, the author uses a moustache towards the end of a story as a symbol of raw manhood (“Beard”). The fact that one girl in Audrey’s class painted a moustache on her face when trying to imitate Audrey suggests that she is seen as totally unwomanly by them. This might be explained by Audrey’s character traits in the context of a Catholic, male-dominated and patriarchal society, in which women are primarily seen as reproducers and placed in the domestic sphere. Audrey, in contrast, a single woman, without any children, not bothering about her appearance and working outside home may carry characteristics which are not typical for women in an Irish, Catholic, male-dominated culture. In this regard, the protagonist’s walking up the Sugar Loaf only two days after this insulting incident and the wonderful view on top of the mountain all over the sea and even seeing the neighbouring island might symbolise that she wants to free herself from these strict, social conventions and morals. Especially, when considering that the top of the mountain is often a symbol of “the state of absolute consciousness” and that the act of “climbing a mountain depicts inner

elevation” (“Mountain”).

Another example of such a rhetorical device is her use of similes, for instance when comparing Pádraig to a spider, or in the following statement, “The religion thing was never mentioned. But it was there, nevertheless, unvoiced, like a huge mountain hidden in fog” (Ní Dhuibhne 152). In addition, when walking up the Sugar Loaf it is said that “On it’s crest there’s a line of things that looks like burned spruce trees. Or crucifixes.” (146). This latter example shows already another stylistic feature in “The Sugar Loaf”, which is its heavy use of ellipses. Similar to “The Shelter of Neighbours” ellipses in “The Sugar Loaf” do not only highlight Ní Dhuibhne’s realistic style, but, above all, it goes especially well together with the stream of consciousness technique, i.e. with the presentation of inner thoughts. Besides, it was already outlined that the protagonist is constantly contrasted to various other characters, most notably to her mother’s attitude towards life, but also to her former lover, Pádraig. In fact, this contrasting of characters is the rhetorical device of juxtaposition, which makes it possible to portray them in great detail. Additionally, the mountain as symbolising stability is juxtaposed to Audrey’s garden, which is a complete mess and to Audrey’s chaotic life in general. Apart from that, Ní Dhuibhne’s style of writing shows ironic instances, as for example in the following passage:

The mountain is five hundred metres high [...] but maybe some people can get altitude sickness at that height? She wonders if the Twin Towers were five hundred metres high. Probably about that. You wouldn’t get altitude sickness at the top of a building that you worked in every day, even one that a plane would crash into and destroy. (147)

Finally, the intertextual aspects in “The Sugar Loaf” shall be discussed. There is one explicit intertextual reference to fiction in this short story, which is John McGahern’s *Amongst Women*. This novel is about the Moran family whose patriarch is Michael Moran, a very conservative and religious man like it was typical during the 1950s and 1960s, most especially in rural areas of Ireland. Even though Michael Moran wants his family to stay together, the oldest son chooses a different life for himself and flees from his father’s control. Michael Moran can be simultaneously characterised as being adored and feared (Maher 349-352). There are various parallels between McGahern’s novel and “The Sugar Loaf”. First of all, Audrey’s father shows some similarities to Michael Moran in *Amongst Women*. Obviously, Audrey’s father was not violent or a tyrant, like Michael Moran, but he probably was the ruler of the Bailey family, since

he is the one who decides that Audrey should not go to America. Additionally, both Audrey's father as well as Michael Moran were adored by their children. Secondly, religion plays a role in both narratives, albeit more importantly in *Amongst Women*. It can be assumed that religion was one of the reasons why Audrey's father had reservations regarding the trip to America. Thirdly, in *Amongst Women* there is Luke, who runs away from the Moran family and who is adored by Audrey because - in her view - "[a]nyone can run away, but it takes real courage to stay there" (Ní Dhuibhne 141). Other than Ben, who went to England, but has visited the Bailey family about once in a year and other than Pádraig who left to America, but who obviously returned to Ireland, Luke never came back to Great Maedow (Maher 351). Apart from this, it is referred to a radio programme called *Money Goes Wild on One* and to the music of John Field and Frédéric Chopin.

4.2.4 Features of Irishness

Catholicism has been one of the constituent features of Irishness throughout history. Nonetheless, "The Sugar Loaf" does not deal with religious duties proper, but rather implicitly with the strict morals and values that were largely brought about by the Catholic Church. After Ireland's independence from the United Kingdom and its partition, the Catholic Church had had - as already mentioned - an enormous influence on Irish politics and society, especially through the cult of the Virgin Mary. The Catholic Church in Ireland fought against liberalism and secularisation particularly in terms of sexuality and it further had control over the Censorship board and family planning. In the 1937 *Constitution* most of these strict Catholic values and morals were established by law (Kilfeather 105-107). As outlined in the discussion of the previous short story, the *Constitution of Ireland* gave priority to marriage and it was also determined that females were restricted to the domestic sphere through banning them from the workforce (*Constitution of Ireland* 41.2-41.3). This clearly shows that women were primarily seen as reproducers and as the transmitters of Irish identity. At the same time a patriarchal family structure was imposed, with the father or husband as the head of the family (Smyth 64). Ruth Fletcher claims, in this respect, that "[r]eligion provided the ideological justification for the nation-state's interest in domesticating women and encouraging reproduction" (Fletcher 378). A logical result of seeing women as reproducers is a ban on contraception, restrictions on the availability of these have existed until 1993 (Craven 16) and, of course, abortion, which was constitutionally banned in 1983 (Craven 18). Various incidents in "The Sugar Loaf" can be found that refer to this historical context. Though the Bailey family

can be assumed to be Protestant, which means that they belonged to a minority in the Republic (Inglis 66), Audrey's father is presented as the patriarch, who sticks to the conservative and strict morals, which were dominated by the Catholic Church. This is illustrated in the fact that he does not want his unmarried daughter to go to America with her boyfriend. Furthermore, his wife, Audrey's mother, represents a traditional Irish woman. She immediately stopped working outside home as soon as she got married. Then she was placed only in the domestic sphere, which means that she primarily looked after the house and the garden. Above all, she functioned as a reproducer and gave birth to two children.

Audrey, in contrast, is portrayed differently and, thus, signifies somewhat a modernised version of Irish identity. She is single, even if involuntarily, works outside home - in fact she is a workaholic - and she does not care about the appearance of the house and the garden. This reflects that gender roles and the image of how women have to live their lives have shifted in the second half of the twentieth century. "The Sugar Loaf", similarly to "The Shelter of Neighbours", very much focuses on this development, which constitutes another marker of the Irish cultural and national identity. As soon as the country became more open and modern under Seán Lemass in the 1960s also the positions of women was improved. For example, by 1961 women were increasingly working outside home, though, of course, until this time only unmarried women (Ingman, *Twentieth-Century Fiction* 17-18). From the 1970s onwards feminist movements aimed at improving the status of females in Ireland, albeit their initiatives were constantly contested by conservative forces, i.e. the Catholic Church as is clearly shown by the ban of abortion in the 1980s. However, as already mentioned with the election of Mary Robinson as president of the Irish Republic in 1990, several reforms took place, which also affected the lives of women (Kilfeather 110-112). Statistics show, for example, that this resulted in a decline of the fertility rate and the family size, while the number of extra-marital pregnancies increased (Canavan 12). Apart from portraying Audrey as a modern woman, this change within Irish society is also directly expressed in "The Sugar Loaf" in the following reflection of Ireland's recent development, "And so much has changed. Nobody cares whether you're Catholic or Protestant. Nobody cares whether you're married or single, either" (Ní Dhuibhne 154). Also at the very end of the short story when noting that Wales can be seen "on a really clear day, from the top of the Sugar Loaf" (156) suggests that Ireland has left behind its isolated and censoring past. However, marriage and the idealised image of women as housewives is still prominent in the heads of Irish people, which is underpinned by the fact that married families are still favoured in the *Constitution*

of Ireland, while abortion is still not made legal (Canavan 23). That women are still stigmatised if they do not belong to the norm is illustrated in the moustache incident in “The Sugar Loaf”, where Audrey is insulted for her disorganised and unattractive behaviour and external appearance.

Apart from this implicit impact of Catholicism on Irish society that has just been discussed, the opposition of Catholicism and Protestantism in Ireland is also explicitly mentioned in this short story. This is a fundamental characteristic of Irishness and being Catholic or Protestant has meant moving in two separate societies:

It [being Catholic or Protestant] has been central to family life, education, health care and social welfare and has influenced the schools people attended, the friends they had and who they married. Religion has reached into areas such as the businesses, shops and pubs used by people; as well as the sports played and the newspapers and magazines read. In many ways, Catholics and Protestants in Ireland occupied two different, divided, social worlds. (Inglis 59)

This suggests that religion dominated all aspects in Irish society, thus, making it a religious, i.e. theocratic, society rather than a secular one (Inglis 69). The fact that religion determined Audrey’s upbringing and the life of her parents becomes visible when she is not allowed to leave Ireland together with Pádraig because of “[t]he religion thing” (Ní Dhuibhne 152). Obviously an inter-religious relationship between Audrey and Pádraig was not approved of.

Besides, there are several references to the beauty of the Irish countryside, for example when talking about the Sugar Loaf, the nice landscape around it and the wonderful view on top, or about Powerscourt. Also the difference between the urban and rural world is addressed when the Bailey family moves from Dublin to the suburb of Dunroon and where it is implicitly suggested that they move into a better area:

They moved out of town because their father had got a promotion and that’s what people who were doing well did in those days. They said goodbye to the old Victorian terraces and colonised the new white estates built on the fields and farms all around the edge of the city. (143)

Another feature of Irishness that is marginally addressed in “The Sugar Loaf” is emigration. There are two characters who left Ireland, though one of them obviously did not stay permanently. Firstly, Audrey’s brother, Ben, left to England and, secondly, Audrey’s former lover, Pádraig, goes to America during the summer holidays.

This situation reflects the fact that Britain and the USA have been the two destinations most favoured by Irish emigrants since the nineteenth century (Hickman 117).

4.3 “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here”

4.3.1 Plot Summary

The story “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here” is set in a Gaeltacht in the rural West of Ireland and revolves around the heroine Polly and the difficult relationship to her mother whose name is unknown. Polly, who used to live in this rural village, but emigrated when she was seventeen years old because of her pregnancy outside wedlock, comes back after a few decades to visit her mother. Her aim is to clear up all the misunderstandings between them and to resolve their conflicts so that she can eventually achieve inner peace and move on. Unfortunately, this is a more difficult task to undertake than she had thought since Polly’s mother is nearly deaf. However, during her stay Polly still comes to terms with her past and the valley, at least to some extent, because she visits the mother of her first boyfriend, i.e. the grandmother of her son, Muriel. There she derives comfort from their talk and Muriel’s caring words and gestures. Her travel back into her native home country does not only conjure up old memories of her partly unhappy time in this village, but she also learns that Ireland, even this rural region, has changed tremendously during her exile. All in all, the journey to her origins somehow eases her former restless state of mind and softens her complicated relationship to her mother and to the whole valley.

4.3.2 Analysis of the Story Level

Regarding the setting of “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here”, the narrator does not mention any explicit place names. At the very beginning the location is only referred to as a valley and as a village. Towards the end of the story it is called a Gaeltacht region, so an area where Irish is, or has been, spoken as the first language. However, an attentive reader can reveal some more information about the setting by examining the story’s context. When talking about the beauty of the landscape in this area several flowers are mentioned. Some of them, e.g. orchids, saxifrage, or primroses, typically grow in one specific area of Ireland, which is the Burren. This national park is located in county Clare on the Irish west coast (“Der Burren”). Since in the short story the location is constantly referred to as a “valley” that cannot be far from the sea, “The crashing waves, the grey cliffs, the purple mountains” (Ní Dhuibhne 159), it can further be narrowed down to the Caher Valley, which is in the northwest of Clare.

Moreover, there is a nearby Gaeltacht region where Irish has been spoken until the mid-twentieth century, which is Baile Ui Bheachaín (English: Ballyvaughan) (Hickey 331). Conditioned by its special geography - this county is surrounded by water to its south, east and west - it is inward-orientated and very traditional. Moreover, this area has been confronted with large scale emigration since the Great Famines in mid-nineteenth century ("Irish Ancestors: County Clare"). It is claimed that in particular this outward migration led to the extinction of the Irish language by mid-twentieth century (Hickey 330), even though the western part of Co. Clare had still been listed as a Gaeltacht in 1925 (Hickey 6).

Within this rural area the story takes place in different locations, major and minor ones. First of all, Polly's holiday house, which is her temporary residence for the duration of her stay in Ireland, is described. This holiday house is described to be "one of dozens dotting the landscape around here". It is said to have a garden around it, on which its own septic tank and well are situated. It is designed like a traditional, rural cottage house, which means that it has a grate, "wooden roof beams, rough white walls [and] a slate floor" (Ní Dhuibhne 160). Secondly, when Polly visits her mother the story is set in the house where she grew up. Having been a cattle farm in former days, it is described as an old and shabby place in the fictional present, though in fact nothing has been changed. To Polly her mother's house, i.e. a bungalow, which used to be her home decades ago and which she used to see "as an extension of her mother, elegant and superior" (173), is completely strange in the fictional present. Apart from these two major settings, the story also takes place on a hill that is situated behind Polly's holiday house as well as at Muriel's place, who does not live far away from Polly's mother.

These settings in Ireland are constantly contrasted to the protagonist's contemporary main place of residence, which is Copenhagen. By using these comparisons, the protagonist's attitude towards Ireland and, in particular, towards this village in the West as being backward, less open-minded and less welcoming become evident. For example, when stating that "Copenhagen celebrates light in the deep midwinter, glows with optimism and hope. Back in the house [in Ireland], she pulls the tweedy curtains to shut out the bleakness and throws a few sods of turf on the fire" (164-165), the narrator compares Copenhagen's lightness, though winters in Denmark are dark indeed, with Ireland's coldness. According to Giovanna Tallone it is a common aspect in Ní Dhuibhne's fiction that her protagonists move to "estranged or estranging places", such as countries in Northern Europe, as a result of the "search for otherness" (Tallone

169). Since Polly leaves Ireland, escaping the prevailing, unfortunate circumstances and hoping to find a better life elsewhere and, subsequently, establishes a new life in Copenhagen, Tallone's characterisation of Ní Dhuibhne's fiction ideally fits in this context.

As far as the temporal setting is concerned, the action proper is set in a December in the early years of the twenty-first century. In fact, this month is the incarnation of "gloom, [and] coldness" ("December") and this image is continuously evoked, for instance, when reporting that there is no flora and that it is cold and dark outside. This impression of a bleak landscape underpins the cold atmosphere between Polly and her mother. In opposition to this, parts of the story's flashbacks are set in May. May, according to de Vries, is the time of "blooming, resurrection in nature" ("May"). In the present short story this time is described as following:

It was a glorious May, as it often could be in that part of the world. Long, sunny days, some so warm you would feel like swimming, although the water would still be freezing. Swallows were flying high over the meadows, and larks twittered constantly, tiny dots so far away that they could have been daytime stars. (Ní Dhuibhne 169)

This shows that Ní Dhuibhne does not only contrast places - Ireland and Denmark -, but also different seasons. In addition, the author sets to different times against each other (Pierse 151). On the one hand, the story is set in contemporary Ireland, which is presented as rather open, welcoming and modern. On the other hand, parts of the plot, narrated through childhood memories, are set a few decades earlier at a time when the upbringing of children was still heavily influenced by Catholicism and patriarchy. These contrasts concerning the setting of the short story allow Ní Dhuibhne to portray the decades under consideration as a period of remarkable transformations. However, the topic will be revisited in more detail at a later stage.

Having covered the local and temporal aspects of the present short story, a detailed characterisation shall follow. Polly, the protagonist of the short story, lived on the farm with her parents until she was nearly eighteen years old. In these days she was not called Polly, but rather Póilín. By reference to the historical context Polly's age can be determined. She went to secondary school when she was twelve years old and it is said that she did not have to board because of "the new educational opportunities", such as "the free bus" (Ní Dhuibhne 160). In 1967 a series of educational reforms were introduced, such as the abolition of tuition fees for secondary schools, and, additionally,

“free school transportation was provided” (Raftery and Hout 44). Therefore, Polly was probably born in the second half of the 1950s and in the fictional present she is in her late forties. Polly loved reading and being good at school was easy for her. Also when studying for the Leaving Certificate¹¹, she did not have any problems. However, she deliberately did not give her best at school because her friends would not have liked that:

So when she found herself speeding up - finding that she could enjoy reading history, or botany, derive a pleasure from learning and understanding, which was true satisfaction, not just the fulfilment of an urge to please some adult - she sensed some sort of danger. She held back. (Ní Dhuibhne 162)

This success in school was demanded by Polly’s parents, especially by her mother:

She would greet Polly with, ‘You could get an hour in before tea!’ Meaning, an hour of study. Then she could get three or four hours in after tea. Polly was doing the Leaving Cert in a month’s time, in June, and her mother expected her to do well. What she meant by ‘well’ was quite specific. Polly would win a scholarship, a medal proclaiming her to be the best student in the county. At least that. (169)

This already suggests that Polly was raised in a very strict way. Also Catholicism played a huge role in Polly’s upbringing, e.g. they prayed and “said the rosary every night after tea” (158). It can further be assumed that Polly grew up in a rather traditional family, because they venerated people like Eamon de Valera, highlighted the importance of the Gaelic language and the beauty of the Irish countryside (159). These are all aspects of traditional notions of Irishness, as will be elaborated later on, and can be ascribed to Polly’s most rural background. Implicitly it is described that Polly obviously suffered from her mother’s authoritarian upbringing. For instance, when Polly remembers being the only one who was not allowed to act as an extra when the film set was in their village, she describes this as “a disappointing experience, an experience of total exclusion for Polly” (164). As a result, the relationship between Polly and her mother is a very distanced one. In the present, Polly sees her mother as her devil, which symbolises “the dangerous aspect of the unrealized dark side of man; his ‘shadow’” (“Devil”). Despite this rather unhappy childhood of Polly, she is portrayed as a completely different person as soon as she falls in love with Paddy. Now

¹¹This is an examination that is taken at the end of secondary school and which at the same time is the basis for entrance at university or colleges (Raftery and Hout 43).

she had a much more positive attitude and her state of being enamoured of Paddy is described as following:

Now she found herself filled with a glow of emotion no matter where she was or what she was doing; a pleasurable excitement shimmered not far under the surface of every single thing she was doing, bubbled in her veins, as if her blood had been injected with some lightening, fizzy substance, as if the air she breathed were transformed. *Light, bubble, crystal*. These were the words for what was happening to her. Walking on air, people said. [...] She smiled at everyone now, even her mother, and could not care less what anyone said to her. (Ní Dhuibhne 170)

Although Polly was such a good student, she could not finish college immediately after school because the situation as a single mother caused tremendous difficulties. Therefore, she started to work in a bank and three years later she could “move to Copenhagen with the bank” (183) where the circumstances for unmarried mothers were incomparably better. Eventually she did attend college and later became a scriptwriter for the Danish television.

When continuing with Polly’s parents, what first comes to mind is that these are the only two characters in the story whose names are not mentioned. This immediately evokes the feeling of a distanced relationship between the protagonist and her parents. Only very little is said about Polly’s father, apart from the fact that he “was a teacher in the village school” (157). Polly’s mother, in contrast, who is widowed in the fictional present, is characterised in much more detail, especially through the eyes of the protagonist. However, since the relationship between these two characters is somehow difficult, and, above all, most characterisations arise from childhood memories, these might not always be totally reliable. As it was typical for women of that time, Polly’s mother did not work outside home, but her duties were very much situated in the domestic sphere: “She baked, milked cows, [and] scrubbed the house” (157). This suggests that she lived a rather simple life, which she did indeed, but still she considered herself as superior to the other residents of the valley mostly due to the fact that she did not grow up in this valley, but rather in a “big town” (159). She came to this valley, because her family “had been leading lights in the Irish language movement” and Polly’s mother was instructed to learn the dialect of this Gaeltacht.

Polly’s mother is also described as a rather religious person, who never skipped the Sunday Mass, yet not as orthodox as some other women in the area, since “she made fun of the ladies who became *ex officio* keepers of the church, arranging the altar

flowers and pandering to the priest and his every need” (157). Through the eyes of the protagonist Polly’s mother’s religious practices rather evoke the feeling that she wanted to boast. The way she dressed, “wearing a showy hat and white gloves”, and where she used to sit in the church, “she sat on the men’s side”, served “to proclaim her superiority to all the other women” (158). As a result, Polly’s parents were not amongst the most popular in their village. Although Polly’s mother has been totally snobbish and believes to have a much higher standing than the other residents of the valley, their background can be regarded as middle-class because her father was a teacher in the local school and her mother worked on their farm. In line with her old-fashioned, conservative and religious attitude, Polly’s mother disdained any kind of popular culture, such as going to the bingo hall, to a pub, or to Hollywood movies as well as wearing make-up or trousers. Most importantly, however, Polly’s parents obeyed the rigorous, Christian morality regarding sexuality:

It was no longer just her belief that her parents regarded all boys as out of bounds, indeed seemed to believe that any sort of relationship between the sexes was essentially wrong, and, what was worse, in extremely bad taste. [...] Paddy was everything her mother would abhor: English-speaking, poor, a fisherman, a member of a family which had turned its back on every value that she held dear. (175)

Also her hostile reaction to Polly’s pregnancy, “Clearly, this was the nadir of her existence. Nothing as tragic, as evil, as shameful, as her only child’s pregnancy had ever befallen her” (182), and her very authoritarian concept of how to raise her daughter, in general, are deeply rooted in the Catholic moral tradition. Additionally, Polly’s mother is implicitly characterised as cold-hearted. When Polly passes the Leaving Certificate with nothing but A’s and, thus, receives three scholarships, her mother “could not have cared less” (172), though it had been such an important matter beforehand. This suggests that Polly has always longed for her mother’s appreciation and praise, which she never really received. This is nowhere better demonstrated than in the first meeting of Polly and her mother after having not seen each other for several decades. While Polly wants to embrace her mother as a sign of greeting, the only thing her mother does is smile and shake her hand. In the fictional present, Polly’s widowed mother is described as a very old woman. Apart from being deaf, she is largely sightless and has white and sparse hair and deep wrinkles. Due to her deafness and poor sight, she cannot do much. Most of the time she just watches television and tells stories. This ageing of Polly’s mother is reflected in the decay of her house, which used to be elegant, but which is now old and shabby. However, some things have not changed in

all those years:

But when she smiles, her face is still recognisably her face, whatever the essence of it was - its sweetness, its primness - has not changed. That same expression of polite surprise, the head tilted in a manner both coquettish and disapproving, the same poise. The same superiority. (173)

According to Mary Pierse, the fact that Polly's mother is deaf as well as poor-sighted has symbolical meaning (Pierse 151). Blindness, like the colour black, often means "darkness, error, ignorance" ("Blindness") and as such it perfectly fits as a symbolical characterisation of Polly's mother in the fictional present. The fact that she is nearly blind symbolises that Polly's mother has made numerous errors when raising her daughter and that she is ignorant, i.e. she is unable to admit the mistakes she has made. In other words, Polly's mother's near-blindness is the symbolisation of her inability to see and accept the reality. Moreover, the fact that Polly's mother is sometimes able to read Polly's lips and in some cases she cannot, suggests that she only hears what she really wants to hear.

Paddy Mullins is not a character of the main action, but only occurs in memories, mostly in those of Polly, but also in his mother's. This is why he is only described through the eyes of his mother and the reflector-character. The reason why his appearance is restricted to flashbacks is because he drowned as a result of a row on the ship while being out for fishing shortly after having done the Leaving Certificate, so around the age of seventeen. Still he is a very important character, because he was Polly's boyfriend towards the end of secondary school and the father of her son. Even though their relationship lasted only a couple of months, i.e. from May until about July or August, he was her great love and soul mate. His social background is rather poor since his father was a local fisherman and it is given weight to the fact that "they did not own even a small farm, just a house and a field" (Ní Dhuibhne 167). In addition, it is claimed that he "never went on holiday anywhere" (167) and Paddy's family obviously could not afford a telephone. His family's poor background and the fact that they are not as traditional as other families in the village are the reasons why they are considered to be rather particular and why Paddy is not liked by everyone, especially not by teachers or priests. Regarding his behaviour and external appearance he is characterised as belonging to "the rough element on the bus, smoking hand-rolled cigarettes and slagging people" (165). It is claimed that these boys usually were tall, had brown hair, were "[d]ark, large-boned, stubble-chinned" (166) and exuded raw manhood. Moreover, these boys usually were in a football team and

so was Paddy, who was the goalkeeper. Although Paddy, like most other boys on the bus, was generally rough and loud on the bus, he was, nevertheless, good-mannered. Besides, he had moments where he was totally silent and stared dead ahead. Polly also mentions that he often looked “worried, as if he were carrying some burden” (168). In general, Paddy appears to have been a rather thoughtful and reflective person, for instance, when explaining his experience as a fisherman: “‘OK.’ He looked out, then at the *Silver Mermaid*, then out again. He reflected and seemed to come to a decision to say more” (168). Also Paddy’s mother, Muriel, calls him a “quiet boy”, whom “she could talk to” and who “had a depth of understanding” (187).

This leads to another character of the short story, who is Paddy’s mother, Muriel. She was not born in this valley, but comes from a working-class suburb of Dublin. This is also why her Irish is somewhat different to that of the locals and why the reflector-character insinuates that she has “an underlying toughness, an urban edge” (187). She is further described as not paying too much attention to social conventions, since she goes to the bingo hall and to pubs. This shows that she is designed as diametrically opposed to Polly’s mother, who very much disapproved of such popular activities. Likewise, Muriel’s way of dressing constitutes a sharp contrast. Other than Polly’s mother, who exclusively wears skirts, Muriel is much more modern and simply wears jeans, or shorts, and jumpers. In the fictional present, Polly’s mother and Muriel are further contrasted in that the former absolutely refuses to listen to Polly and to accept reality about Polly having a child, while the latter is eager to hear Polly’s story about Paddy. Moreover, while Polly’s mother offers her daughter refreshments only after several visitings, Muriel immediately shows her hospitality.

In addition, there are other characters who appear only marginally, amongst them Micky, the driver of Polly’s school bus. He is described as an old, clever and authoritarian man. Besides, two school day friends of Polly are mentioned, who are Katherine and Eileen and “to whom she was bound by ties of eternal loyalty” (163). Especially Eileen is described as a true friend in Polly’s most difficult time. In her first few months of being a single mother, Polly experienced that she could not rent any flats, which is why Eileen officially rented them for her. Another friend of Polly is Lia, whom she can always talk to about her feelings and who is very sympathetic and understanding. In contrast, Karl, Polly’s partner, is said to be very “practical” (165). This also becomes manifest in the fact that he does not care much about marriages and so Karl and Polly have lived together for twenty years without being married. He is the headmaster of a secondary school and his external appearance is compared to

a fox: “He has reddish hair, still, and a sharp face” (181). Even though Karl does not want to have any children himself, he does not mind that Polly has a son, called Conor. Conor works at a university in Brisbane as a “marine biologist [...] doing research on the breeding habits of pilot whales” (183-184). According to Mary Pierse, Conor’s job is an important fact because it signals the connection to his father who was a fisherman (Pierse 151).

As a final aspect of the story level, the themes and motifs of “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here” shall be discussed. The most prominent theme in the present short story is star-crossed love. The love relationship between Polly and Paddy, though having been rather short, was of extreme intensity. Paddy is implicitly described as Polly’s one and only true soul mate. However, due to his untimely death Polly loses her lover. This already implies another crucial theme, death. Apart from Paddy, also William, the lover of the protagonist of the story within the story dies. Moreover, when Polly returns to Ireland both her father and Paddy’s father are dead. The presence of mortality is further emphasised in the claim “that the valley is full of widows” (Ní Dhuibhne 187). The motifs that emphasise the theme of death are the black colour of the sea as the place of Paddy’s death and the constant reference to darkness. Also the motif of the well underpins the theme of death. Being located on the ground of Polly’s holiday house and symbolising “a hidden gateway to the lower world” (“Well”) the well might mean that when travelling to this village Polly’s memories of Paddy immediately come back and it is as if he was alive again.

When discussing the historical development of the Irish short story a recurrent theme of this genre has been mentioned, which is the returning emigrant. Through his or her “bewilderment” it is possible to emphasise “how dramatically the Irish society has changed” during the second half of the twentieth century (Ingman, *History* 237-239). This is perfectly exemplified in Ní Dhuibhne’s story, in which Polly returns to Ireland after a thirty-year absence and is stunned by the Christmas decoration, which used to be much simpler in former days. Moreover, Polly is amazed by the dramatic change of Irish society, the people’s attitudes and values, even in such traditional and backward regions as the Gaeltachts.

The constant references to nature in the form of flowers, animals, the sky, mountains, the sea etc. suggests that nature and landscape is another prominent theme in the present short story. The theme of landscape suggests that its “spatial dimensions are clearly related to human existence” (“Landscape”). Therefore, the numerous

references to the scenery of Ireland is in stark contrast to the memories, dreams and imaginations of the protagonist both in the short story and in the story within the story. In other words, nature is opposed to the subtle allusions to the supernatural world, such as Paddy's immortality in Polly's memories, which will be addressed again when discussing the issue of intertextuality.

Apart from these, the author addresses several other thematic issues, among them family life and the complicated mother-daughter relationship between Polly and her mother. Additionally, the notion of friendship is incorporated in this literary work. When Polly is calling Lia or when describing how Eileen helped Polly in her most difficult time the importance of having true and supporting friends is emphasised.

4.3.3 Analysis on the Level of Discourse

Turning to the discourse level, the narrative situation shall be considered first. Like the previous two short stories, "The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here" is largely dominated by the reflector mode. Furthermore, since there is a "third-person reference" and an internal perspective located in the protagonist, the narrative situation is a figural one (Stanzel 55). The protagonist of the story functions as the reflector-character, or in other words as a covert-heterodiegetic narrator. As it is typical for the figural narrative situation, the story shows use of free indirect discourse, e.g. "[Polly breathed deeply, superstitious.] How could he be so sure? Wasn't he tempting fate?" (Ní Dhuibhne 172). This shows the flow of thoughts, impressions and reflections of the reflector-character, recorded in the stream of consciousness technique. However, there are some instances in the short story, where an omniscient narrator becomes slightly more apparent, thus, moving from the reflecting mode towards a "*teller-character*, [who] narrates, records, informs [...]" (Stanzel 144). The following passage shall serve as an example:

She has read somewhere that in everyone's life are seven devils, and only when you meet them and overcome your fear of them can you find your guardian angel. (It was a novel about Chile, which she read in Danish: devils, angels, saints and sinner have lead roles in Chilean folk belief, according to this novel.) (Ní Dhuibhne 163)

Regarding the structure of the present short story, there are again similarities to the previous ones, as, for example, its beginning *in medias res*. In this short story, the phenomenon of the "familiarizing article" (Stanzel 161) at the very beginning of the

text is especially prominent. The short story starts like this: “The house is a holiday house, one of dozens dotting the landscape around here, each one perched in its own scrap of field, overlooking its own septic tank” (Ní Dhuibhne 157). Even though this house is a holiday house and the protagonist has never been to this place, the fact that the story starts with a definite article, acts in a familiarising way. Stanzel argues:

With the definite article, the reader familiarizes himself simultaneously with the perception of these objects through the reflector-character. His acceptance of their presence makes an introduction by the teller superfluous. The consequence is a nearly total transfer of the reader to [...] [the protagonist’s] position in the action. (Stanzel 161-162)

Moreover, the present short story shows a lack of closure because the reader is neither informed about how long Polly will continue to stay in Ireland, nor whether she will be able to start a proper conversation with her mother. The facts that Polly starts working on a new television programme - “the Gaeltachts of Ireland” (Ní Dhuibhne 184) - and that she increasingly feels comfortable in her old hometown suggest that she might stay longer than she expected to do so. Concerning linearity of the story, the idea that “a lot of Ní Dhuibhne’s stories open in the present tense and on a present situation to break up into alternating stretches of past and present” (Tallone 175) is perfected in the “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here”. Like in most of her fictional narratives, also in this one the narrator goes constantly back and forth in time. Especially, the narrative device of using past settings is heavily used in the present short story. In fact, the length of the analepses is much longer than that of the main action, thus, providing a profound insight not only into Polly’s, but also into Ireland’s past. Besides, the present short story shows prolepses as well as instances of foreshadowing. A flashforward can be determined in the following statement, “Polly has a week to spend in Ireland, and during that time she is going to face the devil. [...] Her mother. That is one of her devils, the one she is going to meet and talk to” (Ní Dhuibhne 163). Apart from that, various hidden hints foreshadow certain events. For example, when the reflector-character asks the rhetorical question “Wasn’t he tempting fate?” (172), or when stating that “Polly never found out if Paddy’s calculations were correct” (172) Paddy’s death is hinted at.

Coming to the aspect of story time, it is not exactly clear how long the main action lasts, but it can be assumed that it covers a couple of days, maybe one week. Because of the anachronic structure, however, the plot covers several decades. In the fictional present, which is sometime in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the protag-

onist is in her late forties, while the two earliest, explicit time measurements that are provided in the protagonist's memories are "the late sixties" (158) and "[w]hen she was twelve" (160).

As it is typical for Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, the language of "The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here" is heavily symbolic; some of the symbols have already been mentioned in the present study, such as Polly's mother's blindness, or the symbolic meaning of December and May respectively. The symbolic meaning of blindness is further emphasised by the repetitive use of the colour black at the end of the short story, "The coloured lights on the fuchsia bush twinkle against the black sea and the black mountain and the black sky" (188). Equally to blindness, black symbolises "error, [and] ignorance" ("Black") and, thus, highlights Polly's mother's disrespectful behaviour. Apart from that, given that black also symbolises "anything to do with *death, mourning, penitence, punishment*" ("Black") the description of the sea as being black (Ní Dhuibhne 186, 188) further emphasises it as being the place where Polly's lover died. Besides, there are various symbols in the story that mean fertility and hint at reproduction. For example, the elm, which is the tree under which Polly and Paddy have their first kiss, is considered to symbolise fertility ("Elm") and, thus, hints at Polly's eventual pregnancy. Likewise, fish are a symbol of fertility and this is worth discussing considering that Paddy was a fisherman. Furthermore, fish can hint at sexuality, with the shape of this animal being a phallus symbol. Above all, fish symbolise "wholeness, togetherness: 'they are both as whole as a fish' [...] said of two lovers" ("Fish"), which underpins the love relationship of Polly and Paddy. Another important symbolism is implied in the Christmas decoration. The protagonist comments on this that in former days it used to be just "one candle, lit on Christmas Eve", whereas now "[c]oloured lights fill every window, are strung along the edge of the roof, are draped in the hedges [and] Santa Clauses climb up fairy ladders to chimneys" (Ní Dhuibhne 186). This is a way of emphasising that the Irish society, in general, has changed while the protagonist was in exile.

Apart from these symbols, which serve to describe character traits, situations, feelings etc., the author uses juxtapositions in order to add vividness to a given symbol. For example, the symbolic meaning of the months December, as being bleak, cold and dark, and "glorious May" (169) are juxtaposed. Whereas the former is the month in which Polly returns to her mother, i.e. she has to face one of her devils, during the latter month Polly fell in love with Paddy. In juxtaposing these two symbols, the author sets out to emphasise the protagonist's different states of mind in the respective sea-

sons. Another juxtaposition that draws upon darkness and coldness is the contrasting of Polly's former home in Ireland and her new life in Denmark, which highlights the differences in attitudes and values in the two societies and, thus, emphasises even more the very backwardness of the Irish past. This is nowhere better demonstrated than in the comparison of the very unfortunate situation of single mothers in Ireland with the uncomplicated approach to this issue in Denmark. In addition, the author uses other rhetorical devices to put emphasis on certain ideas and descriptions. Firstly, this includes repetitions, as for example, when using the phrases "the black sea" (186, 188) and "nobody mentions Paddy Mullins" (184) more than once. Secondly, similes are used to emphasise and to make the stories vivid. Examples include "doing well was easy, it was a habit she could see her way into clearly, as if doing well were clean, shining river, down which she could sail effortlessly one she had caught the wind" (162) or "her face is wrinkled with deep, shadowy ridges, the kind black-and-white photographers love, like the cracks of a river delta" (173).

Besides, there is a certain degree of rhythm in Ní Dhuibhne's language in "The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here". The title of the story does already suggest this, since 'clear' rhymes with 'here'. Moreover, there can be found another rhyme which is "fail to hoist her sail" (163). This rhythmic tone in the language is further emphasised by the countless enumerations used in this fictional narrative, for instance "the black sea and sky and mountain" (186), "*Light, bubbles, crystal*" (170), or "*Homes, adoption, hiding*" (182). In order to highlight the phrases even more, the latter two examples are written in italics. Additionally, an alliteration emphasises the rhythm of the story: "unfree, ununited, unwhole" (163).

In "The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here", Éilís Ní Duibhne also invents a neologism, which is a "newly coined word" ("Neologism"). "Treeshian" is such a neologism and it is used by teenagers to describe other people who use Irish, where in fact English is the dominant language (Ní Dhuibhne 165). Its aim, in this context, is to illustrate the specificity of the language of teenagers, which is often also characterised by colloquialism. This last aspect is also shown by the use of such words as "slags and swots" (161).

As a last point intertextuality in "The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here" shall be investigated. A direct form of intertextuality can be found in the phrase "With my body I thee worship" (176). This is taken from the marriage liturgy of the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer* (*The Book of Common Prayer* 3). It is used in the

present short story to contrast the strict morality and the many taboos in the Catholic Church, with the Anglican Church.

Besides, there can be found an intertextual reference to the metaphysical poet John Donne and his 'Meditation 17'. The crucial part for the present discussion says:

No Man is an Iland, intire of it self; every man is a peece of the *Continent*,
A part of the *maine*; if a *Clod* be washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the
lesse
... Any Mans *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankinde*;
And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee*.
(original spelling) (Donne 87 qtd. in Wilcox 159)

In this text, Donne, while reflecting on death, highlights the interconnectedness of individuals. Moreover, his aim is to emphasise that if somebody dies this always affects somebody else (Wilcox 159). First of all, this reference highlights the closeness and the bond between the two lovers, Polly and Paddy. Secondly, the reference to Donne's literary work points to the theme of death in the present short story and how Polly's life is affected by the death of her great love. Since this intertextual reference is used before the reader knows that Paddy dies, this might also serve as a means of foreshadowing.

Apart from this intertextual reference, there can be found another one, which actually is a story within the story. This story within the story is addressed in "The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here" as "a story in a collection of German ballads" (Ní Dhuibhne 185). In fact, the story that is meant is the ballad 'Lenore' by Gottfried August Bürger, which basically is a didactic story emphasising that blasphemy is a sin. At the same time the intertextual reference is a rewriting of the children's ballad 'The Suffolk Miracle', which shows exactly the same content as the story that is told by Polly's mother, however, without stating any explicit names (Bronson 84-91). What these two ballads have in common with the intertextual reference and with the short story itself is that all of them feature a female protagonist whose lover is dead and who, as a result, suffers from lovesickness. Another parallel between all these fictional texts is that the protagonist is confronted with the presence of her lover in some way or other. In the case of the story within the story and the stories on which it is based, the protagonist believes to actually see her lover, until her father demonstrates that this is not possible because he is dead. In the short story proper the protagonist knows that Paddy is dead, but as soon as she travels back into her former home and particularly

when talking to Paddy's mother her memories are awakened and it is as if Paddy was alive again. Especially at the end of the story this becomes evident:

They sit in silence. They let the story settle. And for minutes it is as if he is here again, on this earth. Alive, seventeen. He is not on the pier or in the park or on the mountainside, but on the bus. He is sitting on the bus, silently staring out the window, motionless as a seagull on rock, lost in a boy's dream. (Ní Dhuibhne 188)

This idea is further emphasised by the title of the short story, which also occurs as a phrase in the intertextual reference. The horseman as “a bearer of immortality” (“Horseman”) symbolises the immortality of the lovers of the protagonists, since they all continue to live in their memories of them. At the same time the moon emphasises that the lovers cannot be alive, but that the protagonists are only dreaming, imagining or remembering their beloved men, if considering the following symbolism of the moon:

Another significant aspect of the moon concerns its close association with the night (maternal, enveloping, unconscious and ambivalent because it is both protective and dangerous) and the pale quality of its light only half-illuminating objects. Because of this, the moon is associated with the imagination and the fancy as the intermediary realm between the self-denial of the spiritual life and the blazing sun of intuition. (“Moon”)

Therefore, in drawing upon the folkloristic tradition by using an old ballad Ní Dhuibhne blurs the line between reality and imagination. That fact and fiction are slightly interwoven in “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here” is supported by the following comment: “Paddy has been transmogrified into a hero: a brave, strongly drawn character in a story that she has half-remembered, half-invented” (Ní Dhuibhne 188).

4.3.4 Features of Irishness

The story within the story just mentioned is partly told orally by Polly's mother. She does this as a pastime, since she cannot do many other things anymore. Polly's mother comments on these stories as following: “I used to hear those old things when I was a child and I thought I'd forgotten them. [...] They were buried in my head somewhere, and when I told one, the others came back, one after the other” (179). This implies an essential marker of Irishness addressed in the present short story, which is the tradition of oral storytelling. Irish folklore has been an important factor in Irish culture for many centuries and it is noteworthy that throughout the nineteenth century this tradition became a crucial marker of Irish nationalism. Nationalists constantly drew

upon, reflected on and recreated old myths and legends (Thuente 42). Since Éilís Ní Dhuibhne has a doctoral degree in folklore it is not surprising that this tradition of storytelling plays a crucial role in her fictional works (Fulmer 77-80).

The second feature of Irishness prevailing in the present short story is the importance of Catholicism. “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here” points to the duties and morals of deeply religious Catholics and their impact on Irish life and Irish society. On a very basic level, the importance of going to mass every Sunday as well as to say the rosary every evening is emphasised. Besides, it is mentioned that schools are run by nuns and Christian Brothers respectively. This shows that religion had a major influence on a variety of social affairs. There are various reasons why religion was able to become such a domineering factor. One of them is the fact that the Irish have been totally loyal to the Catholic church, often even more loyal than to the state or one’s own family. Consequently, Catholicism became an orthodoxy that was unquestioned and consolidated in the every day life of Irish people, thus, influencing ways of speaking, attitudes, practices, etc (Inglis 68-69). Since the 1970s Catholicism as an orthodoxy declined in the everyday life of the Irish, which manifests itself, for instance, in the decline of people going to Sunday mass. Nevertheless, Catholicism still determines the way Irish people think and act and how they understand themselves:

This reflex way of reading the world lingers long after supporting institutional structures and discourses have fallen away. The legacy of the Catholic *habitus* is such that it still informs and guides people as to what is right and wrong, good and bad, even though they may not adhere to many of the teachings of the church, particularly in relation to sexual morality. (Inglis 73)

Exactly this development is mirrored in the present short story. Even though the decline of the impact of Catholicism is mentioned, “in the late sixties, the rosary stopped” (Ní Dhuibhne 158), its influence as a guidance for what is good or bad has not declined. When Polly’s mother hears about Polly’s pregnancy she gets completely furious and goes as far as risking to lose her only daughter, just because she sinned against Catholic morality. What is striking even more, however, is that she will not listen to her daughter in the fictional present, i.e. three decades later. This demonising of unmarried mothers largely resulted from the teaching of the Catholic Church, which eventually forced “single mothers to give up their children for adoption” (Kilfeather 106). This is not only illustrated by Polly’s mother, but also in the fact that she could not rent a flat because of her situation.

Since the short story is set in the far West of Ireland, it provides valuable insight into the life of Irish rural areas during the 1960s. Apart from the religious aspect that has just been mentioned, this idealised image of the Irish countryside has constituted one of the most essential features of the Irish cultural and national identity since the nineteenth century, and as such its values and morality are closely related to those of Catholicism. It has already been discussed that Yeats' and Synge's image of the romantic West, which was considered to be that region where the true Irish people with genuine Irish attitudes lived, was again taken up by de Valera in the twentieth century (Duffy, *Writing Ireland* 56-59). This aspect of Irishness is best expressed in the following extract:

The view is sublime. That's what Polly was told all the time she was growing up. That she lived in the most beautiful place in Ireland was drummed into her [...]. She believed it as certainly as she believed that God made the world, or that Ireland ununited could never be at peace, or that Gaelic was the one true language of Ireland [...]. In fact, she probably believed in the beauty of the place more profoundly than in any of those other tenets of the local faith. It seemed verifiable. The crashing waves, the grey cliffs, the purple mountains; did these not, in their awesome wild grandeur, constitute perfect beauty? (Ní Dhuibhne 159)

According to Mary Pierse this romanticised Gaelicism is the reason why Polly has to leave her home as soon as she is pregnant:

The contrasting attitudes of time and in place are obvious in pregnant Polly's flight from home when faced with the uncontrolled rage of her parents whose stance Ní Dhuibhne links to their romantic ideas of a pure Gaelic Ireland. (Pierse 151)

As already mentioned, this negative experience in rural Ireland of the early 1970s, which is about the time Polly got pregnant, is compared to her coming back to this area in the twenty-first century. Concerning this matter it says in the short story that "[n]obody cares about what used to be called unmarried mothers now, either. There are heaps of them, even in the Gaeltacht" (Ní Dhuibhne 184).

This tremendous change of attitudes regarding sexuality and gender relations in Ireland in the last decades of the twentieth century, which is perfectly shown through the use of the theme of the returned emigrant, leads directly to the next prominent feature of Irishness, which is emigration. Outward migration has been a crucial aspect

of Irish identity since mid-nineteenth century, i.e. from the time of the Great Famines, and as such emigration has been an important issue in Irish literature as well. By way of illustration, the population on the island of Ireland was nearly halved between 1841 and 1921. In this regard, it was particularly the rural West of Ireland that was left by a great number of people (Duffy, *Literary Reflections* 20-21).

For much of the period in question, Irish emigration took place from a very rural, isolated and backward society directly into some of the most advanced and urbanised economies and societies in the Western world. Irish migration represented rural-urban migration *par excellence*, an international emigration with all the stress and cultural and emotional trauma that this must have involved. (Duffy, *Literary Reflections* 22)

This brief explanation of Ireland's out-migration ideally fits with the present short story. The protagonist grows up in a rural village with completely traditional attitudes and leaves this area because of unmarried pregnancy. Due to the restrictions single mothers had to face she eventually leaves Ireland and goes to Denmark, which is described as modernised, open, liberal and welcoming. More precisely Polly goes to Copenhagen, therefore, she perfectly represents an example of Irish migration from a rural to an urban community. This suggests another prominent feature of Irishness that is addressed in the present short story and which is related to the aspect of the myth of the West of Ireland, namely the dichotomy of the urban and rural world. Polly's mother is different to the other women in the village because of her urban background. Basically, Polly's mother equated urbanity with superiority. Muriel, on the other hand, also coming from an urban background, yet a working-class one, is seen as anything but superior, though the protagonist sees her as being tough, having "an urban edge" (Ní Dhuibhne 187). Generally, Muriel, with her working-class English and interest in popular culture, is rather seen as inferior. Besides, urban and rural regions are opposed in yet another way. While urbanity evokes the feeling of anonymity, rural areas are strongly related to community. This aspect is suggested in the following passage:

It was a walled park, secreted in the middle of the town, behind rows of houses and shops on all sides, and had a sheltered, enclosed atmosphere, very unusual in this place of exposed bare coasts, windy hills. Also, it was full of high trees, sycamores and elms and flowering cherries; the sheltering town allowed them to thrive here, whereas in the valley where Polly lived hardly a single tree would grow. (171)

In relation to the short story's setting in the rural West of Ireland, most notably in

a Gaeltacht, also the Irish language as a feature of Irishness can be observed. In the course of time, the language use in Gaeltacht areas has become increasingly similar to the language outside of these regions, though the official boundaries do still exist (Walsh 31-32). Today English is the native language of the vast majority of Ireland's population, or, put the other way round, "Irish is spoken as a minority language throughout the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland" (Walsh 26). Still the Irish language is a prominent aspect of Irish cultural and national identity (Hickey 3). As already mentioned Irish is firmly established as the official language in Ireland:

The Irish language as the national language is the first official language.
The English language is recognised as a second official language. (*Constitution of Ireland* Art. 8.1-8.2)

The importance of the Irish language in the valley where the present short story is set and, especially, in Polly's family is addressed several times throughout the story, for instance, when talking about the Irish language movement or the idea that "Gaelic was the one true language of Ireland and, eventually, would be spoken by every Irish citizen" (Ní Dhuibhne 159). This mentioning of the Irish language movement probably refers to the "new voluntary language organisations" that emerged from the 1940s onwards and that were mostly "concerned with publishing, communications and evangelising in key sectors" (O'Tuathaigh 52). Additionally, the Irish language is actually used by different characters, as it is said that it was "the language of home and of school" (Ní Dhuibhne 165). Generally, this is nothing unusual since Irish continued to be the language of education until the 1960s and early 1970s (Comerford 40). However, even in the main action, which is set in the early twenty-first century, the Irish language is actively used, "Men in caps come and mutter darkly in Irish to one another" (Ní Dhuibhne 163). In addition, Polly starts speaking Irish when visiting her mother even though she has not spoken it for several decades (173). Still the increasing influence of English is visible in the short story, since on the bus on the way to secondary school the spoken language was not Irish, but English:

The language of the bus was English, although the language of home and of school was Irish, and some of the children, especially those from Polly's valley did not know English very well. But they had to speak it, anyway; English was trendy, the language of pop singers and films, the universal language of teenagers. (165)

Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh argues in this respect that Ireland's geographical location, "right in the middle of the Anglo-American highway of communications and entertainment,

increasingly the main artery of a global technology whose dominant language was English” was one of the reasons why the Irish language could not be revived, or why bilingualism, at least, could not be established on a broad basis (O’Tuathaigh 51).

5 Teaching Literature and the Pedagogic Potential of the Short Stories Analysed

5.1 Why Teach Literature in ELT?

After the close reading of three Irish short stories and the considerations on how Irishness, i.e. the specific Irish cultural and national identity, is transmitted, this didactic part explores the potential of these texts when used in an EFL classroom. However, initially a more general examination of the usefulness, practicability and advantages of dealing with fiction in an English language teaching (hereafter ELT) environment, and in this context, particularly short fiction, shall be provided.

The detailed study of literature had been the most dominant part in learning a language until the 1940s, which is when literature disappeared almost completely from the language curricula (Carter 6). Until this point of time the Grammar Translation Method (henceforth GTM) had been used, in which the focus had principally been on memorising and translating these literary texts. This was changed in the mid-twentieth century with the emergence of structuralism¹² (Pardede 15). The assumption then was that literature was “an unhelpful means for the attainment of teaching and learning goals” because communicative aspects had not been addressed (Khatib and Nourzadeh 258). It was only in the 1970s and 1980s with the advent of CLT¹³ that the usefulness of literature in the foreign language classroom was steadily rethought (Carter 6), however, quite differently than it had been used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the GTM. Today the improvement of communicative competences is foregrounded when using literature in the EFL classroom, alongside offering “a springboard for the development of critical thinking and aesthetic appreciation” (Bretz 335-338 qtd. in Pardede 15). The importance of literature is also emphasised in the curriculum for foreign languages in Austrian grammar schools (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schulen, referred to in the following as AHS), where it is explicitly said that

¹²The influence of structuralism on linguistics manifests itself in the focus on linguistic form. Regarding ELT, this resulted in the emphasis “on the teaching of discrete grammar points and sentence patterns” (Field, “English Language Teaching”).

¹³Abbreviation for Communicative Language Teaching.

Die verschiedenen Themenbereiche sind durch möglichst vielfältige Textsorten zu erschließen (wie zB Sachverhaltsdarstellungen, Analysen, Stellungnahmen, Anweisungen, Zusammenfassungen, Berichte, Beschreibungen, Kommentare, Reflexionen, Geschichten, Dialoge, Briefe, E-Mails, Märchen, Lieder, Gedichte). Im Sinne einer humanistisch orientierten Allgemeinbildung ist bei der thematischen Auswahl fremdsprachiger Texte auch literarischen Werken ein entsprechender Stellenwert einzuräumen. (BMBF, *Lehrplan: Lebende Fremdsprache* 4)

This means that the various topics in the L2¹⁴ classroom have to be addressed on the basis of a variety of text types, as, for instance, summaries, reports, letters, etc. Furthermore, it is stated that literary works need to take on an important role in the context of a humanistic education. Beyond its establishment in the AHS curriculum, some of the arguments in favour of the use of literature in the EFL or ESL classroom shall be elaborated below.

First and foremost, one of the most important reasons for using literature in a second or foreign language learning environment is that it has a motivating function, especially if reading literature is not merely used as a source for new vocabulary, but rather as a pleasurable experience (Khatib and Askari 38). In their study, Khatib and Askari have shown that the use of literature has a significantly positive effect on the second language learners' attitudes towards English and this, of course, is beneficial for language learning in general (Khatib and Askari 43-44). In this respect, Lazar points out that literature is more motivating than stories in the students' course books, because reading literary texts is something that students usually enjoy: "[a] good novel or short story may be particularly gripping in that it involves students in the suspense of unravelling the plot" (Lazar 15). She further argues that literature is not only a pleasurable classroom material, but also an authentic one. Therefore, learners will be motivated because they will have the feeling that classroom work is "relevant and meaningful to their own lives" (Lazar 15). Concerning this motivational aspect of literature, it is argued that short stories are most appropriate. Their brevity does not only allow them to be covered in a time-pressured schooling environment, but they are also more motivating for learners because they can easily succeed in finishing the text. Moreover, the short story's language is not as figurative as in poetry, which makes it easier to grasp for students. At the same time there is a wide range of genres within the category of short fiction available and, thus, a variety of learners' interests can be met (Pardede 17-18).

¹⁴Abbreviation for Second Language.

Another crucial aspect of why literature is important in classrooms where English is taught as the L2 is that it “can provide students with access to the culture of the people whose language they are studying” (Lazar 16). Similarly, Carter and Long argue that since literary works express “the most significant ideas and sentiments of human beings” learners are provided with an insight into different regions, times, cultures, societies and ideologies (Carter and Long 2). However, Lazar emphasises in this regard that one has to be aware of the fictional dimension of literary works and that they hardly ever realistically represent a culture. Besides, considering that English is a global language, it needs to be taken into account that students are exposed to a range of cultures when dealing with literature in English. Nevertheless, a contextualised reading of fictional texts is a perfect way to help students gain insights into a range of cultures and societies and into the varied ways of lives at different times and places (Lazar 16-17). According to Khatib, Derakhshan and Rezaei literature is specifically appropriate to raise the students’ awareness of (inter-)cultural differences, particularly at times of globalisation. Moreover, through the use of literature in the EFL classroom attitudes and perceptions of students can be influenced and, as a result, negative prejudices may be diminished “while boosting catharsis, empathy, sympathy, forgiveness, tolerance etc” (Khatib, Derakhshan, and Rezaei 215). This is in line with Gillian Lazar’s claim that literature has “a wider educational function” than the mere contribution to language proficiency “in that it can help to stimulate the imagination of our students, to develop their critical abilities and to increase their emotional awareness” (Lazar 19). Likewise, Gillespie argues that reading and the subsequent identification with different, literary characters encourages the learners’ ability to imagine and, above all, to empathise with people in real life:

Assaulting someone, tagging a wall with spray paint, sexually harassing another, or yelling a racial slur are all acts that show an incapacity to empathize, to imagine another’s deepest responses, to consider the real consequences of actions on others. In the fractious world we inhabit, empathy is a much-needed skill, and literature is a form in which we can practice this skill. (Gillespie 18)

It has already been said that short stories usually have an open ending (Henderson and Hancock 483). This lack of closure and completeness makes the short story especially useful for developing the learners’ creativity and imagination. In addition, literature is an area where students can learn and develop skills to solve problems, which will be necessary in real life as well, “[h]aving elaborated on the themes, plots,

characterizations, points of view, symbols and allegory, the teacher will definitely empower the learners to conceive their world better, to discover their own solutions, thus boosting the skills and insights they are in need of while dealing with conflicts themselves” (Schomberg qtd. in Khatib, Derakhshan, and Rezaei 215). In other words, when reading literature and imagining, identifying and empathising with the characters, students will learn to understand themselves and their world better and to resolve conflicts. Therefore, “[h]elping students to read literature more effectively is helping them to grow as individuals as well as in their relationships with the people and institutions around them” (Carter and Long 3). In this respect, short fiction seems to be particularly suitable. Its often realistic presentation of everyday life of ordinary people, while using a range of writing styles, language varieties and registers, allows readers to “[observe] not only language, but life itself” (Hişmanoğlu 61).

This leads to the linguistic aspect regarding the purpose of teaching literature in ELT. Using literary works is a very useful means to facilitate language acquisition, “as it provides meaningful and memorable contexts for processing and interpreting new language” (Lazar 17). In this respect, reading literature in the EFL classroom offers the opportunity to learn about lexical and syntactical language aspects, as well as about discursal, pragmatic and cultural issues, since literary texts include authentic language from a variety of situations and contexts. For example, students’ will often get an insight into slang, colloquialism and different varieties of English when reading fiction, let alone the exposure to a whole range of new vocabulary, writing styles and grammar patterns. Therefore, dealing with literature will involve and improve all four language skills (Khatib, Derakhshan, and Rezaei 214-215). Regarding the learners’ competence in reading, it has been shown that the exposure to literature resulted in greater improvements among learners than the use of non-literary works (Lao and Krashen qtd. in Pardede 19). Additionally, short stories and other literary works can enhance the students’ active language skills because they have the potential to stimulate meaningful writing and speaking tasks in which students have to express meaning and interpretations on their own, for instance in group discussions, or when writing an opinion essay (Pardede 21-22). Especially the short story with its language that is “highly charged with meaning and suggestion” (Thaler 91), heavily depending on the readers’ ability to infer meaning, encourages interpretative skills as it “helps students to go beyond the surface meaning and dive into underlying meanings” (Hişmanoğlu 62). This skill to interpret meaning of a literary text can, in turn, be used in many other real-life situations, for example, when one has to infer “what is implied behind the literal meaning of what someone says in a conversation” (Lazar 19). Furthermore,

the learners' listening ability is likely to be improved, if, for instance, parts of the story are read out aloud or if audio books or film versions of literary texts are available (Pardede 23).

Besides, literature can help teachers to show their students the “varied creative uses of the language“ (Carter and Long 2). In fictional texts the language is often different to and more unconventional than in everyday usage, since authors often break “rules of syntax, collocation, and even cohesion” (Lazar 18). If the focus is on this stylistic aspect when discussing literature in the foreign language classroom, then, according to Widdowson, the learners' language awareness may be expanded and they are forced to think about language conventions (qtd. in Lazar 18). Widdowson further claims that such an approach towards literary texts “naturally brings up more general issues about the different ways in which language is used to communicate and develops an awareness in the learner which can be transferred to other instances of language use” (Widdowson 85). Regarding literature as a means for linguistic development, Carter and Long point out, however, that teachers have to be careful if they see literature primarily as a resource for learning new vocabulary and grammatical structures. They claim that this may “result in mechanistic and demotivating teaching practices which substitute language activities in place of a genuine engagement with the work as literature and will probably have the detrimental effect of spoiling any pleasure the poem or story might have given” (Carter and Long 2).

5.2 The Purpose of Teaching Literature related to Ireland in the Austrian EFL Classroom

The use of Irish literature in an Austrian school setting can be easily reasoned with the aspect of intercultural learning. In the curriculum for foreign languages it explicitly says that the choice of teaching materials must provide a fundamental insight into the society, civilisation, politics, media, economy, science, culture and art of the concerned language area, “Durch entsprechende Auswahl der Unterrichtsmittel ist für grundlegende Einblicke in Gesellschaft, Zivilisation, Politik, Medien, Wirtschaft, Wissenschaft, Kultur und Kunst des betreffenden Sprachraumes zu sorgen” (BMBF, *Lehrplan: Lebende Fremdsprache* 4). Dealing with literature from another country, in the present case, with literature from Ireland, is an elaboration of its culture and, simultaneously, offers the possibility to provide insights into its society, politics, economy or whatever the subject of a literary piece may be (Asián and McCullough 53). In addition to this (inter-)cultural aspect, a discussion of a fictional text by an Irish

author may offer valuable insight into a non-standard variety of English¹⁵, and this “could provide a worthwhile complement to course content” (Asián and McCullough 52). Apart from being exposed to literary language, Asián and McCullough argue that students will also benefit from fictional texts written in a non-standard variety in that they might gain knowledge about colloquialism and the vernacular. Besides, using different varieties of English in literature may have a motivational effect on the students if they see how multifaceted the language is (Asián and McCullough 52-53). Especially if considering that English is now a global language and that Great Britain was a colonial power in former times, it is important to avoid any kind of imperialistic values and notions. Lazar points out:

Literary texts in English reflect the rich and fascinating diversities of our world. They are written by authors living in many different countries and widely divergent cultures. By exposing our students to literature in English, it seems that we should be asking them to think about the range of cultures from which literature in English is produced. But frequently, the teaching of literature is identified with the imposition of particular imperialistic values. (Lazar 16)

By using Irish literature, amongst literary texts from many other cultural and regional backgrounds, teachers can help to achieve this objective and can demonstrate their learners the global dimension of the English language.

5.3 The Pedagogic Potential of the Short Stories Analysed

The most important criteria for choosing appropriate literary texts for the EFL classroom are summarised by Collie and Slater:

When selecting the literary texts to be used in language classes, the language teacher should take into account needs, motivation, interests, cultural background and language level of the students. However, one major factor to take into account is whether a particular work is able to reveal the kind of personal involvement by arousing the learners’ interest and eliciting strong, positive reactions from them. Reading a literary text is more likely to have a long-term and valuable effect upon the learners’ linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge when it is meaningful and amusing. Choosing books relevant to the real-life experiences, emotions, or dreams of the learner is of great importance. Language difficulty has to be considered as well. If the language of the literary work is simple, this may facilitate the

¹⁵The most widely used variety of English in the Republic of Ireland is Hiberno-English (Asián and McCullough 38).

comprehensibility of the literary text but is not in itself the most crucial criterion. Interest, appeal, and relevance are also prominent. Enjoyment; a fresh insight into issues felt to be related to the heart of people's concerns; the pleasure of encountering one's own thoughts or situations exemplified clearly in a work of art; the other, equal pleasure of noticing those same thoughts, feelings, emotions, or situations presented by a completely new perspective: all these are motives helping learners to cope with the linguistic obstacles that might be considered too great in less involving material [...]. (Collie and Slater 6-7 qtd. in Nasirahmadi, Madarsara, and Aghdam 1327)

Regarding the linguistic level, all three short stories by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne are suitable for teaching English at an advanced level in the Austrian AHS. Neither are the sentences used in the short stories too long, nor is the language too figurative or too archaic, since all three of them are contemporary. Furthermore, despite their everyday language, there are no slang words or specific dialects used in the short stories, thus, they are easy to read and understand. Also the length of the short stories is appropriate. Besides, the short stories dealt with in the present diploma thesis all contain numerous childhood memories in the form of flashbacks and, therefore, they address issues that students can relate to. Especially in "The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here" the protagonist's strict upbringing, pregnancy and subsequent flight from home is something that learners, being at about the same age as the protagonist at this stage in her life, can definitely identify with. Consequently, students will be interested in and enjoy reading the short story, thus, they will be motivated, which is a perfect basis for fruitful language learning (Pardede 19). However, students are also likely to be personally involved with the other two short stories, because of their realistic, everyday topics and experiences. In the case of "The Sugar Loaf", for instance, the fact that the protagonist is a teacher might be appealing for learners and may stimulate interesting discussions about student-teacher relationships, as well as the idea that a wrong decision made at a relatively young age might have an effect on the rest of one's life. If considering the cultural and historical context of the short stories, it needs to be said that learners will have to be provided with some background knowledge indeed, in order to fully understand and appreciate the fictional texts. Nevertheless, if this is taken into account and discussed, this will lead to an even more profound cultural learning.

Apart from the above mentioned, general reasons for teaching the "The Shelter of Neighbours", "The Sugar Loaf" and "The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here" in the Austrian EFL classroom, their usefulness might also be reasoned with some

of the guidelines in the AHS curriculum. In its general part it explicitly emphasises gender equality as a fundamental principle in Austrian schools and it further says:

Schulen sind im Zuge von ‘Gender Mainstreaming’ und Gleichstellung der Geschlechter angehalten, sich mit der Relevanz der Kategorie Geschlecht auf allen Ebenen des Lehrens und Lernens auseinanderzusetzen. (BMBF, *Lehrplan: Allgemeiner Teil* Art. 1.3)

Since the lives of women in Ireland and the changing of these in the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century are a central issue in all of the three short stories, they are more than suitable to serve as a basis for discussions about gender equality. Additionally, the Austrian AHS curriculum invites teachers to address subjects of values, morality and religion:

Den Fragen und dem Verlangen nach einem sinnerfüllten Leben in einer menschenwürdigen Zukunft hat der Unterricht mit einer auf ausreichende Information und Wissen aufbauenden Auseinandersetzung mit ethischen und moralischen Werten und der religiösen Dimension des Lebens zu begegnen. (BMBF, *Lehrplan: Allgemeiner Teil* Art. 1.3)

The three short stories all tackle moral and religious issues, which is why they might be especially useful to stimulate fruitful discussions on these topics. In this context, the aspect of regional differences of such ideas and ideologies between Ireland and Austria, or another cultural background, might be very interesting. Moreover, Ní Dhuibhne’s stories may be helpful to show how such values and morals can change in the course of time, since this is an important aspect in all three short stories.

Besides, various topics of the standardised, competence-oriented, oral *Reifeprüfung* (henceforth *Reifeprüfung*) at the end of the AHS can be addressed with the present short stories. The Austrian Ministry of Education and Women (abbreviated BMBF in the following) developed a pool of twenty-four, suggested topics for the *Reifeprüfung* (BMBF, *Die kompetenzorientierte Reifeprüfung* 13), some of which might be introduced on the basis of the short stories analysed in the current diploma thesis. First of all, the most prominent aspects that can be dealt with when using these three short stories by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne are aspects relating to “Regional and Cultural Studies” (“*Landeskundliche Aspekte*”) and “Intercultural Aspects” (“*Interkulturelle Aspekte*”) (BMBF, *Die kompetenzorientierte Reifeprüfung* 13) as can be seen with the lengthy discussion of features of Irishness, i.e. the Irish cultural and national identity, incorporated in each of the stories. They provide a profound insight into the

traditions, values, culture, society, politics, religion and economy of the Irish people. Furthermore, depending on which short story is chosen, they show differences between urbanity and the rural world. Whereas in “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here” the reader gains much information about rural Ireland, which is even intensified because it is contrasted to urban Copenhagen, the other two short stories present the living in a suburban neighbourhood. The investigation of markers of Irishness reflected in these three short stories, also illustrates that they are perfectly suitable for discussions of “Tradition and Change” (“*Tradition und Wandel*”) (BMBF, *Die kompetenzorientierte Reifeprüfung* 13), which is yet another, suggested topic for the oral *Reifeprüfung* in Austria. The very backwardness that was prevalent in Ireland until the second half of the twentieth century is a central issue as well as the subsequent, relatively rapid change in Irish economy and society. Related to these issues, various other topics relevant for the *Reifeprüfung* may be marginally addressed when discussing Ní Dhuibhne’s short stories. These include, for instance, “Relationships and Social Networks” (“*Beziehungen und soziale Netzwerke*”) (BMBF, *Die kompetenzorientierte Reifeprüfung* 13), since not only family life and marriage are topics in all three of the stories, but also neighbourly community, and “Rules, Regulations, Laws” (“*Regeln, Vorschriften, Gesetze [...]*”) (BMBF, *Die kompetenzorientierte Reifeprüfung* 13) as exemplified in the strict regulations concerning divorce that are addressed in “The Shelter of Neighbours”. Additionally, “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here” might also lend itself for discussions of “The Globalised World” (“*Die globalisierte Welt*”) (BMBF, *Die kompetenzorientierte Reifeprüfung* 13), since emigration is an issue there.

6 Conclusion

Basically, this diploma thesis has pursued two major objectives: Firstly, to investigate to what extent Éilís Ní Dhuibhne constructs Irish identity in three stories taken from her latest short story collection *The Shelter of Neighbours* and, secondly, to examine whether the short stories under consideration might be a suitable resource for the EFL classroom.

As regards the first aim, a contextualised close reading of each of the stories has demonstrated that the author, being a folklorist and having “a unique understanding of her time period” (Fulmer 77), frequently incorporates markers of Irishness and the changing of these in the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Examples include the use of the Irish language, the importance of Catholicism and its influence on numerous aspects of Irish society, gender roles and the urban-rural dichotomy. Generally, the overall tendencies that occur in all three short stories analysed in this diploma thesis are that of tradition and transformation. However, apart from the liberalisation, freedom and independence that was brought by this modernising development in the past few decades, Ní Dhuibhne also manages to show that changes always develop only slowly. Especially until changes are accepted as something positive, it takes quite a long time. Moreover, Ní Dhuibhne usually portrays these changes in a critical way. She does not only present the positive aspects and consequences of changes, but also the possible negative ones. For example, in spite of all the improvements, freedom and independence that women in Ireland gained in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, she also illustrates the struggles that the new working mothers had to deal with. Therefore, the author shows in her short fiction that she has a somewhat critical stance towards the concept of Irishness and especially towards the claim that it has dramatically changed in the past few decades. This is in line with the following claim:

Her [Éilís Ní Dhuibhne’s] father was a native Irish speaker from Donegal who settles in Dublin and married an English-speaking woman. Growing up between the two places and the two languages, Ní Dhuibhne has been aware, since early childhood, that Irishness is not essential, but variable and negotiable. (Markey 120)

Therefore, the claim stated at the beginning of the thesis, namely that identity in Ní Dhuibhne’s work should not be seen as something definite and inflexible (Pelan, *Introduction* 11) can be confirmed when looking at the three short stories analysed.

Concerning the second goal of this thesis – examining the usefulness of the short stories discussed for teaching in the Austrian EFL classroom – it has been outlined that each of them is perfectly suitable for various reasons. Alongside the general advantages of using literature, and especially short fiction, in the foreign language classroom, it has been shown that some of the guidelines in the Austrian AHS curriculum as well as various topics required for the Austrian school-leaving examination, i.e. the *Reifeprüfung*, can be met with the help of these short stories. In this respect, the issues of gender equality and cultural aspects of Ireland shall be particularly emphasised as these constitute the most prominent topics in Ní Dhuibhne’s short stories. In conclusion, it can be said that an implementation of these short stories does not only contribute to successful language learning and to enhance all four language skills if prepared appropriately, but can also help to develop empathy and cultural understanding through identification with individual characters. Therefore, the use of the three short stories written by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, “The Shelter of Neighbours”, “The Sugar Loaf” and “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here”, in ELT certainly offers the potential that students will grow personally.

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9 Abstract

The aim of this diploma thesis is to analyse features of Irishness in selected short stories written by the contemporary Irish writer Éilís Ní Dhuibhne and to elaborate on their pedagogic potential. The selection of texts is based on the author's latest short story collection called *The Shelter of Neighbours*, which appeared in 2012. The works under consideration are: "The Shelter of Neighbours", "The Sugar Loaf" and "The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman's Here". Initially the introductory chapters provide the necessary, theoretical background regarding the development of the (Irish) short story and the concept of Irishness, which is the national and cultural identity of the Irish. The following literary analysis of the individual short stories forms the main part of this thesis. Concerning the underlying method, the literary texts are analysed on both the 'story level' as well as on the 'discourse level'. This includes detailed investigations of the temporal and spatial settings, the characters, the themes and motifs, the narrative situation and narrative devices, as well as of the stories' stylistic and intertextual aspects. Additionally, a close reading reveals how distinctive markers of Irishness are included in the three short stories discussed. Apart from features, such as religion, emigration and immigration, the Irish language, as well as the distinction between urban and rural areas, especially illustrations of gender roles and Irish family life are addressed. Finally, the short stories' potential to be used for teaching in an Austrian EFL/ESL classroom is critically examined. In this respect, also the importance and value of dealing with short fiction in ELT on a more general basis is addressed.

10 German Abstract

Die vorliegende Arbeit versucht sich an einer Untersuchung der Repräsentation der irischen, nationalen und kulturellen Identität in drei ausgewählten Kurzgeschichten der zeitgenössischen, irischen Autorin, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne. Zudem wird diskutiert inwiefern sich diese Kurzgeschichten für den Unterricht an österreichischen Schulen eignen. Die Auswahl der literarischen Werke basiert auf der neuesten Kurzgeschichtensammlung der Autorin, genannt *The Shelter of Neighbours*, welche 2012 erschienen ist. Es wurden folgende Texte herangezogen: “The Shelter of Neighbours”, “The Sugar Loaf” und “The Moon Shines Clear, the Horseman’s Here”. Einleitend werden notwendig erscheinende theoretische Kenntnisse dargelegt. Umrissen werden dabei sowohl die historische Entwicklung der Kurzgeschichte im Allgemeinen, als auch die der irischen Kurzgeschichte. Des weiteren enthält dieser einleitende Teil eine Zusammenfassung verschiedener Versuche einer Begriffsdefinition der ‘short story’. An prominenter Stelle in diesem ersten Teil der Diplomarbeit steht außerdem die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Begriff ‘Irishness’, welcher die nationale und kulturelle Identität der irischen Gesellschaft umschreibt, als auch mit dem Konzept der Identität.

Die darauffolgende literarische Analyse bildet den Hauptteil der Arbeit, welche sowohl die Erzähl- als auch die Diskursebene der einzelnen Kurzgeschichten berücksichtigt. Diese umfasst eine detaillierte Untersuchung von Zeit und Ort der Handlung, der Charaktere, der Motive, und verschiedener narratologischer und sprachlicher Aspekte, wie etwa der Erzählsituation oder der rhetorischen Stilmittel. Zentral ist in diesem Zusammenhang auch die genaue Untersuchung inwiefern spezifische Merkmale der irischen nationalen und kulturellen Identität in den einzelnen Kurzgeschichten in Erscheinung treten. Dabei werden vor allem Faktoren wie Religion, Emigration und Immigration, die irische Sprache, die Stadt-Land-Dichotomie, Geschlechterrollen und das irische Familienbild angesprochen.

Der letzte Teil der Arbeit widmet sich der Fachdidaktik. Eingangs werden unterschiedliche Ansätze zur Implementierung von Literatur im Fremdsprachenunterricht (v.a. Englisch) beleuchtet und die Vorteile dessen herausgearbeitet. Schließlich wird das Potential der untersuchten Kurzgeschichten hinsichtlich ihrer Nützlichkeit für den Englischunterricht an österreichischen Allgemeinbildenden Höheren Schulen (AHS) thematisiert. Dabei dienen einerseits der AHS-Lehrplan, als auch der Themenpool für die mündliche Reifeprüfung in Englisch als Bezugsquellen, um die zahlreichen Möglichkeiten, die eine Behandlung literarischer Werke bietet, aufzuzeigen.