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“Homosexuality in Selected Contemporary Irish Short
Stories: A Potential Topic for Teaching in the
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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

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“The Nameless One” by Roger Casement

*No human hand to steal to mine
No loving eye to answering shine,
Earth's cruel heart of dust alone
To give me breath and strength to groan.*

*I look beyond the stricken sky
Where sunset paints its hopeless lie
That way the flaming angel went
That sought by pride love's battlement.*

*I sought by love alone to go
Where God had writ an awful no.
Pride gave a guilty God to hell
I have no pride - by love I fell.*

*Love took me by the heart at birth
And wrought out from its common earth -
With soul at his own skill aghast -
A furnace my own breath should blast.*

*Why this was done I cannot tell
The mystery is inscrutable.
I only know I pay the cost
With heart and soul and honour lost.*

*I only know 'tis death to give
My love; yet loveless can I live?
I only know I cannot die
And leave this love God made, not I.*

*God made this love; there let it rest.
Perchance it needs a riven breast
To heavenly eyes the scheme to show
My broken heart must never know.*

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1 Introduction

It can be assumed that since the beginning of humankind, people have loved other people of the same sex, whether society has accepted this state of affairs or not. One of the main aims of this thesis is to raise awareness of the (still) controversial topic of homosexuality. The medium of choice used in order to achieve this purpose is the contemporary Irish short story, with the consideration that Ireland's society still follows certain traditional moral conventions. This thesis provides a detailed literary analysis of four primary texts of both the "story level" and the "discourse level". The short stories in question are: "The Lover: Dublin, 1965" by Dermot Bolger, "The Hardest Winter" by Breda Wall Ryan, "Windfalls" by Mary Rose Callaghan, and "A Noise from the Woodshed" by Mary Dorcey. This thesis aims, furthermore, to reveal how homosexuality is represented in the stories, how Irish society has ultimately changed, and whether there have been any progressive tendencies towards a more open-minded view of sexual diversity. In order to answer these questions, the primary texts were examined in great detail, and various scholarly articles, books, legal texts, surveys, and Censuses were consulted and used as text-external reference frame. The empirical part of this thesis addresses the practical research in the Austrian EFL¹ classroom, with its focus to examine current attitudes of teachers towards the topic of homosexuality in their lessons. Including this topic in the curriculum would serve to prevent future discrimination, prejudices, and ignorance towards same-sex preferences.

First and foremost, chapter 2 introduces the short story as a literary genre, with the main emphasis being laid on the Irish short story. This brief excursus offers historical milestones and developments surrounding short fiction. Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of the history of homosexuality, in a European, and especially the Irish, context. This survey of the development of the social construct of homosexuality in the course of time presents ancient discriminatory laws, atrocious penalties, and inappropriate labels before it reveals recent positive changes that have occurred and are currently occurring in today's society. The next chapter (4) starts with the literal analytical part and focuses on Dermot Bolger's short story "The Lover: Dublin, 1965". It provides basic facts

¹ Abbreviation for English as a Foreign Language.

about the author and offers a plot summary, continuing with insights regarding the story level as well as the discourse level. At this point, the reader is presented with detailed information about the narrative technique, a characterization of the main protagonists, descriptions about time and setting, and a revelation of the major themes. A further subchapter is concerned with detailed background information about the main character Roger Casement. The remaining three short stories are analysed according to the same approach, only differing in the chapters concerning background and contextualization. Thus, Breda Wall Ryan's "The Hardest Winter" includes additional information about Irish women writers, rural Ireland, and the clash of generations between mother and daughter. Concentrating on the themes addressed in Mary Rose Callaghan's text "Windfalls", the focus lies on the concept of 'healing' homosexuality, current developments concerning Ireland and divorce, and the clash of generations between father and son. Lastly, the evaluation of "A Noise from the Woodshed" by Mary Dorcey offers in-depth background information about feminist writing in Ireland. Chapter 8 rounds the literary part off with a summary including the representation of homosexuality and the direct connections in all the short stories analysed.

The didactic part initially discusses the general issue of teaching literature with the aim of addressing same-sex desire, in chapter 9. By collecting different arguments in favour of literature in the classroom, a general subchapter explains why teaching literature is important, followed by an introduction to the genre of young adult literature. The next subchapters proceed by focusing on the topic of homosexuality in this literary genre in general and in an Irish context. Both subchapters reveal examples of young adult fiction that deal with same-sex relationships, as well as the positive development that this genre has undergone in recent years. The following pages are dedicated to difficulties that may arise when teaching a controversial topic, such as homosexuality. The chapter takes into consideration possible fears of both teachers and students, and demonstrates possibilities of how teachers can minimize these obstacles. The next subchapter especially examines educational circumstances surrounding the Austrian EFL classroom and how the topic of (homo)sexuality is dealt with in the curriculum, the standardized competence-oriented *Reifeprüfung*, and the principles of education. Finally, chapter 10 is dedicated to the empirical

quantitative research. It explains the method applied and it discusses the results of the questionnaire. This includes an introduction of the participants, an explanation of measurements, a presentation of the main hypotheses, and a contextualization of the findings. Ultimately, chapter 11 provides a conclusion, followed by a list of abbreviations, the bibliography, the index, and the appendix.

The main focus of this thesis, just as that of the examined short stories and the questionnaire, is on homosexuality. At this point, it must be stated that the author of this thesis is well aware of the reality that people (or characters) cannot be neatly herded into boxes labelled heterosexual or homosexual. Certainly, various other expressions of sexual diversity that would be worth analysing exist, including bisexuality, transsexuality, or transgenderism. Additionally, the thorough concept of queer theory “that works against the oppression that comes with being named, labelled, and tagged” (Blackburn and Buckley 202) deserves attention. No one should be forced to put labels on his or her sexuality, but the focus of this work had to be limited in order not to exceed the scope of this thesis, thus, in general the term ‘homosexual’ is used taking a lesbian/gay-identified approach rather than a queer studies’ perspective. The use of the abbreviation LGBTQ is justified inasmuch as it occurs in relation to the whole movement, on the one hand, and literary texts, on the other hand, implying the complete literary genre, but not specifically addressing individual sexual concepts.

2 The Short Story – A Brief Excursus

Since the focus of this thesis is short fiction, a brief introduction to this literary genre is appropriate at this point. From a historical point of view, it has been suggested that short stories are as old as literature and mankind itself. Ancient records reveal the existence of a collection of Egyptian short stories already at approximately 4000 B.C. (see Current-García 3). Another famous example is the *Old Testament*, which includes narratives about various biblical characters, such as King David, Joseph, or Jonah, which are considered essentially short stories (see H. Shaw 343). Various famous collections in different forms and with different aims followed, such as for instance, *The Thousand and One Nights*, of the 10th century A.D. The short story of today, however, was developed in the 19th century (see Current-García 3). According to Harry Shaw, Edgar Allan Poe “is considered the father of the modern short story” (343).

Thus, the term ‘short story’ was born and, consequently, for the first time included in the *Oxford English Dictionary Supplement* in 1933, which initially defined it as “a particular kind of literary product” (Reid 1). When analysing specific features of this genre, although there is no standard definition, the *Dictionary of Literary Terms* explains it lengthwise as a rather short narrative consisting of less than 10,000 words (see H. Shaw 343). However, the “challenge, of course is that not all ‘short’ stories are ‘short stories’” (Lohafer 88f.). A more precise definition can be found in Valerie Shaw’s work *The Short Story*, where she explains that “the short story is an independent yet hybrid genre, which connects with other art forms at various points and keeps eluding definition except as an interplay of tensions and antitheses” (16). Keeping this hybridity and interaction in mind, the Irish writer Claire Keegan once gave a succinct definition, without ignoring its challenges and difficulties, when she was asked about the short story’s attractiveness:

Its [sic] very difficult. Its [sic] very challenging. Its [sic] intense. The level of intensity is very high. Youve [sic] got to leave most of what could be said, out. Its [sic] a discipline of omission. You are truly saying very little. People say very little anyway. We talk a great deal, of course, but we actually say very little to each other. I think the short story is a very fine place to explore that silence between people, and the loneliness between people and the love that is there. And I think they all come organically out of the short story. Its [sic] a very difficult form. (Van Dusen)

She then also addresses the most common misconception about short stories; namely that they are considered as a minor art form only because of their brevity. Keegan emphasizes in her interview that a short story is definitely not easier to write than a novel merely because it is shorter (see Van Dusen).

As far as form is concerned, the Russian author Anton Chekhov aptly explained this aspect, saying that one has “*to slough off at one stroke all that is useless*” (qtd. in Current-García 4). To be more precise, the main goal, due to spatial limitations, is “*to reduce a story to its basic dramatic and pictorial essentials*” (qtd. in Current-García 4). Claire Keegan also alluded to this notion of compactness when she admits in an interview that “[t]here are so many things the short story cannot do [and] it’s by learning those limitations that [she is] cornered into writing what [she] can” (qtd. in O’Hagan).

Turning these limitations into something positive, Millhauser, in his unconventional essay, “The Ambition of the Short Story”, gives voice to the novel and the short story, comparing these two genres and also highlighting the precision of the latter and the fact that after excluding all that is unessential, it is able to offer a perfect shape to what remains. At the beginning, he amusingly describes the public’s general opinion of the greatness of the novel and how everyone totally ignores and underestimates the ‘pitiful’ short story. However, referring to a poem by William Blake, he uses the metaphor of seeing the whole “world in a grain of sand” (Millhauser 411) and concludes that even if it is not as vast as the novel, the short story can be as big as the universe (see Millhauser 411f.).

Although length is a crucial feature of short fiction, it is obviously not the only one. As far as the beginning of the typical short story is concerned, the literary term *in medias res* appears immediately. Deriving from Latin, this literary device means “in the middle of things” (H. Shaw 203) and always refers to the very direct and immediate beginning of a short story. The main advantages are that it guarantees the prompt interest and attention of the reader (see H. Shaw 203) and that it evidently saves time and place, aspects that are usually necessary when dealing with short stories.

All these features considered, additionally, it can be argued that the short story “has been associated with modernity, both in terms of experimentation and theme” (Ingman, *History* 2).

2.1 The Irish Short Story

Because this thesis focuses on contemporary Irish short stories, a brief excursus into this literary geographic field is necessary. Similar to other nations, Ireland awards the genre of the short story a central role in its national canon. In 1979, Declan Kiberd declared that “the short story has been the most popular of all literary forms” (14) both with readers and with writers in Ireland for the past 80 years. Forkner even argues that the short story is “one of Ireland’s natural resources” (21), since it truly expresses all aspects of Irish society like no other genre achieved before. However, to this day there are still ongoing debates amongst scholars about the genesis of the modern Irish short story (see Ingman, *History* 6ff.). When it comes to its origin, however, “Castle Rackrent” published in 1800 by Maria Edgeworth, who was born in England but in early years moved to Ireland, is considered the very first Irish short story by various critics (see Kilroy 3). Although the rather extensive narrative of approximately 34,000 words does not appear particularly short at first glance, the author argues that the main distinction from her work to moral tales is “its vivid presentation of a sharply defined narrating figure” (Kilroy 3), which apparently justifies its label as short story.

Addressing the aspect of modernity in the section above, as far as the context of Irish short fiction is concerned, one can observe a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the short story in general claims to express modernity, but, on the other (Irish) hand, there is a long existing relationship between this literary genre and traditional oral storytelling (see Ingman, *History* 2f.). In Ireland, a distinction between two different types of storytellers is made, namely the so-called *sgéalaí* and the *seanchaí*. The first one is famous for international tales, which are always long and difficult to remember, filled with adventures and wonders and always narrated objectively in the third person. However, the latter type tells stories more personally, from a witness’s point of view, and focuses on local tales including familiar places, fairies, and ghosts. Whereas the *sgéalaí* was always male, the *seanchaí* could be a man or a woman (see Kiberd 15f.). It is argued by various writers that this continued adherence to the oral folk tradition is a logical explanation for the flourishing of the Irish short story compared to the Irish novel. One big difference between the oral and the written form is of course

that the storyteller is able to use gesture, tone, and facial expressions, but the author's only tool is language. Furthermore, generally speaking, the aims are different, since an oral tale almost always tries to convey didactic information in the form of a moral or a maxim, whereas the modern short story is analytical, experimental, and inward-looking, focusing on the everyday. However, on the Irish landscape too, authors often use the form of short fiction to convey a useful message to their community. Hence, this suggests the writer's consciousness of an actual, although maybe distant, audience (see Ingman, *History* 2f.).

Another interesting explanation for the great success of Irish short stories is the idea that "the short story is often stronger in less structured societies where locality and individualism are rampant" (Maher 159). In times of change and growth, such as in the 1990s in Ireland, the increasing Irish interest in short fiction can be traced back to the fact that the genre's ability of capturing very brief moments of existence allows the reader to reflect more easily. It is arguable that short stories are able to permit snapshots of important political issues, such as the Celtic Tiger, immigration, or the decline of the Catholic Church, as well as the breakdown of the family unit, whereas comparably few novels have risked a portrait of these profound changes (see Ingman, *History* 227).

When talking about the development of the Irish short story, one of the main difficulties that should also be mentioned is the fact that numerous writers were closely connected to the British literary system for traceable historical reasons. Various authors published their works in London rather than in Dublin and for the most part, they addressed a British audience rather than an Irish one. It is comprehensible that even after the creation of the Irish Free State in the year 1922, this situation did not change from one day to the next. Hence, the question of a sense of belonging remained even after independence, because Irish writers could not easily identify themselves with their own country for various reasons, such as for example, class or religion (see Malcolm 21).

Moreover, it has been said that the Irish Literary Revival, a period starting from the mid-1890s and ending in the mid-1920s after the Irish Civil War, produced two different kinds of short fiction, namely stories discussing myth, legend, and folklore, on the one hand, and stories "focusing on a relatively unvarnished presentation of the *realia* of Irish rural and urban life" (Malcolm 23), on the other hand.

The origin of the Irish short story, more than two centuries ago, has already been discussed above; however, since this thesis focuses on contemporary works, a brief excursus into the modern Irish short story is also necessary. Various experts in this field, such as Frank O'Connor, describe the short story collection *The Untilled Field* published in 1903 by George Moore, as pioneer work (see Kiely, *Penguin* 8). The included short stories in this "first wholly modern collection of Irish stories" (Forkner 22) focus on rural Ireland as opposed to James Joyce's collection, titled *Dubliners*, which was initially published several years later, and which draws the reader's attention to the urban streets and people of Ireland's capital (see Kiely, *Fiction* 45). Joyce's *Dubliners*, along with his various other novels, is responsible for Dublin's fame as far as literary *loci* in Europe are concerned (see Malcolm 26). Forkner argues that both Moore and Joyce represent highly influential authors, who transformed "the Irish short story into a modern art" (22), setting standards for future writers incredibly high (see Kilroy 10). In the 1920s and 1930s, at least three Irish authors also managed to achieve these standards, namely Liam O'Flaherty, Frank O'Connor, and Seán Ó'Faoláin. All three authors, although they share the common alias of "the three O's", apply different techniques and focus on dissimilar themes. This second generation of modern Irish writers succeeded in reshaping and perfecting the genre as developed by leading authorities, like Moore and Joyce with new vitality and various experimental literary devices (see Kilroy 95). Apart from Dublin, they also published abroad, in the USA and in Britain, since this offered the possibility to avoid the Irish Republic's censorship (see Malcolm 28). In mentioning various concrete authors as milestones, the name of Samuel Beckett must not be forgotten. Like no other, in all his short stories he excellently represents "a profoundly cosmopolitan and experimental tendency within Irish short fiction in the twentieth century" (Malcolm 29). Although these are of course only a few names out of all the famous Irish writers, the list of geniuses that originate from the green island is almost endless and various authors have been passed over because of spatial limitations.

However, speaking of modernity, in recent years scholars have also pointed out various changes in the context of Irish short story writing, such as for example, female writers. Their appearance challenges the idea of a homogeneous Ireland and criticizes the prevailing masculinist nationalism that

declared “women as idealized symbols of the Irish nation” (Ingman, *History* 11) but almost entirely ignored their public voice. Another innovative change appeared in the realm of themes, as now more recent works also address the topics of divorce, abortion, homosexuality, and gender (see Ingman, *History* 11). Thus, the modern short story is used by various authors to mirror ongoing social changes within Irish culture. As far as the topic of homosexuality is concerned, the innovative collection *Alternative Loves: Irish Gay and Lesbian Stories* edited by David Marcus and published in 1994, completely focuses on issues of different lifestyles and sexuality (see Ingman, *History* 226). In addition, the work *A Noise from the Woodshed* edited by Mary Dorcey is also dedicated to characters living on the margin of the Irish nation, such as battered wives or the elderly, but above all, it gives a voice to lesbianism. All these innovations reveal that in the 1980s, beneath the traditional and conservative surface of Irish society ran a deep vein of suppressed wishing for open-mindedness. Hence, the previous, apparently fixed, definitions of Irish identity began to crumble under the pressure of modern change (see Ingman, *History* 243). Moreover, apart from overarching themes, from the 1990s onwards, the contemporary Irish short story shows “a willingness to experiment with language and form and embrace complex, non-linear narratives” (Ingman, *History* 255). Reflecting on all these recent changes, the genre of Irish short fiction is restless. It is constantly in motion and always alert to new possibilities, new worlds, and new identities (see Ingman, *History* 261). This explains the assumption that short fiction will continue to defend its status as the favourite genre for Irish authors in the 21st century (see Malcolm 32).

3 Homosexuality in the Course of History

3.1 General Introduction

In the course of (religious) history, people have always pointed a finger at others who did not perform 'normal' or 'common' sexual practices merely for procreation reasons. Different labels, including 'sodomites', 'perverts', or 'sinners' have been used for people belonging to a subculture that does not live according to normative rules set by the majority. However, in today's advanced and modern world, one would assume that its society is ready for same-sex desire, but even in the 21st century, homosexual couples still have to face the discrimination and prejudice of a heterosexual environment on a daily basis. Even though the topic has already found its way into literature, poetry, music, cinema, and slang terms, negative publicity after the coming out of famous people, like a German football player or a Latvian foreign minister prove that intolerance still exists. However, putting aside today's examples of narrow-mindedness, the situation has at least improved slightly compared to centuries ago.

As far as the genesis of the word 'homosexual' is concerned, Sullivan explains that the Swiss doctor Karoly Maria Benkert coined the term 'homosexuality' as early as 1869, though it only gained popularity in usage one century later (see 2). Obviously, same-sex love existed long prior to when it was first labelled; and throughout the previous centuries, the term 'sodomy' was widely utilized.

Since this ancient concept of sodomy is used in various historical essays, a brief introduction to this abstract term is necessary. Referring to the biblical story of Sodom in chapters 18 and 19 of the *Book of Genesis*, where various men intend to rape two angels (see Carroll 18ff.), the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines the term 'sodomy' as "denoting any homosexual practices between men". Apart from that, it describes anal intercourse in general, sexual contact between humans and animals, and other sexual practices such as oral intercourse or sexual activities with minors. Leaving aside all additional definitions of sodomy, this chapter refers to its primary one, namely sexual relations amongst men. However, later in history psychoanalysts, such as Freud and Foucault, distance

themselves from the term sodomy, developing their own concepts (see Kaplan 269).

Apart from the *Book of Genesis*, the Bible contains various other sections where same-sex relations are condemned. For example, in Leviticus 20:13 it says: “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them” (Carroll 147). It also declares homosexuality as an unnatural sin and as an abomination in Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-27, and in Corinthians 6:9.

3.2 European Milestones

Evidently, historical events and consequent alterations in the public’s attitude towards the topic of homosexuality have happened at different places and at different times all over the planet. For reasons of space, this chapter limits itself to Europe, since the overall focus of this thesis is Ireland and Austria.

In ancient times, historians, such as the Greek Thucydides, who lived approximately 400 B.C., would not understand the hysteria that followed a few years later concerning homosexual actions, because back then, the topic was treated as equal to heterosexual behaviour. However, with the following triumph of the Christian empire over ‘pagan’ Rome, a new stigmatizing taboo was created and neutral or positive records and chronicles relating to homosexual practices disappeared mysteriously (see Dynes viii). From then on, same-sex activities amongst men were labelled ‘sodomy’, and they became a sin and a crime against nature (see Dynes x).

Little has been recorded historically about female homosexuality. Some chronicles prove that there was lesbian behaviour in Sparta and on Lesbos in classical antiquity, but generally, scholars argue that lesbianism appears to be invisible until the twentieth century. Almost only documents about male homosexuality have been preserved, suggesting that in male-dominated times it was not regarded important enough to record female sexual activities (see Dynes xf.). However, historians argue that around the 16th and 17th century, lesbianism often occurred in connection with witchcraft and that it “drew far more contempt and ridicule than their male counterparts” (Coward 49). In addition, scholars state

that female homosexuality mostly occurred in religious communities, convent schools, and the Royal Court; all places where many women were brought together. It is, however, indicated that female homosexual love occurred infrequently and that women generally were considered 'more careful' (see Coward 49f.).

Generally, from the 13th century onwards, acts of sodomy were illegal in Europe and were punishable by law, even with the death penalty. These were cruel years, since, for example, customary laws from that time ordered that homosexual men and women had to suffer mutilation for the first offense and in case of recidivism, they had to be burnt alive. Another ancient law in England stipulated that sodomites had to be buried alive. However, it has not been proven that this atrocious law was ever carried out, since most of the time in England's past, 'culprits' had been hanged, drowned, or burned. Coward suggests that, from the Middle Ages onwards, homosexual relationships were commonly identified (with some prejudice) with certain social groups such as bishops or priests, students, sailors, nobles, and the Knights Templar. Different social classes could await different forms of punishment. While homosexuality was traditionally tolerated amongst the highest rank of society, such as for example, Edward II of England, or Henry III of France, the lower classes always had to suffer somehow (see Coward 35ff.).

In Germany, an interesting examination took place at the end of the 15th century. The council of Cologne interrogated various pastors and confessors in order to reveal secret activities practised by homosexual 'sinners'. Since same-sex relations were not to be tolerated under any circumstances, they required urgent action and even the seal of confession was declared null and void. Due to the fact that there was no scientific or academic research available at that time, the council had to rely on the priests' testimony. The verification from the cleric who was leading worship for the St Apostle Church was of capital importance, as he revealed the precise number of 200 cases of homosexuals in Cologne. Sexologists, such as for example, Iwan Bloch, have observed that this estimation seems very appropriate, considering the population at that time of approximately 25,000 inhabitants. He also concludes that for over 400 years of available data, there was no significant change in homosexual behaviour. Between 1484 and 1908, same-sex relationships between both men and women of all different social

classes existed, prostitution was a constant issue, and secret meeting points for homosexual couples endured (see Bloch 2ff.).

However, although strictly forbidden in the past, between 1730 and 1740 the situation slightly improved, since although of course it was still not possible to display one's homosexuality openly, secret clubs for queers flourished in France and England. Obviously, these clubs had to camouflage their true purpose, but they were hardly ever raided or closed. Consequently, it appears that in those years the price of homosexual freedom was discretion. Additionally, at that time, the public occasionally questioned the horrific punishments (addressed earlier) for homosexuals and recommended a more civilized solution, which was, for example, already common in Italy. Hence, it was still considered a crime, but not treated differently than crimes of debauchery in general. It was then regarded a sexual misconduct, but far less serious than the seduction of minors or rape. Progressive intellectuals even shared the common attitude "that it was part of the pursuit of happiness" (Coward 51). Although the great part of society still considered homosexuality as an object of disdain, economists acknowledged adultery and fornication as the more major threats to marriage and family life (see Coward 43ff.).

Moving from England and France to Germany, the German lawyer Ulrichs published various books and articles between 1864 and 1879, arguing that same-sex desire was a result of nature and, therefore, could not be declared unnatural, insane, criminal, or sinful (see Sullivan 4f.). Additionally, the pioneering sexologist Hirschfeld established the first homosexual rights organization in 1897, called the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee. More than 20 years later, he also founded the world's first Institute for Sexology (see Sullivan 12). However, as far as negative milestones in German's homosexual history are concerned, Hitler's persecution of homosexuals has to be mentioned at this point. On 10 May 1933, the Nazis destroyed innumerable documents and volumes gathered by the modern homosexual movement when they burned down the archives of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (see Dynes xiii). Moreover, Hitler's aversion towards 'the Other', be it religion, skin colour, or sexual orientation, also triggered a kind of "gay Holocaust" (Dynes xvi). Although the Nazis ignored lesbians, the number of their male homosexual victims ranged from estimated 5,000 to 1 million (see Dynes xvii).

Another indelible impact on the history of same-sex desire occurred in the 1980s, when the worldwide AIDS crisis once again turned a (negative) spotlight onto homosexuals. Various right-wing politicians demanded coercive HIV testing and consequent quarantine for people with positive results, and religious groups explained “AIDS as divine retribution for sexual transgressions” (Haggerty 27). Thus, AIDS-phobia significantly changed the public’s opinion concerning male homosexuals, and political work concerning homosexuality shifted from information about acceptance towards health issues (see Dynes xix).

3.3 Homosexuality in Ireland

As discussed earlier, homosexuality has existed throughout history, however, the ways in which various societies reacted to this topic, or the self-perception of the people who were engaged in same-sex relations have varied significantly depending on the time and country. This variation is evident in particular in the example of Ireland. According to the Census of 2011, over 84 per cent of the population declare themselves Roman Catholic (see Central Statistics Office, *Part 1* 42). Hence, it is not surprising that same-sex relationships are not approved by a significant (religious) majority. However, although being members of a stigmatized minority group, in the same Census, a representative number of 4,042 couples revealed living in a same-sex household, showing that this topic can no longer be ignored (see Central Statistics Office, *Part 1* 27).

Under the subsection of ‘Unnatural Offences’ and with the keywords ‘Sodomy and Bestiality’, the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861, an act to consolidate the Statute Law of England and Ireland, announces in Section 61 that “[w]hosoever shall be convicted of the abominable crime of buggery, committed either with mankind or with any animal, shall be liable... to be kept in penal servitude for life” (Irish Statute Book, *Offences*). Thus, anal intercourse was already illegal in 1861, followed by the so-called Labouchère amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act that made all male homosexual activities in Ireland criminal in 1885 (see McDiarmid 176).

In London in 1895, the famous trial against the Irish author Oscar Wilde was an important breakthrough, since due to his fame it raised immense public

awareness about the topic of homosexuality (see Dynes xvi). He was convicted of violating the Criminal Law Amendment Act where under the heading of 'Outrage on Decency' it declares the following in Section 11:

Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of or produces (a) or attempts (b) to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency (c) with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour. (Mead and Bodkin 68)

Since the radical politician Labouchère banned "gross indecency" between men, Wilde was consequently sentenced to a two-year imprisonment with hard labour (see Kaplan 167ff.).

In 1977, Senator David Norris initiated a case against this law, which in the following years came before the High Court and the Supreme Court where it was rejected by five judges in 1983. Finally, he took the case to the European Court of Human Rights where judges eventually found that this Irish law contravened the Convention on Human Rights. Thanks to Norris' persistence, after a 16 yearlong battle, this Victorian law was removed from Ireland's statute book and with the 1993 Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, sexual acts between men finally became decriminalized (see Bohan). Section 2 clearly states that "any rule of law by virtue of which buggery between persons is an offence is hereby abolished" (Irish Statute Book, *Criminal Law*).

Since these laws only covered male homosexuality, a brief excursus into the situation of lesbianism in Ireland needs to be supplied. This is easier said than done due to the lack of a lesbian public identity. Apparently, Queen Victoria even denied the existence of female homosexuality and hence, objected to its criminalization. However, in 1895 and 1922, attempts were made to make lesbianism a crime, but it never became an official law. Thus, lesbians in Ireland "were both outside the law and at the same time rendered invisible by lack of official recognition, or condemnation" (Haggerty 476). However, Kate O'Brien is an exception, since in 1941 the Irish Government banned her publicly for references to homosexual desires in her novel *The Land of Spices*. Scholars claim that this overall invisibility of lesbianism can also be interpreted as a

blessing, since it offers “imaginative freedom and openness” (Haggerty 476) to authors, which is clearly reflected in their contemporary works.

Before the official decriminalization of homosexuality, five homophobic young men beat a man named Declan Flynn to death because of his sexual orientation, on the 10th of September, 1982. The result was the birth of a new LGBTQ² movement. A protest march under the motto “Stop Violence Against Gays and Women” was organized a few months later, whose activists demanded “[t]he immediate repeal of all legislation that define[d] [them] as criminals, [t]he support of political groups with concern for human rights [and t]he participation in this important march of gays and non-gays alike” (Madden, *Figure 1* 191). This first major public demonstration for homosexual rights was a turning point in Ireland’s history that later became known as “Ireland’s Stonewall”³ (see Madden 188f.).

In 1990, Mary Robinson, a feminist and civil rights lawyer, became Ireland’s first female President. Her election was a great “triumph for those supporting a modernizing liberal agenda over those associated with traditional nationalist and Catholic values” (Ingman, *History* 243). She too took an important part in the battle begun by Senator Norris and actually assisted him as the attorney working on his case. In the years following her election, she enabled the legalization of homosexuality, as well as contraception and divorce (see Ingman, *History* 243).

Conrad argues that there is an interrelationship of homophobia, colonialism, and nationalism where homosexuality is regarded “as a kind of foreign ‘pollution’” (127). This misconception that places homosexuality outside the discourse of Irishness can also be found in the early years of the AIDS crisis, “when the general populace denied the presence of AIDS in Ireland and, concurrently, right-wing groups such as Family Solidarity castigated homosexuals as carriers” (Conrad 127). The anxiety regarding national borders and sexual identity is also evident in today’s St Patrick’s Day parade in New York City. In 2006, 15 years after their first application, the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization (henceforth ILGO) still has not received a permission to march in

² Abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Questioning.

³ The name derives from the famous Stonewall riot in New York in 1969, which was a milestone for LGBTQ activism, since in the wake of these rebellions liberation movements for gay men and lesbians developed and their political situation improved (see D’Emilio 99).

the parade. The parade's founder, the chairman of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, John Dunleavy, justifies this decision "declaring that an African American parade could hardly expect to have the KKK march, therefore why should New York's St Patrick's Day Parade include ILGO?" (O'Donnell 137). Despite this ridiculous and more than inappropriate comparison, in Ireland it appears that the former 'oxymoron' of being Irish and homosexual at the same time, in the same place, is no longer the oxymoron it once was. As early as 1992, 32 lesbians from Cork actually marched as a contingent in Dublin's St Patrick's Day Parade (see O'Donnell 138). This displays conservative Ireland's slow but sure trend towards encouraging change.

Another positive effect of these alternations is that homosexual artists have used this notion of empowerment in order to stimulate their creative work and develop "a modern Irish lesbian and gay identity" (Haggerty 476). This sensibility towards homosexuality revolutionizes the contemporary artistic landscape in fields such as literature, film, drama, and popular culture. In addition, political projects and homosexual rights movement groups have gradually appeared on the (Irish) surface (see Haggerty 476). In an online article of *The Journal*, Kieran Rose, who co-founded the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, also explains the importance of the 1993 Criminal Law (Sexual Offenses) Act and how it positively influenced the lives of all Irish homosexuals. He grants that "[w]e have come a very long way since the State regarded gay people as criminals", and summarizes that "Ireland has changed" (Bohan).

Indeed, the country has changed, marked by achievements, such as the foundation of Ireland's primarily gay rugby team, the Emerald Warriors, in 2003 (see Madden 214), and victories, as for example the fact that "the National Library of Ireland officially accepted the Irish Queer Archive" (Madden 184) in 2008, which clearly indicate this positive progress. However, current ongoing debates about same-sex desire demonstrate that there is still some work to do before it becomes a normality in the public's mind. Excellent examples of this need for more tolerance are the present discussions on the fact that Section 37.1 (a) and (b) of the Employment Equality Act 1998 still exist. This section of the Irish Statute Book permits religious, educational, or medical institutions a preferential treatment to their (future) employees in order to maintain the (religious) ethos of the institution (see Irish Statute Book, *Employment Equality*). Although the

implications of this piece of legislation are not clear-cut, and the responsibility to prove that the ethos of the school, or hospital, has been undermined lies with the employer, it is obvious that such clauses hinder workers in affected institutions from being open about their sexuality. Senator Katherine Zappone's main concern is that "the protection of religious ethos can extend beyond the ground of religion into an employee's private life and is not confined to what he or she says or does in the workplace" (Irish Congress of Trade Unions, *Recent Progress*). Thus, many organizations, politicians, and supporters of the LGBTQ movement are fighting for a change, or removal, of this section. In March 2013, numerous Labour Party Senators and TDs⁴ introduced the *Employment Equality (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2013* with the aim to:

ensure that employees or prospective employees in publicly funded, religious run institutions such as schools cannot be discriminated against just because they are married, single, divorced or in a civil partnership, or because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. (Irish Congress of Trade Unions, *Recent Progress*)

However, as history shows, there is always a long way to go before legal alterations come into practice. Needless to say, Irish society could only benefit from a removal of this clause in order to fight discrimination in all sectors: medical, educational, and in general. As far as the setting of schools is concerned, it is absolutely necessary to create a tolerant culture where both LGBTQ teachers as well as LGBTQ students are able to feel real inclusion. This opinion is also shared by current Education Minister Ruairi Quinn, who is worried about how authentic the discouragement of homophobic bullying in the classroom really is while Section 37.1 is still operating (see Murray and Connolly). It is evident that since the introduction of the Employment Equality Act in 1998, various positive developments for LGBTQ people have occurred, including the introduction of the civil partnership and its resulting advantages for LGBTQ employees concerning their pensions. In times where the Irish Government has even considered a referendum for marriage equality, it should be obvious that the removal of Section 37.1 is long overdue (see Irish Congress of Trade Unions, *Conclusion*).

⁴ Also called Deputies or Members of Dail Éireann, which is the Lower House of the Oireachtas (see Houses of the Oireachtas).

4 “The Lover: Dublin, 1965” by Dermot Bolger

4.1 The Author

Dermot Bolger was born in 1959 in Dublin. At the age of 18, he founded a publishing house named The Raven Arts Press, which published works by leading authors such as Colm Tóibín, Patrick McCabe, and Katie Donovan. However, he shut down operations in 1992 to become co-founder of one of Ireland’s major publishing houses, New Island Books. Currently, he writes and reviews for various Irish newspapers, such as *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Independent*, and *The Irish Daily Mail* on a freelance basis. In the course of his career, he has written nine novels, numerous plays, and nine volumes of poetry, and he has edited various anthologies. From the start of his career to the present day, he has been awarded several prizes, amongst others, The Samuel Beckett Award and the Irish Times/ESB Prize for Best New Irish Play of 2004. In addition, his work has been translated into various European languages, including German and French (see Bolger, *Home page*). Interestingly, unlike many of his contemporaries, Bolger decided against a university education, justifying his decision with the following quote: “To write, you have to be someone who loves books, but you don’t have to be someone who has studied books. I could have gone to university and gone into that world but I felt the experience would put me off from the lives I wanted to write about” (qtd. in Paschel 42).

4.2 Plot Summary

“The Lover: Dublin, 1965” tells the story of the life and death of the English soldier Roger Casement through the eyes of an unnamed narrator, who is a fellow veteran and former lover. Casement fought in the Amazon Rainforest and in the former Belgian Congo. He publicized the famous Foreign Office Report that revealed abuses and violations of human rights under Leopold II, King of the Belgians. Following these experiences, he joined the Irish Republican Army (henceforth IRA) and took part in the Easter Rising. Although he was celebrated as a martyr and an icon by the Irish, he was considered a traitor, condemned for

treason, and consequently hung by the English authorities. The present day setting in the short story is the day of his state funeral at Glasnevin cemetery in Dublin, many years after his actual execution. Apart from these main plot points, homosexuality is a prominent topic in "The Lover: Dublin, 1965", since it reveals various details about the intimate, sexual relationship between Roger Casement and the unnamed male narrator.

4.3 Story Level

When analysing the setting of "The Lover: Dublin, 1965", naturally the places where the story happens become relevant. Various real, existing locations are mentioned throughout, starting with the subtitle, where Dublin is specifically stated. Over the course of the story, Bolger also mentions the very real Glasnevin cemetery, Cross Guns Bridge, and the O'Connell monument. Although flashbacks reveal a variety of other regions, the narrator currently is in the capital of Ireland relating his story; hence, it can be regarded as the story's main location. However, the following statement suggests his aversion to this city: "I don't know Dublin. I have never liked this city nor wished to live here" (Bolger 55). Thus, the reader can intuit that the protagonist did not choose to live in this city, but he only came to Dublin in order to take part in the state funeral. At this point, one clearly has to distinguish between narrator and author as Dermot Bolger and his protagonist have different views. In an interview, published in Paschel's 1997 book *No Mean City?* Dermot Bolger talks about why he often presents a bleak view of Dublin in his works. He, furthermore, explains that the city had in recent times improved considerably and that he was "quite fond of the dilapidated little streets and pubs around Temple Bar, for instance" (qtd. in Paschel 144). He also indicates that it is an exciting place to live.

A second city that is frequently mentioned is the capital of Northern Ireland, Belfast. Great importance has to be attached to this setting, since it was in a "godforsaken country lane" (Bolger 54) near Belfast where the narrator and Roger Casement first met. This sacred place is described twice in greater detail, firstly, when the narrator shares the experience of their initial sexual intercourse, and secondly, at the very end, when after all these years, he remembers their first

meeting, lifting his head up to the sky and remarking, "I can see white clouds over chestnut trees beside the Antrim field where I first waited for him" (Bolger 58). Mentioning the chestnut tree twice attracts the attentive reader's eye, and one can analyse this specific tree as a symbol of either sensuality and voluptuousness or foresight (de Vries s.v. "Chestnut"). The first meaning is fairly simply applicable, as the narrator fell in love at this particular place. The aspect of foresight, however, is a little more complex. The author describes "white candles of chestnuts [...] still visible in the dark mass of leaves above" (Bolger 56), representing hope shining in the darkness. This dark surrounding in turn foretells a darkness to come, namely prejudice against homosexual couples and the death of Roger Casement. In connection with this rather hidden location in the County of Antrim, the narrator also reveals that it is not only a place of love, but also of hatred. Gangs of youths would repeatedly appear there in order to violently molest homosexual couples who were trying to meet privately. One night the narrator even witnessed such a brutal attack from a hiding place in the ditches amongst the bushes. The narrator also briefly mentions a hotel in Belfast where the couple occasionally met secretly. Finally, he addresses the city once more and foreshadows his own funeral when he, slightly enviously, compares his life and death to that of Roger Casement with the lines, "I have enough money put aside for a headstone but no one will seek it out. My bones will lie undisturbed in Belfast soil" (Bolger 57). One can assume that, since he does not like Dublin, he probably now lives in Belfast where he plans to be buried once his time has come.

Two equally important regions are also referenced in anecdotes about Casement's military-past, namely the Belgian Congo and the Amazon Rainforest. After the narrator had earned his trust, Casement shared his personal and very intimate experiences concerning war with him, which offer some explanations about his personality, since "[h]is strength came from the fact that he never lost his innocence, despite having forced himself to watch every act of cruelty and genocide in the Congo and then the Amazon" (Bolger 54). These places shaped his personality and the atrocities he witnessed prompted him to write the Foreign Office report, which can be seen as "his first act of class betrayal" (Bolger 53).

Lastly, an indirect reference to London is made when the narrator refers to the Pentonville Prison where the buried remains of Casement were exhumed in preparation for the state funeral.

Apart from all these places, the time in which the story takes place also needs to be analysed when discussing its setting. Again, a direct reference can be found in the subtitle, namely the year 1965. Eventually, the reader learns that the two main characters first met “over fifty years ago” (Bolger 53), that is to say, in the year 1913. Thus, it becomes evident that the present day, the day of the state funeral, takes place in the year 1965, as indicated in the title. In addition, two more years are briefly mentioned, when the narrator bitterly looks retrospectively at his life in 1936, “when he was beaten up in a public toilet” (Bolger 57), and in 1957, when a man broke his fingers while demanding money from him.

Knowing now the local and temporal framework of the short story, a closer look at its characters becomes necessary, since it is they who are, apart from the action, the main concern of the story (see Abbott 123). Starting with the main protagonist, Roger Casement, one can clearly describe him as a round character, because, according to E. M. Forster, who introduced the distinction between flat and round characters, the latter is more complex, inhabits various degrees of depth and, therefore, “cannot be summed up in a single phrase” (Forster 74). In addition, Roger Casement is a real historical figure, and various aspects of his life actually happened as has been proved. These true-to-life aspects will be discussed at a later stage of this thesis, however, the focus at this point lies on the literary figure. As far as his appearance is concerned, the reader is mostly left in the dark, the only features described in great detail are his eyes and his gaze: “in his eyes, in his stride, in his slightly haunted aura” (Bolger 53), “with his slightly fanatical stare” (Bolger 54), and “with his piercing gaze” (Bolger 58). Although the physical appearance is left to the reader’s imagination, several of his character traits are revealed. He detested injustice and, therefore, published his Foreign Office Report denouncing the King of the Belgians who “would force mothers to watch their children’s hands being amputated if families on his plantations did not reach their weekly rubber quota” (Bolger 53). Furthermore, he joined the IRA fighting for full Irish independence and one of his principal concerns was also to unite “Taigs” and “Prods” or rather, Roman Catholics and Protestants (see Rickerby 70). Due to all these deeds, the Irish press remembered him as a courageous and brave man. It is also known that he had no wife or children and that he was wealthy, because the narrator compares him to other “rich toffs”

(Bolger 54) who he had met before him. It is not surprising that his fight for justice also demanded certain losses that he willingly accepted, namely class betrayal: “he became a traitor and deviant to his former tribe and a martyr and icon to his new one” (Bolger 56). According to the narrator, Casement’s primary wish was to live, comparing his life force with a glow and explaining that his iron will and strength were due to the fact that he had always kept his innocence (see Bolger 54). As the title evidently suggests, love also plays a principal role in this short story. Roger Casement was “a hunter of love” (Bolger 56) with a “sheer capacity for pleasure” (Bolger 56). The likewise male narrator reveals Casement’s homosexuality when he describes several of their sexual meetings. Homosexuality is also a prominent topic when it comes to his heroism, since, although his Irish comrades honour him with a gigantic state funeral, they still want to avoid and deny the fact that he was gay. One can infer that Casement himself possibly did not entirely want to accept his sexuality because he invented a different identity to avoid the narrator recognising him during their first meetings. Although he always desired freedom, it is questionable if he could have been entirely free when he always had to fear “a knock on his door[,] a mob in a country lane[, or] exposure and ruin” (Bolger 57).

The second round character is the narrator himself. Although the reader never learns his name, he embodies an important part in Bolger’s life. He describes himself as an old man who was handsome in his youth. Similar to Casement, he is a former soldier who endured many wars and now, living his days as a veteran, he regularly, but discreetly, attends funerals of former comrades. It is suggested that he is very attentive, as the following examples show: “I have sensed their unspoken desire for my hands to choke the life from them” (Bolger 53) or “I sensed that he had been touched by some foreign place” (Bolger 56). Apart from this sensitive character trait, he uses rather rough and vulgar language when describing several sexual situations such as “they can feel my cock” (Bolger 54), “I fucked him” (Bolger 54), “wished to be fucked to the hilt” (Bolger 54), “he came quickly in my hands” (Bolger 55), or “fucked him tenderly or savagely” (Bolger 57). On various occasions, the narrator depicts the sexual intercourse very vividly, for instance, “I might tighten my grip on their necks slightly, just to heighten their passion and my own” (Bolger 54) or “I ran my hands underneath his jacket and shirt so that my nails gripped his bare shoulders as I

timed it so that we came together” (Bolger 56). It is indicated once that Casement gave the narrator ten shillings after their first encounter, but there is no evidence that it was a regular necessity. Hence, their relationship could have started as prostitution; however, the aspect of money in this sexual context cannot entirely be clarified. Sometimes the reader even gets the impression that the narrator has possessive feelings towards Casement, because he repeatedly indicates how well he knew him due to the fact that they were both homosexuals. This becomes evident in the following quote revealing his inner thoughts towards an old IRA veteran and former comrade of his lover: “You gave him a sense of fellowship but I gave him a sense of pleasure. For long minutes he was mine in a way that he could never be yours. I was his nation because we were equals and he was free to be himself in my arms” (Bolger 56). Although it seems that he was truly fascinated by the figure of Roger Casement, he did not fully share his political passion and Casement’s “half-hearted attempts to convert [the narrator] to his mania for nationalism” (Bolger 57) remained without consequence. Facing the final phase of his life, he remembers his intimate relationship with Casement and “the feel of his hands and tongue” (Bolger 57), but simultaneously, he is jealous and curses him when comparing Casement’s state funeral to his own foreshadowed burial. He puts it thus:

I know how I shall never be remembered like he is being remembered now; no comrades will ever stand by my grave. I have enough money put aside for a headstone but no one will seek it out. My bones will lie undisturbed in Belfast soil. No pathologist will examine the ribs cracked when I was beaten up in a public toilet in 1936 or the fingers broken by a young man who came back to my flat in 1957 and demanded more money than I had. (Bolger 57)

However, the final lines of the short story suggest that he accepts this situation when he imagines that the empty coffin is meant for everyone “who must remain unknown and unremembered” (Bolger 58). Although one gets the impression that the narrator is at peace with himself and his homosexuality, it is easily perceptible that he is aware of the fact that his lifestyle is not accepted in Irish society. He emphasizes this general prejudice with expressions such as “my kind” (Bolger 54), “the likes of me” (Bolger 55), “our sort” (Bolger 55), or “queers like us” (Bolger 56). Another interesting observation can be made in connection with the narrator’s religious beliefs, since he mentions God twice. First, right at the beginning of the story, he describes the situation on the African plantations as “in

such remote locations that even God had ceased to watch over them” (Bolger 53). Consequently, although this God is not there to watch, he does not question his existence. Second, God reappears at the very end of the story, with a very different overtone, namely: “If only the comfort of a God actually existed, or there was a land where our queer nation could be free” (Bolger 58). Hence, one may intuit that over the course of the story and over the course of time, after all the negative experiences he witnessed, the narrator has abandoned his religious views and has come to the rather atheistic opinion that God and the Holy Land do not actually exist.

Apart from the two round characters already analysed, there are some flat characters who are only mentioned marginally and “can be expressed in a single sentence” (Forster 73). Amongst others, there is the King of the Belgians, Leopold II, who is described as vile and cruel, exploiting the families on his rubber plantations. Then the reader is introduced to the old IRA veteran who explains the significance of his medals, which triggers the narrator’s interior monologue during the state funeral, referred to above. In addition, the young man who broke his fingers in 1957 while demanding more money from the narrator is mentioned briefly. Another flat character is the young Irish soldier who “fainted in the colour party on the road” (Bolger 57) during the state funeral and had to lie there exposed for an unknown amount of time because his colleagues were not allowed to help him. The woman who tries to comfort the narrator during the funeral is another briefly mentioned character. A reference to the ageing president of Ireland at that time, Éamon de Valera, can also be found, who holds a speech at the funeral. Finally, the narrator describes a priest who speaks some words in Latin. Moreover, there are some persons only mentioned marginally, without any serious influence on the action such as a kneeling man, the rubber traders, Irish comrades, Peruvian Indians, Irish rebels, Catholics and Protestants, plantation owners, a man with a radio, and other pensioners.

Having discussed the different characters, the last aspect of the story level, namely, themes and motifs, needs closer examination. According to Abbot’s definition, “a theme is abstract and a motif is concrete” (88) and they are both frequently used for repetitions in a story. Bearing this concept in mind, it immediately becomes evident that the main themes in “The Lover: Dublin, 1965” are war and love, and the incompatibility of war heroism and homosexuality. On

the one hand, as far as war is concerned, various connecting subthemes such as heroism versus class betrayal, the fight for freedom, ageing, and death are addressed. In addition, the themes of patriotism, nationalism and the concepts of Irishness versus Englishness are also very prominent when reading the short story in a broader context. On the other hand, examining the theme of love, the story indubitably focuses on the love between two men. Consequently, this can be narrowed down to the subthemes of social prejudice, injustice, passion, and facing reality versus secrecy.

4.4 Discourse Level

As far as the narrative genre is concerned, “The Lover: Dublin, 1965” can, first and foremost, be classified as a short story, as all four works dealt within the present thesis. It was published in 2004 in *The Faber Book of Best New Irish Short Stories*. Bolger’s plot is based on real events, including real persons and places, hence, it can additionally be classified as a historical short story. Although H. Shaw defines the term ‘historical’ in connection with novels and plays, it is equally applicable to short fiction, as he states that the historical work is “characterized by an imaginative reconstruction of historical personages and events” (H. Shaw 184). Additionally, he argues that the combination of fiction and history has been customary for centuries, and that the works mostly deal with “events from history, especially critical and crucial episodes in the career of a ruler or outstanding military personage” (H. Shaw 184). He also compares historical work to chronicle work, explaining that the latter focuses on one major character in principle, including greater usage of pageantry such as battle scenes or state funerals (see H. Shaw 184). All these aspects are valid for “The Lover: Dublin, 1965”. However, scholars argue that historical short stories are rather rare due to the genre’s brevity implying its inability “to perform the reconstructionist task” (Malcolm 72), as opposed to the historical novel.

When analysing the narrative voice, the very first words of the short story, namely, “I met him” (Bolger 53), reveal the fact that the reader is confronted with a first-person narrative where a narrator can be found “who belongs entirely to the characters’ world” (Stanzel 17). Stanzel differentiates between the “quasi-

autobiographical first-person narrator" (201) and the "quasi-autobiographical first person narrative" (201). The former "is located at the periphery of the narrated events and his [or her] role is that of an observer, witness, biographer, chronicler, but not that of the hero [or heroine] who stands in the centre of the events" (201). Whereas with the latter, "the narrator and the hero [or heroine] of the story are identical" (201). One could argue that in the case of "The Lover: Dublin, 1965" it is a mixture of both, since although the hero of the story is Roger Casement, the narrator's part is more than only observing or witnessing, he also actively takes part in the events, especially as far as the sexual situations are concerned. However, when he describes the political life and the state funeral of Casement, the reader indeed gets the impression that the narrator is only located on the margins, observing the events. When discussing the first sentence of the short story, "I met him first over fifty years ago, not long after he returned from the Amazon jungle" (Bolger 53), it is interesting that the narrator does not introduce himself to the reader, however, "there is no doubt about the subject to whom it refers: it is the teller-character, because, with the exception of direct quotations, only this character can appear in the first person singular at the beginning of a narrative" (Stanzel 158). The narrator in this story uses innumerable first person singular pronouns, and he also introduces the name and important deeds of the hero to the reader, which reveals the "existential bond of the first-person narrator and his motivation to the story" (Stanzel 157). As far as reliability is concerned, according to Stanzel, the first-person narrator is defined as an unreliable narrator, since "he [or she] can have only a subjective and hence, only conditionally valid view of the narrated events" (89). This limited horizon also indicates that he or she cannot be omniscient, although in "The Lover: Dublin, 1965", this might be suggested at some points in the short story, for example, when the narrator describes the dreams of the rubber traders sitting on their verandas and drinking whiskey, which are impossible for him to actually know.

A discussion of the plot's duration requires a closer look at the relationship between the discourse time or "text time", as Hawthorn (96) labels it, on the one hand, and the story time, on the other hand. The latter can be deciphered on account of the specific years mentioned in the text. Hence, the story time covers a time span of roughly 52 years beginning with the first meeting of the narrator and Roger Casement in 1913 and ending with the state funeral in 1965. In

addition, it can be observed that the present occasion, the funeral, takes more or less two hours, because this is mentioned in connection with the incident of one soldier fainting at the funeral. However, the whole story time also covers the years before they met, with flashbacks to the Amazon and the Congo. When having a look at the discourse time, firstly, it has to be pointed out that according to Rimmon-Kenan, this is a highly problematic concept, since “there is no way of measuring text-duration” (51). Of course it can be argued that “The Lover: Dublin, 1965” in print is approximately six pages long (in the edition of *The Faber Book of Best New Irish Short Stories* published in 2004), or that the average reader would roughly need 15 minutes to finish the story. However, pages are no constant variable and some readers read more slowly than others or “the same reader will read more or less quickly depending upon such factors as textual complexity, reader involvement and tension” (Hawthorn 96). Although the term ‘text time’ is no particularly reliable measure, it is evident that the story time unambiguously exceeds the text time in Bolger’s short story.

Having covered the issue of time, this immediately leads to the overall organization of the story, namely its structure. It is composed of nine paragraphs, the last of which is briefly interrupted by a dialogue of three lines. No linear, classical structure can be found, and analepses, where the narrator vividly describes different former deeds of Roger Casement, whether political or sexual, prevail in this story. Various paragraphs start with a flashback but then turn into the present day or vice versa. Therefore, this change of perspective is always accompanied with a change of tense (see Stanzel 45). The narrator always brings the reader back to the present with phrases such as “her in this crowd” (Bolger 54), “[e]ven today” (Bolger 55), or “and be part of today” (Bolger 55). However, there are also a few instances of foreshadowing, where “the evocation of future events” (Hawthorn 279) becomes evident, such as the narrator’s depiction of his own funeral, or when he fantasizes about the land where Casement would wait for him at the very end of the story. Since the plot covers more than 50 years, it is not surprising that the concept of ellipsis is frequently applied where several items of information are omitted (see Hawthorn 101). Although the reader learns about various events in the past, both from Casement and from the narrator, he or she is also left in the dark various times. For example, amongst other things, it is not clear how many times they met, how Casement exactly was exposed, or

what happened between his execution and the day of the state funeral. Despite these gaps of information, the story has closure inasmuch as it “ends in such a way as to satisfy the expectations and answer the questions that it has raised” (Abbott 188). A clear ending is offered to the reader with the long expected state funeral and he or she is also able to imagine the remaining years of the elderly narrator because of his foreshadowed burial. However, it is always in the eye of the beholder, if it is a closed text and if all expectations are satisfied, and Hawthorne states that “a closed text is open to any sort of response and that an open text constrains what the reader does to it” (246).

After analysing the structure, it is also necessary to have a look at Bolger’s style and the rhetoric devices he uses. Depending on the narrative technique and occurrence of interior monologues, the reader has direct insight into the very personal thoughts and feelings of the narrator, since “the presentation of the consciousness of a fictional character can create the illusion of immediacy” (Stanzel 126). In addition, the short story offers various metaphors. Compact metaphors enrich the story with vivid images, for instance, the comparison of “the cold arctic wastes” (Bolger 54) with the untruthful married lives of former self-denying homosexual lovers from the narrator, or “the opened box of cruelty” (Bolger 53) referring to the tremendous injustice on the plantations. However, there are also more complex metaphors, for example, the incident where a young Irish soldier faints during the state funeral and cannot be removed for several minutes. The sentence: “He lies exposed, with his colleagues unable to break from their rigid poses and assist him” (Bolger 57), can be analysed as a metaphor for Casement’s homosexuality, since all his admirers and colleagues knew about it but no one accepted it or stood by him publicly; hence, figuratively, they let him lie there similarly exposed. Moreover, the fact that “[o]fficers finally remove him from sight and order the soldiers to close ranks like he had never been there” (Bolger 57) illustrates the bitter reality of a soldier’s life, since if he or she dies during a mission of war, he or she will be easily substituted by another soldier. Apart from these vivid comparisons, there are other stylistic devices used such as similes: “his life force was always like a glow” (Bolger 54), antitheses: “I could feel his strength even as he yielded” (Bolger 54), exaggerations: “briers that cut my skin to shreds” (Bolger 55), personification: “I was his nation” (Bolger 56), and various repetitions. The use of sarcasm can also be found, namely when the

narrator recalls what he always said when Casement thought about strategies of how to unite Protestants and Catholics, namely that one should only give them homosexuals “to hunt down and hate” (Bolger 56) in order to put aside their own quarrels. Moreover, although the situation is not funny at all, even one comical pun can be found, namely, when the woman at the funeral asks the narrator if he fought side by side with Casement, and the narrator thought to himself that side by side was not their style, referring to sexual preferences.

4.5 Background and Contextualization

4.5.1 Roger Casement – Traitor or Hero?

As already mentioned above, “The Lover: Dublin, 1965” is based on true events and it is necessary at this point to have a closer look at the life and death of the real Roger Casement. He was born in Sandycove, Dublin on the 1st of September, 1864. Interestingly, his mother Anne was a devout Catholic, whereas his father Roger was a rebel Protestant. When he was nine, his mother died in childbirth and only four years later his father also died of unexplained circumstances in Ballymena (see Mitchell 10ff.).

In 1884, Casement was employed by the International Association in Africa controlled by King Leopold II. However, he resigned in 1888 only to return to the Congo one year later, where, in Matadi, he shared a room with the young Joseph Conrad. Recognizing his potential, he was recruited by the Foreign Office in 1892 where in the following years his undercover skills were required to spy on “what munitions were passing through the Congo” (Mitchell 25) and to investigate the dreadful stories about the inhumane methods of the colonial regime on the rubber plantations under Leopold II. In addition, Casement worked to establish a British consulate. When voices, as for example the one of Herbert Samuel, got louder denouncing the suffering of the Congolese under the hands of the Government, Casement also decided to take action. He returned to England in 1903 and within eight days, he had compiled a draft of a report describing incidents of forced labour, slavery, malpractice, and brutality, such as for example, natives’ hands or feet being cut off when they arrived late to work (see

McDiarmid 169). Together with E D Morel, he founded the Congo Reform Association (henceforth CRA) in order to raise public awareness about this issue. After various discussions regarding the publication of the report, Lord Salisbury decided, against Casement's approval, "that the names of both perpetrators and victims would be excised from the published report and replaced by letters and symbols" (Mitchell 34). This censored version was finally published on the 12th of February, 1904 as "Correspondence and Report from His Majesty's Consul at Boma Respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo" (see Mitchell 19ff.).

After a few years in Ireland, where he also wrote some poetry, he re-joined the Foreign Office in 1906 and became Consul of São Paulo and Paraná and later Consul-General of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. A few years later, he was again selected to investigate atrocities committed by a British-owned rubber company in the frontier region of the Putumayo. He recorded his findings in a journal and according to Casement, the violations against human rights were even more horrific than those he had witnessed in the Congo. Travelling back to Europe in January 1911, he wrote two reports for the Foreign Office that he finished a few months later, and he was consequently rewarded with a knighthood for his humanitarian work. In July 1912, his reports were published in the so called "Blue Book" (Mitchell 68), which forced the British Prime Minister to appoint a Select Committee of Inquiry in order to investigate the level of culpability of British company directors. This was an enormous victory, since the directors were found guilty of negligence and "an amendment was made to the slavery laws making it a crime for a British company to plead ignorance in defence of the acts of its agents – making slave-owning an offence for a British subject anywhere in the world" (Mitchell 70). Consequently, Casement informed E D Morel in a letter about the end of the CRA and formally resigned from the Foreign Office in 1913 (see Mitchell 50ff.).

Roger Casement dedicated his remaining three years to Irish politics. On the 24th of October, 1913, he entered the political arena with a speech, preaching the politics of peace, at Ballymoney in County Antrim. He then joined the movement of the Irish Volunteers where he soon represented an essential leading part. In the course of his political career, he also travelled to America for recruitment and fundraising work, where he even met former president Theodore

Roosevelt. On the evening of the 31st of October, 1914, he arrived in Berlin and negotiations with the German Foreign Office over guarantees for the Irish independence were started. However, his “arrival in Germany was nothing short of a personal declaration of war” (Mitchell 100), which he justified in one of his journals being for Ireland’s sake, for a free Ireland after centuries of slavery (see Mitchell 76ff.).

On Good Friday, the 21st of April, 1916, three days before the Easter Rising began, Roger Casement was captured on the beach at Banna Strand in County Kerry and taken to London, where he was interrogated by British Intelligence chiefs and consequently placed under arrest in the Tower of London. After four days of trial, he was found guilty of High Treason and sentenced to death on the 9th of June, 1916. His famous last great speech, the speech from the Dock, goes down in the annals of history, dedicated to “*the people of Ireland*” (Mitchell 143). He was then moved to Pentonville prison and stripped of all his decorations, including his knighthood. Roger Casement was hanged on the 3rd of August, 1916 at 9am (see Mitchell 112ff.).

4.5.2 *Casement and Homosexuality – Saint or Pervert?*

While Casement was imprisoned, excerpts of his letters and diaries were secretly circulated by the British Government to the press, revealing his homosexuality and denoting him as a “moral offender” (Mitchell 134). Given the fact that “love between men was outlawed and punishable with long prison sentences” (Mitchell 135) in 1916, it is not surprising that these accusations counteracted all remaining arguments in his favour and possible sympathizers turned their backs on Casement. Former supporters even publicly announced their disgust and shock. Sir Ernley Blackwell, legal advisor to the Home Office, lists various reasons why Casement should be hanged in a Memorandum, amongst others:

Casement’s diary and his ledger entries, covering many pages of closely typed matter, show that he has for years been addicted to the grossest sodomitical practices. Of late years he seems to have completed the full cycle of sexual degeneracy and from a pervert has become an invert – a woman or pathic who derives his satisfaction from attracting men and inducing them to use him. (Mitchell 148)

From then on, expressions such as ‘sodomy’, ‘sexual degeneracy’, and ‘perversion’ echoed in the minds of the public and were spread like gossip in connection with Roger Casement’s name. To this day, uncertainty still exists about whether these so called “Black Diaries” (McDiarmid 169) were real, however, they fulfilled their purpose, namely to destroy Casement’s reputation, his respectability, and the movement and ideals he had fought for, worldwide. Mitchell even goes so far as to say that he was practically expunged from Africa’s, the Amazon’s, and Ireland’s official history (see 149).

Although by no means justifiable, these intolerant reactions may partly be understandable and explainable considering the temporal context and the fact that homosexuality was illegal at the time of Roger Casement’s death. However, what does the current Irish attitude look like, almost 100 years later and with the promulgation of the 1993 Criminal Law (Sexual Offence) Act, which decriminalized “homosexual acts between consenting adults over the age of seventeen” (McDiarmid 168) in the Republic of Ireland? At a symposium from the Royal Irish Academy on “Sir Roger Casement in Irish and World History, in May 2000” (McDiarmid 167), the Taoiseach’s⁵ representative announced that the present Irish state takes pride in Casement’s heroic work.

Today, the story of Roger Casement is represented in various works of literature and art, in numerous poems (including works by W. B. Yeats and Wilfrid Blunt), and in at least eight plays. His name also appears in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and in fictional works from, for instance, Agatha Christie and Stevie Smith. In addition, Michael Carson’s novel *The Knight of the Flaming Heart* is dedicated entirely to him. Apart from that, numerous paintings, portraits, and ballads also exist on the subject of Casement. An examination of Roger Casement’s afterlife demonstrates that he is a very prominent figure in popular culture. Various biographies have been written about him, seven radio and television documentaries are dedicated to him, and three monuments and one statue are additionally devoted to him. Apart from that, his name is also present in the general civic landscape, including railway stations, airports, and camping parks. Accepted by the public or not, the extent of the usage of the Casement ‘brand’ preserves his fame and infamy, and the thoroughness of his record-

⁵ This is the prime minister of Ireland.

keeping transforms him into a legend whose extraordinary life will always be accessible for posterity (see McDiarmid 170ff.).

4.5.3 *The Black Diaries – Real or Forgery?*

This question may not be answered easily, since uncertainties about the origin and authenticity of the probably forged nature of the diaries prevail to this day. Therefore, each and every person has to decide which Casement to believe in, the humanitarian, the knight, the Protestant, the Catholic, the hero, the martyr, the gunrunning rebel, the traitor, or the homosexual. However, various critics have claimed that the diaries are real, such as McDiarmid, when she cynically explains that otherwise a British forger would miraculously have had to have “learned the names of people in the places Casement visited all over the globe” (169). In addition, John Harris, a member of the Anti-Slavery Society, admits that they contain certain information about the Congo that only he and Roger Casement knew about (see McDiarmid 169).

Whether people believe in the authenticity of the diaries or not, when the book *The Black Diaries* was published in 1959 by Singleton-Gates, hardly anyone knew about the detailed contents. Only rumours were known because important newspapers, such as the *Times* (London) and the *Irish Times* never mentioned the diaries during the trial. Consequently, the public outcry of indignation was even louder when the tabooed entries were published. Apart from homoerotic poems, especially “The Nameless One”, and next to a letter where Casement cross-writes to his dear sister from the point of view of an American girl, complete descriptions of time, place and position of sexual interactions shocked the public. All these different sexual discourses, from poetic to romantic to pornographic, naturally engraved a certain opinion in the public’s mind (see McDiarmid 172ff.).

In 1936, William J. Maloney published a book titled *The Forged Casement Diaries*, where he argues that all the homosexual references in Casement’s diaries were interpolated by the British Government and by “Sir Basil Thomson, the Scotland Yard official who had found the diaries” (McDiarmid 197) and that they actually originate from a Peruvian rubber agent. This book was the first footstep on the road to the restoration of Casement’s reputation, since it was published in the *Irish Press*. However, it was a poem titled “Roger Casement” by

W. B. Yeats that provided the milestone for reversing the pollution surrounding Casement's name, which was also printed in the *Irish Press*, on the 2nd of February, 1937 (see McDiarmid 189):

I say that Roger Casement
Did what he had to do,
He died upon the gallows,
But that is nothing new.

Afraid they might be beaten
Before the bench of Time,
They turned a trick by forgery
And blackened his good name;

A perjurer stood ready
To prove their forgery true;
They gave it out to all the world-
And that is something new.

For Spring-Rice had to whisper it,
Being their Ambassador,
And then the speakers got it,
And writers by the score.

Come Alfred Noyes and all the troupe [sic]
That cried it far and wide,
Come from the forger and his desk,
Desert the perjurer's side;

Come speak your bit in public
That some amends be made
To this most gallant gentleman
That is in the quick-lime laid.

The fact that this poem has been cited in numerous Casement controversies ensures that a positive connotation sticks in the popular mind. Today, it can be said that from a modern and open-minded point of view, it is more Ireland's homophobia than Casement's homosexuality that should be in the dock. Fortunately, records prove that tolerance can be gradually found in contemporary Irish society, since readers of the *Irish Times* as early as 1973 casually wrote things like, "[i]t does not matter a damn whether Roger Casement was a homosexual or not" (McDiarmid 205) and one reader was "quite certain that the younger generation of Irish don't give one damn if the 'supposed diaries' were black, red, pink, or blue" (McDiarmid 205f.). Thus, in the following years, the general attitude towards homosexuality changed positively, and from the 1990s

onwards, it was no longer a taboo subject. Hence, thanks to this innovative, politicized sexual discourse, Roger Casement “lost much of his naughty aura” (McDiarmid 207) and eventually became a famous homosexual historical figure. In 1993, when same-sex sexual activities were decriminalized, the infamous *Black Diaries* “were forensically examined and declared genuine” (McDiarmid 208) for the first time in history. Consequently, the Home Office had to guarantee their publication in order to ensure public access (see McDiarmid 208). Still, Casement was and is a man who was confronted with gossip, whose name was and is polluted, and according to Bernard Shaw, a man whose “high reputation is still befouled by a slander” (McDiarmid 194). No generalized opinion about his personality can be found, and most certainly, there are people on both sides of the issue who either love him or hate him. Fortunately, however, the outdated mindset people used to have concerning homosexuality has now been reversed, and Roger Casement’s reputation is almost entirely restored in modern Irish society.

4.5.4 War and Homosexuality – Endangered Masculinity?

A contextualized reading about the fate of Roger Casement, necessarily leads to an analysis of his story in the general realm of homosexuals in military service. The predominant, generally narrow-minded opinion about soldiers is that they represent masculinity, characterized by strength, courage, patriotism, competitiveness, virility, and, not least of all, heterosexuality. However, the question arises if it is possible that homosexual love and male patriotic reverence can coexist peacefully in the context of war (see McDiarmid 209). As a matter of fact, gay soldiers have served their countries as honourably as heterosexual soldiers, yet this is still a topic that is very likely to be kept quiet. The majority of people believe that their ignorance concerning the challenges homosexuals in the military face is an acceptable response, but in “a military context influenced by sexual stigma, heterosexism, and mandated secrecy about sexual orientation, LGBTQ service members may have an increased likelihood of sexual victimization, such as sexual assault and sexual harassment” (Burks 604).

Although men who love other men certainly have served bravely in wars worldwide for centuries, anti-sodomy laws have endangered their military lives.

At first glance, president Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (henceforth DADT) policy from 1993 indicates a lifting of "the ban on gays and lesbians in the armed forces" (Estes 22), but on closer examination, it only legislates the silence of homosexual troops in active service, which again leads to public oblivion about their heroic deeds and courageous sacrifices (see Estes 22ff.). To be more precise, the underlying message of Clinton's policy was to lie about one's homosexuality, to ignore it, or to even deny it. Although this slightly innovative approach allowed entrance into the military, it equally transmitted the message that heterosexuality is the norm and homosexuals are inferior (see Burks 605). However, the DADT policy, which was actually first introduced during World War II, was repealed in 2011 under President Barack Obama (see "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"). Obviously, it can be argued that there had always been the possibility of discretion concerning one's own sexuality, however, if it was revealed, the person affected could certainly expect to be discharged unceremoniously.

In his survey, Steve Estes conducted more than 50 interviews with gay and lesbian veterans for the Veterans History Project, revealing their personal experiences and giving them the opportunity to speak freely about the current military policy. Records concerning, for instance, the gay submariner Perry Wood, prove that various heterosexual sailors also had sex with other men and returned home to their wives after the war (see Estes 27). This suggests the idea of a 'temporary homosexuality', which is further explained in an article by Chauncey who describes the former distinction between "congenital perverts" (26), who are always homosexual and "normal people submitting to acts of perversion, as a great many normal people do, [who] do not become perverts themselves" (26), such as soldiers isolated from females in a military context, for example.

In addition, the interviews address the idea that homosexual soldiers were considered dangerous because they are easier targets for blackmailing (see Estes 31). However, this frequent practice is not only true of soldiers, but also for any politician and is appropriately referred to as the "sale of silence" (Moran 52). Hence, President Eisenhower introduced an executive order announcing, "that 'sexual perversion' was reason enough to fire homosexuals and to discriminate against them in hiring for government positions" (Estes 31).

An interesting aspect is also mentioned in Estes' study, namely, that a great number of homosexual men volunteered for the Vietnam War in order "to

prove to themselves and others that they were real men” (Estes 32). This aspect juxtaposed to the common attitude that only heterosexual soldiers are considered masculine and brave. Another suitable example concerning this issue is found in Leonard Matlovich, who volunteered for the Air Force in Vietnam and said that he “had to prove that [he] was just as masculine as the next man” (Estes 36). In the course of his military career, he received two medals for bravery, a Bronze Star, and a Purple Heart. He received certain fame within the LGBTQ community and in 1975, he demanded the abolition of the ban on homosexuals in the military. However, after five years of fighting for justice, he accepted a discharge and a financial settlement and disappeared from the scene (see Estes 36ff.). Such unjust stories about individual fates are no isolated cases. Another example is Jose Zuniga, who was awarded *Soldier of the Year* but was suspended and demoted when his homosexuality became public (see Estes 42).

As already mentioned above, through the reproduction and “repetition of the most stereotypical versions of masculinity” (Álvarez 17), war is commonly seen as a symbol for the prowess of manliness, implying heterosexuality. Militarism, however, also suggests the image of camaraderie between men (see Vincent 73). This focus on male friendships, which could easily be interpreted as homoerotic, “challenges the heteronormative values of military masculinity” (Gonzalez-Allende 271). Thus, there is a fine line between male friendship and male love, which should not be misunderstood according to stereotypical military beliefs.

Since the year 2000, however, tolerance of homosexuality has become institutionalized, because all European countries lifted the ban that excluded homosexuals from the armed forces. This abandonment of former policy can be justified on the basis of Article 8 of the *European Convention on Human Rights* which guarantees the right of privacy announcing that “[e]veryone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence” (Oxford University Public Interest Law Submission 2).

Needless to say, homosexual women have to face similar prejudice and additional challenges by the mere fact that they are females in a male domain. They are simultaneously confronted with homophobia and sexism (as well as racism if they are of colour). However, the focus of this chapter is on male homosexuality with reference to the short story about Roger Casement.

5 “The Hardest Winter” by Breda Wall Ryan

5.1 The Author

Breda Wall Ryan grew up on a farm in County Waterford, which is part of the province of Munster, located in South-East Ireland. Today she lives in Bray, County Wicklow with her family. Besides her Bachelor's Degrees in English and Spanish, earned from University College, Cork, the author also has a Master's degree in Creative Writing from Trinity College, Dublin, as well as a Post-graduate Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language from Trinity College, London. An impressive number of her works have been broadcast on RTÉ, the national public service broadcaster of Ireland, and have also been published in different journals and anthologies, such as *The New Hennessy Book of Irish Fiction* and *The Faber Book of Best New Irish Short Stories*. This last anthology was published in 2004, and holds the short story this thesis will examine: “The Hardest Winter”. Alongside these accomplishments, her stories have been shortlisted for several literary prizes, including the William Trevor/Elizabeth Bowen Short Story Award, the Francis McManus Short Story Award, and the Davy Byrnes Irish Writing Award. However, since 2005, Wall Ryan has focused on writing poetry instead of fiction, which has also been published successfully in print and online (see Wall Ryan, *E-mail* Appendix A). Her poetry has won or been shortlisted for numerous literary awards as well. Wall Ryan's homepage provides her outlook on the future, informing followers that her first poetry collection, titled *In a Hare's Eye* will be published in 2015 (see Wall Ryan, *Home page*).

5.2 Plot Summary

“The Hardest Winter” is set against a rural Irish background and describes the difficult relationship between Kate and her mother, who are both living on a sheep farm. Kate's father died a year ago, so her mother's biggest wish is for her daughter to find a husband, who would be able to run the farm with her, take care of both women, and, above all, finally give her grandchildren. The mother never tires of trying to pair Kate off with potential sons-in-law, including her latest target,

Anthony, a traveller who currently helps them around the farm. However, the short story reveals that Kate is homosexual and not at all interested in men. Frequently, her thoughts wander off back to Lizzie Connors, a former lover of hers, who camped next to her home each year at shearing time. When the female artist, Róisín Cronin appears in town, and restores the stained glass of the town's church window, Kate falls in love with her and eventually even invites her over to dinner with her conservative mother. As a new attempt at matchmaking, however, her mother also asks Anthony to join them for supper. Unfortunately, in the course of this evening meal, Róisín reveals that she is moving to Spain the next day with the intent to live there, and she leaves without any kind words of farewell.

5.3 Story Level

As far as the setting of "The Hardest Winter" is concerned, the narrator does not reveal a specific name of a region or town. However, it immediately becomes clear that the farm is settled in a rural area when the author mentions the moor, the lane, and the closeness of one unnamed mountain. Apart from that, one gets the feeling of the family being out of touch with modern Ireland when Kate remembers the times before they purchased a freezer and had to salt and smoke all of their meat. Although the story does not reveal any particular place names, various indications suggest an Irish setting. First, Róisín is the diminutive of typical Irish names, such as Rós, Róise, or Róis, which are "common among the Ulster families from the sixteenth century" (Ó Muirthe 152). Additionally, the name is frequently used today due to the popular traditional Irish song "Róisín Dubh" and it, moreover, refers to a figurative name for Ireland (see Ó Muirthe 152). Another clue about the setting is the Irish sounding name of the town's saint, called Saint Spideoigín. This saint, however, is a fictional invention and "her story is a composite of that of several Christian martyrs" (Wall Ryan, *E-mail* Appendix B). A historical saint who shared some similarities with this composite martyr is Saint Agatha, from the third century, who cut her breasts off. Additionally, Saint Wilgefortis, who lived approximately in 800 A.D., grew a beard in order to look unattractive because she did not want to marry a Sicilian king to whom her father had betrothed her (see Favazza 14).

Although it is not stated specifically, the nearest town to the farm is located “[s]ix miles out, on the lower slopes of the mountain” (Wall Ryan 157) and seems rather small in size. Indications for this conjecture are that firstly, there is only one supermarket, the Co-op, which “is closed for dinner-hour” (Wall Ryan 156) and secondly, the newspaper features minor local affairs such as the restoration of the church’s window including three photographs. Another clue is that apparently there is only one restaurant, the Summit, since they are always eating there and Kate justifies her dinner invitation by saying, “I can’t stomach another of Mrs Summit’s deceased sandwiches, Róisín. Let’s get a proper dinner” (Wall Ryan 158). There is also the fact that Main Street, which may be the only proper street in town, leads to the church, which is rather indicative of small towns or rural regions as well. However, since Kate mentions that she is going out to “the pictures” (Wall Ryan 157), the place is big enough to have a small cinema.

Mainly due to climatic circumstances - the story takes place in wintry November - the farm and its surroundings have an inhospitable and inclement overtone made clear with phrases such as “the ground is iron-hard” (Wall Ryan 153), “terrible [sic] cold” (Wall Ryan 153), and “the frosted ground” (Wall Ryan 155). However, these unpleasant features suggest symbolically the general emotional atmosphere on the farm, including the relationship between mother and daughter. Róisín tends to see an upside to this isolated place, asserting: “Must be peaceful. Remote. Solitude to do your work” (Wall Ryan 157). Kate, however, views the farm negatively, focussing on her solitude and feeling that her only company are the sheep.

Various other cities are mentioned marginally, including Manchester, where Lizzie currently lives with her family in a “new council house” (Wall Ryan 155). Thus, Manchester connotes a bitter taste for the narrator because it represents the loss of her former love. Additionally, the attentive reader will notice Kate’s envy between the lines, since she must live her harsh life at the farm and Lizzie lives in a rather privileged home. Vermont, Berlin, and the Caribbean also appear in the story, as places where Róisín once lived, although it is not clear what exactly she did there. Lastly, Spain is also brought up briefly because Róisín plans to move to this country soon.

Having covered the issue of location, the aspect of time is equally important as far as the analysis of the short story’s setting is concerned. The title

already clearly alludes to the season, that is, winter, and the third line of the story reveals the exact month, which is November⁶. The narrator emphasizes the cold and dreary season with phrases such as “[t]he radio warns of blizzards” (Wall Ryan 157), “while the windows of the car fog up and ice-ferns grow on the inside of the glass” (Wall Ryan 157), and “I can hardly steer for shivering and my chilblained fingers ache” (Wall Ryan 157). The title additionally reveals that this is an extremely harsh season, as it is the “hardest” winter. This phrase, or a quite similar one, is used three times in the text. First, the narrator reports the radio weather forecast announcing “the coldest winter on record” (Wall Ryan 157), second, during the dinner it is mentioned that “a sheep farm is a bind in a hard winter” (Wall Ryan 158), and finally, when Kate’s short-lived crush leaves, she regretfully remarks: “He taps the car horn once and drives the threat of Róisín into the night, into the hardest winter on record” (Wall Ryan 159). This last reference does not only mirror the disagreeable weather outside, but also refers to her inner state of mind and her current situation, namely losing her love and being left alone with her uncomprehending mother.

The story reveals only one specific decade in relation to Kate’s father, who apparently “clung to the 1950s all his life” (Wall Ryan 154). In addition, the reader learns that he died one year before the beginning of the story and that he was already old when he married her mother. However, no exact year of the present appears and one can only infer the historical context with the help of some cultural references. One such allusion is the term ‘New Agers’, referring to the people camping in vans in the lane next to the sheep farm. According to Kate, they are “playing at travelling, living off the dole and whatever they can lift” (Wall Ryan 154). The *New Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines the New Age movement as a spiritual movement whose followers believed in a ‘New Age’ of love and personal transformation through mystical knowledge including esotericism and astrology. Apparently, this movement was very popular in the 1970s and 1980s, so the story is very likely to occur within this period. Apart from that, three Irish actors are mentioned: Daniel Day Lewis, Brenda Fricker, and Colm Meaney. Considering the fact that Kate refers to them in connection with going to the cinema, this could be a reference to the Oscar winning movie “My Left Foot”, which features the first two listed actors. This drama film, telling the story of the extraordinary Irish artist

⁶ Albeit, strictly speaking, astronomically winter only begins on 22 December.

Christy Brown, was released in the year 1989, which again would suit the inferred time frame. However, there is no movie in which all three mentioned actors are featuring together; thus, it cannot be said exactly which movie Kate and Róisín are watching.

Having finished the analysis of the setting, this thesis will now turn to the characters, since it is they who absorb one's attention while "making the action move" (Abbott 124). Breda Wall Ryan creates characters that are equally vivacious and rough-edged such as the landscape in which they live. One such main round character is Kate. She is unmarried and lives with her mother on a sheep farm, which she has basically been running alone since her father died last year. However, she is used to hard work, as she has been engaged in the daily chores since she was 15. This hard everyday life is mirrored in her physical appearance: the muscles along her forearms "stand proud from drawing firewood" (Wall Ryan 153) and the comparison of her hands to Róisín's soft hands suggests that her own reflect signs of hard work such as callused skin or dirty nails due to the fact that she does not wear work-gloves. Her haircut apparently is also practical for farming life without falling into her eyes. However, when she prepares herself to drive into town, she "tease[s] out a few strands of fringe with a hairbrush" (Wall Ryan 156), though only until her mother tells her that she looks nice, to which she responds by removing them instantly.

Although the term 'homosexual' or 'lesbian' never directly appears in the short story, it is evident that Kate has same-sex desires. These feelings surface in various ways: first, reminiscences about her former love affair with Lizzie and the wish that they were running the farm together, second, her infatuation with the artist Róisín and the desire to be with her, and third, the fact that she absolutely does not want to find a man, thinking that "[n]o man would get the place by shoving his hands up my jumper or stretching his legs under my table" (Wall Ryan 155). The very last passage of the story indicates that she is good at keeping up appearances, probably because she had to dissemble her sexual feelings most of her life, when she keeps on smiling although she feels miserable because once again the dream of a happy love with a female partner has shattered into pieces.

A main aspect of this short story is the mother-daughter relationship, so the second important round character is Kate's mother. She is widowed and also

lives at the farm but appears not to include herself in the heavy farm work, but rather cooks, knits, and takes care of her beloved chickens. Her most crucial role is the one of the matchmaker, since she has always wanted her daughter to marry “the right man” (Wall Ryan 158) in order to produce her longed-for grandchildren regardless of Kate’s own preferences or wishes. Although she ignores it, she is obviously aware of her daughter’s homosexuality, since remarks such as “*Alternative lifestyle*. Turning my own words on me” (Wall Ryan 154), or the description of the moment when she informs Kate about the woman artist who fixes the stained glass and she then “searches [her] face for a sign of interest” (Wall Ryan 156), suggest that previous talks about her daughter’s sexual interests must have happened. However, the fact that she obviously drove Lizzie away in the first place and her cold refusal to Kate’s suggestion of three women living on the farm: “That won’t happen, Kate” (Wall Ryan 159) prove that it is she who will, in the end, decide her daughter’s future.

The character of Róisín Cronin is also of great importance to the plot because she repeatedly arouses Kate’s sexual feelings. She can be analysed as a globetrotter, since she has been to various locations before, including Vermont, Berlin, and the Caribbean. Róisín is only temporarily in town because she is an artist and is currently fixing the stained glass in the church’s window that depicts the town’s seventh-century saint, Spideoigín. There is a feature on her in the local newspaper, which is when Kate first notices her. She has “[h]igh cheekbones and dark curly hair [that] frame[s] wide-awake eyes that gaze straight into the lens” (Wall Ryan 156). In addition, her voice sounds like “melted chocolate” (Wall Ryan 157) and her hands are “chamois-soft” (Wall Ryan 157) with short broad nails. Apparently, her eyes are the same as Lizzie Connor’s, which is why Kate immediately falls in love with her. After various dates and meetings for sandwiches, a romantic relationship develops and it comes to physical contact in Kate’s car. Although Róisín has kind words for Kate, comparing them, as a couple, with “hot apple pie and ice cream; different but compatible” (Wall Ryan 158), however, it becomes clear at the shared dinner at the end of the story that this liaison was less serious for her when she simply announces that she will leave for Spain the next day, without warning or preparing Kate in advance.

Lizzie Connor, although she only appears in flashbacks, is the fourth most important character in “The Hardest Winter”. In the past, she used to camp in the

lane next to the farm every year at shearing time with her mother Mrs Connor and Seanie Connor, who could be either Lizzie's brother or father. Either way, the honorific suggests that Mrs Connor is married. Kate's mother admits that she enjoyed and now misses their company, but when she found out about the love relationship between Lizzie and her daughter, she somehow ended their visits. Lizzie lives now in Manchester; she was married off to her cousin and now has a baby and a second on the way. As only one point of view is presented to the reader, it is not clear if Lizzie was as in love with Kate as vice versa and suffers now similarly, or if she lives a happy life with her husband.

Anthony is also worth mentioning, although rather as a flat character, since he accompanies the whole plot and probably will stay long after Kate's mother has asked him to. He is one of the New Agers, travellers who Kate is not very fond of, who camp in their vans next to the farm. He immediately offers his help on the farm starting with sawing firewood and mending the sheep-wire and, consequently, he will probably stay at least until spring after the lambing. Apart from that, according to Kate's mother, he is not married, enjoys reading, has his own van, is well-mannered, works fast and tidy, and both the Leghorns and his nieces adore him. For her, he is good company and the 'right' man because she feels that he would be a good father. He is described as a polite person, but it does not become clear if he has romantic feelings for Kate, like her mother wishes so badly. However, during the dinner an almost intimate atmosphere develops when he announces that he sees through Kate's hard shell and expresses his willingness to do the lambing her way. In addition, he is not bothered at all when Róisín "flashes her eyes at him" (Wall Ryan 159), so maybe he only has eyes for Kate, but she does not notice because her aversion prevails. However, when Kate's mother asks him to stay, he agrees.

Next to these main characters, who absolutely "motivate the events" (Abbott 125), there are also some personages mentioned which are of lesser importance, such as Kate's father, Anthony's family, an ex-seminarian and a vegetarian bee-keeper, as possible husbands for Kate according to her mother, and Mrs Summit, who runs the local restaurant. Abstract institutions, such as the Forestry, who put the price up for firewood, and various different animals also make an appearance. The latter, for example, sheep, dogs, rabbits, and different breeds of chickens perfectly suit the rural discourse and the life on a farm.

The last aspect of the analysis of the plot are themes and motifs. One major theme frequently addressed in "The Hardest Winter" is solitude. The harshness of life in rural Ireland, the dreary season, and the remote location of the farm are all features of the story that suggest and underline Kate's lonely condition. The fact that she is a lesbian who will probably never find true love in the traditional conservative Irish countryside, further, contributes to this solitary image. In an e-mail, Breda Wall Ryan wrote that "making the protagonist homosexual was to accentuate her isolation and aloneness in an already isolated rural location, and the hopelessness of trying to fit in with family expectations" (Wall Ryan, *E-Mail Appendix A*). Addressing the issue of family expectations, the story is also a study of the mother-daughter relationship and the resulting clash between generations. After the lord of the manor, Kate's father, passed away, it was Kate's duty to run the farm. Ingman says that the bond between mother and daughter is depicted in many Irish short stories as a regressive one, "pulling the daughter back into the past and hindering her move forward into a wider, more liberating future" (*History* 223). This statement is very suitable to Kate's situation, since her mother wants her to stick to traditional, old values and find a husband to settle down with on the farm and produce grandchildren with, denying her the ability to move on with her own desired life and to develop her own individual identity. Despite all this negativity, Kate does not succeed in separating herself entirely from her mother but continues working on the farm, living with her and possibly also succumbing to her wish for a son-in-law. Maybe her mother also had to experience oppression from her parents or her husband, who is described as an old man when they married, and she now transfers this material oppression to her daughter (see Ingman, *History* 222). Apart from these two main themes, the author of course also addresses the love between two women and the alternative lifestyle of the New Age Travellers. Similar to Bolger's short story, the former includes various subthemes, such as social prejudice, injustice, forbidden love, hidden desire, suppressed feelings, and the parental wish to save face in a small town where everyone knows everyone. In addition, less abstract but more concrete motifs include farming, more precisely, sheep farming and shepherding. The narrator explains various exact descriptions of working processes on a sheep farm, such as mending the sheep-wire or the process of lambing and whether to use a dead lamb's skin or Vick's Vapour Rub.

5.4 Discourse Level

This short story can be classified as a coming-of-age story in combination with a realistic slice-of-life story. According to Harry Shaw, the latter term derives from the French expression *tranche de vie* and represents a “segment of actual experience” (349) by means of an author who “opens a door for the reader, permits him [or her] to see and hear characters, and then closes the door without comment or observation” (349). “The Hardest Winter” uses no futuristic or unrealistic elements but tells the story of a young woman that actually could have happened exactly the way Breda Wall Ryan wrote it, thus, representing a ‘slice of Kate’s life’. According to Wharton (see 12f.), this method is frequently related to the concept of stream of consciousness, differing, however, in the fact that the latter notes both mental as well as visual reactions. This attempt to express inner thoughts and sensations, for instance in Wall Ryan’s story, “I should have kept my hands in my pockets” (Wall Ryan 155) or “I say nothing, just keep on smiling hard, because what’s the point?” (Wall Ryan 159) has the effect of “making vivid a tidal rush of emotion” (Wharton 13).

As far as the classification of a coming-of-age narrative is concerned, the term means, “to reach full legal adult status” (Millard 4) and it is commonly linked to the *Bildungsroman*. This German expression was coined in the year 1819 and means a story “recounting the early emotional development and moral education of its protagonist” (Millard 2). Thus, depictions of Kate’s adolescent life can be seen as a modern example of the *Bildungsroman*. However, it is argued by Hardin that “there is no consensus on the meaning of the term *Bildungsroman*” (x). The point when a fictional character comes of age is not carved in stone, and, additionally, disagreement over the interpretation of the term *Bildung* prevails.

Analysing now the narrative voice used in this short story, one only has to finish the second sentence, “[...] but Mam and I hear”, to learn that a first-person narrator is addressing the reader in the present tense. Similar to the narrative situation in “The Lover: Dublin, 1965”, the embodied first-person narrator and fictional character, Kate, shows “a restriction of [her] horizon of knowledge and perception” (Stanzel 201), as the reader is limited to one character’s point of view. However, the narrator is simultaneously the main protagonist, and this allows the reader to experience her inner thoughts and feelings, for instance: “What she [the

mother] really wants are grandchildren" (Wall Ryan 156) or "I was happy with Lizzie. She [the mother] didn't want that" (Wall Ryan 159). As far as reliability is concerned, it is apparent that Kate is an unreliable narrator, since, as suggested above, she is only able to offer a "limited insight into the true state of affairs" (Stanzel 207).

Moreover, the dynamics between the narrating self and the experiencing self as "a specific characteristic of the first-person narrative situation" (Stanzel 72) become evident in "The Hardest Winter". Stanzel explains that the close bond between these two concepts is "an existential connection between the experience of the protagonist and the narrative process" (91) hence, the latter is the "character involved in the action" (Stanzel 86), the hero, whereas the former simply is the self as narrator. Thus, when one reads the sentence, "I pull on clean cords and a half-decent jumper and tease out a few strands of fringe with a hairbrush" (Wall Ryan 156), it is evident that the self is actually experiencing this action. On the other hand, the following description of former times indicates that it is the narrative self's turn: "Mrs Connors used to sit with Mam by the kitchen fire in the evenings, our winter socks snaking off their knitting needles, while they debated the relative merits of oiled wool and washed yarn, or wondered when the young ones, me and Lizzie Connors, would outgrow our sulks" (Wall Ryan 154). However, the fact that the first-person narrator can not only remember things from the past, "but can also re-create phases" (Stanzel 82) of his or her former life, proves that his or her horizon is not necessarily limited to his or her actual experiences.

Similar to Dermot Bolger's short story, the discourse time, the period of time the average reader would need to complete it, is approximately 15 minutes, because it has been written and published on seven pages. As usual, the story time requests closer examination. By means of a flashback, it dates back to the 1950s, which is the only year offered in the entire story. This flashback informs the reader that Kate's father was rather old-fashioned and clung to the past and the traditional way of farming, which is depicted, for example, when he refuses to buy a tractor so as not to waste money. The action, however, one year after the father's death, covers a duration of approximately two weeks, since at the beginning of the story the travellers ask Kate for work on the farm for one week, but over the course of the story, the narrator reveals that "[t]he travellers are

staying another week” (Wall Ryan 158) because her mother offered them more work. However, foreshadowing reveals that Anthony will stay on longer, until after the lambing, on her mother’s explicit request.

Flashbacks and foreshadowing immediately lead to the analysis of the general structure of the short story. For the beginning, the author uses a typical *in medias res* technique, since the first sentence, “The Travellers move into the sheltered lane under cover of darkness” (Wall Ryan 153), does not reveal any specific information. The reader does not know who the travellers are, where the action takes place, or who is narrating the events. The overall linear structure, where the narrator describes the present events going on at the farm or in town is sometimes interrupted by flashbacks featuring Kate’s father, or more frequently, the time she spent with Lizzie Connors. These flashbacks evoke both positive as well as negative memories, since, on the one hand, Kate remembers the valuable time together with her former lover, and, on the other hand, she is additionally reminded of the pain of her parting. There are also important instances of foreshadowing: the possibility that Anthony will continue to stay at the farm, and the last request of the mother, asking Kate to give him a chance. However, these incidents of foreshadowing only convey a negative image, since it is obvious to the reader that Kate will never become as happy with a man as she would be with a woman by her side. As far as the ending is concerned, one can easily classify it as an open ending, since “the clock of the plot ticks until the very last moment [and] possibilities suggested in the course of the story are left unexplored or at least unresolved” (Bonheim 119). It is quite peculiar that the very last sentence is a question, whose answer the reader will never find out. According to Bonheim, this mode of speech is preferable to a comment in order to “cast doubts on how the preceding narrative is to be taken” (160) which is a very popular technique in post-1900 samples of short stories. He further argues that the closing speech often “presents the climax of the story” (160), and that these final words can additionally be seen as a mere afterthought, which is very short and frequently “take[s] the form of a question” (160). All these aspects are valid for the last phrase in “The Hardest Winter”, namely when the mother asks Kate, “Can’t you settle for that?” (Wall Ryan 159) because the reader does not know Kate’s answer - if she will continue resisting her mother or if she will give in and consider settling down with Anthony despite her homosexual preferences.

Moreover, these definite last lines reach a climax, as they reveal her mother's hard-heartedness when she calmly says that a third woman will never live on the farm with them, and Kate admits to herself that Róisín was never a serious threat to her mother's grandchildren.

After covering the issue of structure, stylistic features are also worth being analysed when observing the author's style. Breda Wall Ryan uses various figures of speech, making her plot very lively and vivid. Examples of such rhetoric devices would be similes, for example when Kate regretfully looks back at her wish to live with Lizzie, "that dream fell the way leaves fall from trees" (Wall Ryan 155) or when the chainsaw produces sawdust that "[m]ounds up like spilled sugar" (Wall Ryan 155). In addition, Kate and Róisín compare themselves to "chalk and cheese" (Wall Ryan 158) and "hot apple pie and ice cream" (Wall Ryan 158) respectively. Moreover, Kate's mother apparently is fond of idioms or "daft sayings" (Wall Ryan 155) as Kate puts it, such as "to warm the cockles of our hearts" (Wall Ryan 155) and "[t]hat'll stick to your ribs and keep your skin from cracking" (Wall Ryan 158). Various figurative images also occur, for example "[h]er words are ice in my guts" (Wall Ryan 159), "disappointment fogs up the warm kitchen" (Wall Ryan 156), and "the way boys' eyes used to lick me on the school bus" (Wall Ryan 157). The author also makes use of repetition for reasons of emphasis, because the fact that Kate has to, but does not want to, "settle" is mentioned various times, just as the phrase "the right man" reappears frequently.

Apart from repetition, this short story contains numerous symbols that offer a galaxy of interpretations. The winter is very prominent, as the title already suggests, and according to the *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, it relates to darkness and misery, which exactly mirrors Kate's situation. In addition, de Vries also suggests that the winter represents "the enemy of love and charity" (de Vries s.v. "Winter"). This image would connect perfectly with Kate's mother, since she is absolutely against her daughter's female love affair and does not allow her to realize it. Various animals take part in the plot as well, for example, the concept of sheep and shepherding. However, it is doubtful whether they really are an important symbol, since they are mainly used in biblical literature with religious quintessence. In the case of "The Hardest Winter", they probably do not convey a specific meaning such as the typical metaphor for sacrifice or the Christian flock who needs Jesus as their shepherd (Ferber s.v. "Sheep"). They are certainly not

a symbol of diabolical maleficence either, as they can be interpreted in the “Siege of Druin Damghaire”, an Irish tale (Chevalier and Gheerbrant s.v. “Sheep”); the sheep farm in this story was possibly merely selected to underline the rural and remote setting. Whereas Kate takes care of the tame and harmless sheep, the mother is in charge of the chickens, the Leghorns that seem a bit suspicious to Kate, since they are not able to look somebody straight in the face but only give them “one evil eye at a time” (Wall Ryan 153). Due to the fact that chickens also symbolize cowardice (de Vries s.v. “Chicken”), one can argue that each woman owns their appropriate companion animal because Kate’s mother is too ashamed and intolerant to accept her daughter’s sexuality, which one could analyse as a cowardly character trait. The image of the window is also repeatedly mentioned because it is the reason for Róisín’s visit in town. Scholars argue that it symbolizes receptivity because it guarantees the inflow of air and light (Chevalier and Gheerbrant s.v. “Window”) and it, furthermore, is related in literature to “the place for a woman to contact her lovers, or vice versa” (de Vries s.v. “Window”). Although the latter meaning probably mainly concerns heterosexual couples in classical literature, it can easily be applied to Kate’s situation, since she goes daily to see Róisín working on the church’s window under various pretexts. As far as receptivity is concerned, one could read into it that Kate should allow herself to be loved; to receive love and not to be reduced to ‘chalk’ or ‘cheese’. Lastly, the picture of Kate’s fringe sticks to the reader’s mind, since it appears three times. In *A Dictionary of Symbols*, the entry about ‘hair’ very suitably explains that it “is one of woman’s main weapons and, therefore, the fact of its being concealed or displayed, plaited or hanging loose, is often the sign of a woman’s availability” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant s.v. “Hair”). The fact that Kate’s mother wants her to tease out a few strands of fringe in order to look nice every time she visits town underlines the overall opinion that showing more hair equals beauty and availability. Kate herself makes use of this stereotype when she first sits down to eat with Róisín and secretly rearranges her hair. However, the very last paragraph reveals that once again, the mother changed Kate’s hair to impress Anthony and Kate leaves it the way her mother wants it. This gesture could be interpreted as the first sign of surrender.

5.5 Background and Contextualization

5.5.1 Irish Women Writers

Dealing with a short story written by a female Irish writer, a brief excursus into this, often marginalized, literary field is necessary. Scholars date back the starting point of the study of modern fiction by Irish women to the early 19th century with authors such as Maria Edgeworth or Sydney Owenson. Sad but true, in 1929 women were still neglected in both the *Norton Anthology* and the canon of Irish literature (see Weekes, *Writers* 8). However, some scholars argue that over the last two decades, the work of women writers from Ireland has finally been deservedly recognized within the field of Irish literature studies. The first anthologies of female writers as well as essays criticizing “the marginalisation of women writers in Irish literary history” (D’hoker 1) surfaced in the late 1980s.

According to Ingman, there is no notable difference in form when comparing short stories written by male or female Irish authors. However, the topics reveal a different approach, since at the centre of works by women writers are themes such as female emigration, female sexuality, and the mother-daughter relationship (see *History* 253). As an excellent example, “The Hardest Winter” features the latter two. These apparently new topics in Irish fiction were crowned with great success that is notable inasmuch as various male contemporaries also began to create female main protagonists in their stories. This process is called “the increasing feminization of the Irish short story” (Ingman, *History* 253).

Another innovative trend that can be observed in the study of Irish women’s writing is the use of new theoretical frameworks, for instance, the “application of French feminist theory, trauma theory, or gender studies” (D’hoker 1). These new approaches reveal various interesting insights into the work of female writers in Ireland. Authors use them, such as feminist theory, in order to illustrate the daily reality of women living in contemporary Ireland (see D’hoker 1). These female realities in patriarchal society include husbands, motherhood, and housewife duties. Witting observes that “[w]hether we want it or not, we are living in society here and now, and proof is given that we say ‘yes’ to the social bond when we conform to the conventions and rules that were never formally

enunciated but that nevertheless everybody knows and applies like magic” (39). However, the female protagonist in “The Hardest Winter” gradually rejects this social bond by loving women, avoiding procreating, and refusing to marry a ‘provider’ for economic reasons and hence, deconstructs general conventions in a typical rural Irish society. Therefore, one can also interpret Wall Ryan’s engagement with female sexual identity as a challenge of the prevailing social and cultural constructions that usually focus on heterosexuality as the sexual norm. Addressing the aspect of gender theory, the story additionally questions typical gender roles and masculinity, since it is Kate, a young woman, who runs the farm and performs all the hard work without a single word of complaint.

When writing about homosexuality, the Irish feminist writer Emma Donoghue was asked in an interview about the definition of lesbian narrative and if it should either focus on the text, the writer, or the reader. Declaring that she is a lesbian herself, she opines that it is not enough if the author alone is homosexual, but that it rather depends on the text and its lesbian characters in order to correspond to the definition of lesbian narrative. When analysing this new genre of fiction, she further argues that it is not the form that is innovative, such as special stylistic or structural experiments, because most writers play with these, but it is the content, namely taboo topics like contemporary lesbian relationships. Donoghue also verbalizes a thought that haunted her in her teenage years that Kate’s mother from “The Hardest Winter” possibly also shared, namely, that the expression ‘Irish lesbian’ is a contradiction in itself due to the prevailing moral standards of Irish Catholicism. However, she later “learned to define both terms rather more broadly” (qtd. in Moloney 177) and now these two words are not a bit incompatible for her. In the course of the interview, the author states how she discovered that she is not an isolated case, but that today there are many Irish lesbians who are brave enough to step out of the closet (see qtd. in Moloney 175ff.).

5.5.2 *Rural Ireland*

Malcolm states that “the rural setting derives ultimately from Moore” and various twentieth-century Irish writers of short stories chose it in order to emphasize the “drab constraints of time and place” (31). According to the national Census, if a

person lives in a town with 1,500 inhabitants or less, this is a rural area (see Brennan 31). The year 1961 is a landmark when it comes to the Irish power struggle of rural versus urban society, since for the first time in history, “the rural population became the minority population on the island” (Brennan 31). While life in the countryside used to be harsh and tough, sociologists now argue that modernization has largely already arrived in rural Ireland, integrating the wasteland into the capitalist system of the rest of the country (see Brennan 31). However, the town described in “The Hardest Winter” is obviously a typical rural place from former times, and the farm is little modernized as can be seen in the example of the freezer.

Speaking of historical figures, this rural exodus can be observed with the help of the regular national Census. Brennan argues that “the first reliable source of information on the Irish population is the 1841 census” (32). Comparing different Censuses, Brennan shows that the global Irish population experienced a significant decline between 1841 with 8.2 million and 1991 with 5.1 million inhabitants (see 33ff.). Various reasons obviously underline this decrease, the Great Famine was only one of them. Brennan argues that this decline cannot be explained by analysing the death or the birth rate but rather the migration rate. In the most recent Census taken in 2011, the current population of the state ranks at 4,588,252 people (see Central Statistics Office, *Population* 9). As far as the development of the rural and the urban population is concerned, when the Census was first implemented in 1841, 7.0 million people lived in the former whereas only 1.2 million lived in the latter. However, 120 years later, this situation has changed completely, since in the average ranking, the population is balanced, as 2.1 million people live in rural Ireland and 2.1 million people in urban Ireland. However, examining the exact numbers of the 1961 Census, the urban population already surpassed the rural population.

When defining the former rural Irish society, one has to take three terms into account, namely landowners, tenants, and labourers. The landowners or landlords, owned the land, the second group rented their farms from the landlords, and the labourers, depending on the season, hired themselves out to farmers in order to help where work was required in exchange for wages. The tenants and the labourers in former times formed the group of the peasantry. However, today one still distinguishes between landlords, farmers, and peasants.

The distinction between the latter two “is often based on the degree of respectability reached in the social scale” (Carpentier 95). Although the dividing lines between these two categories fluctuate, as far as “The Hardest Winter” is concerned, Kate and her mother are clearly farmers, since they do not only make a living with their sheep farm, but also sell different produce of their labour in order to earn some profit. Carpentier argues that various realities of rural Irish life include the following topics: housing, food, work, religion, marriage, and death. These topics are all, either directly or indirectly, addressed in Wall Ryan’s short story. Rural areas and the countryside are also often linked to peace and harmony, and a simple and happy life. However, this tranquil image is in reality often overshadowed by difficulties that Irish farmers have to face such as backbreaking work, harsh weather conditions, and crop failures (see Carpentier 94ff.). In addition, “The Hardest Winter” touches upon the topic of dependence on authority when the author mentions that Kate and her family are at the mercy of the Forestry, since this institution simply raises the price for their firewood although the family “couldn’t afford a winter’s supply” (Wall Ryan 153) anymore.

Although religion is no main topic in “The Hardest Winter”, it can be discerned as an implied issue. The rather conservative attitude of the mother towards the daughter’s sexuality can be traced back to religious beliefs and Catholic morals. Although times are changing, the majority of people living in the countryside still follow traditional conventions and incidents involving same-sex relationships are always subjected to criticism as well as gossip. Hence, Kate’s mother either wants to avoid the latter or she possibly desires to exemplify a perfect Christian life in order to find her inner peace. Consequently, the mother’s egocentric perspective, where her attitude is the norm and anything differing from it is subject to strong distaste, does not permit a love relationship between Kate and Lizzie, or Kate and Róisín.

5.5.3 The Clash between Generations: Mother vs. Daughter

As evidenced by the, partly age-related, traditional attitudes discussed in the chapter before, a clear clash between generations is perceptible when analysing the relationship between mother and daughter. Breda Wall Ryan succeeds in transforming the typical mother-son story featuring the Irish bachelor who grows

old alone on the family's farm into an innovative mother-daughter story where the usually male farmer is a lesbian (see Ingman, *History* 259). Both scenarios have in common that the younger generation is usually responsible for the elder generation; a fact the parents usually rely on. However, it is not always easy for the younger generation to find a partner who is willing to accept an often-unpromising future on a remote farm in rural Ireland. Not only the hard work, but also the precarious economic situation acts as a deterrent for future spouses.

Although the clash between mother and daughter is evident to the reader, the tensions in the story are subtle, as there are no major emotional discussions or fierce arguments between the two family members on the topic of lesbianism. They do argue about other issues, however, for example, if the Travellers are allowed on their property, or about the length of Anthony's stay on the farm. The only time when Kate raises her voice is when her mother complains that she misses a woman's company. "What am I then, a man? Or maybe a sheep?" (Wall Ryan 154) is Kate's offended response. The mother's statement suggests that she does not accept her daughter as entirely female, maybe because she is absolutely aware of her daughter's sexual orientation and thus, sees something more masculine in her. This notion of female homosexuals as masculine still prevails today and it is supported by lesbians who enjoy to perform what Judith Halberstam has defined as "female masculinity" (Sullivan 11). Although Kate is described as a tough and independent character, this affront definitely hurts her feelings as mirrored in her thoughts, "That rankles" (Wall Ryan 154) and her raging reaction when slamming the door and storming out of the room. However, in general the reader gets the impression that their emotions are partly muted, since Kate and her mother do not openly address the topic of homosexuality because of the mother's reluctance and ignorance. Only at the very end, when Kate suggests that someday maybe three women could live on the farm, does her mother calmly but powerfully reject this thought by asserting that this would never happen.

6 “Windfalls” by Mary Rose Callaghan

6.1 The Author

The novelist and biographer Mary Rose Callaghan was born in 1944 in Dublin. After finishing her studies in English, History, and Ethics/Politics at University College Dublin, she received a diploma in Education in 1969, allowing her to teach in various different secondary schools in Ireland and England. Alongside her teaching career, she has also published numerous journalistic articles in diverse media, including *The Irish Times*, *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Irish Independent*, and *Hibernia*. She moved to America in 1975 where she finished her first novel *Mothers*, which was published in 1982. In addition to her fictional work, she was also Associated Editor for the first and second editions of the *Dictionary of Irish Literature*. After spending half of her time in Newark, Delaware, and half of her time in Dublin, she eventually settled in Bray in 1993 (see Gonzalez 54). Her plots, although mostly “wild and quirky” (Gonzalez 54) at first glance primarily focus on serious themes, as is evident in her short story, “Windfalls”.

6.2 Plot Summary

In “Windfalls”, Mary Rose Callaghan tells the story of Kay O'Reilly and her upper-class family. In the course of the short story, the reader learns how she finds out about her husband's affair with a French au pair named Desirée du Pont. Subsequently, Kay is confronted with the situation that Tom, her husband, and Desirée are having a baby of one month. Following this discovery, the unorthodox reactions on Tom's faux pas of everybody involved are described. The elder son, James, a lawyer, preoccupies himself only with the money that his father now additionally has to pay, and Ruairi, the younger son, an artist, fully accepts his father's deed and only wishes the baby to be a girl. The topic of divorce is very prominent in Callaghan's work, since regarding the temporal context of “Windfalls”, divorce had just become legal in Ireland at the time when the story is set, and Desirée is convinced that Tom will divorce Kay in order to marry her. In

addition, Callaghan also subtly addresses homosexuality, because Ruairi came out when he was 15, and in the action described, he has a homosexual relationship. His father, a successful but staunchly conservative Catholic psychiatrist, who thinks that homosexuality is an illness, does not at all tolerate this fact. The unconventional solution to the family's delicate situation is to avoid a public scandal and allow Desirée to live in the O'Reilly's gate lodge to raise her daughter, Lucy, with the help of Kay. However, she later finds a boyfriend of her own age, and although Tom gradually withdraws from the family, he does not divorce Kay.

6.3 Story Level

Beginning with the local setting of Callaghan's short story, the reader encounters numerous references to concrete Irish places. The main plot takes place in Killiney, a suburb of Dublin. This is the region where Kay and her family live during the story. Additionally, they also possess a holiday home in County Kerry, in the province of Munster, in the south-west of the country. One brief flashback also reveals that Kay and Tom lived in Chicago for five years. Other countries, apart from Ireland and America, are mentioned as well, including Greece, when Kate reminisces about her unfulfilled dream of travelling there, and France: firstly, because it is Desirée's native country, and secondly, in connection with Tom's yearly pilgrimage to Lourdes with the Dublin diocese. As far as real places in Dublin are concerned, Callaghan directly references the University College Dublin, Trinity College, the Temple Bar area, the Dún Loaghair Shopping Centre, the Westbury Hotel, Merrion Square, Mount Street, and the Quinns' of Baginbun. Some of these settings are described in great detail such as the "rambling Killiney mansion with its chandeliers and stripped pine doors" (Callaghan 49), or the lounge in the Westbury Hotel featuring "pink lamp shades and discreet pairs of pink brocade armchairs placed around tables" (Callaghan 57). These lively descriptions "form verbal scaffolds that the reader imaginatively transforms into pictures" (Meyer 80) with the obvious intention of enlivening the story.

Focussing now on the temporal context, one has to take into account the short story's date of publication, namely the year 1997. The observant reader encounters two main clues that suggest that "Windfalls" literally takes place at the same time, or one year before. The first clue is when James utters his concerns about his father "paying college fees at seventy" (Callaghan 51), whereupon Kay briefly answers that college fees have already been abolished. The reference to the so-called "free fees" (Denny 6) initiative, and the fact that the Irish Government "decided to abolish undergraduate fees for Irish and other EU students" (Denny 5) in 1995, suggests that it was a prominent topic at the time this story is set and thus, was worth mentioning. Secondly, the text offers innumerable references to the topic of divorce and the recent legislation concerning divorce in Ireland, for instance: "Those ads damaged our cause, but we won" (Callaghan 54) or "Well, having supported divorce, I'm being dumped" (Callaghan 55). At this point, a bridge from the fictional to the real world becomes evident when considering the background that "[d]ivorce legislation was eventually enacted in Ireland in 1996, following a constitutional referendum the previous year" (Canavan 15).

One main function of the description of place and time is to relate the characters to their social, political, and cultural fields (see Meyer 80); in the case of "Windfalls", the setting creates a framework that allows the reader to place the O'Reilly family in a wealthy upper-class environment. Their high social status is addressed various times throughout the story. By means of Callaghan's detailed characterization, the reader learns that they possess two houses, a mansion and a holiday home, and in addition, they employ staff: a gardener and the housekeeper, Joan. Kay O'Reilly is the story's protagonist, who was studying law at University College Dublin when she met her future husband, and she can be classified as "a good wife" (Callaghan 47). This description applies inasmuch as she followed Tom to Chicago where he specialized in his professional field, but she neglected her own desires and appears to have given up her career for him. The reader is left in the dark about her actual professional life. However, in the course of the text, Kay never complains about missing any vocational chances and thus, one can assume that her choice of putting her own interests on the domestic sphere was not something she considered a strong sacrifice. On the contrary, the reader gets the impression that she enjoys being a housewife,

affectionately taking care of the family's home, the garden, and the children. Kay is completely absorbed in motherhood and always talks positively about her offspring, whom she fully accepts, whether hetero- or homosexual. The only thing she regrets is the fact that they never travelled to Greece, as her husband always promised. This complaint can be understood as a call for freedom, and possibly, as a missed opportunity for self-realization. In the course of the story, the reader also learns that Kay is a liberally minded woman, who supports the pro-divorce groups. However, in this context she is aware of the paradoxical situation when she declares to her son Ruairi, "Well, having supported divorce, I'm being dumped" (Callaghan 55). She can be classified as a round character because she undergoes a certain development and her actions are rather complex (see Meyer 81), especially her overall reaction to her husband's affair and her decision at the end of the story to help Desirée with her baby and to allow her to move in with them. This somewhat happy conclusion may have something to do with the fact that Kay had a miscarriage at 40, which is mentioned twice in the text. Thus, the baby Lucy could be analysed as a substitute for the daughter she never had but always wanted to raise.

The next important, albeit rather flat, character is Desirée du Pont who initially came to Ireland from France to work as an au pair, and who now lives in Rathmines, a suburb of Dublin. She is rather naïve and can be considered as the stereotypical seductive French young woman, who firmly believes that Tom will divorce Kay and marry her. This misconception becomes evident in statements such as "No, he my fiancé. He getting divorced soon. He want our baby to have a father" (Callaghan 57). However, the reader receives no direct evidence that Tom wishes to marry her because when he is confronted by his wife, he only answers weakly that Desirée "keeps pushing [him]" (Callaghan 57). When the two women finally meet, Desirée is surprised by Kay's peaceful reaction and scared when Kay lists all the domestic tasks that Desirée will be responsible for from now on. However, she does eventually decide to move into the O'Reilly's gate lodge.

Another major character is, of course, Tom O'Reilly, who is described as "a pillar of society" (Callaghan 48) indicating his high social position. As mentioned before, he too studied at University College Dublin, spent five years practising in Chicago, and finally became a successful psychiatrist, who "had

published a book, dozens of articles and had an enormous private practice” (Callaghan 50). The author depicts him as a tall man “with large cauliflower ears and wild hair. No oil painting, but solid and comfortable to hold on to” (Callaghan 56). When examining his professional situation, Callaghan refers to him as very occupied, hard-working, and accessible to his patients. This description partly explains the fact that Kay has to take care of everything concerning their home alone, as becomes evident with the statement, “Tom left the garden to me. He left everything to me, weeding, shopping, cooking, laundry” (Callaghan 49). Another reference to his upper status in society is mentioned marginally when the reader finds out that he is currently being considered for a Trinity professorship. As opposed to his wife, he can be claimed to be very conservative. He votes against the legalization of divorce, and he does not accept the fact that his second son is homosexual. He even compares Ruairi’s sexual orientation to an illness that can be cured. An additional indication of his traditional and religious beliefs is the fact that he travels to Lourdes every summer with the Dublin diocese and he also joins a yearly pilgrimage to Lough Derg. However, his adulterous affair and his illegitimate child shed an unfavourable, hypocritical light on his superficial Christian-conservative attitude and values.

Another interesting character, and the most important one in relation to the topic of this thesis, is the younger son, Ruairi. He is described as sensitive, loving and kind with a white face and “an eerie beauty” (Callaghan 54). In addition, he is “slight and has an intensity, quite the opposite to his burly brother” (Callaghan 54). He came out at the age of 15 and became an artist, specialising in the movement of Bad Art⁷. In the course of the story, the reader learns about his partner Ken, who is not accepted by Tom, which is the main reason why the couple does not come home for visits any more. As opposed to the homosexual characters in the two previous short stories, Ruairi is one that is described to be happy and satisfied with his sexuality, and it seems that he has totally come to terms with his homosexuality.

The elder son, James, who is the clever one with a florid face and his father’s ears, also briefly appears. He too is successful in his occupation, being a lawyer who dresses in designer clothes and lives in Dublin’s expensive cultural

⁷ “Crudeness was the important thing. Their manifesto: why paint beauty, when life is so awful?” (Callaghan 54).

quarter, the Temple Bar area. However, the author transmits the impression that he is either lazy or dependent on others as far as his laundry is concerned, since he still brings it home to his mother for washing and ironing. He appears to be a rather disagreeable person, as he conceitedly criticizes the housekeeper Joan's work, and he is mainly concerned about the financial loss his father will have to face when he learns about his half-sister Lucy. He even indicates that Tom should reject the illegitimate child. In general, he appears rather unsympathetic and more interested in money and success than in interpersonal relations.

Callaghan additionally includes a few side characters, who are only mentioned briefly, such as Joan, the housekeeper and her grandson Jimmy, Ruairi's boyfriend Ken, the gardener, Kay's stylist Janet, and Tom's secretary Mary. However, they are referred to only in passing and have no immediate function in the plot.

In order to complete the analysis of the story level, a closer look at the themes and motifs is necessary. The most prominent theme in this short story is family life, focusing on marriage and the strained husband-wife relationship. Interpersonal relationships are a general supporting subtheme, additionally encompassing the relationships between Tom and Desirée, Kay and Desirée, Kay and her sons, and Tom and Ruairi. Within this major theme, subordinated aspects such as divorce, homosexuality, adultery, and illegitimate offspring are addressed.

Apart from these, another theme in "Windfalls" is ageing and the notion of *carpe diem*⁸. The latter reveals itself when, for example, Kay utters her unfulfilled desire to travel to Greece, or when she states that "you only valued something when you were about to lose it" (Callaghan 55). The process of ageing is dealt with at various times, for instance, when the main protagonist compares her senescent body with nature and their autumnal garden:

All around me there was mellowness. The leaves had turned, littering the grass, the year was dying. Except it would come back, whereas my hair would stay grey. My veins would always bulge, my body sag. What could you do about gravity? I stared into the kitchen mirror. Motherhood had meant everything to me, even those cumbersome months of pregnancy. I'd loved being needed, the years of school runs, of fetching and carrying. Now I was a laundress, going grey. (Callaghan 52)

⁸ This abstract concept of seizing the day "presents youth as short-lived and urges the pursuit of pleasure" (Shaw 64).

A similar comparison occurs when Kay sits at her hairdresser's Peter Mark's, staring into the mirror and thinking of herself as an ancient Egyptian warrior with a double chin. One further situation where she is confronted with her own age takes place when she is waiting for Desirée in the lounge of the Westbury hotel, admiring a wall portrait of an 18th century maiden and suddenly wondering why everyone looks so young and desirable, even the portraits on the wall. However, it is not only Kay who is affected by this angst in middle-age, but also Tom, who is ironically described as "a husband of certain years" (Callaghan 50). According to Kay, he has reached "the age of unreason – fifty" (Callaghan 47), which could partly explain his stereotypical midlife crisis behaviour – having an affair with a woman who is younger than his sons.

Another theme only addressed marginally is alcohol abuse, which concerns both Joan and Tom. At one point in the story, when the daily lady calls in order to excuse herself because her son is ill, Kay suspects, judging from the depleted state of their bottle of gin, that in reality she has actually a hangover. Another incident where alcoholism is an issue is when the elder son James asks his mother, after realizing that something is wrong with her, if his father has developed a drinking problem and Kay simply answers, "No, not yet" (Callaghan 51).

All these themes have one aspect in common, namely change, whether change of domestic sphere, changing relationships, changing nature, changing bodies, or changing drinking habits. Thus, the title "Windfalls" (a term which implies alterations in either one's garden or one's life) already suggests that the central theme of this short story is change.

6.4 Discourse Level

Similar to the definition applied to "The Hardest Winter", Mary Rose Callaghan's short story can be classified as a realistic slice-of-life story too. The author permits the reader to glance into Kay's life and accompanies her in her difficult situation, but then the door is shut again at the end, and the post-short story-future remains undisclosed to the reader. Malcolm, however, would certainly define it as a realist social-psychological short story, since according to him, "[t]he vast majority of the

major (and canonical and frequently anthologized) British and Irish short stories of the late 19th century, the twentieth century, and the 21st century are examples of the social-psychological genre” (74f.). His classification can easily be applied to “Windfalls”, since it truly “focuses on more or less complex human characters in their social relationships” (74). Although he hypothesizes that this is the most dominant genre in Ireland since the 1880s, he also explains that clear distinctions within short fiction can be found, namely differences of themes (see Malcolm 75). Additionally, this story could be classified as a feminist text, since a female author and a female narrator-protagonist are present and one clearly encounters a “confrontation of male stereotypes and female subjects” (Luc and Bart 138). The fact that Kay fought for modernization and supported the pro-divorce group also implies that she has an independent and feminist attitude. Moreover, Tom’s adultery and his marginally addressed drinking problem add a notion of social satire to the whole short story, taking into consideration that an indirect satire features “characters who make themselves and their opinions ridiculous or obnoxious by what they think, say, and do” (Abrams 277). This definition applies evidently to Tom, as one may assume that a psychiatrist should know better and not display such foolish behaviour, which entirely contradicts his professional authority.

As far as the narrative situation is concerned, already the first sentence indicates that the author chose the first-person narrative, with Kay as the narrator-protagonist who entirely shares the characters’ world (see Stanzel 17). Similar to the analysed works before, “the narrator and the hero of the story are identical” (Stanzel 201). Kay embodies the “teller-character [who] usually announces his [or her] presence in the opening sentences of the narrative” (Stanzel 156), which can perfectly be applied to “Windfalls” and its beginning statement, “My story is banal” (Callaghan 47). In addition, Stanzel argues that the teller-character provides necessary information for understanding the story and that this character “leads the reader to the threshold of the story” (156), as Kay does throughout the text.

Analysing the aspect of time, “Windfalls” was published in 1997 on 14 pages in the anthology *If Only: Short Stories of Love and Divorce by Irish Women Writers*. Similar to classical short stories, this short story requires a discourse time of approximately 15 minutes for the average reader to complete. The time span

of the plot is about 15 months, and might even be expanded to the time when the main protagonists first met as students, hence, more than 30 years. The action of the story begins on a Monday, with Kay finding the receipt for the Mothercare pram, and she confronts Tom on the Friday of the same week. The meeting with Desirée takes place the next day, and the reader learns at the end of the text that they all live together, that Desirée has a new boyfriend, and that Ruairi and Ken are coming home now too. No explicit time measurements are provided, thus, one can only assume that all these final events extend over various months. When examining the relationship between discourse and story time, a rather fast rhythm is created, since numerous events happen in a short period of time, or in a few pages. The author also uses the device of ellipsis, when she deliberately chooses to omit aspects of lesser importance, for instance, when the reader is left in the dark about what happens in the time between the crucial talk in the hotel and the moment Desirée moves in with the O'Reilly family. However, when Callaghan describes events of greater importance, she presents these passages by way of 'slowing', in which reading/discourse time and narrated time coincide (see Meyer 77). The text provides many of these dialogues, where the equality of discourse and story time creates the effect of immediacy.

Analyses about the issue of time immediately lead to observations about structure. Basically, one encounters the traditional model, which includes an introduction, development, climax, and conclusion in chronological order. However, within this traditional structural order, various examples of analepsis and prolepsis occur, where the narrator subverts the chronology and connects the plot to the past or the future. Two examples of such leaps in time are when Kay describes the different reactions she and her husband have to Ruairi's outing various years ago, or when she thinks back to their time in Chicago. With these temporal gaps "between primary narrative on the one hand and prolepsis or analepsis on the other hand" (Luc and Bart 65) that direct the reader and create a subtle distance between the main events, the narrative becomes more complex. The reader begins to see connections between different periods in a character's life, which results in increased suspense and "themes may emerge more clearly" (Luc and Bart 66).

First and foremost, one such "clear theme" is change, as already suggested above in this thesis. To point out the metaphorical passing of time,

Callaghan uses recurring images of 'windfalls' through her description of autumn, or changing weather in general. Beyond the title, however, there are three additional references to fallen or rotten fruit. The first reference takes place when Kay describes their garden in an interior monologue, "There'd be windfalls in the apple orchard. We'd even get some from the next garden. It was important to get them before the worms did" (Callaghan 52). One can see that the recent storm that brought chaos to her neat and tidy garden is a clear metaphor for the recent troubles in her marriage. The windfalls from the neighbour's garden could refer to Deisr  e, who intrudes into Kay's family and home. Subsequently, the worms eating the fruits could symbolize the public, which always pounces on gossip and hence, one always has to conceal one's problems immediately in order to preserve a happy appearance on the surface. In the end, Kay actually follows her own advice, allowing Desir  e to move in with them and deciding not to divorce Tom, thereby avoiding a public scandal. The term appears a second time when Kay admits to the reader that although it was already Friday, she still had not talked to Tom, but she had "collected some windfalls for apple jelly" (Callaghan 53) instead. In this case, once again, she does not disclose her true feelings, fleeing from her problems and disposing of possible imperfections. However, she is simultaneously also processing these recent changes. Thirdly, Callaghan refers to the title in the very last paragraph, when Kay uses the image of windfalls in order to describe a positive change affecting the whole family, which is that Ruairi and Ken will now be coming home for visits.

Apart from this prominent metaphor, the author uses other rhetorical devices such as intertextuality. When Kay refers to the BBC Radio 4 programme broadcast "Poetry Please", where she heard that "[l]osing was an art" (Callaghan 52), she indirectly quotes the poem "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop (see 178), who lists various things that are easy to lose but almost meant to be lost and, therefore, losing them is no disaster. Additionally, Callaghan utilizes a direct form of intertextuality to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel *Sherlock Holmes*. It is common knowledge in today's language usage that if a person is compared to Sherlock Holmes, he or she possesses detective skills. In this case, Kay does not show an instinct for detective work because she never before suspected that her husband was having an affair, although clues were visible. Moreover, the *Hello* magazine is mentioned and the reader encounters a direct reference to Princess Diana,

who was still alive at the time of writing, and to 'Fergie', Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, who divorced Prince Andrew in 1996 (see Collins). One final instance of intertextuality, although not mentioned directly, presents itself in the homonymy of the names of Desirée and the protagonist of Kate Chopin's (see 240 ff.) short story, "Desirée's Baby". Interestingly, the ending of this piece of literature, principally covering the issue of miscegenation, is quite the opposite of "Windfalls", since in Chopin's work the main protagonist Desirée and her baby have to leave home and husband at the end of the story.

Not only metaphors, images, and intertextuality can be revealed by means of an in-depth analysis, but also symbols such as the Christmas cracker riddle. At the beginning of the story, the fact that her own husband is apparently the fiancé of another woman represents an unsolvable riddle for Kay. The same symbol is used at the end when Kay admits to herself that she has "become a sort of grandmother to [her] husband's daughter" (Callaghan 60). According to de Vries' *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, the magic effect of a riddle is comparable to the act of untying a knot, including the tension it creates and the release it provides when one solves it. Kay apparently longs to feel such release when she eventually allows Desirée to live with them, hoping to solve the riddle. In addition, the de Vries states that if women pose riddles "in ballads[,] they win the husband by solving them [...] or by successfully evading them" (de Vries s.v. "Riddle"). Applied to "Windfalls", the fact that Kay obviously cannot solve her Christmas cracker riddle could result in the loss of Tom. Next to the riddle, the apple as windfall is also an important symbol. Firstly, the fallen fruit announces climatic change and the transition from autumn to winter. However, it can also be regarded as "the icon of knowledge" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant s.v. "Apple") and as a symbol "of being placed under the obligation of making a choice" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant s.v. "Apple"). The need for decision-making is also highly prominent in Callaghan's short story. However, not only Tom has to choose between two women, but also Kay has to think about whether to stay with her husband or leave him. Desirée has the choice of running away with her baby or staying with the O'Reilly family, and Ruairi has to decide if he can forgive his father for discriminating him because of his homosexuality or if he will avoid his father forever.

6.5 Background and Contextualization

6.5.1 *The Notion of 'Healing' Homosexuality*

In the course of the story, Tom mentions to his wife that he “cured a boy [‘suffering’ from homosexuality] the other day” (Callaghan 55), thus, regarding homosexuality as an illness. Since he declares this “sadly”, one can read a note of disappointment in his statement and hence, can deduce that he wishes this ‘magical pill’ would also work for his own son, to turn him into a heterosexual.

History proves that humankind has tried to explain homosexuality in various (partly ridiculous) ways over hundreds of years, including as hereditary, degenerative failure, insanity, or crime. At the end of the 19th century, the homosexual lawyer Ulrichs theorized that this sexual orientation could be traced back to “an error in embryonic differentiation” (Person 1259), which could cause a female soul to live in a male body. The sexologist Bloch, on the other hand, explains that because of genetic flaws, homosexual people did not succeed in moving “beyond the stage of fetal bisexuality” (Person 1259). This second approach is important inasmuch as for the first time, it changed public opinion towards homosexuality “from moral and legal condemnation to medical concern” (Person 1259). However, it is not surprising that people who consider themselves as homosexual did not celebrate this achievement, since it is hardly better to be related to a disease than to a crime.

In 1905, Sigmund Freud published his “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality”, where he claims that “there are men whose sexual object is a man and not a woman, and women whose sexual object is a woman and not a man” (Freud, *Essays* 136). Although Person argues that Freud did not consider homosexuality as a perversity as such, he did consider it as a “deviation” and psychoanalysis in general made the distinction between “normal” and “perverse” (see 1262). Thus, the “normal” drive was to be heterosexual and, consequently, being homosexual was the distortion or deviation from the normal. Later though, in 1920, Freud wrote to a concerned mother informing her that her homosexual son was “no more or less ill than anyone else” (Person 1275). In addition, Freud declared in 1935 that “homosexuality is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation

of the sexual function” (Freud, *Letters* 147). Freud notwithstanding, homosexuality was officially recognized as a mental disorder in 1949, in a publication of the World Health Organisation’s edition of *International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death*. Although attempts of ‘healing’ ‘abnormal’ sexual behaviour can be traced back to 1892, this official classification clearly gave the green light for medical and psychological professionals to experiment with various ‘treatments’, as described in the short story. Such unscientific treatments, for example, those practised widely in the UK between 1949 and 1992, are close to inhumane atrocities, featuring “oestrogen treatment to reduce libido and psychoanalysis” (Dickinson et al. 1350), as well as highly traumatic chemical and electrical aversion therapy, the latter including electric shocks applied to the patient’s penis (see Dickinson et al. 1349).

The status of homosexuality as a mental illness was sustained until 1992, and only then did scientists and medical experts acknowledge it as a natural variant that needs no cure (see Dickinson et al. 1346). Nevertheless, even today many public figures still claim the opposite. One example is the German priest Bernhard Ritter, who, at the beginning of 2014, offered a seminar with the aim of ‘healing’ homosexuality entitled “*Schritte zur Freiheit aus zwanghaften Gefühlen*”, since he considers homosexuality as a psychic disorder, not a sexual one (see Ehrenstein). A similar example is Spain’s cardinal Fernando Cardinal Sebastian, who stated in 2014 that homosexuality is a curable “defect” that can be healed with proper treatment. His argument is that in various cases it is possible for the affected person to recover and become “normal” again (see Moran). Once again, the question arises, what ‘normal’ means in the area of sexuality, and who has the right to judge? According to a survey conducted by O’Higgins-Norman in Dublin, in which parents of homosexual children, students, teachers, and senior management teams in schools were interviewed, the majority of participants were of the opinion that being homosexual is a “deviation from the normal sexuality, which is always heterosexual” (392). Thus, this general belief is comparable to the prevailing view that exists in the conservative society in which Tom lives in “Windfalls”, which only accepts heterosexuality as the norm and produces a

heteronormativity⁹ that still exists today in the Catholic Church and in large circles of traditional Irish society.

6.5.2 *Ireland and Divorce*

Apart from homosexuality, “Windfalls” addresses another highly controversial topic within the framework of conservative Irish society: divorce. Since Callaghan’s short story was published in 1997, readers are able to relate “the text with the context in which it came into existence” (Luc and Bart 137), namely the recent introduction of divorce legislation.

When reading the *Constitution of Ireland*, the importance of the family unit becomes immediately visible. The wording of Article 41.1.1 is as follows: “The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law” (Constitution of Ireland). This implies that the Constitution makes an unambiguous statement concerning marriage, which is expressly stated in Article 41.3.1: “The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack” (Constitution of Ireland). Hence, historically, a happy family resulting from an efficient marriage should be desirable for every reasonable Irish habitant and consequently, divorce should be no option. Naturally, the Roman Catholic Church had considerable influence on this legislation.

However, modern changes have occurred in Ireland within the last few decades. According to Ingman, authors of popular Irish short stories were willing to “challenge the Irish Catholic construct of female identity and expose the limitations of the family unit on which the Irish Constitution had been founded” (*History* 231). Apart from that, the first constitutional referendum on divorce was held in 1986, which can be attributed to the wish of parts of the Irish people, and, not least, to the reality of marital breakdown in more and more Irish families (see Canavan 15). However, 63.5 per cent voted against the implementation of divorce

⁹ Michael Warner defines the term ‘heteronormativity’ as complex ways of a heterosexual culture thinking “of itself as the elemental form of human association, as the very model of intergender relations, as the indivisible basis of all community and as the means of reproduction without which society wouldn’t exist” (xxi).

legislation, which can be attributed to “heated campaigning by the Roman Catholic Church and other traditionalist organizations against divorce” (James 193). Although the referendum was defeated in 1986, a second referendum was held in 1995, and subsequently the President signed it on the 17th of June, 1996 from when on it was promulgated as a law (see Government of Ireland, *Results* 50). The fact that the referendum passed by only 9,114 votes (see Government of Ireland, *Results* 50), the narrowest margin of any constitutional amendment referenda up to the present day (see James 213), reflects the ongoing disunity amongst the Irish people. This clash in attitudes is figuratively mirrored in the character of Kay in “Windfalls”, who seems trapped between two Irelands. Although she is a modern, open-minded and moderate feminist, who fights for divorce legislation and supports her gay son, she also embodies traditional and conservative attitudes, as she can be considered a typical Irish housewife, who fulfils her domestic chores, and who is probably perceived as inferior to her husband in a patriarchal society.

When examining the results of the 1995 referendum in different counties, it is no surprise that the pro-divorce votes were stronger in the urban areas of Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow, as compared to the rural and rather conservative counties (see Government of Ireland, *Results* 51). Figures from the years after the referendum show that between 2000 and 2007, granted divorce applications increased from 2,740 to 3,864 (see Canavan 15). Hence, as a main consequence of divorce legislation, Ireland’s conservative view of women, marriage and family life, “which had been established both by Irish nationalist propaganda and the Catholic church [sic]” (Byrne 184) was successfully challenged.

6.5.3 *The Clash between Generations: Father vs. Son*

Referring back to the study carried out by O’Higgins-Norman, it shows that parents of homosexual children fear for the future and the well-being of their offspring. Quotes, as for example the following, “If I found out that my daughter was gay I would be very disappointed for her, because I know life would not treat her easily” (387), demonstrate that parents are afraid of how society would react to their children’s homosexuality. However, the study also reveals that the majority of the interviewed parents would accept a gay son or a lesbian daughter

(see 387). This acceptance is the total opposite of the father-son relationship occurring in "Windfalls", in which Tom is not worried about how Ruairi is treated, but fears only for his own reputation as a successful psychiatrist. Following rather traditional and conservative beliefs, he is a member of the St Vincent de Paul's society and also takes part in yearly pilgrimages to Christian heritage sites. Considering the problematic nature of same-sex relations within the Catholic Church, it is not surprising that his religious values do not allow him to accept homosexuality. As mentioned before, Tom considers his son's sexuality as an illness that he intends to cure.

However, it is apparent that Ruairi does not place himself into this victimhood at all. At the age of 15, Ruairi announced cheerfully that he is "queer as a kipper" (Callaghan 48) and hence, it can be assumed that for him, being gay is one of the most normal things in the world. Nevertheless, one can imagine that coming out at that young age and growing up with a conservative father in a homophobic, religious Ireland was not easy at all for an adolescent boy. Complexities of the intergenerational conflict become even more evident when Ruairi leaves the nest and finds his boyfriend Ken. He eventually refuses to come home for visits, because Tom does not accept his partner. Although the reader does not learn exactly what happened between father and son at the end of the story, it is, however, obvious that some kind of change in their relationship has occurred, since the last two lines reveal that "Ruairi comes home now [because] [h]e and Ken are good with children" (Callaghan 60). The reader can posit that Tom may have apologized to them; he could have learned a lesson in tolerance from Kay, who is able to accept her husband's illegitimate child, forcing him to realize that he too can accept his own son and live up to the Christian virtue of forgiveness. Alternatively, maybe it is simply more important for Ruairi to watch his half-sister grow up than it is to stubbornly avoid his narrow-minded father. However, it becomes also apparent that Tom does not care as much about the family any more in the end, since he "is more and more dedicated to others" (Callaghan 60). The reader gets the impression that he is the 'big loser' at the end of the short story because he is more engrossed in his work as a psychiatrist now and almost entirely detached from his own family life. He simply lives on the margins of his own house, whereas the rest of his extended family appear to be happy and enjoy a life in domestic harmony.

7 “A Noise from the Woodshed” by Mary Dorcey

7.1 The Author

Mary Dorcey was born, raised, and educated in County Dublin. She was the first Irish student ever to attend the Open University in Great Britain. As a feminist and homosexual rights activist, she is an important part of numerous movements such as Women for Radical Change, Irish Women United, the Irish Gay Rights Movement, and the Irish Women’s Liberation Movement. In modern Ireland, critics even consider her a forerunner of lesbian writing. Currently, she serves as a Research Associate at Trinity College Dublin. In the course of her career, Dorcey has won various prizes, including the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature in 1990, for her critically acclaimed short story compilation *A Noise from the Woodshed*, which was published the previous year by the London feminist press Onlywomen Press. Apart from short fiction, she has penned various novels and collections of verse. Her poems have also been performed on stage in Europe and Australia, on radio, and on television. Dorcey’s work has been translated into various languages, including Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and Japanese. To date, five of her books “have been awarded major Literature Bursaries by the Irish Arts Council” (Sen). Mary Dorcey dedicates most of her fiction and poetry to those defined as marginal in Irish society, addressing topics such as lesbian sexuality, the suffering of battered wives, the solidarity of women, and aging and death (see Gonzalez 102ff.).

7.2 Plot Summary

“A Noise from the Woodshed” is set in rural Ireland, and the plot follows two females whose names are never revealed. At the beginning, one woman ‘saves’ the other woman and carries her over a flooded path, since the latter one forgot to wear galoshes. They immediately fall in love and make love next to the river. Later the female saviour returns to her home, a “loft” in need of repair, accompanied by the rescued woman, who is also the narrator of the story. In the following days, they get to know each other better, and the rescued woman learns

about her lover's previous relationship with a woman named Cleo, who left because she needed more space. They spend paradisiacal and relaxing days together sharing food, drinking good quality wine, making love, and planning to repair the loft. One day, they hear an unusual noise coming from the woodshed, which turn out to come from two American tourists, Janelle and Janette, making love in their shared sleeping bag. Shortly thereafter, the first woman, the owner of the house, reveals that she had already met them several days before and had invited them to stay in case it rained. At the end, the two women plan to improve and repair the house, and the final scene depicts them having a picnic in the woods by a river.

7.3 Story Level

Although the author mentions no specific names of locations, various allusions help the reader to find out that Mary Dorsey's short story takes place in rural Ireland. The most explicit indication occurs when the narrator addresses the Great Famine, stating that "a good potato is hard to find, even in a country where thousands died for the want of them" (Dorsey 14). Additionally, she does make countless references to inform the reader of the rural character of the setting such as the house in the forest, streams, lakesides, mountains, woods, and pastures. However, there is a small town near the female saviour's home, since she first spotted the two American women there in the hardware store (or the haberdasher's, or the grocer's). Moreover, she notes at the end of the story that they should go into town to buy tools for repairing the loft. One can infer that the author has deliberately placed this love story in such isolated and silent landscapes where "everyone says – how quiet it is – how can you stand the silence?" (Dorsey 17), because only then does the female narrator have the time and possibilities to come to terms with herself and to discover this new facet of her sexuality. Apart from that, there are references to other countries, namely, when the first woman retells the story of her former lover's departure, when she left the country to work in a peace camp. Apparently, she does not know for sure where Cleo went, but she thinks she may have gone to Africa, India, Australia, or England.

One must infer the temporal setting from the context, since Dorcey mentions no dates, seasons, or years. The second woman, who was carried over the river, questions her rescuer why, by this time, she had not purchased a washing machine, because other women already had. Accepting that the washing machine arrived in German households in the 1960s (see Große), one can expect that they emerged some time later in Ireland, especially in exposed rural areas that were not completely connected to the electrical grid, where modernization had progressed more slowly than in urban areas. As far as the season is concerned, one can assume warmer months because the two Americans sleep outside under the stars and the other two women have a picnic next to the river, sitting and lying in the grass. However, the location and time are probably of less importance to the author, since this short story addresses a timeless and omnipresent topic, love between women.

As already mentioned above, the two main female characters are not named. The first woman, who carries the second woman across the river, is repeatedly compared to “a warrior in white armour” (Dorcey 1) or to “a saviour in a white hatchback” (Dorcey 9). There is no detailed description of her physical appearance, as the author only cites the “lovely muscles of her flanks” (Dorcey 2) and “the broad plane of her back” (Dorcey 4) when the second woman depicts the scene of the river crossing. Additionally, the scent of her curly hair reminds the narrator of jasmine. What distinguishes the two women is the fact that the first woman has a home - a house in the woods with a red roof, and the second woman is “temporarily between homes” (Dorcey 5). She, the first woman, is an artistic painter who is interested in feminist philosophy. One can see that she has more experience with homosexual relationships than the second woman because of Cleo, her former lover. The fact that she is the one who saves the other woman can also be understood as a metaphor for her releasing the second female from her former life and introducing her to a new world of lesbian love.

The author provides little about the past or the appearance of the rescued woman. She comes from the suburbs and is probably the more orderly person, since she is worried about the dirty dishes and the laundry. When the first woman retells Cleo’s leaving due to claustrophobic feelings, she too admits to herself that she had experienced a similar situation and suffered the same anxieties. When the two American tourists describe their work in a refuge for battered women, she

again thinks to herself that the pain is familiar to her. All these aspects, including the fact that she is currently homeless, allow the inference that she has recently escaped a restrictive and violent relationship. Generally, both women appreciate the same things concerning making love, food, fine wine, and philosophy. They are currently not working, as they are “tired from the business of making a living” (Dorcey 21). The fact that the author neither reveals their age nor their precise physical appearance is again an indication of the timeless and classless quality of the topic.

Next to the two main protagonists, Cleo is another lesbian character. She was the first woman’s former lover and it was she who started the loft. However, when they were about to work on the roof, Cleo left on her Yamaha motorcycle because she needed more space. Dorcey describes her as handsome, dark skinned, and possessing beautiful eyes. Currently she is supposed to be in a peace camp somewhere around the world escaping her claustrophobic feelings.

Finally, there is the American couple, Janelle and Janette. The main couple of the story finds them in “their big red sleeping bag” (Dorcey 17) and it was they who caused the noise in the woodshed, since they are staying there for an unspecified amount of time, making love and enjoying their vacation. Before their journey to Europe, they were working with molested and abused women for five years in the USA. They are only depicted as naked, one with black and the other one with white, though tanned, skin and short red hair. Although the first woman invites them into her home, they prefer to stay on their own enjoying their intimate togetherness in the woodshed.

References to several relatives of the two lovers occur only on the margin such as the first woman’s aunt, sister, brothers, father, and mother, with whom she has quarrels and to whom she should actually write a long overdue letter. The second woman’s mother appears briefly, the narrator, fearfully indicates that she is behaving like her, although she then admits that it is not the worst hereditary taint to imagine. Numerous domestic animals also live in and around the loft, for instance: cats, goats, hens, and a dog.

In “A Noise from the Woodshed”, Mary Dorcey gives a voice to lesbians, making female homosexuality the major theme. Not only are the two main characters lesbian lovers, but also the female American couple. In the course of the story, it turns out that they are responsible for the noise in the woodshed,

which is the sound of lovemaking. The narrator indicates that this “startling and disturbing noise” (Dorcey 15) is extending from the tiny woodshed “to be heard across the whole nation” (Ingman, *History* 235). Offering direct access to the world of lesbians, she makes this political and social theme available and concrete for the entirety of Ireland, observing that more and more women ‘are crossing the river’, or discovering their homosexuality. Politics is also a prominent theme, since apart from all the lovemaking, relaxing, and joyfulness together, the two women are also committed to political, social, and moral work:

And she told you some of the other things that were going on: unearthing imperialism, saving the whale and the beaches, reclaiming the fields and the night, cleaning the rivers and disturbing the minds, redistributing the capital, housing the homeless, whispering the forbidden addresses for women in distress, making refuges for the refugees: victims of the happy homes. (Dorcey 6)

The two lovers open “the door from the given into the dreamed of [, which is] the possible world in the making” (Dorcey 9). Not only are women discovering and experiencing the joys of lesbianism, they are also speaking out about “their departures from the norm” (Dorcey 10). All these innovations lead to a destabilization of settled conventions, which will cause the settled, male dominated (heterosexual) discourse to collapse (see Ingman, *Fiction* 62).

Malcolm discusses how Dorcey structures her story in a way that is at odds with the male dominated world, celebrating the female as Edenic but perceiving patriarchal society with suspicion (see 314). The first reference supporting Malcolm’s assertion is the following: “and carried you over the waters, and laid you down in long grasses, and committed love with you” (Dorcey 9). It promises a life of peace, happiness, freedom, and lovemaking with others. The male partner, however, suggests a negative connotation of violence, selfishness, and brutality as the following statement warns: “there are lies about needing a gun and lies about needing a man – the one thing they have in common is needing one to protect you from the rest of them” (Dorcey 8). Moreover, Janette and Janelle are working in a refuge for battered, raped, and molested women, which once again demonstrates the author’s point of male violence. The narrator also mentions the fact that it was the man “who started the whole business of counting” (Dorcey 2) and she mockingly points out that it is only men who are preoccupied with their sexual performance.

Dorcey also incorporates the notion of newness into her story, whether it is the topic, the writing style, the narrative situation or the organization of the action. She indicates that after crossing the river everything will be made with care, planned by two loving women and affecting the whole nation (see Malcolm 314).

Additionally, the author addresses the abstract theme of everyday life easily creeping into all relationships. The couple's world is not wholly perfect; it is partly chaotic, and the rescued woman sometimes feels frustrated by the things that have been left undone concerning their home. However, at the end of the short story, when they are by the river again looking back on how it all began, the narrator admits that things are better now because the two women had in a way experienced catharsis: "there had been talk and quarrels and reconciliation and forgetting and fixing things that should have been fixed long ago" (Dorcey 20). Hence, although everyday life has caught up with them, they now know each other better, including both of their positive and negative character traits, which gives their relationship "substance and texture, shading and tone" (Dorcey 21), making it so much better.

7.4 Discourse Level

"A Noise from the Woodshed" can be defined as an "adventurous monologue" (Quinn 228) of the female narrator, addressed to her female lover. According to Malcolm (see 312f.), this short story can be classified as experimental fiction, a technique also used by Beckett, since it differs drastically from the rules of realism. The author's intention is likely to "break new ground and deviate from traditional realist fiction" (Armstrong 1), while taking risks and being innovative (see Armstrong 3). In a sense, the story material is traditional and realistic – a love story, albeit a provocative love story, since both lovers are female. However, its content is experimental inasmuch as when it was published, it challenged social norms of both time and place. The form and presentation of the action are norm breaching too, since Dorcey utilizes "lyric effusions and feminist polemics" (Malcolm 313). Some passages remind the reader more of a piece of poetry than a work of fiction. Some examples of this pulsing and hypnotic rhythm of prose

(see Ingman, *History* 235) are the countless enumerations and listings of things such as different forms of weapons, variations of lies, and several problems women discuss amongst themselves. The action of the plot, however, is hypothetical, and conversations prevail so that the reader gets the impression that “stream of chatter instead of stream of consciousness” (Quinn 228) is the main medium of transmitting this lesbian love story.

An analysis of the short story’s narrative situation quickly reveals that the experimental notion continues. The author does not employ a traditional first- or third-person narrator, but a rather rare second-person narration. However, the ‘you’ in the text is actually an ‘I’, which is the rescued woman addressing herself, breaking “down boundaries between the self and the other” (Ingman, *History* 235). It often seems that the ‘you’, however, is used with the aim of directly addressing the reader, therefore, speaking for and including all women at once. Dorcey emphasizes this universal approach by including “an explicitly general perspective on female life throughout the story” (Malcolm 312). She lists numerous typically feminine chores such as “making the breakfast, doing the shopping, scrubbing the bath, [and] remembering to turn the blanket” (Dorcey 1f.). The narrator generally rejects an objective viewpoint in the story and hence, only possesses “conditionally valid view of the narrated events” (Stanzel 89) through her subjectivity.

In length, this short story differs significantly from the three analysed texts before. It comprises 21 pages, demanding a discourse time of roughly 45 minutes. Similar to the setting, the aspect of story time is only indicated vaguely, suggesting once again that the lesbian love story is not limited to a certain time frame. However, the author does allude to the fact that once the female lovers return to the first woman’s house, five days elapse before they hear the first, startling noise from the woodshed. Thus, the actual plot, from the first meeting at the river until the final scene of the picnic at the river spans approximately five days. However, although the story’s narrative is linear, some flashbacks and foreshadowing occur in order to provide the backstory and previous events. Examples of these techniques are when, for instance, the narrator reflects on female chores “going on for millennia before” (Dorcey 11), or when she conjectures that the American couple is likely to continue their relaxing vacation for weeks to come.

As far as structure is concerned, the denouement is quite remarkable. Dorcey includes the symbol of the river in both the first and last sentence, thus, creating a kind of cycle or frame that connects the end to the beginning. This scenic epanalepsis allows the reader to feel a sense of conclusion with the story, and it contributes to a closed rather than an open ending. When approaching the river at the end of the story, the lesbian lovers remember the day they initially met there and look forward to a future where more and more women can enjoy days similar to theirs. Thus, the ending simultaneously looks backwards and forwards (see Bonheim 143ff.). Another aspect worth consideration is the length of the sentences. Generally, they are “persistently long, full of parentheses, participial phrases, and subordinate and coordinate clauses” (Malcolm 313), again illustrating Dorcey’s experimental language.

The repetition of the river motif additionally emphasizes the importance of this symbol and the concept behind it. According to *A Dictionary of Symbols*, the river represents “universal potentiality [...] and renewal” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant s.v. “River”). When interpreting it that way in “A Noise from the Woodshed”, the aspect of newness appears once again and the fact that after crossing it, a whole new world and life is possible for not only the female narrator, but also for every other woman. Apart from that, the river crossing can be defined as “overcoming an obstacle”. As mentioned before, the crossing of the river represents coming out of the closet, or admitting and discovering one’s own homosexuality, which obviously can be difficult and considered an obstacle. In addition, the river is a very suitable image to refer to this female love story, since it also symbolizes “human existence and its winding passage through desire, emotion and intent” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant s.v. “River”).

Next to this very prominent symbol, Dorcey uses a variety of other rhetoric devices underlining her ornate and lyrical writing style. As mentioned before, enumerations are very prominent throughout the text, as for example: “There are nuclear weapons, ideological weapons and conventional weapons, fire, flood, and famine, [...] beatings and rapings, torture and lies” (Dorcey 8). In addition, she uses various puns to create an even livelier image such as “loftily in the loft” (Dorcey 9), “the rain had been coming down like cats and dogs, and the dogs and cats had been coming down like rain” (Dorcey 3), and “rocking the cradles and not cradling the rocks” (Dorcey 11). The rather inventive author also includes

oxymora such as “half drowning in mouth to mouth resuscitation” (Dorcey 4), and “scientists waiting to cure to death, waiting to kill for peace” (Dorcey 7). She also uses graphic similes, “[l]ike a warrior in white armour” (Dorcey 1), and “like kittens in a weighted sack” (Dorcey 8). The concept of euphemism presents itself as well when the narrator repeatedly promises herself that when she “got to the other side of the water, [she] would get very serious” (Dorcey 3). As the reader learns in the course of the story, the ‘getting serious’ signifies making love to another woman, which is likely the first time for the narrator.

Intertextuality can be found within biblical references such as “Father forgive you for you know not what you do”, and “father – who art – which art (depending on brand identification) in heaven making our hell” (Dorcey 8). These ironic references to Luke 23:34 and to the “Lord’s Prayer” suggest a critical attitude towards religion. The ‘you’ in the first quotation can either be the narrator or could directly address God, not knowing what he or she is doing when he or she allows all the injustice to happen in the world, creating a hell-like scenario on earth. Moreover, statements, such as “[t]here are lies about true religions, original sin and the saving of souls” (Dorcey 8) and “even popes having their uses” (Dorcey 7) in reference to a bottle of Chateauneuf du Pape, demonstrate an aversion to Catholicism.

Lastly, in “A Noise from the Woodshed”, Dorcey exhibits an innovative style and her language treads “a thin line between sense and nonsense as the ‘sense’ of the world is wiped out through nonsense and laughter” (Ingman, *Fiction* 61). The term ‘laughing’ occurs numerous times, suggesting the joy and happiness that the narrator experiences from the first moment she finds lesbian love.

7.5 Background and Contextualization

7.5.1 Feminist Writing in Ireland

As one of the New Woman writers, Mary Chavelita Dunne wrote under the pen name George Egerton and used short fiction with the aim of addressing “the nature of women” (Ingman, *History* 70) in the 1890s. Thus, she can also be

considered a precursor of first-wave feminism. She was an innovative and modernist writer, who drew attention to the female aesthetic “using dreams, symbolism and stream-of-consciousness” (Ingman, *History* 71), in order to explore the female psyche. Although she cannot be automatically classified as a feminist, her works address female sexuality and suggest the necessity of equality of the sexes. Thus, she shows an awareness of the limitations surrounding Irish women’s lives. However, her female characters are also depicted as dependent on conventions, and her writing does allude to motherhood as the main fulfilment of womanhood (see Ingman, *History* 71ff.).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Irish state and the Catholic Church made sure that women focused on marriage, domestic chores and child bearing. Other female issues at that time, such as those concerning domestic violence or sexuality, were silenced and hidden from the public domain. This attitude can in part be traced back to the desexualization of women initiated by dominant Catholic ideologies that prevailed after the establishment of the Irish Free State in the 1920s and 1930s (see Hayes 79). This ignorance did not only apply to real life, but also to fiction, where solely men described and talked about (female) sexuality using only their own imagination and experiences. Other works, as for instance books by Edna O’Brien that included ‘inappropriate’ content, have been banned by the Irish Censorship Board. However, when the genre of Irish chick lit¹⁰ appeared on the scene, featuring the topic of sexual freedom and describing sex scenes from the woman’s viewpoint, positive voices towards female desire and sexuality gradually became audible (see Ryan 93ff.).

As early as the time between 1940 and 1959, more and more female writers explored the suppressed sexuality of Irish women, therewith foreshadowing a theme that became prominent in the 1970s, after the rise of the feminist movement (see Ingman, *History* 177). The time after 1968, is defined as second-wave feminism (see Hawthorn 312). Mary Dorcey once declared in an interview that her return from France to Ireland “in the early 1970s was a political act” (qtd. in Ingman, *Fiction* 61), in order to fight for a new definition of the term Irish, which was until then only connected to conservatism and old-fashioned

¹⁰ “Chick-lit novels are written by women about the misadventures of contemporary unmarried working women in their 20s or 30s who struggle with multiple pressures from reproachful mothers, inadequate boyfriends, and tyrannical bosses while consoling themselves with shopping trips, chocolate, and erotic daydreams. The stories are commonly told in the first person in tones of humorous self-deprecation” (Baldick 53).

ideologies. Most of her works demonstrate her clear feminist agenda, since all her marginalized characters and delicate themes create a visible platform for everyone and everything that until then had been suppressed from society and culture (see Ingman, *Fiction* 61).

However, lesbianism was still a very muted theme in Irish short fiction until the 1980s. Writers, such as Ita Daly and Leland Bardwell, initially included this marginalized subject, but it is the work of Mary Dorcey that is most powerfully dedicated to Irish lesbians and succeeds in bringing them to the surface and including them in “the nation’s definitions of Irish identity” (Ingman, *History* 235). However, the author does not exhibit a homogeneous viewpoint of lesbians, but always presents them in different stages of liberation, creating a notion of fluidity and openness (see Ingman, *Fiction* 62). Dorcey points out that the lesbian is “a pioneer, a woman who has escaped from the controlling grasp of masculine heterosexuality, a visionary, a free spirit, an adventurer, a self-creator” (qtd. in O’Carroll and Collins 30). However, she does not solely celebrate lesbian love, as other aspects of feminism are equally important to her writing.

As mentioned before, her two main characters in “A Noise from the Woodshed” are not only concerned with making love together, they are also concerned about political work. The female protagonists criticize the limitations imposed by traditional life in repressive Ireland and challenge the “accepted pieties about women’s place” (Ingman, *Fiction* 65). A clear critique of this outdated sentiment becomes visible in the following example: “What’s that? There, where the chimneys rise smoking and the television aerials wave and the walls stretch long and concrete and she said oh, that; that’s one of the power stations for the nuclear family” (Dorcey 6). This statement can be analysed as reference to Article 41.2 of the 1937 *Constitution of the Free State*, which “declares the nuclear family to be the basic unit of the state, and women’s role to be daughters and mothers in the family” (Weekes, *Texts and Contexts* 136). Additionally, the author addresses that it is mostly women who are in charge of the domestic world with all its interconnected duties such as “folding a sheet, or holding the ladder while the other climbs up, digging a bed for an apple tree, [and] pulling socks onto a small child’s feet” (Dorcey 3). However, she denounces this role that women apparently developed in a male-centred world, declaring that women are “going with the thing instead of trying to get the better of it” (Dorcey

3). On the other hand, Dorsey also acknowledges the strengths of the female. She reverses typical gender roles, showing that the warrior in the white armour who saves the damsel in distress and powerfully carries her over the river can easily be a woman instead of a man.

In the 1970s, the feminist notion in Irish short fiction gained strength and the voices demanding “equal pay, equal educational and employment opportunities, access to contraception, and justice for single mothers, deserted wives and widows” (Ingman, *History* 202) became louder. Battered wives also became a topic, which had been long ignored in Irish fiction, eventually giving a voice to female victims of abuse. Again, Dorsey also dedicated her work to this aspect, dealing with the general opinion of women of that time, namely that their problems were not worth publicizing and that they should suffer in silence. Her stories succeed in drawing a connection between this public silence and the low self-esteem of women, thus, once again criticizing patriarchy (see Ingman, *Fiction* 64f.).

In 1985, a collection of revised fairy tales by Irish women writers entitled *Rapunzel's Revenge: Fairy Tales for Feminists* was published. Although they do not feature typical Irish themes, all of the stories are rewritten to address a feminist point of view, such as for example, in Binchy's Cinderella story, the protagonist changes love (as in the original tale) for career (see Ingman, *History* 231). This collection is comparable to Donoghue's 1997 work, *Kissing the Witch*, which again features rewritings of fairy tales emphasizing a feminist and sometimes lesbian approach. In her version of Cinderella, the female protagonist ends up having a romantic relationship with the Fairy Godmother (see Ingman, *History* 252f.). The latter work can be associated with third-wave feminism, as this movement began in the 1990s and continues to the present day (see Engel).

8 Representation of Homosexuality in the Short Stories Analysed

As the previous analyses demonstrate, each of these four short stories somehow addresses the topic of homosexuality. However, the modes of representation for this issue differ from one work of short fiction to the other and they succeed in depicting various stages of developed acceptance within Irish society. Because of this, Julia Kristeva would probably identify them all as pieces of literature that demonstrate the “therapeutic role of art” (qtd. in Ingman, *Fiction* 61), since they openly address a controversial topic that has long been successfully suppressed by society and culture.

Beginning with Dermot Bolger’s “The Lover: Dublin, 1965”, where the author creates a very gloomy atmosphere and illustrates the rather dark “notion of the homosexual as doomed to a life of torment, suffering, [and] loneliness” (Sullivan 18). The two main characters, the male lovers, are living in a repressed Ireland, where they have to hide their affection for each other, and their only opportunities to make love are when they meet in secret places or use fake identities and meet in a hotel. Unlike in the other three texts, sexual acts are often described with very graphic, sometimes violent, details, and the author uses tough language and slang expressions. This presents a rather rough image of male homosexual love. The Ireland of that time (the plot takes place, between 1913 and 1965) does not approve of homosexual couples; on the contrary, homosexuality is even considered a criminal offence. The general Irish attitude towards same-sex couples is not only mirrored in its laws, but also in the general opinion and violent deeds of the public. The short story emphasizes this fact by describing incidents where gangs of youth unearth, hunt down, and beat up homosexual couples who meet secretly in remote country lanes because they have no other opportunity to spend time together. Although Roger Casement, the main protagonist, is indicted and sentenced to death for high treason because of his political activities, one can draw a parallel to his sexual preferences, since Bolger demonstrates an Ireland that constructs homosexuals as “sad and twisted creature[s] whose perverse desire would inevitably lead to their tragic downfall, and often their death” (Sullivan 18). The plot suggests that the context of politics and war is mainly concerned with the performance of masculinity, thus, indicating

that homosexual love has no place in it. The local setting is Dublin, and a few decades later, one might expect rather tolerant views in this urban area. However, the temporal setting of "The Lover: Dublin, 1965" obviously still forbids modern attitudes towards same-sex love. Generally speaking, the whole short story represents an overall negative and socially unaccepted image of homosexuality.

The local setting of "The Hardest Winter" by Breda Wall Ryan is a sheep farm in rural Ireland. One can interpret the surrounding even more repressive than the urban setting of Bolger's story due to the described notion of solitude. Thus, the general representation of homosexuality in this short story, as connected to objection, loneliness, and isolation, is not really surprising. Kate, the female protagonist, is a lesbian, and although the topic is never openly addressed, her mother clearly ignores and represses the thought that her daughter might be homosexual. It is axiomatic that such an attitude prevails in conservative, rural Ireland. Moreover, her mother desires to maintain the traditional Irish family unit and deeply wishes to become a grandmother, which (at that time) would be impossible if Kate decides to live a lesbian lifestyle. Needless to say, religious beliefs play an even bigger role in rural Ireland than in big cities. Thus, the Catholic Church obviously also represents a main obstacle for Kate and her desired future with a woman living by her side. Although Kate had a lesbian love affair with Lizzie Connors, they lived their relationship under the guise of friendship and as soon as her mother found out that there was more to it than solely platonic feelings, she stopped any contact with the Connors family. Her numerous attempts to play the matchmaker and marry her daughter off to various men additionally emphasizes her lack of understanding for her daughter's chosen lifestyle. Certainly, this was no isolated case. At that time, roughly the 1980s, many homosexuals were not able to show their true identity and could not realize their own sexuality openly due to their parents, who expected them to follow certain traditional conventions. The small excursus into Lizzie's life, who married a cousin with whom she has two babies, again illustrates the fate of homosexuals who have to disguise themselves and choose a life that resembles a lie. The fact that at the end of the short story, Kate appears to surrender and give in to her mother's wish of a son-in-law implies a bitter truth, namely that up to that moment, no improvement and no chance of more acceptance for homosexuality was visible within the near future in (rural) Irish

society. The only slightly positive representation of homosexuality is Róisín, who is a free spirit and globetrotter and has travelled to many different places before. Apparently, she has no doubts about her sexuality and although one cannot read her mind, one gets the impression that she is satisfied and happy with the short-lived affair with Kate. She seems to possess an open-minded outlook due to her various journeys and her volatile lifestyle. During her trips, she is likely to have witnessed that being a lesbian is less unacceptable in other countries, and maybe this gave her the strength to accept her sexuality and to enjoy it.

As compared to the other three short stories, homosexuality is not a major theme in the third analysed text, "Windfalls" by Mary Rose Callaghan. However, it offers an interesting, different approach to the representation of same-sex relationships within Irish society. Tom is the embodiment of negative ideologies towards homosexuality, since he absolutely detests the fact that his son is gay. He cannot cope with the situation and this narrow-mindedness even results in the fact that father and son have no personal relationship at all, but merely ignore each other. He is a psychiatrist by profession and even goes so far as to wish to be able to 'cure' his son of this 'disease', as he sees it. Given the fact that religion has always had, and still has, an immense influence on cultural and national identity in Ireland, this longing for a 'cure' is, once again, no individual case. However, the author also offers two positive representations of the topic of homosexuality. Firstly, Kay, the mother, fully supports her son and his decisions. She visits him regularly, they have a good relationship, and she absolutely accepts his boyfriend. This can be interpreted as a beacon of hope for a more tolerant future Ireland because although Kay belongs to an upper class society, she resists prejudice, shallowness, and conservatism. Secondly, it is Ruairi himself who is able to offer a positive angle on the issue. Although living in a repressive country, and, at times, family, he has had no problems or difficulties with his coming out. He knows who he is and succeeds in creating and consolidating his own homosexual identity with ease, although the given surrounding might appear as threatening or as an impediment at first glance. The author indicates that he lives happily in a gay relationship, he and his partner share a flat, and they do not have to hide their feelings, but can live openly. No specific incidents of hatred against them are addressed, but of course it can be assumed that they too have had to face prejudice on a frequent basis, as is the

unfortunate case for everyone who does not strictly follow the 'norm' in every country in the world, not only in Ireland.

The local framework created in "A Noise from the Woodshed" by Mary Dorcey is similar to the one in "The Hardest Winter", since the author presents a rural Irish setting. However, Dorcey introduces her lesbians differently, namely in an innovative and overall positive light. She dedicates the whole story to same-sex love and the implied joys of life. Homosexuality is represented as an easy lifestyle consisting of laughing, eating, drinking, lying in the grass, and making love. Dorcey even describes the part where the two main characters fall in love as the simplest thing in life, although in reality, the search for same-sex partners is surely connected with various obstacles, be it in an Irish society, or anywhere else. Actually, the author puts little emphasis on the concept of lesbianism, but rather depicts the couple just like any other couple, heterosexual or homosexual. The reader gets the feeling of being newly in love, but also the notion of everyday life, in which one comes to know the other person better and starts to notice the other's vices. Although the act of making love is addressed numerous times, as opposed to "The Lover: Dublin, 1965", no graphic images are presented or sex practices described in great detail. The appearance of another lesbian couple at the very same time, in the very same remote place can be considered a rather rare coincidence in reality. However, it underlines the idea that homosexuality is omnipresent, sometimes visible in the open, and sometimes hidden (such as in a woodshed) from the public eye. All involved women dispense love, happiness, and satisfaction with their sexuality, which delivers an overall positive image to the reader. One gets the impression that in Dorcey's Ireland, lesbian love is accepted and allowed.

Although each short story obviously is an individually authored work that should be judged as such, they all have a certain topic in common. Each writer treats the issue of homosexuality slightly differently, but they all succeed in rebelling against intransigent ideologies that have suppressed these topics. Hopefully, soon works like these will open the eyes of the entire Irish society.

9 Teaching Literature Related to the Theme of Homosexuality

9.1 Teaching Literature in General in the Austrian EFL Classroom

Although today the main focus in ELT¹¹ lies on meeting the academic and occupational needs of the students, teaching literature and teaching reading must not be ignored. It is essential to start at a very young age in order to help students become “independent readers who read for pleasure with confidence and enthusiasm” (Cliff Hodges 60). There are numerous reasons why teaching literature, regardless if it is novels or short fiction, has positive effects; for example, it is motivating, it is a stimulus for language acquisition, it helps students to understand other cultures, and it is authentic material (see Lazar 14f.).

According to Carter, as far as reasons for teaching literature are concerned, there are three applicable models: the cultural model, the language model, and the personal growth model. The first “enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space” (2). The second model can be justified with the fact that teaching literature promotes language development and helps students to better understand vocabulary and grammar patterns. When examining the personal growth model, one of the main aims of teachers should be to create a lasting pleasure in reading and “a deep satisfaction in a continuing growth of understanding” (3). Hence, the third model suggests that when encouraging students to engage with literature, they simultaneously grow as individuals. Obviously, the choice of text(s) is essential, since it should not be too difficult on either a linguistic or a cultural level and ideally, the young reader should respond to and participate imaginatively with the texts. Moreover, the activity of reading literature should be made a memorable experience and above all, the teacher him/herself should radiate enthusiasm for the teaching of literature (see Carter 2f.).

Gillespie, moreover, argues that the place of literature in the modern curriculum is justifiable, since it contributes to the cultivation of imagination and of empathy. It allows readers to expand their horizons and offers the possibility

¹¹ Abbreviation for English Language Teaching.

of insight into others' lives and the ways they live. This stimulus of the young reader's imagination and different perspective provides diversity, which the students' surroundings may not offer (see Gillespie 16ff.). Additionally, she claims that "literature offers a different form of learning than just processing information" (20), as with reading one has to participate actively.

9.2 Homosexuality and Young Adult Literature

According to Cart and Jenkins, homosexuality is currently very popular in young adult (henceforth YA) literature, because between 1969, when the first YA novel¹² that directly addressed homosexuality appeared, and 2004, about 200 books with LGBTQ topics have been published, mostly in the United States (see 128). Abate explains that this mainstream development is due to "parallels between the YA novel and the coming-of-age narrative for adults" (5) that made it easy to adapt the YA genre to include innovative contents. In addition, experts argue that homosexual-affirmative writing in general has educational and didactic value for the young reader (see Abate 6). It is important inasmuch as it enhances normativity of this taboo topic by emphasizing social tolerance (see Abate 146).

Thus, queer curriculum theorists suggest including LGBTQ themed books in the classroom in order to supplement heteronormative thinking. Sumara and Davis compare this need to the former challenge of questioning the 'whiteness' of the literary canon. It is necessary to prevent students from seeing, reading, and thinking through a heterosexual lens alone (see 202ff.). The main pedagogical aim is to "broaden perception, to complexify cognition, and to amplify the imagination of learners" (202) in order to eliminate homophobia and heterosexism.

¹² According to Renzi, Letcher, and Miraglia, the first YA novel dealing with homosexuality is John Donovan's *I'll Get there. It Better be Worth the Trip* (see 120).

9.3 Homosexuality and Young Adult Literature in an Irish Context

Although none of the short stories analysed specifically feature a teenager, the possibility of using one of them within the EFL classroom with the aim to address and discuss the topic of homosexuality deserves closer examination.

Kimberley Reynolds explains that the genre of YA fiction usually features “characters caught up in the turbulent and complex emotions associated with the teenage years [and] that it is addressed to readers presumed to be in this state of turmoil” (138f.). However, though this subcategory within children’s literature mainly developed in America and Great Britain, there is no major publishing scene for YA literature within the Irish context. Various explanations could apply here, for example, economic reasons, the ongoing influence of the Catholic Church, or the prevailing conservative attitudes of Irish society. The latter two (the Catholic Church and Irish society) probably prefer to conceal controversial topics that are commonly addressed in YA literature such as (homo)sexuality, abortion, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy. However, in the early 1990s, more and more authors and publishers became engaged with teen fiction. As far as homosexuality in this genre is concerned, one’s options are quite limited, as only two Irish novels directly address issues of same-sex desire, namely *When Love Comes to Town* by Tom Lennon, and *Allison: A Story of First Love* by Tatiana Strelkoff. When the former was first published in 1993, it was listed as adult literature, and it was only when it was reprinted in 2003 that it appeared on the publisher’s children’s list. This alteration perfectly mirrors several positive changes that have occurred in Irish ideologies from the time when homosexuality was decriminalized up until the present day. However, the fact that texts featuring homosexuality are still underrepresented in YA fiction suggests a lingering repression of these issues (see Whyte 71ff.).

When examining the short stories analysed above, the definition of YA characters probably applies best to “The Hardest Winter”, since Kate is described as rather young, although her exact age is never mentioned. The author only indicates that she has been running the farm since she was 15, but it is not clear how old she is at the time the short story is set. However, her life can be seen as “a time of struggle to mature as an adult, to develop independence, to challenge authority, to form an identity, and to relate to peers” (Whyte 71). These features

qualify the story as a YA text. Apart from “The Hardest Winter”, “Windfalls” also includes aspects of YA literature, since Ruairi came out when he was 15. This aspect matches the definition of YA fiction perfectly because realizing and accepting oneself as homosexual in one’s teenage years correlates with struggle, gossip, and turbulence.

9.4 Possible Difficulties when Teaching a Controversial Topic like Homosexuality

According to Stradling, Noctor, and Baines, in the educational context a controversial topic includes “those problems and disputes which divide society and for which significant groups within society offer conflicting explanations and solutions based on alternative values” (2). Today’s society frequently confronts students with topics involving sexuality, gender, and race, so simply neglecting them in the classroom setting would be hypocritical. Making use of taboo topics like homosexuality, or sexuality in general, has numerous positive influences on the students, above all, the point is to raise awareness and broaden the students’ minds. There are, however, possible obstacles to be considered in advance.

One major reservation, which was also mentioned by various participants in the conducted questionnaire that will be introduced below, is that teachers could possibly unintentionally initiate the coming out of a student when discussing LGBTQ themed literature, which then could lead to bullying by other students.

Although the media portrays acceptance of LGBTQ characters like Conchita Wurst, or acceptance of public same-gender kisses shared by celebrities like Britney Spears and Madonna, or popular culture texts including the song “I kissed a girl” by Katy Perry, everyday school life does not exactly mirror this suggested tolerant society. In their article, Renzi, Letcher, and Miraglia blame hostile school environments, homophobic language, bullying, and assault for the justified unease of students who identify themselves as LGBTQ (see 117ff.). They further address a survey, conducted in 2009 by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, which shows that 88.9 per cent of the students surveyed had heard ‘gay’ used as swear word, 84.6 per cent experienced verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation, and 61.1 per cent of them felt

unsafe at their school. However, the same survey revealed numerous advantages LGBTQ students have in schools that have a supportive inclusive curriculum, which allows “positive representations of LGBTQ people in multiple areas within the school curriculum” (Renzi, Letcher, and Miraglia 118). The analysed positive effects were that fewer homophobic remarks were used, and LGBTQ students felt safer and more accepted within their school community. The language classroom has the capacity to support such an inclusive curriculum with pieces of literature presenting LGBTQ characters in a positive way. Literature can not only stimulate the imagination, it can also be a tool for reflecting on one’s life, accepting differences in others, and discerning social injustice. Using LGBTQ themed literature could not only help and support LGBTQ students, it could also help other students with the way they can deal with it, like the character Charlie in Chbosky’s novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, who simply accepts his friend’s homosexuality without any fear or drama. Strategies and didactic devices like these would enable a separation from the heteronormative structure of society and lead to more acceptance for people not following the ‘norm’ (see Renzi, Letcher, and Miraglia 117ff.).

The reticence of teachers towards such controversial topics is partly understandable, since the implementation of LGBTQ themed literature is often politically charged and can be seen as a risky proposition. Teachers must not use this literary genre just for the sake of it; they have to be aware of certain homosexual stereotypes in order to avoid reinforcing them. Apart from that, they must guarantee an unprejudiced surrounding where questions and constructive discussions are possible. English language classrooms should also incorporate more than one literary work with LGBTQ characters. This way, the teacher can help his or her class to avoid the common misunderstanding that all LGBTQ individuals resemble a character in a single literary work. Blackburn and Buckley also address the aspect of race because “[i]n order to avoid positioning white queer persons as insiders and queer persons of color as outsiders” (206), they are of the opinion that curricula need to include works that highlight racial dynamics. Moreover, teachers must be careful to avoid opinions based on assumptions such as whether all of their students are heterosexual, or whether the general attitude in the classroom is homophobic. Such generalizations only reinforce heteronormativity. Therefore, experts emphasize that a different

approach is necessary, namely to assume that students are “either LGBTQ themselves or supportive allies” (Renzi, Letcher, and Miraglia 123) in order to challenge prevailing heterosexual norms and question why students might be homophobic. Additionally, pedagogues should be able to talk about sexuality with all its variations without being embarrassed or acting cornered in order to demonstrate the range of gender and sexual identity to their students (see Blackburn and Buckley 204).

Teachers should critically look at the readings they provide for their students and, in addition, they should examine the existing curriculum through a literary lens and search for feminist/gender studies, or queer theory. If time limitations do not allow for a whole LGBTQ themed class reading, short stories, literature circles, or choice texts are possible solutions.

Blackburn experienced another difficulty when requiring her students in her Middle Childhood Literature course to read an LGBTQ themed book, namely that the students felt “offended simply because they were assigned to read the book” (Blackburn and Buckley 204). Generally speaking, this reaction is strongly connected with a student’s highly individual morality and the aspect of how and by whom these moral ideologies have been transmitted. Maybe one is influenced by one’s peer-group, parents, the media, or churches, and thus, one usually bases one’s opinion on perspectives generated by these parties. However, ignoring controversial topics is not an option because if the learners in their private lives never hear about social varieties of ideologies, it is impossible to achieve “a respected diversity of moral and political opinion among students and teachers” (Markowitz and Hedley 207).

Apart from that, teachers are likely to feel reluctant towards the use of LGBTQ literature when vivid same-sex sexual encounters are described. It is likely that such texts are considered inappropriate even if they depict heterosexual sex-scenes, though, since sexuality as such is also taboo in the school context (see Blackburn and Buckley 207). However, the queer inclusive curriculum assumes that sexuality is a primary and “necessary companion to all knowing” (Sumara and Davis 203). Moreover, sexual education is one of the 12 Austrian principles of education, as will be explained below.

Nevertheless, the mere idea of discussing the topic of (homo)sexuality makes some teachers as well as students feel embarrassed. According to Leib,

sometimes it is necessary to make students feel uncomfortable in order to open them to new perspectives on the world around them and to “force them to confront and examine their core values and beliefs that shape who they are” (230). He further states that it is vitally important that teachers are aware of the fact that these discussions can trigger dynamics that are likely to invigorate and simultaneously disrupt classroom harmony.

Leib, furthermore, stresses that students could dislike highly political or moral discussions, because they probably fear being treated or graded unjustly when they hold a different opinion on the controversial issue than the teacher does (see 231). This so called “committed impartiality” (Leib 231) approach suggests the presentation of all sides of a controversial argument while the instructor simultaneously reveals his or her own position (see Leib 231). However, at this point, a certain amount of professionalism and tolerance is necessary from the teacher, who must not treat the learners differently or unfairly merely because they hold a different opinion. Nevertheless, retaining an objective attitude towards the learner is surely a difficult task when topics such as intolerance towards homosexuals, foreigners, or other minorities are concerned, especially when the teacher would personally only allow one tolerant opinion.

All these aspects and possible difficulties considered, it is still important not to ignore such polarizing topics. Furthermore, it is necessary that when using tools, such as novels, short stories, picture books, or films, teachers should consider their students’ and their communities’ attitudes towards LGBTQ issues in order to also incorporate them into classroom discussions (see Blackburn and Buckley 210). Lastly, factors such as timing and the maturity level of the students additionally need to be taken into account. The decision to use LGBTQ themed literature should not be reactionary, however, as for example, after the coming out of one student, or after a harassment incident, but its inclusion “needs to be a planned, discussed part of the curriculum; a coherent and consistent message from the administration and faculty must be present to combat homophobia in the schools” (Renzi, Letcher, and Miraglia 124).

Although bringing LGBTQ themed texts into the English classroom can be a challenge that takes careful preparation and elaborate planning, teachers need to take such considerations and risks in order to fight homophobia in schools (see Renzi, Letcher, and Miraglia 117ff.). The inclusion of the topic of homosexuality

in the curriculum has the potential to help LGBTQ teenagers. Supporting them, representing tolerant attitudes, and clarifying possible prejudices or misunderstandings very likely results in lower rates of bullying, depression, or suicide (see Hill).

9.5 The Topic of (Homo)sexuality in the Austrian EFL Classroom

9.5.1 Curriculum

In an Austrian school setting, the curriculum for the English language (within the curriculum for modern foreign languages) in secondary schools of higher education (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schulen*, henceforth AHS) never explicitly mentions sexuality, still less homosexuality. However, there are various passages that are open to interpretation, in which one could include LGBTQ topics.

One such curricular demand is that foreign languages should enhance social competences in multicultural surroundings and unprejudiced attitudes towards cultural stereotypes and clichés. Moreover, suitable topic choices should promote the students' cultural openness and their understanding of social connections. In addition, conflict ability, problem-solving competence, and peace education are central aims of language teaching. Furthermore, teachers are asked to convey language rules that are in accordance with the equality of the social genders (see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, *Lehrplan 1*). These lines address numerous open-minded and tolerant concepts, and although the focus is on multiculturalism (and against racism), it could also be shifted to sexual equality (and against homophobia).

As far as subject areas are concerned, the curriculum mentions the following:

Sprache und ihre Anwendungsmöglichkeiten; Rolle der Medien; Arbeit und Freizeit; Erziehung; Lebensplanung; Einstellungen und Werte; Zusammenleben; aktuelle soziale, wirtschaftliche und politische Entwicklungen; Prozesse der Globalisierung; kulturelle und interkulturelle Interaktion; Umwelt; aktuelle Entwicklungen in Technik und Wissenschaft; Kunst in ihren Ausdrucksformen Literatur, Musik, bildende Künste. (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, *Lehrplan 4*)

Again, there is no specific invitation to address the topic of (homo)sexuality in the Austrian EFL classroom, but topics such as ‘life planning’, ‘attitudes and values’, ‘living together’, and ‘economic and political developments’ naturally allow the implementation of LGBTQ themed texts. In any case, it is possible to decide on specific thematic foci according to the students’ interests and needs, so it is also possible and justifiable to discuss LGBTQ topics if the majority of the learners are in agreement (see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, *Lehrplan 4*).

As far as literature as such is concerned, the curriculum explicitly states that the use of literary works is of great importance in order to provide humanistically oriented general education (see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, *Lehrplan 4*). Hence, the inclusion of LGBTQ themed YA novels and short stories like “Windfalls” or “The Hardest Winter” are suitable texts to be discussed in the Austrian EFL classroom.

9.5.2 Standardized Competence-Oriented Reifeprüfung

When one examines the guidelines for the new standardized competence-oriented *Reifeprüfung* for modern foreign languages, the officially suggested pool of topics for the oral exam contains the following 24 areas (see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, *Fremdsprachen 13*):

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Relationships and social networks | 13. Arts and culture |
| 2. Living and surrounding | 14. Media |
| 3. Fashion and trends | 15. Communication |
| 4. Diet, health and social security | 16. Nature and environment |
| 5. Sports | 17. Modern technology |
| 6. School and education | 18. Personal future/plans |
| 7. The working world | 19. Cross-cultural aspects |
| 8. Leisure behaviour | 20. Growing up and forging identity |
| 9. Consumer society | 21. Politics and public institutions |
| 10. Tradition and change | 22. The globalized world |
| 11. Transport and tourism | 23. Social groups |
| 12. Aspects relating to regional studies | 24. Rules, regulations, and laws |

In the guidelines, these topics are originally given in German, developed by the Austrian Ministry of Education and Women, however, they have been translated into English for the purpose of this thesis. This pool of topics derives from the guidelines given in the Common European Frame of References for Languages (CEFR)¹³. These topics refer to the linguistic level B2, which is the expected standard for the first modern foreign language at the level of the *Matura*, age 18. Similar to the curriculum, these guidelines do not explicitly address (homo)sexuality. However, teachers are invited to discuss relationships, tradition and change, culture, intercultural aspects, growing up, finding one's identity, and social (minority) groups; all aspects where LGBTQ topics are applicable. It is assumed that the use of literature in order to convey cultural aspects has positive effects (see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, *Fremdsprachen* 11ff.), thus, once again, the short stories analysed are adequate didactic devices for fostering students' competence in the Austrian EFL classroom, for example in order to cover Irish issues as well as LGBTQ themes.

9.5.3 Principles of Education

The Austrian curriculum defines 12 major principles of education that define the teaching content to be considered in all school types, levels, and subjects. Thus, these principles are not limited to one subject, but represent an interdisciplinary consistent throughout all subjects (see Internationale Schulpartnerschaften). Sexual education is one of them. The federal ministry for education, science, and culture initially enacted this principle in 1970. An update followed in 1990 due to curricular changes, which is still valid today. The main aim is not only to convey biological sexual education, but also to offer counselling. Furthermore, the principle demands that the moral conception of different social groups towards sexual education is presented objectively, and that discussion on this topic is conducted with mutual respect. The focus also lies on cooperation with parents, school doctors, educational psychologists, and external experts. It is tremendously important to effectively coordinate individual subjects by taking

¹³ "The Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of languages syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively" (Council of Europe 1).

advantage of their cross-connections. An environment that is free of judgment and prejudice is necessary, in which all participants can feel free to use an open and natural vocabulary. The triangle of teachers, students, and parents can be seen as an interacting forum where mutual exchange is highly important, especially when delicate questions in connection with sexual education occur in the classroom setting (see Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur 2ff.).

The inclusion of this principle already mirrors tolerance and open-mindedness, however, it once again ignores the specific addressing of the topic of same-sex relationships or other LGBTQ themed issues. Similar to the chapters discussed above, dealing with the curriculum and the standardized competence-oriented *Reifeprüfung*, teachers can, nevertheless, interpret the guidelines to this principle in an LGBTQ positive direction. It mentions, for example that sexual education can help students to find their personal identity, which could similarly be a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity. Moreover, teachers must respond to individual questions and personal concerns from students, which could in some cases be of an LGBTQ nature. The guidelines also directly request providing and recommending suitable literature for students and parents, which could be fictional or non-fictional texts (see Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur 2ff.). Hence, this proves once more that, although not directly promoted, the implementation of (homo)sexually themed literature is a suitable tool for the Austrian EFL classroom.

10 Questionnaire

10.1 Methodology

10.1.1 Participants

The study was conducted within four weeks in February and March 2015 with English teachers working in AHS in Austria. A questionnaire (see Appendix C) was sent via e-mail containing an online link to the headmistresses and headmasters of each school in every federal province with the request to distribute it to all English teachers working in this school. In total, 350 institutions were contacted, from which 82 teachers completed the questionnaire. Four of the contacted school principals responded that they could not distribute the message to their teachers, mainly due to lack of time and because their workload was already high enough. The percentage of the response rate cannot be established exactly, since the total number of English teachers working at the 350 schools contacted could not be obtained. The participants have the following characteristics: 66 are female, 16 are male, 24 are 35 years and younger, 36 are between 36 and 50 years, and 22 are 51 years and above.

10.1.2 Measures

The questionnaire consists of 17 items. The first two relate to socio-demographic data, i.e. sex and age, and the remaining 15 relate to the topic of homosexuality in the Austrian EFL classroom. Seven of these items are Yes/No questions and with seven questions, the participants had to choose one (or more) of the options given. Two are open-ended questions where the teachers had to answer in their own words, and one question asks participants to express their opinion concerning the extent to which the topic of homosexuality should be dealt with in the classroom, ranging from scale 1 (less) to more 5 (more).

10.1.3 Hypotheses

The main hypothesis is that the majority of Austrian English teachers tend to bypass the topic of homosexuality in their EFL classrooms, for various reasons such as time constraints or conservative attitudes towards same-sex desire. However, if teachers do address homosexuality in the classroom, the expectation is that they are likely to consider upper secondary levels, or older students, as more appropriate to engage in this topic. Additionally, the hypothesis prevails that most participants regard narrow-minded parents and embarrassed teachers as the main difficulty when teaching controversial topics like same-sex preferences. As far as the addressed short stories are concerned, the final hypothesis suggests that only a few Austrian teachers have read or used one of these (rather unknown) texts before, though it is assumed that a high percentage is able to name one or more fictional texts in which homosexuality is an issue.

10.2 Results

10.2.1 Presentation of Results

Of the 82 teachers that responded, 70 (85.37%) have affirmed that sexuality should be addressed in the Austrian EFL classroom, and 64 (78.05%) of them have confirmed that they actually do address this topic in their lessons. When it comes to homosexuality, an even larger number, namely 73 (89.02%) are in favour of including the topic in the English language classroom, but 'only' 63 (76.83%) have admitted to do so, and act on the basis of their own opinion. The following pie charts illustrate a comparison of the responses to the first four questions:

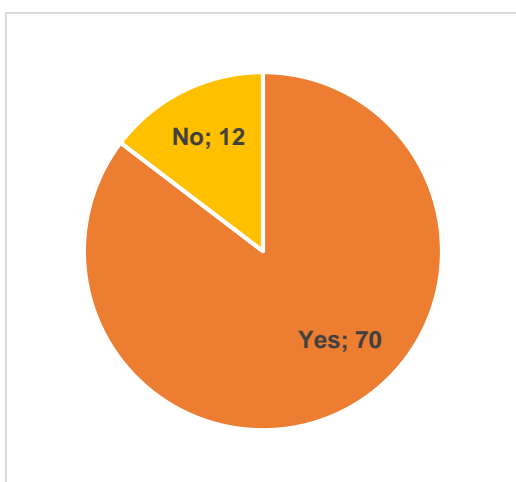


Fig. 1 Do You Think the Topic of Sexuality Should be Included in the Austrian EFL Classroom?

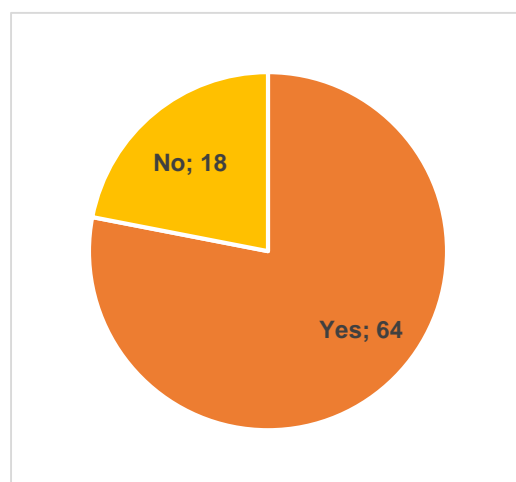


Fig. 2 Do You Address the Topic of Sexuality in any Form in Your English Lessons?

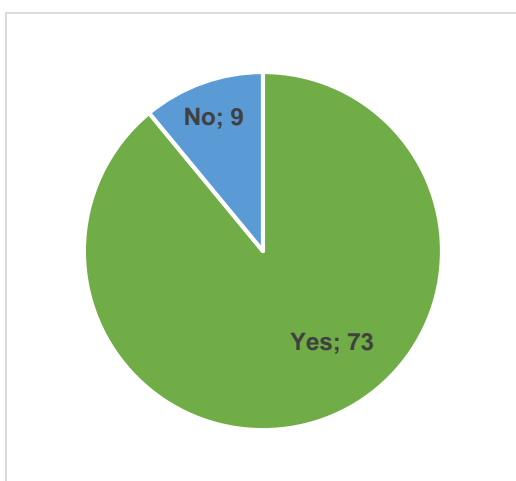


Fig. 3 Do You Think the Topic of Homosexuality Should be Included in the Austrian EFL Classroom?

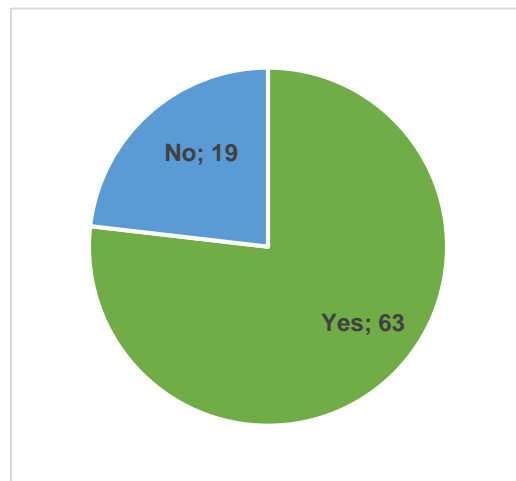


Fig. 4 Do You Address the Topic of Homosexuality in any Form in Your English Lessons?

Thus, the main hypothesis has been falsified by these results, since apparently the great majority of teachers does not shrink from teaching controversial topics such as homosexuality.

The next question was if the topic of homosexuality should be more, or less often addressed in the Austrian EFL classroom. The following table lists the results of the answers in absolute values and percentage:

Table 1 Do You Think the Topic of Homosexuality Should be More Often, or Less Often Addressed in the Austrian EFL Classroom?

Option	Count	Percentage
1 (less)	2	2.44%
2	3	3.66%
3	53	64.63%
4	18	21.95%
5 (more)	6	7.32%

The fact that the majority (64.63%) chose the middle option (3), could either mean that most participants are actually satisfied with the status quo, or it could also signify a possible ‘tendency towards the centre’, where in reality respondents refused to answer (or did not know how to answer because it is difficult for them to commit themselves). However, if there had been no middle option, it would have forced participants, who truthfully meant that one has to address the issue of homosexuality neither more nor less often, to make a choice (see Aschemann-Pilshofer 15). Apart from participants who selected the average, significantly more, namely 24 (29.27%) persons in total chose positive options towards more inclusion, compared to only five (6.1%) respondents, who think that homosexuality deserves lesser attention in the classroom.

Question number 8 asks for the most suitable age of pupils for addressing same-sex love. The results for this item verify the hypothesis that teachers feel more comfortable with older students when discussing homosexuality. A great majority of 66 (80.49%) participants consider the age between 15 and 18 as most appropriate, compared to 14 (17.07%) persons, who would rather prefer to discuss the issue in classes with pupils aged 10 to 14. However, there are also two (2.44%) pedagogues who claim that the topic should never be addressed at all.

Certainly, teachers can discuss various aspects when including LGBTQ texts in the EFL classroom. The following table illustrates the teacher’s preferences according to their multiple answers to item number 9:

Table 2 According to Your Opinion, which of the Following Aspects Should be Addressed when Discussing the Topic of Homosexuality in the EFL Classroom?

Option	Count	Percentage
Tolerance	78	95.12%
Traditional family values	47	57.32%
Equality	67	81.71%
Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)	17	20.73%
Human Rights	59	71.95%
Sexual variations	19	23.17%
Other	12	14.63%

The results are encouraging, because the three categories that, overall, received the most positive responses are tolerance, equality, and human rights. A rather surprising and thought-provoking result is that 17 teachers (20.73%) state that they would discuss STDs in connection with homosexuality. This approach is ambivalent inasmuch, as it implies that LGBTQ people are more likely to be diagnosed with an STD than heterosexuals. Linking a disease, such as AIDS, to homosexuality reflects some biased or received opinion. Finally, various respondents added additional themes that should be addressed when dealing with homosexuality; these include the following:

- Society
- Stereotypes
- Family structures
- Same-sex unions
- Right to adopt children
- Procreative technologies
- Bioethics
- Religious issues
- Individual freedom
- Love

One teacher explains that although he or she would be prepared to discuss literature written by a homosexual author if it fits in his or her curriculum, he or she refuses to treat homosexuality as a topic by itself as long as heterosexuality is not specifically treated as a topic by itself. Another participant stated that he or she would discuss reasons why traditional family values are changing nowadays in order to create more understanding for this issue. Additionally, he or she would emphasize that homosexuality has always existed but was suppressed due to old-fashioned societies and their past norms and values.

The question of possible difficulties encountered when teaching controversial topics has already been discussed in chapter 9.4 above. Item number 10, an open question, was intended to expose the teachers' potential reservations and fears when addressing homosexuality in the classrooms. All 82 participants gave individual answers to that question, providing one or more arguments. Due to spatial limitations, these answers could not be separately listed, but are grouped together in clusters according to overlapping ideas:

Table 3 According to Your Opinion, what are the Difficulties or Potential Reservations against Teaching a Controversial Topic such as Homosexuality in the Austrian EFL Classroom?

Possible difficulty	Count
Parents, family background	18
Embarrassment on the part of the students	15
Society, prejudice, taboo	14
Lack of information on the part of the teachers	14
Very personal topic	13
Immature students	12
None	8
Embarrassment on the part of the teachers	7
Curriculum, lack of time	5

As the table demonstrates, the main hypothesis concerning this question has partly been verified, since the main argument against the implementation of the

topic of homosexuality, which was addressed most frequently, is the potential protest or criticism by the pupils' parents. Additionally, the initial assumption was that teachers would be more embarrassed than students; however, this view has been falsified, since only seven participants agreed that teachers might feel uncomfortable, whereas 15 pedagogues (this reflects the second most important argument) claim that this will cause awkwardness and unease on the part of the students. Apart from that, 14 respondents opine that addressing homosexuality in the classroom is only difficult because of social circumstances, such as a conservative society that still perceives same-sex relationships as "abnormal, as some form of relationship that is not desirable"¹⁴, or as "something unnatural and weird"¹⁵. Additionally, 14 participants concede that they lack relevant information or to not feel sufficiently competent. In order to overcome this insecurity, one respondent "would appreciate some teacher training [on] how one could approach the topic of (homo)sexuality at school"¹⁶. Furthermore, the significant number of 13 participants regard the issue of homosexuality as highly personal, and various answers in this cluster address potential negative consequences when discussing LGBTQ themed texts such as involuntarily 'outing' of students or the bullying of homosexual students that have already come out. Thus, a high degree of sensitivity and empathy is necessary. Hence, homosexuality should not be addressed 'merely' because of a current incident, but included in the curriculum on a regular basis. A considerable number (12) expects students to behave in an immature manner and might consider the topic ridiculous. Lastly, five teachers have stated they could not deal with the topic, as it does not expressly conform to the limited specifications and topics for the new *Matura*. Apparently, when one "teaches to the test, [there is] no time for teaching what [will] not be tested"¹⁷. However, encouragingly, eight open-minded teachers answered that they do not see any (and there should not be any) difficulties when teaching controversial topics in their EFL classrooms.

In order to find out about the most suitable textual genre for discussions about homosexuality, the teachers could choose between the novel, the short story, and non-fictional texts. The latter two options were selected most frequently

¹⁴ Stated by one of the respondents in the questionnaire.

¹⁵ Stated by one of the respondents in the questionnaire.

¹⁶ Stated by one of the respondents in the questionnaire.

¹⁷ Stated by one of the respondents in the questionnaire.

with 31 (37.80%) participants opting for the short story, followed by 30 (36.59%) respondents who preferred non-fictional texts. Apart from that, 17 (20.73%) teachers opted for the use of a novel to address LGBTQ themes in the classroom. Two (2.44%) consider none of the proposed genres to be suitable, and two did not answer the question.

Although 63 (76.83%) teachers have affirmed to address the topic of homosexuality in their EFL classrooms, only 22 (26.83%) have read or used fictional texts in the classroom in which homosexuality is a main topic. The other 60 (73.17%) participants stated that they do not know any LGBTQ themed literature. The next question was directed only to those who responded with 'yes', and were asked to give the title(s) of the text(s) they have read. A small selection of the answers supplied is listed below:

- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *The Boy in the Dress* by David Walliams
- "Brokeback Mountain" by Annie Proulx
- *Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita Mae Brown
- Short stories by Sarah Waters
- Short stories by Alice Munro
- *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf
- *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde
- *Oranges are not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson
- "The End of Something" by Ernest Hemingway

The respondents named various other titles, and some of them stated that they have used fiction covering the issue of homosexuality, but they admitted that they could not remember the exact title anymore. However, the above selection demonstrates a great variety and an awareness of LGBTQ themed literature amongst the teachers. The next item, question number 14, has asked these teachers if they can imagine to use these texts in their English lessons with the aim of addressing homosexuality. The results show a minor inconsistency, because 26 (31.71%) respondents affirmed their willingness to do so, although two questions earlier only 22 people confirmed that they do know LGBTQ themed literature. Moreover, eight (9.76%) teachers answered with 'no', and the remaining 48 (58.54%) gave no answer. The expectation was that the 22

teachers who said that they knew literature containing homosexual issues would have distributed amongst the 'yes' and 'no' options for question number 14, but instead of 22, there are 34 teachers in total that answered this question.

The last three items link the short stories of the analytical part to the research of the empirical part. Question 15 addresses the degree of familiarity the teachers have with the four short stories analysed. The hypothesis that they are not well known has been verified, because only one (1.22%) person knew "The Lover: Dublin, 1965" and only one other respondent was familiar with "The Hardest Winter". The remaining 80 respondents (97.56%) admitted that they did not know any of the four suggested works. Without knowing these texts, 15 teachers (18.29%) claimed they would consider to use them in their English lessons with the aim of addressing homosexuality. Thus, the fact that the content is unknown to them is no obstacle for inclusion, which again shows the teachers' willingness and open-mindedness. Four participants (4.88%) claimed that they were not willing to include these short stories, and the great majority of 63 (76.83%) people, gave no answer, very likely because they have not read them.

This questionnaire has attempted to depict a cross section of the current situation of how Austrian EFL teachers in AHS treat the topic of homosexuality in their classrooms. Contrary to the main hypothesis stated above, the results obtained seem to suggest overall to reflect an encouraging, positive attitude and willingness on the part of the teachers to include same-sex topics in their classrooms. Although various potential difficulties have been addressed, a significant number still can imagine to discuss LGBTQ themed literature with the aim of addressing homosexuality. Surprisingly, eight particularly open-minded teachers are of the opinion that there are no serious problems or obstacles when teaching controversial topics.

10.2.2 Contextualization of Results

The study was conducted on a sample of Austrian English teachers working in AHS all over the country. Needless to say, these teachers have to stick to the curriculum in their EFL classrooms, and this curriculum does not explicitly refer to the topic of homosexuality. Moreover, the dedicated teacher is also required to prepare his or her learners for the new standardized competence-oriented

Reifeprüfung, which does not specifically address LGBTQ topics, either. One teacher responded in an additional e-mail (that cannot be listed in the appendix due to reasons of anonymity) to the answered questionnaire with the following message:

Leider ist es so, dass ich und viele andere Kolleg/innen in unserem Bestreben, die Schüler/innen auf die neue Matura vorzubereiten, grundsätzlich kaum mehr Literatur in den Stunden behandeln. Eine bewusste Entscheidung, einen Text über Homosexualität zu behandeln, wird deshalb wohl selten getroffen werden, weil wir ohnehin fast nie Literatur lesen.

This sobering statement is also mirrored in the answers of four other teachers concerning possible difficulties. The issue of time and the focus in language teaching is given priority over literary topics. However, what is the situation like in a first language classroom setting? An interesting study was conducted in America, where 600 public High Schools were chosen at random and contacted by e-mail in order to find out if the schools included materials that addressed same-sex desire in the English language arts curriculum. Of the 212 schools that responded, only 18 (8.49%) answered positively that they were using LGBTQ themed texts, films, or other materials (see Blackburn and Buckley 205). Thus, when including materials that address same-sex desire, there is no direct connection between teaching a first or a second language. However, although Austrian English teachers are aware of the temporal limitations due to the existing curriculum, still an encouraging percentage of 76.83% of teachers have confirmed to discuss homosexuality in their lessons, compared to only 8.49% in America.

10.2.3 Limitations of the Findings of the Empirical Enquiry

This empirical enquiry has some obvious limitations that need to be conceded. When analysing a controversial topic like homosexuality, one has to be aware of the possibility that some participants may have adapted their answers in order to comply with 'political correctness'. Although the questionnaire was conducted strictly anonymously – as stated in the welcome-text (see Appendix C), the wish to satisfy others and to follow expected standards of tolerance may have induced some teachers not to answer completely truthfully (see Aschemann-Pilshofer 10).

11 Conclusion

By means of a detailed literary analysis and an empirical research, this thesis has shown, that both in Ireland, as well as in Austria, the stigma attached to homosexuality has begun to weaken in recent years.

The aim of this work has been to provide a contextualized analysis of four selected contemporary Irish short stories, and to critically examine the fictional representation of the controversial subject matter of homosexuality in today's Irish society. With regard to this frequently debated theme, relationships, social attitudes, and the representation of homosexuality have been examined in works of the Irish authors Dermot Bolger, Breda Wall Ryan, Mary Rose Callaghan, and Mary Dorcey. The short stories depict different stages of acceptance in different temporal Irish contexts, and it has been demonstrated in the course of this thesis that, despite the fact that more than 80 per cent of the inhabitants of Ireland are Roman Catholics, recently a more liberal and tolerant attitude towards homosexuality has developed. Incidents, such as the acceptance of a gay rugby team, or the inclusion of the Irish Queer Archive in the National Library of Ireland, indicate an emerging open-mindedness of the Irish society. Additionally, the legalization of divorce and birth control, and the latest Census, which reported that 4,042 same-sex couples now share the same household, demonstrate this change of attitude and growth in tolerance.

However, although positive changes can be observed, there is still a long way to go before all prejudices concerning homosexual couples are dispelled in Ireland, and undoubtedly also in the rest of the world. As addressed earlier, one possible suggestion for further progress in this direction would be to alter the out-of-date wording in the *Constitution of Ireland*, extending the definition of the family unit and including the concept of same-sex couples. Moreover, Irish society could only benefit from the removal of Section 37.1 (a) and (b) of the Employment Equality Act 1998, which would prevent discrimination in medical and educational sectors.

The second major part of this thesis establishes a link between Ireland and Austria and demonstrates that tolerant and open-minded teachers dominate the current situation concerning the topic of homosexuality in the Austrian EFL classroom. Falsifying the initial hypothesis, the conducted research reveals that

a great majority of teachers are already addressing same-sex desire in their classrooms. Despite the awareness that there are various obstacles to be overcome, such as conservative parents, or embarrassed learners, numerous teachers confirmed their willingness to teach LGBTQ themed literature. A careful and well-prepared implementation of these topics can certainly help to banish prejudice amongst teenagers, and advance constructive, open-minded classroom discussions that can help (homosexual) students by lifting the shame and stigma adhering to same-sex relationships. As a long-term consequence, this positive attitude may lower rates of bullying, harassment, depression, and suicide involving LGBTQ teenagers. Hence, it is highly important to teach today's children and teenagers a lesson of compassion and tolerance, and to strengthen their feelings of empathy in order to create a future where everyone accepts sexual diversity.

12 List of Abbreviations

AHS	Secondary school of higher education (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule)
CEFR	Common European Frame of References for Languages
CRA	Congo Reform Association
DADT	Don't Ask, Don't Tell
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ILGO	Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization
IRA	Irish Republican Army
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Questioning
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
YA	Young Adult

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15 Appendix

A

Dear Barbara,

Thank you for your email. It came as something of a surprise! I am pleased to hear of your interest in the story, which I wrote quite a long time ago - it was awarded a runner-up prize in the inaugural Davey Byrnes Short Story Award in 2004 and was published in *The Faber Book of Best New Irish Short Stories, 2006-7*, ed. David Marcus. I have completed a collection of short fiction which included *The Hardest Winter*. I'm afraid it hasn't found a publisher yet.

Since 2005, when I earned an M.Phil in Creative Writing from Trinity College, Dublin, I have written very little fiction, concentrating instead on writing poetry. My poetry has been published widely in print and on-line and my first collection, *In a Hare's Eye*, ext year (2015) by Doire Press.

I feel I should tell you, in case it is relevant to you study, that *The Hardest Winter* is written in persona and is not autobiographical. My purpose in making the protagonist homosexual was to accentuate her isolation and aloneness in an already isolated rural location, and the hopelessness of trying to fit in with family expectations. If what you mean to study is work written by homosexual writers, I can send you some names and contact details (if I receive permission from the writers). You might read Colm Tóibín, who has written quite a lot in the genre and is highly regarded internationally.

If you do include my story in your study, I would love to read the relevant part of your thesis.

My website is under construction at the moment, but I hope to have an updated biography included there next week.

If you need any further information, please email me.

Best wishes,
Breda

Breda Wall Ryan
6 Wyndham Park,
Bray,
Co Wicklow,
Ireland
email: bredawallryan@gmail.com

B

Dear Barbara,

Good to hear from you.

The town is fictional, a generic composite of many small rural Irish towns. The church and its window are also a fiction, as is the saint - although her story is a composite of that of several Christian martyrs. All the characters are invented. I'm afraid that, as Ireland is a very small country, where everyone seems to know everyone else, inventing everything - location, story and characters - gave me more artistic freedom.

I hope that information helps?

Best wishes,

Breda

Breda Wall Ryan

6 Wyndham Park,

Bray,

Co Wicklow,

Ireland

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C

Questionnaire “Homosexuality in the Austrian EFL classroom”

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren!

Herzlich willkommen! Mein Name ist Barbara Grim und ich studiere an der Universität Wien. Aktuell schreibe ich meine Diplomarbeit am Institut für Anglistik zum Thema „*Homosexuality in Selected Contemporary Irish Short Stories – A Potential Topic for Teaching in the Austrian EFL Classroom?*“ Hierzu befrage ich Englischlehrerinnen und -lehrer in AHS-Schulen in ganz Österreich. Ich bitte Sie nun, die folgenden 17 Fragen innerhalb der nächsten zwei Wochen zu beantworten und versichere Ihnen, dass es weder „richtige“ noch „falsche“ Antworten gibt. Ihre Angaben werden selbstverständlich vertraulich behandelt und absolut anonym ausgewertet. Jeder beantwortete Fragebogen ist mir wichtig und ich bedanke mich vielmals, dass Sie sich ein paar Minuten Zeit dafür nehmen.

- 1) Sex:
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
- 2) Age:
 - ☐ 35 and younger
 - ☐ 36-50
 - ☐ 51 and above
- 3) Do you think the topic of sexuality should be included in the Austrian EFL classroom?
 - Yes/No
- 4) Do you think the topic of homosexuality should be included in the Austrian EFL classroom?
 - Yes/No
- 5) Do you address the topic of sexuality in any form in your English lessons?
 - Yes/No
- 6) Do you address the topic of homosexuality in any form in your English lessons?
 - Yes/No
- 7) Do you think the topic of homosexuality should be more often, or less often addressed in the Austrian EFL classroom?
 - 1 o (less) 2 o 3 o 4 o 5 o (more)
- 8) According to your opinion, what is the most suitable age of pupils for addressing the topic of homosexuality in the Austrian EFL classroom?
 - ☐ 10-14
 - ☐ 15-18
 - ☐ Never

- 9) According to your opinion, which of the following aspects should be addressed when discussing the topic of homosexuality in the EFL classroom?
- Tolerance
 - Traditional family values
 - Equality
 - Sexually transmitted diseases
 - Human Rights
 - Sexual variations
 - Other: _____
- 10) According to your opinion, what are the difficulties or potential reservations against teaching a controversial topic such as homosexuality in the Austrian EFL classroom?
-
- 11) According to your opinion, which textual genre(s) (is) are most suitable for discussions about the topic of homosexuality?
- Novel
 - Short story
 - Non-fictional texts
- 12) Have you read/used fictional texts (novels, short stories, etc.) in which homosexuality is a main topic?
- Yes/No
- 13) If yes, please name the title(s):
-
- 14) If yes, could you imagine including this text in your English lessons with the aim of addressing the topic of homosexuality?
- Yes/No
- 15) Do you know any of these Irish short stories?
- "The Lover: Dublin, 1965" by Dermot Bolger
 - "The Hardest Winter" by Breda Wall Ryan
 - "Windfalls" by Mary Rose Callaghan
 - "A Noise from the Woodshed" by Mary Dorcey
- 16) If yes, could you imagine using one or several of these short stories in your English lessons to discuss homosexuality?
- Yes/No
- 17) If yes, which one?
- "The Lover: Dublin, 1965" by Dermot Bolger
 - "The Hardest Winter" by Breda Wall Ryan
 - "Windfalls" by Mary Rose Callaghan
 - "A Noise from the Woodshed" by Mary Dorcey

English Abstract

The aim of the present thesis is to explore the representation of homosexuality in Irish society by means of a detailed analysis of four contemporary Irish short stories, which includes both the “discourse level” and the “story level”. The works in question are: “The Lover: Dublin, 1965” by Dermot Bolger, “The Hardest Winter” by Breda Wall Ryan, “Windfalls” by Mary Rose Callaghan, and “A Noise from the Woodshed” by Mary Dorcey. Important milestones regarding the literary genre of the short story, and an overview of the historical development of the topic of homosexuality in a European context are outlined in the introductory chapters. The main part is concerned with the literary analysis, focussing on both thematic issues and aspects of style and artistic form. Additionally, the historical context of each short story is expressed and sociodemographic and geographic aspects of rural Ireland, as well as the notion that homosexuality is ‘curable’ is addressed along with the concept of feminist Irish writing.

After the textual analysis, this thesis deals with the results of an empirical field study conducted at 350 AHS in Austria. The aim of this enquiry was to explore the socio-political attitudes of teachers towards the controversial topic of homosexuality. The questionnaire consists of three main parts: Part one tries to get insight into the individual attitudes concerning the acceptance of the topic of sexuality and in particular homosexuality, in the classroom. The second part addresses the problem of specific obstacles or reservations towards the inclusion of this topic, which are partly outside of the teachers’ spheres of action. The willingness of the respondents to use literary texts addressing homosexuality is the focus of the third part of the questionnaire. The main hypothesis of this thesis, that the majority of the participants would be reluctant to address same-sex relationships, was falsified. Apart from that, all respondents who had already read works of literature in which homosexuality is a main topic, affirmed that they would use these texts in their English lessons with the aim to address same-sex preferences. Moreover, the quantitative analyses have shown that several teachers consider conservative parents and embarrassment on the part of the students as potential difficulties when it comes to dealing with LGBTQ themed texts in the classroom. The respondents were able to name numerous alternative

literary titles, although they did barely know the short stories discussed in this thesis.

Both parts, the narratological-analytical part and the empirical part of this thesis suggest that the stigma surrounding the topic of homosexuality has begun to weaken, both in Austria as well as in conservative Ireland. This encouraging tendency will hopefully lead to a long-term, overall societal acceptance of sexual diversity.

German Abstract

Ziel der vorliegenden Diplomarbeit ist die detaillierte, literarische Analyse von vier zeitgenössischen irischen Kurzgeschichten - sowohl auf der Diskurs- als auch auf der Erzählebene - um so die Repräsentation von Homosexualität in der Gesellschaft Irlands aufzuzeigen. Zur Untersuchung werden „The Lover: Dublin, 1965“ von Dermot Bolger, „The Hardest Winter“ von Breda Wall Ryan, „Windfalls“ von Mary Rose Callaghan und „A Noise from the Woodshed“ von Mary Dorcey herangezogen. Wichtige Eckdaten die Gattung der Kurzgeschichte betreffend und ein Abriss der historischen Entwicklung zum Thema Homosexualität im europäischen Kontext bilden den einleitenden Schwerpunkt der Arbeit. Danach folgt mit der literarischen Analyse der Texte der Hauptteil der Arbeit, wobei fiktionale Geschehnisse der behandelten Werke, Besonderheiten im Schreibstil der Autoren und aktuelle tagespolitische Ereignisse in Irland miteinbezogen werden. Einen weiteren Schwerpunkt stellt die Kontextanalyse zu jeder einzelnen Kurzgeschichte dar, beispielsweise bezüglich historischer Figuren, den soziodemographischen und geographischen Aspekten Irlands, dem Irrglauben, dass Homosexualität „heilbar“ sei und dem Konzept von feministischer irischer Literatur.

Dem literaturanalytischen ersten Teil dieser Arbeit folgt ein zweiter, der das Feld des Lehrens und Lernens im österreichischen Englischunterricht mit Hilfe quantitativer Formen der Sozialwissenschaften untersucht. Grundlage dieser Analyse bildet ein Fragebogen, welcher österreichweit an 350 allgemein bildende höhere Schulen übersendet wurde. Ziel dieser Befragung war die Untersuchung verschiedener sozio-politischer Einstellungen des Lehrpersonals gegenüber einem kontroversen Thema wie Homosexualität im schulischen Diskurs. Der verwendete Fragebogen unterteilt sich hierbei in drei Hauptbereiche. Der erste Bereich betrifft die individuelle Einstellung der TeilnehmerInnen bezüglich der Akzeptanz von Sexualität und im Besonderen der Homosexualität im Unterricht. Den zweiten Bereich bildet die Problematik der eigenen und außerhalb der Handlungssphäre der LehrerInnen liegenden Vorbehalte gegen die Adressierung dieser Themenfelder. Die Bereitschaft der PädagogInnen, literarische Mittel wie Kurzgeschichten als zentralen Anlass für die Diskussion zu verwenden, stellt letztendlich den dritten Bereich dar. Die

Hauptthese, dass die Mehrheit des Lehrpersonals gegenüber der Einbindung dieses Themas aus verschiedenen Gründen, wie beispielsweise Zeitmangel oder eigener konservativer Einstellungen, abgeneigt ist, wird falsifiziert. Des Weiteren würden alle Beteiligten, welche bereits Literatur zum Thema gelesen haben, diese auch in ihren Unterricht integrieren, mit dem Ziel Homosexualität zu diskutieren. Die Ergebnisse der quantitativ durchgeführten Untersuchung zeigen außerdem, dass Lehrpersonen hauptsächlich konservative Eltern beziehungsweise peinlich berührte SchülerInnen als mögliche Hindernisse betrachten, wenn es um die Einbeziehung von gleichgeschlechtlicher Sexualität im Unterricht geht. Wie im Vorfeld angenommen wurden zwar viele alternative literarische Titel zum Thema genannt, die vorgestellten Kurzgeschichten waren jedoch kaum bekannt.

Beide Teile der vorliegenden Diplomarbeit, sowohl der narrativ-analytische als auch der empirische Teil, haben gezeigt, dass das Stigma, welches Homosexualität umgibt, in den letzten Jahren in Österreich, aber auch im konservativen Irland nachlässt. Diese ermutigende Toleranz führt hoffentlich langfristig zu gesamtgesellschaftlicher Akzeptanz von sexueller Diversität.

Curriculum Vitae

Personal Data

Name: Barbara Grim
Date of Birth: 16th of August, 1985
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School Education

09/1999 – 06/2004: Bundeshandelsakademie Hollabrunn (*Matura*)
09/1995 – 06/1999: Bundesgymnasium Hollabrunn
09/1991 – 06/1995: Primary School Eggendorf im Thale

University Education (University of Vienna)

10/2009 – 06/2015: Lehramtstudium UF Englisch, UF Spanisch
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Stay Abroad Experience

08/2012 – 12/2012 “Non-EU Student Exchange Program”
Student at the University of Chile (Santiago de Chile)

Languages

German: Native speaker
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Additional Information

- Trained sex educationalist (ISP Vienna)
 - Belfast/Portsmouth facilitator for an international young workers exchange programme (IFA Vienna)
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