MINISTERY OF THE HIGHER AND SECONDARY SPECIALISED EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

UZBEKISTAN STATE WORLD LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY

On the right of manuscript

UDK

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“’THE ORDINARY LIFE TROUBLES BEHIND CLOSED DOORS’ IN WILLIAM TREVOR’S SHORT STORIES"

5A120100 – Linguistics (English)

DISSERTATION

For academic Master’s degree

The work has been discussed and recommended for defense,

The Head of Department

PhD. As Prof. Galieva M.R.

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Senior teacher
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“____”_____________2016y.

Tashkent – 2016

Content

INTRODUCTION 5

CHAPTER I SPECIFICITY OF SHORT STORY GENRE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

1.1 “Short story about short story” - theoretical aspects of the genre 10

1.2 The origin and evolution of English short story 17

Conclusion of the 1st chapter 28

CHAPTER II WILLIAM TREVOR AND THE SHORT STORY GENRE OF THE XX CENTURY

2.1 British and Irish Fiction at the 2nd half of the XX century. 29

2.2 William Trevor’s contribution to the short story genre in English literature 34

Conclusion of the 2nd chapter 59

CHAPTER III “THE ORDINARY PAIN BEHIND CLOSED DOORS” REFLECTED IN WILLIAM TREVOR SHORT STORIES.

3.1 Loneliness and despair in William Trevor’s short stories. (“The Mark-2 Wife”) 60

3.2 Solitude and injured lives in the “A Bit on the Side” collection of short stories 64

3.3 Exhausted identities in William Trevor’s short story “Lost Ground” 67

Conclusion of the 1st chapter 77

FINAL CONCLUSION 78

LIST OF USED LITERATURE 80

MINISTERY OF THE HIGHER AND SECONDARY SPECIALISED EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
UZBEK STATE WORLD LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY

Faculty:	III English Language	Master's Student:	Quranboyeva S. R.
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Year:	2015-2016	Specialty:	5A120101

ANNOTATION OF MASTER'S DISSERTATION

Topicality of the research is defined by the fact that there is no scientifically significant monograph or book on this contemporary writer. There are some articles with general evaluation of his literary career. The works of this English writer need thorough investigation.
Aim and tasks of the research is to investigate the major themes, mainly "the ordinary pain behind closed doors" reflected in William Trevor short stories.
The subject of the research is William Trevor's short stories**.**
The object of the research is the development and evolution of English short story genre.
.**Methods of the research.** Historical-typological, holistic approach and literary critical analysis are used.
The degree of novelty of the research is that we collected and generalized the information about English short stories of the XX century and identified the peculiar features of this genre in William Trevor 's works..
Theoretical value: The results of the work can be applied for writing scientific articles, qualification papers, and course works. Some results might be used for the lectures and seminars on history of English literature, history of literary criticism and history of literary movements.
The structure of the dissertation consists of introduction, three chapters, conclusion and the list of used literature.
The first chapter of this research is devoted to the review of theoretical aspects of the genre short story and its development. It focuses on specificity of short story genre in English literature.
The second chapter investigates William Trevor and the short story genre of the XX century, British and Irish Fiction at the 2nd is creative work half of the XX century, and William Trevor's contribution to the short story genre in English literature
The third chapter analyse the theme of "The ordinary pain behind closed doors" reflected in William Trevor `s short stories, loneliness and despair in William Trevor's short story 'The Mark-2 Wife', solitude and injured lives in the "A Bit on the Side", Exhausted identities in William Trevor's short story "Lost Ground".
The results obtained. The theoretical aspects of a short story genre in literature, specificity of evolution of a short story genre in English literature, key themes of English short stories..
General summary and recommendations. Definition of theoretical aspects of the genre short story and its development. Literary elements of the short story and development of the English short story. The national diversity in short stories and female writes in short story genre.

Scientific advisor:	**Makhmudova N. A.**
Master's Student:	**Quranboyeva S. R.**

МИНИСТЕРСТВО ВЫСШЕГО И СРЕДНЕГО СПЕЦИАЛЬНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ РЕСПУБЛИКИ УЗБЕКИСТАН
УЗБЕКСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ МИРОВЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ

Факультет:	3 английского языка	Магистрант:	Куранбоева С.Р.
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Учебный год:	2015-2016	Мутахассислиги:	5A120100

Аннотация

Актуальность исследования обусловлена тем, что работы Уильяма Тревора не изучены достаточно подробно, об этом свидетельствует то, что на сегодняшний день нет каких-либо существенных научных монографий по творчеству писателя

Цели и задачи исследования состоят в том, чтобы на основе анализа рассказов исследовать эмоциональное чувство одиночества и заброшенности в рассказах Тревора.

Предметом исследования являются социологические аспекты жанра рассказ в в творчестве Тревора.

Объектом исследования является жанр рассказ в английской литературе.

Методы исследования:.историко-типологический, и целостный метод.

Новизна данного исследования заключается в разработке особого теоретического и практического подхода к исследованию жанра рассказ в разные периоды 20 века, а также типологизация основных социальных тем, отображённых в жанре рассказ этой эпохи на примере рассказов У. Тревора.

Практическая значимость: данная работа может использоваться в написании статей, курсовых работ, квалификационных работ, а также на лекциях и семинарах по английской литературе, теории литературы и литературной критике.

Структура работы. Диссертация состоит из введения, трех глав, заключения, библиографии и приложения.

В первой главе дана общая характеристика жанра рассказ, сформулированы основные жанровые признаки, также рассмотрена эволюция жанра в английской литературе.

Вторая глава исследует критические статьи по творчеству У. Тревора.

В третьей главе рассматривается разнообразие социальных тем, отображённых в рассказах данного писателя.

Основные результаты исследования. Уточнено понятие жанра рассказ, определены характерные для жанра признаки, выявлена специфика развития и основные социальные темы жанра обобщена информация по творчеству писателя.

Заключение и предложения. Проведенноё исследование, ориентированное на исследование социальных тем жанра рассказ в английской литературе, сформировало теоретическую и практическую базу для этого понятия, отображая специфику социально-культурного развития страны.

Научный руководитель **Махмудова Н.А.**
Магистрант **Куранбоева С.Р.**

Introduction

Gaining experience in world literature is very important in language education and the language learning process. Islam Karimov describes fiction with following words in one of his works: “There is another powerful means which discovers human and human’s spiritual world that is art of words, fiction. Of course, it is not without reason that literature is called humanism, and poets and writers are engineers of human’s spirit.” And “Literature, the art of words keeps going to be the expresser of human soul, the caller of truth and justice.”[1]

English authors as well as a contemporary short story collection are very vital for investigation. Writer Ann Patchett likens reading short stories to the experience of a swarm of bees, “blocking out sound and sun and becoming the only thing you can think about.” We’ll be doing a lot of thinking about the short story—as a literary art form, as a social and historical record, and as a reflection of the cultural values that shape our ideas of who we are. From the ghosts and fantasies that haunted the nineteenth-century short story to the casual cruelties and everyday redemptions in twentieth century stories to today’s experimental fictions, the short story represents diverse visions of British identity and experience.

The topicality of the research. The topicality of the research is defined by the fact that there is no scientifically significant monograph or book on this contemporary writer. There are some articles with general evaluation of his literary career. The works of this English writer needs thorough investigation.

William Trevor is the greatest living writer of short stories in the English language who has managed over the last 30 years to tread down every avenue concerned with modern literature. He has long been regarded as one of Ireland's most evocative writers, a prose stylist of the highest order with A. Chekhovian and I. Turgenev’s awareness of the emotional undercurrents of his characters' lives. Fourteen novels, eleven collections of short stories, several novellas, plays and books of memoirs, together with numerous prizes and awards, speak for a life devoted to the craft of fiction.

[1] I.A. Karimov “Yuksak manaviyat yengilmas kuch” Toshkent: Ma’naviyat, 2008.

William Trevor was born in Mitchelstown County Cork on May 24th, 1928 in Ireland . He emigrated to England in 1954. Trevor wrote his first novel “A Standard of Behaviour” in 1958. He decided to move to London in 1960, as he was in need of a reliable income and worked as a copywriter at a London advertising agency. Although he didn't enjoy his time there it gave him the confidence to pick up his pen once more, publishing stories in both Transatlantic Review and London Magazine. Soon after, the publisher Bodley Head became interested in his work and asked him to write a novel. He reworked an unpublished short story “The Old Boys” which won the Hawthorn den Prize in 1964. His novels include “The Children of Dynmouth”, which won the Whitbread Award in 1976, “Fools of Fortune” which won the Whitbread Award in 1983, “The Silence in the Garden” which won the Yorkshire Post Book of the Year Award and “Two Lives”, which was shortlisted for the Sunday Express Book of the Year Award and includes the Booker-shortlisted novella Reading Turgenev. “Felicia's Journey” won both the Whitbread Book of the Year and the Sunday Express Book of the Year awards. His short story collection “The Hill Bachelors” received the 2001 Irish Times Irish Literature Prize for Fiction. In 1976 he received the Allied Irish Banks' Prize and in 1977 he was awarded an honorary CBE in recognition of his services to literature. In 1992 he received The Sunday Times Award for Literary Excellence and in 1999 the David Cohen British Literature Prize. He is also a member of the Irish Academy of Letters.

Problem development status. Before the 19th century the short story was not generally regarded as a distinct literary form. But although in this sense it may seem to be a uniquely modern genre, the fact is that short prose fiction is nearly as old as language itself. Martin Scofield , Fred Lewis Pattee, Susan Lohafer and J. Gerald Kennedy devoted their research to the short stories, considering mainly historical development, reflection of cultural background, exposition of social problems.

The aim of our research is to investigate the major themes, mainly "the ordinary pain behind closed doors" reflected in William Trevor short stories.

In order to achieve the aim we set the following **tasks:**

- to consider theoretical aspects of the genre;
- to study the origin and evolution of English short story;
- to consider British and Irish Fiction at the 2nd half of the XX century;
- to analyze William Trevor's contribution to the short story genre in English literature;
- to analyze Loneliness and despair in William Trevor's short story "The Mark-2 Wife";
- to analyze solitude and injured lives in the "A Bit on the Side" ;
- to analyze Emaciated identities in William Trevor's short story "Lost Ground".

The object of this research is the development and evolution of English short story genre.

The subject of this research is William Trevor's short stories.

Working hypothesis of research. In order to identify the principle themes of English short stories from the point of view of literary studies it necessary to define the historical and cultural background of the XX century, to clarify the reasons which are set beyond the formation of each theme which are very diverse.

Methodology of the research. We used historical-typological and holistic approach in research and literary analysis.

Novelty of the research work is that we collected and generalized the information about English short stories of the XX-XXI century and identified the peculiar features of this genre in William Trevor 's works.

Research materials of the dissertation paper. The texts of short stories('The Mark-2 Wife') A Bit on the Side", "Lost Ground"

The methodological base of research was made by works of MacKenna, D. William Trevor: The Writer and His Work (1999), Morrison, K. (1993).William

Trevor, Paulson, S. (1993).William Trevor: A Study of the Short Fiction. , Schirmer, G. (1990).William Trevor: A Study of His Fiction.

Theoretical value of the research. The considered and analyzed research material allowed identifying and clarifying of: the theoretical aspects of short story genre in literature; specificity of evolution of short story genre in English literature; key themes of William Trevor's short stories.

Practical value of the research. The results of the work can be applied for writing scientific articles, qualification papers, and course works. Some results might be used for the lectures and seminars on history of English literature, history of literary criticism and history of literary movements.

Publications. The findings of the research has been presented and published at 2 students' scientifically-practical conferences:

1. Loneliness and despair in William Trevor's short stories. "The problems of teaching modern linguistics, literature, translation and foreign languages", IV scientific-practical conference May 19, 2015 y.

2. "William Trevor's contribution to the short story genre in English literature. "The problems of teaching modern linguistics, literature, translation and foreign languages", V scientific-practical conference. May, 2016 y.

The structure of the dissertation responds all requirements. It has introduction, three chapters, conclusion and list of used literature. Each Chapter includes two subchapters and summaries.

The introduction explains the topicality and novelty of the research theme, its theoretical and practical value; it identifies the object, subject, aim and tasks of the work.

The first chapter of this research is devoted to the review of theoretical aspects of the genre short story and its development. It focuses on specificity of short story genre in English literature, and the origin and evolution of English short story.

The second chapter investigates William Trevor and the short story genre of the XX century, British and Irish Fiction at the 2nd half of the XX century, and William Trevor's contribution to the short story genre in English literature

The third chapter analysis the theme of "The ordinary pain behind closed doors" reflected in William Trevor short stories, loneliness and despair in William Trevor's short story 'The Mark-2 Wife', solitude and injured lives in the "A Bit on the Side", Emaciated identities in William Trevor's short story "Lost Ground".

CHAPTER I SPECIFICITY OF SHORT STORY GENRE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

1.1 "Short story about short story" - theoretical aspects of the genre

In literary studies various definitions to the genre short story exist. A *short story* is fictional work of prose that is shorter in length than a novel. Edgar Allan Poe, in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition," said that a short story should be read in one sitting, anywhere from a half hour to two hours. In contemporary fiction, a short story can range from 1,000 to 20,000 words.

Because of the shorter length, a short story usually focuses on one plot, one main character (with a few additional minor characters), and one central theme, whereas a novel can tackle multiple plots and themes, with a variety of prominent characters. Short stories also lend themselves more to experimentation — that is, using uncommon prose styles or literary devices to tell the story. Such uncommon styles or devices might get tedious, and downright annoying, in a novel, but they may work well in a short story[2].

Webster's New World College Dictionary defines short story as " a kind of story shorter than the novel or novelette, characteristically developing a single central theme and limited in scope and number of characters".[3]

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language describes it as "a short piece of prose fiction, having few characters and aiming at unity of effect"[4].

The definitions from on-line sources sound like:

- "a short story is now generally categorized as a brief fictional work, usually written in prose"[5];

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[2] http://www.cliffsnotes.com/cliffsnotes/subjects/literature/what-is-a-definition-of-short-story
http://writersrelief.com/blog/2013/11/short-prose-genres-defining-essay-short-story-commentary-memoir-and-mixed-genre/
http://commapress.co.uk/resources/the-three-types-of-short-story
http://tewtjournal.org/tewt-recources/resources/

[3] Webster's New World College Dictionary Copyright © 2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio.

[4] The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 5th edition Copyright © 2013 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

- “short story an invented prose narrative shorter than a novel usually dealing with a few characters and aiming at unity of effect and often concentrating on the creation of mood rather than plot”[6];
- “short story, brief fictional prose narrative that is shorter than a novel and that usually deals with only a few characters”[7].

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms determines it as “a fictional prose tale of no specified length, but too short to be published as a volume on its own, as novellas sometimes and novels usually are. A short story will normally concentrate on a single event with only one or two characters, more economically than a novel's sustained exploration of social background. There are similar fictional forms of greater antiquity -fables, fabliau, folktales, and parables – but the short story as we know it flourished in the magazines of the19th and early 20th centuries, especially in the USA, which has a particularly strong tradition”.[8]

Hence, the definition of the genre short story given in the “The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms” we consider as complete, full, and explicit. We shall follow this theory in our analysis of American short stories.

In order to make in-depth analysis of the genre we need to investigate the theoretical background that include literary elements constituting the genre.

Before the 19th century the short story was not generally regarded as a distinct literary form. But although in this sense it may seem to be a uniquely modern genre, the fact is that short prose fiction is nearly as old as language itself. Throughout history humankind has enjoyed various types of brief narratives: jests, anecdotes, studied digressions, short allegorical romances, moralizing fairy tales, short myths, and abbreviated historical legends. None of these constitutes a short story as the 19th and 20th centuries have defined the term, but they do make up a large part of the milieu from which the modern short story emerged.

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[5] http://study.com/academy/lesson/short-stories-definition-characteristics-examples.html
[6] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/short%20story
[7] http://www.britannica.com/art/short-story
[8] The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms. Chris Baldick. Oxford University PRESS 2001 291 p p 236

The short story is usually concerned with a single effect conveyed in only one or a few significant episodes or scenes. The form encourages economy of setting, concise narrative, and the omission of a complex plot; character is disclosed in action and dramatic encounter but is seldom fully developed. Despite its relatively limited scope, though, a short story is often judged by its ability to provide a "complete" or satisfying treatment of its characters and subject.

The main characteristics of Short Stories are as followings[9]:

– Length: One of the short story's most defining features is also one of its most highly contested. For centuries, authors and critics have argued over the length of a short story, but the general consensus now holds that it should be between 1,600 and 20,000 words. Nonetheless, there are several shorter and longer examples.

– Theme and Subject: While the genre may include topics ranging from ghost stories to daily errands, it is generally agreed that a short story contains only one of them at a time. A single, easily contained plot is one of the hallmarks of the short story and helps shape its other characteristics. The theme is the underlying meaning or message of a story. A story may evoke more than one theme, depending upon your interpretation of the narrative. For example, a story in which a character struggles with a decision to lead a conventional life or seek freedom and adventure could be interpreted several ways. One person might summarize the theme of the story as "rash behavior leads to ruin," whereas another might say "it is better to have tried and failed than to have never tried at all." Whatever theme you might come up with for a story, it is important to realize that the theme statement is not the story. Authors usually don't write stories with a theme in mind. They might get an idea from a news item which gives them an idea for a character.

Once the character is alive on the page, the character may take the story into places the author never dreamed. And that is the point, after all. We read stories so that they will take us to places we have never been before.

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[9] http://users.aber.ac.uk/jpm/ellsa/ellsa_elements.html

– Plot: With only one plotline and limited space, there is little room or need for the same prolonged exposition we frequently find in novels. Instead, short stories generally have a single setting and begin *in medias res* (Latin, 'into the middle of things'), meaning they start abruptly with little to no prior information given. Examples of the genre also tend to end just as suddenly as they begin, with very little time elapsed. Also known as narrative structure, a plot usually includes causality: one event causes another, which causes another, and so on until the story ends. There are a variety of ways that stories move from beginning to end. The most common plot structure moves from exposition through rising action to a climax, followed by the resolution.

In the exposition we are introduced to the main character, or protagonist, in his or her familiar setting—be that a neighborhood in New York City or a farm in the Salinas Valley of California. If the narrative continued describing this “normal” life, there would be no story. A problem or conflict is needed to move the story forward. The conflict may be external—perhaps between the protagonist and a family member or between the protagonist and nature; or the problem may be internal—between the protagonist’s sense of duty and her desire for freedom, for example. Complex stories often have both external and internal conflicts. As the conflict deepens, the story is propelled through the rising action to the climax, or high point. Here that bully of an aunt is confronted, the life-saving fire is started, or the inner demon is discovered. The tension of the climax is released in the resolution, or as it sometimes called, the dénouement, a French word that literally means “untying.” In the resolution, the knot of the conflict is untied and everyone that is still alive goes on to a new “normal” existence.

Of course, not all stories conform to the above plot structure. Some stories start at a high point in the action, employing a technique known as in media res, which means “in the midst of things.” Such stories will fill in the exposition along the way through dialogue or embedded stories. Another approach is to tell the ending first and fill in the rest through flashbacks, one effect of which is to make

the reader pay close attention to motives and causes. Whatever the plot structure, you can be sure that there will be a problem and a character to confront it.

– Limited Number of Characters: There's not much room to develop one character in a short story, much less twenty or so along with all of their relationships. In fact, these stories usually cover such short periods of time that even a single character is never fully developed. Called characterization, the development of believable characters is perhaps the most basic task of the author. But writers have many tools at their disposal. Besides direct description of a character's traits, the author can also reveal character through actions, speeches, thoughts, feelings, and interactions with others. Depending on thetype of story being told and the stylistic tradition the author is working in, characters may be fully drawn and realistic or they may be representative character types. How important they are to the story determines whether they are main or primary characters, secondary characters, or minor characters. The more crucial the character is to the plot, the more he or she will be developed by the author. Even in stories that stress realism, some minor characters might only be present as types rather than as individuals. Another important part of characterization is point of view, or the eyes through which the story is told. This is determined through the author's choice of narrator. There are three main narrative points of view: first person, third person limited, and third person omniscient. In the first person or "I" point of view, the narrator tells his or her own story as Huck does in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. The third person limited narrator is a character in the story and only sees, hears, and knows what that character could see, hear, and know. This means that he or she might only have partial knowledge and understanding of the events and other characters. Doctor Watson of the Sherlock Holmes tales is a good example of this type of narrator. Often this limited point of view is that of the major character or protagonist, but sometimes the author chooses to tell the story from the limited point of view of a secondary character. The third person omniscient narrator sees all and is able to comment on any aspect

of the story because he or she is an outsider, not a character in the story. Readers often like to equate the omniscient narrator with the author, but it is good to remember that any narrator or point of view is a carefully developed tool and not simply the author's voice. Some stories switch back and forth between various points of view.

– Setting: where and when a story takes place. It is important because environment has a strong impact on what happens in a story. These environments influence not only the action but also the characters' attitudes. Setting can also help to shape how characters speak and behave. Sometimes the setting of a story assumes almost as much importance in the reader's imagination as memorable characters do[10].

As a genre, the short story has received relatively little critical attention, and the most valuable studies of the form that exist are often limited by region or era (e.g., Ray B. West's *The Short Story in America*, 1900–50). One recent attempt to account for the genre has been offered by the Irish short story writer Frank O'Connor, who suggests that stories are a means for "submerged population groups" to address a dominating community. Most other theoretical discussions, however, are predicated in one way or another on Edgar Allan Poe's thesis that stories must have a compact, unified effect.

By far the majority of criticism on the short story focuses on techniques of writing. Many, and often the best of the technical works, advise the young reader—alerting him to the variety of devices and tactics employed by the skilled writer. On the other hand, many of these works are no more than treatises on "how to write stories" for the young writer, and not serious critical material.

"The prevalence in the 19th century of two words, "sketch" and "tale," affords one way of looking at the genre. In the United States alone there were virtually hundreds of books claiming to be collections of sketches (Washington Irving's *Sketch Book*, William Dean Howells' *Suburban Sketches*) or collections of

[10] http://users.aber.ac.uk/jpm/ellsa/ellsa_elements.html

tales (Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, Herman Melville's *Piazza Tales*). These two terms establish the polarities of the milieu out of which the modern short story grew"[11].

The tale is much older than the sketch. Basically, the tale is a manifestation of a culture's unaging desire to name and conceptualize its place in the cosmos. It provides a culture's narrative framework for such things as its vision of itself and its homeland or for expressing its conception of its ancestors and its gods. Usually filled with cryptic and uniquely deployed motifs, personages, and symbols, tales are frequently fully understood only by members of the particular culture to which they belong. Simply, tales are intracultural. Seldom created to address an outside culture, a tale is a medium through which a culture speaks to itself and thus perpetuates its own values and stabilizes its own identity. The old speak to the young through tales.

The sketch, by contrast, is intercultural, depicting some phenomenon of one culture for the benefit or pleasure of a second culture. Factual and journalistic, in essence the sketch is generally more analytic or descriptive and less narrative or dramatic than the tale. Moreover, the sketch by nature is *suggestive*, incomplete; the tale is often *hyperbolic*, overstated.

The primary mode of the sketch is written; that of the tale, spoken. This difference alone accounts for their strikingly different effects. The sketch writer can have, or pretend to have, his eye on his subject. The tale, recounted at court or campfire—or at some place similarly removed in time from the event—is nearly always a recreation of the past. The tale-teller is an agent of *time*, bringing together a culture's past and its present. The sketch writer is more an agent of *space*, bringing an aspect of one culture to the attention of a second.

It is only a slight oversimplification to suggest that the tale was the only kind of short fiction until the 16th century, when a rising middle class interest in social realism on the one hand and in exotic lands on the other put a premium on sketches

[11] May , Charles B. , ed. Short Story Theories. Athens : Ohio University Press , 1976 . p.90

of subcultures and foreign regions. In the 19th century certain writers—those one might call the “fathers” of the modern story: Nikolay Gogol, Hawthorne, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Heinrich von Kleist, Prosper Mérimée, Poe—combined elements of the tale with elements of the sketch. Each writer worked in his own way, but the general effect was to mitigate some of the fantasy and stultifying conventionality of the tale and, at the same time, to liberate the sketch from its bondage to strict factuality. The modern short story, then, ranges between the highly imaginative tale and the photographic sketch and in some ways draws on both.

1.2 The origin and evolution of English short story

The short story was very nearly drowned in the tub as an infant. As literary forms go, the short story is very young. Certainly its roots go back centuries — we can see it gestating in the Canterbury Tales, in fairy tales and in poems of a middling length. Arguably, even the conversational traditions of the anecdote, the joke and the parable, can be seen as precursors of the form. But the short story as we know it sprang into full-fledged existence as recently as the 1820s. It appeared, unheralded, to fill a sudden need created by the invention of the “gift book.”

Gift books were annual collections of poems, artwork and literary criticism, aimed primarily at an audience of upper-class women in England and North America. Seeking additional ways to fill the pages of these popular publications, editors began soliciting submissions of short pieces of prose to accompany artwork already purchased (rather the opposite of the way it is usually done these days). In so doing, they created the first paying market for short fiction. All modern literary magazines can trace their pedigree back to these gift books. In 1837, Nathaniel Hawthorne collected a number of stories that he had written for the gift book market and published them to great critical acclaim as Twice Told Tales. And with that, short stories had arrived.

Two hundred years may seem quite a long time, but consider that the novel dates back to at least 1605 (the year Miguel de Cervantes’s Don Quixote was

published) and you get a better idea of the short story's relative youth. Over its entire lifetime, the fate of the form has been inextricably tied to that of magazines. In the early 20th century, literacy in the United States and Canada became near universal for the first time and, as a direct result, magazine sales boomed. On the erudite front, there were publications like The English Review and The Southwest Review, but there were also the decidedly lower brow Argosy and Adventure. This was the era of the pulp magazine and it brought with it the birth of genre literature.

Horror stories, detective stories and most especially science fiction evolved in short stories, cut their teeth in the magazines. It is no surprise that the beginning of the Golden Age of Science Fiction is identified most strongly not with a novel but with the publication of a magazine (the July 1939 issue of Astounding Science Fiction, to be precise). Most of the formative novels of early- and mid-20th century science fiction were more like grown-up short stories in form than like other contemporary novels. In fact, some of the most famous science fiction novels — including Isaac Asimov's Foundation, A.E. Van Vogt's The Silkie, Robert A. Heinlein's Orphans of the Sky and Ray Bradbury's The Martial Chronicles — were fix-ups (a term for a novel created by stitching a series of previously published short stories together). It wasn't until quite recently, around the 1984 publication of William Gibson's Neuromancer and the 1985 publication of Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, that the two parallel traditions of the science fiction novel and the modern literary novel began to collide.

And yet, despite the fact that in its brief history the short story had brought into existence entire genres and traditions of literature, it came perilously close to death[12]. In the 1950s, owning a television suddenly became within reach of the average North American family. The half-an-hour-less-commercials format of shows like I Love Lucy, Dragnet and The Honeymooners targeted the same entertainment niche as the magazine. Over the decades that followed, the circulation numbers of almost all magazines that ran short fiction saw a steady

[12] The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms. Chris Baldick. Oxford University PRESS 2001 291 p p 236

decline. The novel soldiered on, but the state of the short story became so dire that in 2007 Stephen King opened his piece "What Ails the Short Story" for the New York Times Book Review thus:

So much can happen in four years. 2007 was the year that eBook readers burst onto the scene and, while the rise of the online magazine was already underway, it has stepped up considerably in the years since. More importantly, in 2007 television was still clinging to its cultural sovereignty, but it has since been firmly supplanted by the Internet. At the turn of the millennium, there was much ink spilled over the decline in the amount of reading people were doing, but the truth is that many of us are reading more than ever, we just aren't doing it on paper. When reading on a screen rather than the page, there are new considerations. A narrative of a few thousand words can be easily read, enjoyed and digested while sitting before a monitor; a novella, far less so. This is an environment practically designed for the literary form Edgar Allan Poe defined as a tale that "can be read in one sitting." Further, eBook readers are allowing publishers to easily make shorter works available at a reasonable price, without having to worry that a book's spine be thick enough to hold its own on a bookstore shelf.

Video, of course, is quite at home online, but the real meat of the Internet has always been text. Preferably text that limits itself to a screen or two in length. As long as the Internet holds its throne as the defining medium of our time, the short story will be ascendant. It is true however that the form is undoubtedly being influenced and changed by the demands of its new homes. Personally, I'm thrilled to be taking part in that continued evolution, thrilled just to be present for the renaissance of the form that shaped science fiction, thrilled to be able to say unequivocally: "The short story is alive and well."[13]

If all this is true then why has it taken so long for the short story, as a literary form, to evolve? After all, the cultural history of the published short story is only a

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[13] A Brief History Of The Short Story. http://aescifi.ca/index.php/non-fiction/37-editorials/792-a-brief-history-of-the-short-story

few decades longer than that of film. The answer, of course, is to be found in industrial and demographic processes. “The short story had always existed as an informal oral tradition, but until the mass middle-class literacy of the 19th century arrived in the west, and the magazine and periodical market was invented to service the new reading public’s desires and preferences, there had been no real publishing forum for a piece of short fiction in the five to 50-page range. It was this new medium that revealed to writers their capacity to write short fiction. Readers wanted short stories, and writers suddenly discovered they had a new literary form on their hands”[14]. The way the short story effectively sprang into being in its full maturity almost proves my point. There were no faltering first steps, no slow centuries of evolution. The fact that in the early to mid-19th century Hawthorne and Poe and Turgenev were capable of writing classic and timeless short stories virtually from the outset signals that the ability had always been dormant within the human imagination. The short story arrived fully fledged in the middle of the 19th century and by its end, in the shape of Anton Chekhov, had reached its apotheosis.

So who wrote and published the first true modern short story? Who was the great precursor? “Short narratives and tales had existed for centuries in one form or another: think of Scheherazade, Boccaccio’s Decameron and the Canterbury Tales, let alone the Bible, subplots in plays and novels, satires, pamphlets, sagas, narrative poems, essays, journalism. But what is the first literary text we can point to, classify and declaim with confidence: “This is a modern short story”? It has been argued that the honour goes to Walter Scott’s story “The Two Drovers,” published in Chronicles of the Canongate in 1827”[15]. It’s a convenient starting point, if only because the short story’s subsequent rapid development was international and Scott’s influence, huge in its day, was international also—not only inspiring George Eliot and Thomas Hardy at home, but also Balzac in France,

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[14] The Short Story Sequence: An Open Book. Short Story Theory at a Crossroads. Eds. Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey . Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press , 1989 . 148 – 67.

[15] Ibid, p.68

Pushkin and Turgenev in Russia and Fenimore Cooper and Hawthorne in America. If one thinks of the influence these writers had in turn on Flaubert and Maupassant, Chekhov, Poe and Melville we can credibly begin to trace the birth lines of the modern short story back to its original source. The only problem is that after Scott's start, the short story in Britain hardly existed in the mid-19th century, such was the dominance of the novel; writers in France, Russia and America seemed to take more immediately to the form and it's not until Robert Louis Stevenson in the 1880s that we can see the modern short story beginning to emerge and flourish in Britain once more, with the line extending on from Stevenson through Wells, Bennett, James and Kipling[16].

Therefore, in many ways the true beginnings of the modern short story are to be found in America. "One might posit the publication of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales in 1837 as a starting point. When Edgar Allan Poe read Hawthorne, he made the first real analysis of the difference between the short story and the novel, defining a short story quite simply as a narrative that "can be read at one sitting." This is not as facile as it may seem at first"[17]. What Poe was trying to put his finger on was the short story's curious singularity of effect, something that he felt very strongly came from its all-in-one-go consumption. Poe continues: "In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction."

Poe is perhaps too schematic and prescriptive—wanting only one "pre-established design"[18] as the dominating template of a short story—but he is very acute on the nature of the effect a short story can achieve: "a sense of the fullest satisfaction." The short story can seem larger, more resonant and memorable than the shortness of the form would appear capable of delivering. One thinks of Poe's

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[16] The Contemporary American Short – Story Cycle: The Ethnic Resonance of Genre. Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press , 2001 . p.64

[17] Von Frank , Albert J. , ed. Critical Essays on Hawthorne ' s Short Stories. Boston : G. K. Hall , 1991 .

[18] Ibid., p.66

stories—the first detective stories among them—such as “The Fall of the House of Usher” and one realises he was attempting to practise what he preached. However, we would take Poe’s definition a step further and recast it thus: **“the true, fully functioning short story should achieve a totality of effect that makes it almost impossible to encapsulate or summarise”[19].** For it is in this area, it seems to me, that the short story and the novel divide, where the effect of reading a good short story is quite different from the effect of reading a good novel. The great modern short stories possess a quality of mystery and beguiling resonance about them—a complexity of afterthought—that cannot be pinned down or analysed. Bizarrely, in this situation, the whole is undeniably greater than the sum of its component parts. Poe, perhaps inadvertently, achieved this on occasion, but the writer who followed Poe and in whom we see this quality really functioning is Herman Melville.

Melville hated writing stories—he claimed to do so purely for money—but it is in Melville’s stories, published in The Piazza Tales (1856), such as “Benito Cereno” and “Bartleby the Scrivener” that the modern short story comes of age, with remarkable suddenness. In Melville’s stories you can see the first real exemplars of the short story’s strange power. If you understand and relish what Melville is doing in “Benito Cereno” then you can understand and relish what is happening in Stevenson’s “Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde,” in Conrad’s “The Secret Sharer,” in Chekhov’s “House with the Mezzanine,” Hemingway’s “Hills like White Elephants,” Mansfield’s “Prelude,” Carver’s “Cathedral,” Nabokov’s “Spring at Fialta,” Spark’s “Bang Bang You’re Dead,” Borges’s “Funes the Memorious,” to name a very few. We cannot summarise or paraphrase the totality of effect of these stories, try as we might: something about their unique frisson escapes or defies analysis. It is Melville who establishes the benchmark for what the short story can attain and allows us to set the standards by which all the other great writers of the form can be measured.

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[19] Scofield , Martin . The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press , 2006 . p.52

Turgenev was also publishing short stories in the 1850s—and one could throw his hat in the ring with Melville's as the first originator of the modern form—but Turgenev's great contribution was to start something that Chekhov finished. Why is Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) routinely and correctly described as the greatest short story writer ever? All answers to this question will seem inadequate but, to put it very simply, the fact is that Chekhov, in his mature stories of the 1890s, revolutionised the short story by transforming narrative. Chekhov saw and understood that life is godless, random and absurd, that all history is the history of unintended consequences. He knew, for instance, that being good will not spare you from awful suffering and injustice, that the slothful can flourish effortlessly and that mediocrity is the one great daemonic force. By abandoning the manipulated beginning-middle-and-end plot, by refusing to judge his characters, by not striving for a climax or seeking neat narrative resolution, Chekhov made his stories appear agonisingly, almost unbearably lifelike. Chekhov represents the end of the first phase of the modern short story. From his death onward, his influence is massive and ineluctable: the short story becomes thereafter in the 20th century almost exclusively Chekhovian. Joyce is Chekhovian, Katherine Mansfield almost plagiaristically so, Raymond Carver simply could not exist without him. Perhaps all short stories written after Chekhov are in one way or another in his debt. Only in the last 20 years or thereabouts have writers begun to emerge from his shadow, to middling effect.

But with Chekhov and with the advent of the 20th century, "the modern short story entered its golden age. The adjective is very apt: in the early decades of the century you could become rich writing short stories, particularly in America. Magazines proliferated, readers were eager, circulation rose, fees went up and up. In the 1920s, Scott Fitzgerald was paid $4,000 by the Saturday Evening Post for a single short story"[20]. You need to multiply by at least 20 to arrive at any idea of the value of the sum in today's terms. It was about this time, also, as the short story's

[20] Von Frank , Albert J. , ed. Critical Essays on Hawthorne ' s Short Stories. Boston : G. K. Hall , 1991 .

popularity grew and was subjected to the pressures and influence of modernism, that the form began to metamorphose somewhat: certain types of short story became distinct from each other and the form's categories grew.

A couple of years ago I wrote an article in the Guardian (reprinted in my collection Bamboo) in which I proposed a rough taxonomy of the short story and came up with seven basic varieties. Fundamentally, up until the beginning of the 20th century, you have the two great traditions: the event-plot story and Chekhovian story. The event-plot story (the term is William Gerhardie's) refers to the style of plotted story that flourished pre-Chekhov—before his example of the formless story became pre-eminent. Most short stories, even today, fall into one of these two categories. From them other types emerged over the coming decades. Perhaps the most dominant of these new forms is what I termed the modernist story, in which a deliberate, often baffling obscurity is made a virtue, however limpid the style in which it is written. Hemingway was the great practitioner here (In Our Time being the key volume), and after Chekhov his influence on the 20th-century short story is possibly the greatest.

Next among the other varieties we classified was the cryptic/ludic story. In this form of story there is a meaning to be deciphered that lies beneath the apparently straightforward text. This is also known as "suppressed narrative" and is a more recent development—perhaps the first clear move away from the great Chekhovian model. Mid-20th century writers like Nabokov, Calvino and Borges are representative of this mode of writing, though Rudyard Kipling, in stories such as "Mrs Bathurst" (1904) and "Mary Postgate" (1917), is an early master of suppressed narrative. The mini-novel story is a variety of the event-plot, trying to do in a few pages what the novel does in hundreds. One could see Dickens's "Christmas Specials" as early examples of this type, though many short story writers turn to it from time to time (including Chekhov). The next category, the poetic/mythic story, is a rarer beast. Dylan Thomas's and DH Lawrence's stories are typical and JG Ballard's bleak voyages into inner space also conform to this set. Here the short story comes as close to lyric poetry as it can—and in so doing

most obviously attempts to defy easy summary. Ballard's tremendous short stories—a haunting body of work that stretches from the 1950s to the present day—will come to be seen as one of the few successful attempts to escape Chekhov. The final category, and one that brings us up to the present day, is what I called the biographical story, a catch-all term to include stories that flirt with the factual or masquerade as non-fiction. Often the impedimenta of the non-fiction book is utilised (footnotes, authorial asides, illustrations, quotations, font changes, statistics, textual gimmickry). This is the most recent transmutation of the short story form and largely originated in America in the 1990s, where it has found particular favour with younger writers: Dave Eggers, David Foster Wallace, William T Vollman are notable exponents. In the hands of less capable writers, this mode can easily degenerate into the whimsical or the twee (almost deserving of its own sub-class). The biographical story also includes stories that introduce real people into fiction or write fictive episodes of real lives. This can be seen as an attempt by fiction, in a world deluged by the advertising media, the documentary, journalism, and 24-hour rolling news, to colonise some of that territory, to invade the world of the real and, as a cannibal will devour the brain of his enemy to make him stronger, to make fiction all the more powerful by blurring the line between hard facts and the invented. It owes little to the Chekhovian example and is potentially the most interesting new direction the short story has recently taken.

As one of the judges for the inaugural National Short Story Prize, we have read dozens of stories over the last few months, allowing me, to some extent, to diagnose the health of the contemporary short story. What is most intriguing is that the two main styles—the event-plot and the Chekhovian—are still hugely dominant, particularly the latter. The other varieties made an appearance but there was scant sign of formal audacity or experiment. It was as if the level of achievement arrived at in the early 20th century represented some sort of comfort zone for 21st-century writers. Our shortlist of five included, according to my makeshift taxonomy, one event-plot story, two Chekhovians, one mini-novel and

one cryptic/ludic[21]. But the standard was noticeably high, all the same, and it seemed to indicate that the short story form was in a respectable state. Indeed, even though it has become harder than ever to publish short fiction in this country (let alone elsewhere in Europe), the American market is still large and remunerative, and the increasing, not to say incremental, growth of creative writing courses in the US and also in Britain may be responsible for the next phase in the form's short history. The short story is both relatively quickly written and the perfect pedagogical tool. I think this explains why more and more young American writers are turning to it, and why more American publishers are publishing collections. Publishers on this side of the Atlantic will doubtless follow suit.

For the taste among readers for short fiction, inculcated over the last century and a half, has never really gone away, despite the vagaries of publishing economics. The reason lies, as we suggested earlier, in some unconscious predisposition in our minds for the short narrative but, perhaps more pertinently, the revolution that Chekhov brought about was to create a type of short story in which narrative changed. For Chekhov, randomness, inexplicability and haphazard elision became the actual form of the short story—shapely design, authorial manipulation, the tailored conclusion were abandoned—and suddenly we had a fictional style that corresponded with the random, haphazard, inexplicable lives we all lead. Virginia Woolf was not a particularly accomplished writer of short stories (which was perhaps why she was so jealous of Katherine Mansfield) but she was an avid and talented amateur photographer. She said of photography, "Isn't it odd how much more one sees in a photograph than in real life?" This gives us, I think, a clue to the enduring power and appeal of the short story—they are snapshots of the human condition and of human nature, and when they work well, and work on us, we are given the rare chance to see in them more "than in real life."[22]

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[21] The Contemporary American Short – Story Cycle: The Ethnic Resonance of Genre. Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press , 2001 .p.55

[22] http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/arts-and-books/william-boyd-short-history-of-the-short-story

Short stories in English having a long history of development fall into these categories.

Genres of short story – the result of evolution

Humorous short story	Detective short story
Gothic short story	Science fiction short story
Social short story	Romantic short story

CONCLUSION OF THE 1ST CHAPTER

This chapter is aimed to identify the key definition and elements of the genre short story and consider the historical origin and evolution of it in American literature. So we defined that a short story is a prose narrative shorter than a novel usually dealing with a few characters and aiming at unity of effect and often concentrating on the creation of mood rather than plot.

We identified the following main characteristics of short stories:

– That the length of the short story should be between 1,600 and 20,000 words. Nonetheless, there are several shorter and longer examples.

– Theme and Subject: While the genre may include topics ranging from ghost stories to daily errands, it is generally agreed that a short story contains only one of them at a time.

– Plot: With only one plotline and limited space, there is little room or need for the same prolonged exposition we frequently find in novels. Instead, short stories generally have a single setting and begin *in medias res* (Latin, 'into the middle of things'), meaning they start abruptly with little to no prior information given.

– Limited Number of Characters: There's not much room to develop one character in a short story, much less twenty or so along with all of their relationships. In fact, these stories usually cover such short periods of time that even a single character is never fully developed. Setting: where and when a story takes place. It is important because environment has a strong impact on what happens in a story.

CHAPTER II WILLIAM TREVOR AND THE SHORT STORY GENRE OF THE XX CENTURY

2.1 British and Irish Fiction at the 2nd half of the XX century.

As Donna Potts claims “Joyce stands behind us like the ghost of the father”, contemporary Irish fiction writers are often described as writing in the shadow of James Joyce. Although this claim has the potential to diminish their unique contributions to the Irish literary tradition, it nonetheless provides a useful starting point in any discussion of that tradition. The confluence of cultural influences on Joyce was powerful and pervasive enough to be felt by his successors, whose own expression of these influences was bound to be shaped by the author who is arguably the greatest and most stylistically versatile writer of the twentieth century. As the oldest colony of the British empire, Ireland has a broken tradition in terms of language, culture, and religion: in the sixteenth century, the Normans outlawed the native language, Irish-Gaelic, as well as native Irish dress, religion, and various cultural practices. The establishment of the English Protestant Church led to perse-cution of Irish Catholics, and ultimately to Ireland’s self-identification as a Catholic nation in contrast to Protestant England. Joyce describes Irish art as ‘‘the cracked looking glass of a servant’’[23] (1934: 383); and his fiction, written during the period in which Ireland was still under English domination, but struggling for independence, reflects the broken tradition that results from colonization. In particular, Joyce’s linguistic escapades, his preoccupation with representations of colonial Ire-land, his depiction of the role of Catholicism in Irish life, his uncompromising realism that underscores class distinctions exacerbated by colonization, and his allusions to Irish mythology and folklore are all responses to a colonial legacy shared by his successors.

The stylistic and linguistic playfulness of Flann O’Brien’s fiction owes an obvious debt to Joyce. Born Brian O’Nolan in 1911 in County Tyrone, O’Brien

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[23] The Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction General editor: Brian W. Shaffer. Volume I Twentieth-Century British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing. NY. – 2011. 1554p.

grew up in Dublin, and in the 1930s began writing a bilingual column forThe Irish Timesunder the pseudonym Myles na Gopaleen (Myles of the Small Horses), the name of the comic hero of Dion Boucicault's play The Colleen Bawn(1860). He is best known for the novelsAt Swim-Two-Birds(1939) and An Be´al Bocht(''The Poor Mouth,'' 1941), the latter written in Irish, which O'Brien had spoken exclusively until the age of 6. At-Swim-Two-Birds, the story of an Irish college student who writes an irreverent novel in which the figures of Irish myth and legend come to life and riot against their author, is reminiscent of Joyce's experimentation with language and genre (especially the incorporation of Irish myth and legend into a realistic story line), particularly in his later novels,Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. Declan Kiberd suggests that O'Brien's decision to writeAn Be´al Bochtin Irish was the means by which he provided the Victorian stereotype of the stage Irishman, Myles na Gopaleen, the opportunity to speak in his native language, the eclipsed ''g'' of his stage name now restored:

''Through the use of his once-despised but now-functional language, Myles succeeds in depicting a world where all men, and not solely the Irish-speaking peasant, are seen for the buffoons that they are''[24]

Although born into a Protestant family and emphatic about the role of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy in the Irish literary tradition, most notably in his survey, A Writer's Ireland: Landscape in Literature, William Trevor has relied on his position as an outsider to predominantly Catholic Ireland to gain insights into the sources of its religious and political tensions. Born William Trevor Cox in Mitchelstown, County Cork in 1928, Trevor attended a convent school in Youghal, bringing him into direct contact with rural Irish Catholic life. He continually exploits his position as ''out-sider,'' almost invariably preferring to write outside his own experience rather than autobiographically. Although claiming to be ''a short-story writer really who happens to write novels, not the other way round''[25]

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[24] McDonagh, John, 2003. 'Blitzophrenia: Brendan Kennelly's Post-Colonial Vision' in the *Irish University Review*. Dublin: Colourbooks Ltd. p. 498

[25] Ibid., p.450

(Stout 1989: 143), Trevor has written nineteen novels in addition to his fifteen collections of short stories. His early novels, The Old Boys(1964), The Boarding House(1965), and The Love Department(1966), are set in England, where he has lived since 1952; and although they include Irish characters, these tend to be caricatures, featuring respectively an Irish maid, a blarney spouting con-man named Studdy, and Septimus Tuam, whose ‘‘smooth Celtic voice’’ enables him to seduce ostensibly happily married women. Tributes to Joyce appear consistently in his early work, most explicitly in the form of echoes of the final lines of ‘‘The dead.’’[26]

During the 1970s, as Irish ‘‘troubles’’ increased in intensity, Trevor became increas-ingly interested in writing about Ireland and Irish problems, and he had also perhaps gained sufficient distance from his country to write about it from the peripheral position that he preferred, with the objectivity of an outsider. On a radio program in 1981 Trevor stated:

As an Irishman I feel that what is happening in Ireland now is one of the great horrors of my lifetime, and I find it difficult to comprehend the mentality, whether Irish or British, that pretends that it will somehow all blow over. It will not. There will be more death, more cruelty, more fear, more waste. The nightmare will go on . . . Compassion is thrown to the winds, distortion rules.[27]

In fact, Trevor has since acknowledged that he regards himself as following in the tradition of writers such as Frank O’Connor and Sean O’Faolain, thereby associating himself with the Irish nationalist tradition rather than the Anglo-Irish one.[28] (p. 134).

The novel Fools of Fortune(1983), which grew out of his 1981 short story ‘‘Saints,’’ addresses the troubled and complex relationship between England and Ireland through two families – the Irish Quintons and the English Woodcombes – from the famine of the 1840s to the Irish Civil War. The Irish Willie falls in love

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[26] Paulson, S. (1993).William Trevor: A Study of the Short Fiction. New York: Twayne.p. 90

[27] MacKenna, D. (1999).William Trevor: The Writer and His Work. Dublin: New Island. *p.110*

[28] ibid., p.123

with his English cousin Marianne; and when his family home is destroyed by British soldiers in 1918, his subsequent revenge on a British officer results in his exile from Ireland, and separation from Marianne and their daughter Imelda. The Quintons' plight is emblematic of that of the Protestant minority during the Civil War: however well-intentioned they are toward one another, their country, and the cause of Irish nationalism, they inevitably become victims of a capricious fate.

In the novel Felicia's Journey[29](1994), Trevor's growing preoccupation with the fate of the Catholic majority, already evident in his short fiction, finds expression in his longer fiction. The novel concerns an unmarried, pregnant 17-year-old Irish Catholic girl who, searching in England for the father of her child, falls into the hands of an English serial killer, Mr Hillditch, survives the ordeal, and eventually has an abortion.

The novel may be read as a postcolonial narrative: with each successive meeting between the English Hillditch and the Irish Felicia, Hillditch becomes more con-temptuous of the cultural background of this ‘‘runaway from the Irish bog lands’’[30] and whose impending return to her family begins to seem to him ‘‘a fate which is, literally, worse than death and one from which he, the enlightened colonial redeemer, must deliver her, the misguided postcolonial victim’’[31]

Felicia's great-grandmother, with whom the girl is forced to live while in Ireland, represents traditional Ireland, and indeed bears a resemblance to various representa-tions of Ireland, especially Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan, who, in the form of an old woman, seeks young men willing to die for her ‘‘four green fields.’’ In her youth the grandmother had lost her husband in the struggle for Irish freedom and had subse-quently endured a life of hardship, believing it to have been ennobled by her young husband's bloodshed – much as Cathleen ni Houlihan, upon persuading a young man to abandon marriage plans and risk death for her sake, departs with the ‘‘walk of a queen.’’ The grandmother has outlived two

[29] Schirmer, G. (1990).William Trevor: A Study of His Fiction. New York: Routledge, p.73

[30] William Trevor: A Sculptor of Words. http://irishamerica.com/2009/10/william-trevor-a-sculptor-of-words/

[31] Schirmer, G. (1990).William Trevor: A Study of His Fiction. New York: Routledge p. 336.

generations and has also ‘‘outlived her own rational thought’’[32] (1994: 25). Her memorabilia of Ireland’s history – newspaper clippings, photographs, and copies of documents – are the modern-day analogy of the compendium of Irish oral history traditionally possessed and recited by feminine representations of Ireland that appear in the traditional eighteenth century Irish aisling, or vision poem; in this the poet encounters a woman who is an allegorical representation of the country, and whose tale of subjection to a foreign entity, invariably male, is emblematic of the Irish colonial condition.

While Trevor writes as an outsider to the Irish Catholic tradition, Edna O’Brien’s fiction is continually informed by her position as an insider. Born in Tuamgraney, County Clare in 1930, O’Brien attended convent school before leaving for Dublin at16 to attend Pharmaceutical College. HerCountry Girlstrilogy (The Country Girls, 1960;The Lonely Girl, 1962; and Girls in their Married Bliss, 1964), whose protagon-ist, Caithleen Brady, leaves convent school for Dublin, and later moves to London, closely parallels her own life story. James Joyce was an extremely important influence on O’Brien: her book about him was published in 1999, she wrote the introduction for Penguin’s Dubliners, and, in an interview with Philip Roth, she stated that in the *‘‘constellation of geniuses, he [Joyce] is a blinding light and father of us all’’ (Roth 1984: 39). In many ways, her writing may be viewed as an attempt to accomplish the same goals for Irish literature, but to do so from a woman’s perspective, with female protagonists. Frank Tuohy has suggested that while Joyce was the first Irish Catholic to make his experience and surroundings recognizable, ‘‘the world of Nora Barnacle’’ had to wait for the fiction of Edna O’Brien* [33].

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[32] A companion to The British Irish Novel 1945-2000 by Brian W.Shaffer -2005- p606 (p458)

[33] The Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction General editor: Brian W. Shaffer. Volume I Twentieth-Century British and Irish Fiction first published 2011Blackwell Publishing Ltd 1554

2.2 William Trevor's contribution to the short story genre in English literature

"A Short-Story Master"[34], "The Greatest Author Of All Times"[35], "The Sculptor Of The Words"[36] – these titles are distinct indication of worldwide recognition of William Trevor, an Irish-English short story writer of the XX century. William Trevor's numerous, highly acclaimed novels and stories are distinguished by their moral vision, psychological complexity, comic and tragic insights, and detached, ironic perspectives. Having lived in Ireland and England, Trevor is adept at setting his fiction in both countries, writing insightfully about English and Irish life. Best known for his novels and stories, Trevor has also written plays, children's fiction, essays, and reviews, and he has both adapted his fiction and created original dramas for radio and television. Fourteen novels, eleven collections of short stories, several novellas, plays and books of memoirs, together with numerous prizes and awards, speak for a life devoted to the craft of fiction. He has been the recipient of numerous literary prizes, including the prestigious Whitbread Award, which he has won three times.

William Trevor was born in 1928 at Mitchelstown, County Cork, spent his childhood in provincial Ireland, and now lives in Devon. He attended a number of Irish schools and later Trinity College, Dublin. He is a member of the Irish Academy of Letters. He has written many novels, including *The Old Boys* (1964), winner of the Hawthornden Prize; *The Children of Dynmouth* (1976) and *Fools of Fortune* (1983), both winners of the Whitbread Fiction Award; *The Silence in the Garden* (1988), winner of the *Yorkshire Post* Book of the Year Award; *Two Lives* (1991), which was shortlisted for the *Sunday Express* Book of the Year Award and includes the Booker-shortlisted novella *Reading Turgenev, Felicia's Journey* (1994), which won both the Whitbread and *Sunday Express* Book of the Year

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[34] The greatest author of all times. http://www.editoreric.com/greatlit/authors/Trevor.html
[35] William Trevor: A Sculptor of Words. http://irishamerica.com/2009/10/william-trevor-a-sculptor-of-words/
[36] William Trevor: A Short-Story Master's Life Work. http://www.npr.org/2011/01/10/132804604/william-trevor-a-short-story-masters-life-work

Awards; *Death in Summer* (1998); and, most recently, *The Story of Lucy Gault* (2002), which was shortlisted for both the Man Booker Prize and the Whitbread Fiction Award. A celebrated short-story writer, his most recent collections are *After Rain* (1996); *The Hill Bachelors,* which won the Macmillan Silver Pen Award and the *Irish Times* Literature Prize; and *A Bit on the Side* (2004). He is also the editor of *The Oxford Book of Irish Short Stories* (1989). He has written plays for the stage and for radio and television; several of his television plays have been based on his short stories. Most of his books are available in Penguin.

In 1976 William Trevor received the Allied Irish Banks Prize, and in 1977 he was awarded an honorary CBE in recognition of his valuable services to literature. In 1992 he received the *Sunday Times* Award for Literary Excellence. In 1999 he was awarded the prestigious David Cohen British Literature Prize in recognition of a lifetime's literary achievement. And in 2002, he was knighted for his services to literature.

As D. MacKenna states, **"a common theme for Trevor is his characters' acceptance or rejection of the abandonment of their hopes. Another is the small victories they win that can turn out to be more meaningful than their original impulses"**[37]. Moreover, Trevor's most **recurrent themes are "dark ones of loneliness, alienation, marital unhappiness, betrayal, calamity, madness, evil, guilt, and the like, though he often tempers his treatment of these bleak themes with irony and humor.** One of his signature techniques is the use of multiple perspectives in relating a narrative – a technique that often results in the reader's uncertainty about the truth of events"[38].

Trevor is a master of capturing those small shifts in consciousness that shatter someone's world. It creeps up on a reader slowly: the awareness that so many of these tales are about being trapped, buried alive, thwarted at every turn of

[37] MacKenna, D. (1999).William Trevor: The Writer and His Work. Dublin: New Island.p 37

[38] The Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction General editor: Brian W. Shaffer. Volume I Twentieth-Century British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing. NY. – 2011. 1554p. p/867

life's labyrinth. And, yet, the signature response of Trevor's characters to their bricked-in situation is a fatalistic shrug garnished with Black Irish humor.

"The Piano Tuner's Wives," like most of Trevor's stories, takes place in an Ireland that seems out of time. Most of Trevor's characters would have been right at home in the Ireland of the Celtic Twilight, rather than the twilight of the Celtic Tiger. In "The Hill Bachelors," for instance, a young man named Paulie leaves his job in England to attend his father's funeral in rural Ireland. Silently, Paulie's four adult siblings conspire to appoint him the sacrificial lamb who'll stay on to help his aged mother run the isolated farm.

In a spectacularly affecting story called "After Rain," a young Irishwoman named Harriet returns to an out-of-the-way Italian hotel that she had stayed in as a child with her parents. Harriet is disappointed that the hotel is now overrun with tourists from the new Europe: She had hoped to find refuge in the familiar, especially since a long-term romance has just fallen apart. In this turning-point moment, which displays Trevor's eloquent precision, Harriet comes to realize the tragic trap of trying to recapture the past:

"This love affair had once, like the other affairs before it, full of the disappointment that so drearily coloured her life when her parents went their separate ways. ... Both [parents] said the separation was a happier outcome than staying together for the sake of the family. They used those words, and Harriet has never forgotten them. Her brother shrugged the disappointment off, but for Harriet it did not begin to go away until the first of her love affairs. And always, when a love affair ended, there had been no exorcism after all."[39]

Trevor's outcasts never make obvious bids for our sympathy, but they elicit it nonetheless. The stories show a quietly devastating argument for the beauty and power of the short story form as tool for cutting to the quick of human desire and vulnerability.

[39] William Trevor: A Sculptor of Words. http://irishamerica.com/2009/10/william-trevor-a-sculptor-of-words/

Trevor takes up the theme of the tragic past in several short stories and links it to the sectarian violence and terrorism of the Northern "Troubles" – the decades-long conflict between Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists in Northern Ireland. In "The Distant Past," a story set in the late 1960s at the onset of the Northern Troubles, Trevor shows how, despite decades of relative peace in Ireland, the bitter legacy of the distant past (specifically the Anglo-Irish War) really lies just below the surface and easily rises to embitter relationships between Catholics and Protestants once more. "Attracta," arguably the most powerful story by any contemporary writer about the devastating effects of terrorism in Northern Ireland, records the attempts of the title character, an elderly Catholic schoolteacher in the North, to convey to her young Protestant pupils the horror and senselessness of sectarian violence.

Many critics and writers have praised his work: to Hilary Mantel he is 'one of the contemporary writers I most admire' and to Carol Shields 'a worthy chronicler of our times'. In the *Spectator* Anita Brookner wrote, 'These novels will endure. And in every beautiful sentence there is not a word out of place', and John Banville believes William Trevor's novels to be 'among the most subtle and sophisticated fiction being written today'.

A literary critic of William Trevor's works Allen Barra states "that in the stories of William Trevor, quite ordinary characters face extraordinary tribulations"[40]

William Trevor, the greatest living writer of short stories in the English language, has managed over the last 30-odd years to tread down every avenue concerned with modern literature without ever once seeming faddish.

Politics: In "Attracta," perhaps his best-known story, a schoolteacher in Belfast finds his life irrevocably changed by a story in a newspaper about a woman whose army officer husband is murdered, his head returned to her in a plastic bag inside a biscuit tin.

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[40] William Trevor: A Sculptor of Words. http://irishamerica.com/2009/10/william-trevor-a-sculptor-of-words/

Fantastic Naturalism: In "Lost Ground," from his new collection, *After Rain*, a Protestant farmer boy is kissed by what is apparently the ghost of a female Catholic spirit, beginning a chain of events that ends in tragedy.

Abnormal Psychology: In "Gilbert's Mother," also from *After Rain*, a mother comes to believe that her oddball son is actually a murderer and rapist. ("Her role was only to accept. ... No one would ever understand the mystery of his existence, or the unshed tears they shed."[41])

Not that Trevor dwells on these aspects. The point in "Attracta" isn't politics but the effect politics has on people's lives. "Lost Ground" never tells us whether or not the farm boy's vision is real, but details the repercussions of his vision. We never actually find out if the son in "Gilbert's Mother" is a murderer and rapist, only that the mother's guilt impels her to take the blame for the failure of his life.

Trevor never seeks out the melodramatic or even the dramatic effect. His sensibility, seemingly influenced by Chekhov, prefers the pursuit, capture and dissection of the ordinariness of life, and his method, entirely his own, places his ordinary characters in extraordinary situations, where a lightning flash gives a sudden illumination of some dark corner of their personality.

We aren't always certain of what the characters' reactions are--they aren't always sure themselves. Lives are touched, changed; the world moves on. Often, the characters are not even aware of how incidents changed their lives until years later.

The lonely, repressed spinsters, salesmen and shopkeepers who inhabit Trevor's stories resemble what people in Hitchcock movies would be like if they didn't get the clues. In "A Bit of Business," two punkish, smalltime thieves rob an old man in his home. Neither has the stomach for killing him, and for 10 astonishingly suspenseful pages, they debate whether or not to go back and finish the job. The story leaves "both of them wondering if the nerve to kill was something you acquired"--and, of course, leaves us wondering the same thing.

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[41] Paulson, S. (1993).William Trevor: A Study of the Short Fiction. New York: Twayne. P.665

In "Timothy's Birthday," an elderly couple living in the country prepare for the annual birthday visit from their son. The son is gay, a fact that is revealed elliptically, mostly by the parents' refusal to acknowledge it. Sick of the ritual and the pretense, he talks his new lover--a bisexual young tough--into visiting his parents and making his excuses for him.

The possibility of some act of horror pervades the birthday party, although the crime turns out to be nothing more than the theft of a small silver ornament. The parents' refusal to acknowledge the theft is an echo of their refusal to see their son as he is and not as they want him to be.

Two things in particular startle about these and all of Trevor's stories. First, the incidents that happen in them touch off surprising, almost shocking, depths of emotion and passion. Second, those emotions are rendered in a manner that's invariably elegant and, if not sympathetic, at least empathetic.

Trevor the writer never raises his voice; there are no speeches, no pronouncements, no easy lessons or morals to be learned. A William Trevor story invariably recalls Yeats' dictum that "Rhetoric is heard. Poetry is overheard."[42]

Like most great writers of English prose, Trevor is Irish, and no writer of his generation, not even Edna O'Brien, has benefited more from becoming Anglo-Irish. From the land and literature of his birth he seems to have learned passion and pathos; from his adopted country, intellectual curiosity and a scrupulous fairness in the observation of people.

Some critics have accused Trevor of being an omnipotent narrator, albeit one with an archly humorous tone. The charge is perhaps true, but you never get the feeling (as you often do with an equally great writer such as O'Brien) that Trevor does not allow his characters a decent chance for happiness. He gives his people all the help he possibly can. The rest is up to them--and by extension, us[43].

[42] Schirmer, G. (1990).William Trevor: A Study of His Fiction. New York: Routledge. P. 441

[43] Ibid., 442

"This was three years before the collected stories of William Trevor appeared in a single volume. He is a writer from Ireland who has much in common with Elizabeth Bowen. These stories , and his later volume the News from Ireland (1986), return frequently to Ireland , but their subject matter is loneliness, love and loss, rather than a concentration of specifically Irish problems. Trevor`s novel Fools of Fortune(1983) achieves a similar balance of sympathy to Bowen`s classic pre-war Irish novel The Last September (1929), moving the story backwards and forwards in time to show the period of the Troubles, and its consequences more than half a century later. Felicia`s Journey (1994) is the most successful of Trevor`s later novels on these themes. It won the Whitbread Prize and became a successful film. It tells the story of a young Irish girl who has been abandoned by the father of her child – her journey is the search to try to find him in England. Death in Summer (1998) is a novel about the return of figures from the past and their influence on the present"[44].

The malign vision in William Trevor's fiction[45]. Trevor's fiction, in fact, explores some of the same territory as popular novels do, though its landmarks are the ruined lives of tragedy. Trevor tells stories, offering fictional "realities" in a clear, matter-of-fact style. He does not burden the reader with philosophizing speculation or arguments for a particular political point of view. Newspaper reviewers and literary prize committees praise his work and, more recently, he has been recognized by academic critics. Some recent examples are Michael W. Thomas (1999), whose essay "Worlds of Their Own: A Host of Trevor's Obsessives" appeared in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, my own essays (1997 and 1995 respectively), "Reading Trevor, Reading Turgenev" in *The CUHK Journal of the Humanities* and "The Outsider in the Novels of William Trevor" in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies,* and Ian Sansom (1999) "New Fiction:

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[44] The Routledge History of Literature in English Britain and Ireland SECOND EDITION RONALD CARTER AND JOHN McRAE by Routledge New York, second edition, Routledge , 2005.-524p (428-429p)

[45] Allen Barra. The Dark Corners of Daily Beings. Metro Publishing, Inc. 1996 p. 81-96

Reading Trevor" in *Salmagundi*. Richard Bonoccorso published two pieces on Trevor in 1996 and 1997 respectively. More substantially, Kristin Morrison published a book, *William Trevor* (1993), as have Suzanne Paulson with *William Trevor: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1993), and Dolores MacKenna, with *William Trevor, The Writer and His Work* (1999). My purpose here, though, is not to review previous critical works. I am more interested in continuing to record my own experience of reading Trevor. Since previously I have written about his novels, I am now looking mainly at Trevor's copious harvest of short fiction, including the fairly recent collection, *After Rain*(1996) and the even more recent novel, *Death in Summer*(1998).

We take my first cue from Trevor's racy review of P. G. Wodehouse in *The Spectator* (1993). Trevor, acknowledging Wodehouse's mastery, notes with approval the "edge" that time has not blunted, the deliberately broad -not merely highbrow- appeal, and Wodehouse's own estimate that "…he belonged well below the salt, 'among the scurvy knaves and scallions'. If he does, it's the place to be. "Praising the B.B.C.'s *Wodehouse Playhouse* television series, Trevor nevertheless reminds us that "To know Wodehouse, to savour him, he must be read. His artistry and craftsmanship belong on the page, and what he leaves to the imagination is left deliberately. "(*Spectator* : 50). Trevor usefully recalls also that Wodehouse insisted "…that he had no message, being content to leave 'all that kind of thing' to the sombre boys and the swells. Yet he continues to survive, while all around him messages are forgotten. "(*Spectator*: 51). Such remarks apply just as well to Trevor's own work as a fiction writer.

Trevor's exploration of the malign aspects of human existence runs obsessively through a body of fiction peopled, as Thomas (1999) argues persuasively, with characters who are "obsessives". What I call the "malign vision" in Trevor's work appears in several forms. Trevor himself uses the words "malice" and "malicious" in his short story "Sunday Drinks" which appears in *The Collected Stories* (1993): "Marcus Stire arrived then, lanky and malicious… His malice was perceptive, and he didn't much exaggerate. He had a way of detecting trouble, and

of accurately piecing together the fragments that came his way. ”(*The Collected Stories*: 856, 857). The harm that can be done by the perceptively malicious ranges from mere teasing to the murderous destruction of lives. Marcus Stire simply mentions to Jessica that another woman’s smile “…covers a multitude of sins. What awful frauds people are! … Suburban middle age… It’s like a minefield. ”(*The Collected Stories*: 857). As Jessica listens to his gossip about other people, his callous laughter at their predicaments and treacheries, she is mesmerized by his drawling voice and the gestures of his ringed fingers, and, trapped, she wonders what he says about her own marriage and her registered drug addict son. As she crumples, losing her psychological balance, she cannot evade what the end of the story reveals, the horror that has wrecked her and her husband’s previous happiness, their son’s form of “accidental suicide” (*The Collected Stories*: 859). Marcus Stire has worked on her casually, smilingly, with “…the malevolence in the eyes that were piercing…now.” (*The Collected Stories*: 857). Malcolm, Jessica’s husband, taking her home, assesses the damage: “Easily, Malcolm imagined Marcus Stire’s drawling tones and the sharpness of his eye, *like a splinter of glass* [my italics]. He knew now how Jessica had been upset….” (*The Collected Stories* : 859). Malcolm’s reading of*The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) gets a mention in the final paragraph of the story. Dickens’ last (and unfinished) novel opens with a man awakening from a dream induced by opium. In Trevor’s story, we have encountered Jessica’s son having a drug-induced dream. Stire takes some inspiration from the sinister John Jasper, Edwin Drood’s uncle.

The adult Torridge who walks purposefully into the story “Torridge” is to a large extent the result of schoolboy teasing. He relishes the merciless revenge he exacts on the three families of the men who, first as boys and then as men, made him a legendary figure of fun. Torridge is both clever and subtle, these qualities captured in his smile:

"The man beside her smiled his brittle, malevolent smile at her, as if in sympathy. "[46] .

Torridge turns the farcical schoolboy humour and the latent/overt homosexual antics of the single sex school into a jagged weapon of revenge capable of puncturing the comfort zones of three marriages. He relishes the irony of the contrast between his adult presence, with its devastating power, and the image of him as a naïve schoolboy butt of wittier companions. The malefactors — whether homosexual or heterosexual, male or female— in Trevor's work not only wish ill on others, or malign people in their absence, but also perpetrate ingeniously, if compulsively, their varieties of mischief on the deserving and the undeserving alike. They deface people and vandalize households as graffiti vandals indiscriminately deface walls and doors and windows, whether ugly or beautiful. Ironically, such vandalism may result from political correctness, as in the authoritarian school teacher's despicable treatment of old Mrs. Malby in "Broken Homes." The malcontents use their imaginations as powerful instruments for evil. They are children of Satan; Iago is probably their finest literary template. Their maleficence suggests some malformation of nature. In Trevor's canon, mothers, of course, can be malevolent. "Death in Jerusalem", for instance, dramatizes the fearful possessiveness that can infect a mother's love.

In other stories, extremes of criminality appear. In the farcically humorous "The Teddy-bears' Picnic" a group of adults preserve, by repeating every so often, their childhood game of having a picnic, each bringing his or her teddy bear. Edwin, Deborah's husband, cannot credit that she and other adults in her circle of friends would indulge in such a thing. By the end of the story Edwin's grown-up persona has ironically reverted to childhood frustration and anger. He has reluctantly gone along to the teddy bears' picnic but gets horribly drunk and, in a moment of viciousness, he murders the harmless old man whose garden is the

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[46] Wiliam T. "A Collection of short stories". Penguin. 2004.

setting for the picnic. In another piece, “Autumn Sunshine”, Trevor shows the cowardice of murderous hatreds working in the person of the rebarbative Harold, Deirdre Moran’s friend, who comes to stay with her at her widower father’s protestant rectory in Ireland. Harold’s name might recall the battle of Hastings for readers attuned to the ironies of fiction ; Trevor tells us that “Fascinated by Ireland, Harold hated his own country.” (*The Collected Stories*: 843). His leftist ideas and versions of history, however, have not made him more humane than he might otherwise have been. Instead, Trevor portrays a man consumed by bitterness, anger, and malice, probably as a result of a disfiguring birthmark:

Harold would have delighted in the vengeance exacted on an innocent man. Harold wanted to inflict pain, to cause suffering and destruction. The end justified the means for Harold, even if the end was an artificial one, a pettiness grandly dressed up… Harold was the same kind of man as Sergeant James [perpetrator of an atrocity against local Irish villagers in the rising of 1798] had been: it didn’t matter that they were on different sides. Sergeant James had maybe borne an affliction also, a humped back or a withered arm. He had ravaged a country that existed then for its spoils, and his most celebrated crime was neatly at hand so that another Englishman could make matters worse by attempting to make amends[47]. (

Trevor leaves us to speculate on whether Harold’s knowledge as an electrician will be put to sinister uses later. Irish history and the “troubles” that continue into the twenty-first century are dealt with further in other stories: the sufferings of the poor in the nineteenth century potato famine during the “hungry forties” in “The News from Ireland” is one example; another is the terrible awareness of the desensitizing of young people to violence by the news reporting of horror after horror that is the subject of “Attracta”, a story whose fearsome brutalities take us down into the depths of human savagery.

Trevor depicts in many stories the cruelties that accompany and motivate heartless sexuality (see “The Forty-seventh Saturday”). This kind of sex has its

[47] *Wiliam T. “A Collection of short stories”. Penguin. 2004.* 848, 849

counterparts in the denials or the failures of love or just sexual behaviour, as in "The Mark-2 Wife" or "O Fat White Woman", with its sadism, or the school environment evoked again -but to very different effect- in "The Grass Widows". The stories dealing with sexuality are remarkable for the range of their study of behaviour, from the pain and inadequacy of the situations of "In Isfahan" to the superficialities of fashionable "sophistication" that cause the realities of distress in the wife-swapping of "Angels at the Ritz". If political and sectarian hatreds maintain the chain reaction of violence and malice in Irish political "troubles", religious and rural community *mores,* together with ignorance and male attempts to thwart the rules, may lead to the stifling of mature sexual fulfillment, as in "Teresa's Wedding". The bride, pregnant by a friend of her groom, has to marry someone; it matters little who it may be:

In no way did Teresa love him. She had been aware of that when Father Hogan had arranged the marriage, and even before that, when she'd told her mother that she'd thought she was pregnant and had then mentioned Artie Cornish's name. Artie Cornish was much the same as his friends: you could be walking along a road with Screw Doyle or Artie Cornish and you could hardly tell the difference… She'd said privately to Father Hogan that she didn't love him or feel anything for him one way or the other: Father Hogan had replied that in the circumstances all that line of talk was irrelevant[48].

Ironically, Trevor also depicts illicit but genuine love between a visiting "summer" priest and a girl, Ellie, in "The Potato Dealer", a story from his collection *After Rain* (1996). Carrying the priest's child, Ellie cannot face having an abortion. She would even rebel against family and walk away from them in search of work in the towns if necessary. "Loving the father, Ellie already loved the child. "(*After Rain*: 133). But she wants to avoid penury, because that would damage the child. She weds the potato dealer, Mulreavy, who goes along with this secretly unconsummated marriage in order to gain a stake in the family farm.

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[48] Wiliam T. "A Collection of short stories". Penguin. 2004.

We have noted earlier the origins of adult nastiness in the malicious behaviour of children. Trevor's fiction exploits very popular genres of children's fiction : the school story and adventures at the seaside. In Trevor's novels, such as *The Old Boys* (1964) and *The Children of Dynmouth* (1976), we get the genres presented with biting insights into the malign aspects of child and adult behaviour. William, in Richmal Crompton's *Just William* series, is a boy whose exploits were chronicled for adults but quickly became children's reading. Whereas William brings disaster by the exaggeration of schoolboy mischief and by well-meaning attempts to help others or prevent further disaster, Trevor's children are complex victims and, sometimes, evil doers. William has a vivid fantasy life and imagination. All Trevor's wrong doers also have the ability to imagine detailed scenarios and predict events quite accurately. Yet where William's imagination is confined to more or less innocent games, Trevor's fictional children by contrast have ruthless, selfish, and destructive imaginations which prepare vicious or malicious actions. The mockery practised by Liz Jones in "Nice Day at School" is unrelenting and corrosive. Her remarks are crudely sexual or designed to destroy another girl's self-esteem, as when she approaches Eleanor:

"'You've got a moustache growing on you, ' Liz Jones said, coming up behind her and whispering into her hair. "[49]

After her day at the local comprehensive school, persecution by Liz Jones, and the clumsy groping of her person by a butcher's assistant, Denny Price, Eleanor goes home to the contemplation of the trapped and sevely limited lives of her parents. The world being a nasty trap full of unpleasant people, her only ambition is escape to the self-sufficiency of a solitary life in a room of her own, as she imagines that Miss Whitehead, the French teacher, has done. This is a far cry from the jolly hockey sticks girls' books. Beyond the malign aspects of the peer group, there is the pressure from the lower class social milieu in the story.

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[49] Wiliam T. "A Collection of short stories". Penguin. 2004.

In the later work, "Child's Play", Trevor brilliantly shows two children, Gerard and Rebecca, coping with the divorce of their respective parents. After the acrimonious divorces, Gerard's mother marries Rebecca's father, both of them the guilty parties, and it is with them that both children live. At the beginning of the story, Trevor refers to the "Two years of passionate quarrelling, arguing, and agreeing…of final insults and rejection" as "a peepshow" the children viewed. (*After Rain*: 53). The children cope with the situation by playing a rerun of this peepshow, a game they call "marriage and divorce"[50]. (*After Rain*: 54). Trevor lightly sketches in a half-page the kind of scene the children witnessed and then shifts the point of view to that of the children themselves, playing their game of – and incidentally learning how to become– quarrelling adults. He comments:

Such scenes, seeming like the end of everything that mattered, were later surveyed from the unemotional safety of the new companionship. Regret was exorcized, sore places healed ; harshness was the saviour. From information supplied by television a world of sin and romance was put together in the empty attic room. 'Think of that child ! ' Rebecca mimicked, and Gerard adopted his father's grimace the time he called his mother a vicious bitch. It was fun because the erring couple were so virtuous now[51]. (*After Rain*: 55)

Trevor develops a first rate peepshow, his plain, factual commentary being the perfect foil for the scenes the children remember from life and steal from television and old films. The peepshow is a funny, satirical, and lively view of collapsed relationships, incompletely rendered by the children who can only mumble when they deal with things for which they do not know the words. Trevor breaks it up with brief glimpses of the "reality" behind the *guignol*. Rebecca's mother (innocent party) had demanded to know where the sexual encounters had taken place. Rebecca had eavesdropped. Trevor's factual comment, without emotion, but with a telling use of verbs, gives a dimension of great sadness and poignancy, "A hotel was mentioned, and finally a hired room. 'How sordid!'

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[50] Wiliam T. "A Collection of short stories". Penguin. 2004.

[51] ibid

Rebecca's mother cried, then weeping overcame her and Rebecca crept away."[52] (*After Rain*: 57). The story closes with the peepshow coming to an end because Rebecca must return to her mother's care when the erring partners are having another child:

"The easy companionship that had allowed them to sip cocktails and sign the register of the Hotel Grand Splendide had been theirs by chance, a gift thrown out from other people's circumstances. Helplessness was their natural state." [53](*After Rain*: 65).

In Trevor's territory, cruelty is also a "natural state". In another story of childhood and broken marriage, "Mrs. Silly", "Michael couldn't remember a time when his father had been there." (*The Collected Stories*: 400). Trevor charts the cruel, devastating shame of an adolescent who knows that his mother appears immensely stupid to his peers at boarding school, and thinks she seems so, too, as far as the staff are concerned. His mother, in the straightened circumstances of being now a single parent is a foil to the man-of-the-world father with his Alfa Romeo car and new, sophisticated wife. Her visit to the school for the confirmation service is the scene of an accident, when she slips on something, falls to the floor and gets soaked with tea. Michael's schoolmates, Tichbourne and Carson, find this excruciatingly funny, later on amusing themselves by imitating the fall. Michael cannot bring himself to admit that his clumsy, poor relative is his mother. He pretends she is a distant aunt. " 'God it was funny, ' Carson said, and Tichbourne did his imitation, and Michael laughed with his friends." But later, in the dormitory, "In the dark, he whispered to her in his mind. He said he was sorry, he said he loved her better than anyone." (*The Collected Stories*: 418, 419). The potency of childhood experience persisting into adulthood recurs in Trevor's stories. In "The Death of Peggy Meehan" a boy of seven sees a film about a love triangle in which one of the rival women dies in a car accident. When the boy

[52] Wiliam T. "A Collection of short stories". Penguin. 2004.
[53] Wiliam T. After Rain . Penguin ,1996.-p278

narrator is going on a picnic with two girls he knows, he thinks it would be better if there were just one. Peggy falls to her death when the rear door she is leaning against in her father's car suddenly becomes unlatched. The narrator is convinced his wicked thoughts have sparked the accident. He is haunted by the dead girl. He grows to love her and wishes he could make love to her, even in her ghostly state. As a child he naturally led a double life, ordinary on the outside and full of wicked thoughts inside. As an adult he seems eccentric, the result of his loneliness as the late-arrival only child of parents too old and puritanical to be normal parents. He admits people might attribute to him a morbid imagination. He cannot shake off his love for a ghost and feels that God is punishing him:

"I live for her, live hopelessly, for I know I can never possess her as I wish to. I have a carnal desire for a shadow, which in turn is His mockery of me: His fitting punishment for my wickedest thought of all."[54] (*The Collected Stories*: 399).

15In Trevor's short stories and novels there are hardly any happy endings. People are cruel: they punish themselves, they punish others. Their sins are sexual, sometimes even amounting to murder. Sometimes suffering occurs simply because of fate, unavoidable circumstances. Cruelty is natural, as we have seen. In "The Time of Year", Valerie relives in imagination the death of the young man she loved. One Christmas he went into the sea and was swept away to his pointless death:

"She stood in the icy shallows and when she heard him shouting again she imagined he was still mocking her. She didn't even know he was struggling, she wasn't in the least aware of his death." (*The Collected Stories*: 804).

16Her distress is made more acute by the facts that he died at Christmas and that it had been her idea to go for a dip. She feels separated from her peers by their normality and her own melancholy and bitterness. As the students listen to Tchaikovsky's music, Valerie imagines their futures leading inevitably to

[54] Wiliam T. "A Collection of short stories". Penguin. 2004.

decrepitude and death. She finds some comfort in her own imagination and sensitivity:

She was as she wished to be. She paused in faint moonlight, repeating that to herself and then repeating it again. She did not quite add that the tragedy had made her what she was, that without it she would not possess her reflective introspection, or be sensitive to more than just the time of year. But the thought hovered with her as she moved towards the lights of the house, offering what appeared to be a hint of comfort. (*The Collected Stories*: 809)

The malevolence of fate may hone the imagination. In the last two sentences of the story here quoted the narrative voice goes further than Valerie in accepting that tragic fate can bring some advantage as well as suffering. And a slim hope for the future occurs in the image of the house lights, promise of humanity and life itself. Trevor's narrative voice suggests that the imagination may redeem us as well as being a weapon of the wicked. Here we might recall Alain de Botton's discussion of Marcel Proust's notion that suffering is a more effective teacher than a classroom lecturer:

…it may be enough that he has defined a relation between the degree of pain a person experiences and the profundity of thought they may have as a result… Only when plunged into grief do we have the Proustian incentive to confront difficult truths, as we wail under the bedclothes, like branches in the autumn wind.

The malignity and the strangeness of Trevor's situations are markers of his own imagination, the writer's imagination that cannot escape the obligation to make excursions into the imagined world in order to increase our awareness of the nature of reality itself. "In at the Birth" is an early story in which the Dutts, a childless couple, look after an old man on his death bed, employing a baby sitter when they go out for an evening, but cautioning her not to enter the child's room at the top of the house and never revealing to her the real nature of her charge. The story ends with the babysitter, Miss Efoss, an old maiden lady, replacing the old man as the new "child". The moment of shock, when the reader finds that the child does not exist, is balanced by the effort to understand the need to have children.

But human behaviour and its motivation cannot always be explained. Miss Efoss remarks, "The older I become, Mr. Dutt, the more I realize that one understands very little. I believe one is not meant to understand. The best things are complex and mysterious. And must remain so."[55] (*The Collected Stories*: 111).

That persons who inflict injury on others were often themselves victims of some distress or evil in the past, usually in childhood, is now a truism of sociological studies. Trevor's writing career has spanned decades of successive generations of youth gangs. His malefactors, though, tend to be "loners" of all ages and classes. Their pathology, their motives, their inner lives accord sometimes with the case studies of malicious youths to be found in T. R. Fyvel (1961) *Insecure Offenders*. Trevor reports clearly and with characteristically sharp, brief detail, the milieu and class of his malign characters. But he finds a crooked, quirky path for behaviour, sometimes leading back to childhood, to instinct, or even to God. In "Matilda's England", a wonderful trilogy of stories, the Reverend Throataway throws out to the uncomprehending children the idea that God is in everything, even repulsive insects and even in "…the worst things we did as well as our virtues" (*The Collected Stories*: 554). This links with and perhaps follows from, or perhaps explains, the notion that ends the first of the three stories in the trilogy, that cruelty is "natural"[56].

20Trevor's art, though, depends on the story teller's imagination that goes beyond the rational and the explanatory. Another popular genre he exploits is the ghost story. In "Mrs. Acland's Ghosts" the ghosts haunt Mrs. Acland, an only child, whose imagination creates a brother and sister who have died. This imagination, with its compensation mechanisms bringing a measure of relief or escape to the one who suffers, is also the writer's imagination. Trevor's particular fictional world, however malign, is a product of his own imagination. It encompasses the horrors of life and the malignity of human nature. When the

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[55] Wiliam T. "A Collection of short stories". Penguin. 2004.
[56] Ibid

psychiatrist explains Mrs. Acland's case, the power of her imagination and the children she created seem still extraordinarily real to Mr. Mockler:

"…he felt it in his bones and it felt like the truth. " (The Collected Stories: 512).

Trevor's story has made it real to us as well. Again, in "The Raising of Elvira Tremlett", Trevor celebrates the imagination and makes his readers recognize its power. A lonely child in Ireland imagines a woman whose name is on a tombstone until he conjures her into a compelling reality:

"I began to imagine her, Elvira Tremlett of Tremlett Hall in the county of Dorset, England. I gave her her long hair and her smile and her elaborate earrings, and I felt I was giving her gifts. I gave her her clothes, wondering if I had got them right. " [57](*The Collected Stories*: 652).

22Such is also the writer's preoccupation. Creating an imagined companion is something lonely children often do. The child imagination develops its defences. But Elvira haunts the child, becoming a ghostly beloved. The process Trevor's child narrator describes in its details are the processes too of the writer's imagination working to create characters elaborated from fragments of reality.

The readability of Trevor's fiction, despite its determination to rip away the comfort of illusion and confront us with the malign face of humanity, largely rests in the ingenuities of his malign action, the unobtrusive style, and the sharp bursts of humour. The characters are so clearly *there*, from the farm labourers to the lower middle-class porter drinkers, the tradesmen, and the middle-class professional types. The dialogue is always sensitive to the cadences of Irish English and the accents of England itself. The settings and characters are so deftly, vividly, and economically evoked, that the horrors lying in wait for us are at once convincing and obscurely pleasing. The danger with such an imaginative world is that it will merely depress the reader. Trevor's work in *After Rain* and*Death in Summer* suggests that he is finding a measure of hope. It is a mistake to think that

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[57] Wiliam T. "A Collection of short stories". Penguin. 2004.

his fiction is nihilistic. The malign prey on innocents and the benign. These good people cannot be explained away either. They are solidly *there* in the benign imagination of Trevor's people and their worlds. As in life, evil may be done by just one or a few people but it affects the lives of more. The innocent are not totally unblemished, but luckily for human beings, the majority of us do little harm. It is the minority who do the major damage. In some of his work, Trevor allows his victims a measure of peace, though not necessarily happiness, after a catastrophe. In *After Rain,* "Marrying Damian" introduces a country doctor (the first person narrator), his wife Claire, and their daughter, Joanna, a social worker concerned with helping prisoners. The family thus plays a caring role, their work being to help other people in the community. Joanna, small, pretty, in her late twenties, has had relationships but remains unmarried, for as her father puts it:

"Recidivists, penitents, old lags, one-time defaulters, drug pushers, muggers, burglars, rapists: these were her lovers. She found the good in them, and yet, when telling us about them, did not demand that we did too… often people are surprised at the intensity of her involvement, at the steel beneath so soft a surface. Neither Claire nor I ever say so, but there is something in our daughter that is remarkable. " (*After Rain* : 208).

When the narrator's childhood friend, Damian, returns to the neighbourhood after a life of wandering, scrounging and being a hippyish poet, the family accept him with good-natured tolerance. But the doctor and his wife watch with alarm Damian's charming of Joanna. At the beginning of the story, the five-year-old Joanna announces she is going to marry Damian. A few pages later, the adult Joanna repeats the announcement. The effect on her parents is then elaborated in a few terse pages:

"In the night, believing me to be asleep, Claire wept. " (*After Rain*: 210)

And then:

" 'Are we being punished? ' Claire asked, and I didn't know if we were or not, or why we should be punished, or what our sin was. " (*After Rain*: 211).

They know that they will say nothing to dissuade Joanna from marrying someone who would be eighty-one when Joanna reached forty-seven. At the end of the story they do not reproach Damian for his lack of decency towards his women in the past, or for what distress he now causes the narrator and his wife, and might cause their daughter in the future:

"Instead we conversed inconsequentially. " (*After Rain*: 213).

The doctor and his wife will worry but they have learned to accommodate life. The story is a simple one but it compels and convinces. We share the parents' fears for Joanna. Yet the little bit of steeliness in Joanna offers some hope as well. Another story might show the way Joanna would be quite capable of looking after herself. Damian might in fact get his comeuppance. After all, the history of comedy is strewn with the methods by which old men are ruled and punished by very young wives.

If this final story of the collection offers a kind of balanced suspension of judgment, the title story, "After Rain", offers extremely beautiful moments as well as the melancholy story of loss. Harriet, deceived cruelly by her lover, has cancelled their planned holiday on the island of Skyros and instead gone to the Italian *pensione,* known to her for years, because of family holidays spent there with her parents, before their marriage broke down. Harriet, dipping into Trollope's *The Small House at Allington* (1864), reads an ironic sentence about a bleak Valentine's Day and cannot get involved with this bit of the novel (*After Rain*: 90). She is fascinated, though, by the anonymous Annunciation in the church of Santa Fabiola. As she leaves the church insights come to her "mysteriously" and "from nowhere" (*After Rain*: 92). She recognizes the truth of the revelations that have come to her: love affairs do not restore one's faith in love; she has cheated in her own love affairs. She relishes the freshness of the air after rain and realizes that in the annunciation the angel, too, had come after rain. What Harriet gains is insight into her condition and acceptance of it, giving her the strength to leave and begin her life again:

"She has been the victim of herself: with vivid clarity she knows that now and wonders why she does and why she didn't before. " (*After Rain*: 95).

Mysteriously, we are sometimes our own worst enemies. Mysteriously, suffering can lead to revelation, insight, and a new resolve. In this story, as elsewhere in his works, Trevor's economical prose at key moments attains the tension and the rhythm of poetry:

She hears the swish of the cleaner's mop in the church of Santa Fabiola, she hears the tourists' whisper. The fingers of the praying woman flutter on her beads, the candles flare. The story of Santa Fabiola is lost in the shadows that were once the people of her life, the family tomb reeks odourlessly of death. Rain has sweetened the breathless air, the angel comes mysteriously also. (After Rain: 96. My arrangement of the prose into linear verse.)

30Although *Death in Summer* suggests by its title the malignity of Trevor's fictional world, the novel offers not just acceptance, insight, balance, but the hope that comes from the mystery of goodness. Albert, Pettie and Bev are orphans. Whereas Bev joins the wrong crowd and "goes astray", Albert has a way of helping people. He gets a lowly job on the underground erasing the grafitti of London's vandals and hooligans. He helps people to cope with old age, illness, distress. Pettie is "a tearaway" but under Albert's influence she tries to keep her jobs as babysitter or helping in the house. When she fails to get the job of nurse to a baby in the large house of a recently bereaved widower, Pettie is convinced of two things: first, the dead wife's mother wants to look after the baby and thus was responsible for not hiring anyone ; second, Pettie is in love with the bereaved husband and believes –wrongly- he has felt something for her. She thinks of a way to get back to the house, pretending to have lost a ring when she attended the interview. She also watches the mother-in-law's movements. When the old woman sleeps in the garden near the baby, Pettie quietly steals it away, hiding it in the now derelict orphanage, where she once lived with Bev and Albert. By these means she hopes to show the incompetence of the grandmother and get hired by "rescuing" the baby. She sees herself as then being able to marry the father and look after the

child. But things go wrong. She is seen carrying the baby by some boys. She realizes she cannot now appear as a saviour. In fact, true to his nature, Albert, when she confides in him, helps to restore the baby to the parent. Pettie, however, dies in the demolished orphanage, like a piece of debris. Albert sums her up, like an epitaph, as her own worst enemy. Bev gives up the people she has been with and returns to find Albert, who helps her. The baby and the future have been saved. In an earlier phase of Trevor's fiction, Pettie might have created havoc; the baby might have died. Has Trevor's vision gone soft in his old age? I do not believe so. He has lost none of his sharpness about people, none of his ear for the nuances of different speech registers, educated and uneducated. He has remembered, though, that one of the thieves was saved.

Many of Trevor's works treat the disappointments, betrayals, and failures of love and marriage. An early novel, The Love Department (1966), explores with both comic effect and moral insight the middle-class marriages of London suburbanites. "Teresa's Wedding," an early story, and "Honeymoon in Tramore," a late one, have the same theme: the wedding couple's recognition that their marriage falls considerably short of their romantic ideals. In some stories, such as the renowned "Ballroom of Romance," characters resign themselves to loveless marriages, while in others, such as "Office Romances" and "A Bit on the Side," they act out the emptiness, betrayals, and loneliness of failed relationships.

Trevor's fascination with evil in human nature has resulted in his depiction of psychopaths, con men, sexual deviants, murderers, and the like. Quite often the malevolent or perverse behavior of these characters is a result of their being neglected or abused as children. InThe Children of Dynmouth(1976), set on the Dorset coast of England, the 15-year-old protagonist, Timothy Gedge, neglected by his family, goes about maliciously exploiting for his own gain the secret sins and failings of people of Dynmouth village – their sexual proclivities, infidelities, and pathologies.

The most sinister of Trevor's characters is Mr. Hildritch ofFelicia's Journey(1994), an Englishman who ensnares the title character. Sexually abused as

a child by his mother and rejected by a series of women, Hildritch is a psychopath who – despite living a seemingly ordinary life – kills women but then blocks out his horrendous acts from his conscious mind.

Typically, Trevor's plots place innocent characters in situations in which they are threatened – psychologically, sexually, physically – by the malicious characters. Julia of Other People's Worlds (1980), for instance, is brought under the malevolent influence of a younger man, Francis Tyte, who bigamously marries her while indirectly participating in the murder of his first wife. In Felicia's Journey, Felicia is a pregnant Irish girl who has been thrown out of her home by her puritanical father; she goes to England in search of the young man who seduced her. There she meets by chance Hildritch, who draws her into his psychopathic world.

A recurrent theme in Trevor's Irish fiction is the tragic legacy of Ireland's politically violent past, specifically the Anglo-Irish War of 1919–21 (part of the so-called "Troubles") in which Irish rebels fought for independence against the British army.

Trevor's treatment of this theme is distinguished by his compassionate and non-political perspective which allows him to shed light on the great human cost of the "Troubles." InFools of Fortune (1983),The Silence in the Garden(1988), and the Story of Lucy Gault(2002), as well as in several short stories, Trevor shows how personal tragedy results from the larger political tragedy. In Fools of Fortune, which spans the years 1918 to 1982, the protagonist Willie Quinton experienced as a child the burning of the family home, Kilneagh; the murder of his father, two sisters, and family servants by the Black and Tans, a brutal British paramilitary force; and the suicide of his mother distraught over the family misfortunes. This chain of tragic events was set in motion because Willie's Anglo-Irish parents, despite being allied by religion and heritage to the British, were supportive of Irish nationalists in their bid for independence in the Anglo-Irish War. It continues when, out of revenge, Willie kills the man who murdered his father and sisters and is forced to flee, leaving behind his lover and English cousin, Marianne.

Pregnant with his child, Marianne waits at Kilneagh for decades with the child, Imelda, who eventually becomes mentally disturbed. In the end, the family achieves a measure of happiness as Willie, now an old man, returns to Kilneagh.

Trevor takes up this theme of the tragic past in several short stories and links it to the sectarian violence and terrorism of the Northern "Troubles" – the decades-long conflict between Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists in Northern Ireland. In "The Distant Past," a story set in the late 1960s at the onset of the Northern Troubles, Trevor shows how, despite decades of relative peace in Ireland, the bitter legacy of the distant past (specifically the Anglo-Irish War) really lies just below the surface and easily rises to embitter relationships between Catholics and Protestants once more. "Attracta," arguably the most powerful story by any contemporary writer about the devastating effects of terrorism in Northern Ireland, records the attempts of the title character, an elderly Catholic schoolteacher in the North, to convey to her young Protestant pupils the horror and senselessness of sectarian violence.

As a conclusion we would like to stress upon the fact that William Trevor deserves all his titles and even more! In over 50 years of writing Trevor's fiction has remained, in style and technique, firmly within the mode of realism with clear reflection of social aspects of everyday life. His numerous, highly acclaimed novels and stories are distinguished by their moral vision, psychological complexity, comic and tragic insights, and detached, ironic perspectives.

CONCLUSION OF THE 2ND CHAPTER

William Trevor's numerous, highly acclaimed novels and stories are distinguished by their moral vision, psychological complexity, comic and tragic insights, and detached, ironic perspectives.

Having lived in Ireland and England, Trevor is adept at setting his fiction in both countries, writing insightfully about English and Irish life and – in his Irish fiction – about both Anglo-Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics. Best known for his novels and stories, Trevor has also written plays, children's fiction, essays, and reviews, and he has both adapted his fiction and created original dramas for radio and television.

Trevor's novels fit within the English tradition of the serious moral novelists, particularly Dickens, Hardy, E. M. Forster, Evelyn Waugh, and Graham Greene. His short fiction resembles – in both style and subject – that of the best modern Irish short story writers, especially Joyce, Frank O'Connor, and Sean O'Faolain, with Joyce'sDubliners(1914) perhaps being his single greatest literary influence.

Trevor's most recurrent themes are dark ones of loneliness, alienation, marital unhappiness, betrayal, calamity, madness, evil, guilt, and the like, though he often tempers his treatment of these bleak themes with irony and humor. One of his signature techniques is the use of multiple perspectives in relating a narrative – a technique that often results in the reader's uncertainty about the truth of events.

CHAPTER III "THE ORDINARY PAIN BEHIND CLOSED DOORS" REFLECTED IN WILLIAM TREVOR SHORT STORIES.

3.1 Loneliness and despair in William Trevor's short story 'The Mark-2 Wife'

Two things in particular startle about these and all of Trevor's stories. First, the incidents that happen in them touch off surprising, almost shocking, depths of emotion and passion. Second, those emotions are rendered in a manner that's invariably elegant and, if not sympathetic, at least empathetic.

Trevor the writer never raises his voice; there are no speeches, no pronouncements, no easy lessons or morals to be learned. A William Trevor story invariably recalls Yeats' dictum that "Rhetoric is heard. Poetry is overheard."

Some critics have accused Trevor of being an omnipotent narrator, albeit one with an archly humorous tone. The charge is perhaps true, but you never get the feeling (as you often do with an equally great writer such as O'Brien) that Trevor does not allow his characters a decent chance for happiness. He gives his people all the help he possibly can. The rest is up to them--and by extension, us.

In his short stories William Trevor portrays the lonely, repressed spinsters, salesmen and shopkeepers. Trevor never seeks out the melodramatic or even the dramatic effect. His sensibility, seemingly influenced by Chekhov, prefers the pursuit, capture and dissection of the ordinariness of life, and his method, entirely his own, places his ordinary characters in extraordinary situations, where a lightning flash gives a sudden illumination of some dark corner of their personality.

His short story 'The Mark-2 Wife' first published in book form in *The Ballroom of Romance and Other Stories*, 1972, gives vivid description of solitude and despair behind closed doors of peoples' mind.

The story starts from the description of loneliness of the main character who thinks about her husband:

"Standing alone at the Lowhrs' party, Anna Mackintosh thought about her husband Edward, establishing him clearly for this purpose in her mind's eye".

The story 'The Mark-2 Wife' detail after detail undercovers the emotional obsession of a childless lonely woman who is uncertain about her husband and future of her family. The author uses interior monologue to show her condition:

> *Anna had often* ***dreamed of the girl****. She had seen her, dressed all in purple, with slim hips and a purple bow in her black hair. She had seen the two of them together in a speedboat, the beautiful young creature laughing her head off like a figure in an advertisement. She had talked for many hours to Dr Abbatt about her, and Dr Abbatt had made the point that the girl was* ***simply an obsession****. '****It's just a little nonsense,'*** *he had said to her kindly, more than once. Anna knew in her calmer moments that it was just a little nonsense, for Edward was always kind and had never ceased to say he loved her. But in bad moments she argued against that conclusion, reminding herself that other kind men who said they loved their wives often made off with something new. Her own marriage being childless would make the whole operation simpler.*[58]

The main heroin feels guilt that she could not deliver the baby to her husband *and "She believed she had failed him because he had wished for children and she had not been able to supply any"*[59]. These thoughts always tortured her.

> *"I'll wear* ***the blue****, she thought, for she liked the colour better than any other: it suggested* ***serenity*** *to her, and the idea of serenity,* ***especially as a quality in herself, was something she valued.*** *She had said as much to Dr Abbatt, who had*

58 The Mark-2 Wife. Collected Stories, Volumes 1 and 2. Penguin Books 2009

59 Ibid.

agreed that serenity was something that should be important in her life".

The author tries to show the character of the main protagonist through the color she liked. It is well known particular color is associated with a certain characteristic. The blue color suggests serenity that means in ABBYY linguo dictionary: *state or quality of being serene 2) (often capital) a title of honour used of certain royal personages: preceded by his, her, etc,syn. clarity, clearness.*

So this color symbolizes purity, innocence and cleanness of the main character.

Moreover further in the story, the author exposes the psychological condition of a desperate middle-aged woman. The rhetorical questions running through her mind makes a reader feel the sympathy to her problem. As the story makes clear, she is on the edge of nervous breakdown:

> *'Help? In God's name, how can I be helped? How can two elderly strangers help me when* ***my husband gives me up****? What kind of help? Would you give me money – an income, say? Or offer me some other husband?* ***Would you come to visit me and talk to me so that I shouldn't be lonely?*** *Or strike down my husband, General, to show your disapproval? Would you scratch out the little girl's eyes for me, Mrs Ritchie? Would you slap her brazen face?'*[60]

In the party, looking for her husband, she behaves as lunatic, and seeks help, some eager to help, seeing her condition, others are rather indifferent:

> *'The woman's a stranger to us. She should regulate her life and have done with it. She has no right to bother people.'* [61]

[60] The Mark-2 Wife. Collected Stories, Volumes 1 and 2. Penguin Books 2009

[61] ibid

Being out of her mind, thinking about her husband's betrayal, family go to ruin, no chance to have a baby girl - her dream and obsession, Anna finds reconciliation calling to her psychiatrist:

> *She knew, as she sat there, that she couldn't help herself and that as long as she lived with Edward she wouldn't be able to do any better.* ***'I have lost touch with reality,'*** *she said. 'I shall let him go, as a bird is released. In my state how can I have rights?' ...* ***she was taking matters into her own hands, she was acting positively – rejecting, not being rejected herself. Her marriage was ending cleanly and correctly***[62].

Hence, loneliness and despair in family, reflected in this story is tragic and common for many women. Nevertheless the end of the story is optimistic, Anna finds strength to come to life.

3.2 Solitude and injured lives in the "A Bit on the Side" Collection of short stories

We think the William Trevor's short story collection **"A Bit on the Side"** - his 11th,published in 2004 as good as ever and as recognisable as ever - has the wrong title. He's chosen it from a story of muted London adultery, in which the inconclusive lovers part for no very good reason, sad, but sustained by how well they've behaved and by "the delicacy of their reticence"[63]. Though not the strongest story in the collection, it displays all the "delicacy" and wisdom we've come to expect from Trevor, and to praise in him, over many years. Perhaps he chose the teasing, slangy title as a way of resisting the rather deadening, pious genuflections we reserve for our literary monuments, whom we'd like to think of as venerable and benign.

[62] The Mark-2 Wife. Collected Stories, Volumes 1 and 2. Penguin Books 2009

[63] ibid

Trevor is not a benign writer. There has always been a frightening, uncomfortable, cruel side to his work, particularly in his sensationalist appetite (which he shares with one of his great predecessors, Elizabeth Bowen, who gets a mention here) for seedy criminals, sadists, and confidence-tricksters. In this volume, some tame jackdaws have their necks wrung, a girl pushes her mother's lover down two flights of stairs, a maniac pursues his estranged wife with a fantasy of revenge, and a con man replies to a series of lonely-hearts ads to get himself a driver and a free meal. These distressing inventions deal in festering anger and injured lives: *"A man who was hurt was what he'd seemed to be"*

But above all they deal in solitude, and how people try to break through it. In the story called "Solitude" (which I wish had been the title story), the daughter who has witnessed her wealthy mother's love affair and caused the lover's death spends much of her adult life with her parents (reconciled for her sake), wandering from one European hotel to another (like the parents in The Story of Lucy Gault , but these have kept, not lost, their daughter). After their deaths, she feels the need to confess her history to strangers she meets. Most people recoil from the truth, since (in one of the baroque phrases Trevor sometimes allows himself): *"Dark nourishes light's triumphant blaze, but who should want to know?"* At least once she finds absolution, and keeps this as an inner consolation for her solitude, as, in childhood, she once confided in her imaginary companions.

That need to confess, that difficulty in telling the whole truth, and that longing to be relieved of utter loneliness (perhaps the writer's ultimate motives) are the themes that beat through this book. There are, poignantly, a number of widowed characters who now have to look after themselves, with no one to talk to: *"He had never become used to the emptiness of this return to his garden and his house, and he supposed he never would."* There are people who have never said what they wanted to say, and are committed to life-long reserve, living in the "aftermath" of a life not worth telling, or not explaining the most important emotion of their lives "because there was too little to explain, not too much".

As the Russian novelist was the inspiration for Trevor's marvellous novella Reading Turgenev, so Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier - the saddest story, told by a narrator who can never quite explain or understand it all - is the guiding spirit for these tales. In one of the best, "Sitting with the Dead", the long cruelty and strangeness - and inexplicable trace of residual love - of a harsh, claustrophobic marriage is narrated by a recently widowed woman to two do-gooding Catholic sisters who make a life's work of "sitting with the dead". But they understand little of what they have heard.

In that story and elsewhere, some of the deepest of these solitudes are lived out in provincial Ireland, Trevor's habitual terrain. As in Lucy Gault , this is an Ireland that is changing, but not for these characters. A priest who has lost his authority and his congregation finds his only solace in the devoted presence in his church of a backward, illiterate local girl. A young man with a talent for carving saints has to find work lettering gravestones. There's no future in Ireland now for employment or consolation from "the holy world that was lost". The stories where Trevor seems most at home are set in the Irish past, or what feels like the past: the rural couple who try, unsuccessfully, to emigrate to America rather than settling on an uncle's run-down farm; the scullery maid from over the mountain who once hears the visiting Italian dancing-master's music played in the drawing room of the Big House and never forgets it.

No one does these time-trapped scenarios better (not even John McGahern), like the uncle's terrible, mouldering farmhouse ("old bedsteads blocked the holes in the hedges, there was a taste of turf on the water you drank") or the dingy window displays in the small town's main street: *"A fine dust had gathered on the dry goods in MacGlashan's, on packets of Barry's tea and the advertisements for Bisto and chicken-and-ham paste."*

"You were meant for other times", a priest says to the carver of sacred statues. As a new kind of Irish fiction - international, postmodernist, multiracial, secular - takes over, there's a danger that, for all the lambent depth, beauty and

tenderness of his writing, Trevor's Ireland, preserved in the amber of exile, is coming to seem distant and marginal - a bit on the side?

And although Trevor's writing is frequently admired - and rightly so - for its precision of style, its sensitivity to nuance of character and setting, and its subtle sense of comic irony, Trevor has always worked inside the mainstream tradition of fiction written out of strong moral commitments, and it is ultimately the moral dimension of his work, the complex vision of contemporary life generated by both an advocacy of Forster's principle of compassion and connection and a counterpointing, realistic assessment of contemporary society as alienated and disconnected, that makes him a writer of considerable significance, on both sides of the Irish Sea and on both sides of the Atlantic. The view of Trevor as chiefly a chronicler of losers, an ironist working out a vision of despair, has unfortunately tended to stick. It is, however far too reductive to account for either the range of subject-matter in Trevor's writing or the breadth and complexity of his moral vision. Trevor has, for example, written at least as much about middle-class life in prosperous London suburbs as about lonely, alienated men and women wasting away in London bed-sitters or provincial Irish towns. He has written extensively about love and marriage, especially among the middle class, and some of his best work has to do with women and the elderly from various strata of society. His work encompasses both Irish and English life, and within the Irish tradition, he has written with equal authority about Protestant Ireland and Catholic Ireland. And he has frequently written out of a commitment to address some of the most pressing political and social issues of his day, especially in his native Ireland.

Many of the formal qualities of Trevor's novels, including their frequent use of juxtaposition and parallelism, are particularly suited to the short story, and Trevor's work in this genre can hardly be overestimated. Falling somewhere between the radical experimentalisrn of high modernist writers and the more or less traditional methods of the realistic short story, Trevor's stories depend heavily on suggestion, irony, and cinematic juxtaposition. Of the characters: ‘the mind of the characters. In thematic terms, they tend to be relatively bleak; characters in

them rarely discover the means to overcome their feelings of alienation or the crippling illusions that they rely on to mask their inadequacies, and so there is little promise of moral redemption.

The most striking of these narrative strategies is the use of multiple centres of consciousness. Trevor's fiction tends to be constructed of many segments, each of which is associated with one character, or dominated by one character's perception. The result is a mosaic of different points of view, relying heavily on juxtaposition and parallelism […] Trevor uses multiple centres of consciousness to shift back and forth between an interior view of a character and various exterior views, and therefore to negotiate between sympathy and irony, intimacy and distance, and, in larger terms, affirmation and qualification. Characters in them tend to be not only alienated and disconnected, but also rarely able to discover the means to break out of their social and moral estrangement, or to overcome the crippling illusions with which they mask their inadequacies.

Certainly the characters in Trevor's stories - from Mr Jeffs to Nancy Simpson, from Malcolmson to Polly Dillard - are well-acquainted with that aspect of human nature [i.e., loneliness], moving as they continue through alienated and alienating worlds, and trailing behind them, as one character in a late story puts it, "such tales of woe."[64]'

3.3 Exhausted identities in William Trevor's short story "Lost Ground"

We form a rudimentary notion of selfhood in the early stages of our development. Integral to this development is our presence within a family unit. Our families provide a safe haven within which we can express for the first time the vagaries of our personalities. However, the community of the family unit is not just responsible for supporting and therefore bolstering our sense of identity. It can also serve to influence that sense of identity, whether to criticise it or push it towards change. Yet the dynamic of the family unit is not the only factor that wields

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[64] Allen Barra. The Dark Corners of Daily Beings. Metro Publishing, Inc. 1996

influence over our senses of self. The intricacies of the family unit are in constant correspondence with outside influences, be they societal, political, semantic, patriarchal tendencies, or whatever. This correspondence between the senses of self we construct of our own volition and those which are created for us by outside influences is not always harmonious.

With its potential for the demystification of "reality," literature serves to demonstrate the way in which individual identity can struggle to swim against the tide of collective identity which is pressed against it. Whilst both texts clearly host their own respective identity crises, the authors remain unflinchingly astute in their treatment of them, allowing the reader to recognise the often veiled and insidious forces at work in the constitution of identity. The systems which restrict the organic emergence of identity are the linguistic and ideological structures with which we are forced to express ourselves. We can only resort to the realm of language, the only means we have of attempting to ascribe identity to ourselves. Language is used as the filter through which we distil the essence of our beings. We negotiate within the realm of language—psychological, social, familial, regional, ethnic, gender, geographical and biological identities. Jacques Lacan eloquently describes the constant tension which exists between the identity language actually describes and that which we seek to describe: "it is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that confirms what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that which I speak" [65]

Language is inherently flawed because words have no intrinsic meaning; they are, as Ferdinand de Saussure observed "unmotivated signs"[66]. The linguistic system only works because of a system of differences which have become naturalised. The meanings of words are therefore relational and cannot be defined in isolation. Words only acquire authority as part of the syntagmatic chain. The meanings of words are dependent not only on their difference from other words to

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[65] Lacan, Jacques, 1977. *Écrits: A Selection*. Great Britain: Tavistock Publications Ltd.p. 182
[66] De Saussure, Ferdinand, 1983. *Course in General Linguistics*: translated and annotated by Roy Harris. Guildford: Biddles Ltd..p 69

elicit signification but also on their context. Although this system facilitates communication, it can also, by its very nature, prove to be quite hermetically closed. The overall composition of language and its detachment from reality leaves it vulnerable both to attack and colonisation by coercive forces.

Jacques Derrida identifies this aspect of language as logocentrism. He is opposed to logocentricity as he believes it places limits on the potentiality of meaning. His work *Writing and Difference* dispenses with all the ambiguity and enigma often associated with his work and proclaims that “language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique”[67] (Derrida 2006, 358).

However, to disentangle language completely from the logocentric system is a very difficult task. It involves moving beyond philosophy and tradition and is much more difficult to conceive than is generally imagined by those who think they made it long ago with cavalier ease, and who in general are swallowed up in metaphysics in the entire body of discourse which they claim to have disengaged from.

Derrida’s method of decentring—what he famously describes as deconstruction—provides a partial solution. It does not manage to distance itself completely from language but it does endeavour to disassemble the constituent elements—the nerves, sinews, muscles, as it were—that form the body of language and the ideology it disseminates. The language crisis runs parallel to the identity crises in both of the aforementioned texts and will be revisited throughout this essay.

Language is not pure experience but a distorted reflection and distillation of that experience. Derrida posits the notion that language’s hold on reality is not as taut and steadfast as structuralists would like to believe. The application of his theories to work Trevor will enable us to appreciate the role language has to play both in jeopardising and restoring from the brink of erasure identities within both texts. Derrida’s works mark a sustained attack on the naive assumption that any

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[67] Derrida, Jacques, 2006. *Writing and Difference*. Oxon: Routledge Classics. P.359

determinate meaning can be achieved when we are immersed in the realm of language which is dominated by semantic freeplay. Crucially, Derrida's writings also sought to address the frequent singularity of the structuralist vision and voice the concerns of the identities which fall into the fissures this kind of determinism produces. In doing so, he exposed the potential of the tenets of structuralist thought to be manipulated in order to construct a power dynamic. False and often premeditated binaries were set in opposition in order for one side of the binary to assume superiority and control over the other. Derrida works to expose the manipulation of these binaries by dismantling and reconstructing them:

To deconstruct is a structuralist and anti-structuralist gesture at the same time: an edification, an artefact is taken apart in order to make the structures, the nerves, or as you say the skeletons appear, but also, simultaneously the ruinous precariousness of a formal structure that explained nothing, since it is neither a center, a principle, a force, nor even a law of events, in the most general sense of the word.[68]

This explanation of the manner in which deconstruction works, and the objectives which it seeks to achieve, is extremely dense, encapsulating in a few short lines a number of Derrida's beliefs: language is never an accurate replica of reality but merely its reflection; language feeds off a system of binaries which are inherently flawed in that they operate under a determinate belief that one side of the binary has achieved superiority over the other. This belief stems from the notion that expression relies on a 'centre' of meaning from which all other meaning emanates. Derrida questions the reliability of such system, which by its very nature erases possible meanings by imposing a false centre of meaning.

In *Writing and Difference* Derrida concedes that a centre permits the "play of its elements inside its total form"[69] however as he also observes:

The center also closes off the play which it opens up and makes possible. As center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents and elements, or terms is

[68] Derrida, Jacques, 2006. *Writing and Difference*. Oxon: Routledge Classics. P.83
[69] Ibid., 84

no longer possible. At the center, the permutation or the transformation of elements (which may of course be structures enclosed within a structure) is forbidden. (Derrida 2006, 352)

The centre ensconced within the protection of the structure becomes somehow invulnerable to attack, criticism and because of its deemed integral contribution, to the functioning of the structure: it "escapes structurality" (Derrida 2006, 352). Derrida boldly suggests in *Writing and Difference* that "the center is not the center"[70] (Derrida 2006, 352). This bold suggestion ruptures our preconceived notion of the superiority of the centre. Deconstruction endeavours to take nothing for granted. Its neutrality lies in its ambition to disengage not only concepts from one another but the language which created them from these concepts in order to discern the true inner workings of the system. Derrida vocalises this ambition in his work *Limited Inc*, in which he asserts that "deconstruction does not consist in moving from one concept to another, but in reversing and displacing a conceptual order as well as the nonconceptual order with which it is articulated"[71](Derrida 1993, 21).

William Trevor's "Lost Ground" also interrogates the potential for a subject to swim against the tide of collective identity. William Trevor's short story "Lost Ground" functions in a similar manner in that it too interrogates the elements of the equation which result in the formation of a sense of identity.

"Lost Ground" gradually yet steadily begin to undercut the influences which affect identity. In both works, meaning is dislocated from the safe haven of authority it has cultivated for itself. Displaying many similarities to Brendan Kennelly's *Cromwell*, both works are executed in a manner which "aggressively resists generic categorizations"[72] (McDonagh 2003, 322).

Trevor's "Lost Ground" weaves into the fabric of the text a hybrid of postcolonial and postmodernist concepts. In fact, the text may be said to marry the

[70] Derrida, Jacques, 2006. *Writing and Difference*. Oxon: Routledge Classics. P.359

[71] Ibid., p. 360

[72] McDonagh, John, 2003. 'Blitzophrenia: Brendan Kennelly's Post-Colonial Vision' in the *Irish University Review*. Dublin: Colourbooks Ltd.

two in order to extrapolate meaning and incite questioning. In the first instance, it foregrounds Milton's character, the colonial other of the text. The story delves further into the intricacies and vicissitudes of Milton's identity and in so doing documents his struggle to form a sense of personal identity which is not invaded by the notion of a collective national identity. Milton plays a pivotal role within the text; his character functions on a symbolic level to represent the struggle of the individual identity to assert its authority amid a staunchly held collective identity.

Milton is a member of the Leeson family. The story quickly moves to establish a domesticated rural setting in Co. Armagh. The influence of Milton's family upon his character is made clear in subtle yet unmistakable ways from the outset. The centrality of the family unit is symbolised by the physical dimensions of the house. The house and its environs are demarcated by the text as indicating and "reflecting the hard-working Protestant family the Lessons were" (Trevor 1996, 150). The table around which they sit to have their meals—*"an oak table, matching the proportions of the room, dominated its centre"*[73] (Trevor 1996, 150)—has been in the family for generations. The table may be said to represent the fact that Milton's family's beliefs stand at the centre, stabilising his identity and the identity of all the family members in the direction which it deems appropriate. The table which lies at the heart of the family is reminiscent of Derrida's concept of the centre; the family becomes a microcosm which transcends its "Leeson territory" (Trevor 1996, 150).

One day while out in his father's orchard, Milton sees an apparition. At first, the story disorientates the reader into thinking that the apparition may have been a dream, like the dream he had about one of the local girls. However, while we initially dismiss the apparition as a product of puberty and Milton's burgeoning sense of manhood, it quickly becomes apparent that this is not the case: "the next morning the dream quickly faded to nothing, but the encounter with the stranger

[73] Trevor, William, 1996. *After Rain*. London: Penguin.2003

remained with Milton"[74]. The lady which appears to Milton in the orchard claims to be St Rosa and gives Milton the following instruction: *"'Don't be afraid,' she said, 'when the moment comes. There is too much fear'[75]"* (Trevor 1996, 153). In the meantime, we encounter Milton's brother Garfield: [I]n Belfast Garfield was more than just a butcher's assistant. Garfield had a role among the Protestant paramilitaries, being what he himself called a "hard-man volunteer" in an organisation intent on avenging the atrocities of the other side. The tit-for-tat murders spawned by that same hard-man mentality, the endless celebration of a glorious past on one side and the picking over of ancient rights on the other, the reluctance to forgive.

As the story progresses we receive a more vivid introduction to the manner in which the family is coloured ideologically. They proudly march "bowler-hatted and sashed" to celebrate "King William's famous victory over Papist James in 1690"[76] (Trevor 1996, 156). While Milton participates, the text appears to suggest that there is something ineffectual about his contribution:

"before Garfield had gone to Belfast he'd marched also, the best on the flute for miles around. Milton marched, but didn't play an instrument because he was tone-deaf"[77].

Milton is troubled by the memory of his encounter with the woman. He finds himself at an impasse as he is unable to unburden himself to his family. It is intimated by the text that he fears their response. Such is the extent of the family's immersion in their particular ideology, Milton cannot unburden himself to his mother: "it seemed wrong that his mother, who knew everything about him [. . .] shouldn't have been confided in"[78] (Trevor 1996, 157). Instead, Milton tells his brother-in-law, and, later, a Catholic priest of his experience. However, neither of

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[74] William Trevor. Collection of short stories. http://www.npr.org/2011/01/10/132804604/william-trevor-a-short-story-masters-life-work.

[75] ibid

[76]William Trevor: A Sculptor of Words. http://irishamerica.com/2009/10/william-trevor-a-sculptor-of-words/

[77] ibid

[78] William Trevor. Collection of short stories. http://www.npr.org/2011/01/10/132804604/william-trevor-a-short-story-masters-life-work

the people he confides in are able to look beyond the divide which separates them: He had been affronted by the visit, but he didn't let it show. Why should a saint of his Church appear to a Protestant boy in a neighbourhood that was overwhelmingly Catholic, when there were so many Catholics to choose from?[79]

This divide is the result of a collective identity which had been cultivated by both sides to differentiate themselves from each other. These collective identities are based on exclusion, the rendering of another identity as other, and do not reflect the communality of human experience.

Instead, these collective identities are based on artificially constructed, rigid notions of what it means to belong to a particular group. John McDonagh in his article 'Blitzophrenia' traces the significance of these "plastic pictures." In the case of Ireland's construction of the concept of nation, McDonagh comments that One of the most enduring "external plastic pictures" of Ireland was portrayed by Eamon de Valera after the end of the Second World War, when in response to Winston Churchill's thinly veiled criticism of the Free State's official neutrality, he declared that despite being 'clubbed into insensitivity' over 'several hundred years' Ireland 'stood alone against aggression' and emerged as 'a small nation that could never be got to accept defeat and has never surrendered her soul'[80].

This idea of the "soul" is very important according to McDonagh, and liberates Ireland to apportion credence to its means of attaining freedom, because the end, the preservation of Ireland's "soul," is seen as justifying the means, whether violence or death. However, this idea of the "soul" of a nation's identity is not exclusive to the Republic of Ireland. Trevor's "Lost Ground" illustrates that the preservation of a nation's soul was used as a means of justification on both sides of the divide.

Garfield acts as the guardian of this "soul"; therefore his role is valid because it has been inherited from the past and deemed natural and pre-ordained.

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[79] ibid

[80] McDonagh, John, 2003. 'Blitzophrenia: Brendan Kennelly's Post-Colonial Vision' in the *Irish University Review*. Dublin: Colourbooks Ltd.

McDonagh asserts that Kennelly also acknowledges in his epic poem *Cromwell* the damage which a notion of collective yet exclusive identity was capable of eliciting: "In *Cromwell,* Kennelly does not shirk from highlighting the violence committed by both sides in Ireland's sectarian conflict"[81] (McDonagh 2003, 329).

"Lost Ground" illustrates the extremes which can be resorted to in order to preserve a sense of identity. When Milton eventually reveals his experience to his family and tells them he wishes to preach, they lock him up in their house. His perceived insanity is seen as a threat of their cultural image and identity. His mother banishes all of her maternal sentiments, such is the extent of her disgust: "'Shame?' Milton said when his mother employed the word. 'On all of us, Milton'" (Trevor 1996, 173). The text performs a relentless emasculation of his character. Hysteria and insanity were stereotypically feminine phenomenon in 1847. Milton's "femininity" threatens the masculine ideal which is asserted throughout the text.

It is intimated in "Lost Ground" that Garfield murdered his brother in order to erase thethreat which he posed: Looking at him across the open grave, Hazel suddenly knew. In ignorance she had greeted him an hour ago in the farmhouse……The shame had been exorcized, silence silently agreed upon[82]. Unsurprisingly, it is Milton's sister who draws this conclusion—someone who has shunned contact with her family because she fears the strength of ideology. Her femininity, against stereotype and convention, offers clarity and reason, as opposed to the absence of logic with which she would typically be associated. Her enforced silence within the story screams with significance. An immediate affinity is evident between Hazel and her brother. To what extent did Milton's sojourn into the realm of "femininity" and sensibility offer him clarity? Why was Milton viewed as such a liability?

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[81] McDonagh, John, 2003. 'Blitzophrenia: Brendan Kennelly's Post-Colonial Vision' in the *Irish University Review*. Dublin: Colourbooks Ltd.

[82] ibid

The story's title and conclusion offer insight in this regard. By the story's denouement it is clear that Milton is the "Lost Ground" of the story's title. "Milton had disobeyed"[83] in that he dared to venture outside of the territory which validated the preservation of collective identity in an unquestioning manner. Poignantly, his character acts as a sacrificial victim illustrating the result of privileging national identity over personal or familial identity. The Leesons may believe that "Milton's death was the way things were, the way things had to be: that was their single consolation. Lost ground had been regained"[84]. However, the story begs the question—at what expense has lost ground been regained? Does the end indeed justify the means or is the end a phantasm as unattainable as the myth of identity which lies at its ideological centre?

"Lost Ground" pose two very important questions which continue to trouble us long after we have finished reading. Who gives credence to and sanctions the validity of ideology? Which "souls" do we treasure? These are questions crucial to an understanding of the crisis of identity; they demonstrate literature's ability to raise concerns in a manner which precipitates further probing and investigation.

CONCLUSION OF THE 3RD CHAPTER

In the stories of William Trevor, quite ordinary characters face extraordinary tribulations. In "Lost Ground," from his new collection, *After Rain*, a Protestant farmer boy is kissed by what is apparently the ghost of a female Catholic spirit, beginning a chain of events that ends in tragedy.

[83] Wiliam T. "Lost Ground". Penguin.P2004.p180

[84] ibid. p180

Trevor never seeks out the melodramatic or even the dramatic effect. His sensibility, seemingly influenced by Chekhov, prefers the pursuit, capture and dissection of the ordinariness of life, and his method, entirely his own, places his ordinary characters in extraordinary situations, where a lightning flash gives a sudden illumination of some dark corner of their personality.

We aren't always certain of what the characters' reactions are--they aren't always sure themselves. Lives are touched, changed; the world moves on. Often, the characters are not even aware of how incidents changed their lives until years later.

The lonely, repressed spinsters, salesmen and shopkeepers who inhabit Trevor's stories resemble what people in Hitchcock movies would be like if they didn't get the clues. In "A Bit of Business," two punkish, smalltime thieves rob an old man in his home. Neither has the stomach for killing him, and for 10 astonishingly suspenseful pages, they debate whether or not to go back and finish the job. The story leaves "both of them wondering if the nerve to kill was something you acquired"--and, of course, leaves us wondering the same thing.

FINAL CONCLUSION

This research paper was aimed to investigate the problems behind closed doors in W. Trevor’s short stories

The author of 10 novels and dozens of plays for stage, radio and television, in addition to the scores of short stories that have won some of Britain's top literary

prizes through the years, will share the stage with Edna O'Brien, who will read from her new story collection, "Lantern Slides," in the closing session of the Y's Irish Literature Festival.

Trevor, who was born in Ireland, has had a home in England through most of his adult life and is often described as an Anglo-Irish writer. But he says he finds the English "rather strange people" and thinks an advantage of living in England is that "it is sometimes easier to write about your own people from a foreign country." In fact, he is breaking his usual rule against giving public readings because "this is an Irish festival, and I thought I would like to do this one."

When it comes to rewriting stories, he does them over completely, from beginning to end - "you can't tinker with sentences or paragraphs in a story" - typing them on colored paper before he sends them to a typist who produces a copy in black and white. "They look different that way," he said. "You get a different view of them."

On novels he works "like a movie maker, cutting and splicing and pasting things in." But novels seem to annoy him. "I think of myself as a story writer who also writes novels," he said. "My novels just won't be maneuvered into short stories. I start writing away, and sometimes I find myself, to my considerable horror, in the midst of a novel."

In part, he resents the time a novel takes when stories keep bubbling up. For, even though he insists he is "a very lazy person," the stories are compulsive. "If one wants to be written, it must be done. They're insistent. I can't make them go away." Nor can he stop to think about the course they may take. "To me, being a writer is like being an athlete. You can't pause to analyze the game while you're in it."

Where the stories come from he generally does not know, and he is reluctant to tamper with the springs of his imagination to find out. By now he has created many hundreds of vividly realized characters in stories notable for an almost Elizabethan richness of detail. Often it is something he observes or a remark he overhears that will start him off.

But that is only a nudge, "that first little wrench out of reality that's needed," he said. "That's where observation is useful." He has even been wrenched out of reality and into a story by a few of his own dreams. "It doesn't really matter how a story starts; it's how you cultivate it that counts, like gardening."

In praising "Family Sins & Other Stories" in her review in The New York Times, Michiko Kakutani wrote that "decisive moments define the the lives of almost all of Mr. Trevor's characters, dividing their lives into an after and a before, a now and a then. The line of demarcation in a character's life has less to do with the loss of love than with the loss of innocence -something happens to fundamentally change how an individual sees himself or his family or a friend; and in the wake of that revelation, his entire relationship to the world is altered.

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