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Auszug aus:

"Mother" von Grace Paley

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Thema:	Grace Paley – Mother
TMD: 36343	
Kurzvorstellung des Materials:	<p>Grace Paley was a celebrated writer and social activist whose short stories explored in precise, pungent and tragicomic style the struggles of ordinary women muddling through everyday lives.¹</p> <p>Paley's output was modest, some four dozen stories in three volumes: "The Little Disturbances of Man" (Doubleday, 1959); "Enormous Changes at the Last Minute" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974); and "Later the Same Day" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985).²</p>
Übersicht über die Teile	<p>Interpretation, additional remarks</p> <p>(Ohne Primärtext!)</p>
Information zum Dokument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ca. 6 Seiten
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¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/23/books/23cnd-paley.html>

² Ibid.

Interpretation

In this material, the work “Mother” by Grace Paley is analyzed. “Mother” was published in 1959 as a part of the collection of short stories called “The Little Disturbances of Man”.

In the beginning of an interpretation, it is important to start with an introductory sentence, which should contain the following general information: name of the author, title of the text and the literary genre.

As an abstract, the short story is told by a person, who remembers his or her mother. Flashbacks make the narrator talk about the own dead mother. Several situations are suggestive of the ‘mother’ and the special bond between him/her and the narrator. The story reflects the family life of the narrator.

It is useful to explain in a few sentences what the short story is about. After that, one should analyze the short story step by step in a more detailed way.

The short story begins with a special situation. The story-teller remembers “one day” (p. 50, l. 1) when he “was listening to the AM radio” (ibid). The song he hears – it must be said that the reader does not know whether the narrative I refers to a male or a female narrator, therefore this analysis will say ‘he’ as a matter of routine and simplification – reminds him of his mother because it is called “Oh, I Long to See My Mother in the Doorway” (p. 50, ll. 1f). This phrase seems to be the central statement of the whole text because it functions as a kind of title for every little situation the narrator tells the audience. He picks up the title of the song and alters it in various ways. After the sentence “As a matter of fact, she did stand frequently in various doorways looking at me” (p.50, ll. 6f) one flashback after another comes up. Thus, the first sentences up to line 7 can be considerate as an introductory and foreshadowing part for the whole story.

This first paragraph goes into the first lines of the text. Most beginnings of short fictions give introductory information for the whole story. This information can be used for the analysis. So does “Mother” work: Lines 1-7 seem to mirror the whole further story. Thus, this part of the analysis refers to the beginning of the short story.

The recurrent topic of the story seems to be the concern of the mother. Within the flashbacks, the mother is worried about the narrator: “If you come home at 4 a.m. when you’re seventeen, what time will you come home when you’re twenty?” (p. 50, ll. 9-11) or “What will become of you?” (p. 50, ll. 21f.). Furthermore the first-person narrator seems to be sure about the fact that his mother will not live much longer and that this is the reason for her worries. After the first flashback, he concludes: “She had begun her worried preparations for death” (p. 50, l. 12). Thus, the reader gets to know quite soon about the passed mother. First, it is a subconscious feeling because the narrator reminisces about his mother, then he talks about her death and finally he ends with the sentence “Then she died” (p. 50, l. 23), which stands for itself and, therefore, comes along with an even more impressive meaning. The following sentence mirrors the wish of the first-person narrator to see his mother again and refers to the beginning: “Naturally for the rest of my life I longed to see her, not only in doorways [...]” (p. 50, ll. 24f.). With this second aspect the whole meaning of the story falls into place. On the one hand, “Mother” is a story about the love of a mother and the misunderstandings as well as the irritated behavior of the child in reaction of this love and concern. But on the other hand, the story is about a child, who realizes too late how important the bond is between mother and child. So “Mother” plays with a mixture of feelings: nostalgia, regret, misunderstanding, love,



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