Portfolio sehr guter und guter Hausarbeiten
British and Postcolonial Studies

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Subjects

Semester

A Deconstructive Reading

of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

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1. Reading *Jane Eyre* against its ostensible realism

Unfolding as a kind of autobiography in which retrospective sense is made of earlier experiences, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is predominantly referred to as being written in the mode of a realist novel (cf. Smith 76). As the storyline follows Jane's development from childhood into adulthood, precisely describing a pattern of personal growth through various ups and downs of life in the sense of a Bildungsroman (Cuddon 77), the mode of writing evokes the impression of authentically mirroring reality, creating one of the most essential characteristics of realist novels: a "lifelike illusion" (Palmer 491). As Cuddon stresses, "The use of the terms 'real' and 'realistic' clearly implies their antitheses, like 'unreal', 'unrealistic', 'fantastic', 'improbable', 'fanciful', 'of the dream world'" (591), excluding those elements from the realm of realistic storytelling.

Looking at the text more closely, however, a whole set of elements can be found which harshly contradict the dominant genre conventions. I contend that the ostensibly realistic plot construction of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* depends on supernatural elements deriving from the Gothic which are crucial for the storyline's development. Central plot elements without which the development of the heroine Jane could not progress are in fact unrealistic constructions, contradicting the principles of a unified realist text. Jane's successful development from a dependent lower middle class orphan to a member of the educated professional middle class and finally, the gentry, may be embedded in what appears to be a 'realistic' story. The exposure of Gothic elements, however, which function as a link of central plot elements, reveals its inherently 'unrealistic' character. Referring to 'Gothic elements', I rely on Cuddon's definition of Gothic fiction as:

> ... tales of mystery and horror [which] contain a strong element of the supernatural and have all or most of the now familiar topography, sites, props, presences and happenings: wild and desolate landscapes, dark forests, ... , feudal halls ... with dungeons, secret passages, winding stairways, oubliettes, ... a stupefying atmosphere of doom and gloom; ... demonic powers ... and a proper complement of spooky effects and clanking spectres. [Furthermore, they contain] the metaphysical and the preternatural, and also ... such matters as madness. (325)

Apart from these principles, Gothic fiction is generally connected to the evolution of the ghost story (cf. Cuddon 325) and often makes free use of supernatural encounters with ghosts and demonic creatures. The context in which Gothic fiction mostly integrates the defined principles is to create an atmosphere of suspense and terror. As I am going to show, within the ostensibly 'realistic' plot construction of *Jane Eyre* they fulfil the distinct function of making the improbable possible by enabling Jane to advance into the gentry.

Methodologically, I am going to combine two theoretical approaches in order to underpin my thesis and to explore what can be seen as one possible interpretation of my findings. Firstly and predominantly, I shall undertake a deconstructive reading of the text in the tradition of post-structuralist criticism. Instead of assuming an underlying unity of the text, I am going to analyse it with the aim of unmasking internal contradictions and finally, exposing its disunity. Practising what Barry refers to as "oppositional reading" (74), I shall read the text against itself. For my reading of *Jane Eyre*, this approach mainly implies that I am going to read it against its ostensible construction as a realist novel, uncovering its dependency on elements of the Gothic. Of the three stages of the deconstructive process which Barry suggests, my analysis ultimately relies on what he refers to as the "textual stage" (76). Barry defines the task of the critic in this stage as " ... looking for shifts or breaks in the continuity [which] reveal instabilities of attitude, and hence the lack of a fixed and unified position" (76). In this sense, I am going to focus on the analysis of shifts and breaks in genre conventions in *Jane Eyre*, taking a broad view on the text as a whole and moving beyond individual phrases. My analysis of shifts and breaks shall be reduced to two main aspects: **(1)** Not all breaks with the genre conventions of realist novels that can be found in *Jane Eyre* derive from the Gothic. In fact, quite a few of them rather match the genre conventions of the Romance. In my analysis, however, I am going to focus on the elements of Gothic fiction and try to take them into account in more detail, instead of looking at breaks in the sense of various different genre conventions. **(2)** Gothic elements appear throughout the whole text quite frequently and in large numbers. Therefore, my analysis is not going to incorporate all of them and is not meant to give a full account of every single element of the Gothic that can be found in *Jane Eyre*. Instead, I shall focus on a specific selection of Gothic elements which I believe to fulfil a more general function than simply frightening the reader or creating an atmosphere of suspense. The elements of Gothic fiction which shall build the core of my analysis are those which are crucial for the development of the storyline. Functioning as elements which link central stages of Jane's development to one another on the levels of plot, setting and character, they free the text from societal boundaries which, in a 'realistic' story, would have hindered Jane from developing the way the novel suggests.

Deconstructive approaches such as the one which I have outlined do not go beyond the level of dismantling text-inherent contradictions. Therefore, I shall incorporate a second theoretical approach in order to be able to interpret my findings. Since most of the crucial Gothic elements in *Jane Eyre* are directly connected to incidents of female distress

in various forms, I am going to apply feminist criticism for this step. Taking on the viewpoint of a feminist critic, I shall interpret the Gothic elements that I have identified according to questions of gender. In this sense, feminist criticism can serve as a practical extension of my primarily post-structuralist and deconstructive approach. It is, however, important to keep in mind that just as various aspects of texts are privileged by specific approaches, selecting a particular theoretical approach generally involves "neglecting or entirely disregarding others" (Nünning and Nünning 43). Thus, the selection of feminist criticism as an approach to the interpretation involves the neglect of a detailed interpretation of aspects concerned with, for instance, questions of class or race, which could turn out to be equally productive. The definition of feminist criticism that I rely on is basically made up by what Baldick defines as "the arena of debate about ... the socio-cultural subordination borne by women as writers, readers, or fictional characters within a male-dominated ('patriarchal') social order" (138). Of these three defined roles in which women can appear, my focus shall primarily lie on the latter, investigating the representation of femininity in fictional female characters in *Jane Eyre*. Based on feminist criticism, my interpretation comprises an examination of gender-related power relations, intending to show the "extent of patriarchy" in *Jane Eyre*, as well as challenging representations of women as "Other" (Barry 135). It is limited to the elements of Gothic fiction which I have identified in the process of deconstructing the text.

Whenever appropriate, elements of Narratology shall be taken into account for my analysis. For all analytical terms, I am going to follow Nünning's and Nünning's (2014) definitions of terminology.

2.   Breaks with realist genre conventions in *Jane Eyre* and their compensation with elements of Gothic fiction

Relating narrative texts to larger containing structures, literary critics who take on a structuralist approach seek to show textual unity and coherence (cf. Barry 75). Analysing a literary work relating to a particular literary genre, for instance, structuralist critics read the given text in accordance with particular conventions that belong to the chosen genre, resulting in an image of a unified text. Hence, asserting that Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is a realist novel (cf. Smith 76) is a structuralist claim. It implies the notion that the mode of writing in *Jane Eyre* coherently follows a set of conventions which belong to the realm of realism. As Nünning (2000) stresses, six characteristics form the basic principles of realist novels: **(1)** The use of mimesis, creating verisimilitude and a 'reality effect', **(2)** a plot construction that follows the logic of cause and effect, **(3)** a character constellation of

lifelike characters with contemporaneous psychological knowledge, **(4)** a setting in place that functions as a representation of a selection from different options and contains very detailed descriptions, **(5)** a discrete and unobtrusive use of mediacy and **(6)**, a general veiling of fictionality (cf. 27). The widespread reading of *Jane Eyre* as a realist novel that successfully incorporates all of these principles and provides an accurate and confident description of reality (cf. Palmer 491) serves as my starting point for its deconstruction. I claim that the plot construction of *Jane Eyre* depends on the neglect of certain principles of realist writing and their compensation with elements of Gothic, resulting in textual disunity. Since it is my aim in this paper to read the novel against its ostensible unity, the principles and characteristics of realist writing which I shall take into account for my analysis are the ones of which I contend that the novel does not coherently integrate them. Following Nünning's suggestion for the definition of central conventions of the realist paradigm, there are two major principles which the novel violates.
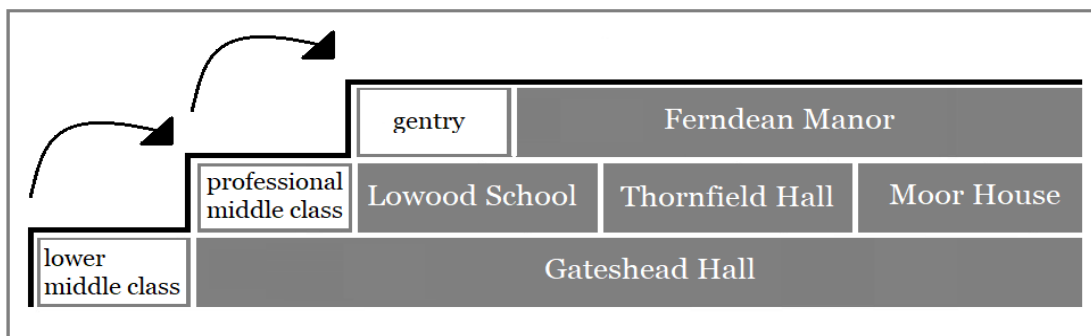
2.1   Narrative transmission: the violation of a discrete use of mediacy

The most textually explicit challenge of the realistic mode of writing in *Jane Eyre* takes place on the level of mediacy. As Nünning points out, the use of mediacy in realistic novels tends to be unobtrusive, discrete and sometimes even invisible (cf. 27), resulting in a language that seems transparent. In *Jane Eyre,* which makes use of a first-person narrative situation, the grown up Jane takes on the role of the narrating I, describing and reflecting on the story of her life which is presented through the eyes of a younger experiencing I. The text's claims to realism, however, are undermined by what Smith calls "self-conscious literary moment[s]" (76) of the narrating I which register its fictionality. First and foremost, in the opening paragraph to Chapter 11, the narrating I begins: "A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play; and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the George Inn at Millcote." (Brontë 86). In this instance, just as in numerous previous and later occasions, the narrating I breaks its otherwise discrete form of mediacy by directly addressing the reader. Over and above that, the opening paragraph of Chapter 11 is special because the story is openly referred to as being part of a novel, organised in chapters and therefore, a constructed piece of writing. Forming "extended pieces of prose fiction" (Cuddon 477), novels are ultimately defined by their affiliation to the realm of "imaginative work[s]" (Cuddon 279). Consequently, this paragraph functions not only as a break with the otherwise predominantly unobtrusive use of mediacy, but also directly challenges the text's overall reliability. This 'literary self-consciousness' suggests that although until this point the

readers may have been beguiled by the apparent realism of Jane's tale, "they now need to engage with the fundamentally fictive, and therefore inherently symbolic nature of the text" (Smith 76). Smith claims that by emphasising the demand to not read the novel literally or 'realistically', the narrating I directs the reader to the "symbolic moments" of the plot which are "in the main generated by the Gothic subtexts" (Smith 76). In this regard, it is crucial to notice that the inclusion of 'unrealistic' elements in the text does not go uncommented, but is actually narratively reflected upon. Reading the analysed paragraph as an allusion to the text's Gothic elements, it forms a very straight-forward disclosure of the text's fictionality, acknowledging how in the 19th century, supernatural elements came to inhabit ostensibly non-Gothic modes of writing (cf. Smith 75).

2.2 Plot construction: contradictions of a logic of cause and effect in the linking of central stages of Jane's development

Apart from its violation of a discrete use of mediacy, the mode of writing in *Jane Eyre* contradicts one more of Nünning's central principles of realist writing and compensates for it with Gothic elements. I contend that the most crucial steps which Jane takes on her way into the gentry only open up for her due to supernatural elements of Gothic fiction. Thus, the plot construction fails to be in accordance with a logic of cause and effect. The first step in proving this claim needs to be an identification of the central stages of Jane's development. The illustration below is meant to give a first overview.

	gentry	Ferndean Manor		
lower middle class	professional middle class	Lowood School	Thornfield Hall	Moor House
		Gateshead Hall		

As the illustration shows, Jane's upward mobility generally comprises two steps which can be identified in the novel's plot construction and which correspond with changes in setting. The first step, Jane's development from a dependent lower middle class orphan without property or status to a member of the professional middle class, only enters the realm of possibility when Jane leaves Gateshead and attends Lowood School, the place where she receives an education and later, finds her first employment. Thus, Jane's transition from Gateshead to Lowood forms the first central plot element which has a crucial effect on her development. In her position as a teacher, Jane has become a member of the professional

middle class. In accordance with the feminist paradigm, this step enables her to to develop towards financial and mental independence. Hence, she is free to decide that after some years of teaching at Lowood School, she longs for change. Finding a new employment as a governess in Thornfield Hall, she meets her employer, the local landowner Rochester whom she falls in love with. Deeply disappointed, Jane leaves Thornfield Hall when she finds out about Rochester's dark secret, a previous marriage with Bertha Mason, the "mad woman in the attic" (Gilbert and Gubar 68). Working at a school at Moor House where Jane has miraculously been taken in by her only surviving relatives, St. John and his sisters, she remains within the professional middle class for some time. Jane's second crucial step, her advancement into the gentry, partly corresponds with a change in setting again. It is made possible when she leaves Moor House and is accomplished when she moves into Ferndean Manor. Her decision to go back to Rochester and to overcome her disappointment with his betrayal, however, is not the only precondition that needs to be fulfilled in order for Jane to be able to marry into the gentry.

I claim that on her way into an apparently fortunate future with Rochester, two more plot elements are necessary, both of which rely on Gothic conventions. First and foremost, Bertha Mason's self-induced death, inseparably connected to her character conception as a nightmarish and vampiric creature who is incapable of acting and hidden from the world, is essential for Jane's marriage with Rochester. Besides, Rochester's physically limited condition after the fire at Thornfield Hall matches a Gothic plot construction and enables Jane to marry him without fearing male suppression.

The plot construction of *Jane Eyre*, thus, comprises three distinct stages of the heroine's development. Between them, Jane has to ascend two crucial steps: the first one elevates her from the lower middle class into the professional middle class. The second one, comprising various preconditions, elevates her into the gentry. As I am going to show, the links between the stages of Jane's development are created using elements of Gothic fiction. Following a logic of cause and effect and thus, a realist paradigm, Jane's transition from a dependent lower middle class orphan to a member of the gentry would not be possible.

2.2.1 Gateshead's red-room

The first central plot element which has a crucial effect of Jane's development is her transition from Gateshead to Lowood. Simultaneously, the incident at Gateshead which finally leads to her registration at Lowood School, namely her incarceration in the red-room, is perhaps the first clearly Gothic plot element up until this point of the novel. After

a bloody fight with her cousin John Reed who lets no opportunity pass to make Jane's status in Gateshead clear by calling her a "dependent ... [who] ought to beg, and not live ... with gentlemen's children" (Brontë 12), Jane is shut up in the abandoned room that used to be Mr. Reed's chamber until he died in it (cf. Brontë 15). Due to its history, the red-room, although "one of the largest and stateliest chambers in the mansion" (Brontë 15), is depicted as cold, silent and dreary (cf. Brontë 15). Locked in and left alone, Jane reflects on her hopeless fate in Gateshead, when her thoughts wander to her dead uncle's spirit:

> ... as I sat looking at the white bed and overshadowed walls ... I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed; and I thought Mr. Reed's spirit ... might quit its abode ... and rise before me in this chamber. (Brontë 18).

Although Jane finds consolation with the theoretical thought of her uncle, rising from the dead to punish Mrs. Reed for treating her unjustly, she quickly feels that it would be "terrible if realised" (Brontë 18). Already at this point, the description of the red-room and Jane's thoughts are clearly interspersed with Gothic elements. Situated within a typical Gothic feudal hall, Gateshead's cold and gloomy red-room, associated with Mr. Reed's death, evokes an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. It is, however, Jane's apparent eerie encounter with her dead uncle's ghost which leads to the situation's final escalation:

> My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down – I uttered a wild, involuntary cry – I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort. (Brontë 18).

Imagining that Mr. Reed's ghost had found its way into the room, Jane calls for help and begs her aunt for escape. When Mrs. Reed refuses and shuts her up in the red-room for the entire night, Jane experiences "a species of fit" (Brontë 19) and swoons into unconsciousness. Although in the role of the narrating I, the grown-up and more experienced Jane reflects upon the incident in the reed-room as being caused by "a steak of light [which] was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern, carried by some one across the lawn" (Brontë 18) and not a ghost, it is the young Jane's belief in a supernatural encounter which finally evokes her fit and leads to the attraction of medical help. The apothecary Mr. Lloyd, sent for by Mrs. Reed to examine Jane's status the next day, turns out to be her first ally by managing to convince Mrs. Reed to send Jane to Lowood school. Without the supernatural incident in the red-room, whether it was a product of her imagination or not, Jane and Mr. Lloyd would not have met. It is, thus, the the Gothic element of the ghost which finally leads to her move to Lowood and the beginning of her arduous journey to the master bedroom of Ferndean Hall. Hence, the link between the first two stages of Jane's

development depends on the contradiction of a logic of cause and effect and its compensation with an element of Gothic fiction.

2.2.1 The voice in the moor

Despite his betrayal, it is Jane's decision to leave Moor House behind and return to Rochester that ultimately enables her to take the last step into the gentry. Thus, her determination to leave Moor House is crucial for the storyline's development and for Jane's second step upwards. In my illustration on page 5, this step is marked with the second arrow. Just like her first elevation, I contend that Jane's return to Rochester as a linking element of the plot relies upon Gothic elements.

Having lived at Moor House, where she enjoyed the feeling of integration into a family for the first time in her life, Jane is overwhelmed when St. John reveals his wish to marry her and take her with him to India on his missionary duty. As St. John urges her to consent to the union, Jane despairs at his proposal:

> ...[I] fancied myself in idea *his wife*. Oh! It would never do! As his curate, his comrade, all would be right: I would cross oceans with him in that capacity. ... my heart and mind would be free. I should still have my unblighted self to turn to: my natural unenslaved feelings ... but as his wife – always, and always restrained, and always checked – forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital – *this* would be unendurable. (Brontë 363)

While she consents to accompany St. John as his fellow missionary, Jane refuses to go with him as his wife, stressing that she loves him as a brother instead of a man (cf. Brontë 363). Comparing her life as an unmarried woman with the perspective of marriage, Jane fears exchanging her freedom, her "unblighted self" and her "unenslaved feelings" for being "restrained", "checked" and "imprisoned" (Brontë 363). Her idea of a marriage with St. John, thus, is ultimately characterised by fears of suppression and a loss of independence. St. John, noticing her distress, changes his approach when he addresses Jane again the next day. Instead of urging her, he announces to leave Moor house for a fortnight, leaving her space for reflection (cf. Brontë 372). As he says goodbye, he turns to Jane once more, embedding his wish to marry her into a piece of Godly advice. This time, Jane reacts differently. Suddenly opening up to St. John, she confides: "were I but convinced that it is God's will, I should marry you." (Brontë 373). At this point, Jane's return to Rochester seems unlikely. Following a logic of cause and effect, the future that she is about to consent to lies in India, living the life of a missionary wife at St. John's side. Just like Jane's transition to Lowood School had seemed unlikely before her supernatural encounter with a

ghost in the red-room, the following incident makes use of a Gothic element in order to break the logic of cause and effect and to bring Jane back to Rochester. As she is about to consent to St. John's proposal, she suddenly hears a voice:

> 'Jane! Jane! Jane!' nothing more. ... it did not come out of the air – nor from under the earth – nor from overhead ... And it was the voice of a human being – a known, loved, well-remembered voice – that of Edward Fairfax Rochester. (Brontë 374)

Out at Moor House where "all was moorland loneliness and midnight hush" (Brontë 374), there is no possibility for Rochester's voice to really be audible. Still, Jane is convinced that his apparent utterance is a sign of their deep connection. After this incident, she immediately decides to leave St. John and Moor House behind and leaves for Thornfield Hall the next morning. According to Lorber, Rochester's voice in the moor is special due to its genuinely supernatural character in comparison to other mysterious elements in the novel which have a natural explanation (26). I contend, however, that just as the narrative transmission has provided an explanation for Jane's apparently supernatural encounter in the red-room, Rochester's voice in the moor is also narratively explained. Just before the young Jane perceives his voice, the narrating I explains: "I was excited more than I have ever been; and whether what followed was the effect of excitement, the reader shall judge." (Brontë 373). Conspicuously, just like Jane's supernatural encounter in the red-room, her perception of Rochester's voice directly succeeds an instance of female emotional distress, caused by her confrontation with St. John. Thus, it remains unclear again whether the plot actually includes a supernatural incident in the moor or whether it was only Jane's imagination, interspersed with Gothic elements and in distress, that made her believe in it. Either way, her reunification with Rochester is only possible because of her perception of an inherently 'unrealistic' incident. Apart from leading her back to Rochester, his voice in the moor fulfils a second essential function. It saves Jane from a marriage with St. John and thereby, from the submission to a missionary wife's life in India for which she had foreseen a loss of independence and freedom.

2.2.2 Bertha Mason's self-induced death

As Talairach-Vielmas points out, "the trope of the madwoman in the attic is perhaps one of the most potent images of Gothic fiction" (32). Incidents of women hidden from the world whose suffering is veiled and who seem unable to productively influence their own fate are a reappearing motif in the realm of Gothic fiction (cf. DeLamotte 153). Constructed as "an animal, bestial" (Hoeveler 216), Bertha's character conception is clearly associated with demonic features. Jane describes her to Rochester as:

> I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face – it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments ... [T]he lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed; the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me? ... Of the foul German spectre – the Vampyre.' (249)

Confined in the attic of her husband's home, Bertha contents herself with midnight forays around the mansion. On one occasion, she lights Rochester's bed on fire, with him in it. On another occasion, she bites and tares away the skin from her brother's neck. And on a third midnight sojourn, she destroys Jane's wedding veil. As Hoeveler stresses, this portrayal implies the notion that women like Bertha Mason who have indulged their sexual passions are vampiric and in need of constant surveillance (cf. 216). Unable to speak, Bertha spends most of her time locked in the attic at Thornfield Hall and seems to have completely lost all vestiges of civility and sanity. A common interpretation of Bertha Mason is that she functions as a Gothic double of Jane, reflecting the heroine's own sense of imprisonment (cf. Talairach-Vielmas 33) and personifying Jane's aggression, her "class-based attack on a system of barter that places her, like all women, in dependent and subordinary positions." (Hoeveler 208). The recurring motif of enclosure and escape (cf. Gilbert and Gubar 341) is reminiscent of Jane's incarceration in the red-room, suggesting that although the text does not state it, Bertha must be suffering just like Jane did. In its portrayal of Bertha Mason, the novel " ... offers the reader a bleak vision of women's fate in a male-dominated world." (Talairach-Vielmas 33). After years of suffering, Bertha sets fire to Thornfield Hall, jumps off the roof of the building and dies, leaving behind a tremendous amount of money and making Rochester a free man who can marry again. In this way, the openly libidinous Bertha, the dark secret at the novel's core, is written out of existence. Constructed as a demonic creature with Gothic features, Bertha Mason has to die because she represents "what a culture is compelled to demonise because it cannot accommodate" (Smith 80). Her character conception, therefore, is ultimately connected to her death, which - enabling Jane and Rochester to marry – forms a central linking element of the plot. Beyond that, Bertha's self-induced death grants Jane and Rochester the wealth they need to finance their life at Ferndean Manor. Jane's well-being, thus, at least partly rests on the exploitation of others. Bertha Mason's death shows that in order to create the prerequisites for Jane's marriage to Rochester, the text depends on the use of Gothic elements.

2.2.3 Rochester: The tamed patriarch

Beyond Bertha's death, the fire at Thornfield has another consequence for the rest of the plot. Not only leaves it Thornfield Hall completely destroyed, forcing Rochester to move, it

also severely injures him. Losing one of his arms and blind on one eye, the formerly athletic Rochester is now in a physically limited condition. Holmes stresses that "… bodily difference, deformity, or damage produces symbolic meanings and creates aesthetic effects such as shock, fear, curiosity, mystery, and desire", creating a "… connection between disabled embodiment and the Gothic" (181). In this sense, Rochester's physical state after the fire can be read as a Gothic feature. It allows Jane to marry a tamed version of Rochester who forms no threat for her as a woman. Ironically, her marriage to Rochester lets Jane give up her job and thus, a constituent to her formally so well-protected female independence. Following a pattern that is typical for female characters in nineteenth-century fiction, Jane does not work for a living "unless … driven to it by dire necessity" (Barry 124). Instead, "the focus of interest is on the heroine's choice of marriage partner, which will decide her ultimate social position and exclusively determine her happiness and fulfilment in life, or her lack of these" (Barry 124). Against the feminist paradigm, Jane's marriage to Rochester makes her give in to the patriarchal order, losing her claim to her personal possessions as well as her status as an independent person before the law. Giving up her profession, however, is Jane's own decision. Rochester, her husband of choice, is not in the physical state to urge her to perform any steps that she does not agree with. Hoeveler emphasises that in this way, Jane does what every Gothic feminist has to do:

> … she [creates] a new family with herself in a matriarchal and unchallenged position of power … her Gothic hero has been tamed and ritualistically wounded. … prone to lean heavily on his beloved helpmate, Rochester is the ultimate embodiment of the masculine victim in the female Gothic fantasy. … he is the safe husband; he is the punished patriarch … he is the weakened man that the Gothic feminist must have if she is to live with a man at all." (203)

In the end, one can argue that when Jane left Moor House and decided to return to Rochester, she did not know about his physical state and intended to marry him anyway. Besides, he partly regains his eyesight after two years of marriage and thus, is only 'half-tamed' from this point on. Rochester and Jane, however, remain to be happily united. Still, Jane's initial reaction to his changed physical state when she sees him after coming back from Moor House is remarkable and fits into the Gothic feminist interpretation of their marriage. Reflecting upon Rochester's missing hand and eyesight, Jane closes: "I love you better now when I can really be useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence." (Brontë 392).

3.   Conclusion

Starting off as a dependent lower middle class orphan, Charlotte Brontë's heroine Jane undergoes a development that comprises several steps. When she receives an education

that enables her to work as a teacher, she becomes a member of the professional middle class and gains a certain degree of independence. In the end, her marriage to her former employer, the local landowner Rochester, makes her voluntarily give up most of this independence again, elevating her into the gentry in exchange. In its depiction of Jane's wish for independence the central stages of her development, the novel reproduces and challenges the feminist paradigm at the same time.

Embedding the plot into an ostensibly realistic narrative, the text suggests that as an independent middle class woman, Jane is able to socially move upwards. The crucial steps of her development, however, only open up because the plot construction violates central principles of realistic writing and compensates for them with elements of Gothic fiction. Jane may try to shape her destiny, but in the end, her own efforts do not seem to have been the factors that made the difference. Instead, Gothic elements free the story from societal and gender-related boundaries, functioning as realisations of ideals, dreams and desires. Most of the seemingly supernatural occurrences that form central stages of the plot construction are explained as the story progresses. Using a form of narrative transmission that comprises an older, more experienced narrative I who tells the story of a younger experiencing I, the text adopts a narrative situation that allows the interpretation that possibly, the plot's supernatural incidents are merely products of Jane's imagination. Furthermore, the narrative I explicitly questions the text's overall reliability in instances in which its otherwise discrete use of mediacy is challenged. However, without the use of Gothic elements, whether they can be seen as actual plot elements or products of the heroine's imagination, Jane's development could not have happened the way the novel suggests. Other Gothic elements, namely the character conception of Bertha Mason as a mad woman, her self-induced death and Rochester's disability, may belong to the realm of the Gothic and are crucial for Jane's development. They are, however, not inherently supernatural.

All in all, *Jane Eyre* as a novel functions as a species of wish-fulfilment. Against structuralists claims, its deconstructive reading has shown that it cannot be referred to as a unified realist text. When narrative introduces discrepancies with what is considered 'realistic', these may facilitate the reader's acquaintance with fictional truths. At the same time, they compromise the narrative's realism. The generic conventions in *Jane Eyre* are ambiguous. Generally referred to as a realist novel, it successfully includes a majority of the principles of realistic writing. Others, such as a discrete use of mediacy and a plot construction that is in accordance with a logic of cause and effect, are harshly violated.

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EVALUATION SHEET

British Studies

Seminar: Theories and Methods of Literary Studies

Name of student:

Title of paper: A Deconstructive Reading of Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre"

Date of marking: 06.03.2018

Research Question/Thesis Statement and Argument

Research question/

thesis statement:	☒ sophisticated	☐ accurate	☐ imprecise	☐ missing
Argumentation	☒ clear/strong	☒ well-structured	☐ logical	☐ misleading
Result:	☒ comprehensive	☐ well-informed	☐ sufficient	☐ missing

Further observations:

The introduction is to the point preparing the reader well for the following argument on the tension and interaction between realism and Gothic. The interconnected thesis statements demonstrate a high capacity for abstract thinking as they successfully bring to bear narratology, feminism and deconstruction on the novel.

Theory and Method

☒ analytical approach   ☐ mix of approaches   ☐ descriptive approach

☒ reference to theories of literature/culture

☒ concepts and terminology of literary analysis and interpretation

☒ plot construction   ☐ representation of time/space   ☒ narrative situation

☒ character construction/constellation   ☐ tropes

☐ other: Klicken Sie hier, um Text einzugeben.

Further observations:

The discussion of the plot does not only convincingly trace its Gothic features but manages to discuss the development in terms of gender and class which shows nicely in the model on p.5. Reading the red room-scene, the voice on the moor and Rochester's disability in Gothic terms is pertinent. The conclusion nicely brings all the strands of the complex argument together.

Primary Sources (Evidence)

Collection of data: ☒ effective ☒ pertinent ☐ relevant ☐ irrelevant

Use of material: ☐ citation ☐ comments ☒ critical discussion

Secondary Sources (Debate)

Extent of research

Reference made to ☒ relevant monographs ☒ book articles

☒ articles in journals ☐ relevant websites

Incorporation through ☒ critical discussion ☐ comments ☐ citation

Use of material: ☐ appropriation ☒ self-positioning ☐ reproduction

Further observations:

Klicken Sie hier, um Text einzugeben.

Form

☒ no complaints

☐ deficiencies with regard to (the)

☐ title page ☐ table of contents ☐ formatting (1.5 line spacing, justification, etc.)

☐ pagination ☐ highlighting of titles and concepts ☐ parenthetical citation

☐ blocked quotes ☐ footnotes ☐ bibliography

Presentation: ☒ competent proof-reading ☐ some mistakes ☐ many mistakes

English: ☒ idiomatic ☒ minor errors ☐ frequent errors ☐ incomprehensible

Style: ☒ appealing ☒ well readable ☐ appropriate ☐ simple

Further observations:

Klicken Sie hier, um Text einzugeben.

The paper under review is marked: 1,0 (very good)

Leibniz Universität Hannover

Englisches Seminar

Seminar: Post-Multicultural Britain? Ethnic Minority Writing Today (BritA, SoSe 2015)

Modul: Advanced Literature and Culture

Dozentin: Prof. Dr. Jana Gohrisch

"Some poem by a man called Wordsworth":

Intertextuality in Farrukh Dhondy's *Two Kinda Truth*

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Method

After the Second World War, a new form of literary production developed in Great Britain. As a consequence of decolonisation and the subsequent migration of many former colonial Commonwealth subjects to mainland Britain, texts by writers belonging to visible ethnic minorities became more and more prevalent in the British literary scene (Korte/Sternberg 8). Such texts are often subsumed under the genre title 'Black British Literature' (8). Themes of this genre are varied: some texts address and assess Britain's colonial past from the point of view of the colonised, some negotiate the treatment of the new immigrants in mainland Britain (e.g. Samuel Selvon: *The Lonely Londoners*), some engage in post-colonial rewritings of older British texts which foreground the colonial discourses inherent in them (e.g. Jean Rhys: *Wide Sargasso Sea*).

I shall examine the short story "Two Kinda Truth", by the India-born, British writer Farrukh Dhondy, first published in the anthology *Come to Mecca* in 1978, which is centred around Afro-Caribbean youths from London. This text not only emanates from the genre of Black British Literature, but also negotiates its features, paradigms and development on the level of content. During the course of the plot, one of the youths is first introduced to canonical British poetry at school. Later he rejects this form of poetry, quits school altogether, and ultimately achieves recognition as a Black British dub poet.

In addition to examining how the text negotiates Black British Literature and Poetry and their position in society, I shall also scrutinise the usage of intertextuality. My contention is that intertextuality is a key element in the text and that it fulfils several functions simultaneously. Making these forms and functions explicit extends the textual space the story navigates to a wider contextual framework. Although, on the level of plot, it is only the character Bonny that becomes a dub poet, it is indeed the intertextual framework that reveals him to be a metonym for developments in literary production in the late 1970s.

Examining a text with special attention to intertextuality invites a structuralist approach, for as Barry writes, one of the main concerns of structuralists is "relating the text to some larger containing structure, such as […] a network of intertextual connections" (48). In my reading I shall follow the "structuralist approach to literature [in which] there is a constant movement away from the interpretation of the individual literary work and a parallel drive towards understanding the larger, abstract structures which contain them" (39). This will be interposed with the "structuralist emphasis on the 'constructedness' of human meaning" (Eagleton 107). However, as I will also examine to what ends the intertextual framework

constructs new contemporary meanings within the text, I shall extend my structuralist reading to connect it with a contextual reading of the literary environment at the time of the texts production, i.e. how the notion of an emerging, increasingly canonised Black British Literature informs, and is negotiated within the text. Within this contextual reading, I shall also use term 'Other'/'othering' from postcolonial studies, which can be defined as a "state of existence of being other or different from established norms and social groups" (Wolfreys 305). Othering implies that certain groups are moulded by a dominant and ruling Self to exist in this different state. In establishing this connection, my analysis attempts to avoid what Eagleton characterises as the contextual shortcomings of structuralism:

> Having characterized the underlying rule-systems of a literary text, all the structuralist could do was sit back and wonder what to do next. There was no question of relating the work to the realities of which it treated, or to the conditions which produced it, or to the actual readers who studied it, since the founding gesture of structuralism had been to bracket off such realities. (109)

Before embarking on my analysis, it remains necessary to define two terms[1] which are central to my reading of Dhondy's text. Apart from intertextuality, the notion of a literary canon is key to examining the development of Black British Literature and its position in the literary establishment. Intertextuality as a term "denote[s] the interdependence of literary texts, [… and implies that] a literary text is not an isolated phenomenon but is made up of a mosaic of quotations, and [… that] any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Cuddon 367). However, as Cuddon adds, texts "[do] not merely […] echo each other but [… their] discourses or sign systems are transposed into one another – so that meanings in one kind of discourse are overlaid with meanings from another kind of discourse. It is a kind of 'new articulation'" (367-68). In conceptualising literature as a realm where no text is ever isolated from all others, "intertextuality produces and sustains literature's memory" (Lachmann 309).

A canon can be generally defined as a "body of texts deemed by the literary establishment to be authoritative in terms of literary merit and influence" (Cuddon 102). While the prevalence in society of the canon's core texts has become normalised, the literary canon remains "a *construct*, fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at a certain time. There is no such thing as a literary work or tradition which is valuable *in itself*, regardless of what anyone might have said or come to say about it" (Eagleton 11). However, despite the canon being a construct, there are several factors that must be ascribed to a certain text in order to ensure its ongoing canonisation. Assmann defines these factors as "selection, value, and duration. Selection presupposes decisions and power struggles; ascription of value

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[1] I shall follow Nünning and Nünning's definitions of other narratological terminology.

endows these objects with an aura and a sancrosanct status; duration in cultural memory is the central aim of the procedure" (100). Dhondy's text negotiates the canon as a category: it not only questions the sole legitimacy of canonical, white British poetry, but affirms the legitimacy of Black British Literature in partaking in the canon.

2. Intertextuality: Forms and Functions

There are two primary functions intertextuality has in Dhondy's short story. Within a narrower definition of intertextuality – in which it means the specific referencing of other written texts – the text aligns itself with a history of canonical poetry through conscious or unconscious references to poems by the characters. These intertextual references also show how the implied reader of Dhondy's short story is not from the realm of society which is being portrayed, but rather from a literarily-educated sphere of society which has a foreknowledge of these canonical texts. In a wider definition – in which intertextuality refers to the invocation of a whole meta-textual framework – the references to poets, primarily Byron and Wordsworth, are used to justify, recontextualise and support the development of Black British literature and poetry on their way to canonisation. The text as a whole engages the literarily-educated reader through intertexuality: combining and interposing contemporary and historical literary environments reveals that any two literatures are never mutually exclusive textual realms.

While the plot is narrated by Bonny's friend Irving, Bonny is the protagonist of the story. He is, along with his teacher Wordsy, also the main 'producer' of intertextuality. Bonny's first utterance is already marked intertextually: "The first day we moved to this dread school in Battersea, he takes one look around the place and says, 'It soft. Man could be happy here'" (Dhondy 125-6). Bonny's ironical statement on the school they are about to begin attending references the poem *The Mountain Chapel* by Edward Thomas, in which the speaker emphasises the attraction of the chapel, despite its rurality and desertedness: "And yet somewhere, / Near or far off, there's a *man could / Live happy here*"[2] (31-33, my emphasis). This fascination with an Othered space is transferred to the Battersea school. Notably, the fact that a poem by Edward Thomas is quoted can also be read in an intertextually biographical stance: Thomas attended school in Battersea as well, at Battersea Grammar School (Thomas, *Portrait* 9-11). Thus, the text establishes a wider intertextual framework from the outset.

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[2] As the editor to *The Collected Poems of Edward Thomas* notes, an earlier version of Thomas's poem records this part of the poem as "there's a man could / Be happy here" (Thomas, *Poems* 46), hereby making Thomas's and Bonny's choice of words identical.

Bonny's and Irving's English teacher, Wordsy, uses T. S. Eliot's poem *The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* in one of his first lessons in their class (Dhondy 130-1), but fails in captivating his pupils: "Wordsy read his poem, and he got the hiccups and some boys rushed over and started hitting him on the back, saying they'd make his hiccups go away" (131). Despite teaching this canonical poem with little success, the reference to Eliot signifies to the reader that Wordsy is trying to acquaint his pupils with the established, manifestly white canon of English poetry.

When Wordsy criticises Bonny's first self-written poem in the poetry circle, upon which Bonny refrains from attending school, Wordsy answers a question on Bonny's whereabouts with a quotation: "Humankind cannot bear too much reality" (143), an assertion that appears in both T. S. Eliot's poem *Burnt Norton* as well as his play *Murder in the Cathedral*. Here, the usage of intertextuality carries ambivalence. The substitution of a quote for an own assertion can be read as Wordsy's uncertainty as to Bonny's leaving: it remains unsaid whether Wordsy cannot bear the reality of having misjudged Bonny's poem, or if Bonny could not bear the alleged reality of Wordsy's negative judgment.

2.1 Character Conception

The story is mainly set in a branch of the school in Wandsworth, called the 'cole heap', because of the "heap of coal in the yard" (126). The school setting itself is firmly established as a place of Othering, which is set into binary opposition with the main building of the school: "There was the main building [...] where they kept the smart ones. They were all white" (126), and "the 'coal heap' [… with] only a few whites up there, most of the youths on the heap was black" (126). Here, the narrator displays the outpost in Wandsworth as an epitome of blackness: the coal heap on the school yard, as well as the pupils are set in colour against the white main building. Transposing this back to the reference to Edward Thomas, the text suggests that whereas the prospective white poet would have gone to the main building, Irving and Bonny did not. Bonny is thus characterised as not coming from an educational background that is in any way predisposed for an intellectual or literary career.

The narrator follows the description of setting with an ironical statement, as despite the narrator's assertion that "this story's not about that school and about blacks and whites, because it would have to be longer than the longest book anybody so far writ" (126), the story is negotiating these categories – it is highly relevant that Bonny comes from this specific background, and that he is a *black* poet. Yet, this statement is also a meta-literary comment: it

shows the impossibility of ever fully coming textually to terms with the current disenfranchisement of visible ethnic minorities, in addition to the foregoing colonial past.

It is Bonny who gives the teacher, Wordsy, his name – he calls him Mr. Wordsworth (later shortening in to 'Wordsy') after Wordsy brings a poem by William Wordsworth to their first lesson: "Wordsy was a teacher. He wasn't called Wordsy at all – that was the name Bonny gave him" (126). The narrator never reveals Wordsy's actual name. This procedure of Bonny naming Wordsy foregrounds the literariness of the teacher: he singularly stands for what he teaches. At the same time, it is also an inversion of the colonial practice of white masters giving their black slaves new names, as is exemplified in Daniel Defoe's 18th-century novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Here it is the white master Crusoe who gives his black slave a name based on a singularity – the day he found him: "I began to speak to him, and teach him to speak to me; and first, I made him know his name should be *Friday*, […] I likewise taught him to say *Master*, [which] was to be my name" (Defoe 163). The practice of naming is thus a reversal of former colonial power structures.

Wordsy is initially characterised as "a young guy with long hair, kinda hippy. He walk in cool, cool" (Dhondy 127). He makes an impression on the students by his young and flamboyant appearance, despite admitting later that "he was nervous that first time, like really shaking. He'd never been in a class before and he was not even sure that he should have been teaching" (127). In addition to the fact that Bonny gives Wordsy the name of the poet Wordsworth, Wordsy is also characterised as being envious of successful literary production: "Bonny walked up to his desk and asked him what he'd got there. […] It was some poem by a man called Wordsworth and Bonny asked him if he had writ it himself. The man say that he wish all his life he had writ it, but he hadn't" (128-9). While these initial statements give Wordsy a more encompassing characterisation, the text gives no specific initial, explicit characterisation of Bonny and Irving – perhaps implying they could represent any black youths from the London suburbs, where visible ethnic minorities are prevalent. Bonny is mainly characterised implicitly throughout the plot's progression and his interaction with Wordsy.

In Wordsy's first lesson Bonny supports the new teacher: "Bonny just watched him careful. The he said, 'Hush your clamour and let the man speak.' That's how Bonny talked, always a bit fancy. They called him a wordsman" (128). Bonny is accordingly placed in allegiance with Wordsy, because the nickname can also be interpreted as a short form of "wordsman". This utterance emphasises Bonny's fascination with language, and also a predisposition for imitating elevated language. He is intrigued by Wordsy's and their usual

English teacher, Mr Cottage's, use of high registers of speech: "'Talk fancy again,' Bonny said. 'This guy's good, you's a preacher man like old Cottage" (130). Bonny becomes more and more engaged with this linguistic versatility for his own ends:

> I could see that Bonny liked the way he was talking, using big words, laying it on when he found the class silent for a moment. Bonny was fascinated by words even then. If we went to a blues, he'd listen to the new lyrics and dub tunes and try and learn the rough bits and change them here and there and use them himself in his speech (131).

This passage also introduces Bonny's interest in dub art and a certain pluralism of styles. Dub poetry, which Bonny later becomes more engaged in is

> [eine] Richtung der britisch-afrokaribischen Dichtung, die in einer stark ausgeprägten Form des westindischen Englisch zu Reggae-Musik gesprochen und in Anlehnung an die 'dub'-Praxis von Diskjockeys als 'dub poetry' bezeichnet wird[. Sie] erfreut sich seit den siebziger Jahren auch bei britischen weißen Jugendlichen großer Beliebtheit. (Korte/Sternberg 37)

Even before Wordsy starts his poetry circle, Bonny acquires a certain public recognition: "Bonny would take the mike and play DJ. He'd carry own a whole rap in front of the music […] He was building himself a small reputation as a real dub artist" (Dhondy 136-7). Irving alludes to Bonny's progression from the outset: "Bonny, boy, he grew smarter than any of the youth we used to hang around with" (125). This is a telling statement, as it counters the commonly-held assumption that intelligence, success or talent can be measured by progression in educational state institutions. While Irving progresses through school finishing with his A-Levels, Bonny leaves school without such a high degree. Nevertheless, Irving regards him as the smartest youth from their former social circle, as Bonny becomes a successful and recognised poet.

2.2 Character Constellation

In addition to Bonny naming his teacher 'Mr. Wordsworth', Bonny also later gives himself a pseudonym of a different romantic poet's name. Irving sees a poster at the Centre, the local youth club, which announces an evening with "'the Byron of Brixton, Bonny Lee.' I smiled to myself, because I knew who Byron was, but most of them youth, them wouldn't know" (143). This choice of name is one that Bonny presumably chooses very consciously as it carries a weight of intertextual meaning, when considering the historical positioning of the poets Wordsworth and Byron. William Wordsworth belonged to the earlier generation of Romantic poets, and later "acquired the status of father-figure to second-generation writers such as

Keats, Byron and Shelley, who accused him of having betrayed the radical leanings of earlier work" (Wu 425). Judging by the plethora of canonical poetry Wordsy teaches at school, it is plausible that Bonny has learnt of this generational framework and maps it onto the relation between him and Wordsy. By calling himself Byron, Bonny is opposing Wordsy and his namesake, knowing that Wordsy will realise his implications, as he would be equally aware of the connotations the juxtaposition of these two historical figures carries.

2.2.1 Transposing Romanticism

Bonny approves of Wordsworth's poetry upon first reading – which is simultaneously the first canonical British poem that Dhondy's Wordsworth supplies Bonny with: "Bonny looked at the sheet and said, 'Hmm, it all right'" (Dhondy 129). After another lesson, on T. S. Eliot, Bonny also approves of Wordsy as a teacher: "By the time the lesson was finished, Bonny was saying to me, 'This man all right'" (131). He displays his approval again when Wordsy teaches them in A-Level English:

> In a way even Bonny admitted that Wordsy was good […] Bonny was never in Wordsy's class, but Wordsy would let him come and sit in on lessons […] Wordsy could see that when we were discussing poetry or reading it in class, Bonny's attention was just there (134-5).

Wordsy thus also becomes a kind of 'father-figure' in terms of poetry to Bonny. He first becomes inspired, fascinated and intrigued by his teachings, only to reject them later on in favour of his own aesthetics and subject-matter. The break that occurs in the intellectual relationship between Bonny and Wordsy accordingly imitates the artistic relation between the historical figures Byron and Wordsworth.

2.2.2 Debating Aesthetics and Subject-Matter of Poetry

Even before Bonny reads his own poem, he debates the aesthetics of poetry with Wordsy. While the latter contends that "'a poem doesn't have to rhyme. Rhyme is a sort of escapism.'" (138), Bonny insists that "'rhyme is musi-kal'" (138). Wordsy and William Wordsworth as figures become somewhat blurred at this point, when Wordsy insists on poetry having to "'have its own internal music, something more convincing than rhyme […] to have the whole rhythm of speech'" (138). This definition of poetry's aesthetics is reminiscent of William Wordsworth's assertion in his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* that his poems were allegedly written "with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation […] is adapted to the

purposes of poetic pleasure" (337). Bonny questions this notion that poetry should somehow attempt to imitate speech or conversation and asserts that "'poetry is not natural talk. If you talk like that on the street man will think you mad'" (Dhondy 138). Byron, Bonny's chosen namesake, rejects the notion that prose can somehow be imitated through poetry – Byron refers to this in his satirical poem "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers": "The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay / As soft as evening in his favourite May; / […] who, both by precept and example, shows / That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose, / Convincing all by demonstration plain, / Poetic souls delight in prose insane" (237-44). In the first canto of *Don Juan*, Byron takes up his rejection of this form of poetry even more vehemently and cites older forms of poetry as more 'true': "Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope; / Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey; / Because the first is crazed beyond all hope, / The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy" (1632-6).

Although Dhondy's text presents no poetry written by Wordsy himself, Irving does comment on the subject-matter of poems written by other participants of the poetry circle Wordsy initiates at the school: "Sometimes the girls would bring their poems […, they] were all about high-rise flats and how depressing they were and about loneliness and old people on park benches and shit" (139). Bonny's poem, which he eventually reads, addresses societal discourses and problems somewhat more overtly, vehemently and politically:

> All across the nation / Black man suffer aggravation / Babylon face us with iration / […] Babylon hold up the power / Black man reach the final hour / Our strength in Jah is like a tower / Bringing down a merciless shower / Of bitter rain, my brother y'all, of bitter rain, my sisters (140).

Bonny's politically explicit poetry (Korte/Sternberg 43) aligns with the developing form of dub poetry which follows different aesthetics than British canonical poetry. This form of poetry is "deutlich sozialkritisch [… und greift] den Rassismus in der britischen Gesellschaft offen an" (37). One of the forms of imagery utilised to this end is that of Babylon. It stems from the colonial era, when slaves from Africa abducted to the 'Babylon' of the western world saw salvation in the hope of repatriation (38). However, the Rastas in Britain in the 1970s no longer utilise Babylon as an image connected with this former hope, but as one that represents the necessity of emancipation and recognition in white British society, for which Babylon serves as emblem (38). Bonny's poem is thus 'deviant' from white British canonical poetry in both form and content, something which dub poetry embraces:

> In der Regel verstehen sich diese Dichter [karibischer Abstammung] auch als 'performance poets'; indem sie ihre Gedichte selbst vortragen, knüpfen sie an mündliche Traditionen der Karibik an. Ihre Werke sind oft in erster Linie 'orature' (von *or*al lite*rature*) und erst in zweiter Hinsicht 'literature' im Sinne der

Schriftliteratur. Spuren solcher mündlicher Traditionen, etwa die direkte Anrede eines fiktiven Zuhörers oder Ausrufe, finden sich auch [… bei] Dhondy (Korte/Sternberg 36-37).

Wordsy rejects Bonny's poem and criticises its relation between form and content: "'I think there's a lot of rhyme there, but there's no poetry […] The poem is too much of a slogan; to be poetry it has to have the sound, not of propaganda, but of, well, how shall I put it, of *truth*.'" (Dhondy 141-2). What Wordsy is also criticising, perhaps unconsciously, is the poem's deviance from accepted forms of poetry. However, Bonny's poem consciously deviates from this form: as the Caribbean-born scholar and poet Kamau Brathwaite remarks, the century-long prevalence of pentameter is of no use to new Anglo-Caribbean poetry (264-5). Brathwaite also criticises Jamaican-American poet Claude McKay for reverting to the sonnet form in order to acquire a certain 'universality', i.e. acceptance in an Anglocentric, white canon and suggests that other forms are necessary for an innovative aesthetics (274-6). Bonny retorts this criticism by pointing to the notion that truth is a malleable category: "Remember, Mr. Wordsworth, that there's *two* kinda truth" (Dhondy 142). Bonny's statement essentially implicates that there is never only one viable form and content for a given genre. The significance for the overall narrative of uncovering this polyvalence is emphasised by *Two Kinda Truth* also being the title. How Bonny unmasks truth as a construct here is very similar to how structuralist criticism rejected allegedly universal, all-encompassing readings of poetry:

> The Romantic prejudice that the poem, like a person, harboured a vital essence, a soul which it was discourteous to tamper with, was rudely unmasked as a bit of disguised theology, a superstitious fear of reasoned enquiry which made a fetish of literature and reinforced the authority of a 'naturally' sensitive critical elite (Eagleton 106-7).

This passage of Dhondy's text implies that even a young generation of teachers nevertheless comes 'biased' from university: they have been solely trained in a white British canon and cannot easily fathom the paradigms of this new form of poetry or easily accredit it as equally legitimate. However, it is also implied that after this reading, Wordsy realises he may have been unjust or wrong in his judgment: "There were no more poetry sessions. The circle was closed" (Dhondy 142).

Irving later describes going to the Centre again, the local youth club, where he ambivalently remarks: "The poetry circle hadn't been cancelled, it had just faded away" (143) as he is about to see Bonny successfully perform his poetry there. This statement implies that 'poetry' as an ontological category has been shifted from the school (i.e. an educational state institution which is designed to acquaint pupils solely with white British, canonised

literature), where Bonny was not appreciated for his poetry, to the local club, where it finds an audience:

> The turntable had stopped functioning […] but the crowd wanted its sounds or wanted its money back. Then Bonny's voice came over the mike again. He was reciting some verses. They were his own verses and he read with a sort of threatening solemnity. […] People were listening (144-5).

Later, it is revealed that Bonny has attracted attention from a different state institution, where he does receive recognition. A poster finds its way into school announcing "a poetry session by the 'Poet in Residence' at the Lambeth Library. There was a paragraph explaining that "Byron" Lee had been given a grant by the Arts Council to work at 'black poetry and literature'" (145-6). Bonny by this point revises his statement on there being two kinds of truth and, as Irving reports to Wordsy, Bonny has asserted that "'There's only one [truth]: Truth is what the masses like.' 'Hmmm, that may be, that may very well be…' Wordsy said" (Dhondy 146). While Wordsy's final utterance reveals that he is still uncertain how to judge the emergent new strand of poetry that Bonny is engaging in, it also indicates that Wordsy has been thinking about the aesthetics of poetry, and is perhaps on his way to developing his definitions of poetry. Ultimately, as Bonny reveals by linking popularity to a definition of truth, the value of writing is always judged initially by how large an audience it attracts. Wordsy has no public success despite having "done some writing himself and […] always boast[ing] that he had friends who'd written real books and poems" (137).

Here, it is productive to return to the historical juxtaposition of Wordsworth and Byron. Byron, whose name Bonny revealingly assumes, is not only considered a great Romantic poet, but was also the most commercially successful poet of his time: "The success of *Childe Harold* was followed, in 1814, with 10,000 copies of *The Corsair* being sold on the day of its publication (Shelley sold almost nothing in his lifetime). By 1815, *Childe Harold* was in its tenth edition" (Wilson 4). He achieved widespread recognition that none of the other poets of his time could match: "Byron was a figure of identification and desire in the public imagination in a way that Southey and Wordsworth simply were not, and in this sense he became what is now called a celebrity" (9-10). However, as Bonny implicates by choosing specifically the name of Byron, is not only that his poetry now achieves popular recognition, but that it nevertheless also has his own quality. Some scholars have implicated that although Byron was more commercially successful, his writing was somewhat inferior to that of Wordsworth and others, which Wilson refutes by saying that "it is now forgotten that Byron became the master of *ottava rima* and was Wordsworth's equal in the consistency and sheer

quantity of his poetic output: one of the effects of Byromania is that Byron's quality as a poet has been left out of his reputation" (Wilson 4-5).

Indeed, Byron was also instrumental in deconstructing, through his popularity, the universal or singular 'truth' of poetry that William Wordsworth (and Wordsy) adhere to: "The concern of Wordsworth and his contemporaries, then, is that in creating a literary mob, Byron had also created a political mob: a new and powerful force – the ungoverned reading public – which was capable of destroying the carefully maintained hierarchies of cultural reproduction" (McDayter 50). This politicisation of poetry is one that is transferred to and modernised in *Two Kinda Truth*, where an educational hierarchy, and indeed a racial hierarchy is eroded through the popularisation of dub poetry: poetry is no longer confined to the realms of the educated.

3. Canonisation and Conclusion

Since Farrukh Dhondy's short story itself belongs to a 'new English literature', the short story can be read as engaging in negotiation of its own status. The notions of canonisation represented by Bonny are projected back on to the text as a whole. The short story itself has already received a certain specific form of canonisation by being included in the German scholars' Barbara Korte and Claudia Sternberg's anthology of *Multicultural British Short Stories*. This implies that it has been deemed useful for learning about the multiplicity of cultures in Britain through literature, as well as being deemed to be representative of a certain literature. In this vein, Bonny is, in a way, more successful in finding his own voice than Dhondy's short story. While Dhondy's versatile usage of intertextuality might be a reason for people who decide on the canon to deem *Two Kinda Truth* worthy of it, Bonny 'Byron' ultimately acquires legitimacy without having to resort to referencing or re-writing canonical works by white authors. However, Irving leaves Wordsy to believe that Bonny continues to seek influence through historical canon content: "'He also said thank you very much for being his teacher and showing him the ropes of poetry, Wordsworth and Eliot and Byron and all. He said he's been reading Wordsworth.' 'He didn't, did he?' Wordsy said, his eyes lighting up. 'Yeah, that's what he said,' I lied" (Dhondy 146). Irving comforts Wordsy by implying that despite Bonny's commercial success, Wordsy should not think that this means that his poetry is now worth less.

Despite *Two Kinda Truth* questioning processes of canonisation throughout most of the plot, it is crucial that Bonny is canonised at the close: the text ultimately reaffirms canons.

This reaffirmation reveals that although canons are constructs, they are somehow inevitable. As Assmann remarks, "although canons change, they remain indispensable tools for education; without them academic fields cannot be established, university curricula cannot be taught" (101). However, the notion that there is not only one canon, and that canons are forever subject to change, is one that Wordsy and Bonny have perhaps both not fully grasped. In a sense, Bonny's first observation that there is more than one kind of truth remains more accurate than his final observation: success (or the lack of it) at one point in time does not necessarily ensure longevity and ongoing participation in the canon. Byron and Wordsworth are now both regarded as two of the highest-ranking Romantic poets, despite Wordsworth being less widely read at his time, and Byron falling into ill repute for a time. The text also aligns with Bonny's first statement, rather than the later adjustment, by having the former as its title.

Despite the break between the first generation and second generation of Romantic poets, this shift has to a certain extent become normalised through history and canonisation, yet was equally contested at the time as 'old white' and 'new black' poetry is in 1970s England. Nowadays, Byron and Wordsworth are anthologised in the same volumes, and poets from visible ethnic minorities appear along with white canonical poetry on school and university curricula. Although the latter contrast remains unbalanced – i.e. considerable more weight is given to white canonical poetry – Bonny's poetical validation and support by the Arts Council seems to suggest that the development of Black British literature and dub poetry is a one that will become more normalised and prevalent over time.

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Declaration

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GUTACHTEN

Das Thema der Hausarbeit ist originell und gut gewählt, die Einführung schlüssig, die Gliederung sinnfällig und die Argumentation sehr gut nachvollziehbar. Der Verf. formuliert eine klare These, die er überzeugend beweist. Besonders hervorzuheben ist die Fülle der intertextuellen Referenzen und der damit belegten breiten literaturgeschichtlichen Kenntnisse, die auch die ausführliche Bibliografie dokumentiert.

Die theoretische Grundlage bildet eine Kombination aus strukturalistischem Herangehen und postkolonial kontextualisierenden Interpretationsansätzen, die aus Fachbüchern gewonnen werden, die über die durchschnittliche Seminarlektüre hinausgehen (z. B. 9). Die tragenden Begriffe „other/ing", „intertextuality" und „literary canon" werden mithilfe einschlägiger Wörterbücher zutreffend definiert und in den Analysen gewinnbringend eingesetzt. Die These greift über die analysierte Kurzgeschichte hinaus und liest deren Protagonisten einleuchtend als Metonym für die Entwicklung der Black British Literature der 1970er Jahre.

Die literaturwissenschaftlichen Analysebegriffe werden zielführend eingesetzt, so dass dem Verf. sehr gute Beobachtungen gelingen, die er überzeugend belegt (4ff). Die Deutungen dieser Beobachtungen werden bereichert von zusätzlicher Lektüre zum Thema des kulturellen Gedächtnisses und der Hauptvertreter beider englischer Romantikergenerationen, die bei aller Kürze einer Hausarbeit treffend zitiert und interpretatorisch genutzt werden.

Die Zusammenfassung bietet, neben der erwartbaren Zusammenschau der eigenen Arbeitsergebnisse problembewusste Überlegungen zum Prozess der Kanonisierung der Black British Literature und der in diesem Rahmen analysierten Kurzgeschichte von Farrukh Dhondy.

Die Arbeit ist in einem fast muttersprachlichen und stilistisch gehobenen Englisch geschrieben, das zusätzlich durch eine klare und pointierte Argumentation besticht (einziger Grammatikfehler S. 4: „own"). Die Hausarbeit entspricht in der Formatierung den Vorschriften des *MLA Stylesheet* und ist formal sehr sauber gestaltet.

Die PL von **Name** wird mit einer 1,0 (sehr gut) bewertet.

Prof. Dr. Jana Gohrisch (06.01.2016)

Leibniz Universität Hannover

Englisches Seminar

Dozentin: Prof. Dr. Jana Gohrisch

Seminar: Reading 20th-Century British Classics

Modul

Abgabe: 30.05.2018

Term Paper

(Mis-)Communication and (Mis-)Interpretations in Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*

Name

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Fachsemester, Studiengang

Matr.-Nr.

Table of Contents

Selbstständigkeitserklärung

Ich, Name versichere hiermit, dass ich die vorliegende Hausarbeit zum Thema „(Mis-)Communication and (Mis-)Interpretations in Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*" ohne fremde Hilfe selbstständig verfasst und nur die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Wörtlich oder dem Sinn nach aus anderen Werken entnommene Stellen habe ich unter Angabe der Quellen kenntlich gemacht.

1. Introduction

The cover and blurb of Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* present the play as warm, affecting and smart (Steven Winn, *San Francisco Chronicle*) – "Stoppard's richest comedy to date" (Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*). Paul Edwards labels the play as one of "Stoppard's two major science-based plays" (171). In *Arcadia*'s reception, its appeal and success have been attributed to the play's variety of topics, ranging from scientific discovery, academic discourse and literary history to love, passions and character relations; and its witty and unexpected dialogue has entertained numerous readers and theatregoers to date.

In the past, scholars have analysed the construction of time and the mathematical and physical metaphors in *Arcadia* to investigate the "interaction of the unpredictable and the predetermined" (Melbourne 557). They have highlighted how the second law of thermodynamics and chaos theory can be read as a metaphorical foundation on which the plot and time are constructed in the play. I, however, contend that the instability and unpredictability that are inscribed in *Arcadia*'s science references, permeate not only the construction of the plot, but also the language, character constellations and setting.

Arcadia's first scene, set in a classroom in Regency England, starts with the surprising question of a thirteen-year-old girl to her tutor, "Septimus, what is carnal embrace?" (5). Not only in this first line of dialogue but throughout the entire play, Stoppard's characters play with expectations, both on the intratextual level, and the extratextual communication level with the implied audience. I suggest that *Arcadia* features miscommunications and misinterpretations on several levels of the text that partake in the destabilisation of concepts such as truth and reality.

Stoppard's dramatic dialogue repeatedly stresses the ambiguity of written documents and oral communication. By applying a combination of literary analysis and linguistics, I will analyse excerpts of dialogue and investigate how their flouting of the Gricean Maxims creates humour and ambiguity. In addition, the communication between the actors on stage and the inscribed audience creates a second level of meaning. As on the intratextual communication level, this level features instability and ambiguity, mainly in the form of dramatic irony and humour, but also visibly through the stage set-up and setting.

After considering the language, I will follow a structuralist approach to analyse the setting, plot and character level and demonstrate how these levels of the drama embrace the same motif of failed communications and (mis-)interpretations as the language: In the plot construction, the modern characters attempt to recreate the past based on a number of documents that have survived the past two centuries. Especially written documents serve as

clues and possible distractions to the scholars in the play, who struggle to test the actual meaning of each of these documents against their expected significance.

Ultimately, in flouting the Gricean maxims, the play departs from the expected patterns of human interactions and thereby increases polyvalence of meaning, *Arcadia* emphasises the ambiguity of the construction of knowledge and questions the existence of definite and indisputable truths.

2. Methodology

In this essay, I will rely both on literary studies terminology (as compiled in Nünning's *An Introduction to the Study of English and American Literature*) and concepts derived from linguistics, especially the area of pragmatics. In their introduction to *Literary Analysis and Linguistics*, König and Pfister argue that "Literary studies can and will profit from linguistics and vice versa, particularly if one focusses on the area where they intersect most directly and closely, i.e. on the literary work of art as a verbal structure and the aesthetic uses of language it employs" (12). In this vein, I will use pragmatics in my analysis of speech situations and communication principles in the literary language of the drama at hand, and subsequently employ Structuralist methodology to investigate parallels between the construction of dialogue in the play and the interplay of *Arcadia's* inventive setting and character constellations.

2.1 Communication Model for Dramatic Texts

Looking at any drama's primary text, the communication situation can be described as consisting of two levels, an intratextual and extratextual level of communication. Whereas the characters function as addressers and addressees of the dramatic dialogue on the intratextual level, the historical author and the readers and audience are positioned on an extratextual level (cf. Nünning 79). Consequently, the dialogue in the play can both fulfil functions on the internal level and suggest interpretations that require the superior knowledge of the extratextual communication level, as with utterances that create dramatic irony.

Dramatic texts display a predominance of dialogue, monologue and soliloquy without the interference of a mediating instance such as a narrator in a narrative text. Consequently, the analysis of dialogue and intratextual communication is essential for the interpretation of a play. Vera and Ansgar Nünning emphasise the artificiality of dialogue and argue that "[a]lthough dialogues frequently appear to be very 'true to life', we should be aware when analysing them that they are in fact literary constructs (…). Whilst real conversations in everyday life primarily fulfil communicative and social needs, dramatic dialogue can serve quite different purposes"

(86). I will analyse the dialogues in *Arcadia*, using terminology that is originally used to analyse non-literary communications. I will show in how far Stoppard's writing deviates from common 'true to life' communications and interpret the effects of this deviance.

2.2 The Cooperative Principle and the Gricean Maxims

In his chapter on "Logic and Conversation", Paul Grice famously postulates the Cooperative Principle, the assumption that participants in a communication generally "[m]ake [their] contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which [they] are engaged" (Grice 26). In doing so, speakers adhere to the maxims of [1] Quantity, [2] Quality, [3] Relation and [4] Manner[1]. These maxims can be summarized as follows: The maxim of Quantity suggests that contributions be "as informative as is required" without being "more informative than is required" (26). The maxim of Quality demands to "try to make your contribution one that is true" (27). If one adheres to the maxim of Relation, one's utterances are "relevant" (27) and in order to observe the maxim of Manner, contributions need to "be perspicuous", by avoiding obscurity and ambiguity and being both brief and orderly (Grice 27). Grice argues that

> Anyone who cares about the goals that are central to conversation/communication (such as giving and receiving information, influencing and being influenced by others) must be expected to have an interest, given suitable circumstances, in participation in talk exchanges that will be profitable only on the assumption that they are conducted in general accordance with the Cooperative Principle and the maxims. (30)

Consequently, any conversation would be assumed to both follow Grice's maxims and the Cooperative Principle. "[I]t is just a well-recognized empirical fact that people do behave in these ways; they learned to do so in childhood and have not lost the habit of doing so; and, indeed, it would involve a good deal of effort to make a radical departure from the habit" (29). Nonetheless, there are instances in which speakers' utterances adhere to the Cooperative Principles but disobey the Gricean maxims. Speakers can violate a maxim, opt out, face a clash or flout a maxim. Grice suggests: A speaker

> may *flout* a maxim; that is, he may blatantly fail to fulfil it. On the assumption that the speaker is able to fulfil the maxim and to do so without violating another maxim (because of a clash), is not opting out, and is not, in view of blatancy of his performance, trying to mislead, the hearer is faced with a minor problem: How can his saying what he did say

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[1] In his original introduction of the Pragmatic Principle, Grice capitalizes all four individual maxims. In this essay, I will follow his spelling.

be reconciled with the supposition that he is observing the overall Cooperative Principle? (Grice 30).

Grice further suggests that flouting and exploiting of the maxims leads to so-called "conversational implicatures". He constructs a contrast between "What is said" and "What is implicated". "Conversational implicatures (i) are implied by the speaker in making an utterance; (ii) are part of the content of the utterance, but (iii) do not contribute to direct (or explicit) utterance content; and (iv) are not encoded by the linguistic meaning of what has been uttered" (Allott, n.p.) I shall focus on those utterances in *Arcadia* in which either of the four maxims is flouted and interpret the effect of those remarks.

3. Textual Ambiguity

Stoppard's drama repeatedly plays with the conventions of communication and breaks with them. In the third scene, the enraged Mr. Chater confronts Septimus:

> CHATER: Captain Brice does me the honour – I mean to say sir, whatever you have to say to me, sir, address yourself to Captain Brice.
> SEPTIMUS: How unusual. (*To BRICE)* Your wife did not appear yesterday, sir. I trust she is not sick?
> BRICE: My wife? I have no wife. What the devil do you mean, sir? (SEPTIMUS *makes no reply, but hesitates, puzzled. He turns back to* CHATER.)
> SEPTIMUS: I do not understand the scheme, Chater. Whom do I address when I want to speak to Captain Brice? (43-4)

In this interaction, communication is constructed as an artificial "scheme" with underlying rules that are too convoluted for Brice to follow; rules that Septimus undermines by emphasising their lack of functionality. This scene constitutes the climax of a series of interactions between Septimus and Mr. Chater, in which the tutor creates and enjoys ambiguity to construct his intellectual superiority. Similarly, repeated failed or flawed interactions permeate the entire drama.

3.1. Flouting the Gricean Maxims

A majority of these flawed interactions can be analysed and interpreted on the basis of Grice's maxims and the contrast between "what is said" and "what is implicated". The play at hand features numerous lines of dialogue that diverge from a straight-forward pattern of succinct and unambiguous utterances and replies; and all four maxims are flouted occasionally. In this chapter, I will give examples for the flouting of each of the maxims.

On the surface, Grice's terminology suggests a clear distinction between each of the maxims. In practice, many of the following interactions could be explained on the basis of different maxims. According to Leech and Short, "It is quite common for a contribution to a

conversation to break more than one maxim at a time" (296). If necessary, I will explain the implicatures of a speech act by considering more than one of the maxims.

3.1.1. Quantity

The maxim of Quantity requires utterances to be neither too long nor too short. The following question, raised by Hannah, would normally require a yes/no answer. An answer that consists of one word, could therefore be considered appropriate.

> HANNAH: 'The Couch of Eros'. Is it any good?
> BERNARD: Quite surprising. (25)

Instead of giving a short and straight-forward reply, Bernard answers by calling the poem "quite surprising". He flouts the first maxim by making his answer not long enough to be understood. By adding his reasons for finding the text "quite surprising" he could have provided his subjective evaluation of the quality of 'The Couch of Eros' and thus answered the question more conclusively.

At the same time, he flouts the third maxim of Relation by evading the obvious yes/no-answer. Hannah and the implied readers can, however, infer what was implicated by Bernard's reply in the text. Had 'the Couch of Eros' been any good, the logical and easy answer would have been a clear "yes". Calling it "surprising" instead implicates that the poem cannot be called "good". By claiming that it is "surprising", nonetheless, Bernhard's utterance fulfils two functions: he, firstly, stresses the importance of the poem despite its not being any good and secondly suspends the answer of the question, thus highlighting his superior position as someone who has more knowledge and who can release the information whenever he chooses.

3.1.2. Quality

In Grice's "Logic and Conversation", he argues that many instances in which the maxim of Quality is flouted contain literary language such as irony, metaphors, meiosis or hyperboles. In *Arcadia*, Chloë creates confusion by talking about her "genius brother".

> CHLOË: […] My genius brother will be much relieved. He's in love with you, I suppose you know.
> HANNAH: (*Angry)* That's a joke!
> CHLOË: It's not a joke to him. (37)

In the same scene, Hannah establishes that Valentine jokingly likes to call her his fiancée. Her answer clearly suggests that she interpreted the "genius brother" as referring to Valentine, since he is a scientist and supposedly intelligent. Chloë's reaction and Gus's following appearance and interaction with Hannah, however, suggest that the "genius" was meant to refer to the

younger sibling. Based on the character construction of both Gus and Valentine, there is no evidence for either of them being a literal genius. Whereas Valentine, as a scientist is clearly constructed as smart and rational, Gus barely interacts with the other characters and does not appear to be conventionally intelligent. In the last scene, however, he displays a surprising intuition when it comes to finding lost documents (101).

Chloë's statement flouts the maxim of Quality by not telling a literal truth. Instead, there are three possibilities of what was implicated by the use of the term "genius". The statement might be interpreted as a case of irony, since she calls her younger brother a genius despite his lack of intelligent or witty utterances in the play; or she follows her mother's unironic assessment of Gus as "genius". On the other hand, Chloë might be referring to her elder brother, using a hyperbole and exaggerating his intelligence. Accordingly, her statement becomes ambiguous. While Hannah interprets Chloë's original utterance as containing a hyperbole and referring to Valentine, Chloë's next statement implicates that she was talking about her younger sibling, instead.

3.1.3. Relation

The maxim of Relation is flouted if a speaker's reaction does not follow logically from the previous utterance. An example could be ignoring an earlier remark and blatantly changing the topic. In the following exchange, Septimus does refer to Thomasina's question but immediately changes the topic:

> SEPTIMUS: Ah. Yes, I am ashamed. Carnal embrace is sexual congress, which is the insertion of the male genital organ into the female genital organ for purposes of procreation and pleasure. Fermat's last theorem, by contrast, asserts that when x, y, and z are whole numbers each raised to power of n, the sum of the first two can never equal the third when n is greater than 2.
> *(Pause.)*
> THOMASINA: Eurghhh!
> SEPTIMUS: Nevertheless, that is the theorem.
> THOMASINA: It is disgusting and incomprehensible. (7)

Since Septimus's utterance contains two different subjects, namely carnal embrace and the theorem, Thomasina's subsequent answer could refer to either of them. Whereas Thomasina presumably reacts to Septimus's definitions of "carnal embrace", Septimus continues to bring maths into the conversation. Both of them flout the maxim of Relation: Septimus, in combining maths and sex in his first utterance, Thomasina, in only answering one of the two parts and refusing to let the topic of "carnal embrace" drop despite Septimus' effort to bring the conversation back onto educational ground. Since neither character allows to let the other determine the content of the conversation, their interaction can be seen as a verbal power

struggle. Despite his superior position as her tutor, Septimus ultimately has to acknowledge the topic of sexuality and answer questions about "sexual congress" until he is interrupted by the entrance of Jellaby (8).

3.1.4. Manner

Another instance in which the flouting of maxims establishes a hierarchy and portrays a struggle for verbal superiority takes place between Septimus and Mr Chater who is enraged after realizing that Septimus and Mrs Chater have had intimate relations behind his back. After Chater declares that he wishes to resolve the conflict in a duel, Septimus answers, "Sir – I repent your injury. You are an honest fellow with no more malice in you than poetry" (44).

This answer flouts the maxim of Manner by creating ambiguity. Septimus states that Chater is as malicious as he is poetic. Given Septimus's earlier assessment of Chater's poetry, he clearly implicates that Chater is neither malicious nor poetic. By inverting the sentence structure and positioning this affront after acknowledging his "repentance", Septimus suggests that he is praising Chater, when, in fact, he ridicules him. If Chater accepts that he is not malicious, he will also have to draw the conclusion that he has as little poetry in him as malice. Were he to consider himself a great poet, Septimus's sentence would imply that he is also very malicious. Consequently, the utterance cannot be read in a way in which it does not affront Chater, while being staged and framed as a compliment.

In this interaction, Septimus clearly establishes himself as verbally superior to Chater. He manipulates Chater into perceiving an affront as a compliment and, at the same time, proves that he, the tutor, has a better understanding of language and verbal humour than the self-proclaimed poet. Delaney likens Stoppard's language to "verbal tennis" (280). Following this metaphor, Chater is clearly constructed as the loser of their match.

3.2. "Reverse-Flouting" the Gricean Maxims

In all previous examples, the interaction follows a certain communication pattern. Speaker A addresses the recipient. If the message does not adhere to all four maxims, the recipient can infer that A has flouted the maxims for a reason. His message gains a second level of meaning. Apart from transporting what was said, the message suggests conversational implicatures that often function to create humour and ambiguity, or construct a hierarchy between the different speakers. These instances of flouting often coincide with utterances that contain rhetorical devices or other features of poetic and literary language. "Gricean implicature can be seen as the basis, in ordinary conversation, of traditional rhetorical figures such as metaphor, hyperbole

and irony. Such figures are, negatively speaking, ways of 'failing to say what one means' (Leech, Short 299).

Nünning and Nünning characterise literary language and literature itself as polyvalent. "In contrast to the ideal of the greatest possible explicitness and clarity, which is applied to non-fictional texts, literary texts (…) typically allow for various interpretations, thanks to their internal ambiguities" (18). Especially poetry features "a high degree of linguistic equivalence and parallelism [for example] on the level of meaning (semantic level) in the form of figurative language" (Nünning 51).

In the previous subchapter, I have already given examples in which a communication act features rhetorical devices such as euphemism, hyperbole or irony. Both the addressee on stage and the implied audience are expected to be familiar with the conventions of literary language. Despite their flouting of the Gricean maxims, the addressees understand the implicatures suggested through metaphors and irony. Apart from these established patterns of communication, however, *Arcadia* features interactions that cannot fully be explained using Grice's original terminology and definitions. I shall refer to these deviations from conventional communication patterns as "reverse-flouting" of the Gricean maxims.

In the first scene, Chater attacks Septimus for having "insulted" his wife. Whereupon the accused answers that "You are mistaken. I made love to your wife in the gazebo. She asked me to meet her there, I have the note somewhere, I dare say I could find it for you, and if someone is putting it about that I did not turn up, by God, it is a slander" (10). The course of this conversation resembles cases of flouting the maxim of Quality. Chater's accusation "You have insulted my wife yesterday in the gazebo" relies on an euphemistic use of insult. The OED defines 'to insult someone' as "[t]o assail with offensively dishonouring or contemptuous speech or action; to treat with scornful abuse or offensive disrespect; to offer indignity to; to affront, outrage." Other definitions suggest the figurative use of 'insult' as synonymous with "to attack, assault, assail".

From the context, however, the implied audience and Septimus can gather that Chater is referring to a figurative or euphemistic use of insult. He suggests that Septimus has had sexual intercourse with Mrs. Chater and casts Mrs Chater as the victim of the tutor's "attack". Chater's accusation itself, therefore, can be called a flouting of the maxim of Quality. We can assume that he observes the Cooperative Principle and that Septimus was intended to understand the metaphorical implicatures of his confrontation. The expected answer, therefore, would be one that denied, confirmed or excused any sexual actions between the two. Instead, Septimus interprets Chater's allegations as referring literally to an act of insulting and negates that while

confirming the rumours about their actions in the gazebo. Septimus's statement is true and does not flout the maxim of Quality. It is long enough and, in terms of the information provided, very succinct and explicit and thus in accordance with the maxims of Quantity and Manner. Septimus, moreover, clearly refers to the question and gives a clear answer in compliance with the maxim of Relation. Nonetheless, the tutor's answer remains unexpected. Not because the answer itself flouts any of Grice's maxims but because it ignores the clear implicatures of Chater's original comment and refers only to the literal meaning of what he has said. Septimus therefore, in reverse, flouts Chater's flouting of the maxim of Quality.

In another instance, Septimus again makes use of the ambiguity created by Chater's use of figurative language.

> CHATER: … I demand satisfaction!
> SEPTIMUS: Mrs Chater demanded satisfaction and now you are demanding satisfaction. I cannot spend my time, day and night satisfying the demands of the Chater family. (10)

Here, Chater refers to the literal meaning of satisfaction, as the "fulfilment of an obligation or claim", or "[t]he opportunity of satisfying one's honour by a duel; the acceptance of a challenge to a duel from the person who deems himself insulted or injured" (OED). In this case, Septimus infers implicatures that were probably not intentional. He does not consider "satisfaction" as being used literally but as a euphemism for the fulfilment of sexual desires. Again, Septimus's answer does not flout any of the Gricean maxims. It is quite possible that Mrs. Chater demanded "satisfaction", making his statement accord with maxim two. It neither evades an answer nor creates clear ambiguity and thus does not affront maxims three or four. Finally, his answer is of appropriate length and passes the first maxim of Quantity. Nonetheless, Septimus' statement again plays with the difference between literary meaning and figural or euphemistic use of certain terms.

The interactions between Mr. Chater and Septimus Hodge feature numerous instances of ambiguity and repeatedly negotiate the difference between figurative and literal meaning. Mr Chater, who considers himself a talented poet, clearly remains inferior to the tutor. Septimus makes use of humour in a situation in which he is threatened with having to fight for his life, and still allows himself to ridicule Mr. Chater. Despite calling Mr. Chater "a poet of the first rank" (11), Septimus's superior command of the English language and his skill when it comes to surprising and humorous turns, clearly mocks Chater's pretence at being a skilful poet.

At the same time, all instances of failed or overturned communications do not only suggest power relations and hierarchies between two individual characters but destabilise the play's construction of truth. The analysis and interpretation of the language in the excerpts of the dramatic dialogue above has repeatedly shown that text and language are open to different

and possibly contrasting interpretation. As with Septimus and Chater who use the same word with entirely different connotations, verbal clues in *Arcadia* are ambiguous.

3.3. Dramatic Irony

Another means of creating ambiguity in the play is through the use of dramatic irony. Dramatic irony occurs „[w]hen the audience understands the implication and meaning of a situation on stage, or what is being said, but the characters do not" (Cuddon 237). It "results from discrepant awareness between the recipient and a character; thanks to superior knowledge, the recipient has a privileged insight into the character's misjudgements, with the result that the character's words and actions take on additional, unintended meaning" (Nünning 186).

In *Arcadia*, we encounter two different types of dramatic irony. In the first case, the implied audience contrasts what is being said on stage with what they know about the world and especially literature and science. Stoppard's play blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, by referring to real authors, literary texts and facts. *Arcadia* features Lord Byron and mentions his supposed love interest Lady Caroline Lamb, whose relationship is part of real academic discourse concerning Byron (cf. Drummond, n.p.). Characters speak of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* and discuss existing writings on science and maths as with Fermat's Theorem. The fact that these names exist both on stage and in the implied audience's reality leads to instances of dramatic irony that rely on the "common fund of knowledge and experience" (Leech, Short 259) between author and implied audience and contradict expectations that are founded in this shared knowledge. Accordingly, there are examples of dramatic irony that rely on the knowledge about Byron that theatregoers bring to the performance but also information about Byron that is mentioned in the present time frame of the play.

Thomasina claims that Septimus "will be famous for being [her] tutor when Lord Byron is dead and forgotten" (41). Here, the dramatic irony derives from the fact, that today, the real Lord Byron is far from forgotten. In fact, as one of the six "Romantic Poets", he is among the most famous writers in the history of British literature (cf. Kitson 328).[2]

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[2] Another instance of dramatic irony that makes use of the knowledge of the implied educated audience, are references to the scientific discourse. Talking about Fermat's last theorem, Thomasina cries that "there is no proof, Septimus. The thing that is perfectly obvious is that the note in the margin was a joke to make you all mad" (10), when, in fact, only two months after *Arcadia*'s first production Andrew Wiles managed to prove the theorem in the play (cf. Ribenboim, Singh). This instance of dramatic irony is debateable since it did not exist when the play was first written but might still amuse educated theatregoers today.

Other examples of dramatic irony result from the fact that the implied audience is aware of the 20th-century time frame in the story. Therefore, the audience already knows that Thomasina will die young whereas the Regency characters are not aware that Thomasina will not live to see her 17th birthday (80). Conversely, readers know that Bernhard's reconstruction of the past does not correspond to the scenes set in the Regency era. We know that Thomasina adds a hermit to Noakes's plans *before* Septimus moved into the hermitage (18), we know that Augustus claims that Byron never, in fact, shot the hare mentioned in the game book (84) and that Chater has never challenged Byron but Septimus Hodge to a duel.

Especially in the instances above, *Arcadia* features characters who attempt to recreate the past or predict the future. Since members of the implied audience are aware not only of one time frame, but both of early-19th and late 20th-century occurrences, they are made aware of the instability of accepted truths. The lines that feature discrepant awareness, therefore, stress the ambiguity of past and future and highlight the ubiquity of misinterpretations that arise from lack of knowledge.

4. Structural Ambiguity

In this essay, I have shown that the dialogues in *Arcadia* partake in a destabilisation of truth and reality. This verbal ambiguity between the things that are said and those that are implicated is taken up in other constituents of the dramatic text, as well. *Arcadia*'s temporal setting, the character constellations and elements of the plot are shaped by parallels, continuities, repetitions and convergences that destabilise boundaries between time frames, individual characters and different interpretations of "reality".

Arcadia is set in Sidley Park, the Derbyshire estate of the Coverly family, both in Regency England, between 1809 and 1812, and in the late 20th century. Whereas the first scenes allow for a clear differentiation between both temporal settings, in the course of the play both times start to converge. Scenes four and five break with the former pattern of alternating scenes in the past and the present and both feature the future inhabitants and visitors of Sidley Park. The stage directions in the end of scene four demand a light change and "a pistol shot. A moment later there is the cry of dozens of crows disturbed from the unseen trees" (Stoppard 56). These directions do not stand in an apparent logical context with neither scene four nor five. Their importance and significance becomes ambiguous. If we apply the Gricean maxims to the play as a conversation between implied author and implied audience, we can assume that the pistol shots carry meaning. Since these noises stand in no relation with the previous scene, and since the play can be expected to follow the Cooperative Principle in so far that form carries

meaning, we can assume that the noises in the stage directions suggest implicatures. In this case, the implied audience is aware of the two time frames and the pending duel in the Regency scenes. The pistol shots therefore implicate that they are part of the past temporal setting and that the duel has taken place. Only later do readers realize that instead of killing or wounding either Septimus or Chater, the shots have been fired by Septimus to kill a rabbit (cf. *Arcadia* 71).

In scene seven, both time frames ultimately collapse into one: the scene features a character configuration that consists of characters from the 19th and 20th century, apparently unaware of each others' presence on stage. Despite the contrast between both time frames, the scene features continuities and correspondences. According to the stage directions, all characters are dressed in clothes from the Regency period, and their conversations repeatedly revolve around the same topics. Both Septimus and Thomasina, and Valentine and Hannah discuss the Coverly set and Thomasina's scientific findings. Both sets of characters discuss Lord Byron, and Hannah mentions Chater and his dahlias immediately after Lady Croom "touches the bowl of dahlias" (87). Moreover, both time frames revise a variation of the tutor/student relationship in the character constellations of Septimus and Thomasina in the past and Valentine and Hannah (in terms of scientific discourse) in the present.

Apart from corresponding character constellations, there are two characters who arguably appear in both temporal settings of the play. On the one hand, both past and present repeatedly engage with the tortoises Lightning and Plautus, that cannot be distinguished since they are represented using the same prop ("*Lightning, the tortoise is on the table and is not readily distinguishable from Plautus*", 47). Even more obvious is the correspondence between the present Gus and Regency Augustus. The dramatis personae of the play lists both Coverlys as individual characters. There are, however, numerous hints that suggest that both characters are more closely connected than through their shared family relations. Augustus and Gus are both fifteen years old (Stoppard 4) and both the youngest sibling in the Coverly family. The production history featured in the Faber and Faber edition specifies that in the first performance in 1993 both teenage boys were played by the same actor, Timothy Matthews. Consequently, the characters would have appeared identical to an audience of the production in question. When Gus appears for the last time, the stage direction reads "GUS *appears in the doorway. It takes a moment to realize that he is not Lord Augustus; perhaps until* HANNAH *sees* him" (100). In fact, both characters are only distinguishable through their interactions with other characters.

In their different ways, both young men appear to be of little importance to the play: Gus does not speak and Augustus only arrives for a few lines in the last scene. Nonetheless

Gus/Augustus are essential for the ultimate conclusion of the play. Augustus asks Septimus for the portrait of tutor and tortoise and Gus manages to supply Hannah with the exact picture, allowing her to infer that the hermit was in fact Septimus, the tutor (101).

Apart from the real continuities between the tortoises and the teenage boys, there are other characters whose identities are debateable. Ezra Chater the poet and Ezra Chater the botanist are assumed to be different persons until scene five reveals the opposite (93). Lord Byron's companion is only late revealed to have been Lady Caroline Lamb (89), and Bernhard Nightingale purposefully poses as one Bernhard Peacock to disguise his real identity (23).

5. Conclusion

Arcadia has been referred to as one of "Stoppard's two major science-based plays" (Edwards 171). In this essay, I have shown, in how far *Arcadia* surpasses this narrow description. Stoppard's play does not only engage with science and academic research but, in its essence, negates the existence of truths. Stoppard's use of chaos theory and iterated algorithms highlights "not only the limitations of scientific prediction but also the inescapable fact that we can never hope to forsee just what course our lives will take" (Antakyalioğlu 87) and *Arcadia's* language, character constellations and plot construction display a high amount of ambiguity.

By flouting the Gricean maxims, Stoppard's dialogue creates ambiguity. On the one hand, this ambiguity and the repeated use of dramatic irony generate humour. On the other hand, the scenes between Septimus and Chater and, similarly, between Hannah and Bernhard resemble verbal tennis matches and clearly establish a hierarchy of wit and intelligence between the characters on stage. At the same time, verbal polyvalence serves to emphasize the chaos and instability that Stoppard's scientific metaphors and references suggest.

Simultaneously, discourses of interpretation and misinterpretation permeate *Arcadia*'s setting, plot construction and character constellations. What appears to be clearly distinct, such as Regency and modern England, converges into one shared picture. Repetitions, parallels and overlaps between both temporal settings deconstruct barriers and blur the distinctions between past and present, prediction and reality, truth and misinterpretations. On the plot-level, Septimus and Thomasina fail to predict the future; Bernhard, Hannah and Valentine misinterpret evidence from the past and finally they acknowledge that "We're better at predicting events at the edge of the galaxy or inside the nucleus of an atom than whether it'll rain on auntie's garden party three Sundays from now" (Stoppard 52).

Consequently, the play establishes not only language and time as ambiguous, it also raises questions about the nature of individual identities and implies that nothing is unequivocally

true. Letters get lost or are burned, grouse populations are not reconstructable, evidence is faked (as with Thomasina's drawing of the hermit). Thus, perceived truths are deconstructed, and ambiguities replace certainties. In *Arcadia*, interpretation is a flawed and error-prone endeavour. Be it in grouse populations, literature or maths, there is just "too much *bloody noise*" (Stoppard 66).

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EVALUATION SHEET

British Studies

Seminar:	Reading 20th-Century British Classics
Name of student:	
Title of paper:	*(Mis-)Communication and (Mis-)Interpretation in Tom Stoppard's "Arcadia"*
Date of marking:	30.06.2018

Research Question/Thesis Statement and Argument

Research question/

thesis statement:	☒ sophisticated	☐ accurate	☐ imprecise	☐ missing
Argumentation	☒ clear/strong	☒ well-structured	☐ logical	☐ misleading
Result:	☒ comprehensive	☒ well-informed	☐ sufficient	☐ missing

Further observations:

The thesis statement is well-thought through and moves convincingly from the concrete to the general (1f, 9). The observations are shrewd proceeding from an impressive understanding of structure in language and literature. The combination of linguistics and literary study is managed on a very advanced level and sustainted through to the very last page of the essay. The Conclusion proves the originality of the interpretation.

Theory and Method

☒ analytical approach   ☐ mix of approaches   ☐ descriptive approach

☒ reference to theories of literature/culture

☒ concepts and terminology of literary analysis and interpretation

    ☒ plot construction   ☒ representation of time/space   ☐ narrative situation

    ☒ character construction/constellation   ☒ tropes

    ☒ other: dramatic dialogue

Further observations:

The terminology of drama analysis is used correctly throughout the essay yielding very good results. The combination of in-depth linguistic analysis based on Grice and the comprehensive perspective of literary studies allows the writer to observe pertinent details of language use to produce humerous effects. Moreover, the author studies tropes (such as euphemism, hyperbole, verbal and structural irony) and then interprets her findings convincingly by looking at social hierarchy, power relations and the de/construction of truth.

Primary Sources (Evidence)

Collection of data: ☒ effective ☒ pertinent ☐ relevant ☐ irrelevant

Use of material: ☐ citation ☐ comments ☒ critical discussion

Secondary Sources (Debate)

Extent of research

Reference made to ☒ relevant monographs ☒ book articles

☒ articles in journals ☒ relevant websites

Incorporation through ☒ critical discussion ☐ comments ☐ citation

Use of material: ☐ appropriation ☒ self-positioning ☐ reproduction

Further observations:

Klicken Sie hier, um Text einzugeben.

Form

☒ no complaints

☐ deficiencies with regard to (the)

☐ title page ☒ table of contents ☐ formatting (1.5 line spacing, justification, etc.)

☐ pagination ☐ highlighting of titles and concepts ☐ parenthetical citation

☐ blocked quotes ☐ footnotes ☐ bibliography

Presentation: ☒ competent proof-reading ☐ some mistakes ☐ many mistakes

English: ☒ idiomatic ☐ minor errors ☐ frequent errors ☐ incomprehensible

Style: ☒ appealing ☒ well readable ☐ appropriate ☐ simple

Further observations:

This essay is one of the most rare cases with no typos at all!
The English is impeccable! The essay is particularly appealing because it uses a plain and sober style on an appropriately elevated register. Excellent work!

The paper under review is marked: 1,0 (very good)

Leibniz Universität Hannover

Englisches Seminar

Winter 2018/19

Course: Ireland: History, Culture, Literature

Instructor: Prof. Dr. Jana Gohrisch

Performing history in Paul Greengrass' *Bloody Sunday* (2002)

Content

1. Introduction

One 15 June 2010, then British prime minister David Cameron addressed the House of Commons, stating:

> I know that some people wonder whether, nearly 40 years on from an event, a prime minister needs to issue an apology. For someone of my generation, Bloody Sunday and the early 1970s are something we feel we have learnt about rather than lived through. But what happened should never, ever have happened. The families of those who died should not have had to live with the pain and the hurt of that day and with a lifetime of loss. Some members of our armed forces acted wrongly. The government is ultimately responsible for the conduct of the armed forces and for that, on behalf of the government, indeed, on behalf of our country, I am deeply sorry (BBC News).

The prime minister's formal apology at that time was triggered by the publication of the results of a government inquiry (also known as Saville report), concluding that British paratroopers deployed to the city of Derry/ Londonderry[1], Northern Ireland, had to bear sole responsibility for the violent death of 14 civilians on 30 January 1972 (The Guardian).

On 30 January 1972, what is now being remembered as Bloody Sunday, a banned but peaceful demonstration organized by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) against the internment of suspected Irish Republican Army (IRA) members was forcefully broken up by soldiers of the British Army and led to the death of 14 demonstrators. British troops had been moved to Northern Ireland three years prior to the incident in a peace-keeping mission in response to growing sectarian violence between Nationalist and Unionist actors. The British Army, however, failed to maintain peace and political violence escalated in the months leading up to the events of Bloody Sunday (Kramer 196). The demonstrations in Derry on Bloody Sunday were in large parts motivated by the measures of Northern Ireland's government to neutralize the IRA by interning over 300 suspected members without trial or charge, which many citizens – not only Nationalists – saw as unjust (Coohill 168 f.).

In the aftermath of the march, political violence in Northern Ireland and beyond escalated further. Several incidents such as the assault on the British Embassy in Dublin and other violent attacks claimed numerous lives, making 1972 the most violent year of the Troubles with the death toll rising to 474 by the end of the year. As a response to such high levels of violence, the British government in London took direct control over Northern Ireland three months later and suspended the regional parliament (ibid., p. 169). When a first government

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[1] Even though the town's official name is Londonderry, it is widely referred to as Derry across Northern Ireland (including by the town's own city council). Today, opinion on whether to recognize the town by the name of Derry or Londonderry is still split mainly along Unionist and Nationalist lines and remains subject to ongoing debates (Wilson). For reasons of consistency and readability, in this paper, the town will henceforth be referred to as Derry.

inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday (known as Widgery report after Chief Justice Lord Widgery) concluded that British soldiers opened fire on the crowds only after being shot at by protestors, disputing the accounts of protesters and residents, further outrage was sparked among Catholics and Nationalists (BBC News; McKittrick & McVea 78).

30 years after the news reports and images of the protests in Derry spread around the world, Bloody Sunday became the basis for a feature film of the same name. *Bloody Sunday* was directed by British filmmaker Paul Greengrass and produced for the British television network ITV where it aired on 20 January 2002 – almost exactly 30 years after the incident. The film won several awards such as the Golden Berlin Bear and the British Independent Film Award and received a remarkable amount of media coverage in the UK and Ireland (Pötzsch 211). The film release was not only scheduled for the 30-year anniversary of Bloody Sunday but also coincided with a string of public hearings conducted during the course of the Saville inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday between 2000 and 2004, which were concluded in 2010 and ultimately challenged the conclusions of the Widgery report (Irish Times).

In 1972, public opinion was split over the role British forces played in the escalation of the initially peaceful demonstration in Derry on 30 January. While the official government inquiry into the incident at that time found that British soldiers could not be blamed for the deaths, many – including people who took part in the march or witnessed it on site – perceived the use of force by the British paratroopers as unjustified and excessive (ibid.). Against this backdrop, this paper will try to explore Paul Greengrass' film *Bloody Sunday* (2002) as a re-enactment of the events of Bloody Sunday and attempt to examine how by deploying prominent aesthetic forms (such as direct cinema and *cinema verité*) the film re-negotiates the complicity of the British Army and the Irish demonstrators in the escalation of the conflict and re-examines which side is to blame for the death of 14 civilians. After laying out a brief methodological and theoretical framework for the analysis of the film, key findings pertaining to the aesthetic forms of the film will be presented. The analysis will then be further elaborated on by a discussion on how the film negotiates history by means of its prominent cinematographic choices.

2. Methodological and theoretical framework

This paper attempts to analyze and interpret Paul Greengrass' *Bloody Sunday* (2002) according to the methodological framework laid out by Nünning (25 ff.). The analysis will inquire into the thematic (What?), as well as formal (How?) characteristics of the film as a cultural phenomenon and examine their functions (Why?) within the film and beyond. By doing so, this paper follows what is described as the "semanticisation of literary forms" (ibid., p. 26) and

assumes that literary forms and structures help the audience construct meaning while also taking into account the wider context of the cultural phenomenon.

According to Mikos (43), there are five main areas of inquiry within the academic field of film analysis: Content and representation, narration and dramatic composition, characters and agents, aesthetics and form, and contexts. This paper will focus mainly on the aesthetic and formal elements of analysis but will also touch upon aspects relating to the narrative situation and context of the film. The formal analysis put forward in this paper will revolve around what Nünning (147) point out to be the four most crucial factors in film analysis: image, sound, story, and narrative mode. Story refers to what in drama analysis is termed action, generally meaning the "change or perpetuation of a situation brought about by the characters" (ibid., p. 91). The action of a film is usually further divided into story and plot. The former being used as a reference to a chronological sequence of events and the latter to describe a causally and logically linked chain of events (ibid., p. 108). Action also usually entails elements such as character constellation, characterization, and dialogue. Image refers to the composition of individual frames determined in large parts by camera settings including the type of shot, camera angle, frame rate, and camera movement which all fall into the category of what is regarded as cinematography (ibid., p. 147). Apart from cinematography, the construction of images of a film is also greatly influenced by the *mise-en-scène* – that is the sets, locations, costumes, props, lighting, and framing for the camera (Bordwell et al. 112 ff.). Sound may among other features include noise, voice, and music, all of which can be distinguished by whether their source is located 'on-screen' (diagetic) or 'off-screen' (non-diagetic). The narrative mode encompasses narratological concepts (borrowed from drama analysis), editing techniques, and the point of view and narrative situation established by the camera (Nünning 147 ff.).

As Nünning (27) note, "[…] anybody embarking on an interpretation of a text [or film in this case] must first choose a fruitful angle of enquiry and clarify their goal, methods, and the theoretical assumptions implicit in all of these". This paper attempts to approach Paul Greengrass' film from a structuralist as well as new historicist angle, allowing for both text-/code-oriented and context-oriented readings of the material. Text-oriented readings within the scope of this paper will be understood as approaches to cultural phenomena concerned with "providing an exact description of the structural features of literary texts" (ibid., p. 39) while disregarding contextual elements. Context-oriented readings will be understood as approaches focusing on "relationships between literary texts and their historical context" (ibid., p. 41).

In literary/ cultural studies, structuralism represents a literary theory that developed under the strong influence of (Russian) formalism, which is mainly concerned with the close analysis

of the formal elements of literary texts and how these so-called 'devices' transform everyday language into literature (Berensmeyer 30 f.). As Doughty and Etherington-Wright (86) note,

> [f]ormalism is concerned with the devices and rules that go into the making of cultural artefacts, with the author actively employing techniques to achieve specific ends. Structuralists, on the other hand, are concerned with the framework of meaning; how an audience reads and understands signs within a text. Their interest is focused on the workings of human perception which moves us away from a particular text to the more general universal context.

Structuralist analyses thus try to reveal how images transport meaning, by examining the relationship between image, language, and a broad range of other concepts, pointing out that the way individuals interpret certain information is greatly influenced by that individual's cultural, linguistic, etc. background (ibid., p. 103). Structuralists therefore acknowledge that "[l]iterary effects are not created by the mere presence of certain devices, but by the interplay between a foreground of striking textual features and a background of unremarkable and familiar elements" (Berensmeyer 35). As a result, structuralist analyses do not dissect the singular aesthetic features of a cultural artefact in isolation but refer/ connect them to larger underlying patterns and structures such as the conventions of a certain literary genre (Barry 40 f.; ibid. p. 50).

Unlike structuralism, new historicism approaches the analysis of cultural artefacts from a context-centered angle altogether. According to Barry (175), "A simple definition of the new historicism is that it is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period". New historicism is first and foremost interested in rethinking the relationship between literary texts and history. "New Historicists maintain that literature does not reflect a 'given' historical moment but negotiates cultural concepts and values" (Meyer 187). New historicism therefore challenges the assumption that history is stable and unchanging and argues that it is instead "[…] open to revision and rewriting, since it is a matter of telling stories about the past" which are usually narrated from a certain point of view (Berensmeyer 109). As a result, new historicism "envisages and practices a mode of study in which literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other" (Barry 175).

3. Analysis of aesthetic form

3.1 Plot construction

The film 'Bloody Sunday' documents the events of 30 January 1972 within a time frame of 24 hours. The film begins with a parallel montage of two press conferences being held by the

Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and the British Army in the wake of the Civil Rights March. Ivan Cooper (James Nesbitt), a Protestant Member of the Parliament of Northern Ireland for Derry stands at the head of the NICRA and represents the association and their intentions to the public, while the British Army is represented by Major General Robert Ford (Tim Pigott Smith). This montage establishes the theme and setting of the film and points out the intentions of both sides of the conflict: While the NICRA points out that they are demonstrating against the "discrimination of Catholics", "mass internment without trial", and "Unionist rule", the British Army makes clear that under according to the law "all parades, processions, and marches will be banned until further notice" and that participants will face arrest.

During the first half hour of the film, both sides of the conflict are shown preparing for the event. Cooper who somewhat functions as a protagonist throughout the course of the film is pictured shaking hands, handing out leaflets, speaking with soldiers and citizens and discussing the details of the march. Gerry Donaghy (Declan Duddy), a Catholic youth and second key character on the side of the NICRA is pictured alongside his Protestant fiancé and their baby. Members of the British Army – Major General Ford, Brigadier MacLellan, and Chief Superintendent Lagan – are shown strategizing in their army offices and taking their positions in the city. Two things become obvious at this point in film: Firstly, British forces intend to not only stand on guard waiting but actively scoop up a group of "hooligans". Secondly, members of the IRA are on scene watching the march from a car, being told by Ivan Cooper to stay out of it.

Once the march gets underway and a group of demonstrators catches sight of armed British soldiers peeking over a wall along the route of the march, events slowly start to escalate. Despite Coopers efforts to persuade the demonstrators, the march splits when a group of mostly young men breaks away from the march and starts throwing rocks at the soldiers. The British army responds with water cannons and fires rubber bullets and tear gas at the group of demonstrators. In the midst of this confusion, a British soldier is pictured shooting two demonstrators sparking the situation to escalate even further. One IRA member is shown pulling out a rifle from the trunk of his car only to be hold back by other men who take away the weapon.

While Ivan Cooper addresses the main section of the march, one army brigade is stepping into the conflict firing at the crowds of demonstrators. The soldiers are pictured shooting at the fleeing masses, wounding and killing several civilians. They shoot demonstrators in the back, fire at wounded who are already lying on the ground, and in one instance shoot a man waving a white handkerchief directly in the head. During the massacre,

one IRA man is shown firing a single shot at the soldiers before – again – being stopped by other demonstrators.

After the gunfire has stopped, the soldiers take some demonstrators into custody while other demonstrators and witnesses tend to the wounded and dead. While Cooper is – in shock - taking account of the casualties and trying to console the victim's families, the British Forces are shown trying to come to grips with their own actions. Soldiers are being questioned and questions about justifications for the firing of live ammunition are being raised. Soldiers as well as the military personnel in charge of the operation claim to have come under fire by the demonstrators, thus simply responding to a threat. However, it becomes obvious in the film that no such threat existed. Soldiers appear to give false testimony of the events and in one scene a person in dark clothes is pictured planting multiple nail bombs in the jacket of Gerry Donaghy who died as a result of a gunshot wound.

The film concludes – as it begins – with a press conference held by the NICRA. A noticeably worked up Ivan Cooper addresses the press and informs them about the death of civilians, accusing the British forces and warning them that they will "reap a whirlwind" (1:36:30) due to a response by the IRA to the actions of the British Army. And indeed, a couple of scenes prior to the press conference, about a dozen men are pictured being handed out guns in a dark alleyway. Towards the end of the press conference the names of the victims are being read out, cross cut with screen credits referring to the Lord Widgery inquiry. In the final shot, a co-organizer of the march is pictured close-up stating, "(…) we will not rest until justice is done" (1:39:40).

3.2 Image and narrative mode

One of the first things that is obvious when analyzing the film image wise is its noticeably desaturated, washed-out colors and almost grainy look. This – for one – makes the footage look as if it had been filmed a good amount of time prior to 2002, but also establishes an almost depressing mood due to the prominence of grey color tones. Evidently, the film also utilizes on-screen credits to indicate the time and place the film is set in within the first three minutes and contextualizes the events with a reference to the Lord Widgery inquiry towards the end of the film. Upon close viewing, some key observations can also be made regarding camera settings, editing techniques, the point of view, and narrative mode.

Aesthetically, the first sequence sets the stage for some prominent formal elements deployed throughout the entire film. Here, the two press conferences by the NICRA and the British Army are juxtaposed through a sequence of cross-cuts that move from one press

conference to the other. Firstly, the viewer is provided a medium shot of the character of Ivan Cooper produced by a presumably hand-held camera that follows him into a pressroom. Separated by a cross-cut, the camera then follows Major General Ford and three other military commanders into a different pressroom. Secondly, Cooper's and Ford's addresses are filmed from what appears to be the second or third row of spectators, the camera shooting through in between the heads of press reporters and photographers taking pictures of the speakers. What follows in this sequence is a number of cross-cuts shifting the attention from one pressroom to the other, continuing with close-up shots of both Cooper and Ford delivering their messages. Thirdly, Cooper and Ford are shown leaving the pressrooms, the camera shooting their exits from behind a number of spectators.

Throughout the film, it becomes obvious that the majority of scenes were filmed with a hand-held camera that is at all times moving in some way. This results in shaky and quivering images. The camera work itself appears to be rather sloppy, as the camera is re-focused and zoomed in and out mid-scene in several instances. In some scenes, the camera seems to be guided not by a clearly structured script but instead appears to be distracted by details not directly relating to the action.

Usually, throughout the film there are four main focalizing instances through whose perspective the viewer gains insight into the events of 30 January 1972. While these instances may not be focalizers in the conventional sense of the term, they do function as anchors within the story/ plot in whose close vicinity the camera is placed. Among those instances are Ivan Cooper, the leader of the march, Garry Donaghy and his friends, the British Army commanders coordinating the operation from within the military headquarter, and one military brigade on the ground in Derry. Apart from the few establishing shots the film displays, the camera is mostly placed where the action is happening. That means – for instance – that it follows Ivan Cooper shaking hands, handing out leaflets, speaking with soldiers and civilians. It also accompanies Garry and his friends getting ready for the march. The military personnel in charge of coordinating the mission are being followed through meetings and talks at the headquarter and groups British officers on the ground are shown strategizing.

It is worth pointing out that although being placed in close distance to the action, the camera appears to keep some sort of observational distance. Similar to the opening scene described above, quite a few frames are being shot through crowds of people, from behind by-standing characters' backs or through open doors or doorframes. While this distance is being kept for a good portion of the film, it is occasionally broken with close-up shots of characters during conversations or soldiers crammed into military vehicles.

The editing is generally rather fast-paced. As mentioned above, quite a lot of cross-cutting is deployed in the film, contrasting for instance the preparations on part of the NICRA and the British Army. A striking detail of many of those cross-cuts is that for a brief second there is a black screen in between frames, clearly separating both perspectives on the conflict. Cuts are often used in a way that the viewer appears to be dropped in the middle of an action or conversation.

Once the shooting starts, the editing picks up pace. The hand-held camera, still very much at the center of the crowds, is incorporating ever more motion into the images, as it follows the fleeing masses. Shots at this point in the film appear rather limited in length while medium to close-up shots of demonstrators and soldiers dominate the screen. This makes it particularly difficult for the viewer to follow the general plotline. The narration at this point in the film seems to move to the background, as images between different perspectives seem to lack a coherent structure.

After the shooting, the frames are arranged less hastily, matching the pace of the beginning of the film. Individual shots of the victims, the victims' family and the organizers of the march including Ivan Cooper in the hospital appear longer than other shots in the film. Here again, medium to very close-up shots of the grieving family members' faces dominate the screen. This is also true for the interrogation of soldiers by military investigators, which is conveyed through close-up shots of the individual soldiers. Press interviews given by Major General Ford and Colonel Tugwell on the ground in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, as well as discussions among Army commanders at the military headquarter are filmed in the same observational manner described above. The NICRA press address after the shooting appears to be framed in almost the same way as the other two press in the beginning of the film. Here, too, the camera is placed in the second or third row of spectators.

3.3 Sound design

One of the first things that is obvious when analyzing the film sound wise is its almost complete lack of non-diegetic soundtrack. Upon closer listening it becomes apparent that throughout the entire film only the first sequence of shots is underscored with musical elements that originate off-screen. Only the parallelly cut montage of the two press conferences held by the NICRA and the British Army with which the film opens is underpinned by a subtle but dramatic arrangement of strings and drums. Except for in this instance, however, the film appears to solely rely on naturalistic sounds to complement its frames. These include the shutter sounds of cameras documenting the press conferences, street noise, the noise of military vehicles

moving through Derry, NICRA members applauding and singing ('We shall overcome'), and mostly inaudible conversation snippets and background dialogue. Once the march gets underway, this sound palette is further supplemented with the sounds of demonstrators chanting and some younger marchers yelling insults at the British officers. After the British troops have opened fire on the protesters, the sound scape of the film is dominated by the sounds of witnesses and family members sobbing and crying and the noise of sirens coming from the ambulances rushing to the scene of the shooting.

Apart from that, there appear to be three sound patterns that are recurring throughout the film and therefore stand out. Firstly, there are multiple scenes in which the viewer can clearly hear church bells ringing indicating the time of day. This sound pattern is in almost all instances either paired with an establishing shot of the town of Derry with a church at the center of the image or a relatively close-up shot of a church bell tower with its clock. Secondly, there is clearly audible but incomprehensible radio noise almost every time British soldiers are shown on screen. This is especially noticeable in scenes that show military personnel at the army headquarter and troops operating on the streets of Derry but runs through the entire film. Thirdly, there are a vast number of shots that are accompanied by the sound of phones ringing in the background. During the first half of the film, this is mostly the case when the camera is focusing on Ivan Cooper. Most prominently, the phone interrupts Cooper shaving in an upstairs bathroom of his house and he has to hurry downstairs, dressing and squeezing through a crowd of people that have gathered in the hallway, to answer the phone (9:44) or when kissing a fellow organizer of the march (38:06). During the second half of the film, phones are audibly ringing at the military headquarter, at the hospital, and the final NICRA press conference.

4. Interpretation

One of the first things worth looking at when discussing how meaning is constructed in the film is the particular style of filmmaking that is embodied by the aesthetic means analyzed above. Arguably, many of the aesthetic features described above appear to resemble key characteristics of what is referred to as direct cinema or *cinema verité* in film studies.

Direct cinema is characterized as a documentary style of filmmaking that according to Bordwell et al. (350) "records an ongoing event as it happens, with minimal interference by the filmmaker". Direct cinema as a film style emerged with the development of lightweight and therefore portable camera equipment. According to Monaco (356), this innovation led to film production processes where "[…] hundreds of hours of film were shot to capture a sense of the reality of the subject", instead of simply relying on a thoroughly-scripted narration like other

documentary styles. As Tracy (15) notes, "In cinema-verité [and direct cinema for that matter] the camera is most often hand-held, on the shoulder of the operator, rather than placed on a tripod. This communicates a strong sense of movement and intimacy and facilitates an impression of 'being there' for the viewer". Despite their stark similarities, Nam points out that "[…] direct cinema and cinema verité aim to uncover truth (hence the name) in two different ways. The former hopes to unveil truth through the camera's observation of events and subjects; the latter uses any means possible to seek out truth and is intrinsically an internal process being gradually revealed". According to Barsam (303, qtd. in Beattie 83 f.), however, both "[…] are committed to […] producing a cinema that simultaneously brought the filmmaker and the audience closer to the subject".

Image wise, the representation of direct cinema and *cinema verité* in *Bloody Sunday* is first and foremost accomplished through the extensive use of hand-held cameras producing shaky images, the striking use of cinematographic inaccuracies, such as the re-focusing mid frame, and the style of editing that relies on cross- and jump-cuts instead of continuously edited sequences. The point of view represented through the focalizing instances listed above, creates the impression for the viewer to be participating in or witnessing the events firsthand, while maintaining a safe observational distance to the characters that allows for a seemingly unbiased assessment of the events. Sound wise, the film is constructed in a way that resembles direct cinema and *cinema verité* primarily through the lack of non-diegetic soundtrack, naturalistic sounds and realistic background noise, and inaudible conversation snippets floating through the sequences.

Following Penney's reading of the film, the inclusion of prominent aesthetic elements primarily found in direct cinema and *cinema verité* results in a reconstruction of the primary and secondary witness positions. This perspective asks the viewer to "bear witness to the trauma [and] to become a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event" (Penney). Immersing the audience directly in the deadly confrontation, which the film arguably achieves by deploying characteristic features of direct cinema and *cinema verité*, *Bloody Sunday* "[…] makes the audience complicit with the victims and the immediate witnesses, and it therefore relates the immediate effect of terror to the reflexive passion the spectator experiences" (Haekel 185). Above all, this becomes obvious during and after the actual shooting takes place. While the sequences that depict the shooting itself are constructed rather fast-paced and hastily, communicating a strong sense of confusion and fear on both sides of the firing line, the sequences following the shooting are marked by a number of close-up shots of the grieving victims and families and the British soldiers scrambling to justify their actions that appear less

hastily edited and longer in duration, arguably conveying stronger feelings of shock, grief and desperation.

One possible angle of interpretation could be that the film pitches a reconciliatory agenda to its audience, trying to bring together both sides of the conflict by concentrating on the emotional impact the event had on all participants and witnesses alike. To follow Penney's reading once again, "[i]t would seem that Greengrass' intent, particularly in the scene of the massacre, is to induce feelings of trauma, helplessness and guilt […]". By establishing an 'on-the-ground' perspective of both the side of the demonstrators and the British Army and documenting both perspectives leading to up to the deadly escalation of events, one might further argue that the film "is able to create a dynamic that allows for collective guilt acceptance to occur" (Beckett 69). It could be argued that the reconciliatory aspiration is also manifested in the focus on Ivan Cooper as a protagonist of the story. By relying on Cooper – a Protestant fighting for the rights of Catholics – the film arguably addresses the necessity to bridge the gap between the two factions of the conflict.

Given the stark presence of elements of direct cinema and *cinema verité* in *Bloody Sunday*, however, one could contend that the film attempts to do more than simply relive the traumatic events through the emotional involvement of its audience. By incorporating prominent elements of documentary style films, *Bloody Sunday* might attempt to imitate the quality of actual news or documentary footage altogether. Especially the overall desaturated and grainy look of the images, the often times inaccurate camera work and the naturalistic sound scape of the film support this impression. As a result, it could therefore be argued that the film aims at presenting itself more as a documentary film than the work of historical fiction or drama it actually is.

As Bordwell et al. (351 f.) point out, "[a] documentary claims to present factual information about the world. […]. [It] may take a stand, state an opinion, or advocate a solution to a problem". One argument could be that by adopting prominent features common for documentary style films, Greengrass' film, too, claims to provide a factual retelling of the events of 30 January 1972. As Beckett (51) observes, "[p]laying on the concept of journalistic immediacy and unbiased reportage much of the aesthetic for this film is based around the establishment of an 'on-the-ground' point of view that depicts events simply 'as what they are'". By revisiting the historical event through a feature film that comes in the shape of documentary film rather than a historical drama, *Bloody Sunday* therefore asserts to document the events as they unfolded and would have been seen by someone on the streets of Derry that day.

If this is to be considered an effect of the aesthetic form of the film, *Bloody Sunday* should be read in the light of the public and political discourses that surrounded the events it documents, particularly considering the time of publication, however. In 1972, public opinion on who was to be blamed for the escalation of the Civil Rights March were very much split. Only a few months after the shooting in Derry, the inquiry led by Lord Widgery found that British soldiers could not be blamed for the death of civilians because they merely responded to a violent assault by demonstrators. In legal terms this meant that no British officer was charged for firing at unarmed protestors in the aftermath of the incident[2]. In 2002, at the time of release, however, the public outlook on the events of Bloody Sunday were presumably rather different. Just after being elected Prime Minister in 1998, Tony Blair established a second inquiry into the events which – as mentioned in the introduction – resulted in the British Government eventually accepting the blame for the excessive use of force by British soldiers on the ground.

Plot wise and in terms of what is effectively shown image wise in the film, the question of complicity in the escalation of the event is answered in a somewhat balanced fashion. While the British assault on the march is depicted extraordinarily graphic and violent for example, the film does not deny that armed members of the IRA were indeed among the marchers. All things considered, following Pötzsch's (213) reading, "[…] Greengrass's *Bloody Sunday* closely aligns to the final conclusions drawn by Saville and at times almost seems to resemble a popular and dramatized pre-mediation of the actual report". By doing so through utilizing aesthetic forms usually found in documentary filmmaking, it could be argued, that the film aims at establishing a credible and persuasive alternative narrative to the report produced by the Lord Widgery inquiry in 1972. By presenting itself as a documentary film rather than a historical drama, the film arguably questions the British government's stance defending the use of force against protestors and making the case for a public re-evaluation of the British troops' role in the death of civilians. One could contend that the film re-negotiates complicity in the escalation of the protest in so far, that it exposes the misconduct of British soldiers and debunks the results of the Lord Widgery inquiry.

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[2] In fact, it took 47 years until in the spring of 2019 the first murder charge was laid against a soldier of the British Army (BBC News).

5. Conclusion

As this paper tried to point out, Paul Greengrass' feature film *Bloody Sunday* (2002) reenacts one of the most violent incidents in the history of Troubles by incorporating prominent elements of direct cinema and *cinema verité*. On the one hand it was argued that the cinematographic means such as the operation of hand-held cameras and the point of view conveyed through the camera allows the viewer to be immersed in the reenactment of the events of Bloody Sunday, reconstructing a primary and secondary witness position that affords the acceptance of collective guilt through the emotional involvement of the audience and promotes an agenda of reconciliation. On the other hand, however, it was argued that the film strives to present itself as a documentary film rather than a piece of historical drama in order to establish a credible and persuasive narrative that challenges the dominant public opinion advanced by the Lord Widgery report in the immediate aftermath of the incident, anticipating the results of a second government inquiry published in 2010. It was argued that by establishing this alternative narrative, the film re-negotiates the complicity of the British Army in the escalation of the events, emphasizes the misconduct of British soldiers and highlights the responsibility they bear for the death of 14 civilians on 30 January 1972.

It should be stressed at this point, however, that the analysis put forward in this paper is limited to a rather small aspect of the film. Areas of further research would include matters pertaining to the conception of characters, the choice of actors, or the representation of genre conventions like historical drama, biopic, docudrama, and Hollywood movie. Even though the film borrows some key characteristics commonly used in documentary films, it might also be read against the backdrop of the more classical conventions of Hollywood film or historical drama – in respect to plot development or romantic sub-plot, for instance. As far as the choice of actors is concerned, the casting of James Nesbitt – himself a Protestant who grew up in Northern Ireland – as Ivan Cooper could be the focus of further analyses. Interestingly, Greengrass' and his crew also casted a number of British soldiers that had been stationed in Northern Ireland at some points in their service to play members of the parachute regiment, raising the question of how authenticity is marked in the film (cf. Sutherland). Ultimately, a comparison of Paul Greengrass' *Bloody Sunday* and Jimmy McGovern's *Sunday (2002)* – a feature film produced for the British Channel 4 that was released only eight days after *Bloody Sunday* and depicts the same historical event (cf. Kelly; Pötzsch) – would also lend itself as an area of further inquiry.

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EVALUATION SHEET

Prof. Dr. Jana Gohrisch

Seminar (Module):   Ireland: History, Culture, Literature

Student's Name:

Title of Paper: Performing History in Paul Greengrass' "Bloody Sunday" (2002)

Date of Marking: 04.04.2019

Evaluation Criteria	++	+	+-	-	--
1. Analysis and Interpretation					
thesis statement or research question	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
argumentation	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
result(s)	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Theory and Method					
analytical approach	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
reference to theories of literature and/or culture: definition of critical terms and concepts	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
scholarly meta-language of literary studies	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Sources					
primary material — selection, references	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
primary material — use: analysis and interpretation	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
secondary material — selection, references	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
secondary material — use: critical discussion & appropriation	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Form and Layout					
academic standards (cf. stylesheet)	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
competent proof-reading	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
5. Language					
academic register	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
idiomatic writing style	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
syntax, grammar, spelling	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Working Process					
independence	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

Further Comments and Observations: Gegenstand und Thema sind selbständig gewählt; die politisch-historische Hinführung zum Film ist sehr gut gelungen; die These ist klar formuliert; die Argumentation sehr gut strukturiert; Analyse und Interpretation verbinden vorbildlich Theorie und Methode, wobei für letztere die flimwiss. und litwiss. Fachbegriffe sinnfällig verbunden und korrekt verwendet werden. Die ausführliche Bibliogr. belegt die umfangreiche Lektüre und enthält eine einzige Leerstelle: den Film selbst! Das Englische liest sich geschmeidig und bewegt sich durchgehend auf dem akademischen Register: Sie formulieren komplizierte Sachverhalte eindeutig und zum Punkt. Unnötig sind die vielen Weichmacher (could, might, rather, somewhat) sowie einige fehlende Bindestriche bzw. orthografische Unebenheiten. Die Gliederung funktioniert sehr gut, bringt aber durch die Aufteilung in Analyse und Interpretation einige Wiederholungen mit sich (z. B. 13). Die Zusammenfassung beider Lesarten des Films samt Ausblick rundet den durchweg erfreulichen Gesamteindruck angemessen ab!

The paper under review is marked: **1,0 (very good)**

Contemporary Asian British Cultures

Prof. Dr. Jana Gohrisch

SoSe 17

BritA

Constructions of post-colonial hierarchies in

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (2012)

Table of Contents

1   Introduction

When India is portrayed in Western popular culture productions, it often takes the role of the exotic and mystic place that is "a gateway of personal enlightenment" (Gomes 244) and "a site of rejuvenation" (Roy 155) to find one's true identity (cf. Gomes 244) or, if not simultaneously, of the Eastern barbarian that is saved by Western civilization (cf. Roy 155).

According to Roy and Gomes, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (henceforth *Marigold Hotel*) offers another orientalised depiction of the kind (cf. 155 and 244 respectively) in an attempt to equal its predecessors' success. And while the two academics simply enumerate *Marigold Hotel* amongst other films without providing any scholarly prove, they underline the fact that it has indeed, for the most part, stayed unnoticed in the academic realm[1]. Nevertheless, this essay takes cultural studies' assumptions as its foundation and consequently lends the named film its rightful scholarly attention (cf. Cuddon 177; "Cultural Studies" 53). The analysis of popular culture, however, follows its own rules. For one needs to take into account that the popularity of *Marigold Hotel* implies its producerly nature. One's interpretation can thereby easily follow the prevalent ideology (cf. Fiske 103). But the film also bears the "openness of the writerly" (Fiske 104) text and therefore leaves space for interpretation (cf. Fiske 104). Hence, individual sense-making processes guide the understanding of the film and simultaneously "help form [the viewer's] identity" (During 193).

It is this assertion that lays the cornerstone for the orientalist paradigm, too, for it is the orient and "truths" about its inhabitants that have been "constructed in European" (Ashcroft 171.185) discourse. This construction has mainly led to an imposed hierarchical "binary separation of the colonizer and the colonized" (Ashcroft 169). Reinforced by consequent othering (cf. Ashcroft 171), this binarism is originally thought to "suppress ambiguous […] spaces between the opposed categories" (Ashcroft 23). But contemporary post-colonial scholars focus on the disruption of this binarism and its dialectical character (cf. Ashcroft 26-7). Since orientalism still prevails in recent European discourse (cf. Ashcroft 185) and popular

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[1] An exception is Marston, Kendra. "The World Is Her Oyster: Negotiating Contemporary White Womanhood in Hollywood's Tourist Spaces". *Cinema Journal* 55 (2016): 3-27. *Project Muse.* Web. 12. Sep. 2017., who is citing the film in her footnotes section; and Roy, Sohinee. "*Slumdog Millionaire*: Capitalism, a Love Story". *Journal of Popular Culture* 49.1 (2016): 153-173. *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 05.12.2017., enumerating the film among others.

texts[2] have a large amount and wide range of audiences, it is all the more important to analyse how such works contribute in shaping post-colonial identities.

And even more than other types of texts, motion pictures offer multiple layers for creating meaning and, as a consequence, for analysis (cf. Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 40). Nonetheless, the following essay evaluates *Marigold Hotel* in terms of its, in literary studies long since established, narrative features (cf. Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 64). Serving as one of these features, the character conception and constellation seems to hold a particularly profitable potential in regard of an analysis along the lines of an orientalist approach, since the different characters can be thought to typify their respective place of origin.

Regarding *Marigold Hotel*, all protagonists are characterized by their culturally determined predicaments. These provide a marked contrast between the British and Indian factions. The character conception thereby creates an opposition between East and West. And yet, an impartial and cooperative approach proves to be far more helpful in the solution of the protagonist's problems than their stay in India alone. Simultaneously, it becomes evident that British characters appear to be rather more uncivilized than their Indian counterparts at times. One might therefore assume that the film factually questions post-colonial power relations. So even though the preservation of a certain binarism is apparent, I reject the thesis of Roy and Gomes that *Marigold Hotel* is just one of the many popular movies that depict India as inferior to the West. In fact, it is my contention that *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* focuses on the dialectical character of post-colonial interactional processes and therefore dissolves the orientalist hierarchy of civilized and primitive by offering a successful mastery of every personal hardship for that character which is willing to corporate on a respectful level. It does, therefore, cater to the audience by maintaining a certain orientalist opposition between the two sides, but also breaks conventions in that it questions Eastern inferiority and, consequently, Western superiority.

2 Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Popular Culture and conventions

When Matthew Arnold most "famously defined culture […] as 'the best that has been thought and said'" (Cuddon 179), he clearly determined culture to be an elitist articulation and laid the cornerstone for the distinction between high and low culture. On this ground, some scholars

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[2] This term is used throughout my argumentation in its widest sense (erweiterter Textbegriff) following "Text." Def. (3). *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft.* Ed. Hadumod Bußmann. 3rd ed. Stuttgart: Kröner, 2002. Print.

might argue that the success of a text does not indicate its academic relevance or its right for scholarly consideration. But today, Arnold's notion of culture is only one of many (cf. Cuddon 179). In fact, cultural studies contest the idea that only "objects of aesthetic excellence" (Storey 2) may be granted an exceptional value by defining culture "as the texts and practices of everyday life" (Storey 2). Cultural studies even credit popular culture the power to "help form an identity" (During 193) since it is the "main expression of our time" (During 193) and therefore make its study a mandatory undertaking.

There is, notwithstanding, considerable disagreement about the classification of popular culture[3]. But whatever definition employed - whether one talks about the popularity of *Marigold Hotel* in numbers or about it not being a work of high culture, for instance - there is no doubt that the film is part of what is understood to be popular culture. Following Fiske, *Marigold Hotel* should therefore possess one distinctive feature: it should be producerly (103-4). Coined by Fiske, producerly is a term to characterize the "popular writerly text" (103). It indicates an easy accessibility for an audience that is accommodated in the "dominant ideology" (104)[4] on the one hand but also leaves an open space for interpretation equalling a rather writerly text on the other hand. Unlike a writerly text though, this active construction of meaning is not demanded by a producerly text (cf. Fiske 103-4)[5].

Consequently, the meaning of a popular text much depends on individual sense-making processes. Knowledge about certain genres thereby shapes the audience's expectations which, in turn, partly determine interpretive processes (cf. Strinati 41). The development of genres provides an insight into the functioning of popular culture in general. For the emergence of genres in the early film industry followed the principle "'what works once, works again'" (Strinati 48), evidently leading to a certain standardisation and the establishment of conventions with the aim of maximum profit optimisation (cf. Strinati 48). The fact that "'one film that is successful spawns a host of others'" (Strinati 48) does not, after all, impede the evolution of film; genre movies are always a combination of convention and innovation (cf. Strinati 43.46) "to ensure […] continued popularity" (Strinati 46).

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[3] See for instance Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. An Introduction.* 3rd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2001. 5-14. Print.

[4] On ideology, see Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. An Introduction.* 3rd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2001. 2-5. Print.

[5] Fiske's definition of producerly content is based on Barthes' differentiation between a readerly and a writerly text, see for instance "Readerly/Writerly" *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory.* Cuddon, J.A. 5th ed. London: Penguin Books, 2014. Print.

Whether there is a subgenre of films that is (partly) set in India while targeting Western audiences remains open and is, in any which way, only of subordinate importance. Fact is, that the exceptionally successful film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) generated the production of numerous movies alike[6]. Unfortunately, there is no well-founded research on the conventions of this succession of films. And although their storylines differ immensely, scholars do not fail to notice a common infiltration with an orientalist ideology[7] and the trend for a certain power constellation. Even reaching back to films released far previous to *Slumdog Millionaire* such as *A Passage to India*[8] (1984) and *Outsourced*[9] (2005), Gomes contends that "the inscrutability and mystical nature of the subcontinent are [portrayed to be] its defining traits" (244). This mystery then serves to enlighten the Westerner (cf. Gomes 244). Likewise, Roy argues that films such as *Eat, Pray, Love*[10] or *Million Dollar Arm*[11] either "follow the familiar European colonial tropes of the mystical east as the site of rejuvenation for the jaded Western man/woman" (155) or portray the West as the "heroic savior of the eastern man or woman from its own barbarity" (155). It is therefore necessary to determine in how far *Marigold Hotel* follows this convention or to what extent it possibly deviates from it.

2.2 Orientalism and its hierarchies

Although Roy and Gomes lack any scholarly proof, their theses are very likely to hold true considering the substantial European contribution to the discourse that invented or created, and still creates, the Orient (cf. Ashcroft 184-5; Cuddon 497). According to Foucault, discourse is a system that is prescribed by the dominant group and that dictates how the world is seen and known (cf. Ashcroft 51; Cuddon 556). Colonial discourse, again, is the structure that determines knowledge within colonial relationships and is greatly determined by assumptions about Europe's supremacy and predominance (cf. Ashcroft 51). It therefore legitimizes cruel

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[6] For instance, *Eat, Pray, Love.* Dir. Ryan Murphy. Columbia Pictures, 2010 (USA). Film.; *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (2011)*, *Million Dollar Arm.* Dir. Craig Gillespie. Walt Disney Studio Motion Pictures, 2014 (USA). Film.; *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.* Dir. John Madden. 20th Century Fox, 2015 (UK). Film.; *The Man Who Knew Infinity.* Dir. Matthew Brown. IFC Films, 2015 (USA). Film.; *Lion.* Dir. Garth Davis. Entertainment Film Distributor, 2017 (UK). Film.; *Victoria & Abdul.* Dir. Stephen Frears. UPI, 2017 (UK). Film.; *Viceroy's House.* Dir. Gurinder Chadha. Pathé, 2017 (UK).Film.

[7] Roy's and Gomes's theses cover movies produced up to the year 2014. Nonetheless, recent films are named here to emphasize the recent influx of films with a combination of the relevant setting and target audience.

[8] *A Passage to India.* Dir. David Lean. Columbia Pictures, 1984 (USA). Film.

[9] *Outsourced.* Dir. John Jeffcoat. Lantern Lane Entertainment, 2007 (USA). Film.

[10] *Eat, Pray, Love.* Dir. Ryan Murphy. Columbia Pictures, 2010 (USA). Film.

[11] *Million Dollar Arm.* Dir. Craig Gillespie. Walt Disney Studio Motion Pictures, 2014 (USA). Film.

intrusions for the supposed betterment of the colonized and acts as an "instrument of power" (Ashcroft 50-2).

Orientalism, a concept developed by Edward Said, deals with and explains this instrument of power (cf. Cuddon 556; cf. Ashcroft 50). In fact, Said claims that the construction of knowledge about the Orient led to its existence in the first place (cf. Cuddon 556). In addition, he claims that Western descriptions of the East "reveal […] a certain [attitude of] arrogance and [a] sense of superiority [often tainted with] […] racism, naivety, presumption and plain ignorance" (Cuddon 500). Mysticism (cf. Roy 155; Gomes 244), barbarity (cf. Roy 155), primitivism or savagery are only a few of the many concepts that originated in these descriptions and in the consequent rule of the Occident over the Orient (cf. Ashcroft 185.235). They may now be considered naturalized "Orientalist assumptions"[12] (Ashcroft 185).

In its sense germane to this discussion, primitivism refers to a "form or style perceived to present an early stage of human" (Ashcroft 217) development. Assuming a linear cultural evolution from simple to complex (i.e. sophisticated and civilized), oriental discourse tends to term art primitive and, in consequence, without value since it is uneducated or untrained (cf. Ashcroft 217). And inasmuch as alternative cultural or artistic concepts that do not match the dominant and "progressive" West are debased or termed inferior, so are whole cultures, too (cf. Ashcroft 217).

Yet, qualifying something or someone savage is *not necessarily* derogatory. As a matter of fact, the concept of the noble savage romanticizes the "simple, pure, [and] idyllic state of the natural, posed against the rising industrialism and the notion of overcomplications and sophistications of European urban society" (Ashcroft 236). In this oversimplified and idealized sense, the savage may even serve as a means to "redefine the European" (Ashcroft 236) (cf. Ashcroft 236).

The described complete dissociation and separation by means of debasement or the afore mentioned idealization is a process termed othering (cf. Ashcroft 188). Coined by Gayatri Spivak, it refers to the "social and / or psychological ways in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group" (Ashcroft 188), called "the Other" (cf. Ashcroft 188). Othering certainly is a dialectical process where the formation of a 'normal' West goes hand in hand with, if not depends on, the formation of an 'abnormal' East (cf. Ashcroft 188). Although the frame of thought is dictated by the imperial centre only, orientalist discourse firstly produces

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[12] On universalism, see also Ashcroft 268.

and secondly shapes the world view of both, the colonizing and the colonized subjects (cf. Ashcroft 51.235).

As already explicated in regard of the noble savage, othering need not always be demeaning. In the nineteenth century, for instance, a certain fascination with the exotic, initially denoting something "'alien, introduced from abroad, not indigenous'" (Ashcroft 110), gained prominence and attributed the exotic Other the ability to stimulate or excite domestic life (cf. Ashcroft 110-11).[13] It goes without saying that the classification of something as exotic or ideal is, nonetheless, another marker of a clear dissociation between the self and the Other.

On this ground, othering results in a binary separation between colonizer and colonized (cf. Ashcroft 169) as "the most extreme form of difference possible" (Ashcroft 25), such as the civilized/savage, centre/margin, metropolis/empire or human/bestial oppositions (cf. Ashcroft 26). This binarism entails an absolute hierarchy; it establishes and likewise confirms the complete dominance of the West (cf. Ashcroft 25) and, in turn, suppresses any ambiguities or "interstitial spaces" (Ashcroft 27). Ambivalence is one of the means to disrupt this fundamental binarism and, in consequence, disturb the hierarchical postcolonial oppositions (cf. Ashcroft 13).

Postcolonial studies pay attention to those interstitial spaces and their disruptions which uncover the ambivalences and complexities that disturb these absolute binarisms (cf. Ashcroft 27-8). Homi K. Bhabha, for instance, stresses the ambivalent relationship between East and West. He argues that "the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer" (Ashcroft 13) and that ambivalence constitutes a fundamental part of colonial discourse as both "exploitative and nurturing" (Ashcroft 13) (cf. Ashcroft 13). Additionally, Bhabha emphasizes the interdependence of colonizer and colonized as evident in hybrid forms of language or race (cf. Ashcroft 136). Generally, contemporary scholars tend to focus on these dialectical - as opposed to top-down - processes that govern (post)colonial interaction (cf. Ashcroft 28). It may be noted though, that a focus on dialectical processes does not imply the negation of imperial hierarchical structures (cf. Ashcroft 137).

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[13] Furthermore, exoticism is a good example to demonstrate how the dominant world view is employed by both, East and West; for schoolchildren in the Caribbean describe their own vegetation as exotic rather than natural or indigenous (cf. Ashcroft 111).

2.3   Character conception and constellation in film

In order to examine in how far *Marigold Hotel* is accommodated to this prevalent orientalist paradigm, an analysis of its components is obligatory. Generally speaking, motion pictures offer a complex interplay of multiple layers for creating meaning and, as a consequence, for analysis (cf. Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 40). Visual tools like mise-en-scène, cinematography and editing (cf. Wharton & Grant 41) or the "sound-image-relations" (Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 51) are specific for film. But motion pictures can also be evaluated in terms of their, in literary studies long since established, narrative features (cf. Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 64). These features comprise the plot, the characters and their relationships, themes, motives, symbols, the representation of space and time and the point of view (cf. Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 63).

However, an analysis along an orientalist line needs to integrate a corresponding methodology. In our case, the utilization of a narratological approach and the examination of the character conception and constellation appear to be especially fruitful, since the characters and their relationships can be directly linked with the categories of East and West.

In comparison to literary texts though, the analysis of characters in a film does not just require the consideration of "words and actions" (Nünning & Nünning 92), but also the regard of the "physical presence and body language" (Nünning & Nünning 92). This results in a vast number of possible techniques[14] for characterisation, ranging from explicit, yet unreliable, figural to implicit authorial (Nünning & Nünning 97). In film, authorial techniques of characterisation even include the camera action, lighting or music (Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 68). These however, must be mostly excluded since it exceeds the scope of this paper. At the same time, a concentration on the remaining techniques already yields vast results. These encompass the characters' norms and values, their level of knowledge and their psychological disposition that can further extend the understanding of their perspective (cf. Nünning & Nünning 94).

The extensive delineation of a character may then help to classify them as static or dynamic, respectively. Whether a character is static or dynamic is determined by their ability to develop throughout the text (cf. Nünning & Nünning 95; Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 65) which suggests a strong "correlation between character and action[15]" (Nünning & Nünning 93),

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[14] A full overview, following Pfister, is provided by Nünning & Nünning 97.
[15] Action refers to the "content of the text as a whole" (Nünning & Nünning 108) and, following Forster, comprises the concepts of plot and story (cf. Nünning & Nünning 108).

since every character can induce a change in the action and vice versa (cf. Nünning & Nünning 93).

In order to penetrate the film's narratological structure, establishing a character constellation chart and visualizing the characters' relationships is a corollary (cf. Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 65-6). Looking for "'correspondences and contrasts'" (Nünning & Nünning 93; Henseler, Möller & Surkamp 65), categorizing the characters or looking for hierarchical structures may lead to insights commensurate with an orientalist approach.

Marigold Hotel has at least eleven protagonists that contribute considerably to the film's action and a lot more that play an important role in its progression. However, an enumeration of my complete findings is pointless and arid. Since many observations may not be relevant, only those in accord with an orientalist approach are recounted in the following analysis, while prove regarding assumptions on the characters' dispositions is provided in exemplary manner with the aim of painting an integral picture of each character that is pertinent.

3   Analysis[16]

Marigold Hotel tells the story of British Evelyn, Graham, Douglas and Jean, Muriel, Norman and Madge, all of which decide to move to the Indian Marigold Hotel in order to spend their remaining years in retirement. Their motivation and their attitude, though, differ fundamentally. At the same, time, the film immediately establishes these motives at its very beginning. This very architecture therefore instantly functions to place paramount importance on the origins and the respective problems of each British character.

Evelyn, for instance, is surprisingly faced with the large financial debt her deceased husband left behind, the consequent urgency to sell off her apartment and the need to live a self-dependent life. Her development towards an independent person already starts in Britain, though. For her initial lack of knowledge about Wifi or Broadband soon gives way to her plan of maintaining an online blog. Employed as a cultural advisor in an Indian call centre, her job and the required qualification – being an expert in "Britishness" - characterize Evelyn as "very British". This is underlined by a meticulous description of the British tea and biscuit traditions Evelyn delivers during her job interview and easily leads to the conclusion that old-age loneliness or poverty are problems the film ascribes British or Western society.

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[16] An illustration of the character constellation can be found at 6.1 Character constellation chart.

At the same time, Evelyn employs an extremely impartial approach towards her new place of residence. In doing so, her emancipation is shaped by those experiences she initially approaches in an unbiased way and subsequently utilizes to grow and learn about herself and her environment. One example for this impartiality certainly is the absence of any generalization and a resulting dismissive attitude towards Indian call centres after their unsympathetic phone call while Evelyn was still in Britain. Her open mindset and her pragmatic approach especially become evident in her blog entries where she argues that "old habits die easier than we think . . . and new ones form", "it's like a wave: resist, and you'll be knocked away, dive into it, and you'll soon end up on the other side" or "this is a new different world, the challenge is to cope with it, and not just cope, but thrive". On account of Evelyn's highly successful adaptation and liberation (indicated in the final scene by her Indian clothing, her riding sidesaddle on the back of Douglas's bike like many other Indian women, and her recitation of Sonny's Indian philosophy) it may actually be argued that India is presented as the site where one can find their true identity (cf. 1 Introduction). This, however, ignores the fact that Evelyn's development already started while she was still in Britain and that it is her impartial approach that led to such progress.

Apart from Evelyn's successful venture, she also reveals that her stay is tainted with thoughts about her husband's financial dishonesty and her betrayed unquestioning trust. Her pain leads to a profound interest in Indian Gaurika and Manoj, wherefore she exposes her self-doubt in the face of their merciless honesty with and endless loyalty for each other. That this loyalty is not merely culture-bound becomes evident when Gaurika visits Graham's funeral though she is by no means obliged to do so. Hence, faithful Gaurika and Manoj surely contrast Evelyn and her deceased husband in their loyalty and relationship, their social status (Gaurika and Manoj coming from a humble background) and their origins (cf. 6.1 Character constellation chart). Now this contrast functions twofold. On the one hand, it surely establishes a clear opposition and therefore serves to create a binary separation between East and West. Notwithstanding, this instance of othering fails to establish the uncivilized in favour of the civilized. It rather questions and reverses the prevalent postcolonial allocation of these terms and thus disrupts the oriental hierarchy.

Likewise, the Indian couple contrasts Douglas Ainslie and his wife Jean which is again a clear dissociation between East and West. Due to their retirement after 30 years of civil service - characterizing them as "very British" - they cannot afford to buy a flat that meets Jean's requirements. In consequence, old-age poverty can once again be associated with Britain or the West as a whole.

With respect to only Jean, her fluctuating, at times hysterical, tone and her high voice accentuate her general discontent. A, for her part, rash remark about her new residence stating that "this country seems rather more civilized than one originally thought" actually exposes her prejudiced disposition. Generally speaking, Jean shows little initiative in the exploration of her new environment and the resolution of upcoming problems which characterizes her as passive and helpless. Simultaneously, she accuses India of "driving [her] mad" and exhibits a distinct disapproving attitude towards all imaginable features when she proclaims that she cannot stay in this country and that "this whole trip is a grotesque fantasy". In addition, Jean displays total resistance regarding any insights that could possibly be gained by intercultural encounters. Although Jean`s role could easily be dismissed as static character that enhances the film with a comic element, it actually underlines the mentioned findings. India as the mystic place alone does not lead to Gomes's "personal enlightenment" (cf. 1 Introduction). It rather fails to do so in the absence of a constructive attitude like Evelyn's.

Furthermore, Jean is more than just a static comic element. In her last appearance, Jean's futile attempt to bribe the rickshaw driver shows that she is willing to get involved in the, for her, unconventional Indian way of dealing with things. On the one hand, this detail grants Jean the missing dynamism and on the other hand, it stresses the importance of intercultural communication once again. For Jean needs to cooperate with the driver to reach her ultimate aim, her flight to return to Britain. But this instance also creates an interstitial space by actually turning Jean into a corrupt character. Since the rickshaw driver can also be considered corrupt in that he accepts Jean's gifts but does not render the desired service in return, the oriental binarism is momentarily dissolved.

Regarding Douglas, his coping strategies initially oppose Jean's, since "we just have to make the best of things" quite clearly articulates his optimistic philosophy and his will to cooperate alike. Unlike Jean, Douglas utilizes problems as an opportunity to learn and deals with them humorously. One example for his pragmatism may be the dripping tab he repairs with his sleeves rolled up while in Britain he seems to have lacked any such skills. Notwithstanding the obvious discrepancies between the two, Douglas furthermore tries his best to loyally comfort his wife. His self-characterization may, however, hold true when he realizes that it is "some stupid sense of loyalty" that makes him stay with her. British decency and politeness can therefore be ascribed to him. And yet, it is only when Douglas overcomes his rigidity that he connects with Evelyn (cf. 6.1 Character constellation chart). This highlights the correspondence between the dynamic like-minded two and the importance of their impartial attitude in order to cope with problems.

As for Graham Dashwood, Evelyn's confidante, he is employed as a high court judge, again a profession which qualifies him as representative of the state or "very British". Be that as it may, he suddenly decides to quit and leave for the country he grew up in. Grahams familiarity with Indian customs becomes evident when he patiently deals with the officials in search for Manoj, whom he had fallen in love with in his younger years and who was apparently excluded and deserted by society for his homosexuality (cf. 6.1 Character constellation chart). This contrasts Graham whose life has obviously been quite successful despite him being gay. Nonetheless, his desire to meet disgraced Manoj again, his bad conscience and the gruelling question of what has become of his friend have moved him to return to the place he calls "extraordinary". Hence, his bitter-sweet longing for India is lined with a great deal of fascination with it, creating an exotic picture of India as is part of non-demeaning othering. However, Graham's thirst is apparently quenched when his lengthy search for Manoj is rewarded with a reunion, he gains certainty that Manoj has been able to live a dignified life and he receives a forgiving reaction. This certainty literally puts him to rest and he expires contentedly in the yard of the hotel. Together with the seeming respective social implications of homosexuality, the two men's origins, lifestyle and social status one might quickly assume that this character constellation implies the prevailing civilized/savage binarism between East and West. Even more, Graham's death can be construed as final fulfilment in mystic India and therefore encourage Roy's and Gomes's theses (cf. 1 Introduction). Since this clear dissociation between the two sides cannot be ignored, it is easy to disregard the actual social rehabilitation Manoj has received, the forgiving reaction he exhibits and the already mentioned honesty and loyalty his marriage encompasses. I therefore argue again that the undeniable binarism displayed does not entail the corresponding hierarchical structure.

In contrast to Graham's familiarity with life and people in India, Muriel Donnelly's racist disposition is palpable from the very beginning. In want of an immediate hip replacement by a supposedly English doctor but confronted with no alternative, Muriel enters a program in India that allows her to soon receive the needed surgery. But of course, her racism clashes with her new surroundings and statements like "if I can't pronounce it, I don't want to eat it" or "I'm in hell" express her general aversion to her new environment. Her apparent bitterness is underlined by her rough tone, her blunt conversational style and her grim face. Remarkably, it is the warm-hearted invitation of Indian servant Anokhi and her sincere interest in her mistress's life that breaks apart Muriel's seclusion wherefore she reveals the reason for her virulence: her British employers had engaged her as a housekeeper and babysitter for decades after which they simply discarded her when she reached retirement. In a way, this circumstance

dismantles and exposes Muriel's unreflected racist position, since her experiences with performance-orientated Western society could have moved her to question the same. Simultaneously, it is striking how Muriel's and Anokhi's employments correspond in that they both have been serving others. The contrasts, however, are even more striking (cf. 6.1 Character constellation chart). For it is undeniable that uneducated, low-cast and therefore constantly disregarded Indian Anokhi was able to maintain her benevolence, while educated, at least temporarily respected British Muriel could not do so – until their encounter. Thereupon, Muriel's progress manifests itself in her willingness to assist Sonny with the hotel's finances, her effort to convince Mr. Maruti to grant Sonny the needed capital and her eventual employment as the assistant manager of the Hotel. For this reason, it can be assumed that Muriel lastly experiences the comfort of being needed and useful and that this experience contributes to the overcoming of her discontent. Since Muriel's development from a bitter woman to a helpful lady is a striking evolution, her physical and emotional recovery - once again a development using India as its site - is at centre stage. For this reason, one can readily fail to notice the contrast between Muriel and Anokhi that serves to uphold the clear separation between East and West in tradition, education, society and culture but also questions and reverses the civilized/uncivilized or progressive/primitive binaric opposition.

As for the last two inhabitants, Norman and Madge, they both seem to suffer from their loneliness, if not desperation, in search of a partner. Madge, in face of a future as her grandchildren's liberal babysitter, impetuously decides to move out of her grown up daughter's house, while her shift to the unknown and mystic Marigold Hotel in India is another spontaneous choice she only takes thereafter. In India, Madge's search for a partner continues in the "Viceroy's Club". In view of its high member fees, she does not hesitate but lie about her being Princess Margaret and ask for a discount. The Indian receptionist, however, unmasks her lie by being far more well informed about the death of Princess Margaret than Madge appears to be. Now it is not certain whether Madge assumed the Indian receptionist to be unknowing or whether she is the one uninformed. Whichever way, this instance serves to characterize the receptionist as far less "backward" than one might assume and simultaneously creates an ambiguity to interrupt and overturn the hierarchical binarism. Anyhow, it is only later on Madge reveals that her true fear is to "grow older, […] to be condescended to [or] to become marginalized". Madge's desperate search for a wealthy partner therefore underlines her wish to gain a settled and recognized identity, which she ultimately seems to gain when she is ready to put up with her situation and decides to stay in India. But even so, her final rendezvous with the man called "your excellency" earlier on hints at the implementation of this

same wish. As Madge's neutral but straightforward attitude does not affect the rare intercultural encounters she needs to cope with, so does Norman's impartial approach, neither. And while Norman originally exhibits a certain clumsiness and crudeness with women while speed dating in Britain, he initially maintains his very obvious advances when encountering British Carol Parr (not an inhabitant of the hotel, but a resident of India) in the "Viceroy's Club", too. It is only when he is willing to "drop all [the] pretence" and admit his flaws – a change that was not induced by any intercultural encounter - that he can overcome his loneliness and enter a relationship with Carol. Since Norman and Magde are part of a group that has many members who are "very British", it may be assumed that their problems and fears describe the Western senior citizen, too. It therefore upholds a clear distinction between East and West, since their loneliness opposes the very present role Mrs. Kapoor plays in the life of her son Sonny.

Concerning the Indian protagonists, Sonny Kapoor is the most prominent of all. He is a new entrepreneur that tries to turn the family heritage into a home for the "elderly and beautiful". His motto "nothing happens unless first, we dream" and his philosophy "everything will be alright in the end, and if it is not alright, it is not yet the end" underline his optimistic disposition. Simultaneously, Muriel terms him "lunatic" as his unconventional and unorganized way of dealing with the hotel and its inhabitants is disconcerting her. Besides, Sonny does not take anything too serious as is apparent when he hastily pronounces unconscious Norman dead or replies Madge that a door for her room - whose absence itself is a proof of Sonny's talent for improvisation - would arrive "most definitely in three months straight away". This lax management clashes with the British accuracy when Jean demands the photoshopped hotel from the brochure, for example. It therefore surely is an instance of othering that sets East and West apart. It does not, however, make any judgements about supremacy, for inasmuch as Sonny's unorganized directions potentially characterize him as deranged, so does Jean's hysteria, too.

Over and above, Sonny's clothes emphasize his character and mediating position: the Indian dress he wears on official occasions highlights his origin while his Western clothes accentuate his modern side. In fact, Sonny oscillates between tradition and modernity. This contradiction solidifies in Sonny's relationship with his mother, Mrs. Kapoor, and his girlfriend, Sunaina (cf. 6.1 Character constellation chart).

Mrs. Kapoor is the impersonation of Indian traditions. Besides the arranged marriage she tries to push Sonny to accept, she constantly overpowers and disregards him by entering his office and checking his drawers without his permission. Rooted in her fear for Sonny to fail like his father, her dominant behaviour may also be founded in her anxiety to "welcome modern

India" (as Sonny reports to Sunaina) and therefore grant Sonny some liberty. In contrast to her, Sunaina can be termed the "modern Indian girl" that almost exclusively wears Western clothes and works in a call centre run by her brother, while she openly acts out her relationship in front of his eyes and therefore experiences the liberty that is refused to Sonny. Interestingly, Sunaina's character hardly goes beyond her rather static role, while it functions to forbid treating only the West and modernity as equivalent. Secondly, the difference between the three portrays India as a site of diversity and upheaval. Since the film displays the British as very homogenous body, this further separates the East and West opposition.

Be that as it may, it is only that the contradiction between mother and son can be resolved when Sonny follows Evelyn's advice to simply tell Sunaina that he loves her and willingly faces his mother's vexation. At the same time, the imminent failure of his plans for the hotel is averted when he accepts Muriel's help in the management of the same. Again, these instances plea for the relevance of an intercultural cooperation without any prejudices. Over and above, this development speaks for the supposition of the Eastern barbarian saved by Western civilization (cf. 1 Introduction) and implies the consequent hierarchical civilized/savage opposition at first sight. However, one must not fail to notice that it is Sunaina who urges Sonny to accept Muriel's support, and the servant Wasim who appeals to Mrs. Kapoor for the acceptance of Sonny's relationship with Sunaina. This event is especially striking since Wasim is a very inconspicuous character whose employment allows conclusions about his social status and educational level that easily lead to a presumed primitivism. It is all the more striking that "primitive" Indian Wasim leads to "progressive" insights about parental loyalty. Hence, the oriental hierarchy is disturbed for just another time.

Summing up, the character conception and constellation exactly does what Roy and Gomes claim – on the surface. Starting with the beginning of the film that places paramount importance on the "Britishness" of the inhabitants and their problems, there is an abundant number of instances that clearly establish a separation between the East and the West by means of non-demeaning othering. Furthermore, the development of all protagonists is so central to the movie that an inattentive viewer may assume that it is factually all about Norman's rejuvenation, Muriel's blossoming or Sonny's rescue. Indeed, these prominent elements eclipse all other findings and the very few and weak interstitial spaces that mean to disrupt this very harsh separation cannot possibly withstand the overwhelming number of contrasts between British and Indian players. However, the mere presence of these interstitial spaces describes the complex postcolonial situation in that, following Bhaba (cf. 2.2 Orientalism and its

hierarchies), "the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer" (cf. Ashcroft 13).

Anyhow, it is perfectly maintainable to recognize India as a site of these very remarkable developments. And one can further assume that mystic and exotic India had a latent influence on these developments. This, however, ignores the fact that India is probably not exotic or mystic for Sonny and Mrs Kapoor, who also underwent a fundamental change. I therefore argue that the character conception and constellation suggest personal growth to depend on traits like impartiality, openness and cooperation. This thesis therefore follows the contemporary focus of post-colonial scholars on the interdependence of colonizer and colonized and their dialectical relationship (cf. 2.2 Orientalism and its hierarchies).

Furthermore, the film exhibits plenty of scenes that distort the prevailing hierarchical binarism, while it does not reinforce it at all. Nonetheless, Roy's and Gomes's assertions suggest the conformance of *Marigold Hotel* and movies alike with those hierarchical oppositions. Key to this misinterpretation certainly is a rash perception of servants, arranged marriages or the social unacceptabiliy of homosexual relations as primitive and therefore inferior. It is important to note that this inferiority can only be granted from a perspective that ascribes the West a desirable ultimate cultural progress which is, in my opinion, only one of the many erroneously naturalized orientalist assumptions (cf. 2.2. Orientalism and its hierarchies). If scholars cannot free themselves from this orientalist paradigm, it is inevitable for them to miss the constructive and progressive contributions of these inconspicuous characters that are at times even far more civilized than their British counterparts.

In addition, the mentioned immersion in the dominant ideology may lead to such a disparity in the interpretation of the film, too. Since *Marigold Hotel* is a producerly piece (cf. 2.1 Popular culture and conventions), it is readily accessible to those viewers that are accommodated in the dominant ideology, namely orientalism. Since orientalist discourse is still prevailing and in effect (cf. 2.2 Orientalism and its hierarchies), it is not surprising that the popular movie is easily interpreted along its lines. Considering that similar successful movies preceding *Marigold Hotel* supposedly followed this same frame of thought, the superficial observation of oriental binarisms is an attempt to maintain conventions. Hence, the film caters to the audience in order to equal the its predecessors in popularity. The fact that *Marigold Hotel* simultaneously questions the oriental hierarchies can be interpreted as an innovative feature "to ensure […] continued popularity" (Strinati 46) (cf. 2.1 Popular culture and conventions).

Finally, *Marigold Hotel* does not demand but grant the space to come to the conclusion that it actually questions hierarchical oppositions and simultaneously manages to uphold the oriental categories of East and West.

4 Conclusion

Marigold Hotel is a film that offers several alternatives and layers for interpretation due to its producerly popular nature. The continuous othering that results in binarisms and the central British characters' developments easily lead to the conclusion that India is presented as mystic place that is inferior to the West. The few instances that create an interstitial space by no means contradict this finding. They rather exemplify the complexity the post-colonial situation entails as indicated by Bhaba's assumptions (cf. 2.2 Orientalism and its hierarchies).

This assessment, however, can only be maintained if the viewer is accommodated in the prevalent orientalist paradigm. An objective analysis reveals that this superficial layer eclipses the plenty of cases that veritably question or even reverse the oriental hierarchy. In addition, the characters' mastery of their respective problems appears to depend on their ability to impartially communicate, corporate and adjust. Therefore, the character conception and constellation of the film delineates the importance of dialectical rather than top-down post-colonial processes.

Nonetheless, it would be very interesting to assess in how far other aspects of the movie support or break with this thesis. To that end, an analysis of the title along the reader-response theory, the frequent Indian instrumental film music or the setting could contribute to an all-encompassing picture.

Meanwhile, it is a pity that scholarly research lacks objective analyses regarding the many films that equal *Marigold Hotel* in target audience and setting. As popular culture contributes to the formation of orientalist discourse and vice versa, it is all the more important to discuss and analyse the tendencies contemporary films reveal. A research on oriental hierarchies in contemporary Western popular cinema set in India would therefore be a desirable project.

Furthermore, it is striking how an ostensibly objective thesis can be distorted by one's own ideological stance. For me, the film's analysis brings the difficulty of a truly objective examination into focus. Especially in matters of primitivism, it is striking how fast the Western mind can assume a supposed inferiority at an occasion that depicts a situation which might have taken place at an earlier stage in the Western evolution. Accordingly, one should not

forget that the viewer plays a fundamental part in the construction of meaning, even though popular culture is mainly produced for entertainment and recreational purposes.

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6 Appendix

6.1 Character constellation chart

	Leibniz
1 1	Universität
1 0 2	Hannover
1 0 0 4	
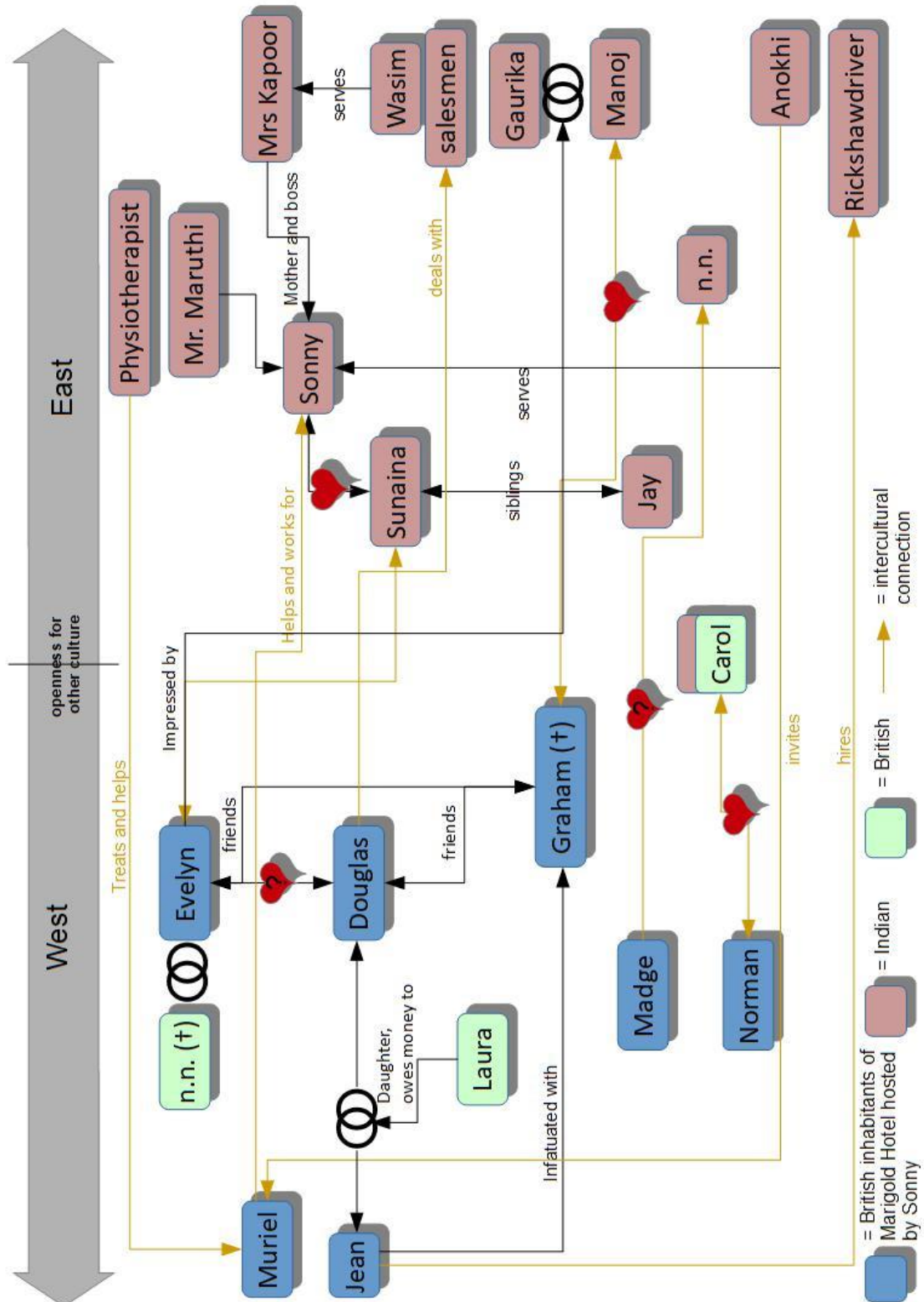
EVALUATION SHEET

British Studies

Seminar:	Contemporary Asian British Culture
Name of student:	
Title of paper:	*Constructions of Post-Colonial Hierarchies in "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" (2012)*
Date of marking:	18.06.2018

Research Question/Thesis Statement and Argument

Research question/

thesis statement:	☐ sophisticated	☒ accurate	☐ imprecise	☐ missing
Argumentation	☐ clear/strong	☒ well-structured	☐ logical	☐ misleading
Result:	☐ comprehensive	☒ well-informed	☐ sufficient	☐ missing

Further observations:

The main thesis statement as well as the additional ones (2, 9, 11, 15) guide the reader well through the argument. The critical discussion of the secondary material is laudable.

Theory and Method

☒ analytical approach ☐ mix of approaches ☐ descriptive approach

☒ reference to theories of literature/culture

☒ concepts and terminology of literary analysis and interpretation

  ☒ plot construction ☐ representation of time/space ☐ narrative situation

  ☒ character construction/constellation ☐ tropes

  ☐ other: Klicken Sie hier, um Text einzugeben.

Further observations:

The theoretical approaches are well-understood and nicely abstracted bringing out their main features ready to be employed in the essay. There is a tendency, however, to go into too much detail (f. ex. p. 5f). The terminology of film analysis does not have to be rehearsed here: it is more important that the essay employs the terminology concisely. The essay spends eight pages before it actually undertakes the promised interpretation with the title "Analysis" which should have named its focus, namely colonial hierarchies. There is one missing definition, though: as the essay insists on identity as a central term it needs to define it, esp. if it claims the existence of such things as a "true identity" (9). Both analysis and interpretation present absolutely valid observations, f. ex. on the minor characters (14), providing the contents for the very good conclusion (16), which correctly places prime im-

portance on the function of the aesthetic elements.

Given the Cultural Studies approach, characterisations such as "very British" (9, 11, 13) are highly problematic because they restrict identity to ethnic belonging only leaving aside the other identity categories such as class and race, etc. Another tendency in the essay is to take kitsch and the happy ending seriously (11f) and to rely on stereotypees when it comes to analysing Sunny and his mother (as "impersonation of Indian traditions", 13). These elements should be read through the very theories of popular culture which had been outlined very convincingly earlier on.

Primary Sources (Evidence)

Collection of data: ☐ effective ☒ pertinent ☐ relevant ☐ irrelevant

Use of material: ☐ citation ☐ comments ☒ critical discussion

Secondary Sources (Debate)

Extent of research

Reference made to ☒ relevant monographs ☒ book articles

☒ articles in journals ☒ relevant websites

Incorporation through ☐ critical discussion ☐ comments ☐ citation

Use of material: ☐ appropriation ☒ self-positioning ☐ reproduction

Further observations:

Klicken Sie hier, um Text einzugeben.

Form

☒ no complaints

☐ deficiencies with regard to (the)

☐ title page ☒ table of contents ☐ formatting (1.5 line spacing, justification, etc.)

☐ pagination ☐ highlighting of titles and concepts ☐ parenthetical citation

☐ blocked quotes ☐ footnotes ☐ bibliography

Presentation: ☐ competent proof-reading ☐ some mistakes ☐ many mistakes

English: ☐ idiomatic ☒ minor errors ☐ frequent errors ☐ incomprehensible

Style: ☒ appealing ☒ well readable ☐ appropriate ☐ simple

Further observations:

There is a preference for convoluted sentences showing an undue influence of German, esp. in the long and un-English attributes and inserted digressions.

The paper under review is marked: 1,7 (good)

How to become Middle-Class

Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre as Advice Literature

19.03.2018

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19.03.2018

How to become Middle-Class
Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as Advice Literature

The England of the mid-nineteenth century was a society defined by social classes. The majority of the population belonged to the working-class, employed by land or factory-owners, tasked with earning their employer's income. At the top of society, containing only a small percentage of Britain's population was the aristocracy, comprised of royalty and the peerage, the left-overs from feudal times. Between these two classes a new social group had emerged: the middle-class, consisting of former workers, who had worked themselves up into respectable positions, the professions and members of the gentry, who had not inherited the family estate and were forced to find a way of earning their living. The middle-class is typically credited with the invention of the novel and advice literature. Both genres were extensively used by them on their quest of self-definition and were read by both a male and female readership. In addition, during the nineteenth century an ever-growing group of female authors emerged. One of the female novelists of this period was Charlotte Brontë. She published her first novel, *Jane Eyre*, under the pen-name of *Currer Bell* in 1847. The novel follows the childhood and adolescence of the protagonist Jane Eyre and ends with her marriage to Mr. Rochester. In doing so, the novel begins with Jane's childhood at Gateshead and Lowood School. At the age of 18, Jane takes a position as governess at Thornfield where she meets Mr. Rochester. After discovering his mad wife in the attic, Jane leaves Thornfield and arrives at March End, a place inhabited by her cousins. A sudden inheritance provides Jane with some money and she heads back to Thornfield. Seeing the place burned down, she finds Mr. Rochester at Ferndean and marries him.

Jane Eyre follows the genre of the *Bildungsroman* and can be read as advice literature. This paper will employ Structuralism and New Historicism to define the term *Bildungsroman* and show how Brontë's novel follows this particular genre before

reading *Jane Eyre* and Samuel Smiles *Self-Help* parallel and show how *Jane Eyre* can be read as advice literature.

A structuralist perspective will place Jane Eyre within one or multiple genres and show if and how the novel deviates from the assigned genre(s). However, structuralism is a text-based approach and will not offer any deeper insights into the novel or any underlying ideas. To examine those a second approach will be needed, which, in this paper, is New Historicism. By utilizing New Historicism, it will be possible to examine class, and to a certain extent, gender from a historical perspective, but unlike Marxism or Gender Studies, without taking sides.

Genre Convention: *Bildungsroman*

The *Bildungsroman* is often credited as a German invention with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* as the defining novel of the Genre. When translated into English, the word *Bildung* can be read in several ways: The term Bildungsroman can either be translated as novel of *education* or novel of *formation.* As most novels of this genre follow the maturing or formation of a character, who may be quite educated, the latter terms appears more fitting. In addition, *Bildungsromane* can generally be accredited as a sub-genre of realist fiction as they follow characteristics of this genre. *Bildungsromane* as well as realist fiction attempt to mimic reality by depicting plots and characters that are written as if they were real. The plot is constructed logically and events follow the rule of cause-and-effect. The goal is to construct a plot which could have happed as described (cf. Nünning 27). For the *Bildungsroman* in particular, additional genre characteristics are necessary: The plot is constructed around the protagonist's character development, starting at a young age and presents conflicts and problems (often with changes in place) until the protagonist finds his or her position in society (cf. Gutjahr 8). Further "realism" can be given to the novel by marketing it as a (fictional) autobiography.

Reading *Jane Eyre* as a *Bildungsroman*

When looking at Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the title page already attempts to invoke realism as it states: "Jane Eyre. An Autobiography." In doing so, readers are given expectations about the plot of the novel and, as contemporaneous reviews

have shown, the realism of it, with some critics going as far as suggesting that it was written by a governess employed by William Thackeray (Rigby in Norton ed. of *Jane Eyre* 453). The novel is narrated by an authorial first-person narrator in the past tense, furthering the idea of an autobiography as it depicts a narrator recollecting and commenting on the events.

The novel structures the plot by introducing a new setting or a turning point with a telling place name. Jane Eyre's formation begins at the age of ten at *Gateshead*. The first chapter points out that Jane is by no means uneducated: at the age of ten she reads a scientific book about birds and, when confronted by John Reed, compares him to the roman emperors (Brontë 11). Nonetheless, Jane is very emotional and passionate, leading to her attacking John Reed. Further conflicts with her aunt end with Jane being sent away from *Gateshead* to *Lowood School* (Brontë 27-28, 34-35). Where Gateshead depicted only the beginning of a journey and presented a very passionate Jane, Lowood presents Jane as struggling with the school at its strict rules and mindset at first. When Jane meets Helen Burns for the first time, Helen is reading "Rasselas". Helen allows Jane to look through the book, resulting in Jane being disappointed. On the contents of the book, she comments: ""Rasselas" looked dull to my trifling taste; I saw nothing about fairies, nothing about genii, no bright variety seemed spread over the closely printed pages." (Brontë 49-50). This marks one of the first clashes of Jane with reality and social expectations. Not only is the work realist fiction, it explores the elusiveness of happiness (cf. Britannica). The punishments of Helen Burns by Miss Scatcherd stir Jane's emotions during the next chapters. Helen is continuously punished over minor offences, even when she is not responsible (not having cleaned her fingernails when the water was frozen (Brontë 53)). In a conversation with Helen, Jane, rather emotionally, suggests resistance against Miss Scatcherd but is lectured by Helen that it would do more harm than good and that the bible tells otherwise (cf. Brontë 55-56). A change in Jane's character takes place when Mr. Brocklehurst visits Lowood School and accuses Jane of being a liar in front of the whole school. After his visit, Jane reacts very emotionally and spends some time crying but when asked by Miss Temple to give an account of her treatment at Gateshead a change takes place: unlike previous instances Jane does not tell an angry and emotional tale but instead takes some time to reflect on what she is going to say (cf. Brontë 71). After Helen's death, Jane adapts to the mindset of Lowood, helping her become the schools top-student and later a teacher.

This sense of belonging ends when Lowood's superintendent Miss Temple marries and leaves the school. Jane becomes restless and seeks a new employment which she finds at Thornfield Hall where she is employed as governess (cf. Brontë 86-89). At Thornfield, Jane's character development continues when she falls in love with her employer Mr. Rochester. The character Blanche Ingram is introduced as an opponent to Jane and when it is suggested that Mr. Rochester will make a proposal naturally it is assumed that he will propose to Blanche as she comes from the gentry (cf. Brontë 169, 172, 200). Against contemporaneous standards Mr. Rochester proposes to Jane which she accepts, albeit on the condition of being an individual (cf. Brontë 254-255). However, the wedding does not take place: Mr. Rochester's Brother-in-law and an attorney reveal that Mr. Rochester is already married. Mr. Rochester confirms the allegation and reveals his mad wife, which he kept in the attic, to Jane. Shocked by this revelation, Jane leaves Thornfield the next morning (cf. Brontë 289-320). This change of setting provides Jane with new hardships as she forgets her few belongings in the coach she travels in, leaving her with only the clothes she is wearing (Brontë 322). Seeking shelter from the elements Jane arrives at *Marsh End* where she meets St. John Rivers and his sisters Diana and Mary, who turn out to be cousins of Jane (Brontë 384-385). Destined not to rely on the support of the Rivers' Jane asks St. John for employment and is made teacher of the village's girl's school (Brontë 354-355). However, this occupation does not last long as Jane surprisingly inherits a sum of £20,000 from her uncle in the West-Indies (Brontë 381-383). From a *Bildungsroman* perspective the plot could end here: Jane finally possesses the money to secure her a position in the middle-class or upper-class. Nonetheless, the plot continues: Jane decides to share her wealth with the Rivers' giving each of them £5,000 (Brontë 386-387). In addition, Jane refuses St. John's proposal and instead returns to Thornfield (Brontë 406-408, 422). Finding the place burned down, Jane finds Mr. Rochester at *Ferndean Manor* and marries him after learning that his wife committed suicide (Brontë ch. 11-12).

In addition to the Bildungsroman, Jane Eyre contains elements from two other genres. The protagonist's employment at Thornfield is marked by strange events that bear resemblance to elements found in *Gothic fiction*. Bertha Mason, Mr. Rochester's wife, is the culprit of these events, although at first she appears as a poltergeist, when she rattles at Jane's door or when she sets Mr. Rochester's bed on fire (Brontë 147-148).

Later she appears in front of Jane and is described as a "vampyre" (Brontë 284). Another genre found in *Jane Eyre* is *romance*. Again, this mostly takes place when Jane is at Thornfield: a romantic relationship occurs between Jane and her employer Mr. Rochester resulting in Mr. Rochester proposing to Jane (Brontë 254-255). During the wedding, however, it is revealed that Mr. Rochester is already married. Nonetheless, Jane is able to marry Mr. Rochester at the end of the novel after his mad wife killed herself (Brontë Ch. 11-12).

In conclusion, *Jane Eyre* is a Bildungsroman: it depicts a plot following the formative years of the protagonist. This progression can be marked by a change of setting, each providing the protagonist with a new set of challenges to negotiate. However, the novel also deviates from this genre, it contains elements from both Gothic fiction as well as romance, which are genres not usually associated with realist writing. Despite this, both elements are kept to a minimum and, at least the gothic elements, are rationally explained as the work of Mr. Rochester's mad wife. Based on these findings it is safe to say that *Jane Eyre* can be classified as a *Bildungsroman* or, more precisely, a *female Bildungsroman*.

Genre Convention: *Advice Literature* and the nineteenth century middle-class

During the nineteenth century public lending libraries became immensely popular in Britain. Often, people who could afford membership in one (among other factors) were considered to be part of the middle-class. Lending libraries such as Mudie's shaped the literary world of nineteenth century Britain: what was declined by libraries was bound to be unsuccessful, as books were still expensive. Two genres stood out as the most popular ones: novels and advice literature. Authors such as Sarah Stickney Ellis wrote literature teaching their readers on how to behave, what to do and what not to do. A particular piece of advice literature published in 1859 stood out among the rest: *Self-Help* by Samuel Smiles, a work often referred to as *the Bible of mid-Victorian liberalism*, making its author famous almost over-night. The work itself focusses on teaching the necessary skills and accompanying mindset to succeed in the mid-Victorian workplace and to improve one's social position. While written with male readers in mind, the underlying ideas can also be found in *Jane Eyre*.

However, before discussing how Jane Eyre can be read as advice literature, it is necessary to illustrate the English mid-nineteenth century middle-class and their ideology. When defining the middle-class different categories can be applied to ascertain if any given person is part of the middle-class. A definition based on income alone may be to general as Steinbach pointed out: "Some upper-working class families had higher incomes than some lower middle-class families…" (125). Belonging to a certain class was linked to more than just income. In general, the difference between working-class and middle-class was the type of work: working-class people did manual labor and were paid in wages; while middle-class men were paid in salaries and worked in white-collar occupations (cf. Steinbach 133-134). Despite this, income did play a role in defining the social classes: the magical border for entering the middle-class was £100 per year. At this sum, a family could employ a single servant, usually a maidservant, and the wife would not have to work. Additionally, access to a library became possible (cf. Copeland 130). Be that as it may, this could not always be archived. Nonetheless, certain occupations were still considered middle-class based on reputation alone, even if they paid less than manual labor: for instance, teaching professions or public service were considered middle-class employment, since these jobs required some form of education while most manual labor did not.

Another important factor to the British mid-nineteenth century middle-class was gender ideology, or, more particular, the separate spheres ideology. While working-class women did work to support the family and add to its income, middle-class women were expected to stay at home and work in the house as household managers. This idea came from the concept of *domesticity*. Women were thought of as domestic creatures that focused on home, family and religion while men were pubic figures, dealing with the cruelty of the marketplace and providing the family's income. Also, it was thought that if a middle-class woman had to work, the husband did not earn enough, which lead to a decreased respectability (cf. Steinbach134). However, sometimes middle-class women had to work albeit in very limited job opportunities: the only respectable occupations for middle-class women were governess and dressmaker (cf. Steinbach 134).

In order to return to *Jane Eyre,* it can be said that Jane, for a large portion of the novel, belongs to the middle class, as she works as governess and teacher, albeit at

a salary of less than £100. To add to this, her inheritance of £20,000, or after sharing with the Rivers' £5,000, provides Jane with a secure (middle-class) income[1].

Reading Jane Eyre as Advice Literature

In Self-Help, the advice character is obvious: at the beginning of each chapter, Smiles states an ideal in an almost sermon like fashion before referring to anecdotes of how the particular quality or idea has been useful to famous and/or successful men. In *Jane Eyre* the advice character is not as obvious, however, the underlying ideology is typical middle-class and by applying it, Jane is able to advance her social position until she finally marries Mr. Rochester and moves into the gentry. This educational character it often found in nineteenth century novels (cf. Steinbach 223).

As the first part of this paper pointed out, *Jane Eyre* is a Bildungsroman and presents crucial moments in the protagonist's life. To archive a higher authenticity, the novel follows the genre of realist fiction and, in addition, presents itself as an autobiography. This is purposely done by the author, believing that (auto-) biographies provide the reader with incentives to do as the characters/persons have done to accomplish the same or at least similar results and to provide an example to follow. Smiles follows the same idea in *Self-Help*, providing anecdotes or in some chapters whole biographies of how people archived their goals by applying certain qualities, he deemed helpful to success in life. This is even stated in the first chapter: "Biographies of great, but especially of good men, are nevertheless most instructive and useful, as helps, guides, and incentives to others." (Smiles 4). For this reason, it can be said that by writing *Jane Eyre* as a realist novel and fashioning it as an autobiography, the novel can be read as advice literature.

The kind of advice *Jane Eyre* offers represents mid-nineteenth century middle-class ideas that can also be found in *Self-Help*. One of the central ideas in the mid-nineteenth century British middle-class was that hard work was necessary to become successful. When Jane enters Lowood School she is placed at the bottom of the fourth class (cf. Brontë 45). However, during the eight years she stays at Lowood Jane is able to become the top-student of the institution and later spend two years as teacher before applying for a position as governess (cf. Brontë 84-85). The

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[1] Based on Copeland, an investment in government funds provided a 5 per cent return, giving Jane a yearly income of £1,000 or, after sharing, £250, which places her in the middle-class (cf. Copeland 130).

description of this academic rise states the underlying ideas clearly: "[…] a fondness for some of my studies and a desire to excel in all, together with a great delight in pleasing my teachers, […], urged me on […]" (Brontë 84-85). Similar ideas are found throughout Smiles' work with numerous examples from lives of men who, through hard work, rose in social status[2]. On the idea of hard work, Smiles quotes a Mr. Lindsay: ""he had prospered," he said," by steady industry, by constant work, and by ever keeping in view the great principle of doing others as you would be done by." (Smiles 9). The idea of a good behavior towards others is later picked up again by Smiles when he writes: "A graceful behavior towards superiors, inferiors and equals, is a constant source of pleasure." (Smiles 220). Again, this idea can be found in Jane Eyre as well: At the beginning of the novel, Jane shows a hostile behavior towards her aunt Mrs. Reed, which is sanctioned by Jane being sent to Lowood School. After learning to control her temper, Jane acts respectful towards all characters she encounters, even those who act vicious towards her, such as Blanche Ingram and Mrs. Reed. This is most clearly shown when Jane returns to Gateshead to meet her dying aunt and "forgives her" (cf. Brontë 240). Jane's behavior towards others also helps her after becoming a teacher in Morton, when she states about the parents of her pupils:

> "There was an enjoyment in accepting their simple kindness, and in repaying it by consideration – a scrupulous regard to their feelings, […], and which both charmed and benefited them […] it elevated them in their own eyes, it made them emulous to merit the deferential treatment they received.
> I felt I became a favorite in the neighborhood." (Brontë 366).

If not already obvious, Self-Help has been written for members of the working class or lower middle-class, seeking to advance their social position, by introducing them to middle-class ideas and the mindset deemed necessary to work their way into the middle-class. The middle-class mindset is a concept also found in *Jane Eyre*. This becomes obvious when Jane describes her pupils at Morton's girls' school: "Some of them are unmannered, rough, intractable, as well as ignorant; but others are docile, have a wish to learn, and evince a disposition that pleases me." (Brontë 358). This quote offers advice for both members the middle-class and the working class. The middle-class is introduced to the concept of the *deserving* and the *undeserving poor*, a concept also found and popularized in *Self-Help* (bl.uk). Many members of middle-class, who could afford it, where involved in charity work but at the same time

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[2] Some examples: Smiles 4, 18, 27-28.

displayed a certain anxiety concerning those who would receive their help (Steinbach 132). Only those who appeared sensible and able to utilize the help given to them were seen as *deserving.* The reminders were seen as *undeserving* poor. For members of the working class, the quote from Jane Eyre offers advice on the mindset deemed acceptable by the middle-class. Two crucial aspects of the middle-class mindset that members of the working class had to archive were good manners and education. Again, both aspects are also found in *Self-Help*, were Smiles stresses the importance of both. Education is a topic Smiles accentuates throughout his work, pointing out instances where famous scientists from working-class backgrounds spend their free time or breaks from work on the gathering of knowledge or testing their theories (cf. Smiles 73, 180). Additionally, Smiles points out, that education is a free good and any person who bothers to work on archiving education will eventually archive it (cf. Smiles 180). The mid-Victorian middle-class placed great importance on education and the achievement of knowledge, going as far as seeing other forms of free-time activities as moral temptations which had to be avoided (cf. Steinbach 135). Another important aspect working class members who aspired to move into the middle-class had to learn was good manners. This also introduced the idea that genteel behavior was a skill which could be learned, rather than status acquired by heritage. This idea is also found in *Jane Eyre*, in the same paragraph were Jane describes her pupils:

> "I must not forget that these coarsely-clad little peasants are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of the gentlest genealogy; and that the germs of native excellence, refinement intelligence, kind feeling, are as likely to exist in their hearts as in those of the best born." (Brontë 359).

On the same idea, Smiles dedicates a whole chapter in his work on genteel behavior and what is necessary for a member of the working-class to become a gentleman. In essence, these ideas follow the middle-class ideals of integrity and moral behavior (cf. Smiles 217 & Steinbach 166). As Smiles wrote:"Though a man have comparatively little culture, slender abilities, and but small wealth, yet if his character be of sterling worth, he will always command and influence […]" (Smiles 216). In both cases the contemporaneous readers are presented with advice on how to act in believe that it will help them to advance in the social hierarchy.

The presented ideas follow the concept of self-help, which proposes that anything can be archived by hard work and perseverance. As stated earlier, Jane is able to

rise through the ranks of Lowood through working hard. Later, when staying with the Rivers, Jane again is determined to work and not rely on the Rivers' charity, even if this means a loss in social position, as the prestige of a governess working for the gentry is higher than that of a village school teacher (cf. Brontë 359). Nonetheless, in doing so, Jane stays true to the idea that "Heaven helps those who help themselves" (Smiles 1), the core idea of self-help. As is often the case in realist fiction, Jane's virtue throughout the novel is rewarded in the end by a form of poetical justice. After having started her job as a village school teacher, Jane raises the question what would have been the right choice: fleeing to the continent with Mr. Rochester, whom she still loves, and being his mistress or taking on new hardships and becoming a village school teacher. The latter is presented as the morally right choice and Jane is "rewarded" for her moral behavior in form of the inheritance from her deceased uncle in the West-Indies (cf. Brontë 359-360, 381-383).

Another example of hard work paying dividends is given throughout the novel in descriptions of Jane's painting skills. After her first lessons at Lowood, the results are described as "[outrivaling] in slope those of the leaning tower of Pisa" (Brontë 74). However Jane continues to improve her artistic skills and, when her drawings are discovered by Rosamond Oliver, Jane is said to be a better artist than the master at the best school in the next big town (cf. Brontë 369). The idea of hard work eventually leading to success are abundantly found in Smiles' work, for artists as well as other forms of work. One of the most memorable examples is given in the third chapter when Smiles lengthily describes the life of Bernard Palissy, who under great personal sacrifices rediscovered the process of enameling earthenware. Again, both works depict the idea of hard work, practice and determination leading to eventual success.

In conclusion, both *Jane Eyre* and *Self-Help* share similar ideas and advice on personal conduct. In *Self-Help* this is clearly presented as advice for the readers by firstly stating desirable features and then illustrating the use of these features with anecdotes from biographies of famous or successful people. In *Jane Eyre*, the advice is given less obvious, Brontë opts to mediate the advice and middle-class ideology to her readers in form of descriptions of how a particular quality aided Jane, by inserting a short moral lesson or by describing deserving and undeserving poor. The advice

characteristic is aided by the concept of the Bildungsroman and by marketing the novel as a (fictional) autobiography, showing how application of the underlying ideology can lead to the desired results.

Conclusion

Investigating *Jane Eyre* from a structuralist perspective revealed that the novel follows the Bildungsroman genre with some deviations into romance and gothic fiction. However, this does not offer any greater insight into the underlying ideas. To unearth some underlying concepts a second approach in form of new historicism had to be applied. Reading Jane Eyre and Self-Help parallel revealed that both works stem from a similar (lower) middle-class background and feature the same ideas and concepts. Having done a structuralist analysis before applying new historicism helped in demonstrating how the Bildungsroman mediates advice by presenting a biography of a person successfully advancing their social position. In addition, new historicism made it possible to discuss the historical background in which both works were written. Additionally, it was possible to investigate class and gender ideology, concepts usually linked to politically charged theories such as Marxism and Gender Studies, from a neutral perspective. This paper focused primarily on the character development of Jane Eyre and how reader could take lessons from the novel, it did not investigate other characters such as Helen Burns, Mr. Rochester or St. John River. A psychoanalytical investigation into those characters may provide different insights into the novel than this paper did. Also, The British colonies are featured heavily at key points in the novel, a post-colonial analysis may provide interesting findings.

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EVALUATION SHEET

Prof. Dr. Jana Gohrisch

Seminar (Module):   Theories and Methods of Literary Studies

Student's Name:

Title of Paper: How to become middle class: C. Brontë's "Jane Eyre" as Advice Literature

Date of Marking: 27.04.2018

Evaluation Criteria		++	+	+-	-	--
1. Analysis and Interpretation						
thesis statement or research question		☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
argumentation		☐	☒	☒	☐	☐
result(s)		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Theory and Method						
analytical approach		☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
reference to theories of literature and/or culture: definition of critical terms and concepts		☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
scholarly meta-language of literary studies		☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
3. Sources						
primary material	selection, references	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
	use: analysis and interpretation	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
secondary material	selection, references	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
	use: critical discussion & appropriation	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
4. Form and Layout						
academic standards (cf. stylesheet)		☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
competent proof-reading		☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
5. Language						
academic register		☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
idiomatic writing style		☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
syntax, grammar, spelling		☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
6. Working Process						
independence		☐	☐	☒	☐	☐

Further Comments and Observations: Obwohl beide Thesen schon im Seminar entwickelt und diskutiert wurden, zeigt die Arbeit, dass es sich lohnt, sie noch einmal ausführlicher zu fundieren. Das gelingt für die im Titel benannte These besser als für die zum Bildungsroman, weil der Verf. Smiles heranzieht und als Folie auf den Roman legt, während für die erste These nur der Roman nachvollzogen wird (3ff). Hier hätten die Details aus dem Roman besser mit den Konventionen des Bildungsromans korreliert werden müssen, um analytische Aussagen zu treffen. Die lit.wiss. Analysebegriffe werden aber weitgehend korrekt verwendet (Ausnahmen: realism ist kein Genre, sondern ein Modus, mode, S. 3f; Erzählsituation, S. 2,7). Besonders gut gelingen dem Verf. die Ausführungen zum Klassenbegriff und zum Bürgertum und dessen

Werten, die er klar formuliert und dann im Text aufsucht (6ff). Der Verf. hat einen sehr guten Blick für das Wesentliche und kann daher beide Theorien sinnvoll verbinden. Das zeigt die gelungene Zusammenfassung der eigenen Arbeitsergebnisse.

The paper under review is marked: 2,0 (good)

Language class: Colonial Encounters in Contemporary Australian Fiction

Instructor: Dr. phil. Ellen Grünkemeier

Englisches Seminar

Wintersemester 2017/2018

Liminality in Phillip Noyce's *Rabbit-Proof Fence*
(2002)

Name:

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Matriculation

Table of contents

1. Introduction

Colonialism and its legacy have been the topic of research and debate since the middle of the 20th century which continues to produce both insights into how colonialism has affected the colonized as well as generate controversies surrounding its findings. Especially postcolonial studies with its interest in the complex interactions between colonizers and colonized and the resulting conflicts has often drawn attention to historical and existing problems that had its roots in colonialism. Notable disputes include the disadvantaged status of Native Americans and the First Nations in North America or the long lasting economical effects colonialism had on the African continent, how to fix them and most importantly: who is responsible?

Australia is another example of a state which has only recently started to come to terms with its own colonial past – but not without being accompanied by heavy political and academic disputes, as seen in the history wars which concerned itself with how the treatment of Aboriginal Australians should be interpreted and how it relates to white Australian identity. One big point of contention was that of the Stolen Generations, children born to white and Aboriginal parents which were taken from their families and put under the guardianship of state or religious organizations in order to receive a "re-education" with the goal of assimilating them into white Australian society as servants. The debate about it started with the publication of the *Bringing Them Home* report in 1997 which ultimately led to official apologies to those affected by the programme but was met with criticism or even outright denial of the historicity of the Stolen Generations. One year earlier, Doris Pilkington had published her novel *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* which tells the story of three Aboriginal girls who become part of said Stolen Generations and was based on a personal account and doubtlessly gained more attention through the public discourse.

Since postcolonial studies also concerns itself with media and how colonialism is represented in it, the film adaptation of Pilkington's novel, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, presents itself as a possible point of interest – not only because of the topic itself, but also because the representation of Aborigines in Australian cinema has been the topic of research ever since *Jedda*, which featured the first Aboriginal actors, was released in 1955. One point of view that has been proposed is that the Aboriginal characters are very often defined in being the counterpart to "white civilization" and will thus often be characterized in a way that highlights their connection to the "wilderness" and links their behaviour to their skin colour

(Turner 1988 : 140).

The main characters of *Rabbit-Proof Fence* are not as easily placed into the black/white dichotomy – Molly and her sisters are so called "half-castes", children of Aboriginal and white parents and are thus located in-between the two sides which have often been constructed as being mutually exclusive. They escape the Moore River Settlement to which they were taken and follow the titular rabbit-proof fence which was constructed as a barrier between the already settled part of Australia and the wilderness with its animals that posed a danger to to agricultural efforts. Both the main characters and the fence itself appear as being on the threshold between the two aforementioned opposites, a big part of their description relying on their in-betweenness. The term of in-betweenness has been extensively described by postmodern scholars, most notably Homi Bhabha, in order to describe a space between two cultures in which hybrid identities can be formed which then weaken the colonial discourse that hinges on constructing colonizers and colonized as mutually exclusive groups in order to justify the colonizers' superiority. This space is often also described as being connected to liminality, a term which has been used in many different fields in order to describe situations in which something is between two opposites and cannot be fully assigned to one or the other.   Considering the situation of the films' characters and the locations they visit, analysing *Rabbit-Proof Fence* under the consideration of the term liminality appears worthwhile. This paper will first delve into the concept of liminality in order to produce a framework with which to then analyse the film itself in order to test the thesis that *Rabbit-Proof Fence* heavily features the concept of liminality in the way it constructs its characters and the locations shown in the film.

2. Theoretical framework

This part of the paper will mainly concentrate on the theory behind the term liminality, which has been in use since the early 20th century. Since then, it has been employed to describe and understand various subjects. The first part of the theory chapter will delve into the origin of the term itself and how it has been adapted into postcolonial studies in order to create a framework for the analysis. However, a restriction to the methods of postcolonial studies would not be sufficient to analyse the designated object of research since *Rabbit-Proof Fence* is a film. Consequently, the second part of this chapter will enunciate the relevant film studies

methods and will identify the properties of film that are most relevant for bridging the gap between the two fields and thus make a more thorough analysis possible.

2.1 The concept of liminality

As pointed out, liminality is a term that has been used in a wide variety of disciplines such as art, anthropology and postcolonial studies (Moles 2007: 54). For the analysis of *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, only its origin and the way it has been integrated into postcolonial studies, especially by Homi Bhabha, will be important. Arnold van Gennep coined the term liminality in his work Les Rites de Passages in 1909, in which he used it to describe the transition period in-between the start and end of rites of passage (Chakraborty 2016 : 145). Before reaching this liminal stage which Gennep calls margin or limen, the person undergoing the rite first goes through a point of separation. Here, he or she will lose not only the social status they enjoyed before starting the rite but will also be separated from their social environment, effectively cutting them off from friends and family and essentially "dying", leaving behind their former stage in life (Chakraborty 2016: 147). During the now following transitory, liminal stage, the person exists on the threshold between its former life and the life that is ahead of them where they stay until a certain condition is met and they can return to society. Until then, their status is ambiguous since it is not meant to be permanent and because they lost their prior status in society, but have not yet received a new one. Gennep likened the liminal stage to a time "in human history when countries did not border directly on each other but were divided by a neutral zone", which meant that they occupied a transitory place in which it was unclear which laws applied to them (Chakraborty 2016: 147). The liminal stage ends with what Gennep calls reaggregation in which the individual is welcomed back into society, effectively being re-born after their pre-rite self has died in order to be able to take the rite of passage (Chakraborty 2016: 147). Moles points out that when approaching the sequence of separation, margin and reaggregation with a focus on liminality, it can "also be understood as a pre-liminal phase (separation), a liminal phase (transition), and a post-liminal phase (reincorporation)"(2007: 61).

The term liminality has since made its inroads in postcolonial theory and is intricately linked to two other concepts: colonial discourse and hybridity. Colonial discourse was already alluded to in the introduction, but a marginally longer, more thorough description is necessary

for understanding the importance of liminality in regards to postcolonial theory. The unequal power relations between colonizers and colonized require a discourse that legitimises both the dynamic itself and the various means in which the colonized are relegated to the status of the "other" which entails notions of primitivism, lack of civilization and thus a need for being civilized by the colonisers. This dichotomy is inherently unstable and requires constant reinforcement by propagating ideas based on a binary opposition of colonizers and colonized in which the division between the two is made on the grounds of the formers' assumed cultural superiority (Moles 2007: 56). The concept of hybridity constitutes one way of subverting the strict division of colonizers and colonized by pointing out the "creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" which highlight the way in which cultures have regularly changed through contact with others, thus undermining the notion of pure cultures that are completely different from each other (Ashcroft et al. 2007: 108). The important detail for the analysis of *Rabbit-Proof Fence* is the description of contact zones between colonizers and colonized in which new, hybrid identities emerge that call the assumed opposition between two cultures into question.

The conflict between colonial discourse and the idea of hybridity was investigated further by Homi Bhabha, for example in his book *The Location of Culture* in which he introduced the concept of liminality and liminal space into the discourse. He refers to the aforementioned contact zones between colonizers and colonized as liminal or in-between spaces, points of contact in which cultural differences are negotiated and new ideas of self and identity can be formed (Babha 1994: 1). As such, the liminal spaces constitute the threshold that lies "in-between settled cultural forms or identities, like self/ other", very much alike the aforementioned liminal stage in rites of passage in which the individual is put into an ambiguous position which it is neither completely one nor the other (Moles 2007: 57). Bhabha has pointed out one of the main tenets of the concept of liminality in regards to colonial discourse by referencing the idea of liminality as a stairwell proposed by Renée Green: The threshold between two spaces, or in the case of postmodern theory, two identities, constitutes a liminal area rife with back- and forth movements which prevent both ends from reaching a state in which they become the two parts of a binary opposition (Bhabha 1994: 4; Ashcroft et. al. 2007: 117). Consequently, the strict division between colonizer and colonized in a self/ other fashion which constitutes the cornerstone for colonial discourse becomes undermined by the fact that as soon as the two groups come into contact with each other via the act of

colonization, liminal spaces emerge which invariably establish a link through which new identities are created. These hybrid identities do not only serve as a sort of "living proof" of the shaky foundation of colonial discourse, but are also capable of highlighting cultural difference without using it as a basis for establishing a hierarchy (Bhabha 1994: 4). However, these hybrid identities resulting from contact in liminal space come with their own challenges. Since colonial discourse relies on stereotypes in order to keep the division between colonizer and colonized stable and legitimize the colonial authority to "civilize", liminal spaces and their products pose a serious threat to its ideological basis (Moles 2007: 59). As a result, hybrid identities may be designated as "foreign bodies […] in the midst of the nation" and thus relegated to a position outside of the established communities (Bhabha 1996: 57).

2.2 Relevant film-studies aspects

While an analysis of *Rabbit-Proof Fence* founded on the concept of liminality might already produce ample results, it would not be complete without taking the properties of the medium into account. Film studies offer a wide variety of categories with which to analyse films, for example camera, editing and sound. However, a full analysis incorporating most or all of the available categories would exceed the scope of this paper. Consequently, only the aspects relevant to the concept of liminality will be considered. Liminality and its effects on those involved in it concern mostly human beings changing on the threshold between cultures and identities. As such, the characters of *Rabbit-Proof Fence* will need to be examined closely, especially how they are constructed and how they change throughout the film. Liminality also relies on liminal spaces in order to occur, thus necessitating an analysis of the locations featured in the film as well as how these spaces are realized via film language.

Film, much like other narrative media, relies on characters in order to portray a fictional story or one that is based on true events. Often, films rely on having one or multiple main-characters which the audience follows throughout the story while the characters try to act on their motivations and encounter the side-characters along the way. A characters motivation often serves as a way to make their choices and actions understandable, making it an important part of how characters are constructed in a film (Lewis 2014: 34). However, character motivation is not an aspect that is specific to film, which can employ various other methods due to its audiovisual nature. One important facet is how characters are portrayed in

the film itself, more precisely how their appearance is realized through costume which also often includes make-up and hair. Lewis points out that costume represents "a part of a film's visual shorthand" that lets the audience infer "a character's social standing, occupation, even their attitude towards life" (2014: 67). Furthermore, costumes can not only serve as a means of signifying a character's current status in a scene, changes made to it are a very straightforward way of highlighting transformation (Lewis 2014: 68-69). Camera work serves as another means for subtle characterization. While mainly being used as means to portray a scene, it can also used to great effect in order to subtly influence the audiences perception of a character. For instance, the angle of a shot can make characters appear in different ways – low-angle shots can be unflattering and portray the character as something menacing, but can also confer a sense of authority while high-angle shots can make someone appear more sympathetic (Lewis 2014: 88; 89). Positioning the camera at eye-level with a character on the other hand can be used to "imply a connection between the viewer and the character on screen (Lewis 2014: 90).

Locations or sets are an integral part of films which provide an environment in which the characters interact either with each other or with the set itself. Just like the appearance of the characters, a set can convey a multitude of information to the viewers. For instance, they can establish the time and place of the film, which is especially important when striving to portray either a historic setting or even historic events, as is the case for *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Lewis 2014: 59-60). One of the methods used for this is the establishing shot, which is used to introduce the location before the scene itself plays out (Lewis 2014: 91). By using real locations that some of the viewers might have already seen or even been to before, a film can deliver a sense of authenticity by employing the right set design. Although it is important to note that a set only has to convince the audience of its authenticity and not actually be authentic itself – in fact, by using a convincing method of portraying a seemingly real location, directors can even add additional details in order to give a certain impression that fits the tone of the film (Lewis 2014: 60).

3. Liminality in *Rabbit-Proof Fence*

Rabbit-Proof Fence follows the journey of Molly, Daisy and Gracy, three young girls of Aboriginal and white descent who, due to being designated as "half-castes", are taken into the

Moore River Native Settlement in order to be re-educated and subsequently assimilated into the white colonial society of 1930s Australia. They escape and follow the titular rabbit-proof fence in order to return to their home of Jigalong while being pursued by a tracker working for the colonial authorities and meeting several characters throughout their journey, constantly having to decide whom they can trust. This chapter is divided into the two big big categories of characters and locations described earlier. The aspect of space, or more precisely liminal space, will be analysed first since it serves as the foundation for liminal constructions of identity and culture to occur. Afterwards, how the main- and relevant side-characters interact and potentially transform through their actions inside these spaces will be explored. The combined results will be used to test the thesis laid out in the introduction.

3.1 Locations

Rabbit-Proof Fence opens with a short, narrated exposition establishing the time and place in which the story takes place. Before any character is seen, the audience is shown an establishing shot of what can be assumed to be the Australian wilderness, with no signs of western inhabitants in sight. After a cut, Jigalong, is portrayed in a set of scenes, all of them taking place in a nature environment which pronounces the place in which Molly, Daisy and Gracy grew up as being far away from the colonized cities and settlements of white Australians. Even though said colonial settlements have not been shown yet, the home of the main characters is established as being located inside an uncolonised "wilderness" of Australia and thus seemingly setting up the basis for echoing the trend in Australian cinema in which Aborigines are linked to nature, eventually positioning them in opposition to white civilization (Rhekhari 2007: 4). This basis is then further developed into the dualism of civilization and nature when the film cuts to the office of A.O. Neville, the Chief Protector of Aborigines as he prepares the paperwork necessary for the abduction of Molly and her sisters – the set features a cramped, but organized room that heavily contrasts the wide, open area seen before. In regards to liminality, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* establishes both sides of the colonial discourse in an isolated manner as opposites while setting up not only the reason for the following story, but also pointing towards the location in-between the two sides to which the main characters will be transported. The connection to the liminal space between the two manifests itself as the base camp located at the rabbit-proof fence close to Jigalong. West-

Pavlov has stressed that while fences have traditionally been used to divide between the progressing colonization and uncolonised space, the case of the rabbit-proof fence showed that these intersections have also led to "hybrid societies" forming as the workers came into contact with the indigenous population (2010: 89). Since the base camp also serves as a platform for distributing goods and later on becomes the location in which Molly and her sisters are abducted, it constitutes the entrance towards the threshold that is liminal space. Visually, the sets are still dominated by nature, each one remaining surrounded by it. However, elements of colonisation are added to the sets which range from subtle like the horse surrounded by fencing in the background to the more obtrusive main building of the base camp which takes up the majority of the shot in which it is first seen.

After the abduction, the location of the film shifts to the Moore River Native Settlement. The liminal properties which took up a minor, yet noticeably part of the set design of the base camp seen before now rise to prominence and shift the relationship between nature and colonization – while the signs of colonization were placed inside the living space of the Aboriginal characters, thus making liminal contact between colonizers and colonized theoretically optional, Molly and her sisters are now surrounded by a colonial settlement that entraps them in an enclosed, seemingly liminal space in which their hybrid status as "half-castes" is elevated to a position of high relevance. The entrapment in the camp is highlighted by locating the scenes inside the various buildings of the Moore River Native Settlement, establishing an inside/outside dynamic which carries over into the sets showing the area surrounding the houses while communicating a sense of oppressive narrowness – the individual rooms are tightly packed with furniture and appliance designed for their purpose, leaving only as much free space as necessary. While it is clear that the settlement is not inside a large urban area and thus still surrounded by the nature, the buildings and especially the centrally-positioned church dominate the view and thus serve as a boundary between the confined nature of the settlement and the freedom outside of it. Through this, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* positions the Moore River Native Settlement into the centre of liminal space by pronouncing its status as a threshold between Aboriginal and white colonial identities. However, due to the nature of the location, the articulation of cultural differences mentioned happens solely on the terms of the colonizers, which is to say that the formation of new, hybrid identities that might endanger the authority of colonial discourse is actively suppressed. The "hither and tither" on the liminal stairwell is heavily controlled, in fact, only

one direction of stairs is permissible: that towards the colonizers culture (Bhabha 1994: 4). Consequently, the settlement fails to meet the postcolonial definition of liminality, instead featuring more elements of Gennep's model – its goal is to serve as the in-between location for "half-caste" children that have been separated from their environment, thus leading to their "death" as parts of their own society in order to prepare them for their "re-birth" as parts of white colonial society.

The rest of the film mainly takes place along the rabbit-proof fence which serves as a connection between the Moore River settlement and Jigalong. The space between the start of the journey home and its goal mirrors modes of presentation found in the portrayal of the base camp close to Jigalong. Long takes of the surrounding nature, completely devoid of colonial settlement are shown alongside shots that feature the fence either in the background or as a line dividing the shot and thus the landscape. During this part of the film, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* constructs its namesake not as the exclusionary entity that it was intended to be, but instead highlights its hybrid state that facilitates interactions between colonial settlers and the indigenous population, although the characterization as a liminal space is pronounced less in the set design than it is via the characters' interactions which will be covered later (West-Pavlov 2010: 90). During their journey, the fence is not the only in-between location visited by the main characters: A train station, which has been described as being a typical in-between space, combined with rumours regarding the whereabouts of their mother promises a safe return to their family (Luz 2006: 151). In contrast to the settlement, the fence and its surrounding locations exhibits more liminal properties. Molly, Daisy and Gracy encounter a good amount of characters throughout their journey, indicating that the fence is less of a separating structure and instead constitutes a catalyst for liminal contact between colonists and aborigines that is not directly within the controlling grasp of colonial discourse and subsequently enables a form of contact between the two sides that can facilitate hybrid identities.

3.2 Character analysis

Since *Rabbit-Proof Fence* keeps its spotlight on the three main characters which go through a long journey on their own, most of the other characters remain bound to the locations in which they are encountered, only being able to leave try and influence their actions during

their short stays. Molly stands out as the most prominent of the three by doing most of the speaking, serving as the leader of the group and thus receiving the largest amount of characterization. In the opening sequence, the audience witnesses Molly succeeding in a hunt, establishing her as possessing a certain degree of skills necessary for surviving in nature and thus positioning her firmly on the "colonized" side of colonial discourse. Her and her sisters status as "half-castes" which is established in the exposition seems to be of no concern to their immediate environment. *Rabbit-Proof Fence* establishes the three sisters as being a fully integrated part of their indigenous community not only by not showing them being the receivers of animosity by their peers, but also via the clothing they wear. From the start of the film until their arrival at the Moore River Native Settlement, Molly and her sisters wear the same light brown clothes as their peers in Jigalong, which then gets replaced with a white set of clothes, signifying their separation from their home (see Fig. 1-2). During their journey along the fence, their new apparel gets dirty, slowly losing its white colour – the closer they get to Jigalong, the more it changes until it resembles the light brown of their original wardrobe. The change in clothes underscores the motivation of the three main characters: escaping the forced assimilation into white colonial society and returning home, shedding the influence of the colonizers along the way. When viewed through the lens of liminality, Molly, Gracie and Daisy certainly move through the liminal spaces in which cultural transformation takes place, whether they are under the control of the colonial authority like the settlement or far removed and more akin to a border between two spheres like the fence – however, the transformation involving the creation of a new, hybrid identity is wholeheartedly rejected (Chakraborty 2016: 146).

Fig 1-2 Molly and her sisters are introduced wearing the same colour as their peers. In the settlement, they receive a white set of clothes, signifying the separation (Noyce 2002, screenshots taken by author).

Another character of interest is that of Moodoo, the Aboriginal tracker working for the colonial authorities who is tasked to recapture the escaped girls. *Rabbit-Proof Fence*

establishes Moodoo by showing him returning a "half-caste" girl who had escaped from the settlement. Moodoo's clothing clearly communicates his role as an ally to the colonial authorities – he wears a clean, blue shirt with prominent buttons reminiscent of Australian police uniforms of the 1920s as well as carrying a rifle (see Fig. 3-4). This and his employment in the ranks of the colonizers introduce him as having separated "himself from his own people" as well as establishing him as an experienced tracker who poses a threat to successfully escaping the settlement (Holíková 2012: 35). While all of this might lend itself to putting Moodoo firmly onto the side of the colonizers, his character's motivation for his work paint a more nuanced picture: His daughter is also kept at the Moore River Native settlement, indicating that he acts on the hope that his service might enable him to reunite with her or possibly preventing her complete separation from him (Holíková 2012: 37). Moodoo's ambiguous role is further supplement by the camera work. While the white colonial authorities and even the Aboriginal supervisor at the settlement are mostly seen from a low-angle, thus pronouncing their authority and painting them as something menacing, Moodoos shots remain close to eye level, situating him closer to the sympathetic characters who are also presented via eye-level shots. The camera work and his ambiguous role construct him as the most liminal character in *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. His position as a father made him follow his daughter into liminal space, taking a new position that gives him the hope of bridging the disrupted connection to her. While his newfound role directly on the threshold is not the most advantageous and comes with him having to work against other aborigines, he still retains a certain degree of agency inside liminal space, as shown when having to give up the pursuit of Molly and her sisters seemingly provides him with a sense of relief (Holíková 2012: 38).

Fig. 3-4 Moodoo returns to the settlement with an escaped girl. His clothing bears great similarities to the uniforms used by 1920s Australian police (Noyce 2002, screenshot taken by author; Menzies Virtual Museum: *Eric Scott)*

The dynamic of establishing characters via camera angles that is used throughout the first half of the film starts to lose its reliability during the journey along the fence. The low-

angle that has so far been reserved for characters that are opposed to the protagonists loses its meaning in the liminal space that is the rabbit-proof fence. Two examples are the fence worker and the mother living on the farm the girls steal from who are both mainly shot from low angles. However, both characters play a vital role in aiding the girls' way home by giving them details about the rabbit-proof fence and supplying them with food. On the other hand, the Aboriginal man that lures the protagonists to the train station is shot at eye level, giving the impression that he might be as benevolent as the other hunters that the girls met earlier who were also shot at eye level. The subsequent capture of Gracie at the train station reveals the man to be cooperating with the authorities. The change in how camera work is used to introduce characters is further pronounced by the regular use of shifting the view to that of the girls, making sure that all of the other characters are defined in relation so the protagonists (Lambert 2005: camera in *Rabbit-Proof Fence* paragraph). Through this, the *Rabbit-Proof Fence* highlights the "blurring of roles" and ambiguity inherent in liminality spaces by extending it to way the characters are presented to the audience (Moles 2007: 72).

4. Conclusion

As has been shown, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* exhibits the concept of liminality not only via the sets used but also how it constructs and presents its characters via camera work. While the film mostly features liminal places in the postcolonial sense such as the camp close to Jigalong and the rabbit-proof fence itself, the Moore River Native Settlement appears as a liminal location in the anthropological sense laid out by Gennep. However, the film does not espouse the hybrid identities' capability to subvert colonial discourse. The main characters understandably reject any approximation towards a liminal identity whereas Moodoo, the only character to truly position himself in-between the dichotomy of colonizers and colonized, remains an ambiguous figure whose fate is ultimately left to the audience's imagination. While *Rabbit-Proof Fence* relies on the colonizer/ colonized dichotomy that has been very prominent throughout the history of Australian cinema, it still strives to subvert it somewhat through the representation of Moodoo. Since the film was released in 2002, further research could go into the direction of analysing more recent films in regards to their incorporation of liminality and colonial discourse.

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LEIBNIZ UNIVERSITÄT HANNOVER
ENGLISCHES SEMINAR
ANGLISTISCHE LITERATUR- UND KULTURWISSENSCHAFT

EVALUATION SHEET
Dr. Ellen Grünkemeier

Seminar (Module):   Colonial Encounters in Contemporary Australian Fiction

Student's Name: ---

Title of Paper: Liminality in Rabbit-Proof Fence

Date of Marking: 12.07.2018

Evaluation Criteria	++	+	+-	-	--
1. Analysis and Interpretation					
thesis statement or research question		☒	☒		
argumentation		☒			
result(s)		☒	☒		
2. Theory and Method					
analytical approach		☒			
reference to theories of literature and/or culture: definition of critical terms and concepts		☒			
scholarly meta-language of literary studies		☒			
3. Sources					
primary material — selection, references	☒				
primary material — use: analysis and interpretation		☒	☒		
secondary material — selection, references		☒			
secondary material — use: critical discussion & appropriation				☒	
4. Form and Layout					
academic standards (cf. stylesheet)	☒				
competent proof-reading		☒			
5. Language					
academic register		☒			
idiomatic writing style		☒			
syntax, grammar, spelling			☒		
6. Working Process					
independence	☒				

Further Comments and Observations: Basierend auf soliden Kenntnissen zur Filmanalyse ebenso wie zum Postkolonialismus besticht die Arbeit durch die genaue und kritisch-abstrahierte Analyse von Figuren und Setting im Film Rabbit-Proof Fence. Dank der reflektierten Darstellung der Argumentation ist die Leserführung gelungen. Im Hauptteil der Arbeit übertragen Sie das Konzept 'liminality' gewinnbringend auf den Film und berücksichtigen dabei treffend die Unterschiede in den Definitionen von Gennep und Bhabha (vgl. z.B. 8-9, 10). Die zentrale Schwäche der Arbeit liegt jedoch darin, dass Sie nicht eingehender nach der Funktion dieser Konstruktion fragen. In Anlehnung an Chakraborty schreiben Sie, "the

transformation involving the creation of a new, hybrid identity is wholeheartedly rejected" (10). Warum entwirft der Film die Schauplätze und Figuren auf diese Art und Weise?

Die verwendete Sekundärliteratur ist einschlägig und gut ausgewählt, allerdings dient sie nur zur Absicherung Ihrer Argumentation; eine kritische Auseinandersetzung wäre wünschenswert. Was die Sprache betrifft, so liest sich die Arbeit flüssig, allerdings irritieren die vielen Passivkonstruktionen, die die Akteure verschleiern und somit insbesondere einer postkolonialen Lesart abträglich sind. Außerdem weist die Arbeit grundlegende Grammatikfehler auf, wiederholt bei der Verwendung des Genitivs, aber auch bei der Unterscheidung zwischen "who" und "which".

The paper under review is marked: 2,3