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Binary Opposites and Opposites in general are a staple point of storytelling, conflict drives a story. Both *Sweet Sixteen* (Loach, 2002) and *Fish Tank* (Arnold, 2009) are structured around opposites, in *Sweet Sixteen* (Loach, 2002) Liam is in conflict with many opposites such as his stepfather Stan, Authority and his mother (Jean). *Fish Tank* (Arnold, 2009) is about a teenage girl called Mia, in *Fish Tank* (Arnold, 2009) Mia is also in conflict with many of her opposites such as her mother, herself and also her environment.

Liam’s conflict with Authority is shown within minutes of the film’s opening, Liam and his friends are in Greenock, their home town, when they spot a police bike parked in front of side road, coming out of said side road is a lorry. Liam goes over to the lorry and directs the driver to come out of the road causing him to smash into the bike and knock it over, Liam then steals the Police Officers helmet and runs away when the Officer notices its missing. This establishes his conflict with authority straight away, showing that the narrative if the film is structured around conflict.

In *Sweet Sixteen* Liam’s conflict with his step dad Stan is the inciting incident in the whole film in my opinion. After running away from the police officer we cut to a close up of Liam in the back of a car, this shot highlights his loneliness in the situation as he is in the car with his step dad and grandad. The two men are arguing at Liam about them being late to visit Liam’s mother. Liam is ignoring them completely and when asked where he was he simply relies “out” in a gruff (heavily Scottish) voice. They arrive at a prison and Stan forces Liam to smuggle in drugs to give to his mother. Liam and the men make it into Prison and Liam is given the opportunity to hand over the drugs to his mother and he doesn’t he is corralled by Stan but Liam refuses and leaves. Stan and Liam’s grandad then beat Liam up and kick him out of the house, starting the Chain of events that in my opinion make the film happen. So you can see that in this sequence at least the narrative is driven by opposites, that being the opposite of Liam and Stan and their general opinion of each other and each other’s actions.

*Sweet Sixteen* has a narrative driven by opposites. The ultimate narrative opposition in the film is Liam and his mother. Liam’s mother is in prison, and not for the first time. Liam’s desire to be the opposite of his mother is one of the driving forces of the whole film, Liam’s decision to steal Stan’s drugs and sell them is one he made after finding the caravan that is essential to the plot. Liam tries to make enough money to buy the caravan nearer to the more middle class Gourock is one he makes in order to get away from Greenock and increase his chances of making his life better. Liam makes the decision to deal with Pinball after his is offered the ultimatum by Douglas that he can have an apartment on the condition he deal’s with Pinball. He makes this decision in a both selfless and selfish way because he knows having the apartment will make his life better, but also it will make his mothers life better. The nail in the coffin for the narrative being structured around opposition is Liam’s opposition of his mothers decision to go back to Stan. Liam storms over to Stan’s house to oppose her decision and his discovery that she doesn’t seem to love him like he does sends him over the edge and he stabs Stan, another opposition. This ends the narrative structure.

In *Fish Tank* (Arnold, 2009), what I mean by Mia being in conflict with her environment is the fact that she is driven to make decisions based on what the people around her do. This is shown brilliantly in the opening sequence of the film. Mia has been around the estate looking for her best friend when she sees a group of girls she instantly dislikes. We see Mia’s conflict with her environment as she takes an obvious dislike to these girls shown by the fact that she goes over to them and bluntly voices her opinion, she starts having a go at them for what they are wearing and we see earlier in the scene that they seem to be dancing for some boys. After a short argument Mia head-butts one of the girls and walks off. This shows a conflict as she obviously doesn’t like these girls seemingly because they are just becoming the like the other girls on their estate and Mia doesn’t want to be like them.

Mia has another major conflict with her mother, this is perfectly shown again in the opening sequence in which Mia returns home for her mother to shout at her that the police are looking for her, Mia’s mum pulls her hair and Mia shoves her away storming off to her room. Mia’s mother then shouts up at Mia “I don’t know what’s wrong with you”. Mia replies “your what’s wrong with me”. This perfectly shows that the narrative is driven by opposites as Mia and her mum are opposites, Mia is so desperate to not end up like her mother that she acts out and makes bad decisions. Mia is so scared of becoming her mother that the only option she sees is to drive her mother away.

Finally Mia’s opposition to herself is clearly shown in the dance audition scene, in this scene Mia is auditioning for a dancing role in which she doesn’t realise is for a more adult role than she realised. In this scene Mia makes the decision not to dance for the “judges” and leaves. As she is leaving she walks past a mirror, this mirror is seemingly showing her that she is making the right decision, she is looking almost at the opposite of herself. This drives the narrative as it gives us a sense that she is changing and shows us that she is no longer accepting that opposite of herself. This decision in way is the one that takes her away from her opposition of her mother and her environment as it is her saying to herself that she isn’t going to end up like them and she is going to try and do something different.

In Conclusion I think both film’s narratives are structured around opposites as in both *Sweet Sixteen* (Loach, 2002) and *Fish Tank* (Arnold, 2009) the characters make decisions based on what drives them further away from there opposites, Liam drives away from authority and his parents and Mia seeks a life better than the one her mother has or the one that is expected of her by certain people because of her environment. The characters in both films are very similar as they are both very resilient teenagers who have struggled a lot on their way, definitely more than I have, and they are making their choices based on moving further away from their opposites. This brings the narrative with them as they are an extension of the narrative therefore it moves as they move.

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