

Explore how the narratives of both your chosen films are structured around oppositions (AO)

~~Explore how narrative structure of narrational devices (narrative devices) are used in both of your chosen films~~

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Narrative terminology

Film form

'Sweet Sixteen' (2002, Ken Loach) is a ~~the~~ British social realist film that follows a young Liam (Martin Compston) as he attempts to navigate his way ^{through} the unfortunate circumstances he finds himself in, eventually resulting in the unravelling of his world around him. This film's narrative is driven by compelling binary opposites that affect the character and the structure of the story. 'Fish Tank' (2009, Andrea Arnold) is another British social realist film that follows a young person's journey, this is Mia (Katie Jarvis) as she comes to terms with herself and her environment as everything changes when she meets Conor (Michel Fossbender), the boyfriend of Mia's mother. Binary opposites are also presented in the narrative structure of this film as they compell the character's decisions.

analyzing objects

writing

In 'Sweet Sixteen' a key opposition is the ideas of childhood and adulthood. Protagonist, Liam, is in a constant battle between his childish, impulsive nature and his need to be considered mature and responsible. This clash leads to him making decisions that affect the course of his life and the film's narrative, in a cause to effect, ~~the~~ action and reaction chain of ~~events~~ events. A scene that represents this opposition is a section of the opening sequence, where Liam, Stan (Liam's mother's boyfriend) and Rab (Liam's grandfather) are searched on entry of the prison when visiting Liam's mother. In this scene, Liam emptys ~~the~~ the contents of his pockets onto a table ~~and~~ and a close up, medium long take ^{reveals to} ~~shows~~ us what there is. In one pocket, there is a handful of loose change, mixed with scraps of rubbish and cigarette butts as well as two packs of cigarettes, one open ^{and} none

closed and in the other, there is a lollipop and a mobile phone. The contrast between the two pockets, specifically the cigarettes and the lollipop represent Liam's struggle between adulthood and childhood as well as displaying the different aspects of his personality. The fact that Liam carries so much miscellaneous cash and scraps shows that he takes what he can get, implying that he has had to grow up fast and adapt to his challenging environment. This representation of ~~the~~ this opposition is present throughout the film and shows how this film is an uneasy bildungsroman in nature. This is continued ~~in~~ the scene much later in the narrative, where Liam is shaving his face. This is a typical scene in coming of age stories as it represents manhood and ~~the~~ becoming an adult. Throughout this scene Liam's reflection is shown in ~~3~~ mirrors showing ~~the~~ 4 different 'versions' of himself or different states of mind, further cementing his ~~own~~ inner conflict between adult and child. The narrative of the film is structured around this opposition as it drives the narrative forward and compels the character of Liam through the uneasy, ~~the~~ linear storyline towards his equilibrium.

Another opposition shown in 'Sweet Sixteen' is the conflict between the working class and the middle class. ~~the~~ One of the key narrative motivations is Liam's journey towards Gourrock and his struggles to leave Greenock behind. Gourrock is represented as a desirable and aspirational location to live in and so Liam is determined to reach it. The apartment is Greenock is larger and cleaner than any location ^{seen} in Greenock up to this point and scenes shot there use much wider shots to represent this new space. In contrast, when Liam realises his mother has returned to Greenock

shaving

Gourrock
is ↑
Greenock ↓
selling apart

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the narrative journey of the film shifts and becomes a push from Gowrock to Greenock, once this happens the stability and equilibrium Liam had is disrupted and the downhill stretch begins. Scenes shot in Stans apartment have darker, more low key lighting and contain more close ups and claustrophobic shots. These key differences represent the tension between the two locations and therefore the two different classes, showing how this opposition affects the narrative structure of the film and its importance to the characters and their motivations.

In 'Fish Tank' a key opposition is the representation of femininity, namely between ^{with heroine} Mia and the other girls ~~who are the Mardike Estate messes~~ on Essex's Mardike Estate. In the opening scene, ~~we~~ ^{we} are presented with centre framed shot, using a slightly warped fisheye lense, of Mia. ~~Her~~ Her costume is composed of baggy ~~and~~ athletic clothing with a monochrome colour palette. Her hair is pulled tightly back into a ponytail, full of clips and pins to keep the hair out of her eyes and her ~~and~~ jewellery consists of large hoop earrings and ~~a~~ a few necklaces. This composition of ~~the~~ ^{her} outfit shows that she values practicality, in her hair styles and clothing choices but ^{that} she does ^{also} take pride in her appearance, in her accessories and jewellery. This costume design contrasts with the other girls on her estate ~~and~~ seen as the sequence continues, ~~the~~ dancing in a car park. They wear much more ~~to~~ bright and colourful ~~clothing~~ as well as revealing clothing, almost the complete opposite of Mia's. This contrast continues as we see Mia display ~~the~~ aggressive, feral behaviour as she head butts one of these girls in the forehead.

feminine

class

As this happens, the camera breaking the 180° rule in a hand-held, medium close up that disorientates and amplifies the violence and shocking nature of the action. This extreme contrast between Mia and the other girls ~~is~~ in her environment captures the ^{binary} opposition of femininity as shows how it effects the already uneasy equilibrium of the narrative and the ~~structure~~ cause and effect structure as it continues.

Class
Conor vs
Mia

Another important opposition in 'Fish Tank' is the working class and the middle class contrast. This is represented by the clear differences between Mia's neighbourhood and Conor's. When Mia visits Conor's town she is immediately shown to be uncomfortable and confused, the streets are wider and cleaner and the houses are similar and cohesive unlike the estate.

~~When~~ As Mia walk around the neighbourhood she is shown in wide shots, filmed with a long lens for an observational effect. She is ~~stared~~ stared at from across the street by a local woman who acts as though Mia is 'out of place' here, consolidating the clear class contrast and divide.

Conor.

This ~~contrast~~ ^{opposition} in ~~the~~ between class allows for a clear turning point in the narrative structure as ~~the~~ cause and effect chain of events caused by this scene is key to the structure of the narrative.

To conclude all of the points previously stated above ~~is~~ in 'Sweet Sixteen' the oppositions of childhood and adulthood and the working class and the middle class effect the structure of the narrative as they compell characters to make decisions and form

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important motivations for them as well as that shape the structure of the story and ^{help} dictate the conclusion and resolution of the film as a whole. In 'Fish Tank' the oppositions of femininity in different characters and the working class and the middle class influence the structure of the narrative as they effect and disrupt the equilibrium throughout the film and establish cause and effect chains ~~the~~ over the course of the film's narrative. ~~the~~

~~1.7, marked page 15 (1/1/2017)~~

Explain how the narratives of both of your chosen films are structured around oppositions.

Both 'Sweet Sixteen' (Ken Loach, 2002) and 'Fish Tank' (Andrea Arnold, 2009) explore the concept of binary oppositions to portray youth versus adulthood and underclass versus middle class. Binary oppositions are a pair of related concepts/terms that have opposite meanings.

Firstly, in 'Sweet Sixteen', Loach explores the opposition between youth and adulthood through the protagonist, Liam (Martin Compston). 'Sweet Sixteen' follows Liam's journey as Loach seems to present the film as bildungsroman because the viewer follows Liam on his attempts to ~~grow up~~ grow up and provide for himself and his mum. Towards the beginning of the film, Liam establishes his morals by refusing to own the key narrative device of the knife, saying he'd "use my head". However, this is contrasted during the closing sequence when Liam stabs Stan (his mum's toxic boyfriend) with this 'chav' gun type prop and disrupts the equilibrium. The closing sequence lacks a narrative resolution, ending with a fade to black shot of Liam walking on the beach. Loach ensures the camera is distant so the ^{viewer} audience feel like a bystander - ironically, the cyclical structure ^{emphasises} about the cycle of poverty, which Liam attempts to break out of through a forced adulthood. Yet, Liam ends up miserable and with an uncertain future, linking to the shaving scene's parasite of parasite. Loach's closing sequence links to '400 Blows' (François Truffaut, 1959), with the sea ironically symbolising hope as both films end with a character walking towards

it. The opposition between youth and adulthood is used by Loach to emphasise Liam's vulnerability and to criticise the cycle of poverty.

Furthermore, in 'Sweet Sixteen', Loach explores the opposition between underclass and middle class through the key locations of Greenock and Gairloch. The opening sequence is shot on location with natural lighting, emphasising the social realist nature of the film and how it's like a documentary that highlights the difficulties faced by the underclass. The mix of mid-shots and long-shots in the selling cigarettes scene, during the opening sequence, establishes the lower-class environment. This juxtaposes the telescope scene which the film begins with in medias res because the use of the narrative device the telescope creates a sense of magical realism. Loach's high POV shots through the telescope of Saturn emphasises how Liam can symbolically and literally see beyond his deprived environment. The harsh reality of the selling cigarettes scene shows the ~~realistic~~ realism of an underclass life. In ^{the} later apartment scene, Loach presents Liam's new middle class life in Gairloch, however, Liam is on this life because he achieved his aims through criminality. Loach seems to explore ^{the opposition between} underclass and middle class to further emphasise this cycle of poverty because, realistically, Liam won't be able to escape the underclass through crime.

^{also}
In 'Fish Tank', Arndt explores the opposition between youth and adulthood through protagonist Mia (Kate Winslet). Arndt also presents the film as

building from an through the audition scene because it shows Mia's moral growth when she leaves the audition behind. Arnold's use of Mia's POV shots whilst watching the dancers, then shot reverse shot to show her reaction, ~~emphasises~~ suggests her disbelief and disappointment. Mia is placed half in the dark and half in pink light, contrasting the natural lighting used in the film and showing her realisation. As Mia leaves the audition, she walks through a corridor with distorted lighting, like a retrope, suggesting a transformation into adulthood*. The closing sequence continues with Mia dancing with her mum as a form of resolution, juxtaposing the beginning of the film which shows her youth and immaturity when she says "you're what's wrong with me". Arnold uses an ending lacking narrative resolution, like in 'Sweet Sixteen', as Mia leaves behind the council estate in Essex with her newly found adulthood, yet there's a sense of an uneasy equilibrium because Mia will still face uncertainty in Wales due to the class divide, which Arnold seems to criticise.

Finally, in 'Fishtank'. Arnold also explores the opposition between underclass and middleclass through the characters of Mia and Conner (Michael Fassbender). Mia represents the underclass because the film follows her as during a time when she is unemployed, kicked out of school and awaiting a pupil referral unit. The opening sequence of the film emphasises the underclass as she is introduced to protagonist Mia and her council estate. Arnold allows the viewer to hear Mia breathing before seeing

hercentrally framed, with her silhouette looking over the estate - a recurring image. The room she dances in acts as a metaphor for a fish tank with its blue walls, as well as the council estate itself, showing her exhaustion with her underclass life. Mia contrasts Conor, especially in the scene at Conor's house where revenge becomes the new narrative goal after the camera (used as a narrative device) reveals the truth. Conor lives in a loving, caring, middle class household versus Mia's deprived household which she is desperate to escape. Arnold uses the opposition between underclass and middle class to, like Loach, seemingly criticise the class system which Mia becomes trapped in.

Ultimately, both Loach and Arnold structure their films around the oppositions of youth and adulthood as well as underclass and middle class to criticise the class system, which forces both Liam and Mia to live in the underclass and strive for adulthood to escape it.