# Representation of the Self-Other Binary in PRIDE

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#### **Extract**

The film PRIDE tells the extraordinary tale of a group of lesbians and gays who decide to stand up and support the miner's strike in the 1980's in Great Britain. In the midst of this historical story, we follow the fictional character of Joe who is trying to come to terms with his homosexuality. With a film like PRIDE where the protagonist is queer, as well as many of the most important side characters, can we see a change in the way in which the Self-Other binary is constructed? To answer this question, first the concepts or representation and othering will be discussed, which are the building bricks to understanding the construction of a Self-Other binary. Queer theory and the practice of queering are also explained, since all these concepts will be vital tools in understanding the film PRIDE. To analyse this, the structures of sympathy will be analysed through the neoformalist approach as developed by David Bordwell. This is a observant analysis method which focusses on film techniques used to engage the viewer. The first part of the analysis will focus on the opening and closing scenes to understand the construction of sympathy throughout the entire film. The main characters and the way they are framed will be discussed. After this, some key scenes in which gueer and straight have a conflict regarding identity will be highlighted and analysed. Finally, there will be a reflection on this analysis and a more in-depth discussion of the representation of the Self-Other binary in PRIDE and how we can understand the construction of characters in this film.

#### Introduction

The film Pride hit theaters in fall 2014. The story revolves around a group of gays and lesbians who decide to support the miner's strike in the United Kingdom in the 1980's. The film is based on the actions and experiences of the real-life action group Lesbians and Gaymen Support the Miners. In one of the earlier scenes in the film, one of the leaders of a mining community meets LGSM and is baffled to find the eccentric group. His response is: "I thought the L was for London. London something. Never dreamed for a moment it was L for..." To which Steph, at that point the only lesbian in the group, dryly responds: "Hi"

This scene is an example of a phenomenon apparent in films with queer protagonists in which the straight character does not understand or agree with the protagonist's sexuality. In this queer setting, the straight character does not quite fit in. Somehow the familiar structures of society have changed and it is the straight person who is the odd one out. This is contrary to the traditional Self-Other binary as described by Stuart Hall. He explained that the Self-Other binary is a relation of power in which the priviliged identity, the straight person, is in power and the minority, the queer person, is the 'Other'. Somehow this binary opposition seems to be changed in the film. This sparked my interest while watching PRIDE. I would like to look more into how this representation plays out in this film, which is why in this thesis the following question will be discussed: "How is the Self-Other binary represented in PRIDE, a film with a queer protagonist?"

Within gender studies, there have been numerous studies done analyzing the representation of minorities. For example, Stuart Hall discusses the representation of black people as the Other in the chapter *The Spectacle of the Other*. However, I am interested in looking at the way in which both straights and queers are represented and how this could influence the Self-Other binary, in which heterosexuals could possibly become the Other. To analyze this, I will structure my research in four chapters. The first chapter will contain the theoretical framework and the method that will be used. The second chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of the overall story arc and how this influences the sympathy the viewer has for the characters. The central question in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," in *Representation*, ed. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon (London: Sage Publications, 2013), 215.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," 215-271.

this chapter will be: "How is framing used to influence sympathy with both the straight and queer characters in PRIDE?" In the third chapter I will go more in depth into scenes in which there is conflict regarding sexual identity. The question I will attempt to answer in this chapter is: "How is the conflict regarding sexual identity represented in PRIDE?" The fourth chapter will reflect on the analysis done in the previous chapters. The central question will be: "How does the representation of characters in PRIDE influence the Self-Other binary?" Finally, I will reflect on my research and attempt to answer my main question in the conclusion.

## Chapter 1 - Theory and Method

#### 1.1 Representation

Representation is, according to Sturken and Cartwridge, "the use of language and images to create meaning about the world around us." In their book *Practices of Looking* they also point out that representation helps people make sense of the world around them. We construct the meaning of everything around us through representation. Stuart Hall states that "representation connects meaning and language to culture" in which culture refers to the meanings and concepts that people share. Language or images, as Sturken and Cartwridge mention, can be any form of communication, be it spoken words, video, music or facial expressions. Anything that expresses a meaning can be seen as a language.

So when we listen to a song or read a book, we construct the meaning using the concepts and signs we know, interpreting it in the way we have been taught through culture. This idea of constructing meaning through language and culture is called the constructionist approach.<sup>5</sup> This approach views meaning as something symbolic, a way to interpret the world around us. To process anything we experience, including something as arbitrary as seeing a couch, we connect the symbolic meaning of couch that we have learned to the material object. In this way the word couch and the images and memories connected to the concept represent the material object.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.2 The Self-Other Binary

An important aspect in making sense of the world around us, is the way in which we differentiate between various concepts. What sets a couch apart from a chair is the fact that a couch is not a chair. They are both objects to sit on, but we can tell them apart very easily. In the way the meaning of couch is related to that of chair, all concepts and

<sup>3</sup> Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, "Images, Power, and Politics," in Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation*, ed. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon (London: Sage Publications, 2013), 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Hall, "The Work of Representation," 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Idem, 7.

meanings we have learned are relational.<sup>7</sup> The same way we understand what a man is, by understanding what is a woman and thus not a man.

Media, such as film or television, represent the world and anything that belongs in that world. This could be something simple such as an umbrella, but could also be a man or woman. People define themselves by their relation to the other, the way in which they define anything by its relation to something else. This creates a binary of 'Self' versus 'The Other'. For example, when you are a man, you are not a woman. In this case the Self is the man, while the Other is the woman. While it is normal to define oneself in relation to another, it can become problematic when the Other is seen as less. Referring back to the earlier example, saying someone throws 'like a girl' suggest that girls are not as good at sports as boys are. Here the girl or woman is the Other and is seen as less. This representation of difference of a minority from the 'normal' is what we call the process of 'othering'.<sup>8</sup> The Other is degraded to something less then the Self. This Other can be any dimension of difference, such a ethnicity, class, gender or sexuality.<sup>9</sup> In this case the binary opposition is not neutral, but there is a relationship of power of one identity over another.<sup>10</sup>

In media, since it represents the world, this definition of a person by its relationship to another is also apparent. This could be something arbitrary such as the relationship of a child to its parent. However, this could also be a binary opposition in which power structures are at play. In a film this could be seen when the Self would be a white, straight man who interacts with, for example, a lesbian. This opposition could still be seen as neutral, however the representation of the lesbian can code her as the Other. By reducing this character to a stereotype, she is reduced to a few, essential character traits. These traits can be exaggerated and simplified, characteristics that can be widely recognised as those of a lesbian. In this case, the white, straight man is the Self and the lesbian is the Other.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Hall, "The Work of Representation," 12.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 8}$  Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," 215.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," 225.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Idem, 247.

#### 1.3 Queer Theory

While the term 'queer' originally meant strange or unusual and was used as a derogatory term, in the past decades it has been reclaimed as an umbrella term for any identity that strays from the heteronormative norm. This goes to show how, as mentioned before, meaning is constructed and is not something fixed. Terms like gay and queer can be reclaimed and therefor changed overtime. The category of queer theory stems from the need of academics within gender studies to be critical about identities within the queer community and be broader than the binary opposition of straight versus gay. 12

'Queer' can also be used as a verb, in which 'queering' can be seen as a resistance to the norm and the rejection of a binary mindset. Sullivan states that the queering of popular culture, such as films, "involves critically engaging with cultural artifacts in order to explore ways in which meaning and identity is (inter)textually (re)produced."<sup>13</sup> The act of queering can encompass many practices, such as smashing the Self-Other binary of straight versus gay and acknowledging the fluidity of the spectrum and all identities outside of this binary. However, the self-reflexivity and self-narration of queer people when interacting with media can also be seen as 'queering', since it is an attitude which functions outside the norm.<sup>14</sup> By queering a media text, you go against what is expected by heteronormative standards.

Sender discusses these practices in the context of queer history, in which she explains how queer people used to bend interpretation of characters and contexts to cater to their own needs.<sup>15</sup> This queering of these media texts is a way of creating representation which reflects your own identity and on which you can reflect your identity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Renée Hoogland, "Seksualiteit als strijdtoneel: de tomboy en queer studies," in *Gender in media, kunst en cultuur*, by Rosemarie Buikema, ed. Iris van der Tuin (Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho, 2007), 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Nikki Sullivan, "Queering Popular Culture," in *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, by Nikki Sullivan (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 190.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Christine Quinan, "Alison Bechdel En de Queer Graphic Novel," in *Handboek Genderstudies: in media, kunst en cultuur*, by Rosemarie Buikema and Liedeke Plate (Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho, 2015), 364.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Katherine Sender, "No Hard Feelings: Reflexivity and Queer Affect in the New Media Landscape," in *The Handbook of Gender, Sex and Media*, ed. Karen Ross (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell (an imprint of John Wiley & Sons Ltd), 2012).

#### 1.4 Decoding Queer Meaning

How can this queer interpretation, or queer reading, be done? This can best be understood by using the concepts of encoding and decoding, in which the encoding can be understood as the creating of a representation through signs, which have to be decoded, or constructed, by the receiver of these signs. Sturken and Cartwridge discuss three positions of decoding that can be distinguished when consuming cultural content. They base these three positions on writings by Stuart Hall. The first mode of reading is the dominant-hegemonic reading in which the consumer does not question the dominant message. The consumer is a passive receiver. The second mode is the negotiated reading, which is a negotiation between the viewers interpretation and the dominant meaning and where the viewer is an active participant in the construction of meaning. The last is the oppositional reading where the viewer opposes to the dominant meaning, or the viewer can ignore the text. However it is important to remember that these are not boxed off categories. These should rather be seen as a spectrum.

Sturken and Cartwridge discuss how representations carry ideology, whether these were intended by the creator or not. The interaction the viewer has with the representation is very much influenced by their personal system of believes and lived experiences. Someone from a subculture or a minority such as the queer community has been through different experiences and can construct a different meaning than the dominant meaning interpreted by someone who does not belong to this minority. This goes to show how much influence culture has on the construction of meaning, as previously discussed when explaining the constructionist approach.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, "Viewers Make Meaning," in Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, "Viewers Make Meaning," 72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Idem, 73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Idem, 72.

#### 1.5 Analysing Sympathy

In this case, the analysis of this film will be done on the possibilities of reading or interpreting the text from the context of queer theory and a queer perspective. A text can be understood as any artifact that provides "traces of a socially constructed reality" which are constructed within a particular cultural context. So a film can be regarded as a text and thus a film analysis can be seen as a textual analysis. When doing a textual analysis the focus is on the way in which meaning is constructed by the author or creator and then encountered by an audience or viewers who construct their own, personal meaning. The focus is not primarily on the way in which viewers might react to a text, but rather how people could relate these texts to their own lives. 22

In 1995 Murray Smith wrote *Engaging Characters* in which he explained the ways in which people relate to, sympathise with, and engage with characters in films. In 2011 he wrote a reflection on his book, responding to critique and positioning it in the context of today's film theory. Murray considers characters to be the entry point to the way in which the viewer engages with the narrative.<sup>23</sup> He proposes the analysis of the structures of sympathy as a way to understand this interaction. This structure consists of three processes that interact while engaging with the characters.<sup>24</sup> Firstly alignment, which is the spacial attachment and access to the characters.<sup>25</sup> Secondly allegiance, which can be understood as the emotional connection or distinction from the characters, based on their action and characteristics.<sup>26</sup> And finally recognition, the ways in which we see these characters as individuals and can identify with them.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Bonnie Brennen, "Textual Analysis," in *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies*, by Bonnie Brennen (New York: Routledge, 2013), 193.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Brennen, "Textual Analysis," 194.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Murray Smith, "Engaging Characters: Further Reflections," *Projections* 4, no. 1 (2010), 234.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Smith, "Engaging Characters: Further Reflections," 234.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Ibid.

#### 1.6 Neoformalism

A method to analyse this is through the neoformalist approach, developed by David Bordwell, which is an analysis of film through observations. In this analysis, identifying filmic techniques which support a certain narrative, is the main focus. Four of these strategies, or dimensions as he calls them, of camerawork are explained in his book *The Way Hollywood Tells It*. These four dimensions are picking up the pace, going to extremes such as a wide-angle shot or over-the-shoulder shots, using extreme close-ups, and using a moving camera or a zooming shot.<sup>28</sup> These are all methods to draw in the viewer and engage them with the characters and the story. For example, close-ups can be used to create an intimate setting, since it creates a fysical closeness to the character. Over-the-shoulder shots suggest that the viewer looks through the eyes of the character, which creates a connection with this character. These are all techniques used to influence the engagement the viewer has with the characters.

In this analysis, firstly the overall story arc will be analysed, by using the opening scenes and the closing scenes of the film. This will give an insight into which characters the viewer is supposed to sympathise with by manipulation of the shots and other filmic techniques, such as support from music or dialogue. After this decoding of sympathy in the opening and closing scenes, some of the scenes in the film will be analysed more in depth on the ways in which both the queer people and the heterosexual people are represented. For this analysis, examples will be selected in which there is a conflict regarding identity between queer and heterosexual characters, which is discussed in the dialogue. The neoformalist analysis of filmic techniques as developed by Bordwell will be used to analyse the ways in which sympathy is structured in these particular scenes, by observing how the use of shots and other techniques are used to draw in the viewer.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> David Bordwell, "Intensified Continuity: Four Dimensions," in *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies*, by David Bordwell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 121-138.

#### Chapter 2 - Analysing the Overall Story Arc

#### 2.1 Introducing the Case of PRIDE

In 2014 the film PRIDE hit theaters around the world. The film received the Queer Palm Award in 2015, which is awarded to the best film with gueer themes at the Cannes Film Festival.<sup>29</sup> It has a star cast of British actors, including Bill Nighty, Imelda Staunton and Andrew Scott and is directed by Matthew Warchus. 30 PRIDE is an upbeat British drama about the gay activist group that supported the miners community during their strike in 1984-1985. In the film we follow the fictional character of Joe who is a 20-year old closeted gay who attends his first pride march in 1984. He stumbles upon Mike who invites him to join the parade and Joe ends up marching with Mike and his friends. Itis this group of friends that end up forming the action group LGSM; Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. The leader of this group is the charismatic Mark Ashton. LGSM tries to contact the National Union of Miners, but after being rejected communication with their leaders, ends up calling a random village in the coal fields in Wales. They manage to come into contact with the people of the Dulais valley and travel there to visit the community. They are met with prejudice and curiosity, as well as friendship. While struggling to help the community in which opinions about 'the gays' are divided, Joe has his own struggles at home with his parents. His friends at LGSM help him grow into an independent grown-up man who learns to stand up for himself. PRIDE is a story of friendship, solidarity, and coming-of-age.

#### 2.2. Opening the Story

The film opens with historical video material of the miner's strike and its news coverage, supported by the song *Solidarity Forever*. This scene can be considered as a prologue, since the point of attack is after this scene when the characters are introduced. This prologue sets the tone for the film, situates it within its historical context, and introduces one of the most important themes of the film; solidarity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> "'Pride' Wins Cannes' 5th Queer Palm Award," IndieWire, May 23, 2014, accessed June 26, 2016, http://www.indiewire.com/2014/05/pride-wins-cannes-5th-queer-palm-award-214156/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> "Pride (2014)," IMDb, accessed August 15, 2016, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3169706/? ref\_=nv\_sr\_4.

The very first shot after the prologue is that of a tower block with a big banner which states 'Thatcher Out', followed by a close-up of this banner. This explains that the character that will be introduced next, will not be a Thatcher sympathiser. The third shot is a close-up of a teacup being set down on a kitchen counter, which quickly cuts to a close-up of Mark Ashton. The viewer does not know his name yet, but because of the closeness of the shot, the viewer can assume this character will be of importance. The scene continues with Mark watching a news report on the miners strike, which connects this scene to the prologue. A young man walks in and states flirtatiously "I left my number, just in case." The viewer could interpret this as Mark being gay. Also, because the young man visiting is not given a close-up, the viewer can assume this character unimportant and will not be part of the narrative. His function is to introduce the next scene by stating: "Maybe see you on the march then." The news item continues and a miner is shown who states: "All we've got now is just pride and respect and we'll carry on keeping that," to which Mark smiles, insinuating that he has a plan. The viewer then sees Mark collecting buckets from his house and neighbors, which confirms this assumed plan.

The film then cuts to an overview of a family home, suggesting a very average family. The next shot is a zooming shot, which shows the entire living room with a middle-aged man, presumably the father, watching tv. It also shows a young man, the viewer will later learn his name is Joe, opening a present. He has a middle-aged woman, presumably his mother, by his side. By his physical closeness to his mother and distance from his father the film suggests that he is, what you would call, a mummy's boy. Then a few close-ups of Joe and of the clock are shown, suggesting Joe needs to be somewhere. The film then cuts to the stairs of a train station which Joe is climbing, followed by a wide shot and a few close-ups to set the scene and make clear this is a train station. The film then cuts to Mark who walks past a wall showing the letters to the film title PRIDE. The viewer will now understand that the two main characters have been introduced.

The viewer is introduced to the next scene through the eyes of Joe, as he enters the streets of London filmed by an over-the-shoulder shot. The titles on screen state that this is the Gay Pride parade in London on June 30th, 1984. The first participant of the march the viewer sees by a close-up is Gethin, who is the first side character to be introduced. The film then cuts to the first homophobic confrontation showing a few men

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013) was a British politician and prime-minister from 1979 until 1990. She decided to close many of Britain's mines, which sparked the miner's strike in 1984. As with the mines, she decided to privatise many state companies, making her unpopular with the left-wing and communist supporters.

throwing rocks at the people marching, which causes Joe to stumble into the march and run into Mike, the second side character shown. Mike convinces Joe to help him carry his banner until his friends have arrived, to which Joe responds: "I don't really want to be too visible." Mike reacts with: "First pride?" after which he greets his friends who are still off-screen. Then Steph walks into frame, who is the third side character to be introduced. Then Jeff joins the group, to whom Mike asks: "Where is Mark?" Mark enters the scene, at which point the two main characters who have been introduced earlier are now connected. Mark comes carrying buckets and he convinces everyone to start collecting money for the miners. Mike says to Joe: "Whatever Mark says, we do it, don't ask why." This statement makes clear that Mark is their leader. Joe decides to step away from the march and a woman and girl walk past him. The woman mutters: "Disgusting." To which Joe uncomfortably responds: "Yes, eh." Then upbeat music starts fading in, combined with the exclamations of people collecting money. In the meantime a close-up shot of Joe is shown. He then decides go back and join the group in collecting money. They greet him with their made-up nickname Bromley, which shows that he is accepted into their group. Joe's eye catches a sign a woman is holding stating 'Burn in Hell' but he decides to ignore the hate and keep on collecting money with his new found friends.

These first scenes introduce the main characters Joe and Mark, as well as the most important side characters, who will form the basis of LGSM later on in the film. These first scenes also make clear that this film will most likely be following the development of the character of Joe, since the viewer has discovered the pride march together with him. The opening scenes also establish Joe as the 'Self' through which the viewer will follow the narrative. While Joe is a very shy character who is easy to adore, Mark is clearly the charismatic leader who is a good-hearted and head-strong person. The film has also introduced some violence against our two protagonists. Firstly the men throwing rocks, then the woman saying "Disgusting" and finally the woman with the 'Burn in Hell' sign. These people are framed as the enemy, since they are shown through the eyes of Joe and are not granted the close-up shots our protagonists and their friends get. This establishes the homophobic people as the Other.

#### 2.3 Introducing the Miners

In the opening scenes, the miners are only introduced as an abstract concept by Mark watching a news item on television and by people discussing the miner's strike. In the following scene they remain this abstract concept, when LGSM tries to contact the

National Union of Miners. The union refuses to work together with LGSM as soon as it is mentioned that they are a lesbian and gay support group. The miners first take form when LGSM decides to call a community hall of a miners community in Dulais. Here it is a woman, later introduced as Gwen, who picks up the phone.

However, the first character that is properly introduced, is Dai who travels to London to meet LGSM as a representative of the community of Dulais. The first thing he asks, after they have introduced themselves, is: "So, LGSM, what does that stand for?" after which the films cuts to LGSM and Dai talking inside the pub. It is clear Dai is surprised to find out who they represent when he states that: "I thought the L was for London. London something. I never dreamed for a moment it was L for..." to which Steph, the lesbian in the group, responds: "Hi." However, the meeting is very civil and Dai does not show any sign of homophobia. It is made clear that he is just taken by surprise to meet these openly gay people, but that Dai is not negatively affected by this new information. After their meeting in the pub, the scene cuts to a gay bar in which Dai keeps a passionate speech. Through this speech, the similarities in solidarity and community between the gay community and the miners are stressed.

This introduction makes clear that Dai, since he is in London as a representative, is an important person in the community of Dulais and the viewer can assume he will be and important character in the film. It is also clear that he is friendly with our protagonists, through close-ups, over the shoulders shots and dialogue. These shots indicate an intimacy between Dai and LGSM. However, after this interaction, the film shows the people of Dulais for the first time in the form of the committee. This committee is responsible for running the community of Dulais during the strike. They are in a meeting discussing whether they want to invite LGSM to visit their village. Not everyone approves to be supported by an openly lesbian and gay group and not all of them are happy to invite them over. These are many shots quickly after each other, emphasizing the fact that this is an important discussion. Some of the individuals are open to LGSM, others reject them by claiming that the men who are striking cannot handle gays and lesbians in their community. The committee eventually decide to invite LGSM, but this discussion makes clear that not the entire mining community will be welcoming.

#### 2.4 Closing the Story

The final scene mirrors the first one in many ways. First of all, the setting is the pride march a year after the march in the opening scenes. The scene starts with a wide angle overview shot of a big field full of people readying themselves for the march. The triumphant, upbeat music is playing again, which also mirrors the first scene. Also, LGSM is once again reunited at this pride march, with the same people as seen in the opening scene.

However, some differences are made clear, which highlight the developments of the last year as seen throughout the film. In the past year LGSM has bonded with most of the mining community and has become friends with many of the committee. Joe has developed into a confident adult who is able to stand up to his parents and is not afraid to be himself. The differences shown between the pride march in the opening scene and the closing scene make all these developments clear. First of all, the tone of this march is much more festive and celebratory than the one at the beginning of the film, with upbeat music and exited people walking around with flags and banners. One of the people of the organisation comes over to LGSM letting them know that this year's Pride should not be political, but should be a celebration. However, when many busses arrive with people from miner's communities from all over Wales, to keep the promise Dai made that the miner's would support their friends when the time came. The music is even more upbeat and triumphant than that of the opening scene and the atmosphere is one of excitement, acceptance and solidarity. There are no people who make any homophobic statements. It suggest the actions of LGSM have made a difference and have helped people to accept the queer community more.

Another difference which is brought emphasized by the parallels with the first scene, is the development of Joe's character and personality. First of all, Joe takes the lead when LGSM gets into an argument with Lesbians Against Pit Closures, the feminist group who split off of LGSM. This shows Joe's development in character, since he is now a grown-up who can stand up for himself. The second parallel is the fact that Joe, once again, carrier the banner with Mike. When they take their place at the front of the march, Mike asks: "Not worried about being too visible this time?" to which Joe responds: "Shut up and march." Which nicely finishes the story arc of Joe who is now able to accept himself and has the pride to march.

The very last shot of the film is a close-up of the banner the miner's community is carrying. This banner has been described by Dai throughout the film and is a symbol of

solidarity. By showing this banner in the last shot, the theme of solidarity is once again highlighted, connecting this to the prologue with the song *Solidarity Forever*.

#### 2.5 Bridging the Overall Story Arc

There are a few narrative bridges of which the opening scene and closing scene are the supporting building blocks. The most prominent one being the earlier mentioned theme of solidarity. The film starts off with a song in which solidarity is important. Then, throughout the film, the value of solidarity is stressed multiple times by both Dai, the leader of the mining community, as well as Mark, the leader of LGSM. This theme is wrapped up with the earlier mentioned close-up of the banner showing two hands shaking, which then fades into the closing titles.

In the opening scene we have been introduced to Mark Ashton. He has less character development throughout the film than Joe. During the film, some of the focus is taken off Mark, making Joe the main protagonist. The only finality the viewer gets to Mark's storyline, is the statement during the last shots with tells the viewer that Mark Ashton was diagnosed with aids and passed away at the age of 26. This reminds people that Mark represents a real person who died only two years after the film's plot ended. This could feel like a loose end, but throughout the film the focus was taken off Mark as a main character. Mark can be seen as the one opening the door for Joe to LGSM and the queer community. In the beginning of the film he is therefor a very important character, but the more confident Joe becomes with himself and the less guidance he needs, the less prominent Mark character becomes. His storyline does not need to be wrapped up, in the same way the storylines of the other members of LGSM do not need to be finished. The purpose of his storyline was connected to the purpose of LGSM and at this final scene the actions of LGSM are visible in the acceptance and solidarity among the queer community and the miner's community.

Finally there is the storyline of Joe that started with the opening scene and finishes with the closing scene. The contrast between his behaviour in both scenes makes clear the development his character has made throughout the film. From the scared, shy boy who did not want to be too visible, Joe has grown into a proud and confident man who has found friends that have helped him become the person he is. He is no longer afraid of being visible and marches proudly amongst his friends of LGSM. This intimate bond the viewer has with the main protagonist Joe is emphasised by the close-ups used in both the opening and closing scene. The opening scene contains a

zooming shot which zooms in on Joe, followed by multiple close-ups of him. In the final scene, Joe is shown in close-ups, this time with a confident smile on his face. These intimate shots emphasizes the bond the viewer was supposed to develop with Joe.

## Chapter 3 - Conflict between Queer and Straight

#### 3.1 The People of Dulais

As mentioned earlier, during the introduction of the miner's community, the viewer is shown a meeting in which the committee discusses whether to invite LGSM to the community or not, and where it becomes clear that not everyone is accepting of them. In this scene a woman named Maureen brings up that LGSM did not have the full approval of the whole committee, since Dai made the decision to accept their help while he was on his own in London. In this scene Maureen claims that she does not have a problem with who they are, but the cynical and impatient way in which she says this suggest that she is lying to not offend the accepting members of the committee. Gail responds that none of them have a problem with them, but does not dare to speak up for LGSM. Maureen then states: "It's the men. You put a load of gays into a working men's club and you get trouble. I'm sorry," which confirms the suspicion raised earlier. Through the tone in which she states this and the lack of any intimate framing with close-ups, Maureen is framed as the antagonist of the story: the person who is against the lesbians and gays.

Their discussion is interrupted by Sian who is sorting food and overhears their conversation. She tells them: "Then why don't you just invite them? I'm sorry, but everyone's saying they don't have a problem. Good. They've raised the most money, so invite them." This suggest that Sian is an ally and it also makes clear that none of the people of the committee feel comfortable standing up for LGSM. It is the first discussion in which prejudice towards the queer community is mentioned and their sexuality is explicitly discussed as a reason not to invite them over.

The meeting is followed by a conversation between Sian and her husband Martin, who is mad at her for speaking up. He tells her they need to blend into the community, since they are new in the village. He tells her to not stir things up by inviting over lesbians and gays. This makes Sian mad and she claims he is prejudiced. Martin then responds that he is realistic and confirms the expectations stated earlier by the committee: that they suspect the villagers will not be very welcoming.

#### 3.2 The Newspaper Incident

Another scene in which there is conflict discussing the identity of the members of LGSM, is the scene in which the newspaper publishes an article on LGSM supporting the mining community. Earlier on we have seen that the antagonist, Maureen, has spilt this information to the newspapers to make sure LGSM leaves town. The article is as followed: "Perverts support the pits. A gaggle of gays and lesbians has come out in favour of the miner's strike. Our editor says: We knew the miners were desperate, but now we have the final and compelling evidence that they are finished. Does anyone here hear the bottle of the barrel being scraped. From where I'm sitting the noise is pretty deafening."

As a response to this article, a representative of the National Union of Mineworkers decides on holding a meeting to discuss whether they can keep on accepting the support of LGSM. While discussing this need for a meeting with the committee of Dulais, the representative states that now the entire country is laughing at the miner's. Him stating that this matter is about dignity, suggests it is a degradation to accept support from lesbians and gays. This reflects how the majority of the country supposedly thinks about gays and lesbians. However many people in Dulais have gotten to know LGSM and have become friends with them. To the Dulais community the queer community are not a strange group they should be afraid of, but they are their friends. The fact that people like Maureen and the representative are homophobic alienates them from the LGSM and their friends, who are the protagonists in this film. This creates an Other in the form of the homophobic people, where the Self are LGSM and their friends. While, as mentioned before, a minority such as the queer community is often portrayed as the Other, in this instance they become part of the Self the viewer identifies with.

Meanwhile the bookshop of Gethin and Jonathan, which is also the home of LGSM, is attacked with fireworks. A rock with the article wrapped around it is thrown into their store, followed by fireworks. The article is also a reason for Maureen to start spreading homophobic sentiments among the villagers, with statements such as it being bad for children to be exposed to gays because it is unnatural. This again positions the homophobic people as the Others, as oppositional to the queer protagonists and the friends and ally's. This othering of the homophobic people is emphasized by the stereotypical homophobic statements these people use to communicate their homophobic ideas.

#### 3.3 Joe's Coming Out

The scene's that encompass the forced coming out of Joe, are cut up into pieces and mixed with a montage of the meeting of the National Union of Mineworkers and the committee of Dulais discussing whether to accept the support of LGSM any longer.

His coming out starts when Joe comes home after the fundraiser LGSM has set up. Joe has just had a wonderful night as the official photographer of LGSM. He has taken pictures during their successful fundraiser and has had his first kiss. Joe walks home smiling after this happy, euphoric night to find his mother crying. This is filmed with an over-the-shoulder point-of-view shot. He then sees his dad who is holding his pictures of LGSM and the news articles he has cut out. This is filmed by a tracking shot, suggesting it represents what Joe is seeing at that moment. The viewer is looking through his eyes, sympathising with Joe.

The next part of the montage is a blurred out shot which shows Joe's father angrily yelling at him, while his mother is crying. His fathers screams are drowned out by dramatic music. The blurred out image combined with the yelling being set to the background by the dramatic music, could suggest the experience of Joe who is too overwhelmed to really be present at that moment. Again the viewer gets to understand the experience of Joe and will sympathise with him.

The last part of the coming out is a scene in Joe's bedroom with his mom. Joe is sitting on the bed, tired and crying. His mom tells him: "I know you think you know what you want Joe, but you're so young. That's what the law's for, to protect you. I didn't know who I was at your age. It's such a terrible life, Joe. It's lonely. Is that what you want? No family. Hiding from people at work, from everyone. Keeping secrets." She then starts to cry and says: "Come here" after which she hugs Joe. He leans in to accept his mother's hug. This scene shows the homophobic side of Joe's mom and her incapability to accept who he is. It is also made clear she loves him, which is the reason she does not want him to be gay. This is a very intimate scene using quite a few close-ups, which makes sense since the opening scene showed that Joe is close with his mother. So it is logical that he would have a conversation discussing his sexuality with his mother, instead of his father who yelled at him earlier. Through strategies of filmic techniques, such as close-up shots and the use of music, Joe is situated as the central figure. In these scenes he is the Self with whom the viewer identified, while his parents are depicted as the Others who cannot accept him for who he is.

#### 3.4 Other Instances of Conflict

Throughout the film there are quite a few events of aggression and conflict. They can be smaller events, such as Gethin having to wash off the graffiti on his shop spelling 'Queers' after someone has painted all over the bookshop's windows. Or someone spitting on the ground when LGSM is collecting money for the miner's. Similarly, the announcement of LGSM visiting Dulais which Sian has hung up four times with an abundance of staples is ripped off the announcement board in the town hall multiple times. There are also people using derogatory terms to insult LGSM, such as Maureen's sons calling them faggots and one of them exclaiming that they make him physically sick. Maureen herself also calls them perverts on many occasions. Then there is Joe's brother-in-law who, after seeing an infomercial on television warning against aids, jokes to Joe it is an 'anally injected death-sentence'. These instances of name calling are witnessed throughout the film.

However, there are also moment which seem to be turning into a conflict, but end up being a nice conversation. Such as Gwen asking the lesbians of LGSM whether this shocking thing she has heard is actually true, which turns out to be the rumour that all lesbians are vegetarians. To this Stella responds that she and Zoe are actually vegans, which leaves Gwen speechless. Similar is the conversation between Gail and one of the gay couples of LGSM, who are minor characters. Gail asks them: "So are you together, like, you know, husband and wife? But, what I want to know is..." To which Ray responds: "I know what you're gonna say." Gail then asks: "Which one does the housework?" Which surprises Ray: "Oh, okay. That's not what I thought you were gonna say."

These casual conversations that discuss the differences as well as similarities between the queer people and the community of Dulais normalises both identities. It shows that people need to get to know each other and have to get used to other people to be able to accept them. There is a natural curiosity in these conversations, which plays with stereotypes and the people of Dulais are curious to know whether these are true. In getting to know each other, they learn how to accept the other for who they are and discover that they are not that different. These scenes also show that it might not always be blunt homophobia that causes people to be suspicious of the gays and lesbians of LGSM, but that it is a lack of knowledge. Once they learn more about these new and unknown folks, they can see past their differences and become friends.

### Chapter 4 - The Self-Other Binary in PRIDE

#### 4.1 The Self-Other Binary

So far the film has been analysed both on the overall narrative arc, as well as on examples of interaction between queer and straight people discussing identity. The representation of many queer and straight characters has been discussed. As mentioned before, representation often happens by means of a binary system of the Self versus the Other. Hall explained how the Self is usually a majority identity who is uncoded, while the Other is the minority and is represented as different, which can encompass representing that identity as strange, less valuable, dangerous or not to be taken seriously. The Other is also often degraded to a stereotype, without personality or individuality.<sup>32</sup> How are these binaries represented in PRIDE?

Within Queer Theory, there is a rich history of queering texts, including films, where elements are interpreted as queer by means of negotiated or oppositional reading.<sup>33</sup> One example is the interpretation of Captain Jack Sparrow in the Pirates of the Caribbean as being gay.<sup>34</sup> Or within online communities on platforms such as Tumblr, interpretations of Sherlock Holmes in the BBC's Sherlock series as asexual is a popular one.<sup>35</sup> The question with these actions of queering is; how does this influence the Self-Other binary? If the main protagonist is queer, or can be interpreted as such, can this binary also be queered? Is it possible this binary is influenced, flipped or even deconstructed by queering the text? In this following chapter, there will be a reflection on the film analysis done in the previous chapters with these questions in mind.

#### 4.2 Interpreting Sympathy

In the previous chapters, the methods of sympathy were analysed. It is clear that the main protagonist in the film is Joe, with Mark being introduced as a main character and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," 225.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Alexander Dhoest and Nele Simons, "Questioning Queer Audiences: Exploring Diversity in Lesbian and Gay Men's Media Uses and Readings," in *The Handbook of Gender, Sex and Media*, ed. Karen Ross (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell (an imprint of John Wiley & Sons Ltd), 2012), 262.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Dhoest and Simons, "Questioning Queer Audiences," 273.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> "Sherlock Holmes as an Asexual Character," Tumblr, December 21, 2013, accessed June 26, 2016, http://anagnori.tumblr.com/post/70661417641/sherlock-holmes-as-an-asexual-character.

throughout the film turning into one of the most important side characters. The other characters in the film are not simply friend or foe, sorting them this way would be too short-sighted. There are three categories that could be roughly distinguished. These, however, are not fixed and throughout the film people can change from one category to another, as will be explained.

The first category are the queer people with whom Joe finds friendship and a shared experience of life. These people are mostly represented within LGSM, but throughout the film others from the queer community are met as well. There are people at the parade, in the gay bars and at the fundraiser who fall within this category. The second category would be the ally's, of whom many characters of the mining community of Dulais are the most prominent. Dai is one of the first characters who is represented as an ally, but many others within Dulais are also friendly with the people of LGSM. Other ally's can be seen during the fundraiser LGSM organises. The last category would be the homophobes, who are the people that do not understand or do not want to understand the people of LGSM. There are some prominent members within the community of Dulais who fall within this category, Maureen being the most notable example. Maureen and her sons openly mock and offend LGSM and try to convince other people to do so too. The family of Joe would be another example, since they cannot accept him being gay.

People can also change category. One example is Sian's husband Martin who is sceptic at first and makes homophobic comments, but changes into an ally who openly defends LGSM when others insult them. Another example would be Carl, who at first does not want anything to do with the people of LGSM. After he finds out Jonathan is a good dancer and can teach him how to dance so that he can flirt with girls, he becomes friends with LGSM. Then finally there is Cliff, who is part of the committee and seems to be a silent ally. However, halfway through the film he comes out to Hefina and by the end of the film he is happy to march with his fellow gay poets in de Gay Pride parade.

#### 4.3 A Queer Film

It becomes clear that in the film PRIDE there is no clear binary system of queer versus straight. Also, the Self is not the straight person. As discussed, Joe is the main protagonist, with Mark being the most important side character. The Self, as portrayed in the film, would be the gay man. This does not automatically position the straight people of the film as the Other, PRIDE is more nuanced than that. We could argue that those framed as the Others are the homophobic people. However, it is not as black and

white as that. We can argue that the identities within the film can be placed on a spectrum and are changing and fluid. We have established that the Self in the film is Joe. The antagonist of the story is Maureen, who actively tries to get rid of LGSM. But these characters are not entirely on opposite ends of a binary. The film does not establish a binary opposition, but creates characters that are multifaceted and cannot be defined by a single character trait.

This representation of characters and identities is in line with the ideas of Queer Theory with its focus on the complexity of identities and the rejection of rigid structures. Dhoest and Simons state:

It challenges the idea of fixed or essential identities and draws attention to the historical and political context in which subjectivities are constructed as fluid, unstable, multiple, internally contradictory, and intersectional.<sup>36</sup>

This sensitivity towards the multiplicity of identities is reflected in the film PRIDE by the representation and construction of many of its characters. For example, Joe's parents are contradictory and multiple in their identity. They clearly love their son, especially the mother who is very close with him. However, when they find out he is gay, they are angry and sad. This conflicts in their relationship with Joe and establishes parents who are not just homophobic, but at the same time love their son. It is this love that fuels their rejection of his homosexual identity. A similar multiplicity is true for the two lesbian girls, Stella and Zoe. While they are part LGSM which is dominated by men, they ask for attention for women's rights in the miner's community. Eventually they found a new group called Lesbians Against Pit Closures, which is the feminist sister group of LGSM. Stella and Zoe are not only gay, they are also women. The film does take the time to shed light on their multifaceted identity.

So, while the film has queer content, it could also be considered a queer film in its sensitivity towards identities. I would consider PRIDE to be a good example of how to create a queer film which discards binary oppositions. When creating a film in which the main characters are queer, it is easy to repeat the binary opposition. If a film would represent the queer characters as the Self and the straight characters as the Other, it only repeats the binary oppositions and reduces people to stereotypes. Only then the Other is the heterosexual character. I would not consider such a film to be truly queer,

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Dhoest and Simons, "Questioning Queer Audiences," 261.

since it neglects to create multifaceted characters to whom anyone can relate. Pride does not fall into this trap and has both straight and queer characters that are well developed and subjective. Personally I would consider Pride to be a great example of a queer film which could inspire other filmmakers to create more diverse films with a multiplicity of characters and identities.

#### Conclusion

The film PRIDE is a story of solidarity and acceptance and contains many multifaceted characters. While there are structures of sympathy at work within the film, constructing a Self with whom the viewer can identify, there is not a binary opposition established and it is difficult to categorise characters as the Other. This brings us back to the question with which the research started: how is the Self-Other binary represented in PRIDE, a film with a queer protagonist? As discussed earlier, there are many concepts that have to be utilised when attempting to answer a question like this. The concepts of representation and the Self-Other binary have to be considered, as well as queering and decoding.

In the analysis of the overall story arc, it becomes clear that Joe can be considered the main protagonist and that the viewer is let to sympathise with him, through various filmic techniques. The viewer experiences the story mainly through the eyes of Joe, sometimes as intimate as by the use of over-the-shoulder and point-of-view shots. From the analysis, it also becomes clear that Mark is an important character, and can be seen as the one opening the door to LGSM for Joes, after which we follow him on his journey together with LGSM, not only to the miner's community of Dulais, but also on his personal journey of self discovery and acceptance.

There are also multiple scenes of conflict in which the opposition between straight and queer comes forward. However, not in every situation the Self and the Other are clear. As discussed, many of the characters in PRIDE are multifaceted and develop throughout the story. While it is clear that Joe is the Self, the Others are more difficult to distinguish. The film offers the characters the space to get to know each other and move past their prejudice towards the other. Many of the miner's at first are hesitant to getting to know LGSM, but as the film progresses, both groups get to know each other and realise they have more in common than they expected. There are also characters who seem contradictory, such as the mother of Joe who loves her son dearly, but cannot accept that he is gay. These characters, whether they learn to accept the others or not, are not reduced to stereotypes, but are multifaceted and fluid. By creating such diverse characters, PRIDE is able to move past the Self-Other binary and represent individual personalities.

To conclude, I would argue that the Self-Other binary is queered in the film PRIDE. There is no clear binary within the film and the characters are not reduced to stereotypes. This would make Pride not only a film with queer content, but also a queer film in its sensitivity towards the complexity of identity and its rejection of the Self-Other binary. It can be seen as film which encompasses the values of Queer Theory and should be considered a shining example of a queer film made well.

This research turned out guite different from what I expected it to be. When starting this research, I had my mind set on analysing how heterosexual people are othered in films with a queer protagonist. In order to achieve this, I wanted to analyse PRIDE, as well as the film CAROL. While researching various theories and methods for this research, I started to be more aware of the many layers in the film PRIDE. So I decided to focus solely on this film and its characters, both queer and straight. I found it difficult to find a method that would highlight all these layers. Finally I decided to combine Thompson's neoformalism with Smith's Structures of Sympathy. This way I was able to analyse the framing of the shots, as well as analyse the way this influences the viewers attachment and sympathy with the character. Using these analysis methods from film theory with a gender studies perspective allowed me to further research the characters of PRIDE. The outcome of this research surprised me, since I was expecting to conclude that the heterosexual characters were othered. Many people have asked me whether I am able to watch the film ever again after researching it and my answer is a definite yes, for I can now see the many layers and facets that make PRIDE such a beautifully rich film.

For further research I would recommend using methods from Film Theory to better understand the ways in which film techniques shape the film and influence the representations and interpretations. While this is only a small research, by expanding the corpus one could look for more patterns of representation across multiple films. This could help to better understand how representation is constructed and how to create a film with fluid and multifaceted characters that is truly queer.

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