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# **The Student Journal of the Department of Anglophone Studies**

## **Editorial**

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*The Student Journal of the Department of Anglophone Studies* aims to provide visibility to excellent student papers. As a platform, it will broaden scholarly discourse across a variety of fields and provide access to the research interests of our Department. We value the scholarly sophistication and intellectual integrity of our students and therefore believe that student papers should not merely pass across our desks and vanish into the university archives. By publishing the papers in the journal, we not only lend visibility but we also give students the opportunity to engage in the writing and publishing process and to go through a proper editorial process – from submission to integrating comments and following formatting guidelines.

As the Department of Anglophone Studies brings together a variety of fields, including linguistics, EFL, literary studies and cultural studies, the student journal will similarly exhibit an interdisciplinary quality. It will also reflect the diverse experience of our writers, from undergraduate to graduate level. Indeed, while the journal strives for excellence, excellence is an ambiguous concept. Papers may take a particularly innovative approach to a topic, stand out for their contribution to existing scholarship, or examine overlooked material. The journal will therefore embrace the different facets of excellence, functioning as a platform for outstanding work while allowing students to speak in their own voices. This approach will hopefully expand scholarly discourse and enrich conversations in our Department and our fields of teaching and research.

# Now You Read It, Now You Don't

## Enhancing the EFL Reading Comprehension of Students with Autism through Poetry

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*Atypical* is the name of a TV series that features Sam, a teenager with autism who wants to find the love of his life. On his journey through high school and a number of failed dates, the audience experiences numerous characteristics that come along with autism syndrome, one of which is displayed in the following scene:

SAM: I need my lunch money.

CASEY: God, I hate that skank!

SAM: Skank? Do you mean she's promiscuous?

CASEY: No, she's just annoying. Why do you make things so literal? God, you suck! Find me if you don't have anyone to eat with, okay.

SAM: Okay. (Jann min. 12:45)

During the conversation with his sister Casey, it becomes evident that Sam does not fully understand his sister's utterances. The misinterpretation at hand, caused by Sam's literal understanding of the swearword, is a very common and representative one for people with high-functioning autism (see Styslinger 41). The inability to infer from context the suitable meaning of words with multiple connotations does not only influence their daily conversations but also – and more importantly – their reading comprehension skills (see Schnorr 36).<sup>2</sup>

According to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), “the language user may read for gist; specific information; detailed understanding; implications, etc.” (79). To achieve these objectives, a reader needs to go beyond the mere decoding of words requiring the capability of inferring. As

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1 This essay was initially submitted as a term paper in the BA seminar “Assessment in Theory and Practice” and supervised by Prof Dr Eva Wilden.

2 The author wishes to thank Professor Dr Eva Wilden and Dr Luisa Alfes (University of Duisburg-Essen) for their constructive criticism in revising this paper.

inclusive educational settings become more and more common, it is noteworthy that research in the field of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) education is lacking comprehensible research on L2 reading comprehension of students with special educational needs (SEN). That said, all studies referred to in this paper examine the L1 reading comprehension of students with high functioning autism.<sup>3</sup> Thus, new teaching methods as well as further empirical research are necessary to also help students on the autism spectrum to become proficient EFL readers.

Thus, this paper explores the potential of poetry for fostering the EFL reading comprehension skills of secondary learners with high-functioning autism. First of all, different theoretical frameworks are established to explain the process of constructing meaning while reading as a basis for further discussion. Secondly, recent studies on the development of reading comprehension skills of children with high-functioning autism are sketched out to give an overview of how the autism syndrome impacts on the cognitive processes responsible for decoding and inferring. Based upon these findings, the paper furthermore discusses various support measures to improve the reading comprehension skills of learners with high-functioning autism. An exemplary integration of these supportive methods and strategies into EFL activities for year 8 learners is finally suggested on the basis of Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken." The paper shows that poetry offers manifold ways to improve the reading comprehension skills of EFL learners with high-functioning autism since it is much more accessible to them than prose, which tends to dominate in EFL reading education.

## **HOW DO WE MAKE MEANING WHILE READING?**

According to Madeline Lutjeharms (see "Leseverstehen" 97-99), a written text is a sequence of structured signs which are part of a complete sign system, such as letters of the alphabet. During the first years of reading, children work out repeatedly occurring patterns of morphemes and grammar which are memorised. This memorisation is carried out by the working memory, a functional unit of the human brain that handles the recognition of incoming stimuli. Depending on the reader's familiarity with perceived information, it conveys the stimuli to long-term memory

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3 For a more detailed review of the research available, see Hsu-Min Chiang and Yueh-Hsien Lin (261-263).

or initiates the generation of new cognitive schemes for future recognition. Processing chunks of signs rather than each and every single letter (word superiority effect), the working memory aims to keep effort as low as possible. This processing of signs is called decoding and is the basic mechanism that allows a reader to read. However, the mere decoding and pronunciation of words is not the only key to textual understanding.

The recognition of a word through reading enables what Lutjeharms coined 'lexical access' to the reader's mental lexicon (see "Leseverstehen" 98). As a part of an individual's linguistic knowledge in the long-term memory, the mental lexicon comprises representations of all the morphemes and words readers encounter throughout their reading biography. The modes of representation can differ depending on the reader's first contact with the word. Some words are represented visually whereas other words are related to the context of an experience. Once a word is recognised and its representation activated, the reader is able to access certain schemes that come along with it. Consisting of an accumulation of abstracted experiences, schemes bring the word to life. It is the combination of word decoding and recognition, contentual representation, and scheme which makes us able to construct meaning while reading. Consequently, the more multifaceted a reader's prior knowledge with the content of a text the easier it is to understand it.

Nonetheless, readers must go beyond the level of mere word decoding and recognition in order to understand a text completely. In this case, the meaning of a text is more than the sum of its words. The capability to infer, the interaction of decoding and prior knowledge, is required to construct textual coherence. Reading comprehension is then defined as the reader's ability "to process a written text to such a degree that its content is understood" (Lutjeharms "Leseverstehen" 98). This is achieved on three different textual levels: due to syntactic rules, words are understood in the context of sentences which build a contentual model of the written text. Having passed these three instances of processing, text information is memorised in long-term memory as lexical representation or scheme bringing the process of reading full circle. To distinguish it from other styles of reading, this paper concentrates on fluent receptive reading, a linear style of reading with the aim of getting to the gist of a text (see Lutjeharms "Processing Levels" 265).

In the context of EFL education, it is important to consider the differences Lutjeharms points out between the development of reading comprehension in the

first and second language (see “Leseverstehen” 97). In contrast to the reading of texts in their first language(s) during which students develop reading comprehension on the basis of proficient language skills, the situation in the EFL classroom is different. Even though students usually start the learning process with a set of basic reading skills, these competences cannot be transferred one-to-one. A lack of linguistic knowledge at the beginning of the target language’s acquisition makes additional reading strategies necessary and has implications for the working memory: the more similar the target language is to the first language of a reader on a structural basis, the more resources can be used to focus on content rather than form.

The working memory can process incoming stimuli automatically or intentionally. “Automatic processing is carried out fast, parallel, without effort and is not limited by any capacity constraints, whereas controlled processing demands effort, is serial, and has capacity limitations” (Lutjeharms, “Processing Levels” 267). The latter is responsible for unfamiliar or not fully mastered information as well as for the correction of inconsistencies. Whenever a language is not fully acquired, attentional resources are often required for processing form-based linguistic information rather than semantic information the cognitive structure is usually responsible for. This is the moment when the processing of a text begins to become a conscious process. To compensate the limited capacity of working memory for attentional processing, avoidance or guessing strategies are frequently used. It is therefore advisable to train the automatic processing of EFL learners in order to avoid capacity shortcomings for attentional processing.

To explain the way the working memory processes incoming information automatically, Lutjeharms (see “Processing Levels” 268) and James R. Booth, Soojin Cho, Douglas D. Burman, and Tali Bitan (see 441-443) contrast two different paradigms emerged in the field of cognitive psychology: modular and connectionist models. In the first case, processing is understood as a linear, modular process. Associated with an autonomously acting device, each area of the brain is responsible for a specific part of the reading process, such as lexical access, word recognition or syntactical analysis. On the contrary, connectionist models explain the non-hierarchical structure of the brain through individual experience. Even though advocates of connectionism acknowledge the fact that certain units in the brain are more specified in their function than others, they depict the human brain as highly interactive. Different units in the neuronal network connect each time the reader’s

experiences activate them simultaneously, which can be understood as a developmental increase in reliance. As a result, students' reading proficiency advances the stronger and more directly interconnected their units are. This paper pursues the connectionist approach since it allows to take autistic people's individual strengths and psychological theories on the cognitivism of autism (see Frith, Happé, Zunshine) into consideration.

## COGNITIVE ABILITIES OF PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

In accordance with the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), the *Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen* regards autism as a spectrum disorder and an umbrella term nowadays, functioning as a label for human beings who show “qualitative impairment in reciprocal social interaction and communication as well as limited, stereotypical, repetitive patterns of interests and activities” (Kamp-Becker 79, my translations).<sup>4</sup> This means that the characteristics of people with autism are highly individual with special regard to their strengths and interests or fascinations, as Kelly Chandler-Olcott and Paula Kluth prefer to call it (see 552). Even though medical research proved that autism is genetically determined, diagnostic criteria still refer solely to social behaviour (see Happé 216). Another unpredictable characteristic of people with autism is intelligence with IQ values varying between two standard deviations below and above average, the latter only occurring in the case of high-functioning autism. In the following, the paper focuses on high-functioning autism since people with autism and an IQ value one standard deviation below average or lower are usually unable to read. Yet, whenever autistic people are capable of reading, their ability to decode is in excess of what is expected by their IQ levels suggesting that “they are as skilled as normally-developing children of equivalent reading level at using phonological-based reading strategies” (Nation et al. 912).

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4 The original source of this definition is in German: “[...] qualitative Beeinträchtigungen in der zwischenmenschlichen Interaktion, qualitative Auffälligkeiten in der Kommunikation und ein eingeschränktes, stereotypes, sich wiederholendes Repertoire von Interessen und Aktivitäten” (Kamp-Becker 79).

This paper refuses the term disorder since it takes on Francesca Happé's approach on autism as a cognitive style rather than a cognitive deficit (see 216-217). Claiming that people with autism are characterised by a special way of perceiving the world around them rather than deficient cognitive skills, this understanding of autism grounds its belief in a psychological ability which is known as central coherence nowadays. In her seminal work *Autism: Explaining the Enigma*, Uta Frith coined this term to describe "the everyday tendency to process incoming information in its context – that is, pulling information together for higher-level meaning – often at the expense of memory for detail" (Happé 217). This view has been supported by results of different studies that investigated whether the perception of people with autism is focused on parts or the whole of a visual stimulus. As a result, Happé concludes "that this feature of human information-processing [central coherence] is disturbed in autism, and that people with autism show detail-focused processing in which features are perceived and retained at the expense of global configuration and contextualised meaning" (217). This way, the cognitive style of people with autism is no longer defined by disorders but a weakness in central coherence, a factor that naturally varies throughout population.

The preference of processing parts instead of wholes caused by weak central coherence also has implications for the reading ability. In "Remembering of Words by Psychotic and Subnormal Children" (1967), Beate Hermelin and Neil O'Connor asked two groups of students to memorise a list of given sentences, recalling them after short and long periods of time. All participants of the first group were diagnosed with a spectrum disorder, half of them meeting the DSM criteria for autism. The fact that all of them reached standardised reading comprehension scores significantly lower than their standardised word identification scores makes them comparable to high functioning autists referred to in numerous studies before. The group of students with spectrum disorders was not able to write down all sentences after the first interval of waiting whereas some students of the control group even recalled the whole list of sentences after the second interval. The psychologists assumed that the inability to remember a large amount of information is, again, caused by weak central coherence. In their memory, Hermelin and O'Connor state, people with autism do not use any semantic or grammatical relations (see 217-218). Referring to the same cognitive phenomenon of autistic people, Frith and Maggie Snowling confirm that "reading a sentence might, for

them, be akin to reading a list of unconnected words, and sentence context will not be built up to allow meaning-driven disambiguation” (338).

Besides weak central coherence, Kate Nation, Paula Clarke, Barry Wright, and Christine Williams found that the proficiency of autistic students between reading accuracy and reading comprehension differs significantly with accuracy being exceedingly above average and considerable variability within reading comprehension scores (see 914). However, when these students were asked to read uniquely generated non-words, their decoding skills failed most of the time. This study, Nation et al. argue, proves that autistic people use rote memorisation and visual association strategies rather than phonological decoding (see 917-918). The reason they assessed both competences separately is the importance for reading comprehension of both, decoding and inferring skills (as pointed out in the previous section). To investigate this inconsistency further, Irene M. O'Connor and Perry D. Klein examined in how far students with autism are capable of applying different inferring strategies, some findings of which are discussed more detailed in the following. First of all, on a structural level, the more complex grammatical relations in a sentence are, the more significant are the limits imposed on reading comprehension. For example, inserted subordinate clauses and flexibility in word order make it hard for autistic people to find any coherence in a sentence, such as subject-verb agreement (in fact, this is a factor that can also be found when diagnosing the reading proficiency of students without autism syndrome). Secondly, coherence in a text is, among other textual elements, often achieved through anaphora. Talmy Givón defines anaphoric devices as

pragmatic signals that inform listeners or readers where to search for a referent: zero anaphora signals that the referent is currently the focus of attention; a pronoun signals that the referent was recently discussed and is available in memory, but is not currently in attention. (350)

Especially in longer texts, the inability to recognise anaphoric devices results from an inchoate representation of the text in mind, thus prohibiting the reading proficiency of autistic students. This becomes important with regard to fictional texts, where pronouns are one of the most common anaphoric devices. Thirdly, O'Connor and Klein (see 117-118, 124-125) address the role of prior knowledge for textual understanding. The higher the rate of activated schemes in the mental lexicon, the more probable it is that this general world knowledge is used for

inferences. In the case of autism, however, it is crucial to activate the suitable kind and amount of information in the reader's mind. Otherwise, prior knowledge initiated by pre-reading tasks overexerts the autistic reader, causing confusion instead of providing a basis for reading comprehension.

Likewise, the theory of mind is another cognitive structure people with autism are struggling with albeit especially important for the reading of fictional texts. Grounded in the field of literary theory, this concept understands human beings as mind readers, "a term used by cognitive psychologists to describe our ability to explain people's behaviour in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires; for example, 'Lucy *reached* for the chocolate because she *wanted* something sweet'" (Zunshine 271; emphasis in the original). The example clarifies that in order to understand a fictional text's storyline, two major processes are required from the reader: first, different characters' perspectives have to be adopted; second, the monitoring of behaviour, set-shifting and holding of information on line in working memory which are all included among executive functions. Since one of the main characteristics of autism is the inability to interact appropriately with others in social contexts, it is hard for autistic people to get the gist of fictional texts. For them, it is nearly impossible to discern why characters act the way they do and how these actions are related to other textual elements. In "An Anthropologist on Mars" (1995), Oliver Sacks illustrates the problems the autistic Temple Grandin encountered in her early years of life:

Something was going on between the other kids, something swift, subtle, constantly changing – an exchange of meanings, a negotiation, a swiftness of understanding so remarkable that sometimes she wondered if they were all telepathic. She is now aware of the existence of those social signals. She can infer them, she says, but she herself cannot perceive them, cannot participate in this magical communication directly, or conceive of the many-leveled, kaleidoscopic states of mind behind it. (Sacks 272)

Hence the genre of prose excludes a considerable number of people with autism completely from the world of literature. In contrast to prose, poetry usually does not confront its readers with complex pragmatic aspects of language, such as communicative intentions. Instead, this genre is a very personal one and often provides insight into the persona's mind. Consequently, a suitable poem meets its autistic reader's fascinations and conveys thoughts and emotions comprehensibly.

## **SUPPORTING STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM ON MEANINGFUL READING – A REVIEW OF RESEARCH**

Having worked out the characteristics of reading in the second section of this paper, it becomes evident that a lack of strategies to deal with anaphoric devices, non-existent or unavailable prior knowledge, and weak central coherence negatively affect the development of reading comprehension for people with autism. In the early years of the twenty-first century, a number of interdisciplinary studies conducted by researchers in the field of EFL education investigated the effectiveness of different reading and support strategies with focus on the aforementioned areas. This was due to the publication of the Salamanca Declaration, a paper that sounded the bell for inclusive education passed by the UNESCO conference in 1994. In the following, a selection of these teaching strategies is presented and applied to the teaching of poetry in the next section. Since no empirical studies investigating the L2 reading comprehension of EFL learners on the autism spectrum could be identified, the present research review gives an overview of seminal studies which explored L1 reading comprehension. However, their implications for EFL education are limited and thus ought to be considered very carefully.

One of the major studies in the research of reading comprehension strategies for students with autism is the one conducted by O'Connor and Klein in 2004. They investigated the effect of anaphoric cuing, a cloze test as well as pre- and post-reading questions on 20 high functioning autistic students' reading comprehension under direct instruction. Each time a pronoun occurred in a text, the student was interrupted and asked to identify the referent in the sentence before. Afterwards, students were asked to read a second text about a similar topic in which pronouns of each kind had been erased similar to a cloze test. If students were not able to complete the gap, they were offered a list with three possible pronouns by the instructor. Both interventions, anaphoric cuing and the cloze test, had statistically significant effects on the students reading comprehension. The several pauses initiated by anaphoric cuing gave rise to first instances of self-monitoring behaviour

whereas both strategies influenced the students' engagement with post-reading tasks positively.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to the explication of anaphoric devices, the use of pre- and post-reading questions did not have a significant effect on reading comprehension in general. In fact, O'Connor's and Klein's study showed that the pre-reading questions activated prior knowledge that was either irrelevant or inaccurate with regard to the text (see 124-125). Only a small group of higher ability students with autism benefited from these questions since they were able to focus on a selection of the activated prior knowledge that was relevant for the understanding of the text. Besides a lack of appropriate strategies, another problem that comes along with pre-reading questions are the students' unique fascinations typical for autism. In most cases, these fascinations limit the range of students' interests, reducing them to one special area. As a consequence, fascinations often function as a primer which builds the basis for the person's everyday communication and interpretation. Referring back to the introductory example, Sam is fascinated by penguins and Antarctica which is the reason why he compares everyday human interaction to the behaviour of these animals. Nevertheless, this special knowledge of students with autism can be used to turn them into experts of the EFL classroom. Teachers should endeavour to weave in these fascinations into their lessons as often as possible, also considering them when choosing texts.

What sets O'Connor and Klein's study apart from others in its field is the relatively large number of participants that allows a generalisation of the results to a certain degree. By doing so, the authors laid the groundwork for numerous studies to follow. Building on the findings of O'Connor and Klein, Margaret M. Flores and Jennifer B. Ganz (2007) explored the impact of an oral language skill training on related reading comprehension skills by training four autistic students from fifth and sixth grade in statement inference, use of facts, and analogies. Based on a direct instructional approach similar to O'Connor and Klein, the students were instructed by educated researchers both in group format and individually. Once all students mastered the first strand of developmental skills (i.e. statement inference), the next one was introduced by the instructors. The study investigated the effectiveness of direct instruction on reading comprehension by proving a functional relationship

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5 Even though this study was realised by instructors who assisted the students during the reading process, both strategies can be realised in the EFL classroom with the help of appropriate software.

between both observed variables: All four students were not only able to reach 100% of correctness with regard to each strategy but also maintained their performance even one month after the last training session (see Flores and Ganz 248-250).

The same is true for a study by Suzanne Stringfield, Deanna Luscre, and David L. Gast (2011) which examined the effect of story maps on autistic students' success in post-reading test scores.<sup>6</sup> The idea behind the use of a story map was to relieve the students' working memory by providing a visual organisation of the most important elements of the text, called story grammar (see 218). Placed in a similar setting, the three students from 8 to 11 years of age regularly took part in a quiz about one of the levelled books they were most interested in. At the beginning of the study, the students had to note down the most important details of the short story concerning characters, time, place, beginning, middle, and end while reading (at a later point, they were given the choice to use a story map or not). Stringfield et al. found that all three participants' accuracy in response increased, concluding a positive impact on the efficiency of the students' reading skills (see 225-227).

Additionally, fascinations cause an underdevelopment of vocabulary except in the respective field of interest as Catherine Roux, Eric Dione, and Anne Barrette (2015) point out. Once a week, they taught a group of thirteen students with autism different strategies to identify the main ideas of a text as well as the relations between them. These extra lessons included the introduction of eight new items of vocabulary a week and the intensive reading of a text which was summarised immediately afterwards. The analysis of the pre- and post-test confirms that both interventions had a positive effect on the students' reading comprehension (see Roux et al. 12). Proceeding from these findings, teachers should always provide their students with the necessary vocabulary before dealing with a text in the EFL classroom. Otherwise, students who are not familiar with the topic of the text will be left behind. In her study of vocabulary teaching "Cognitive Development and Reading" (2002), Kelly B. Cartwright presents several different ways how autistic students can be made familiar with ambiguous vocabulary which is typical for prose and poetry. What makes the learning of vocabulary effective for students with autism, she emphasises, is that tasks combine the written representation of a word

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6 In a research review by Farah El Zein, Michael Solis, Sharon Vaughn, and Lisa McCulley (2014), the studies by Flores and Ganz (2007) and Stringfield et al. (2011) were the only ones described as conclusive in contrast to other studies in the field.

with its semantic dimensions in order to create a connection between the word- and discourse-level processing (see 57-58, 61).

## **FOSTERING AUTISTIC STUDENTS' EFL READING COMPREHENSION WITH POETRY**

This section integrates the findings on cognitive abilities and strategies to foster the reading proficiency of students with autism into an EFL lesson on Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" (see appendix A). The lesson addresses inclusive classes of eighth graders (*Gymnasium*), preferably with SEN students with autism. According to the *Kernlehrplan für den verkürzten Bildungsgang des Gymnasiums – Sekundarstufe I (G8) in Nordrhein-Westfalen im Fach Englisch*, students are expected to be capable of speaking and writing about their way of life, education, and participation in society at the end of eighth grade. Frost's poem offers numerous ways to discuss the students' plans for future life as well as reasons for decisions they have made in the past. The schedule of the EFL lesson (appendix F) provides a brief overview of the teaching approach which will be explained in greater detail in the following with special focus on the individual facilitation of autistic students.

"The Road Not Taken" is all about the importance of making decisions and the consequences that come along with them. To introduce the students to this context, the first lesson starts with letting them make a decision. The teacher presents two boxes to the class, one of them containing sweets and the other one being empty. Students have the chance to choose one of the boxes while they have to share the reasons of their decision to the rest of the class. Afterwards, the teacher uses this demonstration as a starting point to introduce the class to Robert Frost and to contextualise "The Road Not Taken." It is important that students with autism are not directly confronted and left alone with a piece of literature. The game at the beginning of the lesson makes it possible for them to relate to the persona later on and experience the dilemma of decision making at first hand. This is especially important since students on the spectrum might lack of empathy which makes it impossible for them to relive other students' reactions.

Before the class listens to the poem for the first time, the teacher has to make sure that the key vocabulary is known by everyone. For this purpose, the students work together with their partners. Each student gets a stack of cards that show a

word, a suitable picture, and a list of associated words (see appendix B). Students then describe the word at the top of the card to their partner without using the words below. Having figured out the key vocabulary, students are now asked to classify the words according to different categories, such as animate and inanimate objects. Taking on Cartwright's approach, this task makes students aware of two dimensions: the written representation of a word and its semantic relations. Autistic students benefit from tasks like this since they are confronted with ambiguous words that take on different meanings in varying contexts (e. g. wood, either being used as a synonym for forest or describing the raw material). Instead of using a set of pre-reading tasks which probably cause confusion in autistic students' minds (see O'Connor and Klein 124-125), a manageable list of key vocabulary lessens the complexity of the poem. As a consequence, the effort for the working memory of autistic students is reduced which lets them focus on the decoding of semantic relations during reading instead.

In the following group work, students are asked to reflect on their life. Decisions they had to make at that point of time are gathered and placed at the bottom of a poster similar to the one at the front of class. The groups then write down the options they decided for earlier in their lives on cards and glue them on the poster, marking one of the two paths respectively (see appendix C). Even though this part of the lesson is characterised by communication and exchange of experience, autistic students should not be forced to work collaboratively since they often prefer to work on their own to avoid uncomfortable social situations. When the results of this phase are discussed in class, it is important to make sure the students share their experiences and emotions. In the best case, it becomes evident for the class that decisions often result in a feeling of insecurity, leaving the question of *What if I decided the other way?* unanswered. Notwithstanding autistic students' inability to relate to other people, the openness towards and diversity of their peers' thoughts might help students, as Lisa Zunshine calls it, to read each other's minds (see 271-274).

Having established an understanding for the persona, a reading of the poem is played to the students. The presentation of the audio file makes the class familiar with the poem without expecting them to read it on their own. However, if necessary and applicable, it is important to provide two other versions of the poem, a video translating it into sign language and a text in braille, simultaneously for students with auditory and/or visual impairment. While the students are listening

to the poem, a picture at the front of the class illustrates the scenery described by the persona. Aiming at a completely inclusive approach, even autistic students who might never be capable of reading have the chance to imagine what the persona is describing throughout the poem.

The second part of the lesson offers students time to engage with the text individually. At the end, each student should have created a written or drawn summary of the poem. Students who like to work on their own are welcomed to do so; but the teacher should provide a read aloud session for SEN students in front of the class (see Chandler-Olcott and Kluth 551-552). As a participant of the reading circle, each student receives a laminated copy of “The Road Not Taken” that serves as a scratch paper for the read aloud session. Whenever a question arises or context is not understandable, students can take notes on their copy or simply raise their hand to ask the teacher immediately.

Since communicating about a text with others, especially people who have already understood it, makes it easier for students with autism to understand its content (see Chandler-Olcott and Kluth 549-552), students without SEN are highly encouraged to take part in the reading circle as well.<sup>7</sup> In fact, they might also benefit from the vocabulary explanations of autistic students fascinated by the forest. Providing as much visual and oral scaffolding as possible, teachers should only focus on one aspect per reading. To turn students into proficient readers, it is helpful to make the structure, the persona’s decision, and major stylistic devices the subjects of discussion.

The use of digital tools can play a part in contributing to establish differentiation in the classroom (see Windmüller-Jesse and Talarico 88-91), especially when schools are deficient in SEN teachers and staff. If students do not feel ready to take part in the read aloud session, they should be given additional time to prepare themselves for the reading of the poem. To do so, teachers can create online learning applications which help students to focus on different aspects of a text, such as vocabulary, grammatical structures, and stylistic devices. As an example, two applications were created: the first one introducing students to the vocabulary necessary for “The Road Not Taken” (see appendix D), the second one

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7 Based on a social constructivist approach, Lev S. Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development describes “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (86).

helping them to revise the lesson at home (see appendix E). Finding pairs is an appropriate game to help students memorise new vocabulary with special emphasis on different forms of representation. In this case, students are asked to find pairs of words and pictures which fit to the new vocabulary. To adjust the difficulty of this application, the number of pairs and the mode of representation is variable. For example, autistic students with a strength in auditory memorisation can listen to an artificial voice reading out the vocabulary to be matched with a suitable picture. The second application allows for (some) teacher-student interaction since it combines self-made teaching sessions with the interface of a text messenger. Single choice questions, pictures, and videos can be embedded into the conversation to initiate a revising discourse on the texts dealt with in class. In the case of “The Road Not Taken”, this application is useful to make students aware of stylistic devices and relationships between different stanzas of the poem. In case teachers are short of time during their lessons, autistic students can train their understanding of anaphoric devices and intertextual semantic relations using applications like these as an additional resource for learning and revising at home (see Roux et al., O’Connor and Klein).

Having confronted the students with “The Road Not Taken” for the first time, it is possible to ask them to write a poem about a future decision they will have to make on their own. In order to do so, students hopefully adopt central elements of Frost’s poem and develop an understanding for the persona’s situation. Such a creative writing task is also an appropriate challenge for students with autism but has to be prepared in detail. To make writing easier for them, it is conceivable to provide a worksheet with a pre-formulated poem where students have to fill in the gaps with their individual decision or a collection of rhyme words in general.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the potentials of poetry as a genre for fostering the EFL reading comprehension of autistic students. Students with high-functioning autism, despite having decoding skills well above average, often struggle to understand the gist of texts due to weak central coherence as well as a lack of prior knowledge and strategies to deal with anaphoric devices. This is especially true for prose fiction because these texts expect their readers to infer to a

high degree which proves a challenge many people with autism are unable to meet. In contrast, various samples of poetry are less dependent on inferring since the personae depicts their thoughts and emotions in a less elusive way. However, it is essential to recall autism as a spectrum disorder which results in highly individual strengths and weaknesses of autistic people. Consequently, an exemplary way of teaching students with autism does not exist. Thus, the teaching activities suggested in this paper only serve for orientation and examples of how to individually support autistic students' reading proficiency in the EFL classroom. As a cautionary note, the studies discussed in this paper are small-scale studies giving an extremely limited insight into the range of abilities of students with autism. Concerning this, the paper points out a research gap in reference to studies exploring the L2 reading comprehension of autistic students. Further studies are needed to shed more light on the neural structures which characterise autism as a cognitive style. Additionally, inferences of different cognitive structures and abilities, such as weak central coherence and theory of mind, need to be investigated (see Chiang and Lin, El Zein et al., Frith, Happé). More insight into these processes is necessary to make students with autism capable of understanding that "the people whose story the author is telling experience much more than [the author] can ever hope to tell" (Auerbach 549).

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**APPENDIX****A. "THE ROAD NOT TAKEN" BY ROBERT FROST (1916)**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
5 To where it bent in the undergrowth;

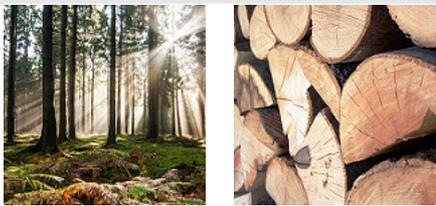
Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
10 Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
15 I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less traveled by,  
20 And that has made all the difference.

## B. EXEMPLARY VOCABULARY CARDS

**wood**

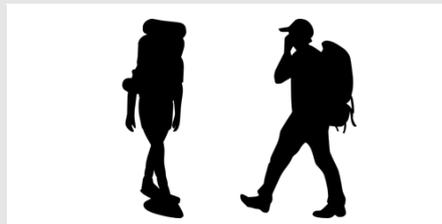


© Holger Alts (flickr)<sup>8</sup>      © Sonia Belviso (flickr)<sup>9</sup>

Words you are not allowed to use  
for the description:

- forest
- green
- fire
- walk

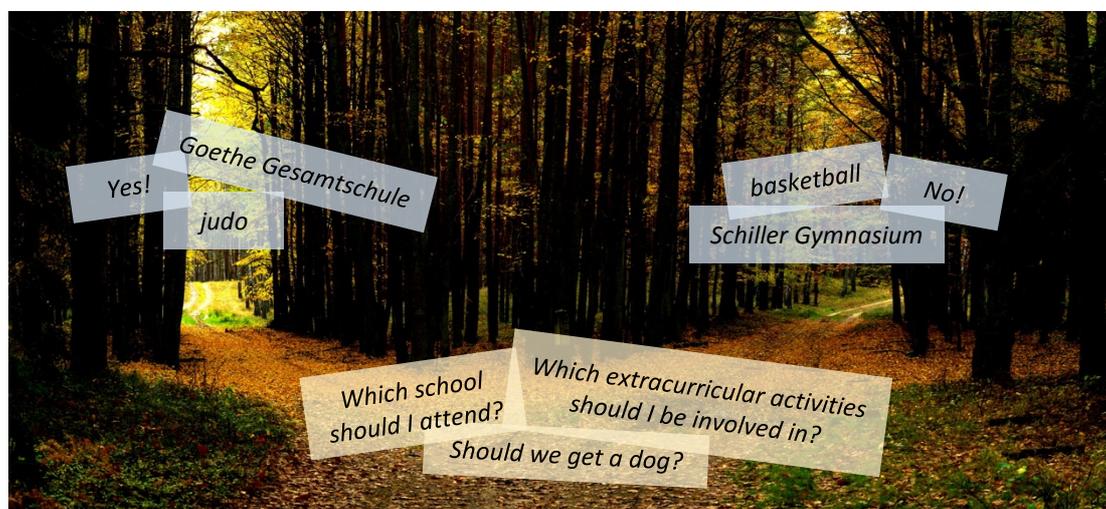
**traveller (BrE),  
traveler (AmE)**



Words you are not allowed to use  
for the description:

- holidays
- plane
- baggage
- tourist

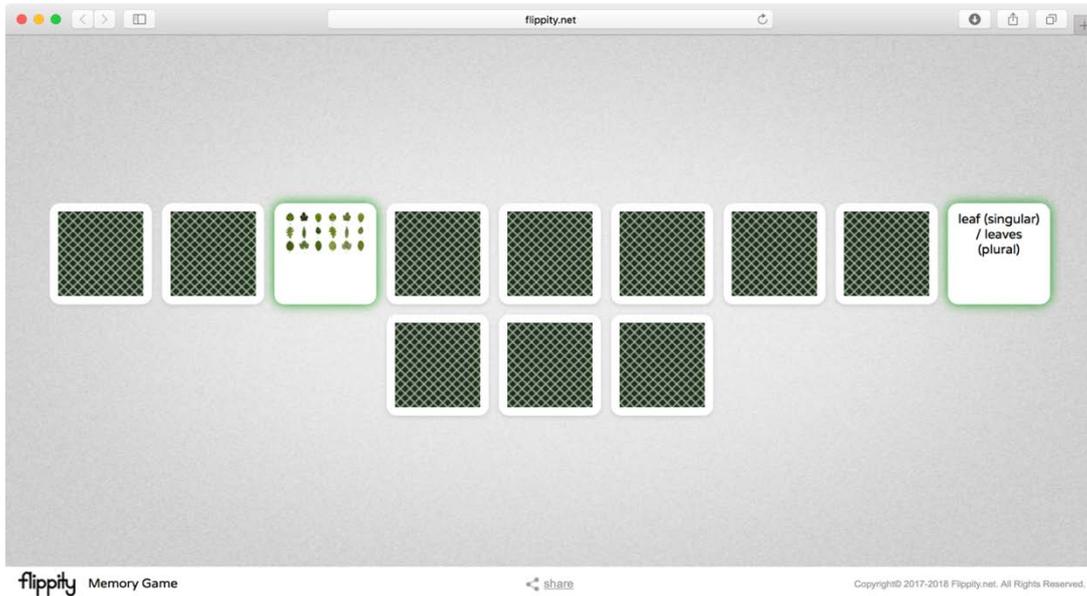
## C. EXEMPLARY GROUP WORK RESULTS



© Szymon Gackowski (deviantart)<sup>10</sup>

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- 8 This work was published by Holger Alts under CC BY 2.0 (<https://flic.kr/p/XyFRJd>). I did not change the work in any way.
  - 9 This work was published by Sonia Belviso under CC BY 2.0 (<https://flic.kr/p/c2icVq>). I did not change the work in any way.
  - 10 This work was published by Szymon Gackowski (<http://fav.me/d1o6crx>). I did not change the work in any way.

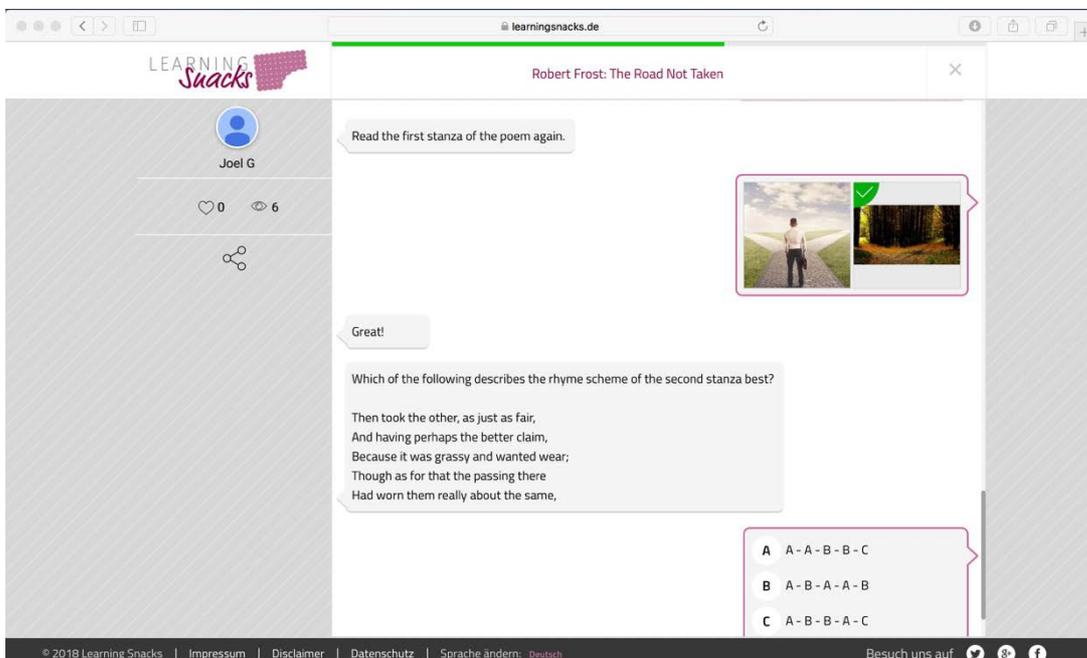
### D. APPLICATION 1: PAIRS



Try it out:

[https://www.flippity.net/me.asp?k=17PdLVxdc\\_qPi02NDWUzSZy3prEpxjUSA1nj0\\_l3JQAo](https://www.flippity.net/me.asp?k=17PdLVxdc_qPi02NDWUzSZy3prEpxjUSA1nj0_l3JQAo)

### E. APPLICATION 2: LEARNING SNACK



Try it out:

<https://www.learningsnacks.de/share/9147/5de5fb2e66577288db330aea49f23ee806cd3692>

## F. EXEMPLARY TEACHING UNIT ON ROBERT FROST'S "THE ROAD NOT TAKEN"

### Abbreviations

CIC: conversation in class	PT: presentation by teacher	PS: presentation by student(s)
IW: individual work	PW: partner work	GW: group work
LC: listening comprehension	RC: reading comprehension	SC: speaking competence
WC: writing competence	MC: methodological competence	IC: intercultural competence

Phase	Introduction (20 min.)
<b>Aim</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Introduction of "The Road Not Taken" (TRNT)</li> <li>– Teacher introduces the groundwork for further interpretation</li> </ul>
<b>Content/ Arrangement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Introductory game: Students choose a box and discuss the reasons for their decision</li> <li>– What was happening in your life some time ago? (CIC)</li> <li>– Students discuss options they had each time they had to make a decision in the past (GW)</li> <li>– Students decide on a path, stick their notes on the poster (GW)</li> </ul>
<b>Competences<sup>11</sup> (Students can...)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– MC: take complex notes (e. g. mind map, cluster); run a project and present its results; work cooperatively</li> </ul>
<b>Material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– two boxes, sweets</li> <li>– picture 1 (present in front of class)</li> <li>– sticky notes</li> <li>– copy of picture 1, one for each group</li> </ul>

11 All competences in this table can be found in the *Gymnasialkernlehrplan für das Fach Englisch in Nordrhein-Westfalen* (2007, pp. 29-36).

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Elaboration (15 min.)</b>
<b>Aim</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vocabulary on forest and poetry is available</li> <li>- Students can classify Robert Frost's poetry</li> </ul>
<b>Content/ Arrangement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher gives basic information on Robert Frost (PT)</li> <li>- Teacher present the poem as an audio file (CIC)</li> </ul>
<b>Competences (Students can...)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- LC: understand excerpts from audio files (e. g. radio)</li> </ul>
<b>Material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TRNT audio file</li> <li>- computer</li> <li>- vocabulary cards</li> </ul>

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Results (10 min.)</b>
<b>Aim</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students communicate their experiences</li> <li>- Students get a feeling for the persona in TRNT</li> </ul>
<b>Content/ Arrangement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students present to the class: What made you choose this option/this path? (CIC)</li> <li>- How did you feel in this moment? (CIC)</li> </ul>
<b>Competences (Students can...)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SC: take part in the classroom discourse; express experiences and emotions; present the results of their work using different forms of notes</li> </ul>
<b>Material</b>	

Phase	Consolidation (45 min.)					
<b>Aim</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students have read the complete poem at least one time</li> <li>- Students can summarise the poem</li> </ul>					
<b>Content/ Arrangement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In this phase, the students have a choice what they would like to work on:</li> </ul> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; border-right: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; vertical-align: top;">           (1) Students participate in the read aloud session provided by the teacher in front of the class (CIC)         </td> <td style="width: 33%; border-right: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; vertical-align: top;">           (2) Students draw or write a short summary of TRNT (maximum of five sentences/pictures) (IW or PW)         </td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px; vertical-align: top;">           (3) Students use digital applications to work individually on different aspects of TRNT         </td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homework: Students write a poem about a decision they had to make referring to a decision on the posters they created before</li> </ul>			(1) Students participate in the read aloud session provided by the teacher in front of the class (CIC)	(2) Students draw or write a short summary of TRNT (maximum of five sentences/pictures) (IW or PW)	(3) Students use digital applications to work individually on different aspects of TRNT
(1) Students participate in the read aloud session provided by the teacher in front of the class (CIC)	(2) Students draw or write a short summary of TRNT (maximum of five sentences/pictures) (IW or PW)	(3) Students use digital applications to work individually on different aspects of TRNT				
<b>Competences (Students can...)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IC: notice the relevance of canonical texts for today</li> <li>- RC: understand poems with focus on characters, plot, emotions, and attitude</li> </ul> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; border-right: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SC: read out long texts aloud appropriately</li> </ul> </td> <td style="width: 33%; border-right: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MC: structure long, complex texts</li> </ul> </td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px; vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MC: work subject-specifically on texts and other media</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WC: adopt different text types for their own writing</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SC: read out long texts aloud appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MC: structure long, complex texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MC: work subject-specifically on texts and other media</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SC: read out long texts aloud appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MC: structure long, complex texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MC: work subject-specifically on texts and other media</li> </ul>				
<b>Material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- copy of TRNT (special copy for SEN students)</li> </ul> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; border-right: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="width: 33%; border-right: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- computer</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- posters created in the introductory phase</li> </ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- computer</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- computer</li> </ul>				

# Of Gay Sinners and Grizzly Saints

## Fundamentalism in “The May-Pole of Merry Mount”

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CARINA KEWELOH<sup>1</sup>

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s stories often depict Puritans as superstitious, intolerant, patriarchal and oppressive, which led to the belief he held a negative attitude towards them. However, “The May-Pole of Merry Mount”<sup>2</sup> suggests that this resentment is not specifically directed towards Puritans. Hawthorne’s short story rather exposes the dangers of fundamentalism in general. This essay scrutinizes both the portrayal of the community of Merry Mount and the Puritans in the short story to explore the features of fundamentalism they depict. Finally, the restricting and impairing effects of both fundamentalist communities will be assessed using the example of Edgar and Edith, the young couple at the center of Hawthorne’s tale. Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” outlines the dangers of religious and non-religious fundamentalism that are still relevant in the present.

Strict adherence to fundamentalist doctrines is not a new problem but has been rooted in religious sanctuaries for centuries. The term *Fundamentalism* was first used in the early twentieth century by American Protestants who took up the cause of protecting the fundamentals of Christianity from ongoing changes (see Brekke 4). Therefore, it is a contemporary term coined after Hawthorne’s era. However, fundamentalism is now understood and used in a broader sense. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term as the strict adherence to certain dogmas, which allow no alteration through modern thoughts or customs (see *OED*). This submissiveness to static principle entails the loss of individuality (see Marsden 115). Nothing becomes more important than abiding by strict doctrines, renouncing autonomous behavior or thoughts. Frantically holding on to dogmas also leads to an oversimplification by dividing the world into good and bad (see Marsden 117). Next to the object of worship, any other ethical standard becomes secondary or deficient.

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1 This essay was initially submitted as a term paper in the BA seminar “Religion in American Culture” and supervised by Dr Melissa Knox-Raab.

2 The short story was first published in *The Token* in 1836 and republished in his collection of works *Twice-Told Tales* in 1837.

Behavior is only measured by its conformity to the adored doctrine, causing resentment or hatred towards people not adhering to the dogma (see Marsden 3).

Yet, this rigid obedience to beliefs is anything but a recent behavior. All throughout history people have waged war, killed, or let themselves be killed for their (extreme) principles. This indicates that even though the etymology of the word only developed in the twentieth century, the phenomenon of fundamentalism was well known before. In his short story "The May-Pole of Merry Mount", Hawthorne contrasts two forms of fundamentalism, the stern sobriety of the Puritans and the forced mirth of the Merry Mounters, showing the inevitable dangers that are caused by adhering to extremely worldly and religious principles.

## **PURITAN FUNDAMENTALISM**

It is Midsummer Eve and the Merry Mounters are cheerfully celebrating the wedding of Edgar and Edith, two of their residents. On this occasion, some are dressed up, for instance as animals, Indians, or fools and the whole community is dancing around a Maypole. The festivity is interrupted by the arrival of a group of Puritans, who are at enmity with the Merry Mounters as they feel provoked by their mirthful lifestyle. The Puritans' leader, John Endicott, cuts down the Maypole, orders other Puritans to lash some Merry Mounters and take them as prisoners to bestow further punishments upon them for their behavior once they have returned to their settlement. When Endicott approaches Edgar and Edith they both try to take the other one's punishment on themselves. Suspecting valuable qualities in the couple, Endicott orders the other Puritans to take them along more gently.

The Puritans in the story are described as "stern" (Hawthorne 59), "dismal" (60), and "grim" (61). The use of these adjectives creates an unappealing image of the community. Hawthorne portrays their daily routine in the following: "[They] said their prayers before daylight, and then wrought in the forest or the corn-field till evening made it prayer time again" (60). Their religious belief system seems to be the defining element of their lives. They start praying before sunrise, indicating that even their sleep cycle is determined by prayer times. This suggests that firm determination is needed to lead a Puritan life. In between prayers, their only activity is hard manual labor. Their whole life consists of restrictions and work.

When Endicott, the Puritan's stern leader, assesses Edgar's assets, he explicitly mentions towards the other Puritans that he seems "valiant to fight, and sober to toil and pious to pray" (66). Endicott's emphasis on these qualities suggests that they are the most important character traits and chores of a Puritan. The devout and sober sentiment is therefore encouraged within the community. A reason for this is that the Puritans consider themselves to be the Lord's "peculiar people" (63), alluding to the relationship between God and Israel. Like the Israelites, the Puritans also believe the Lord has chosen them to settle in a promised land, in this case New England (see Pribek 349). In order to be worthy of this destiny, they strictly adhere to the doctrine of a devout life. Their days are structured according to prayer time, which highlights their religion as the determining element of their behavior (see Hawthorne 60).

The narrator portrays the Puritans as a homogenous group lacking any sense of individuality. The group is depicted wearing "iron armor" (Hawthorne 61). This alludes to soldiers who fight united for a common cause. Individual characters are of no importance in such a group. Only two Puritans, John Endicott and Peter Palfrey, are mentioned by name. However, Peter Palfrey's actions are restricted to asking questions about further procedures like "what order shall be taken with the prisoners?" and "[h]ow many stripes for the priest?" (64). The reader does not learn anything personal about Palfrey, making him a flat character, a submissive Puritan archetype. Moreover, his constant questions stress his lack of independence.

The only character who stands out is John Endicott, "the Puritan of Puritans" (63). This suggests that Endicott combines all character traits essential to Puritans, making him a symbol of that community. Endicott furthermore displays the tendency to speak in passive sentences such as "branding and cropping of ears, shall be thought of hereafter" (64). Endicott does not act on his personal feelings but instead executes the Puritans' will. Moreover, Hawthorne describes him as "of one substance with his headpiece and breastplate" (63). As the Puritans were previously described as "men of iron" (61), he has become the community and its values. He is no longer an individual character, instead his actions and words represent all Puritans.

When arresting the Merry Mounters for transgressing the Puritans civic order, Endicott says that "Providence shall bring us to one of our own [...] settlements" (64). The acting entity is not the group itself, but a divine power installed over them. Individual decisions are no longer possible, as the Puritans are

controlled externally by their belief, their fundamental guide. As Edgar is inspected after speaking up for his bride, the question "shall not the youth hair be cut" (66) is raised. The word "shall" alludes to biblical language and commandments. The Puritans have to implement strict rules, which are divine to them. Part of these rules is the cooption of everyone. Even the smallest marker of individuality such as a different hairstyle cannot be tolerated. Moreover, the symbolism of cutting someone's hair can also be found in the bible when the figure of Samson loses all his strength after his hair was cut off (see Judg. 16, 19). By cutting Edgars hair, the Puritans take away his individuality and hence his ability and strength to live an autonomous life.

Another piece of evidence for the fundamentalist character of Hawthorne's Puritans is their oversimplification. When describing the Merry Mounters, the diction is restricted to "heathen" (Hawthorne 64), "sinners" (61) and "pagans" (64). The Puritans only evaluate people by their dogma of a devout life. As the Merry Mounters do not adhere to their doctrine, they are perceived as evil and unworthy. The Puritans even go as far as to label them the "bond slaves" of Satan (62). This makes them the ultimate enemies of God's people. Moreover, a victory over Merry Mount would therefore be equal to a victory over Satan himself (see Pribek 347). The equating with biblical evil continues when Endicott calls Blackstone the "priest of Baal" (Hawthorne 63) despite the fact that the story offers no indication of the Merry Mounters actually worshipping Baal.<sup>3</sup>

This oversimplification entails another feature often linked to fundamentalism, namely violence. George Marsden claims that "[f]undamentalists are [...] conservatives who are willing to take a stand and fight" (1). As their fundamental doctrine needs to be adhered to at any cost, anyone preventing them from doing so or not following the doctrine appears to attack the fundamentalists. In order to end the threat of this transgression, violence becomes an acceptable tool (see 1). In Hawthorne's short story, the Puritans use violence to preserve their religious dogma in several scenes. It is mentioned that "[t]heir weapons were always at hand to shoot the straggling Savage" (Hawthorne 60). The term "savage" alludes to a wild and uncivilized manner, indicating that these people do not share the Puritans' Christian beliefs and are therefore considered less valuable and nearly

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3 In the Bible, Israel continuously turns away from God and to Baal (see Jer. 23,8, Judg. 2,11).

inhumane. It is also striking that the word is singular, suggesting a universal concept of an enemy.

Moreover, they are prepared to use methods such as “branding and cropping of ears” (64) on the Merry Mounters. Even though the Merry Mounters engaged merely in loud singing during prayer time and performed tricks (see 61), the Puritans considered these minor provocations “enormities” (61) and as justifications for torture. This further depicts the Puritan immoderateness regarding the use of violence. However, this violence is not limited to people outside their group. Hawthorne mentions that people who even thought of dancing were placed in stocks (see 61). As the merry activity of dancing is not suitable for a stern man or woman of God’s chosen community, thinking of dancing alone is a culpable transgression. Actual dancing is even punished with whipping (see 61). This emphasizes the strictness of the Puritans to ensure that their people live a devout life.

Hawthorne’s Puritans in “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” bear significant resemblance to the historical Puritans. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a group of Protestants accused the Church of England of being too similar to the Catholic Church regarding liturgy, hierarchy, cathedrals, and other features (see Coffey and Lim 1-3). Wanting to continue their pursuit of worship and belief, some of them departed from England and settled in New England, where they wanted to create a perfectly pious and devout colony (see Bremer 127). These people, who were soon called Puritans as their self-imposed aim was to practice a purer form of Protestantism, considered themselves to be God’s chosen people (see Person 17). In a sermon during early settlement, John Winthrop reminded his people to “consider that we shall be a city upon a hill” (“A Model of Christian Charity”), highlighting their presumed superiority over other communities and their function as role-models for the rest of the world.

Like them, Hawthorne’s Puritans also consider themselves to be chosen by God. Another similarity is that the historical Puritans also adjusted their lives according to a fundamentalist belief system. Moreover, the incident described in “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” is based on historical events when two maypoles in the liberal settlement of Merry Mount were cut down by a group of Puritans from Plymouth in 1627 and 1628 (see Doubleday 95). However, several historical facts are altered by Hawthorne. For instance, the Puritans did not conduct any further punishments against the people of Merry Mount (see McWilliams 9). By changing this fact to the settlers being whipped and being taken captive (see

Hawthorne 64), Hawthorne stresses the brutality of his fundamentalist Puritans towards those who do not share their beliefs.

### **THE MERRY MOUNTERS – A LIBERAL COMMUNITY?**

Similar to the depiction of the Puritans in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount," Hawthorne also differs from historical reports when describing the settlers of Merry Mount. Historically, the settlement was a fur-trading plantation which attracted new inhabitants due to its rapid economic success (see McWilliams 4). This implies that the settlement was a gathering of people in need of work. However, Hawthorne portrays the Merry Mounters as a hedonistic and unconcerned crowd, depicting them as the extreme opposite of the Puritans. The settlement of Merry Mount is described as a gathering of all kinds of people like minstrels, wandering players, mummers, and other characters, whose only aim in life is to spread joy in their roles as "mirth-makers" (Hawthorne 59).

Furthermore, describing the settler's diversity highlights their individuality. Merry Mount seems to be a welcoming and unrestricted community, which allows its members to peacefully live their lives. The colors of Merry Mount are depicted as "vivid hue" (54) and "liveliest green" (55). The use of these adjectives emphasizes the vitality of the settlement while the color green suggests several positive features such as health, prosperity, and naturalness. Hawthorne portrays their colony as bathing in a "broad smile of sunset" (56). It seems as though Merry Mount is beloved not only by its people but by nature itself. This impression is further strengthened by the fact that an actual bear is present between the dancers around the maypole (see 55). Not only is nature in favor of the settlement, but the bonds are so close that even wild animals ignore their instincts to participate in the festivities of the colony.

The peaceful atmosphere between humans and wild creatures alludes to the biblical prophecy of God's kingdom in which the wolf will lie next to the lamb and the child will play in front of the viper's hole (see Isa. 11,5-9). Merry Mount represents a paradisiac place. Flowers on the maypole look so beautiful that they "must have grown by magic" (Hawthorne 55). Supernatural powers must be involved in this all too perfect settlement. Repeatedly, terms such as "gay" (54), "jovial," and "mirth" (56) are used to describe the sentiment of the people of Merry

Mount. Evidently, the settlers lead a content and cheerful life. The language in these passages creates the image of a utopian community. It is hard to imagine anything could be bad in this paradise.

John McWilliams claims that Hawthorne was the first writer who portrayed Merry Mount as positive (see 17). However, close reading of the short story will reveal the darker sides of the settlement. Hawthorne compares the intrusion of the Puritans to the sensation “when waking thoughts start up amid the scattered fantasies of a dream” (62). Merry Mount is a living dream which will vanish as soon as one wakes up. This image indicates that there is a darker truth behind the settlers’ lives that deviates from the dreamlike façade Merry Mount tries to uphold. Chester Eisinger claims that “it is not to the fanaticism of [Endicott] that Hawthorne rallies any more than to the wild hedonism of the celebrants” (34). Contrary to McWilliams’ allegation, Hawthorne does not portray Merry Mount as positive but criticizes its lifestyle and calls out its pretense directly, when writing

old and young were gay at Merry Mount. The young deemed themselves happy. The elder spirits, if they knew that mirth was but the counterfeit of happiness, yet followed the false shadow willfully, because at least her garments glittered brightest. (59-60)

Young and old live a cheerful life in Merry Mount. However, Hawthorne’s narrator seems to suggest that mirth cannot be equated with happiness, as it is merely a “false shadow.” While some settlers perceive this merry lifestyle as truthful, by explicitly referring to the settlers’ young age, Hawthorne emphasizes their inexperience and naivety. Those who are able to see through the charade still hold on to it, even if only for fine clothing.

Hawthorne also describes Merry Mount’s harvest festivities, which take place “though their crop was of the smallest” (60). This indicates that the settlers live a mirthful life even though they have no reason to do so. Indeed, a deviation from this lifestyle is not allowed “for it was high treason to be sad at Merry Mount” (58). Hawthorne could be ironic here, however, the whispered conversation between Edith and Edgar about their gloomy sentiments on their wedding day reinforces the impression that sadness is considered offensive (see 58). The young couple is scared of anyone overhearing their conversation, as somber emotions are not allowed. Even though sadness is a human emotion, the residents have to hide such feelings to not defy the social norms of the settlement. The community hence also

oversimplifies life by classifying sadness as a prohibited behavior, only because sadness violates its doctrine of joy. If someone should become sad anyway, feeling this emotion is considered "high treason" (59) against Merry Mount itself. A strict adherence to the dogma of merriness is therefore fundamental to the community. As rigid obedience to a particular idea which allows no deviation is a clear marker of extremism, Merry Mount also displays clear features of fundamentalism.

Another aspect of fundamentalism among the people of Merry Mount is their lack of individuality. Instead of by their actual names, the settlers are continuously referred to as "masquers" (58) and "revellers [sic]" (61). Their only important character trait is their merry behavior within the group. The people of Merry Mount seem to get lost in their festivities and become nothing but participants in it. Furthermore, it is striking that the diversity of the people who joined Merry Mount is listed (see 59), but none of the characters are mentioned individually. By entering Merry Mount, the residents lose their individuality. Their only destiny now is to be part of the community of revelers. Similar to the Puritans, they never act alone but always together, for example when they start "a riotous uproar" (57) together or when they cry to the reverend in unison asking him to strike up a song (see 57). Not one person deviates from the joyful behavior as they all merge into one communal body that upholds the dogma of mirthful conduct and acts in unison. In addition to this, Hawthorne's narrator predicts a joyful life for all of New England "should their banner be triumphant" (54). Again, the focus is not on the people of Merry Mount. The personalization of their banner emphasizes that it is of higher importance and power than the settlers themselves.

Instead of focusing on their individual needs and feelings, the Merry Mounters occupy themselves with the adoration of the maypole, which is at the heart of the community. This is indicated by Hawthorne claiming that "sometimes they call it their religion" (60). Their eagerness to adorn the maypole is further stressed when the settlers decorate it with flowers and ribbons in the most vivid colors, which mirror the joy and festive behavior of the settlers (see 55). Instead of only having a maypole for one day of the year, which would be May Day, it remains in place all year long and is decorated in a merry style every season (see 60). This stresses the settlers' dedication to the maypole. The settlers' enthusiasm alludes to their causeless mirth. The maypole has no significance but to look pretty. However, the Merry Mounters make a great effort to maintain this vanity. This creates an

image of an irrational and preposterous community chasing their principle of a mirthful life without any other consideration.

The perception of Merry Mount is further affected by comparing its settlers to mythical creatures that escaped their ancient stories (see 55). For the celebration some settlers are dressed up as animals wearing “antlers of a stag” (55) or “the grim visage of a wolf” (55). The community appears to be detached from the responsibilities of everyday life. Moreover, associating the settlers with fictitious characters hints at the pretense of their own lives. The reader is led to observe the Merry Mounters distrustfully. Their suspicious image is also created by the choice of disguise as animals like wolves and bears (see 55). These animals are not innocent, but predators, which are mostly associated with danger and fear. The scenery does not seem inviting but creates an unpleasant feeling of threat. However, these animals are portrayed as peaceful, which is utterly out of character for them. This again alludes to the behavior of the people of Merry Mount. They live a peaceful and joyous life together, but, for Hawthorne, they have to neglect their own sentiments and character traits to be able to do so.

Hawthorne points out that a wanderer experiencing the scene would have considered the crowd to be the crew of Comus (see 56). This draws comparisons to John Milton’s masque “Comus” in which Comus lives in the woods and tricks travelers into drinking wine, which will turn them into beasts, lets them forget their past, and makes them creatures that only live for pleasures and sexual indulgences. This suggests that the people of Merry Mount might behave similarly. Frederick Crews claims that Hawthorne does not mention sexual excesses, as it was unusual in his time to mention such topics (see 20). However, the maypole is not only a historical reference but can also be read as a phallic symbol. Their year-long celebration of the maypole suggests that the people of Merry Mount also lead a sexually hedonistic life.

A further fact depicting Merry Mount as fundamentally joyous is that they conduct funerals with “merriment and festive music” (Hawthorne 61). As a funeral is often associated with expression of sadness and loss, the behavior of the Merry Mounters seems inappropriate. Therefore, Hawthorne depicts the Merry Mount as a fundamentalist group, whose central doctrine is to live a cheerful life. Following this dogma also entails losing one’s identity, since it denies emotions as sadness, leading to a similarly oversimplified division of actions and emotions into good and bad.

## CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO EXTREMES

The two central figures who suffer from both fundamentalist groups in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" are Edith and Edgar. From the beginning they stand out from the rest of the settlers of Merry Mount. Hawthorne creates this impression by describing them as "the two airiest forms, that had ever trodden on any more solid footing than a purple and a golden cloud" (56) amid a "ring of monsters" (56). While the monsters appear frightening, Edgar and Edith are a diversion from this scary atmosphere. In contrast to the beastly crowd, they seem likeable, inviting the reader to identify and sympathize with them. When describing the two, Hawthorne uses words such as "really" and "truly" (57). They do not follow the pretense of Merry Mount, but they are honest and upright. This sets them apart from everyone else.

Moreover, while the other settlers are roaring and crying, Edith and Edgar whisper to each other (see 58). Their communication stands out of the festivities, leaving the reader wondering why they belong to the community. However, a true division between the people of Merry Mount and the couple forms when they become sad and melancholic, imagining that "nothing of futurity will be brighter than the mere remembrance of what is now passing" (58). This violates Merry Mounts doctrine of a cheerful life. Their gloomy sentiments therefore offend the very fundament of their community. Edith continues to question the mirthfulness of Merry Mount, calling it "visionary" and "unreal" (58). She steps out of the fundamentalist world, as she reflects on their actions and challenges the dogma of merriness with an awareness unusual for the settlers.

The whole scene can be perceived as an allusion to the story of Adam and Eve. They were allowed to live in paradise until they ate from the tree of knowledge, which made them aware of their living conditions (see Gen. 3). Like Adam and Eve, Edgar and Edith lose their happy life and their bond to Merry Mount the moment they question their situation. As an immediate reaction "as if a spell had loosened them, down came a little shower of withering rose leaves from the maypole" (Hawthorne 58). The decaying roses allude to the loss of their mirthful life. As soon as they start to question their mirth, they see through the pretense and the dogma of merriness loses its power over them.

The couple finally distances itself from the customs of Merry Mount in the presence of the Puritans. Before, Edgar held a golden staff, a requisite of the festivity, in his right hand and Edith's hand in his left hand (see 56). His attention

was split between the cheerful celebrations and his bride. However, when confronted with real danger represented by the Puritans, he drops the staff and holds Edith in his arms (see 65). This is a decisive moment for the couple and a moment of liberation. Edgar would not have been able to protect Edith fully if he had still held on to the staff. Since the staff can be perceived as a representation of Merry Mount, Edgar lets go of the doctrine of cheerfulness in this moment. Only this action enables him to detect the seriousness of the situation and act accordingly. Edgar's willingness to drop the staff immediately suggests that his attachment to Merry Mount was already fragile before. His priority is the relationship with his wife, which forces him to clearly distance himself from the other Merry Mounters. Edgar and Edith hold on to each other, forming a union of their own and protecting each other from the Puritans as well as distancing themselves from the Merry Mounters. This emphasizes their distance to both parties involved.

At the sight of the couple, Endicott reacts in an unusually empathetic manner. Beforehand, he was described as an "immitigable zealot" (65). This raises expectations of him acting remorseless and stern against anyone not living a devout and godly life. However, when faced with Edgar's and Edith's willingness to step in for each other (see 65-66), Hawthorne claims that "the iron man was softened" (66). As Endicott's unexpected behavior is a clear deviation from the invented norm, it stands out in the story. Its unusualness is further stressed by the antithesis between "iron" and "softened." These terms normally contradict each other and suggest that Puritans, which were previously associated with iron, cannot act empathically. In this case the terms are combined, underlining the deviation Endicott shows in this situation from typical Puritan behavior.

Endicott's behavior might suggest that he is touched by their love for each other. However, a practical reason is more likely. Robert Gale argues that the reason for Endicott's sympathies towards the couple is that he admires them for their bravery (see 319-320). This assumption is strengthened later on as he describes Edgar as "valiant to fight" (Hawthorne 66). It seems that Edgar's bravery rather than his love has left an impression on Endicott. Crews claims that "the whole plot tends toward reconciliation. Thus, for example, Endicott shows a surprising sympathy with the May couple" (23). The term 'reconciliation' would indicate that a peaceful coexistence might be possible. However, Crews neglects the fact that Endicott still plans to transform Edgar and Edith into Puritans (see Hawthorne 66). As this is a

forced assimilation without respecting them or their customs, no reconciliation can be detected.

Crews suggests that "[t]he tale's conclusion, with the chastened Lord and Lady of the May heading [heavenward] with a just commixture of sobriety and affection, resolves [the] conflict [...] agreeably" (18). A sense of union of the two extremes in the couple might be indicated by the fact that no resistance is mentioned when Endicott decides to take them along. However, I think that their lack of resistance rather suggests their powerlessness in this situation as they are threatened by the Puritan violence and know that physical resistance is not an option. This is suggested by the fact that Edgar and Edith both try to persuade Endicott verbally to spare their spouse by Edgar asking to "let Edith go untouched" (Hawthorne 65) and Edith asking to "lay it all on [her]" (66). As they are denied this request, they give up arguing and "never wasted one regretful thought on the vanities of Merry Mount" (67). Not looking back to their former lives does not show their contentment with their lives among the Puritans, but merely their negative attitude towards the fundamentalist community of Merry Mount. They do not fit in and will not miss the mirthful pretense.

Yet their life among the Puritans will not be an improvement to their former life as both have to "support each other on the difficult path" (67). Both fundamentalist communities are equally restricting. In the same way that Edgar and Edith have been forced to adhere to the doctrine of Merry Mount before, they are forced to adhere to the belief system of the Puritans now. Edgar will have to cut his hair, work, pray, and fight, while Edith will need to take on the role of a good mother (see 66). They are neither asked for their opinion nor for their consent concerning these plans. Once again, the couple will have to give up their individuality in order to abide to the community's rules.

Richard Fogle claims that Edgar and Edith "are a symbol of humanity, forced to choose between the 'systematic gayety' of Merry Mount and the 'moral gloom' of the Puritans" (61). They are caught between two extremes. Neither one is suitable as both constrain people from being free. In Merry Mount, the couple is not allowed to feel sad (see Hawthorne 58). They feel the need to whisper to prevent being caught defying the doctrine of cheerfulness. However, Hawthorne labels their sentiments "real passion" (58). By denying Edgar and Edith permission to express their emotions, the Merry Mounters restrict them in their humanity. In contrast to this, the Puritans deny them any joy, as their only aims in life are hard work,

praying, and fighting (see 65). This also constrains the couple, as they are not allowed to shape their lives individually. The Puritans depict a homogenous community in which there is no room for individual human beings. Edgar and Edith are caught between two poles, because they feel both cheerful and gloomy emotions. As they have no chance of liberating themselves from these fundamentalist groups, a happy end for the couple is not possible.

In the fight between Merry Mount and the Puritans, no group is depicted as being more favorable. Hawthorne describes a clash between “grizzly saints” and “gay sinners” (62). As saints have a positive connotation while sinners a negative one, the contradictory language indicates that both groups have darker sides accompanying their positive features. Merry Mount is a community detached from the everyday world which is suggested by the description of Puritans’ arrival as “waking thoughts [...] amid the scattered fantasies of a dream” (62). Merry Mount was a fragile delusion from the beginning since it cannot withstand the Puritans attack. The settlers are petrified in the face of the “dread magician” (63), Endicott. Merry Mount does not fight back or intervene when the maypole is cut down. Their only reaction is a “groan for their idol” (64). This depicts the Merry Mounters as incapable of facing threatening situations. Contrary to this, the Puritans are superior in the battle, since their devout life resolves solely around prayer, fighting, and work (see 66). However, the description of their daily routine seems utterly joyless. In the end, both parties are incapable of understanding each other and thus fail to establish a balanced life, doomed to live the monochromaticity of fundamentalism.

## CONCLUSION

“The May-Pole of Merry Mount” is based on historical events. Fundamentalist Puritans were responsible for cutting down maypoles in a settlement called Merry Mount. However, several facts are altered, suggesting that the short story is not a report on historical events but rather tries to convey a more abstract message by portraying how extreme principles, whether they are secular or religious, restricts human beings. Both communities in Hawthorne’s story show features of fundamentalism. They strictly adhere to their specific dogmas, depict a lack of individuality, and live according to their oversimplified classifications of the world.

The only two characters not adhering to the fundamentalist belief systems are Edgar and Edith. The story depicts the couple as complex, since they combine both cheerful and gloomy sentiments and reflect critically on their situation. However, they are equally restricted by both fundamentalist communities and are forced to adjust to the respective extreme position, because each community cannot accept features of the other. Therefore, Edgar and Edith cannot live a life that balances both extremes. As Hawthorne criticizes the two opposing communities equally and shows that each fundamentalist group restricts people, "The May Pole of Merry Mount" exposes the dangers of fundamentalism.

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# Hunchbacks and Palefaces

## Exocentric Compound Nouns and their Productivity

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What do words like *skinhead*, *blackboard*, *pickpocket*, *underdog*, and *lazybones* have in common? First of all, these are words that we use in everyday English, but that would be too simplistic in a linguistic context. What they really have in common is that they are compounds. These words consist of two constituent parts: *skinhead* is a compound consisting of *skin* and *head*, *pickpocket* consists of *pick* and *pocket*, *underdog* of *under* and *dog*, and *lazybones* consists of *lazy* and *bones*. We might notice that the constituent parts have, in a literal sense, nothing to do with the meaning of the whole compound. A *skinhead* is not a kind of *head* or *skin*, it describes a *person*. A *blackboard* differs from the meaning in the way that it is not a kind of *board* that is black, which would be embodied by *black board*. And *underdog*? This has nothing to do with a kind of *dog* as well as *lazybones* has nothing to do with kinds of *bones*. In linguistics, compounds whose meaning is not derived from the constituent parts are known as *exocentric compound nouns*.

Exocentric compound nouns are said to show low productivity according to Andrew Carstairs-McCarthy (2002) and Laurie Bauer (2004).<sup>2</sup> Why is that and can this be said for all types of exocentric compound nouns? I will investigate this question first using a theoretical base that defines characteristics of exocentric compound nouns, including pre-understandings and their influence. Secondly, I will compare selected types of exocentric compound nouns regarding the question of productivity. Research so far just pointed out difference in productivity by comparing endocentric and copulative to exocentric compound nouns.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is important to look at internal differences in productivity, limited to exocentric compound nouns, to prevent generalisations like saying exocentric compound

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1 This essay was initially submitted as a term paper in the BA seminar “Morphology” and supervised by Julia Salzinger.

2 *Low productivity* means here that there are not many exocentric compound nouns newly invented (see Carstairs-McCarthy 110 and Plag 52-54f.).

3 See for example Bauer (2004) and Plag (2003).

nouns are less productive than endocentric and copulative compound nouns. By comparing different types, we can find out if all types of exocentric compound nouns are productive on the same level or if there are internal differences. This will be done by including an analysis that compares examples of different categories according to relevant aspects and their token frequency, using the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA), the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* and *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

My hypothesis is that not all exocentric compound nouns are equally productive or non-productive, meaning that there is a continuum that sets the range for productivity of exocentric compound nouns.

### HEADEDNESS AND ITS APPLICABILITY IN EXOCENTRICITY

If we want to tackle the subject of exocentric compound nouns, it is important to first look at characteristics that turn them into a distinct category compared to endocentric and copulative compounding. One of the most popular characteristics with which we distinguish exocentric compound nouns is *headedness*. Headedness can be viewed from different perspectives that do not only have a syntactic implication, but also a morphological one.

In general, headedness means that one of the constituent parts of a compound determines not only the word class syntactically, but also the meaning, semantically speaking (see Carstairs-McCarthy 64). If we transfer this definition to exocentric compounding, they are compounds without a head, “having a ‘centre’ outside themselves, figuratively speaking” (65). I include this definition because it is not only the most common but does imply some complications in classifying compounds as exocentric. The actual meaning of *pickpocket*, “a person who steals money, etc. from other people’s pockets, especially in crowded places” (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* s.v. *pickpocket*), for example, derives not from its constituent parts, but refers to another centre that is external, so not obvious. However, the invisible part is important because it carries the core meaning of *pickpocket*.

There is another complication in this definition: here are indeed two distinct concepts, semantic and morphological headedness, fused (see Bauer “English Exocentric Compounds” 7). This indicates that although we call *lazybones*

exocentric from a semantic perspective because of its unpredictable meaning, we should not ignore the circumstance that it contains head (*bones*) and modifier (*lazy*) from a morphological perspective (see Bauer “English Exocentric Compounds” 7).

Another aspect neglected in the general definition is that, syntactically speaking, the head of a compound “determines the category, plurality, and other general features of the word” (Di Sciullo, Williams 24). Although this definition is highly functional, as it describes not only where the head is but also which functions it takes in a compound, this notion leaves some questions unanswered. These questions also include how people can know the word class of a compound if the centre is neither included syntactically in the entire compound nor in its constituent parts. The meaning of most of the newly introduced exocentric compounds is opaque until they are looked up in a dictionary. A person who has never heard of a *pickpocket* will not be totally sure if he or she interprets it correctly. That is why Edwin Williams and Anna Maria Di Sciullo propose that “instead of being rejected or restricted, the notion ‘head’ should be relativized” (25-26). This qualification is important because it means that we have to include contextual aspects when defining the head from a morphological perspective (see 26).

Although the head in an exocentric compound noun is not visible, it certainly has a function, which is revealed when taking the context into account. This is the only remaining way to identify the head of an exocentric compound noun. Therefore, the consequence is that syntactically, we cannot find the head of an exocentric compound. In *pickpocket*, it is not the head, but more the usage context that determines its word class. The head in this example is *person*, but only because we understand and use it this way, taking into account our available knowledge to overcome its unpredictability (see Carstairs-McCarthy 93-94).

Without this “relativization” (Di Sciullo, Williams 26), another problem occurs: if an exocentric compound noun is determined by an outlying centre, the function of the constituent parts is likely to be neglected. To prevent this, we have to look closely at the constituent parts and their meaning. *Pickpocket* includes *pick*, a verb, and *pocket*, a noun. If we know the meaning of *pick* and tie this to the meaning of *pocket*, we can have a slight, although not specified, clue what it could mean. Therefore, I agree with the view that constituent parts of an exocentric compound should be seen as those parts which subtly determine the compound because they, albeit not the centre of reference, add to the meaning (see Di Sciullo,

Williams 26). A *pickpocket* is, on a closer look, someone who picks stuff illegally ‘from other people’s pockets’ (see *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*), so both parts add here to the overall meaning of *pickpocket*.

Consequently, the head of an exocentric compound noun can only be determined by taking a morphological view, thereby considering the importance of both constituent parts.

## PRODUCTIVITY IN EXOCENTRICITY

Another term that has to be specified with reference to exocentricity is *productivity*. It is important to note that productivity and non-productivity “only mark the end-points of a scale” (Plag 52). So there has to be a middle-position that can be determined by taking into account *formal generality*, *formal regularity*, *semantic regularity*, and *token frequency* (see 51).

Generally speaking, productivity enables us to form an infinite amount of new words and sentences and therefore allows us to extend our vocabulary (see Bauer *English Word-Formation* 63). However, this definition just highlights one aspect of productivity, namely that it is predominated by how many new words are coined in a category, the so-called “type frequency” (Plag 52). There are more relevant factors that influence productivity. This is especially underlined when talking about productivity in relation to exocentric compound nouns. The relation between them is characterised by one major problem, which has its origin in the metaphorical connotation inherent in almost all exocentric compound nouns like *lazybones*. As they are unique and therefore rather opaque, it is a widespread assumption that compounds of this category are not productive (see Carstairs-McCarthy 110). This assumption leads to the question how productivity is measured, which aspects influence the productivity of exocentric compound nouns, and which make them apparently unproductive.

Part of the answer is to distinguish between *formal generality* and *formal regularity* on the one hand, and *semantic regularity* on the other hand (see Carstairs-McCarthy 85-90). In short, a compound is *formally general* when its form reveals the meaning and it is hence transparent (see 86). In contrast to this, *formal regularity* is concerned with two things: whether a word is a possible base with which we can form a compound and whether we can conclude from its base that

the compound is a noun (see 86). However, I doubt that the notion of formal generality can be applied to the concept of exocentric compound nouns in exactly this way, considering the circumstance that these compounds have an opaque meaning due to their phonological state (see Miller 53).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, both terms can be considered factors that exert influence on the word-formation process in exocentric compound nouns. Simultaneously, it has to be questioned whether Carstairs-McCarthy's notion that "although not by definition, formal generality presupposes formal regularity, but not vice versa" (88) remains valid in this case, when we hold on to the assumption that exocentric compound nouns are hardly transparent in meaning. In my view, we have to consider the idea that there are patterns in the formation of exocentric compound nouns that show which word classes are often or not often put together, and those word classes that are often put together, especially nouns, are usually the types of compounds that are considered productive (see Carstairs-McCarthy 93).

Another criterion which has to be taken into account is *semantic regularity*, which means investigating the question whether the meaning of a compound can be derived from its constituent parts in a "uniform and consistent" way (Carstairs-McCarthy 88). This concept may be restricted in this context as it was already stated that the meaning of exocentric compound nouns is opaque and cannot be easily derived from their constituents. However, when we see an exocentric compound noun like *skinhead*, which consists of two nouns, I would assume that we interpret it more easily as a person because *head* and *skin* both refer to human body parts and have the same word class. In a compound like *underdog*, on the other hand, where both words have different word classes and the meaning is not transparent, the idea of semantic regularity may be inadequate (see Carstairs-McCarthy 94).

The second part of the answer to how productivity can be measured in exocentricity involves quantifiable measurements that can be applied when working with a corpus. However, this can be a major problem when analysing exocentric compounds, as the amount of newly formed words in a category commonly seems to provide more information than how often an individual word is used. Unfortunately, exocentric compound nouns are numerous. Hence, this

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4 Phonological state means, there are exocentric compound nouns like *sit-in*, where there is no "phonologically realized element" (Miller 53) that gives a hint that this is a noun because the compound consists of a verb and a preposition (see Scalise, Fábregas, and Forza qtd. in Miller 53).

method is difficult to apply; this even exacerbates the aspect that it is in general very difficult to search for exocentric compound nouns in a corpus. Therefore, a competing view not only questions the significance of type frequency, but also argues that it does not have to be the best measurement when analysing word-formations (see Plag 53-54): Token frequency includes measuring how often a word is used by taking a set of different examples of exocentric compounds (see 54-55).

According to Rolf Harald Baayen (1993), an advocate of token frequency, the knowledge people have determines how they understand and interpret certain formations (see 181). The link to productivity is achieved by assuming that people use a morphological rule in perceiving and producing words when they are not acquainted with a certain pattern of word-formation (see 181). If a person meets a new word such as *hunchback*, the first thing the person will do is to divide the word into its constituent parts according to a “word-formation rule in the mental lexicon” (Plag 54). Consequently, the parts will be probably remembered by the person and this offers the possibility to form a new word with one of the constituent parts such as *greenback* (54). This is a very important point because it stresses the multidimensional character of productivity (see Baayen 181). Thus, I also agree with Baayen that unproductive processes are marked by a large number of high-frequency words and a low number of low-frequency words (see 181).

The opposite case would be if a person meets a familiar noun-noun combination such as *chairman*. The person will possibly not divide this compound into its different parts if there are many words in the familiar category of noun-noun combinations (see Plag 54). The word is therefore remembered as a whole and not as a whole consisting of parts (see Baayen 181). Hence, Baayen’s point of view perfectly corresponds with the concepts of formal generality, formal regularity, and semantic regularity. Formal regularity, on the one hand, is determined by the fact that the person is able to acknowledge a part of a compound as a possible base for another coinage. This influences, on the other hand, formal generality, as the compound becomes transparent because of the words used. Semantic regularity is achieved when the words contribute to a uniform meaning. This relation can be seen when considering examples such as *braveheart* or *faintheart*. If *faintheart* refers to a person, *braveheart*, having the same base, will most likely do, too.

Eventually, productivity in exocentricity is determined by formal generality, formal regularity, and semantic regularity, and adequately measured by token frequency.

## CONCEPTS OF EXOCENTRIC COMPOUND NOUNS: MARCHAND'S TYPE DISTINCTION

The topic of exocentric compound nouns does not only concern today's linguistic research. It is a topic that has a long tradition throughout history, especially in relation to descriptivist approaches (see Benczes 16). One of those descriptivist approaches is the one by Hans Marchand; his analyses predominantly exert influence on today's understanding of how to analyse and understand exocentric compound nouns.<sup>5</sup>

Marchand introduces the general term 'compound' as "made up of a determining and a determined part" (11). Referring to exocentric compound nouns, this means that the determining part is non-existent considering formal aspects and the compounds in this category are therefore zero morphemic, which means that none of the constituent parts determines the meaning of the compound: "A *pickpocket* is neither a *pick* nor a *pocket*..." (11). However, the underlying concept is understood by people, so the non-existent part only refers to formal aspects and not semantic aspects (see 11). This notion has exerted great influence on today's understanding of exocentric compound nouns, especially on the term *head*, which can be seen synonymous to Marchand's *determinatum*.<sup>6</sup> Applying this view on exocentric compound nouns, Marchand proceeds his analysis by introducing major categories of exocentric compound nouns (see 37-46).

He begins with type *pickpocket* which is described as a formal connection of a predicate and object that indicates what is performed by the agent, including nicknames, animal names and "impersonal material agents" (37-38). He proceeds by finding connections to type *runabout* which he sees as a development from type *pickpocket* (see 39). What in his view makes these two types related is the underlying concept, namely that both seemingly have a negative impact, although type *runabout* consists of an adverbial complement in a verbal phrase, which specify together what the agent is doing (see 38; see Benczes 19). However, Marchand makes an exception for animal names such as *wagtail* because they lack this derogative undertone (see 38). Furthermore, Marchand specifically refers to type

5 This chapter is based on Marchand's monograph *The Categories and Types of Present-Day English Word-Formation* (1960).

6 This influence reveals itself by taking into account the investigations by Williams and Di Sciullo (1987).

*pickpocket* as a spoken phenomenon because under historical aspects, words in this category were derived from Roman languages that did not have a literary tradition (see 38). Type *pickpocket* is seen as “exceedingly productive” (39), meaning in this case that there are many examples in this category, which he also enumerates (see 38). Therefore, it can be said that he sees type frequency as the factor that divides productive from non-productive types. This is especially underlined by the circumstance that he does not go into deeper detail with type *dugout*, because this category does not consist of many examples, so in his view there is no necessity to examine them (see 45).

The last types he introduces are type *blackout* and a category consisting of the subcategories *hunchback*, *paleface*, *five-finger*, and *scatterbrain* (see 41-45). Type *blackout* is here explained as an activity pointed out in the “verbal phrase” (41). *Blackout*, in this case, describes an action of forgetting (see *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* s.vv. *blackout*, n.5). While he examines this type, he takes apart the semantic and morphological aspect. This type is semantically close to type *pickpocket* on the one hand and shows morphological similarity to type *blackout* (see Marchand 41; see Benczes 19). The semantic similarity is justified by the underlying concept that the agent is doing something that is expressed in the compound (see Marchand 41). However, *pickpocket* and *blackout* are morphologically different, as indicated by the word classes involved (see 41). Therefore, *blackout* implies morphological similarity to type *runabout*, considering that both consist of a verbal phrase together with an adverbial complement (39-41). Taking the similarities into account, it can be argued whether or not *blackout* is different enough to build an own group (see Benczes 19).

Type *hunchback* is concerned with a characterisation namely that a person or thing has an outstanding characteristic that describes them perfectly (see Marchand 42). In my view, this explanation slightly touches the topic of synecdoche, meaning that one single unit describes one whole, the so-called *pars pro toto* (see Bauer “English Exocentric Compounds” 7). A person not only consists of one characteristic, but one special character trait suffices to identify the person (see Marchand 42). What Marchand also points out is that type *hunchback* seems to be very near to endocentricity because it is very difficult to define if a *hunchback* describes a person having a *hunched back* or if a *hunchback* is a certain kind of *back*, namely a hunched one (see 42). Considering this aspect, it can be argued whether this indicates the beginnings of semantic and syntactic exocentricity,

which is an on-going discussion (see Bauer “English Exocentric Compounds” 1). Indeed, from a semantic perspective, a *paleface* is a nickname for a person, but syntactically, it describes a face that is pale (see Marchand 42). Why he especially refers to *paleface*, *five-finger*, and *scatterbrain* as distinct subcategories does not become clear in this context. He refers to them as “bahuvrihi” (42),<sup>7</sup> but examines their productivity separately without giving much explanation. However, he generally describes them as being characterised by what the compound expresses (see 42). Nevertheless, he makes an exception for *five-finger* because it does not fit in his perception of bahuvrihi (see 45).

What becomes apparent in Marchand’s approach of how to separate exocentric compound nouns in distinct categories is the diachronic perspective, namely that he not only describes distinctions between the types, but also draws connections between them while regarding their historical origin and development through time. This is especially emphasized by type *pickpocket*. Generally speaking, there are some aspects to be discovered that remain valid until now, indicated by his distinction of *determinant* and *determinatum*, and the term *zero morpheme* (see Marchand 11).

## BLOOMFIELD’S LINES OF CLASSIFICATION

Another descriptivist approach, although slightly different, is the one Leonard Bloomfield introduced in his monograph *Language* (1933). He categorises compounds based on *two lines* (see 233-237).

First, he looks at the relation between the parts constituting the compound (see 233). Two main types of compounds result from this perspective, namely *syntactic* and *asyntactic* compounds. If a compound is syntactic considering its constituents, these two parts resemble the identical grammatical order “as a word in a phrase” (233). To name one example, we can say that *greenhouse* as a compound consisting of an adjective and a noun shows the same structure as the comparable phrase *green house* (see 233). On the other hand, asyntactic compounds show the exact opposite (see 233). *Chairman* would therefore be asyntactic because we can

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7 Bahuvrihi compounds are exocentric and give a characterisation of someone or something by referring to a striking characteristic; a *paleface* can, for example, describe a person who has an extraordinarily white face (see Marchand 42).

find no phrase such as *chair man* (see 233; see Benczes 16). However, Bloomfield also mentions compounds that take a middle position between these types, namely “semi-syntactic compounds” (234). They are seen as “intermediate” (234), because there are compounds like *undertaker* which have a syntactical order but have a different order in a phrase. The adequate phrase for *undertaker* would be *take under*, so the order is totally different than the one in the compound (see 234). This line of classification is, slightly hinting at future results, more important than assumed at first sight.

He goes on by referring to his second line of classification, namely the relationship of the compound to its constituent parts (see 235), which I think is more important in the consideration of exocentricity. Whereas before he remained mainly general in his explanation of syntactic and asyntactic compounds, as he did not fully specify it to the case of exocentricity, this line of categorisation specifically focuses on exocentricity. This is proven by Bloomfield's assumption that if the head member of the compound and the whole compound itself resemble differing functions considering their word class, the compound will likely be described as exocentric or “bahuvrihi” (235). The main problem appears when the compound as a whole has the same grammatical category as the head member because in his view the compound can no longer be classified as exocentric from a formal perspective. As the only solution to this problem, he proposes the context as the remaining way to figure out the meaning of an exocentric compound (see 236).

There are several points to discover in this explanation. Bloomfield tries to avoid the problem of classifying a compound as exocentric by including different perspectives, a syntactic as well as a semantic view. As I discussed at the beginning of this paper, the head member is not visible formally in exocentric compound nouns, so semantic criteria play a major role in identifying a compound as exocentric. His analysis, although remaining descriptive, as he does not prescribe distinctive rules of how to classify, gains a formal aspect because he takes into account syntactic criteria besides semantic criteria. Therefore, his approach exerts a main influence on today's understanding concerning this topic, as discovered in the previously introduced terms *headedness*, *formal generality*, *formal regularity*, as well as *semantic regularity*.

## COMPARISON AND CRITICISM

As we have seen in the previous subsections, both Marchand (1960) and Bloomfield (1933) exerted main influence on the topic of exocentric compound nouns and how to classify them. Albeit descriptivist, both approaches have internal differences not only in their general understanding, but also in their logical conclusions. Some of the differences and criticism concerning both approaches will be pointed out in the following.

The most obvious difference to be discovered is the base of analysis both choose. The main essence of Marchand's approach is to present several types of exocentric compound nouns and to refer to their development throughout the years, hence adopting a diachronic approach (see Benczes 18). Unlike Bloomfield, who neglects the diachronic part, Marchand seemingly tries to compensate his lack of systematic analysis by counting examples for each type. The problem is that he does not set clear boundaries in his type-distinction, proven by the obviously insufficient way he examines the types *hunchback*, *paleface*, *five-finger*, and *scatterbrain* (see Benczes 18). He tries to draw connections between the types, shown by the fact that he states that type *runabout* came from type *pickpocket* (see Marchand 39). Exactly at this point there are logical inconsistencies to be discovered. First, type *pickpocket* is here described as consisting of an agent performing the action of the "nexus" (37). Marchand tries to find the link to imperatives, which he justifies with the negative impact compounds in this category show (see 37). However, imperative does not seem to be an adequate term, as *pickpocket* for example is not an order to people to steal things from other people (see Bauer "English Exocentric Compounds" 2). However, his general explanation of type *pickpocket* seems adequate considering the example of *pickpocket*, where the agent is a person performing the action of stealing, indicated by the part *pick*. Although I have to qualify that the performance is visible as the adequate verb *to pickpocket* exists (see *OED* s.vv. *pickpocket*, n.2), problems can occur if the person confronted with the noun does not know the adequate verb. Then the performance is, as well as underlying agent, not transparent. Again, the context in which the word is used has to be taken into account.

However, this semantic aspect is pointed out by Bloomfield (see 236). Therefore, Bloomfield's approach opposes Marchand's rather unfounded explanation, reflected in the lack of explanation of type *dugout*. He, in contrast,

proposes two ways to find out if a compound is exocentric by taking into account the relation of the parts constituting the compound and how the constituents relate to the whole compound (see 233-237). Bloomfield repeatedly uses the term *bahuvrihi* as a synonym for exocentric whereas Marchand uses it when talking about type *hunchback*. Therefore, Bloomfield's use of this term raises criticism as bahuvrihis are mostly adjectives and do not occur that often among exocentric compounds to use them as a synonym for exocentric (see Bauer "English Exocentric Compounds" 1).

Hence, it can be said that Bloomfield has an entirely different starting point to classify in contrast to Marchand, who proposes basic types of exocentric compound nouns. I have to qualify that Marchand refers more to productivity than Bloomfield does, indicated by the fact that he enumerates examples for each type to justify his line of argumentation. Nevertheless, there is no mentioning of the word class of the head in comparison to the word class of the whole exocentric compound, which is replaced by the underlying idea with which Marchand is mainly concerned, underlined by words such as "pejorative tinge" (37). It may be easier to track Bloomfield's line of argumentation because it appears more funded and thought-through, whereas considering Marchand's approach, the reader is more or less left with the question of how exactly he classified the compounds on an objective, explicit base (see Benczes 18). Productivity predominates in his approach, so it is self-evident that he neglects certain aspects. In contrast, Bloomfield does not take into account that processes develop in their productivity over years and therefore ignores productivity to some extent.

Eventually, both approaches must not be seen as separate, but complementary units. Marchand's examples have exerted great influence on linguistic research. This is mainly indicated by Thomas Biermeier's list of exocentric compound nouns which consists of a lot of examples from Marchand's investigations (see Biermeier 2008) and the constant criticism linguists utter referring to his distinction (see Bauer 2004). In contrast, Bloomfield's criteria have the function to determine whether a compound is exocentric or not, so they serve as a proof-read and general idea, although the synonymous use of *bahuvrihi* is highly criticised.

## ANALYSIS OF SELECTED EXAMPLES

After having considered different influential factors and pre-understandings, I will now come to the comparison of selected examples. Before that, I would like to make some general remarks. This comparison is based on the aforementioned word list of exocentric compound nouns by Biermeier (2008), which I separated into noun-noun, adjective-noun, verb-noun, and preposition-noun categories. I also added examples by searching the corpus and considering some of Marchand's (1960) examples. That means that the lists consist of subjective picks and therefore have no right to be called representative for the whole categories. The aim is to examine whether we can find and prove the factors that were discussed as relevant, such as formal generality, formal regularity, and semantic regularity, while considering token frequency of these categories. This analysis also includes how token frequency is in general distributed among the categories *spoken* and *fiction*. I chose them as spoken and fiction can be seen as juxtaposed genres and the distribution provides information on whether exocentric compound nouns are in general more important in spoken or in fictional language. I have considered those exocentric compound nouns that are actually used as nouns on grounds of specification and limitation. Therefore, I made use of the POS-function in the corpus. If you search a word, for example *blackout*, in a corpus and you use the POS-function by selecting 'noun.ALL', the corpus will automatically restrict the search to those cases, where *blackout* appears as a noun.

Due to the fact that my analysis is grounded on COCA, I will quickly present the corpus. The Corpus of Contemporary American English, mostly founded by Mark Davies, Professor of Linguistics at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, is freely available. It covers a large range with its collection of over 520 million words of text, which are made up of 20 million words of each year from 1990 to 2015. It also contains a subdivision into spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers and academic texts (for more information see: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>).

## DIFFERENT EXAMPLES IN COMPARISON

First, I will start by presenting my findings and open the discussion of the relevant factors afterwards. On the surface level, we can say that the noun-noun combinations listed in table (2) (see page 15) can be considered the most frequent type, followed by verb-noun constructions in table (3) (see page 15), preposition-noun constructions in table (4) (see page 15), and at last adjective-noun combinations in table (1):

		Token Frequency	Spoken	Fiction
1	redneck	444	78	162
2	hunchback	269	21	95
3	busybody	118	4	70
4	greenback	97	13	6
5	loudmouth	91	11	33
6	dreadnought	59	1	19
7	braveheart	52	15	0
8	redbreast	15	0	6
9	paleface	13	1	7
10	lazybones	11	0	10
11	scatterbrain	10	0	7
12	greybeard	6	0	4
13	faintheart	1	0	0

Table 1: adjective-noun

		Token Frequency	Spoken	Fiction
1	chairman	34013	9807	970
2	paperback	2421	385	486
3	goosebumps	423	75	206
4	skinhead	289	86	90
5	heartthrob	237	66	18
6	brainstorm	193	19	50
7	bookworm	120	19	41
8	egghead	78	9	30
9	killjoy	46	6	20
10	butterfingers	8	1	3

Table 2: noun-noun

		Token Frequency	Spoken	Fiction
1	playboy	1183	372	159
2	scapegoat	755	202	84
3	scarecrow	575	30	411
4	copycat	374	83	67
5	breakwater	184	3	60
6	pickpocket	150	18	86
7	crybaby	127	18	60
8	spoilsport	24	0	12
9	cut-throat	9	0	4

Table 3: verb-noun

		Token Frequency	Spoken	Fiction
1	underworld	1209	117	359
2	underdog	1032	229	56
3	undertaker	343	30	201
4	undertone	311	19	164
5	underboss	26	11	6
6	underdark	8	0	8
7	undershaft	1	0	0
8	undercreating	1	0	0
9	underoath	1	0	0

Table 4: preposition-noun

I have to qualify that the noun-noun category is mainly influenced by the extreme high token frequency of *chairman* with a token frequency of 34013. Considering the distribution of all the individual compounds in each category, a very consistent pattern can be discovered, namely that most of the words in each category are more used in fiction than in spoken, and even when there are some exceptions, they do not have a high token frequency. This may lead to the conclusion that exocentric compound nouns are mainly produced in a creative writing process where it is the aim to achieve a certain effect, whereas spoken language has the aim to be efficient and easy. As this is just an assumption, this would have to be proved by further investigations.

Albeit this obvious finding that most words are used in fiction, there are internal differences between the categories reflected in the different token frequency. Especially the problem with headedness seems to exert influence here.

If I compare for example *brainstorm* with *loudmouth*, it can be seen that *brainstorm* is more metaphorically connotated than *loudmouth*, so the head will be very hard to identify, even with the help of context. In fact, the compounds of table (1) follow a certain pattern, namely the pattern of specifying a certain personal characteristic (see Bauer “English Exocentric Compounds” 4). There may be a similarity to Marchand’s approach to be discovered, but it has to be mentioned that I draw the line between the categories according to the word classes involved and not according to their underlying sense (see Bauer “English Exocentric Compounds” 4-7).

In contrast to the adjective-noun combinations, most of the noun-noun combinations (see table (2)) are not only highly metaphorically connotated, they also barely follow any pattern. Therefore, we can say that according to their meaning, these examples are, in contrast to the listed adjective-noun combinations, less formally general because in lacking a consistent pattern, we can hardly understand what this compound could mean. Taking the relation of formal generality and formal regularity in account, this aspect seems to prove valid in both categories. It was simpler to find adequate examples in the adjective-noun category than in the noun-noun category, so people rather acknowledge an adjective together with a noun as a new coinage than two nouns tied together. Additionally, the restricted set of examples in the exocentric noun-noun category is already noticed in further academic investigations (see Plag 146). However, this does not have to mean that this category is not productive (see Bauer “English Exocentric Compounds” 6).

This aspect is also reflected in considering the token frequency of both categories. As I have mentioned, a high token frequency does not have to result in high productivity. It is more the other way around that many examples with low token frequency reveal productive patterns. This assumption may be proved valid in the adjective-noun category. This category namely shows a lower token frequency than those of the noun-noun-category in table (2). A reason for this occurrence could be that a lot of exocentric compound nouns in this category are rather old-fashioned, and thus have a low token frequency because of the lack of use (see Bauer “English Exocentric Compounds” 2). However, if we look at the single units of the compounds in the adjective-noun category, there are many parts that are redundant in different words, such as *heart* in *faintheart* or *braveheart*, or *back* as in *hunchback* or *greenback*. This could have many reasons. As *heart* and

*back* are associated with humans and this category reveals a rather consistent pattern, people coming across those words take these parts of the compound and connect this with another characteristic to specify it. A *hunchback* can be therefore transformed into a *greenback*. Although the whole compound may be not transparent, the parts are and consequently both are remembered separately and used for coining new words (see Baayen 181). Another possible explanation of this could be that all compounds in table (1) are syntactic, so they exist in the same order as complements in a sentence. A *redneck* also exists as a *red neck*, so people are indeed syntactically familiar with this combination. Bloomfield's first line of classification can therefore be considered very useful in examining the categories (see 233). In contrast, this cannot be said for the noun-noun category as the examples are of high frequency, but lack redundant parts. They are asyntactic, as there is no possible combination like *goose bumps*. This may be the reason why these examples lack transparency. I assume that a *chairman* is remembered as one full expression, and not an expression consisting of *chair* and *man*. Considering semantic regularity, both categories do not provide any consistency. This may be because uniformity and consistency do not correspond with flexibility, which I think is the key to finding new coinages.

The next category that I will now focus on is the one consisting of verb-noun combinations, pointed out in table (3). This category is mainly characterised by the pattern of *a person or thing that does something* (see Marchand 37). A *spoilsport* is indeed someone who 'spoils' fun (see *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* s.v. *spoilsport*). Albeit this seemingly thorough pattern considering the examples in table (3), those are not as formally general as the adjective-noun compounds, but more formally general than the noun-noun compounds in table (2). Some of the examples could be considered syntactic like *spoilsport*, but most of them like *playboy* are asyntactic. This is emphasized by the fact that not all follow the more or less same pattern as in the adjective-noun category. A *copycat* is not a person who copies a cat (see *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* s.vv. *copycat*, n.1), so the meaning remains opaque from its form in this case. Therefore, I assume that these verb-noun constructions are also less semantically regular because they do not always refer to someone, who does something, especially considering a compound like *scapegoat*. Although the verb-noun examples are numerous, they do not fully provide a transparent meaning as in *cut-throat*. This also corresponds with the former assumption that type frequency does not always have to say

something about the productivity of words (see Plag 53f.). Consequently, I consider the examples in this category as less formally general due to their unpredictability. They are also less formally regular because most of the words do not resemble redundant parts, compared to the adjective-noun category. The token frequency in this category is higher than in the adjective-noun category, but the verb-noun category resembles a similar frequency to the noun-noun category. This could imply that the verb-noun category is also the one consisting of compounds that are seen as a whole and not as separate parts which could be a possible basis for another coinage. This assumption would correspond with the low formal regularity I mentioned.

The last category is the preposition-noun category in table (4). This category was probably the one where it was hardest to find any adequate examples because prepositions like *off* or *by* are mostly connected with other word classes, for example in *offshore*, or are used as an adjective when they are formed with a noun. In addition, the examples in this category can be considered asyntactic, as *underdog* does not exist as *under dog* or *dog under*. Therefore, I can say that this category seems rather restricted, also taking token frequency into account, which differs widely among the examples. However, table (4) nevertheless provides useful information on the productivity of this category. They are indeed the perfect demonstration of the fact that the meaning in exocentric compound nouns can vary, although the same word is used. All of the examples are formed with *under*, but *under* does not always mean the same when they are put together with another word. In *underworld*, *under* is commonly understood as 'hidden' or 'not visible' (see *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* s.v. *underworld*, n.2); in *underdog* it means 'inferior' (see *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* s.v. *underdog*). Leaving out the fact that these examples always include *under*, they do not have any common pattern like the other compounds. The reason for this can be that prepositions may not be considered as a good base for exocentric compound nouns, so they are not that formally regular and people are not acquainted with the underlying pattern. The relation between formal generality and formal regularity seems valid here, as this category lacks formal regularity and the presupposition for formal generality is therefore restricted, reflected by the few examples in combination with high token frequency. Semantic regularity could also not be found, due to the lack of pattern. Examining the list of preposition-noun combinations, we might notice that *undershaft*, *undereating*, and *underoath* only occur once as a noun. However, this

does not mean that these are *hapax legomena*,<sup>8</sup> as these words occur only as nouns once. In other categories, when used as adjectives for example, they occur more often. The use of exocentric compound nouns, especially in this category, seems therefore flexible. Another reason to call these set of examples unproductive in contrast to the other ones is that this category is not even mentioned in the literature I chose, whether the recent ones like Carstairs-McCarthy (2002) and Bauer (2004) or older ones like Marchand (1960) and Bloomfield (1933). This category seems rather unexplored, so it is no surprise that there are not many examples.

## CONCLUSION

Concluding from these findings, I can say that the adjective-noun category, presented with its set of examples, is the most productive, followed by the noun-noun category, the verb-noun category, and at last the preposition-noun category. This observation is also supported by other linguistic investigations (see Plag 146). I have pointed out the link between the level of pattern consistency of a category and the appearance of the characteristics formal regularity, formal generality, and semantic regularity. A reason for transparency and intransparency in the examined categories was found when taking Bloomfield's first line of classification into account. Therefore, categories consisting of exocentric compound nouns which are mostly syntactic (table (1)) are considered more productive than those that are mostly asyntactic (tables (2), (3), (4)). This may also lie in the fact that the lists consist of a subjective pick, so this result can only be related to these examples. However, semantic regularity has been proven rather restricted in this context, due to the flexibility involved in coining new words in the category of exocentric compound nouns. This link was made according to the token frequency where I found out that the categories with a respectable low token frequency are the ones considered very productive. The distribution among the genres did not provide as much information as I hoped, except the information that most of the compounds presented are more used in fictional language than in spoken language. This emphasized my assumption that most of the compounds are created in a process of

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8 *Hapax legomena* are words that just occur once in a corpus (see Carstairs-McCarthy 96); the word is of Greek origin and means "said only once" (96).

constructiveness and that consequently, the forming of exocentric compound nouns is motivated in some sense.

As I have tried to make clear in this paper, the study of productivity according to the different categories of exocentric compound nouns affords multidimensional perspectives considering their productivity and classification, especially outlined by the different pre-understandings and aspects that were discussed. It is therefore not sufficient to just look at certain characteristics and study them apart from each other. The link between formal generality and formal regularity could be partly verified because the given examples hardly represent whole categories consisting of thousands of words. My two hypotheses - there is a continuum that sets the range for productivity and not all of the exocentric compound nouns are productive on the same level - could be verified in the context of the paper. However, not all of the categories provide useful information, especially underlined by the preposition-noun category. Therefore, further studies could gain more knowledge in this category and investigate whether this category is really marked by unproductivity.

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# Motivation is Everything

## The Importance of Motivation in Reading and Teaching Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845)

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In his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, Frederick Douglass describes how he succeeded in learning how to read and write while he was still enslaved. Frederick Douglass was born as Frederick Baily in 1818 in Tuckahoe, Maryland. Forty-seven years before the northern states of America won the Civil War it was still common, especially for the states south of the Mason-Dixon Line, to keep African Americans enslaved. Back then, enslaved people were not allowed to go to school or to receive education at all. Therefore, the fact that Douglass was able to educate himself is extraordinary.

As a child of eight years, Douglass had the fortune to receive his first reading instructions by one of his owners. Albeit these lessons only took place a few times before they were ended abruptly, they were the stepping stones for his career. Inspired by these lessons and especially by the fury with which his master ended them, Frederick Douglass dedicated the following years of his enslavement to educate himself. Even though some people tried to hinder him from learning, and even though he was aware of the fact that he put himself at a high risk of punishment by educating himself, his extraordinary strength, endurance, willpower, and his intelligence helped him to finally reach his goal to become able to read and write.

In recent years, psychologist like Karl Josef Klauer and Detlev Leutner or Paul Eggen dealt with the importance of motivation for the learning and teaching process in their books *Lehren und Lernen – Einführung in die*

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was initially submitted as a term paper in the BA seminar “A Survey of American Literature” and supervised by Dr Elena Furlanetto.

*Instruktionspsychologie* (2012) and *Educational Psychology* (2013). When comparing the passages of *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass* where Douglass explains how he managed to educate himself with the arguments put forward by these psychologists one might notice that Douglass already made use of some strategies of modern instructional psychology which were introduced around 150 years after his time.

In this paper I argue that Frederick Douglass's ability to educate himself and others while being enslaved can be explained through the concept of motivation. In the first part of the paper, I am going to discuss the narrator's struggle to educate himself and point out which strategies he used and which circumstances helped him to keep a high motivation level. In the second part, I will build on the findings of the first part and introduce further motivational strategies that can be used to teach Frederick Douglass's autobiography.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION IN *NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS***

To begin with, I would like to define the term "motivation" with the help of Dale Schunk, Paul Pintrich, and Judith Meese. They argue that "[m]otivation is the process whereby [a] goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained" (qtd. in Eggen and Kauchak 4). Klauer and Leutner support this definition and transfer it to the field of education by pointing out that, when a student loses motivation, the whole learning process stops (see 49). Even though they emphasize the importance of keeping track of motivation throughout the whole learning process, they acknowledge that the introductory phase is of special significance (see 49).

This notion of the learning process can also be found at the beginning of Frederick Douglass's educational career in the sense that no learning process can start without motivation. Until he was about eight years old, the narrator of the *Narrative* lacked the information that triggered his motivation and with it his determination to educate himself. Already before he found the source of his motivation, Douglass was dissatisfied with his situation. He was troubled by the fact that he and his fellow slaves did not know when they were born, like white children did (see Douglass 15), and he reports that he can trace back his "first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery" (24) to the songs sung by his

fellow slaves to drown their sorrow while they were going to the great house farm for their monthly allowance.

Even though Douglass suffered from cold, hunger, isolation from his family, the psychological pain to be enslaved, and from seeing his fellow slaves being mistreated, Douglass describes his childhood in Talbot as relatively easy, since he was still too young to work in the field and, in addition, he enjoyed the affection, and with it the protection, of his master's son, Master Daniel (see 33). His 'stroke of luck' continued when he was selected to go to Baltimore to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld to take care of their son Thomas (see 35). First, Douglass explains that the living conditions for enslaved people were much better in the city than at the countryside: they were "better fed and clothed" and the slaveholders had "a sense of shame" (38) which allegedly prevented them from being cruel. Second, he made the experience that not all white people were dreadful. He describes his new mistress Mrs. Sophia Auld as "a woman of the kindest heart and finest feeling" who "had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery" (36). And finally, it was here in Baltimore that Douglass found the source of his motivation, namely the tenderness of his mistress. Inexperienced in handling slaves, Mrs. Auld started to teach Douglass the ABC and subsequently to spell words of three and four letters (see 36). But as soon as Mr. Hugh Auld found out what was going on he put an end to it and told his wife that it was unlawful to teach a slave. In addition, he said that an enslaved person "should know nothing but to obey his master – to do as he is told to do" and that learning would spoil the best of them: it would "forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontent and unhappy" (37).

Later on, Douglass declares this situation to be of the greatest importance as it allowed him to finally understand "the white man's power to enslave the black man" and that the "pathway from slavery to freedom" (38) was education. He highlights the importance of this situation by pointing out that he owes as much to his mistress for teaching him as to his master for giving him this invaluable lesson (see 38). From this moment of enlightenment, Frederick Douglass was not only determined to learn how to read and write, but he also reached the "conviction that slavery would not always be able to hold [him] within its foul embrace" (36).

So far, I did not only describe the events which guided Douglass to find his motivation, but I also outlined circumstances which Douglass himself identifies as

most propitious for his later career. I did so because I want to point out that motivation is an innate power that needs to be stimulated and focused on a certain goal in order to be used successfully. While discussing the prerequisites of motivation, I also would like to discuss the importance of a person's well-being for his or her motivation. Therefore, I am going to look at the humanistic theory as one theoretical view of motivation.

The humanistic view of motivation "focuses on the 'whole person' and views motivation as people's attempts to fulfil their total potential as human beings and become 'self-actualized'" (Eggen and Kauchak 334). The leading representatives of the humanistic theory are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. According to Rogers, the wish to become self-actualized is ingrained in every human being but its actualization depends on a person's environment – it can foster or hinder it. Furthermore, Rogers speaks of "unconditional positive regard [and] treating students as if they are innately worthy" (qtd. in Eggen and Kauchak 335) to receive education. Of course, it cannot be said that Douglass received "unconditional positive regard" but in contrast to other slaves, he at least received positive regard from his master Daniel and his mistress Mrs. Auld. Thanks to both of them, the environment Douglass lived in as a child in bondage was often one that fostered his wish to become self-actualized. Similarly, the concept of a hierarchy of needs popularized by Maslow implies that the so-called deficiency needs, the needs for survival, safety, belonging, and self-esteem, have to be met before self-actualization can be achieved (see 337). Here again, Douglass's comparatively positive experiences in his childhood allowed him to meet these deficiency needs and to proceed to the level of self-actualization. As his narrative develops, the reader encounters situations in which the narrator fears for his life or is not feeling safe anymore; as a consequence, his wish for self-actualization is – even if only temporary – broken.

From his moment of enlightenment, Douglass finds the determination to learn how to read. After he loses Mrs. Auld as a teacher, he has to find ways to continue his learning process himself. In the beginning he trains his reading skills by secretly reading the newspaper whenever possible, but Mrs. Auld's eagerness to please her husband makes it difficult. She becomes furious whenever she sees Douglass with a newspaper and takes it away from him immediately (see Douglass 40). Even though this makes it more difficult for Douglass to progress, his motivation is still high enough to develop a new plan to learn how to read. He befriends boys on the street

and turns them into his teachers. As the boys in the street suffer from hunger and Douglass has access to food at Mr. and Mrs. Auld's house, he starts to carry bread and his book with him every time he is sent to run errands: "This bread [he] used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give [him] that more valuable bread of knowledge" (41). This plan proves to be successful as Douglass finally learns to read.

We can imagine from the context that Douglass must have lived with the constant threat of being watched and the fear of being caught. Robert Yerkes and John Dodson show that there is a curvilinear connection between a student's anxiety level and her/his motivation. While some anxiety is actually helpful to promote learning, too much is destructive (see Klauer and Leutner 53). Douglass's willingness to continue to learn how to read, even though it is no longer possible to do so inside his master's house and his creative resolution to turn the boys in the streets into teachers, show that he makes use of his anxiety, to try harder.

At the age of twelve, Douglass endured a troublesome period. During the period of his life in which Douglass suffered the most under the idea of being a slave for life, he got hold of the book *The Columbian Orator*. This book consists of many political speeches, essays, and poems and was used in the United States to improve students' reading skills and eloquence. In this book, Douglass's attention focused on a text about a discussion between a slave and his master, and Sheridan's speech about Catholic emancipation (see Douglass 41-42). In reading these passages closely, Douglass learns "the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights" (42). These texts had two effects on Douglass: on the one hand reading them enabled him to put his thoughts into words, but on the other hand they made him understand what his Master Hugh meant by saying: "[To enable a slave to read] would make him discontent and unhappy" (37). At one point he admits that "learning how to read had been a curse rather than a blessing," because "it had given [him] a view of his wretched condition, without the remedy" (42). Even at this point, when he regretted to have learned to read and understood that his ancestors once had been free people on another continent, he could not stop fantasizing about freedom in America, even though he wished he could (see 42).

Despite this torturous state of mind, Douglass was still determined to either kill himself or do something for which he would be killed in the struggle to free himself from slavery (see 43). In his ambition to pursue his aim, he was eager to

hear everything he could about slavery. By doing so he came across the word 'abolition' occasionally (before he even knew the meaning of the term he was very attracted to it because it was always used in a way that reflected his own ideas). Once he fully understood that this word was used to describe the movement to end slavery and that more people were fighting for it, his motivation was rekindled (see 43).

Douglass's fascination for the book *The Columbian Orator*, the word 'abolition', and even his transitory discouragement can be explained with the help of the cognitive theory of motivation. This theory proposes that people always try "to make sense of their experience" and that they are "naturally motivated to learn when their experience is inconsistent with their current understanding" (see Eggen and Kauchak 334). As mentioned earlier, Douglass was discontent with his situation as a slave, but he could not yet put his thought into words, therefore he was still motivated to learn. *The Columbian Orator* "gave tongue to interesting thoughts of [his] own soul" (42) and therefore helped him to overcome this gap. But as this gap closed, a new one formed. Now that he understood the concept of slavery, his antipathy against it intensified and his willingness to free himself and fight against slavery increased. On the one hand, he realized that the gap between his determination to stand up for his beliefs and his actual ability to do so was enormous, and this realization resulted in transitory discouragement. But on the other hand, this new gap provided him with new motivation and made him highly responsive to everything that could help him come nearer to his goal. In this state of mind, he came across the word 'abolition'. It was due to the inconsistency between experience and understanding that motivated him to investigate the meaning of the word.

Now that he understood so much more about slavery thanks to his ability to read, he was sure that the ability to write was of great importance as well. Therefore, he decided to learn how to write before trying to improve his conditions by breaking free. The creativity and intelligence he showed while learning how to write even exceeded his efforts of his reading learning process. As he was eager to learn how to write before he would make a first attempt to escape from his master, he started to copy the letters "L", "S", "F", and "A", which he frequently saw being used as abbreviations in the shipyard. After he managed to write and name them he started to challenge boys on the street to beat him at writing letters. In this way he practiced writing the letters he already knew and learned new ones. Afterwards, he

started to “copy [...] the Italics in *Webster’s Spelling Book*” and to “write [...] in the spaces left in Master Thomas’s copy-book” until he finally learned to write (see Douglass 44-45).

By challenging the children on the streets to extend his writing competence Douglass unconsciously made use of the ‘need for competence’ theory, which is a part of the ‘need for self-determination’ approach (see Eggen and Kauchak 336). This theory “suggest[s] that people acquire proficiency and skill ‘because it satisfies an intrinsic need to deal with the environment’” (qtd. White in Eggen and Kauchak 338). Eggen and Kauchak similarly understand this as the desire to be (or at least to appear) smart and successful (see 338). In addition, they point out that it is important for students to realize that their level of competence is increasing. Teachers like to use praises, communicating high expectations, and challenging activities to make their students aware of their progress (see 338). One possibility to achieve the same goal is to do exactly what Douglass did – to convert the children in the streets, who are used to be the students, into his teachers. When students are able to teach others, it is the greatest proof that they fully understood what they have learned. Furthermore, the idea of challenging the children in the streets can also be seen as a constructive conflict. Constructive conflicts are goal-orientated debates between students about a topic. These disputations help to focus the learner’s concentration on the topic, promote the power of endurance, the ability to look for information, and make sure that the information is deeply ingrained (see Klauer and Leutner 50).

After this, Douglass reports very little about his eagerness to learn as he is absorbed by concerns about his place of living and well-being. The next time he refers to his intellect, he is staying with Mr. Covey. After a few months, Mr. Covey succeeds in taking away all of Douglass’s vitality and motivation: “I was broken in body, soul and spirit. [...] [M]y intellect languished, the disposition to read departed” (Douglass 58). After spending about half a year with Mr. Covey, Douglass is at his lowest, but his anger and hate toward the inhumane and brutal overseer make him regain his strengths. When Douglass is about to receive another whipping, he decides to fight against his current master. This situation is of importance as it provides a source of new motivation to Douglass and re-kindles his determination to escape to freedom sooner or later again (see 65).

As I mentioned earlier, a person’s need for self-actualization depends on the fulfilment of one’s deficiency needs. In the encounter with Covey, Douglass’s

deficiency needs are far from being met, as even the basic need for survival is in question. These circumstances explain Douglass's mental breakdown. Even though his spirit rises after his fight with Mr. Covey and his conditions also improve as he is not whipped anymore, his circumstances are still extremely severe, and his liberty is even more limited than before. As a result, he continued to lack the power and the chance to pursue his goal to become educated – he lacked motivation.

After a full year, Douglass left Covey to begin working for Mr. Freeland. Once again, he has the “fortune” to live with a more lenient slaveholder. Under these new conditions, Douglass' motivation, his interest in education and his belief that education is the key to freedom arose again. At Mr. Freeland's he started to teach other slaves for the first time to help them to overcome their wretched conditions. He lived together with two fellow slaves: Henry and John Harris. Both “were quite intelligent, and in a very little while after I went there, I succeeded in creating in them a strong desire to learn how to read” (70). As this desire spread to other slaves as well, Douglass devoted his Sundays to teach his fellow slaves how to read (see 70).

He describes “the work of instructing my dear fellow-slaves was the sweetest engagement with which I was ever blessed” (71) and that “it was the delight of my soul to be doing something that looked like bettering the condition of my race” (72). In this situation, Douglass also described the motivation of his fellow-slaves: “They came because they wished to learn. Their minds had been starved by their cruel masters. They had been shut up in mental darkness” (71).

Douglass is now at a point where he possessed full intellectual freedom and therefore was able to understand that white Americans would have the power to oppress African Americans as long as the majority of the slaves was illiterate and did not have the means to challenge their enslavement. By teaching his fellow slaves, Douglass wanted to change exactly that and by doing so he followed the core assumption of sociocultural assumptions about learning; students are more motivated to participate in a learning process where students and teachers work together to achieve a shared goal (see Eggen and Kauchak 334). The goal of freedom Douglass and his students pursued, the fact that the lessons had to be kept secret, and that the slaves knew the high risk they exposed themselves to, strengthened their bonds and their motivation to collaborate. Furthermore, the last-mentioned paragraphs in *Narrative* show that Douglass was teaching passionately - also an important virtue to create motivation in students (see 353).

Although Douglass was aware of the relatively lenient conditions he had at Mr. Freeland's, he decided that 1834 would be the year in which he would gain physical freedom (see Douglass 72). His writing skills became crucial to devise an escape plan for himself and some of his friends. He wrote protections<sup>2</sup> for all of them, allowing them to go to Baltimore to spend their Easter holiday there (see 75). Their attempt failed, and they ended up in jail. While his fellow slaves were taken back to Mr. Freeland, Douglass was put in jail for a week until Captain Auld sent him back to Baltimore to live with his old master, Mr. Hugh (see 79). Here he was trained to become a caulker. When he finally managed to survive another inhumane situation in which he was heavily beaten by white ship-carpenters, he realized what has been explained with the hierarchy of needs before: "whenever my condition was improved, instead of its increasing my contentment, it only increased my desire to be free, and set me to thinking of plans to gain my freedom" (83). In this state of mind Douglass planned a new break out and finally succeeded. He settled in New Bedford and became a subscriber of *The Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper that denounced slaveholding. By reading this paper, Douglass develops "a pretty good idea of the principles, measures and spirit of the anti-slavery reform" (96), which become the basis for his participation in the anti-slavery movement.

The extraordinary example of Frederick Douglass shows us vividly what many teacher guides try to convey: motivation is of the highest importance for the learning process of students. So far, however, I have not mentioned the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and its importance to understand Douglass' learning experience. While people who are extrinsically motivated pursue a goal to receive a reward when accomplishing it, people who are intrinsically motivated pursue a goal for its own sake. For them the presented task is interesting, fascinating, and challenging enough in itself; they do not require any further reward (see Klauer and Leutner 52). While motivating students is the general goal, teaching them to be intrinsically motivated is even better "because of its focus on learning and understanding" (Eggen and Kauchak 331). Not surprisingly, Douglass appeared intrinsically motivated throughout his learning process.

In this paper, I have addressed several different approaches to handle the topic of motivation. I mentioned cognitive and humanistic views of motivation to

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2 Protections were letters normally written by a slave's master that allowed his slave to travel from one point to another. This kind of document was used as slaves were not allowed to move freely in general.

understand Douglass's motivation in detail. Furthermore, I paid attention to the influences of needs on motivation by discussing Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the need of self-determination. In addition, I explained the influences of anxiety on motivation, the sociocultural view of motivation and the importance of passion for Frederick Douglass's learning process and his attempts to educate others. All these approaches help to highlight that without fulfilling the prerequisites of motivation, without his innate motivation, and without his use of motivational strategies, Douglass would not have been able to pursue his career the way he did.

In the second part, I examine how the previous findings and other motivational approaches can help teachers to motivate their students while teaching them the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.

## **HOW TO TEACH FREDERICK DOUGLASS WITH A FOCUS ON MOTIVATION**

In the following section I draw from the book *Approaches to Teaching Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, edited by James C. Hall (1999). The various authors of this teaching guide focus on many different topics that can be addressed when working with the narrative. Besides engaging in the theme of education as I did, one can also focus on US history, racism, human rights, the legal system that allowed slavery, socialisation, personhood, the influence of religion, gender, aspects of labour, the literary canon, the authenticity of the slave narrative, its structure and stylistic devices, the purpose of slave narratives, and many other topics. As we can see, the book aspires to capture the different layers of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. A discussion about how to raise students' motivation in dealing with these topics, however, is only addressed between the lines.

To show what I mean, I am going to discuss a contribution by David L. Dudley, titled "Teaching Douglass's Narrative in the World Literature Survey," which focuses on broad humanistic themes in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. His aim is to make his students see that the humanistic topics discussed by Douglass are still important for their lives and the societies they live in; he wants to shape his students' thoughts by fostering "a humane sensibility [...] that will help them know and accept themselves and become more understanding and accepting of others" (Dudley 134). Already in this example, Dudley refers to an important

aspect of how to increase student motivation without naming it as such. It is the concept of personalization – to personalize the content by linking topics to the student’s life (see Eggen and Kauchak 353). He does so by referring to W. E. B. Du Bois, an African American professor at Atlanta University from 1897 to 1910 who was denied the use of the Atlanta public library. Since Atlanta is the capital of Georgia, the state Dudley and his students live in, this example fosters a personal link between the topic and students. Other authors published in this collection make use of this technique as well. Gregg Crane does so by discussing the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights with his class, before negotiating their content in contrast to the concept of slavery (see Crane 72). Elizabeth Schultz says that any connection to the students’ contemporary context can help to strengthen their motivation (see 102). The passion and enthusiasm for teaching many of the contributions to the volume display a mastery goal orientation. Mastery goals “focus on accomplishing tasks, improving, and increasing understanding” (Eggen and Kauchak 349) which “lead [...] to sustained effort, high self-efficacy, willingness to accept challenges, and high achievement” (351) on the student’s side. Enthusiasm is of importance because “teacher modelling is one of the most powerful influences on students’ interest” and “students’ motivation to learn can significantly increase if [the teacher] model[s] [his/her] own interest in the topic [s/he is] teaching” (367). A final quote from Dudley underlines such enthusiasm: “Frederick Douglass [...] is my hero. I invite students to make him their hero too” (137).

As already outlined at the beginning of the first part of this paper, to raise the student’s attention and motivation is of special importance in the introductory phase of a new topic. According to Eggen and Kauchak, a teacher can confront students with unique problems, paradoxical questions, or eye-catching examples. Furthermore, they encourage designing an introductory phase that builds a bridge between the student’s prior knowledge and the new content (see Eggen and Kauchak 377). When teaching Douglass, Martin Klammer, for example, makes use of his students’ prior knowledge about “the African roots of African American culture [...], American slavery, and the slave narrative” (124) they gained by dealing with *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789). As an eye-catching example, Bruce Mills suggests using images of slave ships, advertisements for slave auctions, or the punishment of slaves as an introduction to teaching the narrative (see 144). Showing photographs can help to open the classroom conversation: while some students might want to talk about what they see on the

pictures, others might already be able to link it to the narrative of Frederick Douglass.

Another technique to promote students' interest and therefore their motivation is to increase their involvement. One way to do so is to use open-ended questions, "questions for which a variety of answers is acceptable," which makes them "accessible and nonthreatening" for students, they "are safe and ensure success" (Eggen and Kauchak 380). This kind of question may help to involve even the shyest student in the class, while many students can participate. In his contribution "Teaching Douglass's Narrative in an Introductory Humanities Course," Martin Klammer writes that he makes use of open-ended questions when teaching Douglass. One of his questions is: "If you were a white Northern reader in 1845, what part or aspect of Frederick Douglass's Narrative would most move you to change your mind and perhaps even work for the abolition of slavery?" (see 126-127).

Nevertheless, after having constructed an environment the students feel safe and are motivated to participate in, the level of difficulty has to rise as it is essential to keep their motivation high. Communicating high expectations is one way to keep them focused. Bruce Mills does so by asking his students complex questions that require them to work closely with the text and, in addition, to formulate their own opinion (see 145). Another strategy that can be derived from his contribution is autonomy. As he offers many questions, probably too many to be dealt with by all students, Mills may give them the choice to answer one particular question and afterwards discuss answers to all questions in class. By doing so he would save time and, more importantly, meet his students' need for autonomy. According to Bruce and Kauchak "giving [...] students choices is the simplest way [to] increase their perception of autonomy" and with it their innate motivation (see 338). These are only some of the possibilities to motivate the students to learn about Frederick Douglass and his *Narrative*.

## CONCLUSION

The former African American slave Frederick Douglass was able to teach himself reading and writing solely thanks to his motivation in a society in which it was unlawful for slaves to be educated. He was able to do so because he grew up in a

surrounding that, albeit in unorthodox ways, supported his wish to become educated – this support was created by positive regard and the fulfilment of his deficiency needs. By meeting these prerequisites Douglass had the chance to develop the strong innate motivation to become self-actualized. This motivation was the pathway for his later career as an abolitionist. To show that the concept of motivation is not only of help for extraordinary people such as Douglass, I referred to sections of the teaching guide *Approaches to Teaching Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Here, several authors also referred to motivation in order to support students in their learning process. Eventually, reading and teaching Douglass shows us that motivation is of importance to reach educational goals. In this regard he continues to be a great inspiration for our time.

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# The Reception of the American Musical in Germany

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MALTE HANSEN<sup>1</sup>

The musical as we know it today is widely considered a truly American art form. Despite musicals having taken off across the globe “there has always been [...] the sense that the ‘real thing’ takes place with [...] stars, flawless stage machinery, elaborate sets and costumes, professional musicians and dancers – and, of course, on Broadway” (Knapp 16). The term *Broadway* has thus become a synecdoche for U.S. American musicals, which emerged from New York City’s theater scene in the early twentieth century. Since then, the musical has become an essential part of the United States’ theater landscape and thus can be considered part of America’s national identity.<sup>2</sup>

But the growing international popularity of musicals raises the question of what makes the musical appeal to American and foreign audiences alike. Especially in Europe, the American musical has gained remarkable popularity despite the former dominance of operettas and other Europe-based forms of popular musical theater. Today, we can observe two major European musical hubs, with the more prominent one being London’s West. The other one might come as a surprise to some: Hamburg is often said to be “the musical theatre capital of Europe [outside of the UK]” (Martland, “Big in Europe” 16) and Germany being the biggest musical theater market in Europe (see 16). The triumph of the musical in Germany began with the first German-language replica productions of so-called ‘mega musicals’ in Hamburg in the 1980s, whose success led to a musical boom in the 1980s and 1990s (see “Alles für die Cats?”). Today, replica- and non-replica productions of American

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1 This essay is a shortened version of Malte Hansen’s BA thesis which was supervised by Dr Melissa Knox-Raab.

2 In his book *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (2006), Raymond Knapp portrays the American musical as a “distinctively American and widely influential art form” (3) which “represent[s] a large slice of our national life and heritage” (10). Thus, Knapp does not only see the musical as an American genre because of its geographical origin, but because, according to him, national identity and the general zeitgeist are reflected and negotiated within the cultural arena, which is the American musical (see 10).

musicals make up the biggest part of all musical productions in Germany, while only few German musicals are being shown (see Kräft). Apart from the question of what makes the American musical appeal to Americans and Europeans alike, this popularity also raises the question if or in what ways the American musical is received differently outside of the U.S.

While the bulk of German critics and scholars say that the American musical is generally weak in content and relies on stage magic, I believe that these opinions mainly exist because both groups traditionally have bearish attitudes towards U.S. cultural influences, hold Eurocentric biases regarding cultural identity, and, most strikingly, have only limited musical exposure which accumulate to predefined notions about the genre.

## WHAT MAKES A MUSICAL (NOT) AMERICAN?

Considering that the musical emerged in the United States and that the musical theater scene is still most vivid on and around Broadway, one might wonder if not every musical is essentially an American musical. However, scholars are sometimes discussing musicals in general and are sometimes referring to the American musical, which suggests that while the genre has been established internationally, some musicals still appear to be more American than others. Raymond Knapp argues that musicals have always been “projecting a mainstream sense of ‘America’ – of what America was, what it was not, and what it might become” (8). Hence, he seems to define a musical as American if it reflects and discusses notions of America and key themes of American culture.<sup>3</sup> However, his work mostly aims at examining the Americanness of musicals without ever defining the musical as a genre, which is not – and arguably cannot be – exclusively American. I would like to argue that while a reflection of American themes and issues is central to American musicals, a show is mostly definable as American due to its perspective. By that I mean that a musical does not necessarily need to be concerned with notions of America, but it

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3 In *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, Knapp discusses how musicals are “defining America” (101) by taking a look at the question of who ‘owns’ America (see 103), at “American mythologies” (119), and at “counter mythologies” (153) as well as by examining how musicals are “managing America’s others” (179) by taking a look at issues like “race and ethnicity” (181), “the Second World War” (228) and “Exoticism” (249).

must be targeted at American audiences, i.e., it must engage with their perspective to be definable as an American musical. The following examples of *Ich War Noch Niemals in New York* as a German musical which is partly concerned with notions of America, and *Hamilton*, which I consider to be American in its perspective, themes, and artistic influences, shall further support this claim.

The musical *Ich war noch niemals in New York* (2007) (“I have never been to New York”) premiered in Hamburg, Germany, and is a jukebox musical revisiting the songs of German singer-songwriter Udo Jürgens. The show was developed by a creative team of Europeans mostly on behalf of production company Stage Entertainment Germany. All of this suggests that the musical is influenced by European artistic notions and that it was conceived specifically for the German-speaking market, which is, however, still no guarantee for a non-American perspective. But the fact that the show is indeed narrated from a German (or European) point of view is apparent from its title, which implies that the show is partly concerned with notions of America (“New York”) but discusses them from an outsider’s perspective (“I have never been to”). A show like *Ich war noch Niemals in New York* may still be transferred to America at some point but it will surely be received differently as

American audiences will be acutely aware of anything that challenges their notions of what or who America is [...]. If Americans see representatives of other lands and cultures on the musical stage, they will see them in relation to some sense of who *they* are as Americans. (Knapp 103)

One might want to add that if Americans see representatives of their country and culture on the musical stage, they will see them in relation to their perception of the United States.

A musical that does not challenge Americans’ notions of their culture from the outside while heavily drawing on American culture is *Hamilton – An American Musical* (2015) by Lin-Manuel Miranda. This musical tells the story of founding father Alexander Hamilton through rap and hip-hop music. Most of the roles are cast with actors of color while only the role of King George III is consistently cast with white actors, making him the lovable villain against which a diverse America

must unite.<sup>4</sup> *Hamilton*, thus, aims at creating an inclusive American identity by telling an inherently American story with a multi-ethnic cast through contemporary urban music and dance. The show's subtitle could accordingly not only hint at the heavy use of American historical and cultural references, and the influence of contemporary American artistic styles in music and dance, but also at the show's narrative perspective, i.e., its understanding of America as a diverse nation that is united by its historic and cultural legacy.

In conclusion, any musical originally conceived for the American market is an American musical because it assumes an American audiences' perspective. However, audiences' concepts of America and American culture are understandably diverse. That is why American musicals must be palatable to mainstream America – especially as they depend on commercial success. *Hamilton* cleverly ensures its ability to cater to different American tastes by making diversity one of its key themes.

## GERMANY'S THEATER LANDSCAPE AND THE AMERICAN MUSICAL

Today, musicals are an integral part of Germany's theater landscape. But that has not always been that way. While the first production of a musical in Germany already took place in 1955 (see Siedhoff 58), it is widely argued that the musical continued to live in the shadows until the boom of the mega musical in the late 1980s popularized the genre immensely (see "Alles für die Cats?"). But even though the musical has become a popular art form in Germany, Germans seem to have completely different ideas and expectations of the genre than Americans do, which supposedly led to the failure of many Broadway shows in Germany, as Nils Grosch explains in an episode of the radio's show *Musikszene* discussing Germany's musical theater landscape after the big boom (see "Alles für die Cats?"). Grosch claims that German audiences usually expected "more entertainment, [and] less demanding literature" ("Alles für die Cats?", my translations) than audiences on Broadway. The many factors that lead to this discrepancy and its consequences shall be examined in the following.

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4 The depiction of King George III in *Hamilton* also continues the long-established "tradition of treating England comically, albeit with great affection, in American musicals" (Knapp 2012, 45).

Had it not been for the Third Reich and its suppression of so-called “degenerate art,” musicals might have evolved about the same in Germany as they did in the United States (see Siedhoff 55). Regarding this tragedy, Nils Grosch remarks that before World War II, a couple of Berlin theaters like the *Großes Schauspielhaus* and the *Admiralspalast* were putting on Broadway-sized shows already (see “Alles für die Cats?”), which would qualify as musicals according to today’s standards. Some of these theaters survived the war or were refurbished sufficiently, but the former long-running shows were soon replaced by regularly changing productions of the publicly subsidized *Mehrsparten-Theater* (multi-genre theaters) that moved into those buildings. Due to this development, there has been a lack of adequate theaters in which extravagant, long-running musicals could have been performed (see “Alles für die Cats?”).

It was not until 1955, when the first production of an American musical came to Germany: *Kiss Me Kate* premiered in a German-language version and with a new choreography and production design in one of Frankfurt’s public theaters (see Siedhoff 58). Another milestone in the history of the American musical in Germany was the 1961 production of *My Fair Lady*, which was the first German-language reproduction of an original American musical (see 58).

The 1986 production of *Cats* in Hamburg then marks the beginning of a new era in the history of musicals in Germany. This production was a German-language replica of the original West End production and unexpectedly became the longest-running musical in the history of German musical theater up to that point (see “Alles für die Cats?”). *Cats* played in the publicly subsidized *Operettenhaus* but was produced by Friedrich Kurz, who – supported by private investors – produced *Cats* in Hamburg (see “Cats’-Premiere”). The show exceeded all expectations with a fifteen-year run, by the end of which it had long become one of Hamburg’s top tourist attractions (see “Cats’-Premiere”). Meanwhile, *Stella* and other production companies kept importing musicals from the West End and from Broadway. But because most of the available theaters at that time were still administered by public offices and/or did not have the technical infrastructure to mount a Broadway-sized production, new high-end musical theater buildings were constructed across the country, while Hamburg remained Germany’s undisputed musical capitol (see ‘Cats’-Premiere”).

In its December issue of 2017, the German journal *Musicals* listed over 250 musical productions in Germany – most of them being German-language version of

American musicals – shown in public theaters. However, the number of privately funded productions and theaters appears to have risen compared to earlier decades. But regardless of who produces musicals in Germany, it seems fair to say that the American musical has become an integral part of Germany's theater landscape.

Yet, the audience reception of the American musical in Germany is still rather unfavorable. This is partly because many of the above mentioned 250 productions are local amateur productions and because much of the more demanding musicals are only shown at publicly subsidized theaters where they also do not reach mainstream audiences as Grosch notes:

In Germany, we have two completely separated theater scenes: the private and the public scene. This shows especially drastically with musicals; we have a musical culture that is happening in theaters showing musicals only – and then we have the musical [...] as a regular feature of “normal” municipal multi-genre theaters. That is why there is a huge gap [...] between those two musical cultures that we have in Germany. (“Alles für die Cats?”, my translation)

Since musical productions in public theaters usually do not use the original costumes, choreography, set design, etc., audience tend to experience a German interpretation of an American piece of musical theater rather than the original American production. This means that the public only has access to a minimum of original productions, namely the extravagant privately funded productions of blockbuster musicals, which leads to a vicious circle: As most Germans only have experienced little exposure to demanding musical theater, they have a narrow understanding of the genre and according expectations. This tempts German producers to only finance and develop musicals that meet these expectations, which in turn reinforce the limited view that German audiences have of the genre.

An example of a production that continues to be immensely successful in America but that flopped in Germany is Jonathan Larson's rock musical *Rent*, which premiered off-Broadway in 1996. *Rent* is based on Giacomo Puccini's opera *La Bohème* and is set in New York City's East Village during the 1990s, where a group of artists struggles with poverty and personal losses during the AIDS crisis. The musical turned out to be a box office hit and won four *Tony Awards*, six *Drama Desk Awards* and the *Pulitzer Prize* for best drama. Only three years after its American premiere, *Rent* transferred to Düsseldorf as a German-language replica of the original production. But the show flopped, which soon forced the production

company to go into insolvency because they could not redeem the millions invested in the production (see “Alles für die Cats?”). Theater studies scholar Wolfgang Jansen presumes that German audiences could not connect with the characters’ struggles and the issues presented and even remembers an elderly couple saying “Well, I did not really find this great, nothing moved” (see “Alles für die Cats?”). His assessment supports Grosch’s claim that German audiences expect plain entertainment and not demanding content from a musical (see “Alles für die Cats?”). Therefore, according to Jansen, one of the reasons for the failure of *Rent* in Germany was that German audiences received the show distinctly different than American audiences because they could not relate to the plot, characters, and issues as much. Their expectations of the genre lead to disappointment and to disapproval of one of the most successful American musicals of all time.

## THE MUSICAL IN OTHER MEDIA

As the musical is bound to the stage, it is rather difficult and expensive to make it available to many people at the same time. However, there are and have been many ways in which American musical theater content is distributed and popularized apart from the theater.

For many decades, show tunes have often become popular among more people than those who have seen the original show; such songs include “I Could Have Danced All Night” from *My Fair Lady* (1956) or “Memory” from *Cats* (1980). Even as early as during the “era known as Tin Pan Alley [ca. 1900 – 1930], popular song in the United States was dominated by New York City and by the musical stage” (Knapp 70). This trend has been revived in recent decades as ‘popified’ versions of show tunes have become popular again, e.g. in “Hard Knock Live” by Jay Z (1998) using samples from the musical *Annie* (1977), *The Hamilton Mix Tape* (2016) featuring covers of songs from the musical by renowned pop and hip-hop artists, or Sara Bareilles’ concept album *What’s Inside: Songs from Waitress* (2015) which laid the foundation for her musical *Waitress* (2015). In countries such as Germany in which often only the most popular songs acquire broader circulation and fame, audiences tend to have narrower ideas about the complexity and variety of music in the American musical

Besides music, movies helped popularize American musical theater around the world. Knapp argues that “since musicals have never before been shy about trying to achieve great effects from mechanical spectacle [...] they form a natural partnership with the film industry” (16), which is a valid point but also nourishes the perception of the American musical as gimmicky, extravagant spectacles while neglecting the cutting-edge musical theater that has often moved into the mainstream of America’s musical theater landscape. But regardless, movies have made it easier for distributors to promote American musicals in other countries. Germany has been a late bloomer in that sense as most American movies from earlier decades, including many movie musicals, were not released until after World War II,

when [...] the German-speaking film market opened up again for foreign film companies [...]. [Until then], the Hollywood studios had stockpiled literally hundreds of films they had not distributed in the territories of the former enemy during the war years, hoping that they would now bring additional profit. (Jubin, “Hollywood Musicals in Germany and Austria” 237)

As a result to make them more profitable, American movies were artistically altered in several ways. These practices included extensive cutting of scenes and adding of unambitious subtitles that “drastically change the meaning of certain film musicals and affected the reception by both the general public and film experts” (235).

Dubbing and subtitling American movies appears sensible when attempting to make them more accessible to German audiences. But in the case of movie musicals, translators see themselves faced with additional difficulties that can quickly lead to a skewed reception of American movie musicals in Germany. However, dubbing is so popular in Germany that “film musicals, especially family movies that are expected to find favour with the wider public, even have their songs dubbed into German” (236), regardless of any artistic discrepancy. Olaf Jubin finds himself puzzled by how

ignorant [Germans are of] what has been done to American film musicals, and [how they] do not realize that the German-language version is often nothing but a pale copy of the original. (249)

What could relativize this radical statement is the argument that German-language adaptations of the original allow a broader audience to connect with American movie

musicals on an emotional level, as dubbing and other adaptations for the German market have the ability to increase accessibility of American works.

As a compromise between accessibility and artistic cohesiveness, subtitling seems to be the better option here. During the 1970s, prose subtitles – as opposed to rhymed subtitles – became increasingly popular in Germany (see 241) as efforts were made to provide audiences with subtitles that do justice to the original lyrics. There seems to be a general problem with subtitles, however, which Jubin describes as “a tendency to jump to conclusions and to reduce artistic ambiguity to unequivocality” (244). A new approach was finally taken by the German public broadcasting station ZDF with its 1973 dubbed version of *West Side Story*, in which the original songs were kept and only subtitled (see 241).

Besides dubbing and subtitling, the practice of cutting scenes from American movies hindered German audiences from experiencing the original work (see 239). The cuts were motivated by the questionable efforts to tailor movies to German tastes in order to squeeze as much profit out of the market as possible. Distributors furthermore preferred musical numbers that were not performed on a stage in efforts to make movie musicals more palatable to German audiences. They also wanted to enlarge younger stars’ parts to make audiences want to see them in their future movies as well (see 239, 240, 245).

Finally, a new “understanding of movies as an art form that should be treated as such” was brought about by the new “socio-political climate” (241) of the 1970s. But while many popular movies were thus restored to their original form, this was not the case with most movie musicals “as the genre did not have much of a reputation in Germany” (241). This was, however, partly due to the sloppy treatment they had experienced in the past which, according to Jubin, ultimately lead to the notion that movie musicals were a “dumb, decidedly low-brow form of pastime for undemanding American audiences, foisted upon Germans” (241). It seems like the damaged reputation of American musicals could not be redeemed among German audiences.

## **MADE IN AMERICA, DESIGNED FOR THE WORLD?**

In his article “Trafficking in Transnational Brands: The New ‘Broadway-Style’ Musical” (2014), David Savran explains that “[s]hows such as *The Lion King* and

*Wicked* may have premiered in New York, but their continuing multibillion-dollar success in cities on six continents suggests that the traffic in the most popular form of theatre in the world can no longer be linked to one metropolis or one national tradition” (318). Interestingly, *The Lion King* was developed based on the movie of the same name produced by Disney. Therefore, one might assume that the success of the musical version mostly lies in the popularity of the movie, which already featured many of the songs of the stage version. Then again, *Wicked* is based on a novel which is by far not as popular as the movie version of *The Lion King*, even more so outside of the United States. Hence, turning popular movie musicals into stage versions cannot be the only secret to international success. However, the fact that Disney keeps producing stage versions of its most popular movie musicals suggests that there is something about these movies and musicals that appeals to an international audience that may also be found in *Wicked*. In the following, international productions of the American musical will be discussed based on an examination of Disney movie musicals and their stage versions with a special focus on their reception in Germany.

It was as early as 1937 that Disney released their first feature-length movie musical, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. This hugely successful movie was followed by many more Disney movie musicals of which a majority also enjoyed great success outside of America. It is remarkable that already one year after its world premiere, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* premiered in Germany in a completely dubbed version. The company’s awareness of the importance of foreign markets for their musicals was later underlined when Disney decided to enter unknown territory by developing and premiering their original production of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) in Berlin, Germany (see Müller). Today, all of Disney’s shows in Germany are translated replicas of films. All of them are produced by the German branch of the international production company Stage Entertainment, whose repertoire of twelve shows included five Disney musicals in January 2018. The company’s success proves that replicas of Disney musicals resonate well with German audiences (see Martland “Stage Entertainment”). But why is that so?

When Walt Disney was still supervising his studio himself, “thirteen or fourteen of the nineteen animated features [...] ha[d] their origins in Europe” (Allan 275), more precisely in European fairytales and folklore with many of the visuals also being created by European artists (275). These European influences surely

contributed to some extent to the positive reception that Disney movies have received in Europe. But this does not explain why stage musicals like *Tarzan*, *Aladdin*, or *The Lion King*, which do not draw on European folklore, would be successful in Germany.<sup>5</sup> Frankly, it neither explains why they would be successful in the United States, either. Knapp suggests that apart from telling stories about America and Americans, “the American [m]usical has from the beginning traded in exoticism” by portraying “exotic difference commingled with the familiar” (249). He adds that there was a “European- and American-based tendency to define themselves as ‘the West’ in relation to an ‘Other’ – most often Eastern, [...] with a few distinctions concerning which particular ‘Other’ is involved” (249). Exoticism could in fact explain the international success of the above-mentioned Disney movies and stage musicals. However, exoticism is not exclusive to Disney musicals but rather a common trope in musicals that are concerned with the portrayal of the East in relation to the United States, like in *The King and I* (1951) or *Miss Saigon* (1989).

Based on the presumption that American musicals are targeted at an American audience, Disney shows would probably be best described as Western rather than American, as Disney always targets an international, westernized market.<sup>6</sup> However, a certain national identity does not hinder musicals from having international success either. Or as Savran puts it: even if “a national [...] identity remains embedded [in a musical] the traffic in the most popular form of theatre in the world can no longer be linked to one metropolis or one national tradition” (318).

Besides exoticism, another factor that appears to be crucial for the international success of American musicals is that

[w]hatever larger problems may be posed in a particular show, their working out will frequently involve an interpersonal conflict among or between the lead characters, so that the success or failure of their personal relationships may be seen as an emblem for larger possibilities, as a marker for the resolution or continuation of conflicts between larger antagonistic forces. (Knapp 9)

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5 Although none of the works explicitly mentions European folklore, all of the three have complex stories grounded in European imperialism.

6 It is worth noting that Disney musicals explicitly set in American history or culture, like *Newsies* (2011) and *High School Musical on Stage!* (2007), have only been released in the United States so far

Hence, even if an audience cannot fully grasp or relate to the cultural context of a musical, they can at least relate to the personal relationships, which can make an unfamiliar context more accessible. This explains why, e.g., *Legally Blonde* (2007) can be successful in the German-language market even though it is set in America, heavily references American college and popular culture, and does not rely much on exoticism. The general cultural themes of love, relationships, marriage, etc. are relatable experience for non-American Western audiences as well.

In conclusion, it might be fair to assume that some musicals are conceived for the international market from the very beginning. One of the aspects facilitating a musical's international success is emotionalizing the plot. Another aspect is embracing a Western identity rather than a national identity, e.g. by using exotic themes. All of this means that musicals developed in the United States and/or for the American market can be successful in Germany if they allow audiences to connect with the characters emotionally and if no specific American cultural knowledge is needed to be able to follow the plot.

## **LOST IN TRANSLATION?**

When an American musical is supposed to be staged in Germany, the producers will have to decide whether they want to go for a translated version or if they want to keep the original lyrics and/or dialogues. By sticking with the original language, one would preserve the original poetry as well as the original score. By going for a German translation, producers would grant the audience a better opportunity to understand all the words and follow the plot. It stands to reason that a translated version of any musical cannot maintain all the original linguistic peculiarities, which, however, does not mean that the translation would always be of less poetic worth, nor that it would be less appreciated by audiences. But with the songs, translators are facing the additional challenge to make their rendition match the original number of notes, stresses, and rhyme schemes.

Among theater professionals, the opinions on translating foreign musicals into German diverge. In a survey conducted by the *Kurt Weill Foundation for Music* in 2012 among Germans working in the theater, the verdict was mostly to translate dialogue into German and to keep the songs in English (see Chisholm and Stein 10). One of the interviewees explains, that this way the audience is able to follow the

plot without having to deprive the lyrics of their “wit and cleverness” (10). Others insist on monolingual productions, preferably in German, for the sake of “the credibility of the characters and [the] plot” and to prevent that the audience “checks out” (10) during the songs and does not perceive them as devices of storytelling but rather as show acts only. Accordingly, monolingual productions dominate the German market as they are more likely to attract bigger crowds. Even though Germany’s public theaters do not strive to make profit like the private production companies do, their productions are usually completely in German, too. This allows their target audiences to fully understand the show, which public theaters seem to consider crucial for the enjoyment of musicals, opposed to, e.g., Italian operas, which are usually only subtitled.

On the one hand, a translated version allows for a more immersive theatrical experience as it becomes easier for the audience to be emotionally invested. On the other hand, some argue that one should not alter the original work to avoid artistic compromises. Both are valid points, and ultimately producers and creative directors will have to decide for one of them. Part of what makes this decision so difficult is the fact that the musical is not ‘extinct’ yet but still part of popular culture. While it might seem right to produce opera classics in their original language for a small circle of interested, competent experts, it would appear unusual to go for an English production of a family-friendly Disney musical in Germany. The intentions might be similar to what can be observed in the opera genre: Operas are usually shown in their original language attracting mostly expert audiences. Only operettas are regularly produced bilingually or completely translated, as their charm often lies more in the word play than in musical and dramatic aspirations. Since the dialogues are usually spoken, it makes them also easier to translate.

For the German private musical sector, it makes sense to focus on American musicals that do not rely on poetics but rather on spectacular music, scenic design, etc. to provide American musical theater to German audiences without running the risk of mutilating the essence of the original work. This, however, fuels the German notion of the American musical as not being demanding or complex (see “Alles für die Cats?”).

## THE MUSICAL'S RECEPTION BY GERMAN CRITICS AND IN GERMAN ACADEMIA

In 2005, Olaf Jubin conducted a major research project at the Ruhr-University Bochum, in which 1,824 reviews of musicals by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Stephen Sondheim in the USA, the UK, and Germany, published between 1957 and 2002, were examined. One of the major findings of this project was that “critics who write about musical theatre tend to come from theatre, not from opera, music or dance” (“Experts without Expertise?” 186). Reviewers, thus, lack expertise in this field, which leads to critics applying the same standards to musicals that they use to theater – rather than adjusting their set of criteria. Another finding was that because “many of the hit musicals of the 1980s seemed [to the critics] predominantly escapist in character, reviewers across all nations chose not to look for any connections to current socio-political events” (187), which, in turn, nourishes the notion of the musical as being an intellectually and artistically undemanding form of entertainment. In Germany especially, a production will even be “received differently depending on where [it is] performed: in subsidized theatres or in privately owned commercial venues” (187).

Through Jubin’s study, it also became apparent how critics’ reviews were influenced by academic traditions:

German reviewers, especially in the 1970s and early 1980s, were heavily influenced by the critical theory of the Frankfurt school with its highly negative attitude towards any form of entertainment produced for the masses. (187)

Jubin also points out that German critics are heavily influenced by the reputation and fame of the actors, that they are – even with replica productions – heavily fixated on the director, and that they tend to automatically dismiss highly emotional musicals as trivial and as intellectually undemanding (see 187-189).

Not only the professional reviewers, but also German scholars struggled to come to terms with the musical, as the genre was not part of the academic discourse until the late 1980s (see Grosch 12). Even though the genre had been around in Germany for much longer, German scholars have been ignoring it until the boom of the 1980s and 1990s made that impossible. Just as other genres of American popular culture, the American musical was paid little attention to in German

academia in the decades following World War II, because Germans feared the replacement of their culture by “the capitalist, lowbrow culture of the already military victorious America” (9, my translation).

As a result, few American musical composers were taken seriously by German academics, except for those who also composed operas and symphonies, e.g., Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, or Kurt Weill (see 12).<sup>7</sup> Such selective discussions of American composers testify to the (implicit) attempts by German scholars to use a “framing of the American genre in the tradition of the anti-American notions which have developed since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (15, my translation).<sup>8</sup> According to Grosch, the progress in the discourse on the American musical in Germany seems to be particularly slow and arduous (see 17).<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said that many German critics’ and scholars’ views on the American musical are often skewed. While the discourse in German academia appears to be approaching an extensive, professional examination of the genre (see Grosch 15), there does not seem to be a similar tendency when it comes to German critics. In fact, Jubin notes that German critics reviewing musicals still “only have a cursory acquaintance with musical theater and its history” (194) and that as much as 23.8% of the evaluated German reviews contain factual errors (see 194).

## GERMAN MUSICALS AND RECENT TRENDS

Musicals, and the American musical in particular, might still be wrongfully looked at as merely a form of ‘lowbrow’ entertainment for the masses. However, this might rather have to do with the critics’ flawed analyses of the genre, its history and purpose, and a disputable distinction between lowbrow and highbrow culture that often seeps through musical reviews. Even though the sudden increase in popularity during the boom of the mega musical has slowed down, Germany’s private musical

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7 Weill might also have been held in higher esteem because he was a German who immigrated to the United States.

8 Original quote: “Eine solche Kontextualisierung beschreibt paradigmatisch die spezifische Form eines deutschen Framing der US-amerikanischen Gattung, die den schon seit Ende des 19. Jahrhundert sich herausbildenden Amerikaklischees zu entsprechen scheint wie kaum ein anderes Kulturgut der neuen Welt“ (Grosch 15).

9 However, it is questionable why geographical location defines the quality or accessibility of a scholarly work today. Grosch probably sees a lack of international academic cooperation in the field of musical theater studies on behalf of Germany-based scholars.

producers still manage to increase visitor numbers (see Olbermann) as audiences continue to flock into theaters to appreciate the pleasures of the live entertainment musical.

The central legacy of the boom-era seems to be the tradition of bringing translated replica productions of Broadway and West End musicals to Germany and to cooperate with influential license holders like Disney and Cameron Mackintosh (see Martland “Stage Entertainment”). However, Bert Fink, chief creative officer at MTI Europe,<sup>10</sup> admits that in the past, “once [a Broadway or West End musical] started going into the foreign-language market, producers very often lost control” (Martland, “Big in Europe” 16). A way to avoid this dilemma might be to develop original German musicals that are tailored for the German market. In fact, there have been many such attempts. A recent example is *Das Wunder von Bern*, which premiered in Hamburg in 2014 and had a successful two-year run in the newly-built *Theater an der Elbe*. The musical is based on the 2003 movie of the same name, which tells the story of the German national soccer team winning the 1954 world championship in Bern, Switzerland.

By developing this original musical, producer Stage Entertainment followed the example of the Viennese musical theater association *Vereinigte Bühnen Wien*, which has developed many original musicals that have been very successful in the German-speaking market (see 16). But while Stage Entertainment had to financially mount the development of *Das Wunder von Bern* by itself, *Vereinigte Bühnen Wien*’s “activities are partly subsidized by the city of Vienna, which also owns it” (16). The Viennese theater syndicate has also shown that even though their musicals are conceived for the Austrian market, they are “[f]ar from being [...] parochial” (16), thanks to the efforts of their international creative team. The success of *Vereinigte Bühnen Wien* indicates that subsidized theaters can afford developing Broadway-sized new musicals more than private producers in Germany, who very much depend on a production’s immediate success.

A new strategy can be seen in Stage Entertainment’s most recent original production of *Fack Ju Göhte* (2018), a musical adaptation of a popular teenager-movie, for which the company has built a new theater into an old Munich factory. It appears that the company is planning to use this smaller venue as a test location for the low-budget development of daring, original musicals. Their current

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10 Major shareholder of Cameron Mackintosh (see Martland “Big in Europe”).

production of *Ghost* (2018) in Berlin also shows that the division within Germany's musical theater landscape might become less of an obstacle in the future, as this production is the result of a cooperation of Stage Entertainment and the publicly subsidized Austrian *Landestheater Linz*. The company has also cooperated with German universities for tryout runs of potential new expensive musical productions, e. g. *Goethe!* (2017), an adaptation of the 2010 movie of the same name, at Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen.

These developments suggest that Germany's musical scene might be in a process of emancipation from the American and British market. However, it does not mean that musicals will stop being associated with their American heritage. In fact, "modern movie musicals, and TV series like *Smash* and *Glee*, plus the influence of the internet (particularly YouTube)" (Martland, "Big in Europe" 16) provide access to classic and contemporary American musical theater to young audiences worldwide resulting in "an enormous rebirth of interest in the genre, which has rippled into the non-English-speaking market" (16). A potential outcome of this development could be that in the future, German audiences will have a more nuanced understanding and appreciation of the American musical, which could also result in a greater variety within Germany's musical theater scene.

## CONCLUSION

The reception of the American musical in Germany is heavily influenced by German audiences' expectations of musicals, namely that they should be entertaining, but not necessarily demanding. These expectations are partly rooted in notions of German cultural identity and limited exposure to the genre resulting in little knowledge of the musical, its diverse repertoire, its history, and its original cultural context. Similarly, a disdain for commercially produced art or the mistrust to accept commercially produced art as complex further shaped the perception of the musical; a German mannerisms to see the musical as an American turn on European theater traditions rather than as an autonomous American art form contributed further to such assessment. Such views are particularly pertinent among German theater critics, whose knowledge of the genre is often flawed. Even German academia engaged with the musicals in a broader sense not until the 'mega musical' period of the late 1980s.

The skewed perception of the American musical's history, cultural context, and repertoire is mostly due to limited accessibility and availability of American musical theater in Germany. One reason is that in the decades following World War II, Germany's theater landscape did not allow for productions of Broadway-scale musicals until private production companies popularized the genre by importing translated replica-productions and commissioned the construction of new suitable theaters across the country. On the other hand, producers and distributors of American movie musicals treat the foreign markets "as a mere extension of the home market" ("Hollywood Musical in Germany and Austria" 235). As a result, many movie musicals were not released in Germany at all or only in altered versions, which further impedes the reception of the American musicals in Germany.

To this day, German audiences tend to see the musical as merely popular entertainment rather than as a complex genre. Such perceptions lead to one-sided expectations of the genre, which leaves few opportunities to introduce any American musical that one might consider to be more artistically elevated and/or intellectually demanding to German audiences. Therefore, a musical that is well received in America does not necessarily need to be well received in Germany, too. German audiences have distinctly different expectations towards the genre. The current state of the genre in Germany does not allow for a comprehensive reception of the American musical.

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