

DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

“Constructions of The Queen in Contemporary British
Fiction”

Verfasserin

Claudia Sein

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, 2010

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 190 344 347

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Lehramtsstudium UF Englisch

Betreuerin:

Univ.-Ass. Privatdoz. Mag. Dr. Susanne Reichl

Declaration of Authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written this thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from sources are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references either in the footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

Signature: _____

Hinweis

Diese Diplomarbeit hat nachgewiesen, dass die betreffende Kandidatin oder der betreffende Kandidat befähigt ist, wissenschaftliche Themen selbstständig sowie inhaltlich und methodisch vertretbar zu bearbeiten. Da die Korrekturen der/des Beurteilenden nicht eingetragen sind und das Gutachten nicht beiliegt, ist daher nicht erkenntlich, mit welcher Note diese Arbeit abgeschlossen wurde. Das Spektrum reicht von sehr gut bis genügend. Es wird gebeten, diesen Hinweis bei der Lektüre zu beachten.

*To the memory of my grandmother,
who unknowingly sparked my interest in Britain and its
Royal Family*

*Zur Erinnerung an meine Oma,
die, ohne es zu wissen, mein Interesse an Großbritannien
und der Royal Family erweckt hat*

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my utmost gratitude goes to my parents, my grandparents and my brother, whose love and never-ending support enabled me to achieve my goal.

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Dr. Susanne Reichl, who advised, encouraged, guided and supported me during the entire research and writing process of my thesis with much patience. Her constructive feedback was invaluable.

I also owe thanks to my dear friends Carina, Golriz, Julia, Verena and Veronika, each of whom motivated and supported me in their own special way.

Last but not least, special thanks are due to my former English teacher Siegi Witzany-Durda, who both nurtured my love for and furthered my command of the English language.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Literature review.....	7
3. A theoretical framework: Humour, its origins and theory.....	14
3.1 The concept of humour.....	14
3.1.1 A definition?	14
3.1.2 The origins of the term	15
3.1.3 Humour, laughter and the comic.....	15
3.2 Humour theories and theorists – a survey	18
3.2.1 Freud.....	18
3.2.2 Bergson.....	20
3.2.3 Incongruity, Hostility and Release Theories.....	21
3.3 Different forms and linguistic aspects of humour.....	21
3.3.1 Irony and sarcasm.....	21
3.3.2 Satire.....	22
3.3.3 Parody.....	23
3.3.4 Black humour, dark humour and gallows humour.....	25
3.3.5 Slapstick.....	26
3.3.6 British Humour	26
3.3.7 Pun and word play	29
3.3.8 Wit.....	29
3.3.9 Jokes.....	30
3.4 Extra-linguistic aspects of humour.....	30
3.4.1 The relative nature of humour.....	30
3.4.1.1 The subjectivity of humour.....	30
3.4.1.2 The socio-cultural context.....	31
3.4.1.3 Taboo topics.....	31

3.4.2 Humour in literature	32
3.4.2.1 Comedy	33
3.4.2.2 Humour as a textual strategy	34
3.5 Functions of humour	36
3.5.1 Expression of criticism	36
3.5.2 Reduction of anger and aggression	37
3.5.3 Defence against suffering and reality	37
3.5.4 Social function	38
4. From theory to practice: An analysis of the selected novels	39
4.1 The construction of the fictional Royal Family	39
4.1.1 The stereotypical depiction of the members of the Royal Family	39
4.1.2 The function of their (humorous) representation	52
4.2 The construction of the Queen as a fictional character	57
4.2.1 The humour/ humorous construction of the Queen	57
4.2.2 Behaviour, appearance and other characteristics	61
4.2.2.1 The transformation of a distanced monarch	61
4.2.2.2 The Queen in search of her identity	66
4.2.2.3 Abdication	69
4.2.3 Language	71
4.3 In which situations is Her Majesty perceived as funny and comical?	76
4.3.1 The clash of cultures	77
4.3.2 The monarch's encounter with 'ordinary' life	80
4.3.3 The social roles of the Queen	81
4.3.3.1 The Queen as mother and grandmother	81
4.3.3.2 The Queen as wife	83
4.3.3.3 The Queen as dog-lover	85
4.3.3.4 The Queen as an uneducated and naïve woman	88

4.3.3.5 The Queen as a vulnerable and old woman.....	90
4.3.3.6 The Queen as a poor woman.....	92
4.4 Why and by whom is the Queen perceived as funny/ laughed at?	94
4.4.1 Socio-cultural factors.....	94
4.4.2 Ridiculing the Queen as a form of criticising the monarchy?	95
4.4.3 Laughter as enhancing the feeling of superiority	97
5. The myth of the Royal Family.....	99
5.1 People’s fascination with the monarchy.....	99
5.1.1 The media representation of the British Royal Family	100
5.1.2 The cultural significance of the monarchy.....	103
5.1.2.1 National identity	103
5.1.2.2 The role of tradition in the historical development of the monarch.....	105
5.1.3 Demystification.....	109
5.2. The phenomenon of life-writing	112
5.2.1 Biofiction- a literary genre	112
5.2.1.1 Defining the concept.....	112
5.2.1.2 The popularity of biofiction.....	115
5.2.2 The Queen as a biofictional character	116
6. Conclusion.....	119
7. Bibliography.....	125
8. Index	135
German Abstract	137
Curriculum Vitae.....	139

1. Introduction

Great Britain – It is most likely that when contemplating associations with this nation, or when attempting to enumerate things that are said to be ‘typically British’, the aspect of humour comes to mind. A further characteristic which distinguishes the nation from others is its monarchy, the Queen and the Royal Family. At first glance, these two aspects, which are regarded as central to British culture, do not appear to be united by a commonality; a thought which is enforced by the often quoted phrase of the Queen being ‘not amused’.¹

At second view, however, when widening one’s perspective and looking at the field of literature, four novels in particular need to be mentioned, which seem to create a common bond between humour and royalty. These novels, which form the basis of my analysis in this thesis, are *The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla* by Sue Townsend, *The Autobiography of the Queen* by Emma Tennant and *The Uncommon Reader* by Alan Bennett. Apart from their classification as humorous novels, all of them have one thing in common: the Queen of the United Kingdom as their protagonist.

It is remarkable that the novels under consideration, while being praised by critics, have received little scholarly attention, which might be due to their recent publication date as well as the apparent triviality of the plots and their according classification as ‘light fiction’. Moreover, until the present day, no study of Queen Elizabeth II in contemporary British humorous fiction has been undertaken. In the following, I shall briefly introduce the novels, their authors and their reception among reviewers; however, they will not be discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

¹ The phrase “We are not amused” is credited to Queen Victoria, who is said to have uttered it in 1900. No details of the circumstances are known (see *The Phrase Finder*. “We are not amused.” 17 February 2010 <<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/401800.html>>). Nowadays, this phrase is often used in connection with Queen Elizabeth II, particularly in newspaper articles.

Alan Bennett is “one of Britain’s best-loved literary voices” (Glendinning). His work is praised for its “wit, the respectful treatment he offers the socially marginal, and the familiarity of his characters and their speech” (O’Mealy xiv). Bennett possesses a “sharpness of intellect and wit that has proved adept at dissecting the mores of the English and their institutions across a variety of genres”, which eventually resulted in Bennett receiving the “status as an English national institution himself” (Woodward). His various novels and plays, amongst which *The History Boys* and *The Madness of King George III* gained particular fame, are often characterized by “satirical asides” and “comic wordplay” (Woodward). The theme of the monarchy re-occurs in Bennett’s novella *The Uncommon Reader*, in which the Queen discovers the world of literature, which is regarded with suspicion by her advisors and staff. The novella has received various labelling, ranging from “a kind of palace fairy tale for grown-ups” (McCarter) and “a gloriously entertaining comic narrative” (Marriott) to “a playful homage to the written word” (Glendinning). *The Uncommon Reader* was nominated for the Bollinger Everyman Woodhouse Prize (2008) as well as for Booksellers Association Independent Booksellers’ Book Prize (2008) (see Woodward).

Two of the novels under consideration, namely, *The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla*, both by Sue Townsend, are unquestionably related to each other, as *Queen Camilla* is the sequel of the former and “opens where its predecessor *The Queen and I* [...] finished: The English monarchy has been overthrown” (Fairbairns 25). *The Autobiography of the Queen* and *The Uncommon Reader* differ in their respective plots. However, the idea of the Queen as the main protagonist facing a series of unanticipated challenges remains the same.

By literary reviewers, *The Queen and I* has been described, amongst others, as “a gentle tale of working-class survival with a not very satisfying ending” (Fathers). Paxmann stresses the aspect of family, stating that “[t]here is an underlying humanity [...] which recognises that every family is a dysfunctional family, and that the easy certainties of political life take too little account of human nature.” Furthermore, as far as Townsend’s writing style is concerned, she “skilfully combines farcical humour and absurdity with serious social

commentary” (O’Reilly). Her satirical tone is praised because “the mockery is intertwined with compassion, and her tone is never malicious - she is wholeheartedly against the monarchy as an institution, but is not unsympathetic to the royals as individuals” (O’Reilly).

Regarding the political dimensions of the novels it is noteworthy that Susan Townsend herself comes from a working-class environment, which probably accounts for her being “staunchly left-wing and republican” (Fairbairns 25). She is most famous for her novel *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 ¾* and its sequels, which were hugely successful and resulted in the character’s name entering the English language. *The Queen and I*, *Queen Camilla* and *Number Ten*, which satirizes the New Labour Party, are political satires characterised by an “almost slapstick tone” which “differs markedly from the wit, poignancy and sharp social and political criticism” (Fairbairns 26) which she employs in her other novels *Rebuilding Coventry*, *Ghost Children* and the *Adrian Mole* books.

A little less popular with reviewers was Emma Tennant’s novel *The Autobiography of the Queen*, published in the same year as *The Uncommon Reader*. It was criticized for being “like a sitcom hung ponderously on one joke: the Queen’s puzzlement at everyday encounters, particularly the horror of having to queue” (Toms). Also O’Brien, who refers to the novel as an “engaging but unenlightening tale”, criticizes Tennant’s lack of real motives and her consequential attempt “to present the Queen’s slow dwindling to down-at-heel battiness as something amusing” (O’Brien). Therefore, the prevailing opinion is that *The Autobiography of the Queen* is “no match for Alan Bennett’s or Sue Townsend’s visions of a wayward monarch” (Toms).

Certainly, the books in question are not the only representatives of their kind. Aside from Peter Morgan’s screenplay *The Queen*, which was made into a movie by director Stephen Fears, a rather serious attempt at portraying Elizabeth II in a crucial period of her reign, she has been turned into a private detective investigating for murder cases in the novels *Death at Buckingham Palace*, *Death at Windsor Castle* and *Death at Sandringham House* by C.C. Benison. Moreover, the Queen is not the only Royal whose life has been re-

written in fiction. There is a myriad of novels about previous monarchs, such as Queen Victoria and King Henry VIII, not to forget the variety of novels about Lady Diana, most of which deal with her death and her afterlife.²

It appears reasonable to claim that when thinking of the Queen, the image which first crosses one's mind is that of a monarch. However, one or the other might have already wondered what she is like when interacting with her family or how she would behave in a certain situation. Of course, a fictional account of her life does by no means give any information about how she is in reality. Nevertheless, some similarities in her fictional construction might be noticed in all of the four novels. Indeed, one might wonder why there exists a certain pattern in the construction of the fictional Queen and why there is this image of how the real Elizabeth is thought to be, which is apparently commonly accepted. Naturally, at some points, the authors avail themselves of biographical facts which are inserted into the plot. Stereotypes, which are the result of the media representations, are made use of and occasionally real-life events which have been circulated by the tabloids are alluded to. However, a large amount of the behaviour of the Queen is still left to speculation and the authors' imagination.

The central theme of my analysis is to demonstrate how the character of the British monarch is constructed in the four selected novels, with particular regard to the impact of humour. Naturally, by simply judging from the titles and the book covers it can be assumed that these novels were published inevitably with the intention of evoking their readers' laughter, an assumption which will prove correct after indulging in the plot. My argument, however, is that humour is strategically positioned in the fictional construction of Elizabeth II, which allows for the following questions to be raised: Which part does humour play in the construction of the Queen and by which means is the laughter of the readers evoked? In which situations do we laugh *with* the Queen and when do we laugh *at* her? What is the purpose of her humorous representation? Is the fictional

² For the complete list of titles see *World of Royalty Blog*. "Princess Diana in Fiction." 18 August 2009. 20 January 2010 <<http://worldofroyaltyblog.com/2009/08/princess-diana-in-fiction/>>.

Queen only represented in her role as the sovereign or does she adopt various roles? If so, in which roles in particular is she ridiculed and what is the function of eliciting the reader's laughter? Might this even imply a criticism of the monarchy?

In order to understand the role of humour, a chapter will be dedicated to humour theory, its origins and development, with particular regard to what might be the most influential humour theorists of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson. A brief description of the most common contemporary theories will be provided. Furthermore, for a connection of the theoretical with the practical analysis to become more apparent, I will give an overview of the most common types of humour as well as of some of its extra-linguistic aspects, which prove to be of significance for an examination of the comic elements in the construction of the Queen.

After an analysis of the novels in Chapter 3, the questions which now arise are the following: Why does this sort of literature exist? Why did three different writers conceive of a fictional Queen Elizabeth II, who features as the protagonist in a humorous novel? Why have these novels only been published in rather recent times and might one draw any conclusions from this development about new trends in the representation of the Royal Family?

Certainly, literature about the Queen and the Royal Family exists en masse, particularly in the form of biographies³ or uncritical publications which exploit the nostalgic value of the Royal Family, such as illustrated volumes of major events like royal wedding and jubilees, as well as of royal residences, gardens and art collections; not to mention the large quantity of unauthorized biographies and news coverage in sensational journalism.⁴ This interest in royalty is not an entirely new phenomenon. Also former queens such as Victoria enjoyed a large popularity and therefore were depicted in paintings, poems, films, photography and newspapers.⁵ A development, however, which is rather recent, is the fusion of the ancient institution of the monarchy and modern

³ See Cannadine, *Biography* 294; Olechnowicz, *Historians* 9-20.

⁴ For further information consult Von Ziegesar 126-128.

⁵ For a detailed account of the scholarly and media interest in Queen Victoria see Plunkett, 2003. For popular representations of Queen Victoria see Homans, 1998.

popular culture, in the form of a humorous fictional account of a period in the Queen's life. While the novels pretend to portray a very intimate side of the life and character of Elizabeth II, they are entirely fiction and the drawing of parallels between the fictional queen and the 'real' Queen, rather the image of Queen Elizabeth II as it is constructed in the media, is altogether left to the reader's imagination.

This changing nature of the royal image from a respectable monarch to the heroine in popular fiction might be the eventual result of the tremendous media interest in the Royal Family and, consequently, the augmented coverage of the royals' private lives, which are mercilessly exploited in tabloid journalism. The Queen in contemporary fiction is yet another aspect of the media construction of the monarchy and forms part of a different literary form of royal popularization.

Certainly, one could claim that royalty sells⁶, and this concept, which apparently holds true for tabloids and merchandise, also proves to be valid for fiction. However, even if this explanation might not be completely inaccurate, it is definitely not sufficient to account for the emergence of a new 'genre' of literature about the Queen, so to speak, nor does it provide any reason for why 'royal products' enjoy such popularity. In addition, one must not disregard the attractiveness of fictional life-writings in general, a phenomenon particular for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which might shed light upon people's desire to know more about, if not to say, participate in the lives of personages in the public spotlight.

An attempt to pin down people's fascination with the monarchy and, on a wider scale, a speculation of why there has been an increasing demand for this form of literature about Her Majesty in recent years shall be subject to investigation in the last Chapter.

⁶ A large amount of royal products, such as commemorative pottery, postcards and coins can be purchased. For a selection of the products available see *Commemoratives Collecting*. Commemorative Collectors Society. 15 October 2009. <<http://www.commemorativescollecting.co.uk/>>; *Enjoy England*. 15 October 2009. <<http://www.enjoyengland.com/ideas/heritage-and-culture/history-makers/royal-england.aspx>>. For information on the use of the monarchy in advertising see Olechnowicz, *Historians* 33. For more information on the monarchy's importance for national tourism and royal tourist sites see Long and Palmer (ed.), 2008.

2. Literature review

As the British Royal Family is an emblem as characteristic for the nation as its national flag, the Union Jack, it is not surprising that the vast amount of literature published about Queen Elizabeth II and her family would make for a detailed analysis that goes beyond the scope of this paper. It was only during the last decades that there has been a shift away from biographical approaches to an increasing number of scholarly essays seeking to locate the monarchy in larger cultural, social and political contexts.⁷

Certainly, one can differentiate between essays and research work which offer solid general information about the British monarchy and briefly touch upon various issues, amongst which the ideological dimension is usually predominant, and essays which concentrate on a specific aspect, ranging from the media interest to the role of ceremonial and tradition. While both these works are necessary to provide an accurate evaluation of the British Royal Family, the first types of works are not as relevant for this thesis. Of course, there also exists a variety of books and scholarly essays about previous monarchs, which, apart from two exceptions, have not proven to be useful for an analysis of the contemporary interest in the Royal Family. Considering these factors mentioned above, only the works concerned with a relevant focus for this thesis will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

One of the first and probably best-known writers who attempted to sincerely analyse the importance of the monarchy for the United Kingdom was Walter Bagehot, whose opus *The English Constitution*, published in 1867, is commonly referred to as 'a classic' and quoted in most of the works of subsequent and contemporary scholars.

⁷ See also Craig 168 ff.

A general overview of the monarchy is provided by Hibbert (1968), who briefly touches upon the duties the monarch has to perform, the civil list and royal treasures. Unfortunately, he does not explore any of these aspects in detail and due to its lack of critical illumination it is of limited usefulness for an academic paper. Similar to Hibbert's work, Howard's *The British Monarchy in the twentieth century*, published on the occasion of the Queen's silver jubilee in 1977, appears at first glance to give a copious overview of the state of the monarchy during the first 25 years of the reign of Elizabeth II. However, upon closer examination, its popular science character becomes apparent. Whereas the mythological dimension of the monarchy is mentioned several times, no profound analysis is offered by the author. For an academic paper, more specific and also more critical essays might be of more use; nevertheless, solid background information and biographical facts about members of the Royal Family are provided.

A further example for an analysis stressing the mythological aspect of the monarchy is Bradley's *God Save the Queen- The Spiritual Dimension of Monarchy (2002)*, which, unlike most recent scholarly research on royalty, focuses on the religious element of the contemporary monarchy. According to Bradley, it is precisely this religious element, still strongly present "in the continuing love affair between the British population and royalty" (Bradley XIV), which accounts for the positive attitude towards the monarchy.

Among those few scholars who mention this spiritual aspect is Nairns (1990), who acknowledges the importance of the monarchy for British identity in an ideological and spiritual state. His book *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and Its Monarchy* is a highly critical attempt to analyse the monarchy, however, its informal style and lack of specific focus make it of limited use for this paper.

Of the books which view the monarchy from a historical and descriptive angle, Petrie's *The Modern British Monarchy* needs to be mentioned. Although its publication in 1961 renders a comprehensive analysis of the contemporary monarch up to the present day impossible, it stresses the importance of viewing

Elizabeth II in the context of “the stock from which she is sprung” (Petrie 13) and therefore offers a useful study of previous monarchs and political affairs, beginning with Queen Victoria, up to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. It does not cover any socio-cultural aspects of the monarchy, a tendency which only became prominent in research after the book’s publication date.

Particularly useful for an examination of the aforementioned is the evaluation of people’s fascination with the monarchy in Cannadine’s essay, which appeared in a collection of essays titled *The Invention of Tradition* by Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983), who, in contrast to Bagehot, claim that royal ceremonial can be classified as a form of control deployed to stupefy the royal subjects. Cannadine sheds light upon royal ceremonials embedded in their cultural context from the 1820s to the 1870s, a period which he divides into four phases. His emphasis is upon the invention of new rituals, which were supposed to follow the ‘trend’ of staging royal ceremonials in a way which was commercially exploitable and appealing to the public, therefore accounting for people’s fascination with the monarchy. Many of today’s explanations for the popularity of the Royal Family still draw upon Cannadine’s essay, owing to its novel approach to the subject at the time of publication (see Kuhn 1).

Chaney (2001), whose focus lies upon the mediation of the monarchy, argues that because of the extensive news coverage, the Royal Family members have turned into celebrities and have come to constitute a cultural form. However, from his point of view, the royal adaptation to “the demands of a new cultural environment” (Chaney 208) is imperfect and less successful than previous adaptations they had to manage before. Whilst Chaney claims that the monarchy must be treated as a cultural performance, an argument which he bases on Cannadine’s framework, he criticizes Cannadine’s assumption “that the transition to televisual status makes all performers celebrities in an equivalently unproblematic way” (Chaney 210).

Further criticism of Cannadine’s theory can be noticed amongst other scholars as well, such as Kuhn (2001), who challenges Cannadine’s view of ‘invention’

when arguing that precedent traditions and ceremonials were specifically taken into account in the process of re-organizing royal ceremonial; describing the process as 'renovating' rather than 'inventing' would thus appear to be more accurate. Starting from the ceremonial aspect of the monarchy, Kuhn, who views Cannadine's theory in a critical light, examines "the ideas and plans of those who acquired and exercised the greatest influence during a crucial period in the shaping of the modern ceremonial monarchy" (Kuhn 10), more specifically: Walter Bagehot, W.E. Gladstone, Reginald Brett, Randall Davidson and Henry Fitzalan-Howard.

Prochaska (1995) shifts away from the explanation of royal popularity through the effective use of royal ceremonial and instead focuses on royal philanthropy as the reason for the monarch's popularity. He argues that Queen Victoria, even after neglecting her royal duties after her husband's death, maintained her popularity by engaging in charity work. However, what might be criticized about Prochaska's approach is that it does not provide information about what the Royal Family actually meant for the citizens.

In contrast to Prochaska, Brunt (1992) explains the appeal of the monarchy to British citizens by considering the images and values which the Royals embody as well as their communication via the media. According to her, a considerable amount of the ideological power the Royal Family exercises over the British population is due to the people's very national identities being anchored in the state institutions that function in the name of the monarchy, such as the armed forces and the church. Brunt further claims that having a Royal Family and royal ceremonial are, according to the British population, what distinguishes their country most from other nations. However, she provides a rather critical account of this ideological function, as it interferes with self-government of the citizens. Brunt's essay is recommendable as it places specific emphasis on national identity and tackles several new aspects concerning royal popularity which are not treated in other scholarly work. One shortcoming of her work is that it is lacking a more complex view of the ideological government of the monarchy over the citizens. Although surveys and newspaper articles are taken into

account, I would argue that Brunt's theoretical analysis serves as a good complement to Billig's case study.

The apparent triviality of royal topics and the huge media interest in the members of the Royal Family, who do not appear to be more than average in every respect, incites Billig (1990) to devote more scholarly attention to the topic. He stresses the ideological dimension of the monarchy, with particular importance being attributed to the concept of collective memory. In an attempt to investigate the ideological dimension of the monarchy, Billig (1992) presents an empirical study based on recorded interviews with a total number of sixty-three English families, all of which reside in the East Midlands. By encouraging a conversation among the interviewed families about the Royal Family, which constitutes "a symbol of privilege and nationhood" (Billig 1992, 16) in the opinion of the author, the observation of ideological parallels between royal and common lives is facilitated. His experiment proves that "ideological themes flow constantly through this 'ordinary' discourse" (Billig 1990, 65), as recollections of 'royalty-based' events such as visits to castles become milestones in a family's history and thus result in family history and collective national history being intertwined.

In contrast to the previously examined research stands Parry's article *Whig monarchy, Whig nation: Crown, politics and representativeness 1800-2000*, (2007) in which the author, with regard to the emphasis of Cannadine and others on ceremonial and a mystical dimension of the Royals, does not deny that "successful sovereigns are icons" (Parry 47) and that an "intriguing glamour" (Parry 47) has contributed to the appeal of royalty. However, he accentuates the constitutional context and political debate surrounding the monarchy. Parry's paper appears in a collection of essays entitled *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present*, edited by Olechnowicz, which aims to combine research, reassessments of historiography and novel approaches to the questions surrounding the monarchy's role in British public and political life and the reason for its popularity within the nation. Due to its recent date of publication and the authors' ability to shed light upon a wide

range of topics, this collection of essays is arguably one of the best and most extensive scholarly pieces of writing about the monarchy from 1780 onwards.

Of particular usefulness for this paper is the third section of this book, which expatiates upon the popularity of the Royal Family, mainly in the twentieth century. From a sociological point of view, Olechnowicz focuses on the paradox of the enthusiasm for the privileged royalty within an inegalitarian society. He argues that the principle causes for this phenomenon might be found in the omnipresence of the Royal Family and, secondly, in the sympathy people show towards the royals, whose lives are characterized by sacrifice of their personal wishes and lack of freedom, despite their immense wealth. Richards (2007), on the other hand, views the popularity of the Royals from the angle of cultural studies. He regards, along with other scholars such as Chaney, the intrusion of the media in the lives of the royals as the reason for re-clothing “the royals in the divinity of stardom and celebrity” (Richards 258). Contrasting the ideas of Bagehot and those whom Richards refers to as “traditionalist defenders of the monarchy” (Richards 258), Richards does not feel that this development, which Bagehot denominates the ‘letting in of daylight’ (see Bagehot 99) upon the monarchy, entails the loss of magic of the royalty. Rather, he describes the celebrity status of the Queen and her family as a different kind of magic, namely a “magic of familiarity” (Richards 258).

Plunkett (2003) also concentrates on the cultural studies perspective of the monarchy. He investigates the image of Queen Victoria, whom he refers to as the ‘First Media Monarch’, under the influence of the increasing circulation of visual media and mass print during the era of her reign. Interesting for an examination of the construction of the monarch’s image in contemporary mass media is the analysis of the manner of the news coverage in Victorian times, which used to be laudatory and supportive. Only during the later period of her reign could a tendency towards disrespectful reports be noticed, which were likely to gain the sympathy of her subjects, rather than their disapproval.

Von Ziegesar's *Großbritannien ohne Krone* (1993) is, according to the author's proclamation in the introduction, „die erste wissenschaftliche Studie über die moderne britische Monarchie in Deutschland“. Like Billig, he criticizes the discrepancy between the paucity of scientific literature about the British royalty and the myriad of popular publications about the Royals in the form of books and tabloid newspaper articles. His aim is to disclose the secret of the monarch's power, a goal he intends to reach by taking into account the concrete actions and statements of Queen Elizabeth II, as well as those of politicians and the media moguls.

With regard to Queen Elizabeth II in contemporary British fiction, it is vital to not only have a solid knowledge of scholarly work dealing with the importance of the monarchy, but also of humour theory, which plays a major role in the construction of the fictional Queen. However, as humour is a concept hard to define and there is considerable disagreement concerning its different types and forms, an evaluation of the terminology of humour as it is used by various scholars is indispensable and will form part of Chapter 2. Furthermore, a critical selection of humour theorists and theories as well as scholarly works with a relevant focus for this thesis shall also be discussed.

3. A theoretical framework: Humour, its origins and theory

3.1 The concept of humour

3.1.1 A definition?

To begin with, it needs to be acknowledged that there is no single and precise definition of what exactly is signified by the term 'humour'.⁸ Parkin (2), in the introduction to his critical account of the most famous contributions to twentieth century humour theory, states that "[o]ne can never describe any cultural phenomenon objectively, and humour perhaps less than most". In full agreement concerning this subject matter, Apte (13) even goes so far as to claim that "few activities have remained as puzzling as humor and laughter". Since antiquity, scholars have attempted to shed light upon the matter and offer an explanation for a satisfactory definition of the concept of humour, which accounts for the vast amount of literature on the subject from disciplines as diverse as psychology, philosophy, anthropology and sociology.⁹ Apart from these fields of study which predominantly deal with the subconscious processes that underlie humour and their social functions, one branch of science is also dedicated to the actual stimulus and linguistic aspects of the humorous mode.¹⁰

Most scientific works on humour and its theory, albeit from the different perspectives of psychology or sociology, or even theories treating humour in the context of literary criticism, "base the notion of the comic in the deviation from a stable norm" (Pichler 210). The very concept of humour is therefore built upon incongruity, discrepancy and ambiguity. Furthermore, it is often used in a

⁸ See also Pichler 210; Evrard 3.

⁹ See also Apte 13; for a sociological approach which focuses on actual humorous conduct see Mulkay, 1988; for both a theoretical and empirical account from the perspective of psychology see McGhee, 1972.

¹⁰ For studies of the language of jokes and humour see Nash, 1985, Chiaro 1992, Norrick, 1993.

general manner to describe humorous phenomena such as irony, parody or satire and therefore contributes to the confusion regarding the terminology (see Evrard 3). In order to shed light upon the subject, a survey of the historical development of both the term and its concept proves to be indispensable. A description of the best known humour theorists and their work shall be provided, as well as an analysis of the most common types of humour.¹¹

3.1.2 The origins of the term

The origin of the word 'humour', which derives from the Latin word 'humor', dates back to Hippocrates' theory of the four humours, which were said to define an individual's temperament according to the respective predominance of blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile. These humours were connected to the four elements of air, fire, earth and water. The human being was supposed to be regulated by the bodily fluids which determined a person's disposition as either phlegmatic, melancholic, choleric or sanguineous (see Evrard 9). In the Oxford English Dictionary, the definition of humour as "each of the four chief fluids of the body (blood, phlegm, yellow bile (choler), and black bile (melancholy)) that were thought to determine a person's physical and mental qualities by the relative proportions in which they were present"¹² is still cited.

3.1.3 Humour, laughter and the comic

While it is obvious that humour implies to some kind the arousal of amusement or "the quality of being amusing or comic"¹³, in many of the scholarly

¹¹ For a critical view on and comparison of the approaches of Bergson, Freud, Bakhtin, Koestler and Cixous, see Parkin, 1997.

¹² *The Oxford Dictionary of English* (revised edition). "humour *noun*". Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2005. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universitätsbibliothek Wien. 10 November 2009
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e36595>>

¹³ *The Oxford Dictionary of English* (revised edition). "humour *noun*." Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2005. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universitätsbibliothek Wien. 10 November 2009
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e36595>>

dissertations, the terms 'humour', 'laughter' and 'the comic' are either subject to terminological disagreement, or referred to as being arbitrarily interchangeable, which contributes to the vagueness surrounding humour theory. From the earliest approaches to humour theory until the more contemporary ones, the different terminologies as well as the subject as such have been redefined by humour theorists.¹⁴

The problem of grasping the complex conceptualization of humour is summarized by Apte, who claims that

[w]hile there is general agreement that certain stimuli make individuals laugh or smile with pleasure, it has not been possible to determine with any precision what conspires cognitively between potential stimuli and the overt response of laughter or smiling. (Apte 13)

Naturally, in order to investigate this problem, it is essential to consider the sources that form the basis of the potential stimuli, "the cognitive and intellectual activity responsible for the perception and evaluation of these sources leading to humour experience" (Apte 14), and the physical response expressed in laughter or smiling. All three of these elements have been wrongly referred to as 'humour'. Furthermore, Apte points out that while many scholars regard the terms 'humour' and 'laughter' synonymously, it must be taken into account that laughter, whilst being an overt indicator of humour and thus essential in the determination of its occurrence, can be distinguished from humour as it is an activity physiologically and anatomically observable (see Apte 14). Moreover, it must be acknowledged that laughter does not necessarily need to result from humour, just like humorous events need not necessarily provoke laughter (see Apte 239).

¹⁴ See also Reichl & Stein 1-5.

Keith-Spiegel, whilst agreeing that laughter is often, but not always, a concomitant effect of the humour experience, raises the subject of laughter being a reaction to various emotional states, not only amusement:

[T]o attempt a listing of what can give rise to laughter is a hazardous undertaking, since man apparently laughs at just about everything. But from the listings of the sources of the laughable put forth by some writers, many conditions or situations are not very funny if viewed objectively; in fact, often they are quite disturbing or tragic. [...] At any rate, defining the essence of laughter is not nearly so simple as describing its behavioural components or linking it indiscriminately with humor. (Keith Spiegel 17-18)

Furthermore, the social aspect of laughter must not be neglected. Laughter hardly arises when an individual is isolated from others, as it “appears to stand in need of an echo” (Bergson 64). Whereas humour can cause a person to feel amused, even in solitude, “[o]ur laughter is always the laughter of a group” (Bergson 64).

However, it becomes obvious that a treatment of humour, laughter and the comic as three completely distinct phenomena would be absurd, as they are definitely related to each other. Evrard (4) refers to humour and the comic as appearing “comme l’envers du sérieux, de ce qui est utile, important et fiable; ils s’opposent à la gravité qui recherche l’implication, l’adhésion et l’identification”.¹⁵ This definition implies that both humour and the comic are phenomena which signify what is supposed to amuse and to be regarded as funny. Furthermore, it is laughter which is usually evoked by a joke or any other incident which is perceived as humorous, which thus accounts for an interrelation between the three phenomena and a possible overlapping of the terminology.

As a consequence, because of the subjectivity of humour, the apparent dilemma of defining the concept and solving terminological disagreements, it has become common practice to work with different theories instead of

¹⁵ “as the opposite of the serious, of what is useful, important and reliable; they oppose the gravity which looks for implication, adhesion and identification.” (my translation)

attempting to find one single hypothesis which can be applied to every situation in which an analysis of humorous elements is necessary.

Furthermore, instead of theoretically defining the concept as I understand it, I believe it is best to leave the question open and, instead, to look critically upon the notions of humour and the comic as they have been treated so far in order to conceptualize one's individual definition of humour.

This approach is put into a nutshell by Reichl and Stein, who state that

[o]rdinary situations, such as listening to or telling a joke, may also require such a meta-perspective: Tellers of jokes sometimes need to explain why their joke is funny and are occasionally disparaged for having told it in the first place. Thus in everyday situations we are often required to rationalize our own laughter – if not to define our own understanding of humour. (Reichl & Stein 5)

3.2 Humour theories and theorists – a survey

Theories of humour “present an unruly and discordant range, with plenty of contradiction and disagreement” (Reichl & Stein 3). Thus, the perhaps most influential humour theorists, Freud and Bergson, who “have more than once been mentioned in the same breath as the founders of modern humour theory” (Parkin 37), as well as the most important modern theories shall be briefly examined in the following.¹⁶

3.2.1 Freud

Freud's psychoanalytic approach *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten* (*The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious*), a standard work in humour theory of the twentieth century, has been designated “one of the most provocative and useful analyses of humor because of its multiple layers of meaning and its complicated examination of the site of the comic” (Colletta 8). The essay of considerable length was published in 1905 in order to treat the

¹⁶ For a survey of humour research from antiquity to the renaissance, see Attardo, Chapter 1.

subject of jokes from a philosophical point of view because the then available literature on the subject failed to analyse jokes appropriately.

Already in the introduction, Freud points out the clear distinction between the joke and the comic, by declaring that existing research on the subject is focused almost entirely on the “umfassenderen und anziehenderen Probleme des Komischen” (Freud, *Joke*, 25) and that literature on jokes gives the impression “als sei es völlig untunlich, den Witz anders als im Zusammenhange mit dem Komischen zu behandeln” (Freud, *Joke*, 25). Apart from his mechanisms for analysing jokes, his work is particularly interesting as he relates jokes to his theory of the unconscious.

In 1927, Freud published the essay *Der Humor (Humour)* because he felt that *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten* treated humour solely from an economic point of view, while he aspired to find “die Quelle der Lust am Humor” (Freud, *Humor* 253). According to Freud, the humorous act can be performed in two ways: It engages either one person, “die selbst die humoristische Einstellung einnimmt, während der zweiten Person die Rolle des Zuschauers und Nutznießers zufällt” (Freud, *Humor* 253), or two persons, one of whom is not connected to the humorous act, whereas the other makes this person the object of his or her humorous observation. The essence of humour consists in saving oneself the affects which particular situations would give reason to express, as, instead of expressing possible feelings or emotions, one expends the energy for a jest. Freud further relates the humorous situation to his philosophical theory, claiming that humour is the result of the dynamics of ego, id and superego.

Although much quoted and often referred to by other scholars, Freud’s work has received criticism for its textual difficulty and been assessed as raising more questions than it answers.¹⁷

¹⁷ See Colletta, 2003 and Parkin, 1997. For a review on reactions to Freud’s theory see Attardo 56-57.

Freud, who was in favour of the incongruity theory of humour, is particularly relevant for an analysis of the novels under consideration, as several humorous passages concerning the Queen are due to incongruous elements. Moreover, his theory regarding the emergence of the comic situation and the means by which someone is made comic form the basis of my analysis of the situations in which the Queen is perceived as funny.¹⁸

3.2.2 Bergson

Bergson was in favour of the superiority theory, as for him, humour is “used by society to correct deviant behaviour” (Attardo 50). In his essay *Le Rire (Laughter)*, he states that “laughter is a human phenomenon, it is social, and it requires an intellectual outlook from the participants rather than an emotional one” (Attardo 58). What Bergson and Freud have in common is that both their texts on humour are embedded in their respective philosophical theories, in Bergson’s case the ‘*élan vital*’ (see Parkin 39).

Bergson’s great influence on French literary theory cannot be denied; also in English as well as Spanish literary criticism, the impact of his work is present (see Attardo 58).

Concerning the employment of humour in the fictional construction of the Queen, one will notice a tendency to depict her in situations in which she is helpless or which are otherwise embarrassing for her. Laughter can therefore be viewed as an activity shared by society in order to laugh at the Queen’s abnormal behaviour and the superiority theory comes into play when attempting to explain the reasons why the Queen is laughed at.¹⁹

¹⁸ See Chapter 4.2.1 and Chapter 4.3.

¹⁹ See Chapter 4.4.3.

3.2.3 Incongruity, Hostility and Release Theories

Modern approaches to humour are divided into three branches, namely incongruity, hostility and release theories (see Attardo 47). The basis of incongruity theories is formed by “[h]umor arising from disjointed, ill-suited pairings of ideas or situations or presentations of ideas or situations that are divergent from habitual customs” (Keith-Spiegel 7).

Already in Plato’s and Aristotle’s theories, the aggressive side of humour has been pointed out. In the seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes originated the idea “that laughter arises from a sense of superiority of the laugher towards some object” (Attardo 49). Nowadays, this approach is still common in the analysis of humour, as can be regarded in the statement of Alexander (123), who points out that “the vast majority of the humour engaged in is at someone else’s expense, usually a person (perceived to be) inferior to oneself.” This theory is both referred to as superiority and hostility theory.

According to proponents of release theories, “humor ‘releases’ tensions, psychic energy, or [...] releases one from inhibitions, conventions and laws” (Attardo 50). As far as linguistic behaviour is concerned, release theories are noteworthy because they justify the ‘liberation’ from linguistic rules which are typical of puns, for instance (see Attardo 50).

3.3 Different forms and linguistic aspects of humour

3.3.1 Irony and sarcasm

Lodge (179) defines irony as “saying the opposite of what you mean, or inviting an interpretation different from the surface meaning of your words”. Therefore, what probably distinguishes this figure of speech most from others of its kind is that irony does not consist of a distinct verbal form and must be “recognized as such in the act of interpretation” (Lodge 179). ‘Dramatic irony’ refers to the effect which is generated when a disparity between the facts of the situation in a plot and the way the characters understand it is detected (see Lodge 179).

The use of irony as a textual strategy, not as an isolated figure of speech, may be defined “in terms of its use of jokingly ‘mistaken’ language to point to something implicatingly ‘wrong’ in the world outside language” (Purdie 115). The wrongness which is indicated by irony can be more or less important, for instance, the words ‘lovely weather’ pronounced in heavy rainfall can be classified as ‘ironic’, as the weather is, in fact, undesirable. Irony is therefore located outside language and linguistically implemented by a recognisable reversal, that is to say, something which we understand as negative is spoken as good. The use of irony to convey contempt or to mock is also referred to as sarcasm.²⁰ The difference between ‘irony’ and the concept of ‘satire’ is “irony’s reversed, ‘improper’ speech being located in the text (it is the ‘author’s’ speech), while pointing to some extra-linguistic wrongness” (Purdie 115).

3.3.2 Satire

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, satire is “[a] mode of writing that exposes the failings of individuals, institutions, or societies to ridicule and scorn.” It often occurs incidentally in literary works which are not entirely satirical, particularly in comedy. The satirical tone “may vary from tolerant amusement, to bitter indignation”. It is not limited to a particular form of literature, but occurs in drama, poetry and prose writings. A distinction must be drawn from the direct form of satire, in which the reader is directly addressed by the writer, and the indirect form, in which the reader is supposed to grasp the satirical essence when learning about the actions of the characters.²¹

In contrast to this emphasis of satire as a mode of writing, Evrard (see 38) points out that satire can be defined as a text of argumentative and persuasive

²⁰ *The Oxford Dictionary of English* (revised edition). "sarcasm *noun*." Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2005. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universitätsbibliothek Wien. 10 November 2009

<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e68307>>
²¹ *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. "satire" Chris Baldick. Oxford University Press, 2008. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universitätsbibliothek Wien. 16 June 2009 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t56.e1014>>

character, written with the aim of affronting and converting the audience. He further places satire near the comic, pointing out that its content is perceived as grotesque and ridiculous by the reader. It tends to exaggerate and deform reality in order to present it in an absurd way.

Contrary to her definition of 'irony', Purdie claims that "what is labelled 'satire' points to an extra-linguistic, real referent, but one whose 'wrongness' is constructed in terms of their *own* inept speaking – especially of social codes – while also understood as having effects that matter" (Purdie 115; italics in original).

The setting of the social satire is the world of the higher and privileged classes. Naturally, in order for satire to be effective, an implicit moral standard is demanded. The purpose of the social satire is therefore to confront the higher classes plainly with their moral misbehaviour (see Colletta 2-5). The humour of social satire usually offers an optimistic assumption that the "correction of vice will lead to the reintegration of the individual into society" (Colletta 2).²²

Colletta distinguishes another form of satire from the social satire, namely the dark humour satire, in which "injustice is mocked but so too are personal despair and the ideas of moral action and social transformation" (Colletta 4). Serious moral acts, which express the characters' feelings of desperation, such as suicide, are often reduced to absurdity (see Colletta 4).

3.3.3 Parody

The aim of a parody is to ridicule either a person, or a literary work and, in the same way, its author, by mimicking it accordingly. In order to evoke laughter, the parodist makes use of various techniques. It is possible to denounce a text or parts of a text which were intended by the author to have a serious effect, but which lack proper argumentation or style. Furthermore, one could also use an author's style and apply it to topics which are ridiculously unsuited for that, or

²² For a detailed account of the Modernist social satire see Colletta, Introduction.

characteristic aspects of the work can be exaggerated and over-repeated (see Bourke 42).

The humoristic effect of parody is achieved by the creation of discrepancies, such as the stylistic form and the incongruous content (see Bourke 42). When parodying a person, as I would argue, the establishment of discrepancies and incongruities is equally essential. Instead of exaggerating and over-using stylistic elements, characteristic traits in behaviour, language, clothing et cetera can be taken up and used effectively in a humorous imitation.

Upon closer examination, one might remark that the concept of parody does bear a striking resemblance to the one of satire. There are indeed similarities which result in the borderline between these two types of humour being blurred. Bourke even goes so far as to classify parody as a sub-category of satire, however, when taking into account their characteristics and differences, I would rather view them as two distinct, yet partly over-lapping categories of humorous expressions. Both have in common a certain desire to criticize, however, a difference in attitude between the parodist and the satirist can be noted. While the former is on the whole characterized by a good-natured temper, the latter writes with an attitude of rejection and anger, "er will vernichten, wenn auch die Mittel, mit denen er operiert, bald sanfter, bald drastischer sind" (Bourke 47). He further points out that parody "bedient sich oft geistreich-intellektueller Einfälle, während die Satire ihrerseits ihre Wirkung oft durch die Aufstellung lächerlich wirkender Diskrepanzen erzielt" (Bourke 47). Parody constructs, similar to satire, a speaker located outside the text, however, Purdie names as the main difference that in a parodic text, the 'improper' speaking of the character is constructed as having no serious effects on the characters, as it is solely employed as a means of ridicule (see Purdie 115).

3.3.4 Black humour, dark humour and gallows humour

Dark humour is “generally defined by ambivalence, confused chronology, plots that seem to go nowhere, and a conflicting, or even unreliable, narrative stance” (Colletta 4). It characteristically represents traumatic or violent events, hence representing the terrible and the humorous at the same time, which results in a questioning of the readers’ values and perceptions. Dark humour makes fun of themes which are otherwise viewed as serious and tragic, such as loneliness, authority, chaos, powerlessness and even death. This representation of the serious as comical can be regarded as a transgression against established norms of society, however, it does not offer any alternative or solution other than amusement and laughter (see Colletta 29).

One of the functions of the employment of dark humour is thus to allow peoples’ fears to be mastered for a moment. Forces that would normally reduce a person to nothingness are converted into a source of enjoyment (see Colletta 7). Moreover, dark humour “defies any system that does not match with personal experience or intuition, whether that system is political, ethical, religious, or even narrative” (Colletta 4). Simultaneously, a comedic order on the chaos in the plot is imposed, whereas an all-encompassing moral or ideological view on the world is avoided (see Colletta 4-7). The borderline between dark humour and other forms of humour is not clear cut; for instance, dark humour shares certain characteristics of its form with satire, such as its “deflationary wit and lacerating use of irony” (Colletta 6).

Similar to dark humour is the concept of gallows humour, which is addressed by Freud in *Der Humor*. Gallows humour usually occurs when a person experiences a situation in which the utterance of emotions such as pain, anger, horror or even disgust would be expected; feelings, which the spectator/listener is expecting to experience himself as a sign of compassion. However, this willingness to share the expected emotions is disappointed, as the other one does not express an affect, but makes a joke; “aus dem ersparten Gefühlsaufwand wird nun beim Zuhörer die humoristische Lust” (Freud, *Humor*,

254). As an example, he cites the situation of a delinquent who utters, when led to the gallows, 'Well, the week starts nicely', which is obviously not to be taken seriously, as there is not going to be a rest of the week for him (see Freud, *Humor*, 253).

Bourke introduces the synonym *sardonic humour* and provides the simple, but concise definition "bittere Heiterkeit, auch in schwerer Not" (Bourke 40). In connection to Freud's example, it is noteworthy to point out that the 'sardonic humorist' is not limited to employ gallows humour in describing his own fate, however, he or she might as well talk about the misery of others in a purposefully unemotional and cold manner, which does not fall short of a certain comical effect.

3.3.5 Slapstick

Slapstick is defined as a "comedy based on deliberately clumsy actions and humorously embarrassing events."²³ While it is usually associated with dramatic performance and comedy shows, it is by no means restricted to the dramatic genre, but also occurs in prose.

3.3.6 British Humour

British Humour is not a type of humour as such, however, as it is an expression widely associated with Britain and crossed national borders particularly via comedy series and television sitcoms, it is worth embracing the concept in the context of this thesis.

²³ *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, Twelfth edition . "slapstick *n.*" Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2008. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universitätsbibliothek Wien. 03 January 2010 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t23.e52924>>

As Bourke (5) puts it, “[m]an könnte manchmal wirklich den Eindruck gewinnen, der Humor werde in England als eine Tugend von so seltener Erhabenheit angesehen, daß er das völlige Fehlen sämtlicher anderen wünschenswerten menschlichen Eigenschaften mehr als entschuldigen und ersetzen könnte.“ However, Bourke’s notion of England and English humour needs to be questioned critically here, for it is likely that he does not limit his investigation to the geographical area of England, but rather uses ‘England’ as a synonym for Great Britain. Furthermore, what needs to be borne in mind is that British society is by no means homogeneous and therefore leaves little scope for referring to British humour as a national characteristic. As there is also a grand variety of British authors who are credited for their humorous style, ranging from writers such as Shakespeare to Zadie Smith, it becomes obvious that all these representatives of Britain cannot be encompassed with a unified experience of humour, as there are numerous experiences of humour which come together. Thus, I would like to point out that it is certainly not correct to use the term as characterizing the sense of humour of British people as such. British humour, as the term will be employed in the following, is a concept of a certain kind of humour which originated in Britain and occurs predominantly in British literature, comedy and media and has therefore left its mark on British culture.

“The phenomenon of comedy and humour is [...] a conspicuous and yet ill understood force in contemporary British society” (Alexander 132). Apparently, it is not only British people who regard humour as a so-called national characteristic. “A visitor to Britain cannot help but be struck by the sheer quantity of comedy shows broadcast by the electronic media” (Alexander 132).²⁴ Interestingly, non-British people usually find it difficult to grasp the essence of British humour, ‘to get the joke’, as one would say colloquially (see Bourke 14).

One of the types of humour which are typical of British humour is the frequent occurrence of situation comedy, which emerges from a situation which

²⁴ For a detailed analysis of the cultural and social aspects of comedy and humour in Britain see Alexander, chapter 8.

comprises incongruities, and a person's ability to detect those incongruities, react and give expression to them (see Bourke 16).

In addition, British humour often makes use of parody, which has been popular in Britain for more than two centuries and examples of which have been published in magazines, journals and pamphlets ever since (see Bourke 42).

Apart from the types of humour which are featured in British comedy series and novels, there is a tendency to certain stylistic elements, such as extravagant and eccentric comparisons in order to make descriptions seem more interesting and lively, as well as to understatement²⁵; two practices which are, interestingly, contradicting. The latter might be described as "die Tendenz, weniger zu sagen als gemeint ist; eher knapp, gedämpft und farblos zu formulieren als überschwenglich und mit Hilfe von Superlativen Gefühle auszudrücken oder Sachverhalte zu beschreiben" (Bourke 37). Whereas understatement can be a simple indicator of a reserved nature, it can be highly amusing, particularly in situations which would normally involve strong feelings of tragedy, et cetera, which are then replaced by a very dry and unemotional reaction (see Bourke 37). However, understatement is also considered a form of boasting or asserting oneself (see Alexander 126).

The themes which typically occur in British humour are, for instance, family life, sexuality, sports, spirituality, politics as well as certain personality types, such as the eccentric (see Bourke 69). Naturally, topics which are sources of humour and occasions which prompt laughter, in other words, what is perceived as funny, is not continuous, but submitted to the permanent influence of cultural and historical change.²⁶

However, social class dimensions play a major role in British humour. Another factor which is noteworthy in the assessment of British comedy is the effect of regionalism. "Despite the highly centralized character of the unitary British state

²⁵ The use of understatement is considered one of the main differences between British and American humour, where 'overstatement' is employed more frequently. See also Alexander 125-126.

²⁶ See also Bourke Chapter VI.

and economy, there are considerable residual features of regional and local rivalry” (Alexander 152), such as the North-South divide of England, which is above class distinction.

3.3.7 Pun and word play

A pun is usually defined as “a play on words [which] involves the use of homonyms in a single context in which only one meaning is appropriate, while the other meaning may appear so only by extension or by association and in some instances may seem incongruent” (Apte 179). Aside from literature, punning is also frequently made use of in advertising in Western countries. Apte emphasises the habit of using single-word puns, however, he points out the possibility of using punning techniques on a morphological and syntactical level as well.

Noteworthy in this context is the interlingual pun, which occurs “when individuals use a lexical item from a language that is phonetically similar to a lexical item from another but has a different meaning” (Apte 181). Interlingual puns may occur deliberately as a form of word play or unintentionally, resulting from a person’s insufficient language skills. The possibility of using this form of puns in linguistic games, aimed at improving someone’s foreign language skills, must not be neglected (see Apte 181-182).

3.3.8 Wit

Wit might be described as an intellectual ability which effects an association of ideas in the form of a remark which is unexpected, yet accurate, a quick-witted response or a subtle wordplay, with the eventual result of evoking intellectual satisfaction. The difference to other forms of humour lies perhaps in its biting character, which can at times be pitiless and offending. The expressions ‘a

biting wit' or 'a sarcastic wit' have become frequently used collocations (see Bourke 13).²⁷

3.3.9 Jokes

A joke can only be exchanged and fully enjoyed if a certain set of background information is shared. Especially in conversational joking, participants are required to have “a wealth of background information about their respective habits as well as assumptions about who jokes with whom, where, when and about what” (Norrick 4) in order for jokes to unfold their full potential.²⁸

Apart from the functions of humour in general, verbal jokes offer an additional range of possibilities. From a social point of view, “joking and laughing together helps to establish rapport and can lead to further involvement” (Norrick 5), even if the participants in the joking situations are not acquainted. Furthermore, it is a means to relieve tension and overcome hostility, as “joking allows us to manipulate talk and participants in various ways, by presenting a self, probing for information about the attitudes and affiliations of our interlocutors [and] realigning ourselves with respect to them” (Norrick 5).

3.4 Extra-linguistic aspects of humour

3.4.1 The relative nature of humour

3.4.1.1 The subjectivity of humour

Taking the problems and incongruities which arrive when attempting a definition of humour into account, it appears reasonable to agree with Lodge's claim that “[h]umour is a notoriously subjective matter” (111). Which character is perceived as 'funny' and which text passage may evoke a smile or even a chuckle,

²⁷ For a full account of the history and science of wit see Hill, 1993.

²⁸ For more information on conversational joking, its occurrence, organization, function and speaker strategies see Norrick, 1993.

depends on the reader as an individual, but also “on a variety of factors, among them our cultural background and identity, our politics and aesthetics, and our location and current state of mind” (Reichl& Stein 5). Naturally, what is meant by ‘humour’ and what is classified as ‘humorous’ also depends on the era and differs from country to country, from culture to culture, respectively.²⁹

3.4.1.2 The socio-cultural context

Therefore, the socio-cultural context into which humour is embedded is crucial to the understanding of humour, which renders the concept even more unstable and ambiguous.³⁰ In this context, Apte stresses the universal and culture-specific attributes which both language and humour have in common, the universal attributes being “mainly formal in nature, while the culture-specific ones are substantive” (177). Humorous techniques are universal, with reversal, punning, mimicry, mockery, nicknaming and exaggeration being almost certainly used in all cultures. Furthermore, the substantive nature of humour differs across cultures, like that of language, not only in definition, but also in the degree and the direction of a particular humorous form. What is considered mockery, for instance, is culturally determined; however, mockery as a category of humour is universal.

3.4.1.3 Taboo topics

Cultural differences do not only account for whether something is perceived as funny or not, however, they also determine the type of humour which is used, as “different societies have varying sensibilities” (Alexander 115) as far as the level of acceptance is concerned. When encountering realizations of humour in a different cultural setting, a culture shock might occur (see Alexander 15).

²⁹ For a comparative study of the interrelation of socio-cultural factors and humour in societies around the world see Apte, 1985.

³⁰ See also Evrard 4.

Humour is usually not value-free, no matter whether it occurs in verbal form or otherwise. Jokes with a malevolent intention can degenerate to ethnic slurs. In nearly every culture or era, topics which are tabooed or socially stigmatized play a role in humour, particularly in verbal humour. Socially stigmatized topics usually include ethnic minorities or aspects of life, which are either forbidden or not socially approved, in any case, topics which normally do not elicit people's laughter. Obviously, jokes of this kind might be perceived as insensitive or offensive. The limit of what is taboo but still counts as funny if presented in a joke is culture-bound and might even differ from groups within societies (see Alexander 122).

Naturally, national stereotypes figure in making jokes, as there is a strong interrelation between verbal humour, types of humour and national stereotypes. This argument is supported by "our very model of language as socio-cultural process" (Alexander 116). Research in the area of dialect and folklore studies has proven that 'national' sayings, such as jokes and proverbs, relate to national stereotypes. Naturally, studies of this kind reveal the "'constructed' and selective nature of sayings and characteristics which are claimed as 'national' and typically British, etc." (Alexander 117) and therefore emphasize the nature of regional identities within a nation (see Alexander 116-117).

3.4.2 Humour in literature

Obviously, the genres to deploy humorous elements are, for instance, comedy, satire and farce, which all are, according to their very definition, humorous, be it through the author's use of language or a certain treatment of subject-matters. However, it can definitely be said that humour is also an indispensable element for other genres, such as the realist novel, famous examples of which have been written by writers such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Jonathan Swift as well as Nick Hornby and David Lodge, to name a few contemporary ones (see Pichler 208). A special type of novel which needs to be mentioned at this point is the comic novel, a genre particularly popular on the British Isles, famous

examples of which include Henry Fielding, Charles Dickens and Evelyn Waugh (see Lodge 110).

As far as the occurrence of humoristic elements in literary texts is concerned, it can be stated that an exact localisation and definition of what is 'funny' or 'humorous' is equally difficult to assess as the concept itself. The use of humour is not characterized by a specific trope. Evrard (4) remarks about humour that "sa variété de degrés, de procédés, de thèmes, son aspect subtil et diffus, en font un phénomène difficile à localiser et à définir dans une œuvre littéraire ".³¹

3.4.2.1 Comedy

A humorous text is often referred to as 'comedy', which is, however, a concept nearly equally difficult to define as humour itself. Purdie (see 73ff) points out the importance of not only taking into account the funny elements of the narrative, but also the non-joking elements, in order to arrive at a sensible definition of comedy. While some critics have identified "an 'essence of comedy' which is separable from its funniness" (Purdie 73), Purdie criticizes this definition as misleading, as funniness is the main ingredient of comedy.

It is essential to distinguish between comedy in dramatic performance and narrative comedy. Comedy is mainly connected with drama, as humour and funny moments are particularly effective in dramatic performance.³² In narrative comedy, Purdie argues, individual humorous elements and funny moments do not stand on their own, but are integrated into the plot and "shed their 'flavour' into the whole text" (Purdie 74). Of course, the more individual jokes occur in the story, the more the total performance is understood as a joking representation.

³¹ "Its variety of nuances, of techniques, of themes and its subtle and diffuse aspect make it a phenomenon difficult to pinpoint and to define in a literary text." (my translation)

³² In drama, the authorial teller is not as immediately present as in literature; furthermore, the laughing of other audience members reinforces a laughing response in the individual. Moreover, the elements of the joking response are enhanced because of the physical presence of the represented characters. For more information see Purdie 73ff.

It is through this osmosis of understood intention that the characters' behaviour (which constitutes the story) is then attended to as, in itself, the language of a signifying system – a structure that can be operated properly or improperly, separately from words it may use and from words which may describe it. (Purdie 74-75)

Through the medium of performance, every representation, even people speaking, is produced as behaviour, whereas in the narrative form, everything which is represented is produced as a verbal account (see Purdie 75).

3.4.2.2 Humour as a textual strategy

According to Purdie,

[f]unniness is not an inherent characteristic of targets, situations or even utterances, but the effect of attending to 'the fact of signification' within an understood joking intention – an effect some targets, situations and utterances are especially liable to create. (Purdie 77)

In order to find out how the presence or absence of funniness functions in relation to joking, she argues that "an affective concern for the persons involved" (Purdie 77) needs to be distinguished from what she refers to as "an 'ideological' implication with some kind of value or belief that any utterance may mobilise" (77). The most evident way of describing the "affective implication" (77) Purdie talks about is to feel sympathy or empathy towards the people concerned. While experiencing sympathy towards a victim precludes laughter at their misfortunes, the feeling of being threatened by someone will not make him or her the object of laughter in a similar situation. Consequently, it can be said that to yield power or to award sympathy are psychic operations, which "have in common the 'realisation' of their object as an effective entity in our world" (Purdie 78). Therefore, the fictional character is accepted as real and also their speaking has real effect. By responding to an utterance as effective, its speaker is constructed as a reality in the psychic world and to those who are 'realised'

“the status of proper speakers whose utterances constitute full language, which has reference beyond itself” is accorded (Purdie 78). While ‘what a person signifies’ are dynamic constructions in the real worlds and also in texts, this sort of ‘implication’ prevents the audience from taking their signification as a joke (see Purdie 77-78).

How a text is received by the audience is, at least to a certain extent, established before the action is encountered. In order to inform the audience of the main intention of comedies, clear external labels such as appropriate titles and advertising are used. The content and the events which are represented in the plot further encourage the reception of a text as humorous because certain categories of events are interrelated with predominant valuations in any culture, for instance, when a certain event is constructed, its perception as funny or serious is mostly predetermined. The pre-existing relationship between the contents of an utterance and the audience are therefore an essential determinant of whether an event is regarded as humorous or not (see Purdie 78).

Texts which are supposed to be taken seriously usually intend to convince their audience that the characters’ reactions would be provoked by a given cause within the fictive world. The emotions such as anger, joy and suffering, which are experienced by the characters, are therefore constructed as realistic. If a serious character behaves in an unreasonable way, there is probably an explanation provided which the audience can accept as realistic. Humorous texts operate conversely (see Purdie 78-79).

Whether emotions in texts are perceived as serious or comical depends largely on the other characters’ response to them. In texts which attempt to be taken seriously, the characters behave towards each other in a way that would be considered appropriate, whilst in funny texts, the opposite is true. When emotions such as anger, for instance, are not treated with a reaction which would be expected in the situation, the emotion is allowed to be read as ineffective and excessive (see Purdie 79).

3.5 Functions of humour

3.5.1 Expression of criticism

According to Douglas, jokes are used to attack the social structure and rules. She states that “[a]ll jokes have this subversive effect on the dominant structure of ideas” (Douglas 95). With reference to Douglas, who emphasises the “interpretative duality of humour” (Mulkay 152), meaning that “humour is produced, not merely by the incongruous combination of opposing patterns, but also by the revelation of an alternative, hidden meaning” (Mulkay 152), Mulkay stresses the link between humour and social structure. In order for a joke to be perceived as a joke and to be found amusing, it is essential for the actors to “recognize and appreciate the interpretative oppositions and ambiguities required in the realms of humour” (Mulkay 153). The joke, therefore, needs to express the social situation in which it takes place. As social life consists of organised patterns, which themselves involve oppositions, incongruities and contradictions which are expressed through humorous discourse, joking occurs. Douglas (102; quoted in Mulkay 153-154) claims that any humorous discourse or utterance inevitably entails a confrontation with the prevailing social pattern “by giving voice to its inconsistencies and irrationalities” (Mulkay 153). Thus, humour can be regarded as a means for destroying the social hierarchy and devaluating dominant values. The patterns of social life are no longer accepted.

Consequently, humour can be employed as a weapon against social injustice and hypocrisy. As an example of this phenomenon, he cites political jokes, which “are the citizens’ response to the state’s efforts to standardise their thinking and to frighten them into withholding criticism and dissent” (Benton 33). A joke is particularly suited for mocking and ridiculing persons in high positions who one would normally refrain from attacking because of fear or other inhibitions. By virtue of the political joke, it is possible for those who are powerless to express their disapproval and judge society critically. Political humour has been employed since the ancient Greeks and Romans and has become a means to express non-official opinion in every class of nearly every

society. They are, however, particularly flourishing in dictatorships where people do not dispose of democratic freedom (see Benton 33ff).

3.5.2 Reduction of anger and aggression

Linstead stresses the function of humour as a coping device, stating that with the help of humour, one may ease emotions such as frustration or tension (see Linstead 126). Even anger may be reduced and expressed through humour, the employment of which “provides a socially acceptable vent for hostility toward other people and their idiosyncracies” (Norrick 5).

In case of defeat, the use of humour “may also be a ‘surrender’ message which disarms an aggressor, or a reaction to a triumph over another which allows the vanquished to continue without suffering total annihilation” (Linstead 126). The capacity of viewing unpleasant parts of our lives less seriously “serves as a means of accommodating us to those parts of our lives, and of ensuring that we remain within their conventions and roles” (Linstead 126).

3.5.3 Defence against suffering and reality

The effective use of humour is not only able to allay feelings of anger; however, this reductive effect appears to apply to other emotions, such as suffering and sadness, as well. “Der Humor ist nicht resigniert, er ist trotzig, er bedeutet nicht nur den Triumph des Ichs, sondern auch den des Lustprinzips, das sich hier gegen die Ungunst der realen Verhältnisse zu behaupten vermag“ (Freud, *Humor*, 255). Because of the „Durchsetzung des Lustprinzips“ (Freud, *Humor*, 255) and the rejection of reality, humour is close to regressive and reactionary processes. Freud designates humour as one of those methods which were developed by the human psyche in order to elude the compulsion of suffering (see Freud, *Humor*, 255).

3.5.4 Social function

As mentioned before, what is perceived as funny depends on the social context. Having a sense of humour is hence vital for being a member of a certain subgroup of society. “Failing to see the joke’ illustrates how important humour can be as a social structure-bolstering mechanism of a patriarchal, white-Anglo-Saxon society, despite many changes of the latter part of the twentieth century” (Alexander 119).

Given the above-mentioned implications of grasping humour for a social group, it can be inferred that humour plays a significant role in social interaction between individuals. Thus, a lack of what is regarded as ‘a proper sense of humour’ might result in antipathy and dislike on the part of the conversation partner (see Alexander 120).

This is particularly problematic as the foundation for an appreciation of humour is formed by socio-cultural knowledge and not solely on the basis of having a profound knowledge of the linguistic system, assuming that sharing the same cultural background also results in sharing the same world knowledge and prejudices (see Alexander 118). Therefore, it can be especially difficult for non-British people who do not yet share the same cultural prerequisites and might therefore be denied to have a sense of humour only because of having no common ‘background assumptions’, as Alexander (see 119) calls it.³³

Consequently, the powerful force of humour is revealed once more. It is not only the jokes about national stereotypes and the transgression of the borderline of what is socially accepted, but simply the lack of the same socio-cultural knowledge which can be the cause of prejudices and the exclusion of others from society.

³³ For more information on the role of humour in the intercultural context see Pichler, 2005.

4. From theory to practice: An analysis of the selected novels

4.1 The construction of the fictional Royal Family

4.1.1 The stereotypical depiction of the members of the Royal Family

In two of the novels, *The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla*, the Queen is sent to live in a poverty-stricken council house estate together with her family, which accounts for the fact that the other members of the Royal Family in their function as main characters play a role equally important to the one of the Queen herself. It is remarkable that the author achieves to present the supposed characteristics of the real-life Royals by constructing the fictional ones as one would imagine them to be in reality by presenting the physical attributes and the linguistic and non-verbal behaviour of the characters conforming to the general preconceptions the readers might have of the Royal Family. Naturally, this modelling on the real-life Royals ensures a certain level of comedy throughout the plot, which is enforced by heavily parodying these aforementioned characteristics.

Prince Philip

The Queen's husband is the member of the Royal Family who is probably least able to cope with the abolition of the monarchy and adapt to the new living situation. The development of his character basically passes through three different stages. At first, when hearing the announcement of the election results, he is deeply shocked and spends the following hours as if in trance.

Prince Philip was in a state of shock and had been ever since the previous night when he had turned on the television for Election Night Special at 11.25 and seen the announcement of the election of Jack Barker [...]. [He] had watched incredulously as Barker had addressed the joyous crowds in the Town Hall. Middle-aged poll tax payers had cheered alongside young people wearing ragged jeans and nose rings. (Q&I 20)

At the sight of his new living space, his shock transforms into anger, which is expressed by an emotional outburst and the uncontrolled use of aggressive and offensive language, causing his neighbours to assume that “[h]e’s a loony, one of them that’s been let out to die in the community” (Q&I 36).

Prince Philip spoke. ‘It’s abso-bloody-lutely impossible. I refuse. I’d sooner live in a bloody *ditch*. And that bloody *light* will send me *mad*.’ He shouted up at the light which carried on with its storm-at-sea impression, taking on hurricane status when Philip took hold of its post and shook it violently from side to side. (Q&I 36; italics in original)

The last stage of his character development is characterized by complete and utter capitulation, a refusal to acknowledge his new life. His behaviour becomes more and more reminiscent of the one of a sullen child, when he declares his despise of this “hideous box of a house” (Q&I 117) and the consequent loss of his will to live.

‘You haven’t shaved, Philip and it’s nine o’clock.’
‘I’m growing a beard.’
‘You haven’t washed.’
‘Bathroom’s bloody cold.’
‘You’ve been wearing your pyjamas and dressing gown for two days.’
‘Don’t intend to go out. Why bother?’
‘But you must go out.’
‘Why?’
‘For fresh air, exercise.’
‘There is no fresh air in Hell bloody Close. It stinks. It’s ugly. I refuse to acknowledge its existence. I shall stay in-bloody-doors until I die.’
‘Doing what?’
‘Nothing. Lying in bed. Now, leave my breakfast tray and close those bloody curtains and go out, would you?’
‘Philip, you are talking to me as one would talk to a servant.’
‘I’m your husband. You’re my wife.’ (Q&I 77)

This dialogue between the Queen and her husband illustrates another issue which is broached in the novel, namely Philip’s patriarchal understanding of the roles in a marriage. His discontent with his role as the Royal Consort becomes apparent, as it is stated that “he had resented walking one step behind [the Queen]. His personality was not in tune with playing second fiddle. He was a

whole quarrelling orchestra” (Q&I 57). Whereas he seemingly accepted his position lower in rank than his wife’s when she was the head of the nation, it appears as if now that she is an ordinary house-wife, he insists on the roles being interchanged in order for him to be the superior part in their relationship and the head of the household, corresponding to the prevalent gender roles. In accordance with the common usage of women taking on their husband’s family name, Philip wants his wife to be called ‘Mrs. Mountbatten’.

Philip is the only member of the Royal Family who fails to adapt to the new situation at all. He “reacts to the dramatic change of circumstances by going to pieces” (O’Reilly), in contrast to his wife, who “exhibits an admirable stoicism” (O’Reilly). During the course of the entire novel, his character is portrayed as a lunatic, who prefers to live in the past, in which he was still the Duke of Edinburgh and “user of the Royal yacht *Britannia*, which cost £ 30,000 a day to run” (Q&I 276; italics in original). In the sequel *Queen Camilla*, his health has deteriorated drastically as the result of a stroke “that snatched away his vision, memory and mobility” (QC 76) and he was consequently transferred to a nursing home.

The Queen Mother

The mother of the Queen, who was a very popular member of the Royal Family, is depicted as a very likeable and popular person in *The Queen and I*. She is presented to the reader as a sweet elderly lady who is “too old to change now” (Q&I 23) and therefore refuses to acknowledge the anti-monarchist sentiment which is prevalent after the election. The warm smile the real Queen Mum was famous for and the adoration she was used to receive by the population is taken up in the novel and heavily parodied, as also the other characters regard her with adoration in their eyes. Even when moving into her bungalow which is “truly appalling, cramped, smelly and cold” (Q&I 80) to the Queen’s mind, the Queen mother does not “*give in* to one moment of despair” (Q&I 80) and, instead, displays a smile which seems so “fixed, as though it had been commemorated

on Mount Rushmore” (Q&I 80). The only time her smile alters, but quickly recovers, “like the Financial Times Index on a rocky day in the City” (Q&I 81), is when she encounters her next-door-neighbour, who does not display any signs of adoration towards her. This behaviour is greatly puzzling for her, as she “needed people to love her. People loving her was plasma; without it, she would die. She had lived without a man’s love for the greater part of her life. Being adored by the populace was only a small compensation” (Q&I 80). Her death leads to great consternation among her neighbours and she is mourned in a simple, but dignified funeral service, which is attended by all the inhabitants of the estate.

As far as the fictional construction of the Queen Mother is concerned, it is interesting to note that while the above-mentioned description of her character is amusing, humour is not employed in order to ridicule her. Rather, there are tragic elements involved in the description of her effect on others. Humour is a means to depict the Queen Mother as a person who is lonely despite her popularity among the citizens. When she dies in the course of the novel, the combination of the comic and the tragic is apparent once more. Although the death of her character is presented as tragic as such, there are certain humorous elements involved, such as the need to have her coffin pulled by Gilbert, the horse, “[o]n Spiggy’s dad’s cart” (Q&I 264) because of the impossibility to pay for a proper hearse. Therefore, while the reader is tempted to laugh at the prospect of Gilbert pulling the Queen Mother’s coffin, he or she can still sense the hole she has left in the lives of her family and friends.

I would suggest that the mingling of comic and tragic elements in fiction allows for the reader to sympathise with a character, while at the same time, a feeling of sadness or even despair on part of the reader is avoided. For both the fictional characters and the reader, a tragic situation becomes bearable more easily thanks to the employment of humour. As Colletta (27) argues, it is the comedic presentation of the narrative which saves the reader “from the trauma of a painful affective response” by adopting the narrator’s position of preserving a humorous attitude and therefore being moved to laughter rather than tears.

Furthermore, I would argue that the incorporation of tragic elements in an overall humorous plot serves the purpose of making the reader reflect. The mixture of comedy and tragedy also plays an essential role in the representation of the Queen herself. The main tragic element in the fictional construction of Queen Elizabeth II is her growing awareness of her lack of freedom concerning personal decisions and the subsequent feeling of regret on her part, which will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 4.2.2.2.

Charles and Diana

The picture one receives of the fictional Charles is the one of a loyal, dutiful son, who wants to give his mother a helping hand wherever he can. Now that his mother is no longer the reigning monarch, the balance of power is shifted and, instead of his role as the obedient heir to the throne, he begins to see his mother as the elderly, vulnerable person she is and is determined to look after her.

Prince Charles looked at his mother, her untidy hair, her bloodstained jumper. He took her uninjured hand in his hand and vowed to take care of her. (Q&I 63)

The reader is able to observe a change in Charles' personality from the self-conscious, often patronised Prince Charles, son of the monarch, to a self-confident Charlie Teck, who decides to choose neither his mother's nor his father's surname, in order to "bring an end to this dreadful paternalism" (Q&I 74).

A major aspect in the construction of Charles as a comic character is language. According to his sons' account, he is of a rather serious nature, which is reflected in his verbal behaviour.

William and Harry laughed loudly. It wasn't too often Pa made a joke. He sometimes put on a silly voice and said things about the Goons and stuff, but mostly he was dead serious. Frowning and giving lectures. (Q&I 34)

While Charles desists from using joking language or any other form of verbal humour because he does not aim at being funny, he achieves precisely that owing to his use of formal speech, which is often misplaced, and his insecurity in conversational encounters, which results in a stuttering language flow and the over-use of the filler *er*. The following example illustrates Charles' linguistic behaviour, which is perceived as highly amusing by the reader.

'Spect they'd fetch a bit then, eh?'

'Probably,' Charles conceded. 'But, as you er ... may know, we ... that is ... my family ... we aren't allowed to er ... actually ... sell any of our er'

'Stuff?' Warren was getting sick of waiting for Charles to finish his sentences. What a dork! And this bloke was lined up to be King and rule over Warren? (Q&I 84)

The humour in this conversation between Prince Charles and council estate inhabitant Warren is increased by the fact that Charles' habit of 'speaking properly' according to his rank does not have the effect of being appreciated or even admired in this context. On the contrary, compared to Warren's slang and grammatically incorrect speech it appears rather misplaced and results in the disapproval of someone who is inferior to him in social status.

As far as language is concerned, Charles can generally be described as very nit-picking. He usually needs a large amount of time to formulate the perfect sentence, which results in several humorous situations, in which somebody else anticipates him.

He tried to think of some way to broach the subject, but before he could formulate the perfect sentence, Camilla had taken his mother's hand and said, 'Your Majesty, Charles and I are both *devastated* to hear about your illness. How long have the doctors given you?' (QC 119; italics in original)

Charlie sometimes talked like a bender [...] ‘So hard to choose, *impossible* to decide between a custard cream and a bourbon. A custard cream is so fondanty, a little like having sunshine in one’s mouth, whereas a bourbon has a certain French earthiness about it.’ [...] Anne said, ‘Oh, for Christ’s sake, Charles, choose a bloody biscuit.’ (QC 124; italics in original)

While Charles is appalled at the condition of public institutions and struggles with correctly filling out the forms for benefits, as a result of which his family has severe financial problems, he is relieved at leaving Buckingham Palace and finally being able to enjoy “simple life” (Q&I 31). He is depicted as a passionate gardener, who rejoices in cultivating his front garden and nourishes on macrobiotic food, which is an allusion to the real-life interests of the Prince of Wales³⁴. His unpretentious, close-to-nature lifestyle apparently lets him flourish, in contrast to his wife.

Diana is presented as a loving mother and wife, although one gets the impression that her harmonious relationship with her husband results more from her aversion to disputes [“she hated scenes” (Q&I 19)] and sense of duty (“Why had she forgotten to ask a solicitor to go and see Charles at the police station? How could such an important thing have slipped her mind? It was entirely her fault that Charles was now being represented by the court Duty Solicitor” (Q&I 101)]. She is depicted as a sensitive person who gives her best to make their lives as comfortable as possible.

In contrast to her husband, Diana does not take a liking to their simple life style and does not share his enthusiasm for “clumping around the garden” (Q&I 168). She is described as a real fashion victim, who takes pleasure in wearing beautiful clothes and enjoys redecorating the house:

³⁴ See also *The Prince of Wales*. Ed. Clarence House. 30 January 2010
<<http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/personalprofiles/theprinceofwales/interests/>>

The décor had been chosen by someone who had never heard of Terence Conran. Diana shuddered at the purple and turquoise wallpaper on the walls of the marital bedroom, the polystyrene ceiling tiles, the orange paintwork splodged over the sash window. She thought, I'll ring Interiors tomorrow, ask the editor to come round with paint charts and wallpaper samples. (Q&I 45)

The lack of social activities in Hellebore Close causes her to feel bored and dissatisfied with her marriage. Besides her homely duties and the upbringing of her sons, her mind is occupied with her beauty, as she is afraid that “she would end up looking like Beverley Threadgold and then Charles would go *right off her*” (Q&I 173; italics in original).

She had no fun. She never went out. She couldn't afford batteries for her radio, consequently she had no idea what records were in the charts. There was absolutely nothing to dress up for. [...] The only thing she had to look forward to was Charles's trial. [...] What would she wear? She sorted through her clothes and selected shoes and a bag and was instantly comforted. When she was a little girl she had loved dressing-up games. She closed the wardrobe door and made a mental note to save her serious black suit for the last day of the trial – after all, Charles *could* go to prison. Diana re-opened the wardrobe door. What should she wear for prison visiting? (Q&I 173; italics in original)

Just like characteristics of the real-life Prince Charles are used for the construction of his fictional character and funnily incorporated into the plot, Lady Diana's fashion sense and her beauty, which was often an issue in the media representation of her, is picked up by Townsend and pushed to the extreme, as the previous passage demonstrates. The effect Diana's mesmerizing beauty has on others is satirized, when her “fresh face, the soft skin, the shy blue eyes, the warm damp lips” (Q&I 70) cause her neighbour, Wilf Toby, to fall in love with her the very first moment he beholds her.

A further aspect in the novel is the marriage of Charles and Diana, which gives the impression of not being very happy, owing to their lack of common interests. This is realized comically in Charles' attraction to Beverley Threadgold, who “was not only a commoner, she was common” (Q&I 170) and who makes

Charles desire to stroke her hair with split ends and inhale her cigarette breath. Diana, on the other hand, is attracted to Fitzroy Toussaint, who “was so *tall* and beautiful – those high cheekbones. And his clothes were Paul Smith, his shoes were Gieves and Hawkes” (Q&I 255). An affair between the two of them while Charles serves his prison sentence is indicated. The fictional characters’ marriage problems might be viewed as an allusion to the real-life couple’s separation, which took place shortly before the novel’s publication.

Charles and Camilla

In *Queen Camilla*, the character Charles is depicted less self-confident and often whiny. He keeps lamenting his ordeal at diverse private schools:

Prison sounds rather agreeable compared to Gordonstoun School, where I often woke in the night to find my narrow iron bed and rough blankets covered in a light sprinkling of snow from the open dormitory windows. (QC 1)

I was horribly bullied at prep school. It didn’t help that the headmaster addressed me – a little boy, eight years old – as “sir”. (QC 122)

Charles was reading aloud to Camilla from *Macbeth*. [...] At the end she applauded until her hands smarted. Charles took several bows and allowed himself to laugh with pleasure. Perhaps the demons associated with Gordonstoun School’s production of *Macbeth* would finally leave him. (QC 165)

The constant repetition of his childhood trauma is highly funny, given Charles’ age of nearly sixty and the seemingly harder experiences of others he compares his childhood with, but also creates sympathy within the reader. This narrative device therefore achieves the double function of making Charles a comic character on the one hand, but on the other an amiable character, as he is not afraid to show emotions and, despite being royal, has had an unhappy childhood too, which does not set him apart from ordinary citizens.

Camilla shares her husband’s love for nature and the countryside. She is presented as a down-to-earth person with a passion for horses and fox-hunting,

who needs her five cigarettes a day, which she sees as a compensation for the loss of her freedom. While she is generally depicted as a cheerful person who “didn’t bear a grudge” (QC 6), she has a hard time coming to terms with the fact that she is unpopular and even hated by the citizens, who keep Diana in their memory. Her character is presented as amiable, oblivious and spontaneous. However, upon closer examination one notices that she has her idiosyncrasies. While the following passage emphasises her down-to-earth character, it becomes clear that she also has her vices:

With a horse between her legs and the open countryside in front of her, surrounded by friends she could trust with her life, she experienced a sort of ecstasy; and how wonderful it was to return to a warm house at twilight, to lie in a hot bath with a drink and a fag and, occasionally, Charles. (QC 37)

She is not presented as a devoted wife who is willing to give up everything for her husband. The fact that she prefers a drink and a cigarette to the company of Charles is highly amusing and, at the same time, might be seen as an indication of the independent and strong-willed nature of her personality, which will become more obvious later on in the novel, when she secretly leaves the exclusion zone in order to spend a day in the countryside.

William and Harry

William and Harry, the sons of Charles and Diana, only play a minor role in *The Queen and I*, as both of them are children in the course of the novel. It is probable to assume that their young age accounts for them being the ones to adapt fastest and easiest to their new living situation. While they initially assume that their father is joking when he breaks the news that they will be living in Hellebore Close, they soon begin to view it as an adventure, which they immensely enjoy. Owing to their youth, they fit in well with the local children and are soon “fluent in the local dialect” (Q&I 221), which is characterized by their “abysmal use of the English language, the misspellings, the contempt shown for

the rules of punctuation, the appalling handwriting” (Q&I 250), according to their father.

In *Queen Camilla*, both of them are young adults and residing in a house of their own. William finds employment in the scaffolding business and is the pride of his grandmother, as he “had managed somehow to remain law-abiding and charming” (QC 10), despite growing up in Hell Close. He is described as “a very conscientious boy” (QC 75) with “a taste for melodrama, obviously inherited from his mother” (QC 131), who offers himself to carry out his duty and become king in case of his grandmother’s abdication. His brother, on the other hand, is presented as a lazy, work-shy adolescent with a preference for ‘gangsta rap’ and slang vocabulary. His status in the family becomes obvious when the thought of Harry becoming king in case of his father’s and brother’s passing is faced with horror:

The Queen gave a deep sigh, imagining Harry and his hoody friends on the balcony of Buckingham Palace swigging from cans of lager and giving the crowd below the V sign. She said to Violet, ‘We must find a wife for William.’ (QC 35)

Harry said, ‘When you die, I’ll be king. Wicked.’ William thought to himself that he owed it to the nation to produce an heir to the throne, soon. (QC 133)

Princess Anne

Anne is depicted as the most unspoilt Royal, an optimistic spirit, who prefers “practical, down-to-earth solutions to everyday problems” (Q&I 109). She despises society events as well as formal etiquette, that is why her relocation to Hellebore Close does seem rather convenient to her. Anne does by no means insist on privileged treatment, which is comically described in the following passage:

She shook eight hands and said, 'My name is Anne. Call me that, would ya', please!

Mrs Christmas practically swooned with delight and dropped into a curtsey, [...] but when she arose from abashing herself in front of the Princess, she was disturbed to find that Princess Ann was curtseying to *her*, Winnie Christmas. She didn't know what to make of it. It put her at sixes and sevens. What did it mean? Was she taking the piss? But no. She looked dead serious. *Dead* serious. As though Winnie was as good as she was. I mean. (Q&I 109; italics in original)

In contrast to her family members, she is able to cope very well with a life without servants, as she is even capable of plumbing in her washing machine herself, "using Tony Threadgold's toolbox and the *Reader's Digest D.I.Y. Manual*" (Q&I 111). Her down-to-earth life style is appreciated by the carpet fitter Spiggy, who admires Anne because she calls "a spade a bleedin' spade" (Q&I 235). What is characteristic of the fictional Anne is her passion for horses, a reference to the Princess Royal's involvement in horsemanship and equestrian competitions.³⁵ This is parodied in the novel as Spiggy manages to win Anne's heart solely because he offers her a gift horse.

Princess Margaret and Princess Michael of Kent

The Queen's sister is represented as a society-lady who does not easily accept her new societal status as a commoner and loses her temper when being addressed as 'Maggie' by the carpet-fitter Spiggy (see Q&I 86). Her taste of clothes is exquisite; however, she is considerably over-dressed in the council house estate. This is ridiculed by the fact that "[t]he trunk containing her day-time casual wear had been left in London. Her entire Hell Close wardrobe consisted of six cocktail suits, suitable for show business award ceremonies, but nothing else" (Q&I 85). Margaret's relationship to her sister and the rest of the Royal Family is strained. Her character is egoistic and arrogant, which does not change in the course of the novel. She hides behind her façade and

³⁵ See *The Official Website of the British Monarchy*. "Horsemanship." Ed. Website Team, Buckingham Palace. 21 January 2010
<<http://www.royal.gov.uk/ThecurrentRoyalFamily/ThePrincessRoyal/Horsemanship.aspx>>

disapproves of showing any emotions, which she considers “bad form, like peeling a sticking plaster away and displaying a wound” (Q&I 275).

In *Queen Camilla*, her character is replaced by Princess Michael of Kent, who displays an equally arrogant and snobbish attitude towards common people. She carries around her dog Zsa-Zsa, “a beribboned Russian toy terrier in a matching fur jacket” (QC 125), occupies herself with the writing of a novel about a heroine who is “not unlike herself” (QC 273) and comes to the conclusion “that the poor, uneducated people were absolutely horrid and that the best people with the warmest hearts were the rich and the powerful ones” (QC 273).

To the reader, she embodies all the prejudices one might have against royalty or upper-class society in general: she comes across as a stiff and conceited person, who never did any work in her life and does not pay any attention to the troubles of the ‘little man’. She does not make any attempts to befriend her neighbours or engage in local community activities, as she feels clearly superior to the other residents. The reader’s perception of her as dislikeable is enforced by her outsider position among the other characters in the novel and the disapproval of her own family members, including the Queen.

Andrew and Edward

The two younger sons of the Queen play only minor roles in the novels. Andrew, who describes himself as being like “an animal of some kind, of very little brain” (QC 120), appears to be a ladies’ man and is sexually involved with a character of a rather dubious reputation. His brother Edward, who is passionate about theatre, and his wife Sophie, on the other hand, worry about their daughter Louise’s upbringing in an environment which is not suited to a young lady. In both cases, real-life characteristics of the princes are incorporated in the plot and parodied.

4.1.2 The function of their (humorous) representation

When examining the humorous construction of a fictional character, one needs to distinguish whether the characters are perceived as funny because of their own 'sense of humour', that is to say, their ability to employ various forms of humour such as jokes, satirical remarks or witty statements because they *intend* to be funny, or whether they are *inadvertently* funny. The latter can be achieved by the author's creation of incongruities, which results in the characters' outward appearances, their character traits or their verbal behaviour in certain situations being inappropriate and therefore perceived as funny by the readers. Of course, this construction of the characters as unintentionally comic personae gives the author a certain scope of possibilities to make the characters subject to ridicule. Whereas the reader is much inclined to laugh *with* a character who displays a sense of humour, it is likely that he or she laughs *at* a character who is presented as a fool.

When having a closer look, several instances in which a form of humour is employed by the characters can indeed be noticed. One situation, in which a satirical remark is uttered by Prince Philip, would be his dry declaration at his wife's comment "I had a wendy house bigger than this" (Q&I 37) at the sight of their new house, to which he replies "We've had bloody cars bigger than this." (Q&I 37).

One of the few characters who do possess a sense of humour is Princess Anne, whose down-to-earth attitude is accompanied by quick-witted responses and taunting remarks on the weaknesses of her family members, such as the following:

The Queen continued, 'Charles, I am eighty years of age and I simply cannot face ...' She hesitated.
Anne said, 'Another bloody Royal Variety Performance?' (QC 128)

Edward said, 'A spell in the army would do them all good.'
Anne said, 'It didn't do you any good, Eddy. You had a bloody nervous breakdown.'
Sophie said, 'Edward doesn't like to talk about his time in the Marines.'

Anne said, 'His *brief* time.' (QC 121; italics in original)

The functions of these humorous expressions of the characters are various. First of all, satirical remarks, like the one of Prince Philip in particular, can be a means to cope with difficult situations and reduce emotions such as anger or aggression. Bainschab (36) states that "humor is a device of self-defence: [...] [it] enables the joker to defy death (or pain or grave humiliation) by ridiculing it, it empowers and liberates the threatened (fictional) individual." Of course, the situations the fictional Royals have to face do not involve any threats such as death or physical pain. However, it might be argued that the relocation from Buckingham Palace to a council estate entails many situations which are humiliating for them, let alone the humiliation of the anti-monarchist election results as such. Furthermore, given the effects the new living situation has on Philip's psyche and, ultimately, on his health, it appears reasonable to claim that the use of humour is a device of coping and self-defence in this case. The horror of the prospect of living in the tiny house is minimised through the defiant use of humour.³⁶

Furthermore, characters who have a sense of humour appear more likeable and quick-witted to the reader. Particularly Anne, thanks to her down-to-earth and anti-monarchist attitude, is not presented as a foolish person, but rather as an independent woman who has both feet firmly on the ground. This picture of her is reinforced by her conscious employment of humour, which evokes positive connotations.

However, in general, I would claim that in most cases the source of the amusement lies in the characters being unintentionally funny. Most of the Royal characters are not perceived as comic because of their humorous attitude towards the new living situation or their own sense of humour. They hardly ever engage in joking or deploy any other form of humorous utterances, such as

³⁶ See also Chapters 3.5.2 and 3.5.3.

satirical remarks or dark humour, neither in conversations nor in their thoughts; at least, they do not employ it consciously or do not seem to be aware of it.

Instead, they are constructed as comic characters because of the description of their outward appearances, character traits, and their social and verbal behaviour, which is frequently misplaced in certain surroundings. In addition, it is their helplessness in certain situations which are seemingly easy to manage which results in funny scenes. The characters' individual weaknesses are exploited by the author in order to create different personae within the family, which are then all caricatured. While Prince Philip, for instance, has the role of the depressive with no sense for reality, his son Charles is the misjudged intellectual; Diana is the beautiful woman with a passion for fashion, while her sister-in-law Anne is depicted as a resolute, sometimes even unfeminine type of woman.

In addition, the humour of the characters is enhanced owing to the fact that the Royal Family exists in reality and the fictional characters are based on the real-life Royals. As the previous analysis has demonstrated, Townsend makes use of actual facts and also characteristics of the individual Royal Family members, which are parodied and incorporated into the plot, hence forming the basis of the character construction. Of course, in how far the supposed characteristics and behaviour of the fictional Royals correspond to the real ones is speculative; however, they are portrayed in a way the readers could imagine them to be and to turn out in this specific situation. I would argue that this is due to the employment of stereotypes, which are created mainly through the media representation.

As far as the employment of stereotypes in terms of fictional character construction is concerned, Triezenberg (415) proposes the following explanation for their popularity: "Stereotypes are funny because they take small differences that everybody notices and blow them all out of proportions; they create a normal/abnormal opposition. [...] Stereotypes are a cheap way to invoke this feeling of knowingness in one's readers." While Triezenberg is

mainly concerned with the use of cultural and national stereotypes, I would argue that the same concept accounts for the stereotypical and exaggerated description of the fictional Royal Family members as well.

Even if the real life personalities of the Royals are unknown to the readership, the latter can be expected to possess at least some knowledge of the way the Royals are represented in the media. The readers then will automatically refer to their images of the Royals, which were intensified by these media representations, and compare them to the fictional portrayals as exaggerated stereotypical examples thereof. Furthermore, even if refraining from reading tabloid articles, it will be inevitable to construct an image of one's own of a member of the Royal Family, as the mere knowledge of the academic achievement, career, charity work and involvement in scandals of the aforementioned will eventually result in assumptions and prejudices on the part of the readership. Therefore, "this feeling of knowingness" (Triezenberg 415) is invoked in the reader, which accounts for the familiar feeling which emerges when a character is presented and displays behaviour which corresponds to the preconception of the real life Royal.

The construction of the young princes, William and Harry, is one example of this stereotypical depiction of the characters. Whereas the former is generally represented as a decent young man, the latter has earned a negative reputation as a result of several scandals which were exploited in the tabloids.³⁷ In *Queen Camilla*, Townsend constructs the princes according to this image, with William being the hard-working and dutiful son, the 'good' child, so to speak, as opposed to his brother, who spends his days in bed listening to 'gangsta' rap and is therefore perceived as the 'bad one'.

³⁷ In early 2005, for instance, Prince Harry was photographed with a swastika armband at a party, which received huge criticism from politicians and various Jewish organizations. See *BBC News*. "Harry says sorry for Nazi costume." 13 January 2005. 24 February 2010 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4170083.stm>. A further scandal which was covered in the media was the appearance of a video in which Prince Harry used a derogatory expression for 'Pakistani'. See also *BBC News*. "Prince's racist term sparks anger." 11 January 2009. 24 February 2010 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7822883.stm>>.

Naturally, the parody of the supposed real-life characteristics of the Royals results in a humorous construction of the fictional characters, which enhances the amusement as the readers can relate to the media coverage and to their own preconceptions about royalty. However, I would suggest that despite the obvious reason of 'being funny', there are various motives for the employment of humour in the character construction.

I would argue that the creation of stereotypical characters and the exaggeration of the character traits do not only serve the function of mocking the Royal Family, but they might also be regarded as a parody of the media representation and the resultant prejudices people have against them. Moreover, some of the fictional Royals' problems as well as funny situations are caused by the ordinary citizens and their behaviour towards the Royals. Thus, the employment of parody also serves the function of a 'mirror', in which the reader is able to view his or her own behaviour in the residents of the exclusion zone. This is particularly prominent in the presentation of the character of the Queen Mother, who is not really ridiculed as a person; subject to ridicule is rather the admiration and worship people show towards her. The same holds true for the glorification of the late Diana in *Queen Camilla*.

In the novel it is implied that Diana has passed away, as one of the residents, Mr Anwar, declares emotionally "Every day I think about her, the beautiful Princess of Hearts. If she were still with us there would be world peace." (QC 48), while another one remarks "No kids would 'ave to go to bed 'ungry,' [...] 'Not if Di was still alive.'" (QC 48). Obviously, this can be regarded as an allusion to the real Diana's saint-like status after her death, which is parodied as her influence on the population is highly exaggerated. An additional comic factor is the location of this incident, which is the 'Everything A Pound' shop where exclusion zone residents are assembled to buy novelty slippers. Certainly, this is hardly the appropriate time and place for Mr Anwar's sermon-like speech, with which he "addressed the growing crowd in the shop. 'Remind yourselves who she perished with. Was he a Christian? A Catholic? A Jew? No, he was a Muslim! And for that she was killed.'" (QC 48)

Furthermore, the act of ridiculing a character and putting him or her in an embarrassing situation which provokes the laughter of the reader is a means of expressing criticism.³⁸ It can be assumed that this holds particularly true for the novels under consideration, as the author, who comes from a working-class background, is “wholeheartedly against the monarchy, but [...] not unsympathetic to the royals as individuals” (O’Reilly). I would also suggest that there is a connection between the characters’ attitude towards the monarchy and the extent to which they are ridiculed and presented in a negative light to the readership. Upon closer examination, it can be noted that Princess Margaret and Princess Michael of Kent, who are probably the most snobbish and arrogant characters in the novels and represent lavish royal lifestyle par excellence, are mocked, but in comparison to other characters, such as Charles, they are never depicted in a way that evokes sympathy or compassion in the reader. Prince Philip, who is probably most ridiculed and presented as a complete fool, is also highly in favour of the monarchy and refuses to mingle with the ordinary citizens, whom he regards as inferior.

As far as the construction of the fictional character Philip is concerned, one might also take into account the image Townsend has of the real Philip, which results in his negative portrayal as “a bed-ridden depressive” (Townsend): “He strikes me as a very one-dimensional man who doesn’t like to admit that he’s supported by his wife” (Townsend).

4.2 The construction of the Queen as a fictional character

4.2.1 The humour/ humorous construction of the Queen

The protagonist of all four novels is the Queen; presumably, a fictional representation of the currently reigning Queen Elizabeth II. In *The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla* the name of the Queen is mentioned several times, as she is called Lizzie by her neighbours and also the rest of the fictional Royals are

³⁸ For a more detailed analysis of the employment of humour in the novels as a means to express criticism see Chapter 4.4.2.

referred to by their real names. The author of *The Autobiography of the Queen* only names her main character ‘the Queen’ and ‘Queen of England’³⁹ (see *Autobiography* 32); it is not until the very end that she is referred to as ‘Queen Elizabeth the Second’. However, references to her husband, ‘the Duke’, ‘the Queen Mother’ and her ‘grandson William’ allow for the assumption much earlier in the novel that the Queen is based on the contemporary British monarch. It is only in *The Uncommon Reader* that the Queen’s name is never explicitly mentioned; however, as the fictional Queen appears to be very “Elizabeth-like” (McCarter), it is likely to presume that the author was inspired by Queen Elizabeth II as well.

As far as the construction of comic characters is concerned, Purdie’s analysis of comic stage characters proves to be useful. She claims that the comicality of a character results from “a carefully structured culmination of incoherences” (Purdie 81), for example, when the characters’ behaviour does not correspond to their motivation or other characters’ responses are not commensurate with the intended effects. In a dramatic performance, the audience will be able to notice “the disjuncture between the ‘presentation’ and ‘representation’ of the text” (Purdie 81).

I would suggest that Purdie’s concept is based on the incongruity theory of humour, which underlies all kinds of humorous occurrences and is therefore not limited to the construction of comic stage characters, but can be employed for the construction of any humorous character or event. Consequently, I would argue that this concept may be applied to a humorous narrative as well. In order to fully understand what exactly is meant by the term ‘incongruity’, the following definition of the term by McGhee (1972, 6-7; quoted in Attardo 48) proves to be useful:

³⁹ Interestingly, Tennant does not refer to her as ‘the Queen of the United Kingdom’. While in *Queen Camilla* England is an independent nation (see also Fairbairns 25) and the title ‘Queen of England’ would thus be accurate, there is no reason for the assumption of an English independence in *The Autobiography of the Queen*, as prior to her journey to St. Lucia, she stays at Balmoral Castle in Scotland. Therefore, the denomination ‘Queen of England’ might be understood as an allusion to the frequent equation of Britishness with Englishness.

The notion [sic!] of congruity and incongruity refer to the relationships between components of an object, event, idea, social expectations, and so forth. When the arrangement of the constituent elements of an event is incompatible with the normal or expected pattern, the event is perceived as incongruous.

Given this general definition of what is incongruous and Purdie's cited examples of the comicality of stage characters, it appears reasonable to claim that in the humorous construction of the Queen in the novels under consideration, "the mismatch between two ideas" (Attardo 48) plays an important role as well. In fiction, the incongruity which eventually accounts for a humorous situation and evokes the reader's amusement can be achieved by various techniques; it might result from the expected situation, which then fails to take place, a cultural setting, in which the outward appearance of a character is perceived as misplaced, or a character's behaviour, which is not in measure with the description of the character.

In the case of the selected novels, the funniness of the plot unfolds because the reader has a certain image of how a sovereign is supposed to be and to act in mind, which he or she will automatically relate to. One would probably imagine a king or a queen in a specific setting, such as a palace or a royal parade, sporting a regal outward appearance, that is to say, wearing elegant clothes and, perhaps, a crown, and acting and speaking in correspondence to their status, which probably means polite, formal and reserved. Therefore, it is the incoherence of the character, who is introduced in the novels as 'the Queen', and the paradox of the context into which the fictional Queen is embedded, as well as the situations which occur, which account for the comic effect. In *The Queen and I*, for instance, the Royal Family is informed that owing to the results of the recent elections, the monarchy will be abolished and the reigning monarch and her family shall be moved into the housing estate 'Hellebore Close', which hardly gives the impression of being an accommodation adequate to the rank of a Royal Family.

As previously mentioned in connection with the construction of the Royal Family⁴⁰, it is important to distinguish whether the author employs humour as a textual device through the creation of ambiguities and the description of the characters or whether the characters themselves actually make use of humour and joking. Particularly in dangerous and life-threatening situations, it is vital for characters not to lose their sense of humour. Joking can be viewed as a practice which is essential in the face of danger, as it helps to soften the circumstances and to feel calmer and more relaxed (see Bainschab 35).

As far as the Queen is concerned, it is noteworthy that there are hardly any instances in which she actually engages in joking or makes a difficult situation seem less challenging with the help of humour. Apart from some exceptions which I will refer to later on⁴¹, she does not employ humour consciously.

Her character, therefore, is not perceived as comic because of her sense of humour, but because of her outward appearance, character traits and verbal behaviour. The additional aspect which comes into play is the fact that the queen, who is the protagonist in the novels, is based on the contemporary monarch Queen Elizabeth II, who does exist in real life. Consequently, in the character's fictional construction, the authors make use of actual facts about her life, but also of existing preconceptions of her.

Therefore, one might speak of another form of incongruity, namely the one between the 'real' Queen, or rather, the Queen as we know her, and the fictional one. While there are various supposed character traits of Queen Elizabeth II which are parodied in the novels, the respective plots involve a large amount of elements which are freely invented by the authors. To name but a few examples, the fictional Queen is frequently depicted as incapable of dealing with the challenges of everyday life, with simple devices such as a tin of corned beef posing a challenge to her.⁴² In real life, however, the Queen was even trained as a driver for the Auxiliary Territorial Services during the Second

⁴⁰ See also the construction of the fictional Royal Family in Chapter 4.1.

⁴¹ See also Chapter 4.2.2.1.

⁴² For more information on the Queen's encounter with ordinary life see and the functions of this humorous representations see Chapter 4.3.2 and Chapter 4.4.3.

World War⁴³, which proves that she is indeed capable of mastering demanding situations on her own. Furthermore, it is likely to presume that the real Queen would not do any of the things which account for the development of the plot and the comic situations which result from it in the first place, such as going incognito on a package holiday in the Caribbean or visiting a travelling library outside her palace, when she possesses several libraries of her own. Thus, the discrepancy between the Queen Elizabeth the reader has in mind and the Queen Elizabeth which is invented by the author which accounts for additional effects.

4.2.2 Behaviour, appearance and other characteristics

4.2.2.1 The transformation of a distanced monarch

In *The Queen and I*, *Queen Camilla*, *The Autobiography of the Queen* and *The Uncommon Reader*, a certain pattern in the behaviour of the Queen can be noticed. In the beginning, in all of the novels, the fictional Queen is represented as a serious, inapproachable person who never shows any emotions towards her family members, let alone at public display. Her cool attitude, accompanied by her controlled gestures and her unwillingness to show sympathy towards others make her character come across as cold, as a consequence of which a certain feeling of dislike is created in the reader:

Diana was in the hall. The Queen could see she had been crying. It wouldn't do to sympathise, not now, thought the Queen. (Q&I 44)

In other instances, by contrast, the Queen's suppression of her emotions evokes sympathy in the reader, as it appears that she is trapped behind her mask of the invulnerable monarch who is not allowed to display any form of human weakness. During her ordeal in the hospital she suppresses her tears and is determined not to give in to vulnerability and despair:

⁴³ See also *Britain Express*. "Biography of Queen Elizabeth II." 25 February 2010 <<http://www.britainexpress.com/royals/queen.htm>>.

The Queen sank back onto the hospital trolley and closed her eyes tightly against the prickling of tears gathering behind the lids. She *must* control herself at all costs. (Q&I 62; italics in original)

The Queen's self-restraint to hide her true feelings and to maintain calm in all situations is due to her upbringing, which becomes obvious to the reader when she recollects the following event:

Once, when she was thirteen, she had belched at a dinner for the Hungarian Ambassador – an audible belch that was diplomatically ignored by the other distinguished diners. She had dismissed the belch to Crawfie, saying, 'Oh well, it's better out than in.' Crawfie had said, 'No, no, no, Lilibet, it is always, always better *in* than out.' (Q&I 128)

What is remarkable about the fictional Queen is that in all of the four novels, a change in her personality occurs. While she initially displays an air of arrogance, she becomes softer and more sympathetic towards others. She starts to show her feelings and emotions and therefore proves that behind her rough exterior, there is actually a warm-hearted and compassionate person who truly cares about others and not only shows sympathy out of a feeling of duty.

The following passage from *The Queen and I* demonstrates the Queen's first attempt to converse with one of her new neighbours, Spiggy, on a friendly basis. It is also the first situation in the novel in which she employs humour consciously, which does not only create a comfortable atmosphere between her and her conversation partner, but is also the first sign of the Queen's transformation from the stiff monarch to the compassionate Mrs Windsor:

'Funny though, going to the pictures with a crown on yer 'ead.'
The Queen laughed. 'A tiara! One wouldn't wear a crown; it wouldn't be fair on the person sitting behind.' (Q&I 86)

It appears to be reasonable that this personality change is employed by the authors as a means of constructing the Queen as 'human', meaning that her role of being the monarch becomes less relevant and is overshadowed by other, more personal aspects.

A key passage which includes a very intimate confession of the Queen and, simultaneously, the first account of her gratefulness for her moderate home, is the following:

The Queen had rarely felt so close to anyone before. [...] Violet was vulgar and had appalling taste in clothes, but there was an inner strength to her that the Queen admired, even envied. The two women talked about the anguish their children had caused them. [...] When she got home, she looked around at her tidy and clean little house and was grateful for its comfort. And if I'm seriously incapacitated, she thought, Violet Toby will help me out. (Q&I 125)

What differs remarkably from the previous presentation of the Queen is her acknowledgement of Violet's inner strength, a virtue of someone she initially regarded as inferior to her. In her conversation with her neighbour, it is the Queen's role as a mother which is prevalent.⁴⁴ The reader gets the impression that both of them are on the same level, talking from mother to mother rather than from sovereign to subject.

Her transformation is not constricted to her personality, as she also adapts her outward appearance to her new living situation, wearing comfortable and simple clothes rather than exquisite costumes. For the reader, the plain imagination of the Queen of the United Kingdom "wearing an apron and slippers and [...] two plastic rollers in the front of her hair" (QC 72), like an ordinary housewife, is highly amusing, as he or she is probably used to seeing the Queen formally dressed on state visits and in photos in the newspapers; the comicality is further increased by the fact that she has to hide in her flat from a potential visitor, as "she was not dressed for company" (QC 72).

However, it becomes clear that clothes are not solely a means to point out the divergence between the preconception of a queen and the everyday life on a council estate in order to evoke the reader's smile, but also to emphasise the

⁴⁴ See also Chapter 4.3.3.1

transformation the Queen undergoes in the course of the novel. This change does not remain unnoticed by the Queen herself, which is stressed in the following passage:

She tried the hat on in front of the bathroom mirror. How like my *old self* I look, she thought. Since moving into Hell Close she had lived in comfortable skirts and sweaters. She now felt stiff and over-formal in her funeral outfit. (Q&I 258; my emphasis)

After the passing of her mother, the Queen has her first emotional outburst and allows herself to “have a good cry” (Q&I 263) in front of one of her neighbours. This is the first instance in the novel in which the Queen actually displays her emotions in public, which has the effect of representing her vulnerability and, at the same time, constructing her as ‘human’.

The moment when the coffin was lowered into the grave was hard to bear for the Queen and she held her hands out to her two eldest children before she threw a handful of earth onto the coffin. [...] [T]he Queen was showing her emotions. (Q&I 275)

This transformation from a stiff and arrogant monarch to a likeable woman who is not afraid to show her feelings and does not always display a lady-like behaviour as it suits a woman of her rank can be noticed in all the selected novels. I would argue that the main aim of this pattern in her character development is to deconstruct the image of the super-human monarch, who represents the moral values of the entire nation and flaunts perfect manners and etiquette on every occasion. Behind the façade of the sovereign, there is the vulnerable Elizabeth Windsor.

While the general idea is the same in the four novels, the means by which the Queen’s personality change is encouraged differ. In *The Queen and I* and *The Autobiography of the Queen*, it is through her contact with and the kindness of other people that the Queen seems to soften and regard others and herself with different eyes. However, the crucial impulse for the Queen’s personality change is her exposure to ‘ordinary life’ and to unpleasant and often humiliating

situations, such as not having enough to eat, being lost or having to face an unfamiliar situation which does not appear to be manageable. These situations, in which the reader might be inveigled to laugh at her out of a feeling of superiority or pure hostility⁴⁵, function as an eye-opener for the Queen.

In *The Uncommon Reader*, however, the reader can continually notice a change in the Queen's behaviour and attitude when she develops a passion for literature and starts spending more and more time with her beloved books. The activity of reading is not just a mere pastime, but a vital aspect in the construction of the Queen as a fictional character. A strategy consciously employed by the author is her becoming an avid reader instead of simply taking an interest in knitting as a free-time activity. Reading is not just any hobby; reading broadens the horizon and opens up a whole new world, even for those who believe they have seen everything. As the Queen points out herself, “[b]ooks are not about passing the time. They're about other lives. Other worlds. Far from wanting time to pass [...], one just wishes one had more of it” (*UR* 29). Furthermore, whether or not one reads and what kind of literature one indulges in reveals a lot about one's character. Thus, the Queen's initial hesitation concerning her choice of a book -“because to tell the truth she wasn't sure” (*UR* 6) - might be regarded as a sign of insecurity as far as her personal needs and wishes are concerned.

In the beginning, the Queen appears to be too inhibited to admit that her newly discovered passion is an activity she only engages in because of personal pleasure. She obviously feels guilty for concentrating on something which has nothing to do with her subjects and her duties as a monarch; therefore, she finds an excuse for her reading by telling her assistant Norman “I read, I think, [...] because one has a duty to find out what people are like’. (*UR* 30) The following quotation probably describes the dutiful and determined nature of her character best: “Once I start a book I finish it. That was the way one was

⁴⁵ See also Chapter 4.4.3.

brought up. Books, bread and butter, mashed potato – one finishes what's on one's plate. That's always been my philosophy" (*UR* 11).

She suppresses her own, personal wishes and interests because she is completely taken up by her position of the sovereign. Just like she believes that she is not entitled to show her emotions in public, she apparently feels the same about personal pleasure. For the Queen "pleasure had always taken second place to duty. If she could feel she had a duty to read then she could set about it with a clear conscience, with the pleasure, if pleasure there was, incidental (*UR* 30)."

After her immersion in literature, she gradually becomes more self-confident. She begins to distinguish between her role as the monarch and her personal interests and voices her opinion on her 'selfish' activity by telling her advisor that "[o]ne reads for pleasure. [...] It is not a public duty." (*UR* 45).

I would argue that the initial construction of the Queen as ignorant and distanced is not meant to be a criticism of the actual monarch Elizabeth II, as the development of her character clearly demonstrates that she is capable of showing her emotions and speaking up for her own wishes. Furthermore, despite the humorous elements of the above-mentioned passages, the reader cannot but sense the tragedy of her role as monarch: the self-sacrifice and self-control which is expected of her. Therefore, the reader is more likely to feel sympathy instead of contempt.

4.2.2.2 The Queen in search of her identity

In all of the novels, the Queen is portrayed as a good, dutiful monarch, who is devoted to both her job and her subjects. In accordance with the way she was raised, she regards putting her personal wishes behind as one of the responsibilities her position entails. She does not even have a hobby, because

[...] it was in the nature of her job that she didn't have hobbies. Jogging, growing roses, chess or rock-climbing, cake decoration, model aeroplanes. No. Hobbies involved preferences and preferences had to be avoided; preferences excluded people. Her job was to take an interest, not to be interested herself. (UR 6)

While this passage is perceived as humorous, a certain element of tragedy cannot be denied. Her denial of a hobby implies that she has never learned to follow her own interests. Therefore, when she is stripped off her role as monarch, the Queen is presented as a vulnerable, less self-confident person, because she can no longer hide behind royal etiquette. Consequently, the Queen's contact with ordinary life culminates in her search for her identity.

This is very well depicted in *The Uncommon Reader*, even though at first glance, the Queen's contact with 'real life' in the novel might be portrayed less explicitly than in the other novels. Her confrontation with life outside her palace walls is not effectuated by external changes, but by a change within herself, as a result of the Queen's excessive reading. The more she reads, the more she learns, not only about others, but also about herself. Consequently, I would argue that her devouring of every book she can lay her hands upon constitutes the process of finding herself. After all, literature enables people "to break out from the constraints of upbringing, class and education and lead the life you've always wanted" (Marriott), which is particularly true for the Queen.

As a consequence of reading, she becomes more open-minded and, for the first time in her life, the Queen, who supposedly had more opportunities than anyone else to broaden her horizon because of meeting such an enormous number of people, feels regret in her life because she has not explored the world of literature earlier. She thinks of literature "as a vast country to the far borders of which I am journeying but will never reach. And I have started too late. I will never catch up" (UR 48).

Furthermore, she not only regrets being an "[o]psimath: one who learns only late in life" (UR 49), but she also regrets experiences she has not been able to make because of the position she was born into. When "reading the memoirs of

Lauren Bacall she could not help feeling that Ms Bacall had had a much better bite at the carrot and slightly to her surprise, found herself envying her for it” (UR 48).

Along with the remorse comes the desire to ‘be normal’, to be no longer separated from ‘ordinary’ people and to be approached without preconceptions; a sentiment which is evoked by books.

The appeal of reading [...] lay in its indifference: there was something lofty about literature. Books did not care who was reading them or whether one read them or not. All readers were equal, herself included. [...] It was anonymous; it was shared; it was common. And she who had led a life apart now found that she craved it. Here in these pages and between these covers she could go unrecognised. (UR 30-31)

When she begins to loosen from her role as monarch, the people surrounding her have doubts about her sanity; an aspect which is taken up both in *The Uncommon Reader* and *The Autobiography of the Queen*.

Regarding her escape to St Lucia from “her rightful home in England” (*Autobiography* 174), it is feared that the Queen has lost her mental health: “Was it possible that the sensible, well-balanced woman the world had known as the monarch of Great Britain – horse-loving sportswoman, wife and mother – had actually lost her sanity?” (*Autobiography* 174). Ironically, the Queen’s reading has the same effect: The more the Queen thinks for herself and the more she learns, the more others believe that “Her Majesty is getting to be what is known as a handful” (UR 42).

Of course, the comical description of the impact the Queen’s reading has on others and the problems it entails, such as elongated royal visits owing to the Queen’s “new conversational gambit [...] ‘What are you reading at the moment?’” (UR 41), is perceived as funny by the reader; such is the idea of the private team of the Prince of Wales, consisting of Scotland Yard detectives and medical personnel, whose aim is to restore the Queen to the throne by, if necessary, sedating her (see *Autobiography* 174). However, one might claim

that the slight satirical tone which is employed in these passages has the function of identifying the prevailing image people have of her: that of the super-human monarch, who is not allowed to be selfish and has to act according to what is expected of her.

4.2.2.3 Abdication

An essential element of the plot which is picked up in all four novels is the Queen's alienation from her position as the sovereign. Consequently, the abdication of the monarch is addressed. After the Queen becoming more 'human' and her subsequent personality crisis, this is the third commonality of the pattern which can be noticed in her character construction. In *The Queen and I*, she is forced to abdicate and resign her royal duties and prerogatives against her will. However, with increasing time her feelings about returning to the palace change. It is stated that "the prospect of resuming her official duties made her shudder" (Q&I 260). She even hopes that her opponent Jack Barker, who is responsible for the abolition of the British monarchy, will be able to solve the financial crisis into which he has led the nation, in order for her to remain in the council estate. Therefore, a conscious and voluntary abdication takes place. In the sequel, she has become used to living in Hell Close and officially declares her abdication, as she prefers spending the rest of her life among her friends and without royal duties in a humble surrounding to returning to the throne.

In *The Uncommon Reader*, abdication is not addressed until the very end; the more the Queen immerses herself in the world of literature, the more she begins to experience her royal duties as a nuisance and the less time she is willing to dedicate to her subjects. She develops an emotional distance to her role as monarch.

The plot of *The Autobiography of the Queen* starts out with the Queen packing a suitcase, intending not to embark on an official state visit, but to go abroad on her own. Therefore, the monarch literally escapes from her position and leaves

behind her family, dogs and subjects at her own wish, although an official abdication is not mentioned. Whether this act shall be understood as a contemporary break or whether she intends to spend the rest of her life on the Caribbean island of St. Lucia is left to the reader's speculation. The following passage provides an explanation for the Queen's decision to leave her country and, at the same time, gives a truthful account of the present state and an outlook on the future of the monarchy:

The fact was, the Queen had reached a time when it was preferable to look back and record the triumphs and quandaries of the past, than to gaze at an uncertain future. For over half a century, she had reigned as a model sovereign: dutiful, always ready to hear the complaints or demands of her people and to put these before her own wishes and interests. But now, one *annus horribilis* was set to follow another. The European Council of Ministers was about to declare that all EU member states must have a written constitution. Most had, the most notable exception being Britain, with its 'flexible' unwritten constitution. Rationalising this system into a form that might make sense to anyone else would whittle down the Queen's role, in her view a further step towards a republic[.] [...] And Balmoral, the monarch's most adored possession [...] was under threat and would in all probability no longer exist as a great private estate when the new Scottish laws on land ownership went through. [...] Add to that the most recent scandal, a kiss-and-tell story just extracted in the tabloids on Prince Harry by a prior girlfriend and the Queen's decision to leave the country she had served so loyally needed little explanation. (*Autobiography* 5)

However, when she is finally obliged to go home, she feels glad about it, as she acknowledges that her country is in need of her and "her powers still held: without Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second Parliament could not open, and the country would fall into uncertainty and, worse, anarchy" (*Autobiography* 199). She appears to be content with her role as the British monarch, as for her, "there could never be a 'road not taken': there was no alternative to being the Queen" (*Autobiography* 200). This statement implies that the Queen has accepted her fate and, once and for all, is determined to put her own wishes and feelings behind for the sake of being loyal to her country and subjects.

When reading this passage, one cannot but feel sympathy for the Queen because it is her royal position which prevents her from living the life she would choose for herself. Even in the Queen's anticipation of coming back, a slight tone of regret can be noticed in her thoughts, which is, however, dutifully suppressed as "[a] monarch cannot indulge in regrets: too many resonances of heads cut off and kings and queens exiled overseas all their lives for a lack of decisive reigning presented themselves" (*Autobiography* 211).

Summing up, I would argue that the striking similarities in the novels regarding the Queen's character development demonstrate the general preconception that a monarch is arrogant towards people who are lower in rank and, despite class and wealth, has the desire to lead more of an ordinary life. In addition, the aspect of abdication indicates the apparent preconception that being the sovereign is incompatible with personal freedom and privacy, two aspects which need to be sacrificed for the sake of the monarchy.

As the fictional Queen's emotional restraint as well as her initial arrogance are apparently due to her upbringing in an upper-class environment, I would suggest that the transformation of the Queen demonstrates that 'being royal', whatever this means, is a matter of upbringing, not of birth. Consequently, the mythical status the Queen holds in the perception of many is deconstructed and people's attitudes towards monarchy are criticised.⁴⁶ The previously mentioned construction of the Queen as 'human' aims to demonstrate that the Queen is not better than her subjects and that the high expectations people set in their monarch cannot be reached.

4.2.3 Language

The Queen's language is characterized by the use of Standard English, a refined register and, judging by other characters' remarks, a posh accent. Furthermore, she refrains from using the personal pronoun *I* when talking about

⁴⁶ For more information on the fascination with the British monarchy see Chapter 5.1.

herself, but prefers to use the ‘the Royal One’.⁴⁷ This is often amusing, given the evident inappropriateness of her formal style in certain situations, such as during her first encounter with the travelling library outside Buckingham Palace:

‘Is one allowed to borrow a book? One doesn’t have a ticket?’
‘No problem,’ said Mr Hutchings.
‘One is a pensioner,’ said the Queen, not that she was sure that made any difference. (UR 7)

Naturally, her verbal behaviour is due to her position of the monarch, who is expected to speak the standard variety of British English, which is, after all, also referred to as ‘the Queen’s English’⁴⁸. Certainly, it also provokes associations with the reader as the Queen’s English in the novels is based on her real-life usage of English, which can be observed in her speeches. While in reality, her variety of English generally holds the status of being very prestigious, it might be assumed that in lower classes, it bears a negative connotation owing to its association with ‘posh’ upper-class people and the establishment.⁴⁹

As a fictional character, she is mocked by other characters because of her refined speech, which is perceived as highly comical by a member of a lower class:

‘I simply can’t imagine,’ said the Queen, turning her head away from his cidery breath.
‘Hee, hee, hee,’ laughed the man. ‘Hee, hee, hee, that’s verra guid. You sound jus’ like her. “*Ai simplay carrnt eemaygin*”,’ he mocked. [...] “*Ai simplay carrnt eemaygin*”.’ His laughter echoed around the town centre. [...] ‘I mean, you’re not tellin’ me that her accent is *real*. It’s not, it’s not. It’s not real. She sounds like a robot from *Doctor Who*.’ (Q&I 143; italics in original)

⁴⁷ Wales (9) refers to this usage of *one* as “[a] pronominal usage that is undoubtedly used frequently by royalty, in real life as in stereotype”. For real life examples of this ‘Royal One’ see Wales 9.

⁴⁸ ‘The Queen’s English’ is regarded as a synonym for Standard English as well as a synonym for Received Pronunciation. According to linguistic research, however, there are different varieties of RP, including ‘conservative RP’, which is spoken by the Queen. The younger members of the Royal Family tend to speak a more advanced version which even includes elements of cockney (see Wales 4-6). Research suggests that the Queen’s accent has changed over time because of the influence of accents which are regarded as socially inferior (see Harrington et al.). However, it can be presumed that ‘the Queen’s English’ is still regarded as a ‘correct’ form of speaking.

⁴⁹ See also Wales 4-5.

Purdie (see 80) states that characters' emotions are perceived as funny if they do not evoke the expected reaction by the other characters, which means that the misery of one character, for instance, is not met with sympathy, but with laughter by the other characters. The same holds true for discourse and utterances. Utterances are considered inappropriate and therefore funny if they do not have the intended effect. Very often, comic characters are below the social status they wish to obtain; "they are claiming a discursive register which is beyond them" (Purdie 80). In comedies, it is usually the use of obscene and taboo-breaking language which constructs the characters as 'low'. However, "their lowness is a matter not simply of representing a subordinated position in an actual social scale, but of the audience finding them [...] to be inept operators of the languages they employ" (Purdie 80) .

As far as the construction of the Queen is concerned, I would argue that this concept applies as well, even though in a slightly altered form, as it is the opposite which is true. It is the Queen and the Royal Family who obtain the highest rank in the social hierarchy and they are therefore above their new neighbours and the whole population of the exclusion zone. The Queen's language and her upper class accent are thus clearly regarded as inappropriate by the other characters, whose register is characterized by familiar if not obscene language and the use of grammatically incorrect forms. The Queen, however, does not attempt to adapt to the variety which is spoken amongst the locals; nevertheless, her speech does not have the intended effect, as it is neither approved of by her neighbours, who regard her as a 'posho' (see *Q&I* 35), nor does it convey the aim of the speech act, as a misunderstanding occurs.

Already in the very first conversation the Queen is about to maintain with her new neighbour, Beverley Threadgold, her upper-class accent and use of Received Pronunciation leads to a translation problem and causes a misunderstanding:

'Excuse me, but would you have an axe I could borrow?'
'An *ix*?' repeated Tony.
'Yes, an axe.' The Queen came to their front gate.
'An *ix*?' puzzled Beverley.
'Yes.'
'I dunno what an "ix" *is*,' Tony said.
'You don't know what an axe is?'
'No.'
'One uses one for chopping wood.'
The Queen was growing impatient, she had made a simple request; her new neighbours were obviously morons. She was aware that educational standards had fallen, but not to know what an axe was ... It was a scandal.
'I need an implement of some kind to gain access to my house.'
'Arse?'
'*House!*'
The driver volunteered his services as translator. His hours talking to the Queen had given him a new found linguistic confidence.
'This lady wants to know if you've got a *axe*.' (Q&I 36-37; italics in original)

The Queen's pronunciation, which normally serves as the standard for British English, can be regarded as the deviation from the linguistic norm in this setting and could therefore not be more inappropriate. This ambiguity of language and the fact that the help of a translator is needed in order to make this conversation between two speakers of English work is highly amusing for the reader.

This example also demonstrates the effect such an inter-class misunderstanding can have on both sides; while the Queen assumes that her neighbours are uneducated and draws the conclusion that the nation's educational standards have fallen outrageously low, one might assume that her conversation partners draw equally false conclusions.

A text passage in which the problem of appropriate language use and register is directly addressed is the following:

'Mornin'. Sleep all right?'

It was Beverley in an orange dressing gown taking frozen washing off the line. Tony's jeans stood to attention as though Tony were still inside them.

'E's got an interview for a job's afternoon, so I've gotta get 'is best clothes dry.'

Beverley's heart pounded as she spoke. How did you talk to someone whose head you were used to licking and sticking on an envelope? [...] 'Harris found a rat,' said the Queen.

'A rat?' 'A *rat*, look!' Beverley looked down at the dead rodent at the Queen's feet. 'Am I to expect more?' (Q&I 54; italics in original)

The 'clash' of Beverley's informal and grammatically incorrect speech with the highly refined register of the Queen's English accounts for the incongruity of the situation. Different registers and pronunciation account for misunderstandings, which evoke the laughter of the reader.

Furthermore, language functions as an identity marker. I would suggest that the mocking of the Queen's speech is consciously employed to emphasize the Queen's questioning of her identity and to point out the negative attitude people show towards her posh accent.⁵⁰

The Queen nodded, reluctant to open her mouth and advertise her class. Her accent was proving to be rather a bother. Should she try to modify it? And her grammar was a nuisance. Should she throw in a few double negatives? It was terribly difficult to work out where she *belonged* any more – except as a number between thirty-eight and forty. (Q&I 145; my emphasis)

Also, in *The Autobiography of the Queen*, the issue of language is raised as soon as the Queen leaves her cultural space and enters the new territory, which is, in this case, St. Lucia. The following passage describes the Queen's astonishment at and reaction to the language of the local taxi driver:

⁵⁰ For an analysis of the Queen's identity search see Chapter 4.2.2.2.

The words, most of them, sadly, impossible to understand at all, were clearly some kind of debased tongue, a patois that was most unacceptable to the Queen. That 'Where to, ma'am?' summed up his repertoire in English- and this in an American accent – quickly became apparent and this caused some anxiety for the Queen, especially as the muddled-sounding slang was in use when speaking into his mobile, while at the same time he used his knees for both steering the van and changing gear. (*Autobiography* 40)

However, in contrast to the aforementioned scenes, the description of this incident, which was probably meant to be funny by the author, does not achieve its intended effect. I would argue that this passage makes the Queen appear in a negative light, as she regards the local variety of English as inferior to her Standard British English. The Queen's denomination of the taxi driver's English as a "debased tongue" and "muddled-sounded slang" is highly derogatory and can be regarded as an indication of the general air of superiority which is displayed by British people towards the former colonies. Furthermore, it contributes to the Queen's portrayal as arrogant in the beginning of the novel; a behaviour which changes after she has to rely on the help of locals when she is in need of food and shelter.

4.3 In which situations is Her Majesty perceived as funny and comical?

For the purpose of examining the situations in which one is tempted to laugh at the Queen, as well as the reasons why one is inclined to do so, it might be useful to take a look at Freud's theory regarding the origins of the comic:

Das Komische ergibt sich zunächst als ein unbeabsichtigter Fund aus den sozialen Beziehungen der Menschen. Es wird an Personen gefunden, und zwar an deren Bewegungen, Formen, Handlungen und Charakterzügen [...] [und] an deren Äußerungen. [...] Das Komische ist indes der Ablösung von den Personen fähig, indem die Bedingung erkannt wird, unter welcher eine Person komisch erscheint. So entsteht das Komische der Situation, und mit solcher Erkenntnis ist die Möglichkeit vorhanden, eine Person nach Belieben komisch zu machen, indem man sie in Situationen versetzt, in denen ihrem Tun diese Bedingungen des Komischen anhängen. [...] Die Mittel, die zum Komischmachen dienen, sind: die Versetzung in

komische Situationen, die Nachahmung, Verkleidung, Entlarvung, Karikatur, Parodie und Travestie u.a. (Freud, *Witz* 202)

The previous analysis has shown that the fictional Queen is regarded as comic owing to her general appearance and her language, which is a parody of the real Queen. However, with regard to the theory of Freud, it can be presumed that it is not merely the result of the construction of her proper character that she is perceived as funny, but also of the construction of comic situations, into which her character is placed. In the following, the conditions under which the Queen is perceived as funny as well as the social roles she is assigned other than the one of the monarch shall be subject to investigation.

4.3.1 The clash of cultures

Humour research, particularly in the last decades, has “paid considerable attention to the interdependence between cultures and the behaviour of individuals” (Pichler 211). This interdependence and the behaviour of individuals within a culture “is highly significant for both intra- and interculturality, since the interplay shapes the individual human being’s way of acting, behaving, and interacting, whilst it also leaves an imprint on culture” (Pichler 211). In intercultural contexts, problems occur when people misunderstand the motivations for other people’s behaviour. Furthermore, seemingly trivial activities such as eating, greeting others and participating in other people’s activities and jokes are a challenge in the intercultural interaction, as they are novel behaviour for all the participants involved in intercultural encounters. Certainly, this phenomenon is not reduced to the actual interaction, but it can also be a central element in texts (see Pichler 212).

I would argue that this phenomenon is also of high relevance for the analysis of the humorous situations in the novels under consideration. I believe that challenges do not only occur when people from cultures which are geographically remote and actually differ from each other as far as language

and mentality are concerned come together. This phenomenon also occurs when people who are from the same cultural space, but from entirely different backgrounds, that is to say, socio-cultural groups, meet and interact. Of course, in such a case, the immersion in another socio-cultural group might not turn out as severe as the exposure to a faraway culture with a different value and belief system, for the individuals involved are not required to adopt a hybrid identity. However, the likelihood of an initial shock and a suspicious inspection of the unknown customs and practices must not be denied.

The Queen and her family are placed into a completely distinct cultural setting in which they have obvious difficulty to adapt to their new environment. The Queen's first contact with her new living situation and her neighbours can be compared to a culture clash. The monarch's foreignness in the new environment is best displayed by the reaction of her new neighbours, who actually believe she is from abroad, judging from her high class accent:

The Threadgolds watched as a shadowy figure ordered a tall man out of the van. Was she a foreigner? It wasn't English she was talking was it? But as their ears became more accustomed they realised it was English, but posh English, *really* posh. (Q&I 35; italics in original)

Therefore, instead of the intercultural dimension of humour, its inter-class dimension must not be neglected. Of course, the previously mentioned humorous scenes which result from the Queen's interaction with her neighbours, owing to her refined and in this environment inappropriate language use, are a further example of this 'culture shock'. Although both the Queen and the people she interacts with speak English, they are divided by the same language, as they do not only have actual problems of understanding, but they also have preconceptions of their conversation partners in mind, which are due to general stereotypes of members of the respective other class. "[T]he distance between royalty and commonalty in ways of speaking [...] clearly reflects their ideological as well as social distance" (Wales 5).

Furthermore, Purdie (see 80) mentions the inept operating of the signs of social hierarchy, that is to say, a fusion of 'low' and 'high' practices. In connection with the novels under consideration, Purdie's idea can be applied to the adaptation of Royal lifestyle to a lower-class environment, which accounts for the funniness of the following situations:

The carpets were too big for the tiny rooms.

Tony said, 'I've got a mate, Spiggy, what's a carpet fitter. He could cut 'em to size; he'd do it for twenty quid.'

The Queen looked at her Aubusson rugs which were stacked in the hall, looking like lustrous Swiss rolls.

Bev said, 'Or you could have new. I mean, excuse me for saying, but they are a bit worn, aren't they? Threadbare in places.' (Q&I 43)

At 4.30 am, Tony Threadgold was sawing through a sofa that had once belonged to Napoleon, on the doorstep of Number Nine.

'Half a dozen six-inch nails in that tomorrow, it'll be as right as rain.' (Q&I 47)

These passages, which account for the slapstick-like character of the Queen's relocation to her new home, are highly amusing to the reader, as the exquisite rugs and the sofa of historical value, clearly items which belong to the upper rank of the social hierarchy, come in touch with what Purdie refers to as 'low' practices. The members of the working-class do not only lack appreciation of the Queen's priceless furniture, but their kind offer to help also results in an unintentional 'vandalizing' of the royal possessions.

On the basis of Freud's theory, it can therefore be said that a situation and, consequently, the Queen herself, who is exposed to this situation, is perceived as funny by the reader when an encounter of the Queen with a member of the 'other' class happens and a misunderstanding or a fusion of two distinct cultural practices occurs. The condition under which the Queen is perceived as funny is therefore her misplacement in the different cultural setting and the 'clash' of her and her neighbours' values, attitude and behaviour.

4.3.2 The monarch's encounter with 'ordinary' life

As previously mentioned, the incongruity of ideas or events is vital for the construction of a humorous situation. As the Queen's life is commonly regarded as extra-ordinary and eased by wealth and luxury, it is difficult to imagine her doing everyday chores. Therefore, the Queen's exposure to a life without servants causes situations which are annoying and, in some cases, even nerve-wrecking for the Queen, but highly amusing to the reader.

The monarch's inaptitude to deal with simple gadgets or activities is taken up in both *The Queen and I* and *The Autobiography of the Queen*. When she leaves her sheltered castle to embark upon an independent life, she is confronted with the challenge of correctly using her suitcase:

'Oh good,' the Queen said as she stepped out into the corridor and found to her delighted astonishment that the small suitcase sported a pair of wheels. 'Does one simply pull it down the stairs?' (*Autobiography* 6)

On her very first day in Hellebore Close, the Queen, who used to have personal assistance when getting dressed, is overstrained with putting on her clothes herself:

How very awkward it was to dress oneself, how fiddly buttons were! Why did zips stick so? How on earth did one choose what went with what? She thought of the corridors lined with closets where her clothes used to hang in colour co-ordinated rows. She missed the deft fingers of her dresser fastening her brassiere. What a ludicrous device a brassiere was! How did other women cope with those hooks and eyes? (*Q&I* 56)

Therefore, as getting dressed oneself is an activity so simple and ordinary that one would expect an adult person to perform it without difficulty, there is a certain comicality attached to the Queen's clumsy attempt at living like a normal woman. Consequently, it can be noticed that humorous situations usually occur whenever the Queen is confronted with an activity which used to be done by her servants for the first time and, owing to her inexperience, behaves oddly or fails to succeed at all.

4.3.3 The social roles of the Queen

A major fact which needs to be acknowledged is that in all four of the novels, the Queen is not limited to the single role as monarch, which is the role the reader probably associates most with her character, as it is the role she is mainly assigned in the media construction. Owing to the emphasis of her human side and also her family relations, she fulfils several functions and is constructed in various roles.

Especially in *The Autobiography of the Queen*, the different roles of the Queen become evident, as the other characters are not aware of her real identity and therefore perceive other aspects of her personality than simply her being the monarch. Thus, it can be noticed that her character is not solely referred to as 'the Queen', but is denominated different labels, amongst which 'the English lady' and 'the old woman'.

4.3.3.1 The Queen as mother and grandmother

Apart from being the sovereign, the role the Queen is probably most known for is the one of the family matriarch, as she is supported in her official duties by the Royal Family. In her position as head of the family, her role of the monarch is intertwined with her role as a mother and grandmother.

In fiction, however, when her position of the monarch is not in the foreground and she is released by her royal duties, it is particularly interesting to observe the relationship she has with her children and grandchildren. Interestingly, a different representation of her as mother and grandmother can be noticed in the novels. In *The Autobiography of the Queen*, her family is hardly mentioned at all and, as the following passage reveals, she apparently does not miss them too much. Strikingly, she thinks of her grandson only in connection with his coronation, which implies that she is not able to distinguish between her role as William's grandmother and the role of the monarch, which is enforced by her declaration of being "his sovereign".

By the time the Queen had fallen into a blissful sleep peopled by figures from her now-abandoned past – her children were not amongst these, but her grandson William, as so often before in her dreams, appeared in his Coronation robes and stooped low to kiss his sovereign [...]. (*Autobiography* 63)

Similarly, in *The Uncommon Reader* an account of the relationship between the Queen and her family is neglected, except for the remark that “[s]he had always kept them up to the mark and age had not made her more indulgent” (*UR* 46), which causes them to be rather relieved at her newly discovered passion for books. However, the fact that she provides her family with reading material and, much to their annoyance, checks if they have actually read it, conveys the atmosphere of a harmonious family life; a thought which is reinforced by the Queen’s nomination as ‘grandmama’ (see *UR* 46) in the passage, which makes her relationship with her grandchildren appear to be very intimate.

In *The Queen and I* and its sequel, the image of the Queen as mother and grandmother is naturally more prominent, as a consequence of the integration of the other Royals in the plots. There are numerous examples in the novels which prove that the Queen, despite the love for her children, often had to put her duties as a monarch first and, apparently, failed to express her affection with tender gestures. When Charles reminisces about his part in the school production of *Macbeth*, which still haunts him, he remembers that “[h]is mother had been kind, saying, ‘I think you did awfully well to have learnt all those lines. However did you do it?’” (*QC* 166). While she might have meant well and had the intention of cheering him up, the phrase sounds rather like a question she would pose to one of her subjects whom she has to engage in small talk on a royal visit.

In the council house estate, her relationship to her children and grandchildren is portrayed as a good one, yet there are instances when she thinks of the past and wonders if her role as the sovereign has interfered with her role as a mother. Although the following passage is perceived as comical by the reader, which is mainly due to the fact that Charles is only accidentally involved in a

fight and hardly a pubescent teenager who turns to violence because of parental neglect, there are also tragic elements involved. The Queen starts to realize that her position as the monarch made her miss out on the childhood of her children.

The Queen lay awake, worrying about her son. She had once inadvertently watched a BBC2 Bristol documentary about hooliganism [...]. A famous vet had drawn a connection between maternal deprivation and violence. Was that why Charles had started fighting in the street? Was it her fault? She hadn't wanted to go on those world tours and leave Charles behind, but in those days she had believed her advisers when they assured her that the British export trade would collapse without her support. Well, it had collapsed anyway, she thought bitterly. She might just as well have stayed at home with the dogs and seen Charles for a couple of hours a day. (Q&I 99)

During the course of her life as an ordinary, non-royal citizen, her priorities have shifted. As she is now aware that royal duties entail the sacrifice of personal freedom, she warns her grandson William, who is willing to reign after the re-establishment of the monarchy, to reconsider his decision and get his priorities straight.

Please think carefully before you sacrifice your life to an institution that is increasingly irrelevant. I think it's time we thought less of the Royal and more of the Family. (QC 163)

4.3.3.2 The Queen as wife

In *Queen Camilla*, the Queen states, "I had the spontaneity knocked out of me at an early age. The only impulsive thing I ever did in my whole life was to fall in love with Philip at first sight" (QC 25). This love to her husband is still noticeable during her stay in the exclusion zone. While she is annoyed about his refusal to get out of bed and help her cope with the new living situation, she is still depicted as a dutiful and caring wife, who prepares food for her husband and, after his stroke, comes to see him regularly at the nursing home.

However, as previously mentioned in Chapter 4.1.1, a problem arises concerning the power relationship in their marriage. Despite her husband's objections, the Queen decides to keep her own family name Windsor. Furthermore, due to Philip's depression, she has to take all the decisions concerning her family alone and, consequently, is portrayed as the stronger and more dominant part of the marriage partners.

In *The Autobiography of the Queen*, there is little reference to her family and her husband, who is always referred to as 'the Duke', which implies a distance in their relationship. It is only after some time, when she realises that her stay in the Caribbean has not turned out as it was planned, that she contemplates returning home and, in the same breath, thinks of her husband:

[F]or the first time since leaving the country, she thought of the Duke, walking beside her through the Lords assembled in their scarlet and gold robes. The Duke's finger, as so often on state occasions, would lie lightly on his sovereign's white-gloved hand. The thought was oddly comforting. (*Autobiography* 190)

To the reader, this text passage is amusing because the Queen's thought of her husband occurs only two days after she has left, while it is mentioned that she misses her dogs much earlier. What is more, her thoughts of him are not of a very emotional or passionate nature, as she imagines him on an official state occasion and her recollection of his finger touching her white glove appears not to be a very intimate scene of their marriage. Again, not even in her thoughts does she refer to her husband by his first name. Moreover, she stresses her role as monarch by identifying herself as his *sovereign* instead of his wife, which does not solely depict her incapacity to separate her role as wife from her role as monarch, but which might also be construed as the Queen obtaining the powerful role in their relationship.

4.3.3.3 The Queen as dog-lover

Interestingly, her relationship with dogs is picked up in all the four novels. The following passage demonstrates once more the importance of her corgis to her, as she carries a photo of one of her dogs in her passport, and not, as one is prone to expect, of one of her family members, which is highly amusing:

Jolene had glimpsed the lady's passport when she checked in and saw slipped between the pages a photo of a strangely short-legged dog wearing a tartan overcoat and standing in the snow outside what looked like a fairy castle. (*Autobiography* 71)

In accordance with the aforementioned examples, the idea of dogs being seemingly more important and dear to her than her own family is a recurring theme in *The Queen and I* as well. On the first page, the reader apprehends that

[t]he Queen was in bed watching television with Harris. It was election night, 11.20 pm, Thursday 9 April 1992. Harris yawned, displaying his sharp teeth and liver-coloured tongue. 'Are you bored with the election, my darling?' asked the Queen, stroking Harris's back. Harris barked at the television, where a display of computer graphics [...] was jerking about on the screen. (*Q&I* 15)

This passage achieves its comic effect by the step-by-step revelation of the real identity of Harris, whom the Queen shares her bed with. After the description of him having 'sharp teeth' and a 'liver-coloured tongue' and the signal word 'stroking', the last sentence at least reveals once and for all Harris's identity as one of the Queen's dogs, thereby destroying the reader's initial surprise and any possible speculations about the Queen's fidelity, and evoking laughter. It is particularly amusing for the reader, as one would normally expect a wife to share her bed with her spouse, not her dog, this incongruity accounting for the comicality of the situation.

The relationship between the dog and the Queen is portrayed to be a very intimate one, which is enforced by her use of pet names and the physical

contact between them. The humorous effect of the apparent normality for the Queen to share her bed with a dog is enhanced, when several chapters later she is “rather dreading the night to come” (Q&I 46) as she and her husband have to face a problem concerning their new sleeping situation.

She went to the hallway and saw Tony and Beverley dragging a double mattress up the narrow stairs. Philip followed behind, carrying a carved bedhead. He said,
‘Lilibet, I can’t find another bed in the van.’ The Queen frowned and said,
‘But I’m sure I asked for two beds, one for me and one for you.’
Philip said, ‘So how are we supposed to sleep tonight?’
‘Together,’ she said. (Q&I 42)

The Queen is obviously not used to sharing a bed with her husband. The following scene demonstrates that there is no sign of the intimacy one could observe in the bedroom passage with her dog.

The atmosphere between the Queen and Prince Philip was awkward as they washed and undressed for bed. Furniture filled every room. They had to squeeze past each other with frequent apologies for touching. (Q&I 48)

I would argue that dogs play a central role in the construction of the Queen for several reasons; first of all, the real Queen Elizabeth is known to be a dog-lover and therefore, fictional dogs are a means for the authors to model the fictional Queen on the real one, which makes the readers relate to the character more easily. Naturally, as the previous analysis has demonstrated, the Queen’s affection for her dogs is clearly exaggerated and therefore used as an instrument of parodying the Queen, which serves the purpose of ridiculing her and presenting her as socially awkward. Secondly, it is commonly attributed to the English that they are a nation of dog-lovers; thus, the Queen’s close relationship to her corgis is clearly a reference to a national stereotype. This means that the frequent occurrence of dogs in the novels can be seen as mocking the English as such, particularly in the novels by Townsend, in which the dogs are *the* central topic of the elections.

Nevertheless, I would propose one more reason for the importance of dogs in the construction of the Queen as a fictional character. For her dogs, the Queen is just an ordinary human being, not someone who reigns over them or who is superior to them in social rank. Moreover, when in the presence of her dogs, she is not obliged to behave in a way which is expected of her; instead, she can be the person she wants to be. In the company of her corgis, she can escape her role of the monarch, but she can also escape the problems she has to face regarding her family. The following passages point out the reasons why there is such a strong bond between the Queen and her dogs:

People had always done what the Queen wanted –that was why she loved the dogs so much, because they so often refused to do as they were told – and now [...] her eyes felt an unaccustomed moistness. (*Autobiography* 58)

[Relationships] could only be measured against the powers of the Head of State, and because of this must always take second place to familial or conjugal ties (the dogs, who did not know the position of their mistress at the pinnacle of the country's aristocracy and greater in stature than Archbishop or Prime Minister, were exempted from this hierarchical arrangement, and because of this the Queen loved them more than all her subjects). (*Autobiography* 200)

Dogs are therefore used to construct a very intimate side of the Queen, as her fondness of these animals stands for her wish to be treated as the individual she is. Interestingly, in *The Uncommon Reader* it is stated that the Queen's passion for literature, which opens a whole new world for her and allows her to get rid of the constraints of her royal duties, "was the dogs' fault" (*UR* 4), as it is her corgis which first lead her to the travelling library outside her palace. Therefore, her dogs are indirectly used as a means to emphasise the Queen's search for freedom.

4.3.3.4 The Queen as an uneducated and naïve woman

As far as her proper education is concerned, the Queen is not really presented as uneducated as regards her school formation. In two of the novels, *The Autobiography of the Queen* and *The Uncommon Reader*, there are instances in which she feels required to speak French, a language which she is obviously fluent in. She communicates in French with the taxi driver on St. Lucia, after remarking that “[i]f the people here could only communicate in French, then she must address them in that language” (*Autobiography* 45).

However, even though in her position as the Queen of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, the sovereign of all her subjects, no matter which race, sex and social background they are from, the Queen appears to be a remote figure from what goes on outside the walls of her palace. Her surprise at the miserable living conditions of others displays such an unworldly innocence that her naivety is highly comical to the reader:

She had visited many council estates – had opened community centres, had driven through the bunting and the cheering crowds, alighted from the car, walked on red carpets, been given a posy by a two-year-old in a ‘Mothercare’ party frock, been greeted by tonguetied dignitaries, pulled a cord, revealed a plaque, signed the visitors’ book. Then, carpet, car, drive to helicopter and up, up and away. She’d seen the odd documentary on BBC2 about urban poverty, heard unattractive poor people talk in broken sentences about their dreadful lives, but she’d regarded such programmes as sociological curiosities, on a par with watching the circumcision ceremonies of Amazonian Indians, so far away that it didn’t really matter. (Q&I 32)

“The Queen, Tennant has noticed, really does inhabit a world so remote that her sudden exposure to our own would lead to many a fascinating contrast” (Bennett Catherine).

A further situation which provides a reality-check for the Queen is her visit to the hospital as an ordinary patient, where she and Charles are appalled at having to wait “nearly five hours for medical attention” (Q&I 62). Upon the doctor’s declaration of this as perfectly normal, Charles asserts that “‘It’s another world.’”

(Q&I 62), only to be assented by his mother, who concludes “Another country, at least.” (Q&I 62).

However, one is prevented from viewing the Queen as an ignorant monarch who does not bother, as it is clearly not the case that she does not want to know and to care. Her surprise at the living circumstances of the lower classes and the condition of the public and health care institutions can be merely laid down to her own ‘pampered’ and privileged position in wealthy surroundings and among members of the upper class. Owing to the humorous tone employed in these passages, the Queen is not presented as arrogant, but displays a child-like astonishment. Therefore, the reader is not inclined to bear the Queen a grudge, but rather, feels amused about her observations and even a bit of sympathy, as she obviously lacks world knowledge, despite her age and experiences.

On a larger scale, I would argue that the function of constructing the Queen as ignorant is not so much to criticise and denunciate the royalty alone for not looking beyond their own noses. Rather, it can be expanded to society, predominantly the upper classes, and the class system in general. In this passage in particular, the socio-critical and slightly satirical tone of the author becomes apparent. Thus, the humour employed here serves a moral purpose. This sequence can be understood as criticism of the British class system, within which people are stuck in their own world without looking over the borders. The Queen and the Royal Family exemplify the well-off classes, who, despite only a marginal distance to council estates, regard these as some sort of exotic cultural practice which is as alien to their own lives as a culture far away. Already the description of working-class people as ‘unattractive’ and ‘poor’ with their ‘dreadful lives’ (see Q&I 32) reveals a lot about other people’s attitudes towards them.

Furthermore, the above-mentioned passage might be viewed as a criticism of the political system, which fails to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of council estates. While showing concern and support by opening

community centres and shaking hands with the residents, as the Queen reminisces in her thoughts, politicians' endeavours remain at a superficial level, failing to acknowledge reality and see the needs of the little person.

4.3.3.5 The Queen as a vulnerable and old woman

In the novels under consideration there are several situations in which the Queen is depicted as vulnerable, particularly when she suffers from hunger or pain. In *The Autobiography of the Queen*, after her handbag was stolen and the possibility to return to her luxury resort without any money is unthinkable, the Queen must allay her hunger with fast food, which stands in clear contrast to the cuisine her palate is used to. Again, it is the incongruity, which results in a comic effect on part of the reader; the thought of Her Majesty suffering from "pangs of hunger" (*Autobiography* 104) and eagerly anticipating pizza, which "she hadn't tried [...], although she had heard an ex-daughter-in-law warning her girls to keep off them and this had made them sound appetising" (*Autobiography* 104). However, the funniness of the scene does not only arise from the discrepancy of a wealthy monarch eating a simple dish, but also from the mere fact alone that the Queen experiences hunger as such and now has to rely on Austin Ford, a self-proclaimed escort manager whom she barely knows, to provide her with something edible. It is her utter helplessness in the situation which allows for her to be seen as vulnerable, powerless and dependent on someone lower in rank.

Furthermore, an additional enhancer of the humorous is the sarcastic reference to one of her ex-daughters-in-law whose real-life identity⁵¹ can easily be guessed by the reader and therefore evokes amusement because of the readers' familiarity and the slight sarcasm which underlies the comment.

⁵¹ It is implied that the ex-daughter-in-law in question is Sarah Ferguson, ex-wife of Prince Andrew, who does have two daughters and is also known as the author of several books about nutrition and weight-loss. See <http://www.royalty.nu/Europe/England/Windsor/Fergie.html> January 10, 2009.

I would argue that the emphasis on the Queen's old age is also a means to depict her in a very vulnerable position. Age is equivalent to frailty, vulnerability and the reliance of others for help. In situations in which the Queen's age is stressed, her power is impaired and she is usually shown less respect by other characters than she would have been had she been recognised or acknowledged as the sovereign. Furthermore, in these passages, the other characters tend to display a patronizing attitude towards her, which results in her representation as helpless, naïve and slightly 'odd'. In some cases, the people she encounters are even amused by her demeanour. Consequently, the reader's amusement is evoked as well and the situations in which her character is put in the position of the old woman function as a means of ridiculing the Queen.

The following passage describes her impression on Norman, who, despite his odd looks and his job as a skivvy, does not show any sign of intimidation when in her presence:

The Queen, though, might have been less pleased had she known that Norman was unaffected by her because she seemed to him so ancient, her royalty obliterated by her seniority. Queen she might be but she also was an old lady, and since Norman's introduction to the world of work had been via an old people's home in Tyneside old ladies held no terrors for him. (UR 18)

Particularly in *The Autobiography of the Queen* her role as an old woman is dominant, as her true identity is unknown by the other characters. Therefore, it is essential to have a look at how others see and react to her in order to find out about the implication this has for her construction as a comic character.

At the airport, the Queen causes some chaos, as she is not used to the procedures when one travels on an ordinary schedule flight. Her insecurity and slow reaction at the check-in-girl's enquiry result in her being perceived as peculiar by other passengers. It is because of her age and appearance that she is constructed as a comic character by some of the other characters in the novel:

True, it seemed unlikely that a lady of advanced years carrying an unused-looking white handbag would be approached or persuaded to pack explosives by a terrorist – but you never knew, a respectable granny could outdo the Shoe Bomber any time. (*Autobiography* 23)

Moreover, the unworldliness she displays when checking into the hotel is apparently attributed to her age; that is why “the old lady” (*Autobiography* 56), is perceived as child-like by the reception staff:

Reception decided to lodge Mrs Smith in the block of rooms just above the main desk: she didn't look like someone who would demand a plunge pool, and they could keep an eye on her more easily than if she were placed in one of the cottages higher up. (*Autobiography* 56)

These examples demonstrate that in situations in which her true identity is not known, other characters have a tendency to view the Queen as old and, simultaneously, as peculiar and someone who needs to be looked after. The denomination ‘respectable granny’ indicates the lack of respect with which she is treated. Whenever there is a reference to the Queen’s age, a certain humour is attached to the situation, which is often at the expense of the Queen. In other words, as an inconsiderable, frail woman with white hair she is not taken seriously and ridiculed by the other characters. Nevertheless, this is interesting for the reader as well, for whom it is amusing to observe the difference in other people’s attitudes towards the Queen as soon as she is stripped off her role as monarch. This aspect might also be regarded as a criticism of society, as it is pointed out that the elderly are treated with less respect and are often equated with children.

4.3.3.6 The Queen as a poor woman

Besides the Queen’s depiction as an old and vulnerable woman, she is also shown in a very delicate financial situation. For the first time in her life, the Queen is kept awake at night because she has financial problems. The situation

is so severe that she has to ask her relatives for a loan of ten pounds, an amount which seems ridiculous given that she used to have several palaces in her possession. To her disappointment, none of her family members is able to help and eventually, the Queen finds herself in a dark room, as she does not have enough money to feed the electricity meter. Ironically, her neighbours, whom she initially treats with a slight air of superiority, invite her to have a drink in the tea house.

[Tony] said, 'No sweat,' and, after urging the rest of the group to find a table, went to queue at the self-service counter. He came back with seven cups of tea and seven doughnuts. Beverley said, 'Tone, you're lovely, you really are.'

The Queen agreed. She was ravenous. She bit hungrily into the doughnut and jam dripped out and trickled down the front of her cashmere coat. Violet handed her a paper napkin and said, "Ere, 'ave a serviette, Liz.' And the Queen, instead of taking offence at the over-familiarity, thanked Violet, took the napkin and wiped her coat. (Q&I 105)

A further setting where the Queen is depicted in a rather humiliating pose for her is the food market, where "[t]he poor were scavenging what they could before the Council cleaning squads arrived. The Queen bent down to retrieve brown speckled cooking apples that had collected around a drain cover and she thought, what am I *doing*? I could be in Calcutta" (Q&I/186). Presenting the Queen in a state of poverty and vulnerability is more than merely a means to point out the difficulty for the lower classes to make ends meet. A person can be made comic with the purpose of letting him or her appear miserable or depriving him of dignity and authority (see Freud, *Witz*, 202), which is certainly true for the construction of the Queen as old, poor and vulnerable. This technique can be used as an instrument to express hostility and also criticism.

Only now, as she experiences poverty herself, is her naivety put on display once more, when she begins to truly wonder how non-privileged citizens manage to meet the expenses of everyday life:

The Queen watched Beverley cleaning Margaret's windows and wondered how much the maids at Buckingham Palace had been paid. It was surely more than one pound twenty an hour. (Q&I 210)

4.4 Why and by whom is the Queen perceived as funny/ laughed at?

4.4.1 Socio-cultural factors

“What people laugh at, how and when they laugh is central to their culture.” (Pichler 209) This statement suggests that humour functions within the boundaries of social groups, that its “meaning and value derive from the self-contained systems of culture” (Pichler 209) and therefore depend on the cultural context in which humour occurs.⁵² Furthermore, “the theme of a joke – and by consequence of humour – is only one of its dimensions. The occasion on which it is told and both the identity of the teller/author and audience/reader constitute another dimension” (Pichler 210). Also Triezenberg (415), in connection with the popularity of stereotypical characters, emphasises the importance of the cultural factor in the understanding of humour, as “a person not familiar with the culture may be able to follow the story and get the jist [sic!] of characters but will lose much of the nuance that separates good writing from great”. This also holds true for the novels under consideration.

A central element of the funniness of the plot is definitely the parody of the Queen and the Royal Family members and the paradox of her real life persona and the situations she has to endure in the respective novels. I would argue that for the purpose of perceiving the novels as funny and fully grasping their humour, it is essential to be acquainted with the Royal Family and the way they are portrayed in the media. As I already pointed out before, the Queen's humour is not so much expressed in her own funny remarks or jokes, but rather in the description of her appearance, her language and the previously mentioned situations in which her character is perceived as comical. In the

⁵² For more information on the socio-cultural aspect of humour see Chapter 3.4.1.2.

United Kingdom, the Commonwealth nations and, assumingly, European countries and the United States, the Royal Family has a high recognition value and the media have played an important part in constructing images of how they are said to be and therefore creating royal stereotypes. Furthermore, in order for some situations to be regarded as funny, certain preconceptions of royalty or the upper classes need to be shared. The humour of the novels functions thus within these socio-cultural boundaries.

4.4.2 Ridiculing the Queen as a form of criticising the monarchy?

In connection with the humorous constructions of the Queen, the political and social critical implications of humour are of vital importance. As previously mentioned, Douglas (see 95) emphasises the force of humour to attack structure and organisation. According to her, “all jokes have a subversive effect on a dominant structure of ideas and represent a triumph of informality over the formal” (Davies 127).

Of course, the presentation of the fictional Queen and the Royal Family is at times merciless, as particularly their unworldliness and initial inability to cope with the challenges of daily life account for comical situations and make them appear as foolish and even inferior to the ordinary citizen. Furthermore, the reference to their supposed characteristics and the subsequent construction of royal stereotypes necessarily evoke a feeling of familiarity within the reader and thus account for the Royals to be laughed at. Therefore, it appears probable that aiming one’s laughter at the Queen is a subtle device for ridiculing and therefore critically questioning the institution of the monarchy as such. Certainly, anti-monarchists who are annoyed by the extensive media coverage which the Royal Family receives might find delight in imagining the Queen as an ordinary housewife in a council house estate and laugh at her struggle to fit in.

However, I would argue that in the case of the selected novels, in particular in the ones by Townsend, humour is employed to criticise not so much the monarchy, as rather British society, mainly the upper classes and the political

system. The Royal Family might be important for national identity; however, they hardly have any political powers and the Queen's astonishment at the social deficits, such as the inefficient educational system, the horrendous state of the health care system and the humble surroundings working-class people live in proves that she is dismayed at the social standards herself.

Furthermore, the Royal Family already receives criticism via the media and discussions whether or not the monarchy should be abolished can be publicly debated. Thus, it would not be necessary to disguise critical attitudes towards the monarchy in the form of a humorous novel, as political jokes are used by "[t]he politically powerless [...] as a tribunal through which to pass judgements on society where other ways of doing so are closed to them" (Benton 33), which is clearly not true in this case.

I would rather regard the novels, among which *The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla* in particular, as social and political satires which aim at demonstrating everything which is wrong in British society and presenting it in an exaggerated way. The reader is able to look at the social plights through the eyes of the Queen, who is the ideal character for this scenario, as she is the sovereign and therefore representative of all her subjects, but clearly has never experienced the living conditions of the working class.

Moreover, one might argue that the novels do not advocate the abolition of the monarchy as such, but rather, aim at presenting a critical view on the social deficiencies, which are presumably felt more strongly by the people who live in a council house estate than by those who are more privileged, and the class system in general. Furthermore, in the novel *Queen Camilla*, humour is employed in order to draw attention to societal and also political issues on a larger scale. In contrast to *The Queen and I*, in which the social commentary is more subtle and limited to the Queen's proper observations, the tone has become sharper and a stronger focus is put on the satire of the political system and the election.

4.4.3 Laughter as enhancing the feeling of superiority

As mentioned earlier in connection with ethnic jokes, it is common that humorous practices are directed against someone who is viewed as inferior to oneself. It has been the main humour theory “in a long tradition of philosophers [...] that humor arises from delight in witnessing the suffering of other people” (Colletta 18).

I would propose that this concept can also be applied to the construction of the Queen in fiction and, amongst other factors, accounts for the reason why she is perceived as funny in many situations. In real life, royalty occupies the highest rank in society and therefore, there is not much opportunity for the ordinary person to feel superior.

However, as far as the literary construction of the Queen is concerned, a tendency to construct the Queen as ‘human’ can be noticed. In addition, in the novels under consideration she is placed in a social environment or has to deal with situations which are out of her depth, as because of her privileged and protected background, she has not learned how to cope with them. Hence, her royal position and the privileges that go with it, which, in real life, seem out of reach and beyond imagination, are no longer as desirable to the reader now that they are taken out of context and opposed to ordinary life, which results in a reversal of the roles. The fact that the Queen is overwhelmed by situations which appear to be daily routine for the ordinary person might result in a feeling of superiority to the fictional Queen, who is depicted in several passages as being not capable of mastering adult life on her own:

There is so much to do, thought the Queen. So many tasks. How do ordinary people manage? (Q&I 57)

Furthermore, this portrayal of her might result in the arousal of malicious glee on the part of the reader, for it appears that the Queen must pay her price for all her privileges. Whenever the Queen experiences despair, the reader might be tempted to laugh at her. Humour, therefore, is a means to construct the Queen not only as ordinary, but in some cases, owing to her lack of independence,

even inferior to the ordinary person and thus achieves its intended effect. Consequently, it is the superiority theory of humour which comes into play, as the humour engaged in is clearly at the Queen's expense.

One example which illustrates this thought is the Queen's confrontation with a tin of corned beef, a device which represents the ordinariness of everyday life and can presumably be opened by an adult person without major difficulty:

She picked up the tin of corned beef. It looks quite like dog food, she thought, but how does one gain access to it? She read the instructions: 'Use key,' it said. She located the key which was flattened against the tin like a sentry in a box. But now, having found it, what did one *do* with it? Harris barked irritably as he watched the Queen fumbling with the corned beef tin: trying to fit the key into a raised metal strip at the base. The Queen said, 'Please Harris, do be patient, I'm doing my best: I'm hungry and cold and you're not helping me at all.' (Q&I 59; italics in original)

This passage clearly demonstrates that while the Queen's privileged upbringing and her royal life which entailed comforts such as servants may have resulted in her stylization to a sovereign, or even super-human, it certainly did not have any advantages for her leading a simple life. In everyday circumstances all her subjects are presumably acquainted with, the Queen is overwhelmed with a device as simple as a tin and her lack of common sense and naivety becomes obvious. Hence, the image of the monarch loses its mythic status and the reader is no longer inclined to feel inferior to her. The text passage further illustrates the Queen's irritation at the situation, as she is on the verge of losing her temper and therefore urges her dog to be patient. This is particularly interesting as the image people have of their real Queen is the one of a stoic and aloof monarch who keeps her countenance in every situation. Therefore, her irritable reaction helps to deconstruct the prevailing image of her and, instead, depicts her as 'one of us'.

5. The myth of the Royal Family

5.1 People's fascination with the monarchy

In contrast to the rapid decline of a number of monarchies during the first half of the twentieth century⁵³, the British monarchy did not only avoid a similar fate, but managed to survive until the 21st century. What is more, it has become “the oldest institution in Europe after the Papacy” (Hibbert 24) and is still assigned a “hermetic role as a symbol of continuity and national unity in a pluralist democracy” (Howard 16), a development which has been designated by Billig (1) as “a socio-psychological phenomenon of strange proportions”. Even though a considerable percentage of the population responded in favour of a democratic movement in a 2007 opinion poll⁵⁴, as compared to the results of a 1966 opinion poll in which ninety-two per cent of British citizens indicated their support for the monarchy⁵⁵, “the majority of British people [...] express either affection or indifference to the Royal Family” (Simpkins, “Monarchy in the UK”).

Notwithstanding its loss of power to rule over the country⁵⁶, the British monarchy's continued existence and its popularity among British citizens have made the seemingly “anachronistic institution in the politics of mass society” (Chaney 207) noteworthy. First of all, the fascination royalty exercises over common people remains a phenomenon and a mystery, and, secondly, it assumes such proportions that it appears justified to claim that the British Royal Family has attained the status of a myth.

It might be argued that their exceptional wealth, their exclusive lifestyle and the privileges that royalty implies contribute to people's perception of royalty being

⁵³ See also Hibbert 5; Chaney 207.

⁵⁴ Cf. Simpkins, Julia. “Monarchy in the UK”. 2007. 12 October 2009<http://british-royal-family.suite101.com/article.cfm/monarchy_in_the_uk >.

⁵⁵ Cf. Hibbert 24.

⁵⁶ Due to the Act of Settlement of 1701, the British monarch is virtually deprived of any executive power. However, the monarch still disposes of royal prerogative powers, such as the right to be informed by the Prime Minister, the choice of the Prime Minister, the suspension of the government or the dissolution of the parliament. In reality, the Queen only exercises her royal prerogative on the advice of the Prime Minister. For a full account of the Queen's duties and prerogatives see Von Ziegesar 5-6.

all glamorous and the Queen's life enchanted by a magic spell, which accounts for the monarchy's appeal to the citizens. However, with the reduction of the Queen's role to a merely symbolic and representative one, the question which arises is if the monarchy as such is not more than an outdated relic of more glorious times which no longer has a place in modern Britain.⁵⁷ So why do members of the contemporary Royal Family, a family "whose very position symbolizes undemocratic privilege and inequality" (Billig, *Collective Memory* 63), still enjoy unparalleled prestige in a democratic society?

Of course, there is no single and simple answer to that. In attempting to find a valid interpretation of this phenomenon, the monarchy must be located in larger cultural, social and political contexts and several factors must be taken into account. With regard to the specific aspect of the fictional life-writings of the Queen, the emphasis of my analysis will be put on socio-cultural influences and developments.⁵⁸

5.1.1 The media representation of the British Royal Family

The media interest in royalty "is anything but a new concern" (Plunkett 2). Already during the reign of Queen Victoria, the emergence of visual media and the growth of mass print influenced the development of the British monarchy vitally, the members of the Royal Family enjoying immense popularity (see Plunkett 2). Along with the arrival of the cinema as a mass medium providing entertainment at the beginning of the twentieth century⁵⁹, the "ceremonial milestones of the era" (Richards 260), such as Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and her funeral, were shown on screen. In the 1960s, television assumed the functions of the cinema; a medium which is now "inextricably intertwined" (Richards 260) with the monarchy. Back then, however, the

⁵⁷ See also Pearson 7.

⁵⁸ For information on the religious dimension of the monarchy see Bradley, 2002. An account of royal philanthropy as explanation for the monarchy's consistent popularity is provided by Prochaska, 1995. For a political debate of the monarchy see Parry, 2007, whose essay emphasizes the political context within which the monarchy is situated.

⁵⁹ For more information on film representations of the monarchy see Richards, 2007.

coverage royalty received was “uniformly deferential, respectful and supportive” (Richards 261). The portrayals of royalty focused on the following aspects: the Royals’ concern for the subjects and the loyalty of the people for their monarch, the family on the throne, the association of the royalty with Empire and the importance of the idea of service and duty (see Richards 261).

Nowadays, the depiction has shifted from a respectful to a lurid one. The lives of the members of the royalty are constantly expatiated upon in the media, the more scandalous an action of a member of the Royal Family appears, the more coverage it receives in the tabloids. The dutiful image of the royalty has been undermined, if not to say overturned.⁶⁰ Royal weddings, the performance of royal duties and the celebration of the Queen’s jubilee or birthday are broadcast live not only in Britain, but also in many other states, thus contributing to the festivities’ stylization to international media events.⁶¹

The news coverage the Royals’ lives receive is far more pronounced than the report of Hollywood stars or any other people in the public spotlight.⁶² As a consequence, the royal subjects have become so informed about their Majesty’s life and so involved in what one might call ‘a royal soap opera’, that the claim of the royals having gained the status of international celebrities themselves does not appear to be far-fetched. The Queen’s subjects “have gradually become an audience rather than the awestruck onlookers of a traditional crowd” (Chaney 210).

The monarchy is not merely the constitutional form of the United Kingdom, but its concept is so deeply seated in the consciousness of Britons and therefore

⁶⁰ See also Olechnowicz, *Hatred*.

⁶¹ The wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in 1981, for instance, had an estimated number of 1000 million viewers world-wide, thus making it the greatest televised event in history. See Pearson 5; Olechnowicz 6.

⁶² Newspapers such as *The Sun*, *News of the World*, *Today*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mirror* publish articles about members of the Royal Family on a daily basis. Since the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, a decrease of serious news coverage and an increase of lurid headlines, trivial matters and intimate photos of the Royal Family can be observed. For further information see also Von Ziegesar 110 ff.

mirrored in people's identity⁶³, that one might speak of a cultural phenomenon. Thompson (12; italics in original) equates cultural phenomena with "*symbolic forms in structured contexts*; [...] cultural analysis may be regarded as the study of the meaningful constitution and social contextualization of symbolic forms."

On this account, the monarchy, and the contemporary Royal Family in particular, may be seen as a symbolic form, a term which is defined by Thompson (12) as "embedded in structured social contexts involving relations of power, forms of conflict [and] inequalities in terms of the distribution of resources." Further, as symbolic forms are both received and produced in a certain social-historical context, they are attached a certain value, which might either be of a symbolic kind, that is, the value symbolic forms have owing to the ways in which they are experienced and appreciated by the individuals, or of an economic kind, referring to their value in the market (see Thompson 12-13). The way symbolic forms are regarded, the way they are constructed, circulated and, eventually, perceived and which values are attributed to them, all these aspects are reliant to a greater or lesser extent on their context in a particular social world and, naturally, on the institutions which "generate, mediate and sustain" (Thompson 145) them.

Needless to say, the advent of mass media in modern societies, along with the development of capitalism, enabled the circulation of symbolic forms on a hitherto unprecedented scale. Moreover, the life conditions of the individuals who are the recipients of mediated events have been transformed. The experience of witnessing events in temporally and spatially remote places causes the recipients not only to respond individually, but may result in the global, collective responding to a cultural experience (see Thompson 17-18).

The advent of broadcasting and internet had a tremendous impact on the way the contemporary monarchy was viewed and perceived by the citizens. As Thompson (216) states, the knowledge individuals have of public persons, for

⁶³ See also Chapter 5.1.2.1

instance, political leaders, “is a knowledge derived largely from newspapers, radio and television, and the ways in which we participate in the institutionalized system of political power are deeply affected by the knowledge so derived.” As a result of the portrayal of the Royals by a broad selection of media, the public is offered a personal and even intimate interaction with their monarch. Already in the 1960s, a construction of “a less formal monarchy” (Olechnowicz, *Historians* 31) in connection with television has been noted by historians.

5.1.2 The cultural significance of the monarchy

When investigating the importance of the monarchy on a socio-cultural level, a consideration of the Royal Family concerning its representation in a cultural sense and an ensuing analysis of their embodiment of values and meanings is essential. Nowadays, the power of the Royal Family may not be exercised in political terms; however, despite the justification for Britain’s need of a monarchy because of constitutional and economic reasons, the ideological power of the Royals must not be neglected; a power which Brunt (286) describes as working “with clusters of symbols that function, not as free-floating ideas, but as effective expressions of value, contributing to how we make sense of our everyday lives and what beliefs we have about future possibilities.” Therefore, the relevance of the monarchy for British national identity as well as its role of tradition will be examined in the following.

5.1.2.1 National identity

In 1895, Bagehot (92-93; italics in original) declared the following:

We have come to regard the Crown as the head of our *morality*. The virtues of Queen Victoria and of King George III. have sunk deep into the popular heart. We have come to believe that it is natural to have a virtuous sovereign, and that the domestic virtues are as likely to be found on thrones as they are eminent when there.

Apparently, Bagehot's statement still appears to correspond to the prevailing attitude of the Queen's subjects towards their monarch. The interest in the Royals is not only to be explained by a mere interest in them as individuals, but by viewing them as "a sort of mirror in which competing versions of Britishness as well as everyday gendered and family identities are overlappingly articulated." (Chaney 209)

As the Queen is supported in her official duties and accompanied on state visits by her family, it becomes evident, particularly at the occasion of pompous state banquets at the official royal residences, that the British nation is not represented by a single office-bearer, but by a whole family⁶⁴. Owing to its public presence, the House of Windsor is expected by the population to set moral standards⁶⁵, its members functioning as role models for British society. Although divorces and patch-work families are common in modern British life, the Royal Family is expected to display an exemplary family life. The members of the royal household serve as objects of identification for citizens of all ages (see Von Ziegesar 116). Billig's case study gives evidence that the preservation of morality and obedience to moral standards is considered as the quintessential duty of the family which is placed highest in the hierarchical order in society.⁶⁶ Royal divorces, for instance, and possible scandals evoked by the subsequent media representation, are likely to pose a potential threat to the institution as such. This perception of royal family life as exemplary and "super-ordinary" (Nairns 27) contributes to the enormous interest of the population in royal divorces or scandals.

Moreover, in terms of national identity it appears reasonable to examine the influence of the monarch on her subjects. The monarchy "is seen as an integral part of the national identity, representing continuity, tradition, history and pageantry" (Richards 258), thus being a factor which distinguishes the United

⁶⁴ For further information on royal state visits, see Von Ziegesar 70 ff.

⁶⁵ See also Brunt 294.

⁶⁶ In Billig's family discussions, the vast majority of interviewees mentioned 'royalty' as being tantamount to 'role models on a pedestal' and stressed the importance of family life as the basis of morality. For further details, see Billig, *Talking* 90 ff.

Kingdom from other nations. Furthermore, British citizens are indirectly affected by the Queen and implicated in her power, as most British institutions function in her name and “derive their ultimate legitimacy from royalty” (Brunt 286), so to speak.⁶⁷ It might be argued that regardless of one’s attitude towards royalty, a common identity as ‘Her Majesty’s subjects’ is thrust upon British citizens. They are therefore given a “sense of national belonging” (Brunt 287) and their identities are placed in a national context. Being British can therefore be regarded as tantamount to being one of the Queen’s subjects. Brunt (see 287) proposes an explanation of the importance of the Royal Family for British national identity from a historical perspective. As nations exist as a real geographical area and a number of legal institutions, citizens of these nations form a community which represents shared meanings, values and aspirations. Owing to the heterogeneity of peoples and nations and the eventual dominance of England in the United Kingdom, a conception of a national identity of shared, communal values proves itself problematic. Hence, the non-political monarchy mediates a notion of Britishness which functions as a “powerfully unifying myth of nationhood” (Brunt 287).

5.1.2.2 The role of tradition in the historical development of the monarchy

Throughout most of human history, nations, peoples and tribes have been organized “on the basis of royal rule and monarchical regimes” (Cannadine, *Biography* 291). Therefore, the perception of royal rituals as divine and the view of the monarch as “being imbued with sacred qualities as well as being able to pursue boundless indulgence” (Chaney 211) was considered natural in past times. Consequently, it appears only reasonable to state that “the monarchy is embedded in very old and very deep beliefs, not all of them rational” (Howard 16). In a survey conducted in the 1970s, one third of the Queen’s subjects still

⁶⁷ It is the duty of the monarch to ‘open’ the parliament, give ‘royal assent’ to its legislation and ‘uphold’ the judiciary. The government as well as opposition parties, the armed services and the education inspectorate function in ‘Her Majesty’s’ name. British coins are decorated with the image of the Queen, in any British passport and also the national anthem, ‘Her Majesty’ is perpetuated. See Brunt 286-287.

expressed their belief that her succession to the throne was the choice of God (see Howard 16). Indeed, despite better education of the British people and a diffusion of royal authority, effectuated by acts of secularization and bureaucratization, the “secular magic of monarchy” (Cannadine, *Tradition* 102) can still be sensed among the Queen’s subjects. This phenomenon might be due to two reasons. The British monarchy is a social institution⁶⁸, the House of Windsor being “centrally located at the level of image and representation” (Chaney 211); “if this institution is to continue to have any validity some aspects of the aura of sacred status have to be maintained” (Chaney 211), which implies that its members need to be attributed symbolic prestige. Secondly, the myth and ritual which seems to surround the Royal Family indicates the political, economical and cultural context of the period and the state of the monarchy as such. Whereas unchanging ritual might give people stability during times of crisis, it can be perceived as a “collective longing for past glories” (Cannadine, *Tradition* 105) in a diverse context under different circumstances.⁶⁹

In order to understand the transformation of kingship as a divine concept into modern institutional symbolism which maintains “an unbroken link to antiquity” (Chaney 209), it is crucial “to see change as a process developing through time” (Chaney 209). Parry (47) states that “[i]n all ages, monarchy necessarily involves performance; successful sovereigns are icons.” Therefore, when responding to the innovation of modernity and the continuous change of the representation of the monarchy, one needs to take a look at rituals and traditions which surround the monarchy and have been invented and reinvented in the modern era (see Chaney 210).

Undoubtedly, the staging of pompous ceremonies is typical of the British monarchy, the popularity of which definitely reveals insights in the way British

⁶⁸ Social institutions might be defined as “specific and relatively stable clusters of rules and resources, together with the social relations that are established by them and within them.” (Thompson 149) This definition comprises both enterprises and organizations, for instance, the BBC. Characteristic of social institutions are the hierarchy of individuals or their positions and, furthermore, a certain set of conventions, rules and flexible schemata, whose task it is to administrate the conduct of individuals and the use of resources within the institution. For further information, see Thompson 149.

⁶⁹ Cf. Cannadine, *Tradition*.

citizens feel about royalty. In an attempt to investigate its influence on the national psyche, Cannadine sheds light upon the evolution and role of royal ceremonial, a subject which has faced severe scholarly neglect since the late seventeenth century (see Cannadine, *Tradition* 103), as well as the cultural context into which it is embedded, from 1820 to the 1980s, a period which he divides into four different phases⁷⁰. The first one, dating from 1820-1875, was characterized by the unpopular king reigning over the social elite instead of the nation and the rituals of royalty therefore being reserved to the privileged upper class and the church. Due to the lack of mass media, royal ceremonies were not staged to spectacular national events. The impressive grandeur of the British Empire did not require any additional ostentatious displays of royalty to impress other nations (see Cannadine, *Tradition* 116). During the second phase, from 1877-1914, the “nationalistic displays” (Chaney 210) of a monarch who symbolizes integration but does no longer dispose of real power were invented. The increasing political disempowerment of Queen Victoria appeared to facilitate the glorification of royal ceremonial and the stylization of Queen Victoria to the grand matriarch of the British Empire. The public image of the monarchy experienced radical change “as its ritual, hitherto inept, private and of limited appeal, became splendid, public and popular” (Cannadine, *Tradition* 120), Britain becoming the “centre of grand ceremonial once more” (Cannadine, *Tradition* 121). Moreover, the nationwide circulation of royal ceremonies had its seeds in this period on account of the press and the improvement of photography. The invention of new traditions bloomed, particularly under Edward VII. It was “a time when old ceremonials were staged with an expertise and appeal which had been lacking before” (Cannadine, *Tradition* 108) and the pieces *Coronation Ode*, *Land of Hope and Glory* and *The Crown of India* were composed.

In the third phase, beginning in 1918 and lasting to 1953, this image of pomp and ceremonial was promoted further with the help of the mass media radio and the press in order to impress the working class and stand out against other

⁷⁰ For a concise summary of Cannadine's essay, see also Kuhn 2-3 and Chaney 210.

European powers. The context of British royal ritual, however, was significantly altered, as it “ceased to be merely one aspect of widespread competitive inventiveness, and became instead a unique expression of continuity in a period of unprecedented change” (Cannadine, *Tradition* 139). However, the fact that Cannadine classifies this third phase as one single period lasting from 1918 to 1953 might be criticized, as during this period in particular, several historical events which had a powerful impact on Britain, such as the Second World War and the demise of the British Empire, took place, which must have had significance for the monarchy and royal ceremonial as well.

The fourth phase, from 1953 up to the 1980s, is characterized by the transformation of members of the Royal Family into media celebrities, which was caused by the increasing influence of television on the invented traditions of a symbolic monarchy. Royal ceremonies, such as the coronation, weddings and wedding anniversaries became mystified family events, accessible for everyone. Within this framework, the importance of monarchical tradition facilitating change is highlighted. As Cannadine (*Tradition*, 150) states, it “was not so much despite, as because of, the continuity in style and circumstance, that the ‘meaning’, of royal ritual altered once more”. The classification ‘meaning of ritual’ implies the treatment of monarchy as a cultural performance, therefore a display of symbolic identity (see Chaney 210).

The description of the four phases detected by Cannadine does not only demonstrate the significance of ritual and ceremonies for the continuity of the monarchy and, in the same breath, provide an explanation for the sacred status of the Royals which they still give the impression of holding in an educated, modern society; moreover, Cannadine demonstrates that the meaning of royal ritual and societal attitudes towards the monarch are always dependent on the social, economic, political and cultural context. Cannadine’s analysis does not cover the period from the 1980s to the present, which, as I would argue, can be regarded as a fifth phase in the recent history of the monarchy in the United Kingdom. Despite the fact that it is still the same monarch reigning, the country has yet experienced changing attitudes towards royalty within the last three

decades. Owing to a number of events which shattered people's conception of an ideal royalty and the previously mentioned development of the Royals' representation in various media⁷¹, the social context within which the Royal Family must be viewed has altered significantly. This recent period in the history of the British monarchy shall be examined in the following chapter.

5.1.3 Demystification

When there is a select committee on the Queen, the charm of royalty will be gone. Its mystery is its life. We must not let in daylight upon magic. (Bagehot 99)

In the construction of the Royal Family through the media, it is the 'human interest value' which needs to be highlighted, as it creates a bond between the monarchy and ordinary people by enhancing identification with the Royals. From the experience of everyday family life, comparisons with the Royal Family are made.⁷² The extent to which members of the Royal Family are familiarized to the population becomes obvious when apprehending the tendency of both the press and ordinary citizens to informally refer to them by their first names, which was, amongst other aspects, revealed by Billig's family interviews⁷³. The notion of the Royal Family as being, first and foremost, a family, just like so many others in the United Kingdom, implies a tremendous interest in the broadcasting of family occasions, as the 'taking part' in royal weddings and Christmas festivities via radio and television. This collective participation accounts for the appeal of royal occasions, for the citizens "come together as a nation of normal families, and Britain, through its monarchy, becomes The Family of families" (Brunt 293).

⁷¹ See Chapter 5.1.1

⁷² Cultural stereotypes, such as 'bossy sister', etc. are also applied to individual royals. See Brunt 292.

⁷³ This phenomenon, however, applies nearly exclusively to the second and third generation of the Royal Family, the Queen and the late Queen Mother being virtually never referred to by their Christian names. See Billig, *Writing* 21.

However, one might argue that too much identification with the Royals and their exposure to the public results in a loss of the magic and mystique that surrounded the British monarchy.⁷⁴ As a consequence of the mediatization of modern culture and the electronic propagation of the royal dynasty, a process which I would suggest could be called 'demystification' has taken its course.

As millions of people nowadays watch royal ceremonies, which used to be a right reserved for a few thousand spectators, Van Ziegesar (108) points out the danger "daß die von Bagehot beschworene Magie der Monarchie durch die zu grellen Fernscheinscheinwerfer zu einer königlichen Seifenoper verkommt."⁷⁵ Richards (279) accurately refers to the contemporary British Royal Family as "a supreme example of the participatory soap", as the public is enabled to share both "the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows of this family" and judge their actions, as they would with characters in TV shows.⁷⁶ This participation in royal life is also addressed by Billig (*Writing*, 13), who states that "[t]he more the public is interested in the private lives of royalty, the less divinely remote the royal personages will appear." Furthermore, the assimilation of the Royal Family with soap opera characters indicates that the monarchy is no longer regarded "as a political institution, but considered only in terms of human behaviour, human emotions and family choices" (Olechnowicz, *Historians* 32). With intimate details of royal family life published in the newspapers, it is not only the belief in their moral superiority and the continuity of family life which is shattered, but there is the danger that the Royal Family as the unifying element and symbol for the nation will become too ordinary to exercise power on an ideological level.

Consequently, I would suggest that the literature under examination could be placed within the tradition of mediating and, at the same time, demystifying the monarchy. The appealing factor of the novels is definitely their reference to the

⁷⁴ See also Brunt 297.

⁷⁵ A contributing factor to this development is the increased size of the contemporary Royal Family, which now comprises the Queen's and Princess Margaret's children, their spouses, and grandchildren, who, in the past, made appearances in TV and radio shows, thus contributing to the 'trivialization' of the royal dynasty. See Von Ziegesar 109.

⁷⁶ See also Richards 279.

Royal Family and the construction of literary characters who, in their actions, outward appearance and family relations, correspond to the constructed images of the Royals in the media. A fictional life story of Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family gives the readers the opportunity to participate in the Royals' lives. In addition, it is a means of fulfilling the thirst of the subjects to read and get to know more about their sovereign.

Furthermore, owing to the tabloid press relentlessly uncovering secrets and exposing intimate details of royal life, the image of royalty as being 'mythical' has already diminished and the previously mentioned development of the institution of the monarchy acquiring a soap opera- like character has begun. The news coverage of the Royals shows that the exploitation of very private matters is no longer a taboo⁷⁷, which entails the demystification of the monarchy. The novels under consideration demystify because of their construction of the Queen in vulnerable roles and intimate situations, which is a way to deconstruct the image of the Queen as superior to all others and present her as ordinary. On her first morning in the council estate, e.g., it is explained that she is wearing a 'nightdress', followed by an account of her morning routine, which is a very private matter:

There was no hot water in the icy bathroom, so she washed in cold. Her hair was impossible; it had lost its set. She did the best she could and eventually tied a scarf, gypsy-fashion, around her head. (Q&I 56)

⁷⁷ For more information on the news coverage in earlier periods see Chapter 5.1.1.

5.2. The phenomenon of life-writing

5.2.1 Biofiction- a literary genre

5.2.1.1 Defining the concept

The literary genre to be considered in the context of the examined novels is referred to as biofiction, which is a rather complex term encompassing a broad field of similar phenomena. As there is no common consensus regarding the terminology yet⁷⁸, similar definitions such as life-writing and fictitious biography are often used synonymously by scholars and thus contribute to the reader's confusion. An attempt to pin down diverse concepts and to provide a definition is, at this point, indispensable.

A very concrete, yet slightly partial definition is provided by Sarver and Markus, who characterize a bio-novel as being the same

to readers what a bio-pic is to movie fans. It's the story of a famous person told in a way that maximizes the excitement and romance, and that gives shape, meaning, and resonance to the character's essential truth. (Sarver&Markus 1)

They further point out the freedom of the author "to tell the story as it ought to have been" (Sarver&Markus 1), unlike the biographer, whose narration is limited to actual facts. Bio-novels contain characters, locations, dialogues, motivations and events that were artistically added in order to present the subject in a more colourful way, which usually results in a more joyous read. However, as Haase (37) correctly mentions, this definition only concerns novels and disregards other genres such as drama and poetry, to which it could easily be applied as well. She further challenges the definition because it conveys the impression that the entire biography needs to be the subject of the biofictional text, which is, however, untrue. A fictional main plot may indeed be the focus while the biographic part stands in the background.

⁷⁸ See also Haase 37.

In their introduction to the volume *The Rewriting of Romantic Lives in Contemporary Fiction and Drama*, Middeke and Huber introduce the generic term 'biofictions' for both novels and plays that are concerned with the fictional rewriting of the biographies of British romantic writers (see Middeke& Huber 4). They further explain the importance of the "condition of history" (2) for the "writing of the history of lives - biography." (2) In order to grasp the human understanding of both art and reality, three questions are of vital importance:

[F]irstly, we may ask whether a historical identity which has become precarious is able to initiate changes in our historical thought and in our modes of interpretation. Secondly, we may question the traditions which define identity and, in reaction to this, demand a new way of historical thinking aiming at the renewal of the old structures. And thirdly, we may want to know the extent to which a new mode of historical thought can incite radical innovation. (Middeke&Huber 2)

Naturally, these thoughts apply to biography as well. As far as life-writing is concerned, be it authoritative or fictional, a "postmodern emphasis on the indeterminacy of biographical knowledge and the laying bare of epistemological uncertainties and blanks within the context of the representation of biographical facts" (Middeke& Huber 2) may be suspected. The general view that art and science are two entirely different and radically dissimilar ways of understanding the world is now considered antiquated and has long been revised by contemporary historians (see Middeke& Huber 40). The opposition of fact and fiction has been challenged by literary theorists since the 1970s and the proximity of biography to fiction has been widely acknowledged (see Haase 40). As Hutcheon (124) points out, "there is a return to the idea of a common discursive 'property' in the embedding of both literary and historical texts in fiction." Therefore, "[t]he intertextual parody of historiographic metafiction enacts [...] the views of certain contemporary historiographers: it offers a sense of the presence of the past, but a past that can be known only from its texts, its traces – be they literary or historical" (Hutcheon 125).

Thus, it appears that this new historical consciousness places emphasis on the fact that fiction and the biographical or historiographic discourse are two not

mutually exclusive practices and that both genres display similarities which are due to their narrative nature; however, it has to be borne in mind that this does by no means imply an exchangeability of fact and fiction. It is in the freedom of the writer of biofictions to avail themselves of the historical material, but to “play with it, [...] even invert it, if necessary, and still arrive at a heuristically impressive and plausible interpretation of that life” (Middeke& Huber 3).

Taking the above mentioned facts into account, it becomes obvious that there is a close interrelationship between biography and biofiction. Both genres share as a common characteristic their relation to historic persons and, consequently, their reference to reality. Furthermore, another aspect which they have in common is the tendency to employ narrative structures in order to depict reality in a subjective light. Whereas the content of biographies is determined through facts, its very representation depends on the narrative form, which unites single facts to a story. The stylistic form of the narrative lies in the power of the biographer, who exercises his function of the storyteller.

Maack (249-250) also emphasizes the close relationship of biography and fiction and uses both the terms ‘fictitious biography’ and ‘biographic novel’ interchangeably in order to refer to “fiktive Entwürfe, die mittels historischer Figuren Geschichte, nämlich Literaturgeschichte, Geistesgeschichte, Kunst- oder Architekturgeschichte, Sozial- oder Entdeckungsgeschichte präsentieren” (250). This fictitious biography further does not aim at portraying a credible and realistic personality, however, it creates facets of a historical personality, the construction of which entirely depends upon the reader. Maack further mentions the relationship between art and reality, which is often broached in biofiction. The historical personality is put in the centre, while at the same time, the impossibility of a realistic depiction is demonstrated. Regarding literary instruments, characteristics of the post-modern novel, such as repetition and the emphasis on reflexivity and addressing the reader, are made use of for constructing a fictitious biography (see Maack 250ff).

A similar literary genre, which might lead to confusion, is the biographical novel, which must not be mistaken with the fictional biography, a term which is tantamount to what other scholars refer to as 'biofiction' and 'fictitious biography'. Schabert (31) defines a biographical novel as having "as [its] subject the lives of actual persons." She continues to set this specific genre apart from biofiction by claiming that "whereas in fictional biography the specific human reality is made to break the novelistic patterns, in the older biographical novel the patterns take over" (Schabert 31). The subject of the biographical novels usually is an unfamiliar person of whose life little is known, for the purpose of permitting the author to indulge in "novelistic invention and amplification" (Schabert 32).

5.2.1.2 The popularity of biofiction

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the demand for a literary adaption of biographic subject matters has steadily increased, particularly on anglophone territory. Biographies and memoirs tend to have gaps and deficiencies in their account and in some cases, they raise more questions than they answer. Therefore, they need to be questioned critically and this is what biofictions do. Of course, the same reasons why biography enjoys great popularity apply for any kind of life-writing as well. A continuous interest in the lives of public persons can be noticed. The portrait of a famous person in biography is able to satisfy people's desire for myths, for life descriptions of heroic figures of past times (see Haase 44-46).

Usually, the artists or writers chosen for a fictional biography are those who have always been interesting for biographies, owing to their degree of popularity and, as a consequence, people's identification with them. Precedents for biofiction date back as far as Sir Walter Scott's portraits of Queen Elizabeth I in *Kenilworth* and Oliver Cromwell in *Woodstock*, which demonstrates that also historical persons without artistic background have always been of great interest for this kind of literature. As Haase mentions, the introduction of a largely

unknown personage to a greater audience with the help of a fictional biography is rarely the case, as one of the functions of this literary genre is the recognition value (see Haase 47).

5.2.2 The Queen as a biofictional character

In their enumeration of characteristics of contemporary biofictions, Middeke and Huber make it clear that biofictional texts usually rewrite the lives of personalities of the past, not contemporaries. They even state as one of the most essential aims of biofictions the gaining of knowledge of the past and, as a consequence, the progressive movement to make use of this knowledge for explaining and interpreting the present. The responsibility of the writer of contemporary biofictions is hence similar to the responsibility of the contemporary historian (see Middeke & Huber 18).

However, other definitions, such as the one by Sarver and Markus⁷⁹, do not mention the need for biofictional characters to be based on deceased historical characters; furthermore, it must be acknowledged that in the foreseeable future contemporaries will be personalities of the past. Therefore, I would extend Middeke and Huber's definition and argue that the main concepts of fictional life-writings, as they were explained previously, can be applied to contemporary personae as well who do not have to be limited to artists and writers. Therefore, I would suggest the novels *The Queen and I*, *Queen Camilla*, *The Uncommon Reader* and *An Autobiography of the Queen* to be classified as biofictions.

As one of the main characteristics of biofictions, Middeke and Huber stress the irony of the deconstructive process of distancing present from past by presenting the artists "no longer [as] unreachable heroes; rather they are debunked, ironized, or dethroned to textual trickster figures, anti-heroes, or, more realistically, to human beings who have common desires" (Middeke & Huber 10). The same phenomenon, I would argue, can be observed in the

⁷⁹ See Chapter 5.2.1.1.

Queen's case. In *The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla*, Queen Elizabeth is not only literally dethroned and forced to reside as an ordinary citizen amongst her former subjects, but also ideologically, as she no longer represents the nation and values of commitment, the perpetuity of the monarchy, the union of the country, and is, therefore, confronted with disrespect and disloyalty of her former subjects. In all four of the novels, the Queen's human side is stressed and her desires to abdicate, to spend her time reading in privacy, or to visit her husband in the nursing home do no longer portray the image of an unattainable and mystified monarch, but rather picture her as 'one of us', a mere human being whose life is far from being perfect or even desirable.

An aspect of biofiction which has not been treated so far is the role of humour. While the occurrence of certain forms of humour is by no means unusual for biofictional texts⁸⁰, the novels under consideration were written with the intention to evoke their readers' laughter, which is why I would suggest that humour is the most important aspect which needs to be considered in the construction of the fictional Queen. As the previous analysis has shown, the functions of the humorous depiction of the Queen and the Royal Family are various; humour is not merely a means to ridicule the Royals, but also to draw a critical picture of societal and political issues. The often employed satirical tone and references to certain aspects of British society, such as the class system and the deficits in the education and health care system, plays a major role, particularly in *The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla*. However, also in *The Autobiography of the Queen* and *The Uncommon Reader*, critical remarks can be detected, even if they are less obvious. In the former, it is the patronizing attitude towards the former colonies which is revealed in several passages, while the latter offers subtle commentary on the place literature occupies in society and how people who engage in reading are viewed by others. On the basis of the selected novels, I would claim that the combination of a fictional life story of a person in the public spotlight with a wider social and political context

⁸⁰ Middeke and Huber (1999) point out that irony and parody, among other aspects, are characteristics of contemporary biofictions of Romantic artists' lives.

might be seen as the emergence of a new trend in fictional life-writing. This is particularly relevant in the biofictions of contemporaries, as the issues tackled are of current relevance and the authors achieve to hold a mirror up to the readers.

The Queen and I, *Queen Camilla*, *The Autobiography of the Queen* and *The Uncommon Reader* therefore illustrate the shift of the Queen from an authoritative figure, symbolizing tradition and representing feudal privilege, to becoming the heroine of a new form of cultural entertainment with a sociocritical and moral dimension.

6. Conclusion

I've always liked the story of the prince and the pauper. [...] I love the idea of the king looking out the window and envying the pauper's freedom, lack of responsibility. And I like the idea of the pauper looking at the king and thinking, God, if I had his wealth and his power and those clothes. And the moral is, neither of those is right. We need each other. (Sue Townsend quoted in Fairbairns 25)

This statement by Sue Townsend, author of *The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla*, describes not only her personal idea of the relation between a monarch and the poor man, but it also proves to be highly relevant for an analysis of the construction of a fictional Queen Elizabeth, as well as the reasons why novels featuring a fictional life story of the Queen of the United Kingdom are appealing to readers in the first place.

The previous analysis of the four novels *The Queen and I*, *Queen Camilla*, *The Uncommon Reader* and *The Autobiography of the Queen* has demonstrated that certain similarities regarding the respective constructions of the Queen as a fictional character can be noticed. Among these is the development of the Queen's character from a dutiful, but also snobbish and very reserved monarch, to a person who openly shows her emotions and dares to speak up for her own personal wishes. The means by which this transformation in her personality is effectuated are her immersion in a different socio-cultural group (*The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla*), her obligation to rely on the help of other people who are not aware of her real identity (*The Autobiography of the Queen*) and the knowledge she gains through literature (*The Uncommon Reader*). In all cases, however, it is her encounter with real life, a life without servants, a life full of challenges, obstacles and regrets but also a life of personal freedom, independence and anonymity, which enables her to become more strong-willed, but also more sympathetic to the problems and miserable living conditions of 'ordinary' people below her rank.

Although a fictional account of the Queen's life is entirely the product of the author's imagination, one might wonder why three different authors created fictional Queens which are similar in their behaviour and personality as well as their search for their identities. Of course, the media presentation of the British monarch has contributed to a certain image of her, which is taken up in her fictional construction in order to create a feeling of familiarity within the readers. Her refined speech, for instance, or her possession of several corgis are aspects which are also prevalent in the media coverage of her. The same is true for the fictional construction of the other members of the Royal Family, whose supposed real life characteristics are incorporated in their fictional construction and therefore encourage the creation of royal stereotypes even more. Consequently, in some situations, one is tempted to feel that the Queen and the Royals behave exactly in the way one would expect them to.

However, there are also similarities to be noticed in the fictional construction of the Queen which cannot be based on her alleged real-life personality and activities, for speculations about the Queen's satisfaction with her position and possible regrets she may have looking back on her life are entirely up to the authors' imagination. Therefore, it seems reasonable to attribute the pattern in her character construction to a general preconception of a king or queen, or at least a privileged member of the upper class, which is shared by a particular socio-cultural group and therefore commonly accepted.

Interestingly, in all of the novels, the Queen's unwillingness to reign increases with her immersion in 'ordinary' life, which accounts for her eventual wish to abdicate in order to focus on her interests as an individual. Taking this aspect of her character development into account, it might be concluded that being the monarch is apparently regarded as incompatible with being a compassionate and, most of all, happy person; thus, 'ordinary' life is presented as desirable even for someone in a wealthy and powerful position.

Furthermore, in addition to the most obvious role of the Queen, namely the one as sovereign, several different roles which her character has to play can be

detected. Apart from being a wife and mother, she is also constructed in roles which are rather humiliating, such as a poor and naïve woman. The function of this representation is, first of all, to emphasize a human and also very vulnerable side of Queen Elizabeth. Moreover, the depiction of the Queen in a situation which is embarrassing for her or in which she is subject to ridicule is likely to evoke the reader's laughter, which is one of the key issues in the novels.

Humour plays an essential role in the construction of the fictional Queen and is shown to fulfil several purposes, such as to evoke a feeling of sympathy in the reader, as well as to construct the Queen as inferior to the 'normal' person. As numerous examples have shown, the means by which humour is employed are parody, satire and the construction of comic situations such as the 'clash' between royalty and lower classes.

In order to find an answer to the question of why it is precisely Queen Elizabeth II who functions as the protagonist of these novels and not just any other person in the public spotlight, an examination of the popular literary genre of biofiction has proven to be useful.

Fictional life stories give readers the chance to get to know more about famous persons and are therefore a supplement to the ever popular genre of biography. In recent years, there has been a tremendous media interest in the Queen and the Royal Family, which might partly be explained by the cultural significance of the monarchy for the nation, but also by the soap-opera like character the monarchy has acquired within the past years. Both the fascination with the Royal Family and the high recognition value of the Queen make her suitable for this kind of literature. Even unsophisticated readers and anti-monarchists who do not pay attention to tabloid articles of the Royal Family are acquainted with the public self of Queen Elizabeth, her social roles and her significance for the country. She exists for all the people in the nation, although their views upon Her Majesty might differ. This, however, is where the great advantage of a fictional life-writing of Queen Elizabeth II lies. As everyone can relate to her in some way and has a different perception of her in mind, the novels are relevant

for everyone and might be interpreted in different ways. Even people who feel indifferent about the monarchy or who are in favour of its abolition might enjoy reading the novels, as the Royal Family is depicted as 'ordinary' and is no longer a burden for tax-payers, not to mention humour as a tool to subtly criticise the class system. For others, it might be comforting to read about the Royal Family dealing with ordinary situations and struggling with the problems of everyday life, just like non-royal people do.

However, these novels do more than simply attempt to satiate the thirst of the Queen's subjects to know more intimate details about their monarch or to provide the readers with amusement. I would argue that the satirical tone deployed by Townsend is not so much used for mocking the Queen and the Royal Family as individuals, but rather a means for critically illuminating their rank in society and people's attitudes towards them.

The personal aspects of the Queen are combined with a larger social and political context. I would even go so far as to claim that the novels under consideration create a new trend, so to speak, in the writing of biofictions; namely a fictional account of a famous person's life combined with social critique. Particularly in *The Queen and I* and *Queen Camilla* humour is used as a means to draw attention to societal issues and has moral implications. Of course, this is even more present in the fictional life-writings of Queen Elizabeth, as she is the contemporary monarch and any social problems addressed are therefore of the current situation.

Depicting the Queen in intimate moments and making her the object of the reader's laughter does not only aim at deconstructing the image of a super-human sovereign and thus at demystifying the monarchy, but also at criticizing the media representation and satirizing people's fascination with the monarchy. Although the novels succeed in presenting the Queen as 'one of us', there are several instances in the books in which the Royals are admired and set apart from the non-royal people.

One example, in which the stylization of the Royals as 'super-human' becomes apparent, as well as the author's dry social commentary, is the following: *Queen Camilla* ends with the reinstated Royals during their daily 'working hour' as living exhibits in the Throne Room at Windsor Castle, being dressed up in their crowns, coronation robes and military uniforms, respectively, waiting for a horde of "gawping tourists" (QC 443). At first glance, the very idea of the monarchy having "to pay its way" (QC 443) seems ridiculous, let alone the completely absurd scenario of the Royals being surrounded by paying visitors who are instructed not to "feed or touch the exhibits, or attempt to engage them in conversation" (QC 443), as if they were exotic animals in a zoo.

However, upon closer examination, one notices a striking resemblance to the current situation, only disguised behind a slightly satirical tone of the text passage. In accordance with the recent development of the representation of the Royals in the media and their subsequent rise to media celebrities, the idea of the monarch being trapped and displayed behind a showcase does not appear to be far-fetched. It appears reasonable to claim that the contemporary Royal Family is already exposed to an immense intrusion in their private lives by the public eye; the situation described here only demonstrates it more explicitly, as the tourists come into actual face to face contact and do not spy on them via the newspaper. Just like the fictional Royals, the real Royals are not presented as the individuals they are, but they have to adopt roles and there are stereotypical images constructed of them according to the way people want and/or expect them to be. Apart from the roles the Royals are attributed by the media, such as the previously mentioned construction of Prince Harry as a royal troublemaker, people have general preconceptions of how royalty is supposed to be in mind. This is expressed here by the obligation of the Royals to wear pompous and uncomfortable robes in order to please the visitors who paid for seeing the 'the species' Royal Family 'in their natural environment' - hence the allusion to animals in a zoo- that is, in a regal setting which is consistent with the ordinary person's cliché of royalty. Their lack of individual freedom and the unwillingness to attribute them personal qualities results in a complete objectification of the Royals, which is very well conveyed in the tour guides'

appellation as 'exhibits' and the Australian tourist's astonished exclaim "They look almost human." (QC 443)

The grain of truth in this humorous depiction is also acknowledged by the author herself, who responded in an interview to the question whether this is what the Royal Family will become: "I think they already are"[...] "I think they have been architects of their own misfortune- if they see it as misfortune" (Sue Townsend quoted in Fairbairns 26-27).

7. Bibliography

Primary Literature

Bennett, Alan. *The Uncommon Reader*. London: Faber & Faber, 2007

Tennant, Emma. *The Autobiography of the Queen. A Novel*. London: Arcadia Books, 2007.

Townsend, Sue. *Queen Camilla*. London: Penguin Books, 2006.

----- . *The Queen and I*. 1992. London: Mandarin, 1993.

Secondary Literature

Alexander, Richard J. *Aspects of Verbal Humour in English*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1997.

Apte, Mahadev L. *Humor and Laughter: An Anthropological Approach*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Attardo, Salvatore. *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994.

Bagehot, Walter. *The English Constitution*. 1895. Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005.

Bainschab, Alexandra. "The Humor of Christopher Moore." Diss. U of Vienna, 2009.

Benton, Gregor. "The Origins of the Political Joke." *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control*. Ed. Chris Powell and George E.C. Paton. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988. 33- 55.

Bergson, Henri. "Laughter". *Comedy*. Ed. Wylie Sypher. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1956. 61- 190.

Billig, Michael. "Collective Memory, Ideology and the British Royal Family." *Collective Remembering*. 1994 ed. reprint. Ed. Middleton, David, and Derek Edwards. London: Sage, 1990. 60-79.

-----. *Talking of the Royal Family*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Bradley, Ian. *God Save the Queen: A Spiritual Dimension of the Monarchy*. London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 2002.

Bourke, John. *Englischer Humor*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965.

Brunt, Rosalind. "A 'divine gift to inspire'? Popular cultural representation, nationhood and the British monarchy." *Come On Down? Popular media culture in post-war Britain*. Ed. Strinati, Dominic and Stephen Wagg. London: Routledge, 1992. 285- 301.

Cannadine, David. "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977." *The Invention of Tradition*. Ed. Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger. Canto ed. repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. 101-164.

-----. "From biography to history: writing the modern British monarchy." *Historical Research* Volume 77 Issue 197 (2004): 289-312.

Chaney, David. "The Mediated Monarchy." *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality and Identity*. Ed. Morley, David and Kevin Robins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 207-219.

Chiaro, Delia. *The Language of Jokes: Analysing Verbal Play*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Craig, David M. "The crowned republic? Monarchy and Anti-Monarchy in Britain, 1760-1901." *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003): 167-185.

Colletta, Lisa. *Dark Humor and Social Satire in the Modern British Novel*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Douglas, Mary. *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology*. London: Routledge, 1975.

Evrard, Franck. *L'humour*. Paris: Hachette Livre, 1996.

Freud, Sigmund. *Der Humor*. 1927. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992.

-----. *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*. 1905. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992.

Haase, Heike. *Oscar für alle – Die Darstellung Oscar Wildes in biofiktionaler Literatur*. Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004.

Harrington, Jonathan et al. "Does the Queen speak the Queen's English?" Nature Publishing Group. In: *Nature* Volume 408. 2000. 927-928.

Hibbert, Christopher. *The British Monarchy Today*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1968.

Hill, Carl. *The Soul of Wit: Joke Theory from Grimm to Freud*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger. Introduction. *The Invention of Tradition*. Ed. Canto ed. repr. By Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Homans, Margaret. *Royal representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Howard, Philip. *The British Monarchy in the Twentieth Century*. London: Hamilton, 1977.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Keith-Spiegel, Patricia. "Early Conceptions of Humor: Varieties and Issues." *The Psychology of Humor: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Issues*. Ed.

Jeffrey H. Goldstein and Paul E. McGhee. New York: Academic Press, 1972. 4-39.

Kuhn, William M. *Democratic Royalism: The Transformation of the British Monarchy, 1861-1914*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.

Lewis, Paul. *Comic Effects: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Humor in Literature*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1989.

Linstead, Steve. "Jokers Wild": Humour in Organisational Culture." *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control*. Ed. Chris Powell and George E.C. Paton. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988. 123- 148.

Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction: Illustrated from Classic and Modern Texts*. London: Secker& Warburg, 1992.

Long, Phil and Nicola Palmer (eds). *Royal Tourism: Excursions around Monarchy*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2007.

Maack, Annegret. „Charakter als Echo. Zur Poetologie fiktiver Biographien.“ *Klassiker-Renaissance: Modelle der Gegenwartsliteratur*. Ed. Brunkhorst, Martin, Gerd Rohmann and Konrad Schoell. Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag Brigitte Narr GmbH, 1991. 247-258.

Middeke, Martin and Werner Huber. Introduction. *The Rewriting of Romantic Lives in Contemporary Fiction and Drama*. By Martin Middeke and Werner Huber (eds). Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1999.

Mulkay, Michael. *On Humour: Its Nature and Its Place in Modern Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988.

Nairn, Tom. *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy*. 1990 ed. London: Pan Books Ltd, 1990.

Nash, Walter. *The Language of Humour*. London: Longman, 1985.

Norricks, Neal R. *Conversational Joking: Humor in Everyday Talk*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Olechnowicz, Andrzej. "Historians and the modern British monarchy." *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present*. Ed. Olechnowicz, Andrzej. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 6-44.

O'Mealy, Joseph H. *Alan Bennett: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Parkin, John. *Humour Theorists of the Twentieth Century*. Lampeter: The Edwin Meller Press, 1997.

Parry, Jonathan. "Whig monarchy, Whig nation: Crown, politics and representativeness 1800-2000." *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present*. Ed. Olechnowicz, Andrzej. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 47-75.

Pearson, John. *The Ultimate Family: The Making of the Royal House of Windsor*. London: Michael Joseph, 1986.

Petrie, Charles. *The Modern British Monarchy*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961.

Pichler, Susanne. "Interculturality and humour in Timothy Mo's 'Sour Sweet'." *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial*. Ed. Susanne Reichl and Mark Stein. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005. 207-223.

Plunkett, John. *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Prochaska, Frank. *Royal Bounty: the making of a welfare monarchy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Purdie, Susan. *Comedy: The Mastery of Discourse*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.

Reichl, Susanne, and Mark Stein. Introduction. *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial*. Ed. Susanne Reichl and Mark Stein. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005. 1-23.

Richards, Jeffrey. "The monarchy and film 1900-2006." *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present*. Ed. Olechnowicz, Andrzej. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 258-279.

Sarver, Linda and Tom Markus. *A novel approach to theatre: from Adams to Zola*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1997.

Schabert, Ina. *In Quest of the Other Person: Fiction as Biography*. Tübingen: Francke Verlag GmbH, 1990.

Thompson, John B. *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1990.

Triezenberg, Katrina. "Humor enhancers in the study of humorous literature." In: *Humor – International Journal of Humor Research*. Ed. Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin. Mouton de Gruyter: Berlin, New York. Vol 17. Issue 4. 2004. 411-418.

Von Ziegesar, Detlef. *Großbritannien ohne Krone?*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993.

Wales, Katie. "Royalese: The Rise and Fall of 'the Queen's English'." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. In: *English Today* Volume 10. Issue 3. 1994. 3-10.

Williamson, Philip. "The monarchy and public values 1900-1953". *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present*. Ed. Olechnowicz, Andrzej. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 223-257.

Online sources:

BBC News. "Harry says sorry for Nazi costume." 13 January 2005. 24 February 2010 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4170083.stm>

BBC News. "Prince's racist term sparks anger." 11 January 2009. 24 February 2010 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7822883.stm>>

Bennett, Catherine. "Books do furnish a palace..." *Guardian* 24 November 2007. 10 January 2010 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/nov/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview4>>.

Britain Express. "Biography of Queen Elizabeth II." 25 February 2010 <<http://www.britainexpress.com/royals/queen.htm>>.

Commemoratives Collecting. Commemorative Collectors Society. 15 October 2009. <<http://www.commemorativescollecting.co.uk/>>.

Enjoy England. 15 October 2009. <<http://www.enjoyengland.com/ideas/heritage-and-culture/history-makers/royal-england.aspx>>

Fairbairns, Zoe. "Sue Townsend – republican revelries." *Newbooks for Readers and Reading Groups* 42 November/December 2007. 23-27. 8 November 2009 <<http://www.newbooksmag.com/files/newbooks42.pdf>>.

Fathers, Michael. "Book Review/ What if the Windsors were losers?: The Queen and I, Sue Townsend: Methuen, pounds 9.99." *Independent* 20 September 1992. 5 January 2010 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/book-review--what-if-the-windsors-were-losers-the-queen-and-i--sue-townsend-methuen-pounds-999-1552490.html>>.

Glendinning, Hugo. "The Uncommon Reader." *Farrar, Straus and Giroux: Reading Group Guide*. 5 January 2010 <<http://hbpub.vo.llnwd.net/o16/readersguides/9780374280963RG.pdf>>.

Marriott, Edward. Rev. of *The Uncommon Reader*, by Alan Bennett. *Observer* 30 September 2007. 9 January 2010 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/sep/30/fiction>>.

McCarter, Jeremy. "Ruined by a Book." *New York Times* 30 September 2007. 10 January 2010 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/30/books/review/McCarter-t.html>>.

O'Brien, Murrough. Rev. of *The Autobiography of the Queen*, by Emma Tennant. *Independent* 30 November 2008. January 5

<<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-autobiography-of-the-queen-by-emma-tennant-1038153.html>>.

O'Reilly, Elizabeth. "Sue Townsend." *Author Profile-www.contemporarywriters.com*. Literature Department of the British Council in association with Booktrust. 2009. 24 January 2010. <<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/profile/?p=authC2D9C28A18dac23605uLr31DC862>>.

Paxman, Jeremy. "Long live King Graham." *Guardian* 21 October 2006. 10 January 2010 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2006/oct/21/featuresreviews.guardianreview21>>.

Simpkins, Julia. "Monarchy in the UK". 2007. 12 October 2009 <http://british-royal-family.suite101.com/article.cfm/monarchy_in_the_uk >.

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Twelfth edition . "slapstick *n.*" Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2008. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universitätsbibliothek Wien. 03 January 2010 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t23.e52924>>

The Official Website of the British Monarchy. "Horsemanship." Ed. Website Team, Buckingham Palace. 21 January 2010 <<http://www.royal.gov.uk/ThecurrentRoyalFamily/ThePrincessRoyal/Horsemanship.aspx>>.

The Oxford Dictionary of English (revised edition). "humour *noun*". Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2005. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universitätsbibliothek Wien. 10 November 2009 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e36595>>

The Oxford Dictionary of English (revised edition). "sarcasm *noun*". Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2005. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universitätsbibliothek Wien. 10 November 2009 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e68307>>

The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms. "satire". Chris Baldick. Oxford University Press, 2008. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universitätsbibliothek Wien. 16 June 2009 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t56.e1014>>

The Phrase Finder. "We are not amused." 17 February 2010 <<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/401800.html>>.

The Prince of Wales. Ed. Clarence House. 30 January 2010 <<http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/personalprofiles/theprinceofwales/interests/>>.

Toms, Katie. "Queen gone awol." *Guardian* 9 November 2008. 10 January 2010 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/nov/09/autobiography-queen-emma-tennant>>.

Townsend, Sue. "Interview. Secret passions of a republican mole: Sue Townsend explains why she killed off the Queen Mother in a council house." *Independent* 1 September 1992. 10 January 2010 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview--secret-passions-of-a-republican-mole-sue-townsend-explains-why-she-killed-off-the-queen-mother-in-a-council-house-1548632.html>>.

Woodward, Guy. „Alan Bennett." *Author Profile* - *www.contemporarywriters.com*. Literature Department of the British Council in association with Booktrust. 2009. 24 January 2010. <<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=authC2D9C28A1d7801BDED PnG34A0E32>>.

World of Royalty Blog. "Princess Diana in Fiction." 18 August 2009. 20 January 2010 <<http://worldofroyaltyblog.com/2009/08/princess-diana-in-fiction/>>.

Literature not available:

McGhee, Paul E. *Humor: Its Origin and Development*. San Francisco-Reading: Freeman, 1979.

8. Index

B

Bennett 2, 3, 9

Bergson 5, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21

Biofiction

- Characteristics of 119

- Concept of 114

Biographical novel 117

Biography 114, 115, 116, 117, 118,
123, 128

British humour 28, 27, 29

British national identity 105

C

Cannadine 110, 111

Comedy 23, 28, 29, 33, 34, 36, 44

Comic 16

Culture shock 32, 80

D

Dark humour 25

F

Farce 33

Freud 5, 15, 19, 20, 26, 27, 38, 78,
79, 81, 95

G

Gallows humour 25, 26, 27

H

Humour

-Concept of 14, 15

-Functions of 2, 37, 38, 97

-Social context of 39, 111

-Socio-cultural factors 31, 94, 95

-Subjectivity of 1, 18, 31

-Theory 5, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 99

-Theory of four humours 15

I

Incongruity theory 20, 21, 58, 59, 60,
80

interlingual pun 30

Irony 22

J

Joke 31

L

Laughter 16, 17

Life-writing 3, 114, 115, 117, 120,
124

M

Monarchy

-Cultural significance of 3, 105, 123

-Demystification of 111, 113

-Fascination with 101

-Historical development of 15, 107

N

National stereotypes 33, 39, 56

P

Parody 15, 24, 25, 28, 57, 79, 96,
116, 119, 123

Pun 30

Q

Queen Camilla 2, 3, 39, 47, 48, 51,
55, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 83, 96

Queen

-Humorous construction of 57, 58,
60-71

-Language 71-76

-Social roles 81-84

R

Release theory 21, 22

Royal

-Ceremony 109, 112

-Ritual 110, 111

Royal Family

-Fictional construction of 2, 40, 41,
42, 43, 44, 46, 56, 61

-Media representation of 3, 48, 56,
57, 100, 101, 102, 103, 106, 124

-Stereotypical depiction of 40, 54,
55, 56, 94

S

Satire 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 33, 98,
123, 135

Slapstick 1, 27

Superiority theory 20, 21, 97, 98

Symbolic Forms 104

T

Tennant 3, 59, 90

Textual strategy 2, 22, 35

Townsend 1, 2, 3, 48, 56, 57, 59, 88,
97, 121, 124, 126

Tradition 7, 99, 105, 107, 110, 113,
120

The Autobiography of the Queen 3,
58, 61, 64, 68, 69, 70, 71, 75, 80, 81,
84, 85, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92

The Queen and I 2, 3, 39, 41, 42, 45,
46, 48, 49, 50, 52, 54, 57, 58, 59, 61,
62, 64, 69, 73, 78, 79, 80, 82, 86, 88,
89, 93, 96

The Uncommon Reader 2, 58, 61,
65, 67, 68, 69, 82, 87, 88

W

Wit 30

Word play 30

German Abstract

In der vorliegenden Diplomarbeit wird das Ziel verfolgt, die Konstruktion der britischen Monarchin Queen Elizabeth II in der zeitgenössischen britischen Literatur zu untersuchen. Die Romane, die zu diesem Zweck zu einer Analyse herangezogen werden, sind Sue Townsends *The Queen and I* und *Queen Camilla*, sowie Emma Tennants *The Autobiography of the Queen* und Alan Bennetts *The Uncommon Reader*.

Die zentrale Annahme, die dieser Arbeit zu Grunde liegt, ist, dass sich in allen vier Werken Parallelen in der Konstruktion der fiktiven Queen aufzeigen lassen, die die Frage aufwerfen, warum es eine bestimmte Vorstellung gibt, wie die reale Königin zu sein hat. Die Analyse beschäftigt sich außerdem mit der Rolle des Humors, der in der Darstellung der fiktiven Elizabeth strategisch positioniert ist, um so eine breitere Fragestellung zu erlauben.

Nach dem Forschungsüberblick, in dem ein Überblick der wichtigsten Werke zum Thema der Monarchie diskutiert wird, befasst sich das Kapitel 2 mit der Humortheorie. So werden verschiedene Ansätze, die versuchen, das Konzept des Humors zu definieren, erörtert; ebenso liefert dieses Kapitel einen Überblick über die meistbeachteten zeitgenössischen Theorien, sowie über die wohl einflussreichsten Persönlichkeiten auf diesem Gebiet. Darüber hinaus werden die wichtigsten Formen und die Funktion des Humors erläutert; genauso wie einige für die praktische Analyse essentielle soziokulturelle Aspekte.

Anschließend wird auf die humoristische Darstellung der Royal Family und die Funktion dieser eingegangen. In der Analyse der fiktiven Queen wird das Hauptaugenmerk auf ihre Konstruktion als ‚comic character‘ gelegt. Zu diesem Zweck werden die verschiedenen Rollen, die sie in den Romanen einnimmt, beleuchtet. In der darauffolgenden Betrachtung der Situationen, in denen die Queen als komisch empfunden wird, zeigt sich, dass Humor aus verschiedenen Gründen verwendet wird, wie zum Beispiel als Mittel der Kritik oder um das Bild der Queen als „übermenschlich“ zu dekonstruieren.

Der letzte Teil dieser Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Frage nach dem Grund für die plötzliche Popularität dieser Romane, die eine fiktive

Lebensgeschichte der Monarchin erzählen. Um sich einer Erklärung für dieses Phänomen der Fusion der alteingesessenen Monarchie mit moderner ‚popular culture‘ anzunähern, ist es essenziell, der Faszination, die die Monarchie auf die Menschen ausübt, auf den Grund zu gehen, genauso wie das in letzter Zeit an Popularität gewonnene literarische Genre der Biofiktion zu beleuchten.

Zu diesem Zweck wird einerseits auf das steigende Medieninteresse und den Wandel der Berichterstattung über die königliche Familie in den letzten Jahren eingegangen, andererseits wird die kulturelle Signifikanz der Monarchie erörtert. Nachdem britischen Staatsbürgern eine gemeinsame Identität als ‚Untertanen der Königin‘ in die Wiege gelegt wird, könnte man das enorme Interesse an der Queen auf die Verankerung der Monarchie in der ‚British national identity‘ zurückführen; außerdem wird der königlichen Familie häufig eine Funktion als Rollenmodell für die britische Gesellschaft zugeschrieben.

Bei der Betrachtung aus historischer Perspektive lässt sich ein Zusammenhang zwischen der Popularität des Königshauses und dem politischen und kulturellen Kontext feststellen. So wird bemerkbar, dass in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten eine Demystifizierung der Monarchie stattgefunden hat, aufgrund derer der Royal Family ein seifenopernähnlicher Charakter zuteil wurde.

Auf literarischer Ebene wird in den letzten Jahrzehnten eine zunehmende Popularität von Biofiktionen bemerkbar; ein literarisches Genre, das eine fiktive Biographie berühmter Persönlichkeiten darstellt. So lässt sich argumentieren, dass das steigende Interesse an der Royal Family und die durch die Berichterstattung der Boulevardpresse herbeigeführte geringere Scheu über intime Seiten der Monarchin zu berichten, zu der Beliebtheit von fiktiven ‚life writings‘ über die Queen geführt hat. Wie sich schlussendlich zeigt, lässt sich anhand der analysierten Werke eine neue Tendenz entdecken, nämlich die Biofiktion mit moralischer Implikation, die durch ihren humoristischen Charakter nicht davor zurückschreckt, soziale Missstände zu entlarven und die Queen oftmals der Lächerlichkeit preiszugeben.

Curriculum Vitae

PERSÖNLICHE DATEN

Name Claudia Sein
Geboren 28.12.1985 in Wien
Nationalität Österreich

AUSBILDUNG

2007-2008 Erasmusaufenthalt an der Université Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle
2004-2010 Lehramtsstudium UF Englisch, UF Französisch
Juni 2004 Diplomstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik (Universität Wien)
Matura mit Auszeichnung bestanden
1996-2004 Öffentliches Stiftsgymnasium der Benediktiner in Seitenstetten

ZUSATZQUALIFIKATIONEN

Juni 2009 erfolgreicher Abschluss des CertESP der Universität Wien
Mai 2009 erfolgreicher Abschluss des Moduls „Deutsch als Fremd- und Zweitsprache“ der Universität Wien
Juni 2004 Cambridge First Certificate (Grade A)

BERUFSERFAHRUNG

Februar 2009 Fachbezogenes Praktikum UF Französisch am Schottengymnasium (1010 Wien)
November 2008 Inlandspraktikum Deutsch als Fremd- und Zweitsprache bei der Österreichischen Orient-Gesellschaft (1010 Wien)
Dezember 2006 Fachbezogenes Praktikum UF Englisch an der Herta Firnberg Schule für Wirtschaft und Tourismus (1210 Wien)
Sommer 2005, 2006, 2007 Ferialpraktikum bei Telekom Austria, Ordering-Bereich
2004- 2009 Nachhilfekurse in diversen Nachhilfeinstituten (Steyr, Amstetten, Wien)
Sommer 2002,2003 Ferialpraktikum bei Chabek Bau GmbH

SPRACHKENNTNISSE

Muttersprache Deutsch
Fremdsprachen Englisch, Französisch, Latein, Niederländisch (Grundkenntnisse)