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Beyond "Singular" Identities: Multiculturalism and Cultural Freedom in Australian Literature

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction

The background for any inquiry into cultural studies and the development of cultural theories has always been the strive for knowledge and understanding of the nature of relations between human beings. The complexity of societies and world's society as a whole in conjunction with an apparently never ending potential for conflict, conquest, and colonialism is obviously reason enough to search for an answer to the question why individuals and / or groups so often clash in all kinds of conflicts. It seems obvious, that there is a link between how people see themselves and others in conjunction with how they treat themselves and others. Identity perception can therefore be considered to play an important role regarding the question of sources of conflict.

The discussion of these issues regarding identity of individuals and groups interacting in society inevitably evokes the notion of multiculturalism. Regardless of the particular definition of multiculturalism the world has become a place where diversity of cultures is the rule, not the exemption.

The possible contribution of literature studies to the questions of identity and interaction in multicultural societies and the source of conflict is immense. Literature provides accounts, ideas, and perceptions from various perspectives and epochs. Transcultural and post-colonial studies have addressed the question of interaction of individuals and groups in contexts of colonialism and migration. An integral part of these enquiries has been the perception and re-evaluation of identities under the consideration of real events and histories.[1] Importantly, perception of identity is not only denoting one's self-perception, but also perception of oneself by others. Literatures with references to multicultural societies, colonialism, or migration should therefore provide a rich source to scrutinise the development and negotiation of identities of individuals and groups.

Australia is one of the world's most prominent countries of immigration. People of various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds have migrated to the fifth continent and increased the cultural diversity of the predominant British and Irish colonist society. Further, Australia is also still home to Aboriginal Australians who suffered immense atrocities in post-colonial Australia. Regarding the perception of identity in Australian society, Aboriginal Australians and Australians with more recent migration backgrounds

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1   Nünning 2004, 38

have produced significant literatures in the last twenty years. These "new" Australian literatures should provide a rich source of depictions of identity perception and development in the context of a multicultural Australian society.

The evaluation of identity perception of individuals and groups and the potential of conflict between these individuals and groups demands a theoretical concept to explain the causal connection of identity and conflict. Obviously, theories of identity are not new in the fields of transcultural and post-colonial literature studies. Various authors and scholars have developed ideas referring to ethnicity, gender, or hybridity looking explicitly (or by implication) at their particular relevance for identity. However, these theories are usually linked to a particular point of reference from where the question of identity is elaborated. This often leads to the problem that the question of identity is considered in one particular context only. Obviously, such "laboratory conditions" are problematic when generalised in order to provide a theory that can be regarded as a scientific platform for questions relating to identity development of individuals and groups, their perceptions, and the potential of conflict, simultaneously be valid for concepts of ethnicity, gender, and hybridity.

In *Identity and Violence,* Amartya Sen provides a comprehensive explanation of causalities regarding identity perception and conflict. By changing the perspective form group to individual and from diachronic to synchronic Sen is able to construct a model of plural identity with a global scope. This becomes evident when explaining and deconstructing the nature of various contemporary and historic conflicts and their relation to identity and culture. Since Sen's theory is not directly aiming at literature studies, it is necessary to develop a methodology to apply his theory to the novels chosen for this thesis and literature studies in general. Therefore, a methodological adaptation of Amartya Sen's concept of identity for literature studies will be developed. The questions elaborated in the adaptation will then be applied to the selected novels and discussed according to their results and practicality.

The overall question of this thesis is, whether Sen's theory can essentially be adopted for literature studies and whether this adaptation can provide sufficient results when applied to literary texts regarding questions of identity perception and development in multicultural societies. This rather global question will be examined according to five further aspects. First, is it possible to identify distinctive individual and group

identities? Second, is a plurality of cultural identities evident at least for the major protagonists? Third, is there a causal connection between negotiation processes of individuals and / or groups and conflicts described in the novels? Fourth, is there evidence of distinctive narrative elements or opinions referring to singular culture concepts, plural monoculturalism, or multiculturalism in accordance with Sen's theory? An finally, is Sen's demand for comprehensive cultural freedom of individuals a viable solution for the conflicts described in the novels. These five questions should provide sufficient evidence as to whether Sen's theory can be a valuable contribution to literature studies.

This thesis will look at the development, perception, and negotiation of individual and group identities in three selected Australian novels. The novels have been chosen based on their themes referring to identity negotiations in multicultural contexts in relation to Australian society. Larissa Behrendt's novel *Home* depicts negotiations of identity between Aboriginal and European Australians over three generations. Loubna Haikal's *Seducing Mr Maclean* is discussing the question of identity negotiation between a Lebanese migrant community and Australian mainstream society. In *Love and Vertigo,* Hsu-Ming Teo looks at the development and negotiation of identities within an Asian migrant family. Part of the question of identity perception is the depiction of Australian society in relation to multiculturalism. In order to allow for a certain comparability of views and opinions conveyed in the stories attention was also paid to the novels' publication dates. All three books are published between 2000 and 2004 and therefore against the same background of contemporary Australian society.[2]

Chapter 2 will briefly summarise important aspects in Australian history regarding the political and cultural developments of a migrant society and the relation between Aboriginal and European Australians in a post-colonial setting. This is important in order to evaluate the novels implications regarding assumptions on multiculturalism and society. Chapter 3 will take a closer look at Amartya Sen's theory of cultural identities from *Identity and Violence* and elaborate the important issues regarding its adaptation for literature studies. Chapter 4 will develop the methodology based on Sen's concept for literary studies. These aspects will then be applied to the selected texts in order to test their practicability and the validity of Sen's concept for literature studies. Chapters 5

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2   Cf. Behrendt 2004, Haikal 2002, Teo 2000

to 7 are dedicated to the textual work with the three selected novels and the adaptation developed in chapter 4. Finally, chapter 8 will discuss the results and conclude whether the adaptation of Sen's concept of plural identities is applicable in literary studies.

2 Historical and Political Developments in Australian Society

In order to understand and discuss issues of identity and culture it is also important to understand how the process of migration and the intermingling of people of different ethnic backgrounds, including the Aboriginal Australians, has influenced government policies and society as a whole.

The fifth continent has been a country of immigration for over 150 years. During this time people from various countries and cultural backgrounds have settled in Australia and transformed the originally predominately British colony into a multi-ethnic population. This chapter will take a closer look at the historical development of Australian society into what is understood today as a multicultural immigration society.

2.1 History of Immigration and Ethnic Plurality

The concept of culture in Australian multiculturalism depends heavily on a reference to ethnicity. This leads to a classification of society into particular groups of people with apparently common ethnicities. Assumptions of this kind have influenced and continue to influence Australian policies and society to this day. The consequences of such a concept for questions of identity will be discussed in the following chapters. Therefore, it is important to take a closer look at how this has influenced the question of multiculturalism in Australia. As Stephen Castles points out, one has to consider two distinct processes: Aboriginal people were generally subject to a process of destruction and exclusion from Australian society, yet immigrants provided its foundation and could be incorporated as part of this developing society.[3]

2.1.1 Patterns & perception of Australian society in 19th century

Immigration stood at the very beginning of today's Australian Nation. The first migrants of the modern era arrived in 1788 aboard the First Fleet. Of the nearly 1.500 colonists, a little more than 50% were convicts.[4] The settlement was part of the British Empire's strategy in the struggle with other European colonial powers over influence in South East Asia, and was initially not intended to be more than an imperial outpost.

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3   Castles 1988, 16
4   Clarke 2003, 49

Although it took until the 1860s before the transportation of convicts was finally stopped, the administration of the colonies realized early in the 19th century that a stable population development was only possible through the promotion of immigration.[5] Free or partially free settlers (in form of indentured labour or assisted immigration) were first enticed by the possibility of land ownership and from the 1830s also by the rising demand for industrial workers and servants. Most of the early free settlers came from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, but also from other European countries. The policy of assisted immigration lasted until the 1980s.[6]

While the first half of the 19th century saw a steady but slow rise in population figures, the second half was shaped by the discovery of gold in 1851 and the subsequent explosion of the Australian population. People from all over the world came to Australia, predominantly from Europe, but also from North America and Asia.[7] At this time, even though the majority of settlers was still of British origin, the availability of land and work, and especially the Gold Rush had turned the colonies into a multi-ethnic society.

The predominant idea of culture and ethnicity in 19th century Australia was part of the general European understanding of an evolutionary hierarchy of cultures and societies. Derived from the Darwinian model of natural selection and coupled with an ideology of Christian dominance, some societies were regarded as naturally superior to others. Following such opinion, Europeans and in particular the British, considered considered themselves to be creation's crowning glory. Consequently, Aboriginal Australians, who apparently seemed to live in a stone aged society, were considered an endangered species. In accordance with the principle of natural selection and survival of the fittest, who in this scenario were the European settlers, Aboriginal Australians would naturally disappear.

In general, the Aboriginal Australians did not play any significant role in the Australian colonies. When they did not comply with the settlers' ideas or actions they were usually met with hostility, especially in rural areas where their interests often clashed with those of white pastoralists, farmers, and miners. During the 19th century over 20.000 Aboriginal Australians were killed in land related violence (compared to 2.500 white casualties).[8] While the governments in the colonies' capitals occasionally

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5   Ibid., 109; MacLeod 2006, 26
6   MacLeod 2006, 36
7   Clarke 2003, 116; MacLeod 2006, 97;
8   For further details on this estimation see MacLeod 2006, 66

did recognize a responsibility to protect the Aboriginal Australians, atrocities nevertheless often remained unpunished.[9]

Asians, who migrated in large numbers during the Gold Rush, were perceived as an obscure people by the European majority. The Chinese were by far the largest contingent and unlike the majority of the other gold diggers, who arrived and worked individually or in small groups, they usually worked for Chinese companies as indentured labourers.[10] Asians did not necessarily fall through the evolutionary grid denominating advanced societies, but with their apparently very different culture and language, together with an obscure 'heathen' religion, they did not qualify to be on equal terms with British society.

The European notion of Western superiority was not necessarily hostile towards other ethnic groups, but almost always at least paternalistic. Consequently, the strong belief in European superiority ultimately formed part of the foundation for migration and cultural policies in the Australian nation.

2.1.2 Assimilation and ethnic distinction in the early Australian nation

The driving force behind the idea of forming a Federation at the end of the 19th century was both the fear of non-white immigration and of Asian military aggression. While the colonial upper classes demanded Federation in order to organize a pan-Australian defence policy, unions sought to protect the labour market from non-white migrants.[11]

At the time of Australian Federation in 1901 the majority of Australians still considered Australian society to be modelled on British ideas and values. Alfred Deakin, three term prime minister of Australia, demanded in 1901, " ... a White Australia, in which the absolute mastering and dominating element shall be British."[12] Among the first legal acts of the new federal government was the implementation of the White Australia policy in order to keep people of colour, who were considered a threat to both culture and jobs, out of Australia.[13]

Ethnic distinction in White Australia roughly differentiated between four groups: People of British, or at least northern European origin; southern or eastern European migrants; other, such as Asians, usually considered non-white migrants; and Aboriginal

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9   MacLeod 2006, 71
10 Clarke 2003, 132; Ibid., 102-103
11 Clarke 2003, 176
12 MacLeod 2006, 106
13 Ibid., 105

Australians. This differentiation followed a strictly top to bottom hierarchy, with the ruling majority of British descendants obviously at the top. Through legislation the government had a significant influence on how these groups would be treated by society and how they would interact with each other.

Generally, immigration figures between the beginning of federation and the end of the Second World War were low and British migrants still dominated.[14] However, since the demand of the labour market could not be met by British immigrants only, other European immigrants, predominantly from Greece and Italy, began coming to Australia in greater numbers.[15] Initially, White Australia perceived migrants from southern and eastern Europe to be "quite unsuited ... ever to become worthy citizens."[16] Deakin stated that "our Antipodean suspicion is directed at immigrants of the lower Latin type and ... decidedly antagonistic towards newcomers from South-Eastern Europe."[17]

In order to control and influence immigration the Australian government introduced a language test. Migrants who did not fit into the immigration scheme of the government had to pass a test in a selected European language. If they failed, immigration was denied. To reach the desired results, migrants had to pass the test in a language they most likely would not understand.[18]

The Aboriginal people still did not play any significant role in the young Australian nation. However, it was realized, that they were not going to die out and simply disappear, and therefore a policy of assimilation was adopted to solve the problem of an increasingly pauperised people. The major target of this policy were Aboriginal children of mixed parentage, who were considered more likely to assimilate into the dominant white society. Assimilation therefore meant to forcefully remove these children from their parents and put them into homes or foster families in order to "save" them from an "inferior" culture and "help" them to become members of the "superior" white society. This policy only ended in the late 1960s. Until then, up to ten percent of each generation of Aboriginal people, today known as the Stolen Generations, were forcefully removed from their families.[19]

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14 Castles 1992, 54
15 Castles 1988, 20; MacLeod 2006, 112
16 MacLeod 2006, 111
17 Ibid.
18 MacLeod 2006, 107-108
19 Clarke 2003, 364-365; Griffiths 1995, 63-64; MacLeod 2006, 75, 87

2.1.3 Immigration and assimilation after 1945

Australian immigration policy remained essentially unchanged after the Second World War. The economy however, boomed and its labour demand could only be met by large scale immigration.[20] In accordance with its White Australia policy, the government was forced to accept non-English speaking Europeans when British migrants could not be attracted in sufficient numbers. In order to make this more acceptable to the general public, the government chose a two way strategy. First, southern and eastern Europeans were assimilated as "New Australians", yet a government pamphlet reminded the newcomers that: "Australians are not used to hearing foreign languages...", and that speaking their own language, "...will make you conspicuous..."[21] Second, the government changed its openly racist approach of ethnic superiority to a more covert one of cultural incompatibility. While Europeans were considered compatible with Australian culture, non-Europeans, and especially Asians, were not.[22] To appease union fears of cheap labour immigration, the government also resurrected the public's fear of the "Yellow Peril". Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell suggested that if Australia did not raise its population dramatically, the country would be "swamped" by Asians.[23]

Regarding Aboriginal Australians, the government's policy also remained largely unchanged. Some attempts were made to "better" their situation under the label of social advancement, however, this was essentially the same assimilationist policy as in the decades before the Second World War.[24] However, Aboriginal affairs were slowly starting to play an increasingly important role, both on national and international level.[25] At least until the mid-1960s, the dominant ideology of post-war Australia, "in both its exclusionist and assimilationist facets was a racist celebration of the superiority of British culture and institutions."[26]

2.1.4 Multiculturalism in Australia

In the 1960s and 1970s Australians slowly began to embrace the idea of a culturally more plural society instead of the assimilationist one that dominated the post-war years. The policy of assimilation had also hidden the fact that many immigrants lived in more

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20 Castles 1988, 23; Castles 1992, 54
21 Castles 1988, 49; MacLeod 2006, 115
22 Castles 1988, 45
23 Castles 1992, 55
24 Griffiths 1995, 72-74
25 Ibid., 77
26 Castles 1988, 50, 55

or less separate communities and that integration had not taken place.[27] Under the government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in the 1970s multiculturalism became an official policy, finally replacing the notion of White Australia.[28] At the core of this new approach was the idea of social justice and equal rights, and the renunciation of race or ethnically related discrimination between migrants.[29] Ethnic groups and communities were now encouraged to maintain their culture, as long as they had an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia. As well as being offered various services in different languages, migrants now also had access to extensive English language programmes and other measures to assist the process of immigration and integration.[30] However, very little was done to lower racial barriers for new prospective immigrants. Whitlam's policy was primarily directed towards those immigrants who had already settled in Australia.[31] Castles suggests that Whitlam as well as his successor Malcolm Fraser both tried to win what was called the "ethnic vote", and therefore programmes of both parties' included substantial benefits for already settled migrants.[32]

Even under Whitlam, migration was still far more difficult for Asians than for Europeans. A member of Whitlam's Labour Party stated in 1974: "to suggest that ... (a non-discriminatory immigration policy) .. indicates an open door to Asiatic migration or the breakdown of the Australian way of life is malicious in the extreme."[33] It was not until the late 1970s, under the Fraser Government, that substantial migration from Asia became possible.[34] These first Asian migrants were mostly refugees, predominantly from Vietnam, but also from other Asian countries. From the 1980s, Asian migrants also began to settle in Australia for economic or educational reasons.[35] Asia had become an important source of immigration for Australia, as neighbouring Asian countries began to develop strong economies, and Western Europe had reached levels of prosperity that kept people from emigrating in larger numbers.[36]

The second major change during this era was the introduction of full citizenship rights for Aboriginal Australians in the late 1960s. The driving forces behind the change

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27 Castles 1992, 67; Vasta 1996, 47
28 Castles 1992, 67; MacLeod 2006, 154
29 Castles 1992, 67, MacLeod 2006, 118
30 Clarke 2003, 309; MacLeod 2006, 118-121
31 Castles 1988, 58; Jupp 2002, 33
32 Castles 1988, 66
33 Ibid., 58
34 Ibid.
35 Castles 1996, 309-310; MacLeod 2006, 135-136
36 Castles 1988, 53

were the land rights movement and the question of equal pay for Aboriginal Australians.[37] Their situation was further improved under Whitlam in the 1970s, and later in the early 1990s under the Keating administration, when the second Mabo court ruling reversed the over 200 year old Terra Nullius notion, and paved the way for comprehensive land title legislation. The latest act of reconciliation between the Australian Government and the Aboriginal people was Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples on 13 February 2008, apologising particularly for the abduction of Aboriginal children, and for inflicting indignity, suffering, and grief upon the Aboriginal Australians.[38]

2.1.5 Aspects of tolerance and continuing old agendas

The politics of the 1970s clearly paved the way for a more tolerant view of Australian society and a general acceptance of cultural plurality. However, the old notion of British cultural superiority coupled with the rejection of non-European ethnicity or culture has surfaced periodically.

In 1984, Geoffrey Blainey, professor for history at the University of Melbourne, stated that too many Asian immigrants were coming to Australia, and that multiculturalism and the Department of Immigration were anti-British institutions.[39] John Howard, later to be Prime Minister, supported this view in 1988 when he called multiculturalism an aimless and weak policy and shortly after demanded a slow down of Asian immigration.[40] When he was elected Prime Minister in 1996 he abolished the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Bureau of Immigration.[41] Even though Howard's statements on immigration were not as extreme as in 1988, the White Australia ideology was still lingering within Australian society. This became apparent again when Pauline Hanson entered the political stage in Queensland in 1996. In a speech in the Queensland State parliament she expressed her belief that Australia was in danger of being "swamped" by Asians. She further claimed that Asians "have their own [different] culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate."[42] Even though Hanson's overtly racist remarks were rejected by large parts of the Australian public, she did receive some direct and indirect support, most noticeably from the Prime Minister

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37 Griffiths 1995, 99-101
38 Kevin Rudd 2008
39 Blainey 1984, 153-156; 161-163 ;MacLeod 2006, 136-137
40 MacLeod 2006, 137
41 The Economist 1996, 41
42 MacLeod 2006, 158

himself, who refused to repudiate her assertions.[43] Pauline Hanson not only attacked Asian migrants, she also condemned Aboriginal affairs policies and demanded an abolition of all programmes designed to help Aboriginal Australians.[44]

The Stolen Generations report of 1997 also had a strong emotional impact on Australian society when it revealed the atrocities committed on Aboriginal people right up until the recent past.[45] Far right conservatives either denied the report's assertions or praised the opportunities White Australia policies had offered the abducted children. Prime Minister Howard refused to acknowledge the term "Stolen Generations".[46]

In December 2005, a mob of 5.000 mostly young white Australians attacked people who they considered to be Lebanese or Muslim at Sydney's Cronulla Beach. The protest march was the racist reaction to an event the week before, when Cronulla life guards were attacked by two young men of Lebanese descent.[47]

By the late 20th century, the public's general attitude towards these racist and assimilationist assertions in Australian society had changed. Howard's remarks in 1988 led to an instant drop in his poll ratings.[48] Hanson's politics, even though she had gained some support and received an increase of votes for her One Nation Party, were also met with strong opposition which helped lead to a Labour government in the 1998 Queensland elections.[49] Further, the Stolen Generations report increased awareness in favour of reconciliation. In May 2000, more than 350.000 people met in Sydney for the People's Walk for Reconciliation, carrying signs stating "sorry", the word John Howard had refused to say. Similar protests took place in all other state capitals.[50] In a survey taken shortly after the Cronulla riots, 81% of all respondents were in favour of a multicultural policy for Australia.[51]

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43 Clarke 2003, 361; MacLeod 2006, 158
44 MacLeod 2006, 158
45 Griffiths 2006, 160-161; Ibid., 163
46 Griffiths 2006, 161; MacLeod 2006, 163
47 MacLeod 2006, 196-197
48 Ibid., 137
49 Ibid., 161
50 Behrendt 2003, 59; Griffiths 2006, 170; Ibid., 164
51 MacLeod 2006, 199; Koutsoukis 20.12.2005

2.2 Individuals, Groups, and In-betweens

Two striking factors described in the previous section keep reoccurring throughout the history of Australian immigration and society. First, the persistence of the idea of a superior British culture. Even though a large number of Australians no longer subscribe to such an ideology, this notion keeps resurfacing within a strong conservative section of society.[52] Second, all decisions on immigration policies have been forced upon Australian governments by predominately external (i.e. international) factors and events.[53]

While almost every government, from Australia's first Prime Minister Barton to the immediate past Prime Minister John Howard, had tried to influence immigration patterns based on a more or less racist ideology of ethnic and cultural superiority, they have usually had to adopt policies based on different factors. International economic realities have basically forced Australia to become a multi-ethnic society. At the beginning of the 1970s, another factor increased the development of a multicultural society: the decision to grant immigrants full citizenship, and the application of ius soli for children born in Australia. This led to an increased voting power for first and second generation migrants of the post Second World War immigration programmes. Whitlam's campaign manifesto offered substantial support for these people while policies on prospective migration hardly changed at all. This also explains why the more conservative Fraser government could and would take over the Whitlam legislation. Forced by mostly external factors again, Fraser also had to significantly open up Australia to Asian migration.

Another significant element in the discussion of Australian immigration policies and the perception of ethnicity in society is the issue of how individuals and groups are addressed. Australians are almost always referred to in terms of their ethnic origin. They are for example considered Anglo-Australian, Greek, Italian, Chinese, European, Asian, or Aboriginal. These group categories are applied exclusively and seem to be of eternal consistency. This is problematic as it completely neglects the fact that especially in recent generations Australians have consistently ignored such group boundaries in their family planning. Consequently, many of those people who are categorized into these groups, most likely belong to at least one other group as well.[54] Since this is not only true for Australian society, but also for many of the migrants' countries of origin,

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52 Behrendt 2003, 63-64
53 Castles 1988, 19, 23-24, 47; Castles 1992, 53-59
54 MacLeod 2006, 127

especially the UK and Ireland, continental Europe, or Singapore and China, one can assume that migrants already carry various ethnic identities with them when entering Australia. Many Australians today, especially those with 20th century immigration history, are therefore likely to have multi-ethnic backgrounds. Whether they are actually aware of these identities and how this relates to their general identity perception in Australian society will be discussed later. MacLeod is one of few who argues that homogeneous group categories are questionable when describing ethnic diversification of Australian society.[55]

With regard to Aboriginal people, governments have been quite aware that mixed parentage exists. This has led to a categorization of people into full-blood, half-caste, quarter-caste, and so on, which is part of a racist ideology demanding "pure" races. One measure employed to achieve such "pure" races was the abduction of Aboriginal children, in order to assimilate them into White Australia and avoid further mixing. However, similar to the situation of the immigrant groups, Aboriginal people have long been in constant contact with other members of Australian society, and as a result caste-categories have become redundant.[56]

The problem with group categories is not that they are without use. In certain contexts, this form of simplification can be quite helpful. However, when applied in order to explain ethnic diversity, group categorisation misleadingly simplifies a much more complex reality. This is because group categories such as Australian, British, German, Greek, Chinese, or Lebanese are considered disjunct, and neglect the fact that on an individual level, membership in these groups is not necessarily singular and exclusive. In the case of Aboriginal Australians with mixed parentage (who are at the same time white people with mixed parentage), the dominant Anglo-Australian group demanded exclusive group membership, even if this had to be achieved through forcing an apparently singular culture upon the individual.

In the following chapters the construction of such group identities in relation to individual identities will be discussed, in order to develop a systematic description of cultural plurality. Such a construction should help to understand and describe conflicts based on the struggle between individual and group identities.

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55 Ibid., 103, 116
56 Griffiths 2006, 11-12

3 Amartya Sen and Cultural Identity

3.1 Identity Conception

Chapter 2 concluded that there is a strong tendency in Australian society to divide its members into different groups predominantly categorised according to ethnicity, culture, and immigration background, both on an institutional level and also within mainstream society. This neglects that the individuals who constitute these groups might have ethnic and cultural identities that expand beyond or even contradict these sometimes exclusively defined groups. Societal conflicts that surfaced through the Cronulla riots, Pauline Hanson's racist politics, John Howard's crown loyal visions and his inability to bring forward reconciliation, or the recurring awareness of atrocities committed against Aboriginal Australians are all rooted in the relation and negotiation of group identities. This, however, is not a specifically Australian issue.

Amartya Sen shows that most of today's conflicts are based on the assumption of predominantly singular cultural identities.[57] In trouble spots such as Northern Ireland, Palestine, Rwanda, or former Yugoslavia, the different groups in conflict always categorize themselves based on a singular cultural, ethnic, or religious identity. Likewise this ignores the possibility of the individuals multiple identities.

This chapter will look at how individual and group identities are constructed in Sen's *Identity and Violence*. It will describe the process of negotiation between individuals and groups and reveal the traps that eventually lead to conflicts.

3.1.1 Singular identities

In the conflicts mentioned above certain group identities have apparently gained a greater importance than others. In former Yugoslavia, for example, it suddenly mattered more to be a follower of a particular religion (Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox), or to be descended from a certain ethnic group – usually roughly defined through religion, dialect, and geographic origin (Bosnian, Croat, Serb) – than to be a member of the same football club, working at the same office, or bringing one's children to the same kindergarten. What has happened in these cases is a suddenly exclusive emphasise on one particular single group identity. At the same time all other possible affiliations are negated or subordinated, and while within-group solidarity is fostered, between-group

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57 Sen 2007, xv.

relations are turning to discord.[58] *"The adversity of exclusion can go hand in hand with the gift of inclusion."*[59] However, one does not need to refer to major arenas of political conflicts as referred to above in order to see how group identities can pressure individuals into certain roles. Conflicts between the demands of particular group identities and an individual's various other identities can be found on all levels of society.

In many cases group identity is considered to be an eternally valid and exclusive category based on an idea of a singular individual identity. Supporters of this idea usually promote it explicitly. One of the better known ideologies modelled on this assumption is Samuel Huntington's concept of "civilisations". Huntington divides the world's population into a handful of civilisations based on religion and geographic location without any regard for historic developments or diversities within his categories or the considered regions.[60] One example that demonstrates how such an ideology can become a political issue is the recent discussion about a possible reference in an European Union constitution suggesting Christianity to be the common denominator of all Europeans. This attempt to incorporate all people of European descent into a particular system of belief neglects the plurality of beliefs, cultures, experiences, histories, and of course identities of the vast and diverse European population. What happens in such cases is that one group imposes its ideas about identity on a larger group, regardless of any individual preferences.

People like Huntington who overtly promote the idea of a predominant singular identity can be found all over the world and come from all walks of life. However, there are also many good intentioned cultural theorists who often, if only implicitly, fall prey to concepts of singular identity.[61]

In the academic fields of Postcolonial and Transcultural Studies various concepts of migration, diaspora, or hybridity are often, if only implicitly, built on a founding assumption of singular cultural identities. This is probably because concepts such as [culture a] + [culture b] = [new hybrid culture c] are very tempting in their simplicity, and since they are usually referring to a very specific context, all other aspects can easily be neglected. Examining cultural developments under such "laboratory conditions" might produce nice and clean results, however, it can hardly reflect cultural

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58 Ibid., 2
59 Ibid., 3
60 Huntington 2003, 41-48; Ibid., 11
61 Sen 2007, 20, 177

realities. One might argue that such an approach can be helpful in conceptualizing theoretical models, however, the repetition of models based on a founding assumption of singular cultural identities, if only implicitly, will lead to a manifestation of such a way of thinking.

The result is the idea of a singular cultural identity with a possible multicultural background. One example is Salman Rushdie's metaphor of a palimpsest identity in *The Moor's Last Sigh* which is considered to denote multiple identities.[62] In its original definition palimpsest refers to a manuscript which has been recycled by scraping off the ink. This leads to various still traceable layers of writing underneath its current top layer. However, in its original state, it is a plain document with a "singular identity", on which, over time, other layers have been added. In another example Homi Bhabha explains the hybridity of his own Parsi background with the Parsis' transnational experience over more than 1.000 years.[63] If hybrid identity is a consequence of diachronic experiences, then the original identity must be singular. Bhabha therefore constructs his individual hybrid identity through his singular group membership as a Parsi: I (individual) as a Parsi (Group) have a hybrid identity. These concepts work nicely within their particular context. However, as a general theory of identity their implication of singular cultural identities is problematic.

3.1.2 Singular vs plural identity approach

The crucial conceptual difference of Sen's concept is, that the examples above are based on a serial (diachronic) concept of identity, while Sen uses a parallel (synchronic) approach. The serial concept considers identity as something developing over time (possible out of different other identities). Even though many different identities may have influenced an identity, the concept describes a singular identity at any given time and especially at the initial starting point of the process. Another crucial aspect is that singular cultural concepts like Huntington's consider identities to be in a hierarchical order. The individual's identities are therefore organised under a singular predominant identity. The perception of a predominately singular identity constitutes two notions. First, it is assumed that every individual belongs to a dominant identity groups. All other affiliations are subordinated under this predominant identity or are direct derivations of it. Second, the predominant identity and its attributes are considered the

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62 cf. Huddart 2006, 107; Rushdie 1996
63 cf. Huddart 2006, 78-79; Bhabha 1998, xv

guiding parameters in the life of the individual.[64]

The assumption of a predominantly singular identity is tempting, because it provides a simplistic view. In can also seem convincing, since in any specific situation, a person seems to have only one single identity relating to the particular context. However, it is highly deceptive to assume that a person's choice in such a particular context is based on this one identity only.[65]

> "It seems unlikely that the thesis of singular affiliation can have any kind of plausibility given the constant presence of different categories and groups to which any human being belongs. It is possible that the often repeated belief, common among advocates of singular affiliation, that identity is a matter of 'discovery' is encouraged by the fact that the choices we can make are constrained by feasibility..., and these constraints would rule out all kinds of alternatives as being nonfeasible."[66]

3.2 Sen's Plural Identities

3.2.1 Change of perspective

Amartya Sen proposes an identity concept that changes the perspective of understanding identities from group-orientated, singular, serial, and diachronic to individual-based, plural, parallel, and synchronic. A person's individual identity constitutes itself out of a plurality of simultaneously available identities and group memberships. It is upon the individual to determine the importance of a certain identity or group membership within a particular context.[67] Conflicts between individuals and / or groups, as referred to above, are usually rooted in misconception and misinterpretation, explicitly or by implication, of these plural identities. Sen's solution to avoid identity related conflicts is based on the recognition of the individual's cultural freedom to choose each identity's relative importance within a particular context.

3.2.2 Individual choice

Identities generally constitute themselves in the interaction with others and interaction always takes place within a certain context. The individuals involved assume an identity they believe to be appropriate within the given context, considering all the attributes that are connected to it. At the same time people also make assumptions about the possible identities of other individuals involved in the given context. These choices

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64 Sen 2007, 32-34
65 Ibid., 24-25
66 Ibid., 30
67 Ibid., 5, 24

are constrained by feasibility. Even though some of theses constraints may be relatively strict, especially in regard to how the individual is perceived by others, there is almost always a variety of identities from which to choose one's priorities.[68] In the context of former Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, people had to consider the options of identifying themselves primarily according to group identities such as ethnicity, dialect, gender, political belief, profession, religion, or societal engagement. Each of these options would have led to varying implications on how they would relate to their fellow citizens. Accordingly, they also had to choose how to perceive the other individuals (or groups) involved in the context. Even though a person may be for example Croat by origin, or a member of the Catholic church through baptism, it is upon the individual to decide the relative importance of these identities within the given context.

Obviously, these are often subconscious processes. However, if people are aware of their own ability to make these choices, they will more readily reconsider this possibility for others when assessing their identities. The important difference compared to a singular identity concept is that even though the individual chooses an identity considered to be most appropriate within the given context, all other possible identities are not vanishing. The individual's choice is a process of reason which can be reconsidered if deemed necessary. Identity is therefore not a product of the individual's destiny, but of personal reasoning and choice.

3.2.3 Reason and freedom of choice

Beyond the individual, identities are clustered in groups consisting of individuals subscribing to the same identity. As will be explained in chapter four, these groups come with certain attributes, both members and non-members believe to be part of the group's identity. Since individuals have many different identities, each person has to decide on the importance of these groups / identities:

> "We may have to decide whether a particular group to which we belong is – or is not – important for us. Two different, though interrelated, exercises are involved here: (1) deciding on what our relevant identities are, and (2) weighing the relative importance of these different identities. Both tasks demand reasoning and choice."[69]

Reason and choice are two pillars of Sen's concept of identity. As described above

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68 Ibid., 30-31
69 Ibid., 24

choice is an elementary process of determining one's identity in any given context. This process is ultimately based on the principle of reason which is probably one of the most challenging arguments within Sen's concept of cultural identities and plurality. Singular identity concepts often determine identity through external parameters such as community, cultural background, or kinship. A person's environment is obviously an important influence and provides orientation regarding the two tasks described above, and community, cultural background, education, or upbringing can also play major roles in these decisions. Nevertheless, the groups to which individuals belong do not exclusively determine their identity. Obviously, a person cannot choose any identity at random. As explained before, "fixed" group categories such as kinship are heavily constrained. However, it is the individual's freedom of choice to determine the importance of a specific identity within a particular context.

> "The point at issue is not whether *any* identity whatever can be chosen [...], but whether we do indeed have choices over alternative identities or combinations of identities, and perhaps more importantly, substantial freedom regarding what *priority* to give to the various identities we may simultaneously have."[70]

Another essential difference between the two major concepts of identity, singular and plural, is their particular perspective. Concepts of singular identity are constructed from a group perspective. Thus the individual's identity is determined by a predominant group membership which is usually based on community and / or culture. Even though communitarian attributes are sometimes allowed to change over time, the individual has no influence on these processes and can merely recognise and accept membership within the group.[71] In Sen's concept of plural identities the individual's overall identity consists of a plurality of many different competing identities. This pool of identities is highly volatile and not limited in any way. For each given context the individual has the sovereignty to choose the particular importance of the available identities. While some will be considered more appropriate in a given context others do not have to be negated.[72] Unlike the singular identity assumptions, Sen's concept is able to explain how individuals and groups negotiate their identities within complex contexts. It also explains how this can lead to conflict both in minor arenas between individuals and in major arenas between larger groups.

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70 Ibid., 38
71 Ibid., 33, 112
72 Ibid., 29

3.3 Cultural Identity and Conflict

In order to further appropriate Sen's concept of plural identities for cultural and literary studies it is necessary to identify the areas of potential conflict when ignoring plural cultural identities and affiliations. Even though it shall be assumed that the idea of plural identities according to Sen is the most appropriate concept explaining cultural realities, it is still possible for an individual or group to promote and cultivate the idea of a singular cultural identity.

3.3.1 Sources of conflict

The core of identity based conflicts is the misconception of at least one individual within a certain context about the relevant identities and attributes of other individuals involved in the given context. This alone does not automatically lead to conflict. However, if these misconceptions are of an hostile nature and especially if hostility is aggravated through group identity dynamics, conflict is more likely to arise. These misconceptions have two interacting aspects. First, specific characteristics and attributes of an individual or group's particular identity are misconceived, either because of incorrect information and / or bias. The result can be a defective or deficient process of communication and therefore a source of conflict. The second aspect refers to the assumption of a predominant singular cultural identity. Individuals or groups who constitute their identity as predominantly singular will perceive other individuals within a binary paradigm of either associates or aliens. Since the predominantly singular identity also comprises all attributes of an individual or group's identity, associates receive total inclusion while aliens are ultimately excluded.

In order to avoid the rise of identity related conflicts individuals and groups need to be able to perceive an individual's or group's identities beyond the particular context, and must not to rule out the possibility of error or misinformation regarding assumptions about the other's identities.

3.3.2 Cultivating identity related violence

According to Sen not all advocates of singular identity concepts intent to foster violence, but those who pursue a policy of aggression and violence towards others most likely base their endeavour on the idea of predominant singular identities.[73] Even though

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73 Ibid., 175-176

the former would probably not support the policy of the latter, they are involved in laying the foundation which eventually can lead *"(1) to ignore the relevance of all other affiliations and associations, and (2) to redefine the demands of the 'sole' identity in a particular belligerent form."*[74] Such communitarian thinking is frequently used all over the world to divide people who otherwise share many other affiliations and foster violence between them.[75]

3.3.3 The impact of education

While some identities are either genetic or otherwise predetermined, such as biological gender or kinship, the individual's cultural identities are not. Human beings usually develop a foundation of cultural identities through education, both within the family and at school. The issue of education has some importance, because there is a general assumption of parents' sovereignty regarding the education of their underage children. In most instances this will remain unquestioned, however, Sen explicitly expresses his concern about the policy of increasing the number of faith-based schools in the UK. This notion reflects an idea of Britain as a federation of of communities instead of

> "...a collectivity of human beings living in Britain, with diverse differences, of which religious and community-based distinctions constitute only one part (along with differences in language, literature, politics, class, gender, location, and other characteristics)."[76]

It is obviously the parents' responsibility to choose the appropriate education for their children. However, it makes an immense difference whether individuals are brought up recognising that human identities can take many different forms, based on individual reasoning and choice, or whether they are left with the impression that they have only one distinct identity, they are basically born into.[77]

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74 Ibid., 176
75 Ibid., 177
76 Ibid., 118
77 Ibid., 118-119

3.4 Multiculturalism and Cultural Freedom

In society the question of cultural identity is usually discussed on a much broader level than that of the individual. Among advocates of singular cultural identity concepts, culture is constituted as the predominant determinant for one's identity. As referred to above, culture does matter and certainly plays an important role for the individual's identities.

> "It certainly can also influence our sense of identity and our perception of affiliation with groups of which we see ourselves as members. The scepticism I have been expressing here is not about the recognition of the basic importance of culture in human perception and behavior. It is about the way culture is sometimes seen, rather arbitrarily, as the central, inexorable, and entirely independent determinant of societal predicaments."[78]

Multiculturalism has been on the political agenda in many countries and especially in those with large numbers of immigrants such as Australia.[79] Although politicians from all political wings have every now and then either defended or declared its failure the actual concept of multiculturalism and its implications for society and identity need to be examined further. Sen distinguishes two approaches to multiculturalism. The first concentrates on the promotion of cultural diversity as a value in itself, while the second demands the freedom of reasoning and decision-making. Cultural diversity is then a product of individuals' free choice of their cultural priorities.[80] These two distinct approaches reflect Sen's concept of identity and accordingly Sen's central issue regarding the assessment of multiculturalism is "how human beings are seen"?[81]

People can be either considered to be born into a particular community with inherited traditions, such as religion or ethnicity, or they are seen as individuals who freely choose the priorities of their many cultural (and other) identities. Obviously, while the first point of view reflects a singular identity concept, the second is based on the plural identity approach. According to Sen the idea of multiculturalism as a concept where many groups with distinct singular cultural identities are living next to each other is in fact plural monoculturalism.[82] Sen exemplifies this perfectly in the following quote:

> "If a young girl in a conservative immigrant family wants to go out on a date with an English boy, that would certainly be a multicultural initiative. In contrast, the attempt by her guardians to stop her from doing this [...] is hardly a

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78 Ibid., 112
79 Ibid., 149
80 Ibid., 150
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 156

multicultural move, since it seeks to keep the cultures sequestered. And yet it is the parents' prohibition, which contributes to plural monoculturalism, that seems to get the most of the vocal and loud defense from alleged multiculturalists, on the ground of the importance of honoring traditional cultures, as if the cultural freedom of the young woman were of no relevance whatsoever, and as if the distinct cultures must somehow remain in secluded boxes."[83]

This example shows how the priority of group over individual interests will eventually lead to plural monoculturalism. While society is only democratic as long as the individuals' freedom of political choice and speech are guaranteed it can only be considered multicultural if individuals can exercise cultural liberty as well.

Regarding the issue of group versus individual cultural identities, Sen proposes five conditions in cases where the influence of culture on the individual's identity is emphasised.[84] First, culture is not the only, exclusive determinant of a person's life and identities. Second, culture is not homogeneous. There is usually great diversification within what is considered to be one cultural sphere. Third, culture is subject to a process of constant development. This fact is often neglected or negated and cultural determinism often tries to imply a general stasis of culture. Fourth, culture is in constant interaction with other social factors. The assumption of an insularity of culture is a delusion. Fifth, one needs to differentiate between individual orientated cultural liberty and group orientated cultural conservation. The latter has gained strong support in connection with the preservation of minority (group) cultures in multicultural societies.[85]

Sen's concept of individual identities provides a new way to understand the process of interaction and identity negotiation between individuals and groups. He convincingly shows that individuals can in fact choose many different identities and affiliations together with the related group memberships, and that each individual can through a process of reasoning choose the relative importance of these in any given context. By applying his concept in a comparative manner to various examples of identity related conflicts Sen is able to deconstruct the idea of predominantly singular identities.

What Sen demands is the acceptance of individual cultural liberty. Although many countries have founded their political system on the idea of individual liberty cultural freedom is not automatically perceived. Individual rights need to include the liberty of

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83 Ibid., 157
84 Ibid., 112
85 Ibid., 112-113

each individual to choose the relative importance of all affiliations in any given context, without any coercive influence from community, family, society, or else. Since both the development of cultural identities and the awareness and freedom of choice regarding the individual's identity priorities are not inheritable properties, all institutions involved in the education and upbringing of human beings bear a great responsibility. If this is achieved those few who frequently try to foster identity related violence will ultimately fail.

4 Adaptation of Sen's Concept of Plural Identities for Literary Studies

The following adaptation of Sen's concept of plural identities is based on the elaboration of *Identity and Violence* in the previous chapter. The adaptation is primarily a first attempt to formulate possible theorems based on Sen's assumption which can be applied to literary texts. The practicability will then be tested in conjunction with the three novels selected for this thesis. If this procedure proves to be satisfactory an scientifically more authoritative validation of these theorems will be recommended.

4.1 The Individual and the Group

4.1.1 Individual and group identity

There are two types of identities that need to be distinguished in order to grasp the nature of identity relations and expose possible sources of conflicts.

One type of identity is group identity. Groups embrace people under a specific identity tag relating to the common denominator of the group's members. These common denominators can refer to any thinkable identity aspect in conjunction with a person: physical, institutional, biological, ethnic, geographical, cultural, ideological, philosophical, etc. Apart from the denominator, each group is further characterized through various group attributes. The importance of these attributes for both the individual members and for membership in general is subject to negotiation.

The other type of identity refers to the individual's identities. The number of individual identities a person can simultaneously belong to is always almost infinite. If a particular identity is shared with any number of other individuals a congruent group identity is existent. Because of the infinite number of individual identities, a person can also have an infinite number of group identities, in the following also referred to as memberships.[86]

The relevance of a particular identity, whether individual or group, depends on both the individual's perception and the particular context an identity is negotiated in. Identity relevance is therefore not necessarily stable and can strongly vary over time.[87]

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86 Sen 2007, 19, 24
87 Ibid., 26-27

The questions under consideration here is how these two types of identities are negotiated and how they interact.

4.1.2 Negotiation of identities

There are two levels on which identities can be negotiated. On the first level individual and group identities are negotiated within certain contexts between individuals and / or groups. One the second level groups have to negotiate their own particular group identity among their members. In contrast to binding group identities, such as kinship, other groups are based on more or less arbitrary elements. Negotiation of within-group identity can be an overt or hidden process, identities can appear fixed, flexible, or arbitrary. Since within-group negotiation is always also a communication process between individuals, aspects that apply to the first level are also to be considered on the second.

4.1.3 Negotiation between individuals and / or groups

A person's identities, both individual and group, gain their importance in the interaction with other people. Each individual involved in such an interaction will judge the others according to her own perception of identity. It is generally helpful to apply group tags to a person, since relying on one's memory makes information available already collected about various groups of people. This is particular convenient when facing strangers, because this process provides information about the other which do not need to be negotiated from scratch. However, such a process is only successful when, first, the attributes one assumes to belong to a certain group are appropriate, and second, the person who is considered to be a member of this particular group agrees with these assumption. Negotiating group identities is a necessary, usually subconscious procedure. This leaves a lot of room for misinterpretations and misjudgements of identities which in most of the everyday occasions do not have any consequences. However, as Sen shows, it is important to be aware of how this process functions, in order to detect its problematic implications and to avoid being drawn into identity related conflicts.

4.1.4 Negotiation within groups

As explained above, each group identity consists of a denominator and various attributes. In some cases, such as kinship or biological gender, the denominator is fixed. On can neither choose to be son or daughter, nor to have a xx- or xy-genome. Consequently, such group denominators cannot be negotiated. However, the attributes applied to these groups are extremely arbitrary, especially regarding the examples above. In these cases, each human being has a membership in either of theses groups and therefore everyone is somehow involved in their negotiation.

Other groups can negotiate attributes and denominator. This is often the case when a group tries to distinguish itself from others by explicitly defining the group's denominator and attributes. Members then have to subscribe to these definitions in order to claim membership. Since groups consist of individuals, the process of negotiating a group identity is also a process of negotiation between individuals. Depending on the nature and size of a group, this can be a subliminal, a democratic, a declaratory, or even a dictatorial process.

Christianity for example is a group identity a very large number of people would subscribe to. These people, who then call themselves Christians, will have a certain idea regarding the attributes of Christianity. However, as history has shown, the group's members have not always been able to agree on a common set of attributes and consequently over time the group has split into various sub groups, whose members have redefined the attributes they consider to be valid for Christianity or at least their particular sub-group. Further, individuals and groups outside Christianity also have a certain idea about the attributes of Christianity or the specific sub-group they are faced with. Negotiation of the attributes of a Christian congregation is usually not democratic, but discussed within a group(!) of clerical leaders. Religion is probably one of the most complex and complicated examples for group identity. Nevertheless, it provides a good depiction of how group identity works.

4.2 Construction of Individual Identities

While most authors of cultural theories discuss questions of identity on the rather broad level of society the present novels negotiate identity on a lower level. This is usually the family, peer group, or the immediate environment of the protagonists. In order to apply Sen's concept of plural identities with all its implications to the selected

novels it is necessary to identify certain aspects that link the general notion of the theory to the microcosms of the stories. These aspects will serve as a guideline to elaborate the relevance of Sen's concept for literature studies based on the present novels. The way in which these aspects are depicted below may not necessarily be represented in the novels in exactly the same way or order and may also differ in relevance.

First of all, it is important to examine how the protagonists' identities are constructed. According to Sen the individual's overall identity always consists of a plurality of identities competing for relevance in any given context. However, since the author of a novel has the sovereignty to construct his protagonists at will this is not necessarily true for literature.

4.2.1 Construction of cultural environment

As it was mentioned above, the development of individual identities is influenced by the individual's cultural environment. Therefore, questions regarding the construction of individual identities need to consider the cultural environment of the protagonists. This may include their parents' cultural background, their education, and their peer group environment. The cultural background of the parents is interesting, because it can be predicted to have a strong influence on the development of their children's cultural identities and it may also serve as a reference point to detect possible connotations of diachronic singular identities. Education refers to both the up-bringing within the family and the curriculum received in school or other institutions. This includes not only official curricula, but also all possible connotations conveyed between the lines. Further considerations will examine the cultural environment of the protagonists' peers regardless of their age or the nature of the relationship with the protagonists. Similar to questions of education it is important to consider connotations of both overt and covert aspects of culture.

4.2.2 Possibility of plural identities

The second aspect of enquiry will consider the overall possibility of plural individual identities. First of all, is important to examine whether the author has constructed the protagonists in such a way, that plural identities are thinkable. The author may construct the identity of a particular protagonist as plural, but then deny her the possibility of developing these identities in the course of the story. It is therefore important to

examine the possibility of plural identities for the individual protagonists themselves.

Since it is the author's sovereignty to depict the protagonists with certain identities, the question of the existence of plural identities is not merely a question of whether these identities are present or not. It shall therefore also be distinguished whether the author's construction is in accordance with Sen's theory on plural individual identities or whether the protagonists depictions follow the singular identity approach. Although, according to Sen, the assumption of singular identities is a myth, abused in many cases to stir conflict, it should nevertheless be considered possible to construct fictional characters in such a way.

If plural identities are possible at the author's discretion, it further needs to be examined whether these are also possible for the protagonists themselves within the framework of the story. In order to assume plural identities it is not enough to identify for example gender and nationality and hence declare a protagonist's identity to be plural. In the literary context plurality of identities is mostly denoted by the depiction of the protagonist's interests, affiliations, beliefs, or opinions. If these can be assumed to theoretically offer an alternative of perspective in the context of the story and especially in comparison to other protagonists plural identities can be considered possible.

4.2.3 The protagonists' self-perception of identities

The third aspect regarding individual identity will examine the self-perception of identities. In conjunction with the question regarding the possibility of plural identities it is important to consider how the protagonists themselves perceive their own identities. The possibility and the depiction of plural identities does not automatically mean that a protagonist is aware of this or perceives his identities in this way. Self-perception is also influenced by the protagonist's environment, and therefore dependent on the interaction with other individuals and groups as well. The examination of the protagonists' identity self-perception will prepare the ground for further analysis of identity negotiation. These considerations will then be further elaborated under the question of group identities.

4.3 Construction and Negotiation of Group Identities

4.3.1 Identity themes, fields, and contexts

In order to examine the negotiation process of group identities in literary texts it is necessary to define three different terms that will help to grasp the various, sometimes intersecting levels of negotiation. Identity theme describes a predominant topic of a particular narration based on the analysis of the protagonists' individual identities. The identification of such a theme is important as a centre of reference for the subsequent examinations of identity negotiations. The term identity field refers to entities of group identities within a particular story or novel that are relevant for the negotiation of the identity theme. One example for identity field is nationality which encompasses all group identities referring to nationalities and the respective groups' attributes. In conjunction with the terms theme and field, context of negotiation describes a particular situation or scene in a narration where identities are directly negotiated based on the individuals' identities and their attributes, including considerations regarding assumptions and previous experiences. It is within these contexts where the group identities of the respective fields are intersecting.

4.3.2 Identification and examination of major negotiation processes

Based on the examination of the protagonists' individual identities the predominant identity themes have to be identified. Further, for each theme (if there are in fact more than one) all relevant associated fields have to be distinguished. Fields are obviously not exclusively relevant for only one theme and with every associated field per theme the successive examination process becomes more complex and complicated. In order to avoid a possibly confusing complexity it is preferable to contain each themes' scope regarding its associated fields and rather define two (or more) distinguishable themes instead of one. Such an adjustment, however, is only possible if both narration and the analysis of its individual identities' allow for this kind of methodological strategy. Once theme and fields are identified the group identities apparent from the analysis of individuals' identities can be allocated to their respective fields.

Next, all relevant contexts of negotiation across the particular identity fields will be identified. The context examination will consider all individuals involved in a particular context including their individual and group identities as well as their assumptions regarding the respective attributes. For the process of analysing contexts it might

sometimes be necessary to form clusters of contexts. These clusters concentrate all contexts conveying a similar message into one, provided that the respective group identities, attributions, and negotiation processes are comparable. Thus, various depictions of one constellation of identity negotiation can supplement each other, and therefore enhance the examination of contexts, which if considered solitarily might prove to be too fragmented.

The identification of attributes associated with each group identity, based on the assumptions of both members and non-members, is of particular interest. Assumptions of attributes are most likely to provide evidence for misinterpretation and misjudgement, identity disregard[88], or identity related conflicts. However, to avoid an unintelligible complexity relevant group identities and their respective attributes will be highlighted while examining the process of identity negotiation within a particular context or context cluster. Once all these elements are identified it will be possible to explain the process of identity negotiation and reveal constellations that have the potential to develop into identity related conflicts.

4.3.3 Evaluation of potential sources of conflicts

Based on the identification and examination of the negotiation processes above, it is now possible to evaluate the potential sources of conflict regarding a particular identity theme. Two distinct aspects will be taken into special consideration: First, indications of misconception, incorrect information, identity disregard, or bias within identity negotiations, and second, indications of singular cultural identity assumptions and the perception of individuals as either associates or aliens. Especially in contexts where a combination of these two aspects can be identified identity related conflicts should become evident.

The evaluation of these aspects also has to consider the effects of conflicts on the protagonists' identities and further processes of negotiation. This is of particular importance in order to assess these developments for the literary structure of the novels.

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88 The term Identity Disregard is used here to denote the disregard for someone's identities. Sen uses the term slightly differently to refer to disregard the influence of identity on people's behaviour: Cf. Sen 2007, 20

4.4 Multiculturalism and Cultural Freedom

In addition to the examination of identity negotiation processes of individuals and groups further enquiries will consider the relevance of multicultural ideas and representations in the novels. Sen explicitly warns against ideologies that claim to be multicultural, however, if scrutinized carefully reveal to promote what he calls plural monoculturalism. The essential difference between multiculturalism and plural monoculturalism is the emphasis on the perspective of the individual on one and the group on the other side. While multiculturalism is based on the prerogative of the individual the determinant of identity in a monocultural society is the group.

4.4.1 Representation of multiculturalism

In today's societies it is quite probable that aspects of both multiculturalism and plural monoculturalism coexist. This can also be assumed for the novels, especially since their depictions of society are a product of the authors' ideas and perceptions. The search for evidence of multiculturalism in contrast to plural monoculturalism will focus on two different ways of appearance and depiction.

First of all, attention will be paid to individual initiatives or moves of multiculturalism, especially within particular contexts of negotiation. This will not be analysed from the protagonists' perspectives but subsumed under the general question regarding evidence of initiatives of multiculturalism. If such initiatives are evident, this does not automatically imply that a particular individual is depicted in accordance with these initiatives or meant to represent them. It is therefore important to evaluate all events in accordance with the general depiction of the individual protagonists.

Second, the general depiction of group identities and negotiation processes will be examined regarding aspects of ideological or institutionalised multiculturalism or plural monoculturalism. These aspects can be expected to be part of the depiction of the cultural environment – for example reference to schooling or governmental policies and actions – of the stories, but might also be negotiated through the protagonists themselves.

Further, the literary depiction regarding the desirability of either model will be examined. This should be possible by considering the potential of suggestions by the authors regarding the protagonists' individual perception of notions of multiculturalism or plural monoculturalism. Again, the general perspective of this enquiry is not the

individual protagonist, but the overall question of the novels' depiction of multiculturalism.

Finally, multiculturalism will be considered regarding the implications of societies depicted in the novels and the development and contemporary state of Australian society as elaborated in chapter two. By contrasting this with questions regarding the desirability of multiculturalism it should be possible to evaluate the authors' intentions regarding the depiction of multiculturalism.

4.4.2 The possibility of cultural freedom

Multiculturalism according to Sen is unequivocally based on his concept of individual cultural freedom. The individuals' free choice of priorities regarding their cultural (and other) identities is therefore a precondition to achieve a multicultural society. In addition to the questions above the possibility of cultural freedom is therefore a central issue. This is important because it allows to scrutinise the validity of Sen's concept of plural identities for literary studies based on its application to the three novels presented in this thesis. Validity can be assumed if the literary worlds depicted in the stories including the protagonists and their behaviour and development follow Sen's assumptions regarding the negotiation of identities, the development of conflicts, and the ideas about the nature of multiculturalism. This does not mean that the novels' implications necessarily have to agree with Sen's demands. It is by all means possible for a narration to promote an opposite notion of society while still being based on Sen's concept of identity construction and identity negotiation processes and structurally agreeing with his theory.

5 Larissa Behrendt: *Home*

5.1 Construction of Individual Identities

5.1.1 Elizabeth Brecht (Garibooli) / Sonny Boney (Euroke I)

Elizabeth's life can be distinguished into three distinctive phases. First, her childhood within the Aboriginal community at Dungalear Station, when she is still known by her original name Garibooli. Second, her teenage years as a house maid at the Howard's in Parkes after being forcefully removed from her parents. And finally, her family life as wife of Grigor Brecht in Lithgow.

Dungalear Station

Her childhood at Dungalear Station is culturally mostly influenced by the Aboriginal community but also by the white settlers in the region. Aboriginal culture is represented by camp life (open fire, lean-on, kangaroo skins for bedding), the tribal gatherings, initiation rites, story telling by elders, traditional food gathering, and the Eualeyai language.[89] The presence of the Aboriginal language is literarily represented through the frequent use of Eualeyai nouns. The white settlers' European culture is represented by mostly technical or institutional devices, such as the church mission, school, the ration store, the circus, ships, trains, and quite significantly the renaming of Elizabeth's and other Aboriginal children.[90]

The two distinct cultures are not simply living side by side. It becomes apparent by Elizabeth's account of her parents' childhood that they had to adopt to the way of the intruders.[91] Several symbols signify the dramatic change in the cultural life of the Aboriginal community. From earlier days the elders remember diseases transferred by the settlers which killed many people and left visual scars on those who survived.[92] Pastoralism and agriculture has changed flora and fauna and forced the community to settle down and accept rations from the European settlers.[93] The introduction of European jurisdiction and its disregard for existing Aboriginal laws has led to far reaching consequences in various areas of cultural life. One example is the interruption of traditional marriage rules. This also concerns Elizabeth when her proposed husband

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89 Behrendt 2004, 29-34
90 Ibid., 30, 36, 47
91 Ibid., 29
92 Ibid., 33
93 Ibid., 32

is jailed and the community does not know how to respond regarding her status at promised wife.[94]

Set within these turbulent times Elizabeth's identity is definitely constructed plurally. She clearly distinguishes between different cultural aspects and expresses preferences regardless whether these are part of the Aboriginal or European culture. She enjoys her freedom in the Aboriginal community to roam around, climb trees, or join her brother to go fishing. While these accounts are narrated with positive connotations and emphasized by two lyrical parentheses, others such as her proposed wedding – something Elizabeth apparently cannot evaluate yet – are depicted without any emotions.[95] Elizabeth seems to detest most of the European cultural aspects, although it is not clear whether this is primarily because their enforcement through punishment. While religion is *"the terror of God"*, they are forbidden to speak Eualeyai, or to practise their cultural rites.[96] On the other hand Elizabeth can also appreciate aspects of European culture when she marvels at the trains or the circus with its rodeo.[97] In her self-perception Elizabeth is aware that some identities have to be hidden in certain contexts. Especially those referring to her language, her peoples' rites, and her name are subject to European oppression.

Parkes

Her new life at the Howard's house is practically void of any Aboriginal culture and Elizabeth is forced to fully adopt to her new European life as a kitchen maid. She does this exceptionally well, considering that the new environment is part of the white settlers' world that took her away from her family and forces her to work hard and long hours with rarely any time for herself.[98] Nevertheless she is able to enjoy some aspects such as running errands in town, chatting to Peter, or even excelling at some of her household tasks and in the kitchen.[99]

Her Aboriginal identity – apart from physical / visual aspects – has to remain hidden at the Howard's. Only when sneaking out into the garden at night she can lose herself in remembering the old stories told by her family.[100] Revealing her Aboriginal identity is

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94 Ibid., 34
95 Ibid., 34-35
96 Ibid., 30, 34
97 Ibid., 47
98 Ibid., 52, 70-71
99 Ibid., 52-53, 55, 61
100 Ibid., 57-59

not possible until she becomes friends with Xiao-ying who is the first non-Aboriginal person not expecting her to hide her Aboriginal identity. Xiao-ying has some significance for the negotiation of identity, because her Chinese identity and the similarity of experiences add another aspect to the previously binary opposition of black and white. Just like Elizabeth Xiao-ying has been given an "official" Christian name (Helen) and her physical appearance is just as different from Europeans as Elizabeth's.[101] Also, both Xiao-ying's and Elizabeth's communities had to refrain from arranging marriages for their daughters due to European demands. Interestingly, the two girls seem to have a slightly different position regarding partner preference than their parents, which is a clear sign for individuality beyond their communities traditional cultural identities.[102] In Xiao-ying's company Elizabeth is fully confident to reveal her Aboriginal identity, talking about her family, her community, and even using Eualeyai words.[103] It is also interesting that Xiao-ying is referred to using her "secret" name while Elizabeth is not. This can be understood as a sign for Elizabeth's displacement. Xiao-ying can then be considered to be in a culturally similar situation as Elizabeth was at Dungalear. Although she has to hide her Chinese identity in certain contexts she is still able to retreat to her parents' culture and community.

With Grigor Brecht Elizabeth slowly develops a similarly trustworthy relationship. She perceives him just as displaced as herself and since he treats her as a normal human being she recognises that not all white men are like Mr. Howard.[104] Grigor becomes Elizabeth's second real friend who is able to understand the pain that was repetitively inflicted on her and is able to show the necessary sensitivity to comfort her. As a result she develops the same confidence with Grigor she has shared with Xiao-ying and eventually marries him.[105]

Lithgow

In Lithgow Elizabeth completely absorbs herself in her family life, largely modelled on European ideas. Even though the chores and hours are as demanding as they were in Parkes she now feels rewarded by the "unconditional love" of the growing number of her children.[106] The contentedness she perceives in Lithgow is only interrupted by both

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101 Ibid., 56
102 Ibid., 73
103 Ibid., 73
104 Ibid., 98
105 Ibid., 99, 103
106 Ibid., 114

good and bad memories from her past. These signify the struggle to cope with her suppressed identities.

Elizabeth's perception of her identities is clearly disturbed through the identity negotiation process with white Australian society. At Dungalear she begins to understand that her Aboriginal identity is rejected by white Australians and that she is supposed to develop a white identity and "discard" her Aboriginality. This perceived arbitrariness does not make sense to her and she can easily avoid conflict by adjusting the relevance of her identities as Garibooli or Elizabeth depending on the context.[107]

In Parkes and Lithgow, Elizabeth is almost completely suppressing her Aboriginality. While she is secretly maintaining her Aboriginal identity in Parkes, indicated by frequent parentheses citing her Aboriginal name, she seems to surrender and accept the adoption of a predominant European identity in Lithgow. In some contexts Elizabeth feels that this in not working too well. There are three situations where it becomes evident that her Aboriginal identity is still competing over relevance with her other identities. When teaching Patricia how to cook she realises that she is passing on more of what she has learned from Mrs. Grainger than from her own mother.[108] Later, when she tells Thomas one of the Aboriginal stories from her childhood and accidentally calls him Euroke Elizabeth realizes that her Aboriginal identity is still hidden deep inside her.[109] Finally, when running through the field she is briefly liberating her old suppressed identity shortly before suffering a hear attack and passing away.[110]

Sonny Boney

Although Elizabeth's brother Sonny does not feature as a major protagonist he conveys some valuable information about the possibility of plural identities in their generation and supports Elizabeth's perception of arbitrariness. Through his apprenticeship in the pastoral industry, working in several different areas such as irrigation, shearing, or building and maintenance, Sonny has developed an European identity similar to Elizabeth in Parkes and Lithgow.[111] Depending on the economic situation he is still able to supply himself through traditional forms of hunting when necessary.[112] His self-perception is strongly affected by constant humiliation and unfair

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107 Ibid., 30
108 Ibid., 116-118
109 Ibid., 120-123
110 Ibid., 123-124
111 Ibid., 127, 130
112 Ibid., 130, 132-133

treatment by the white settlers. Sonny is well aware that even though the whites always demand from Aboriginal people to become like them that black people will never be accepted within white society.[113] As a result he avoids white people altogether. Since he reads the newspaper, one can also assume that Sonny has a basic education. Full of hope for equality and justice, he follows the news about the Aboriginal rights movements of Maynard and later Ferguson.[114]

5.1.2 Identity construction and perception of Elizabeth's children

Elizabeth and Grigor Brecht's six children constitute the nucleus of the novel. The stories of their lives illustrate the different perceptions and identities people with the same genetic and cultural background can develop through their individual experiences. These experiences are the result of the negotiation of individual and / or group identities.

Unlike their mother the six children do not have any Aboriginal cultural background and their childhood can be assumed to be culturally similar to that of their European Australian peers'. Although Elizabeth confides bits of her Aboriginal heritage to Thomas one night[115] the children's Aboriginal identity only manifests itself through their physical appearance and the responding perception of others. The fact that Thomas, Daisy, and Bob only have light skin tan, while Patricia's, William's, and Danny's darker skin is more clearly denoting their Aboriginal identity has inconsistent implications for their perception.[116] The different depiction of their characters supports the possibility of plural identities, based on their particular experiences. The way Thomas, Patricia, and Bob try to assimilate into mainstream society is juxtaposed by William's, Daisy's, and Danny's refusal of the demanded conformity.

Thomas Brecht

Among Thomas' identities there are five that are relevant for the discussion of identity negotiation. From his parents he has inherited his Aboriginal and Australian / German / Western identities, which together with his homosexuality are fixed. He has further developed an interest in aeroplanes, taking him to World War II as a RAF

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113 Ibid., 128
114 Ibid., 131, 133
115 Ibid., 120-122
116 Ibid., 117

pilot[117], and an admiration for Greek art, leading to an Oxford career as an expert in antic vases[118]. Thomas is clearly aware of these identities. He constantly tries to negate his Aboriginality, finally by moving to Europe and cutting all tie's to his family. Even though he can convince his partner that he has inherited his physical appearance from Greek ancestors Thomas perceives his mother's Aboriginality as a shameful stain.[119] Likewise, homosexuality becomes another stained identity he is ashamed of. While he is able to hide his mother's heritage in Europe post-war homophobia frightens Thomas, because of its similarities to the racial hatred of his peers in Lithgow.[120]

William Brecht

William's character is constructed as an antipode to Thomas'. In every aspect – size, frame, skin, temper – he is his brother's opposite. When abused because of his Aboriginality, William explodes while Thomas freezes. He speaks out what Thomas fearfully assumes, being aware that the recognition of their Aboriginal identity does not alter their self.[121] It is evident that William is well aware of his Aboriginal identity, since he has frequently been racially abused; earlier in life by his peers and later during the war by government policies.[122]

Patricia Brecht

Patricia, second oldest of the children, develops a maternal identity helping her mother and takes over various household and family responsibilities.[123] When Elizabeth dies and both Thomas and William leave to fight in the war it is Patricia, not Grigor, who assumes responsibility for her younger siblings.[124] The skills her mother taught her eventually secure her the job as a seamstress at Madame du Pont's shop in Sydney.[125] Unlike Madame du Pont herself Patricia develops an identity as a successful designer which allows her to pursue her role as the family matriarch. Albeit the mediocre success in brining them back together as a family she is able to take Daisy, Bob, and Danny out of the children's home to put them up with her.[126] Patricia also develops an identity as a

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117 Ibid., 113, 212, 215
118 Ibid., 215, 219
119 Ibid., 220
120 Ibid., 214, 218-219
121 Ibid., 212-215
122 Ibid., 213-214, 221-222
123 Ibid., 115-116
124 Ibid., 162, 164
125 Ibid., 181-182
126 Ibid., 115, 182, 184-185

business woman which becomes evident when she improves her husband's restaurant business and consequently their family's financial scope.[127]

Patricia's inherited Aboriginal identity does not play a significant role in her self-perception. In her environment racial prejudice is conveyed only through Madame du Pont who assumes a connection between race and character directed at Daisy's behaviour.[128] Patricia perceives the problems of her younger siblings – to cope with rules and authority (Daisy and Danny) or family (Bob) – as a result of their mother's early death and from being institutionalised instead of experiences relating to their Aboriginality.[129]

Daisy Brecht

Daisy's self-perception is based on a feeling of being left behind by her older siblings, first William and then Patricia.[130] She has developed a self-righteous attitude believing to be entitled to take and possess whatever or whoever she desires. Her ability to manipulate men to have her will is contrasted by rejecting demands of others.[131] Her affair with Marcel shows how Daisy is caught in a vicious circle of manipulation and power relations when her self-perception is turning from agent to object.[132] Similar to William Daisy can be understood as her sister's antipode. Patricia's closeness to her mother, her endurance in creating a career and family, her gratefulness towards Madame du Pont, and her empathy and generosity, are juxtaposed by Daisy's feeling of motherly abandonment, her reluctance to work, her feeling of being exploited, and her envy and egoism.[133]

Bob Brecht

Bob is instinctively aware that he and his siblings and mother share a certain difference from others, mostly apparent in their skin colour. His perception of this difference and later the recognition of his Aboriginal identity is almost exclusively developed through the feedback from others.[134] This leads to two important problems regarding identity perception. First, apart from the physical aspect, Bob has no identity

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127 Ibid., 254
128 Ibid., 199-200
129 Ibid., 208-209, 241
130 Ibid., 163, 190
131 Ibid., 170, 178, 194-195
132 Ibid., 192, 195-197, 259-262
133 Ibid., 188, 190, 193
134 Ibid., 170-171, 201-202, 278

reference to his Aboriginality. Second, the general notion of his Aboriginality is thrust upon him carrying negative connotations only corresponding to the Aboriginal identity assumptions of white Australian society. Consequently, Bob develops an exclusively negative perception of this identity and begins to prefer contexts in which his Aboriginality remains hidden.[135] He begins trying to make his European identity more prominent and develops a self-perception that relies on the perception of others. Conformity and assimilation regarding the demands of white Australian society become Bob's guide lines and the fear of failing or being excluded haunts him.[136] This is depicted literarily through the parenthesis of Bob's recurring nightmare.[137] Over the years Bob slowly begins to grasp the meaning, the need to face his Aboriginal identity instead of trying to escape and eventually triggers his journey into the past recovering his mother's (and his) origins and story. The accounts of his Aboriginal relatives seem to eradicate the negative connotations thrust upon him by white perceptions, and even though it does not change his Aboriginal identity it certainly changes his self-perception and leads to a reconciliation of his conflicting identities.[138]

Danny Brecht

From a very early age Danny perceives his Aboriginal identity as a burden causing rejection. Just like William who has more problems to make friends among his peers than the lighter tanned Thomas Danny feels that his physical appearance is the reason why he is singled out.[139] Being the youngest of the Brecht children he almost exclusively grows up in the children's home, before moving to Patricia's at the age of fourteen.[140] It can be assumed that the lack of family and the racist environment at the home are the prime reasons for his inability to settle down with Bob and Patricia and to concentrate on his jobs. Danny seems to combine characteristics also evident with William and Daisy, especially his restlessness, aggressiveness, and problem with authority and conformity.[141] Towards the end of the novel it is revealed that Danny was

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135 Ibid., 171-173, 204-205
136 Ibid., 172, 177, 241, 256
137 Ibid., 177, 205, 209, 227, 270
138 Ibid., 282-288, 303
139 Ibid., 179, 291
140 Ibid., 204, 206; There is some confusion regarding the dates given in the book. According to the text Danny was born in 1939 and institutionalised in 1943, ages four. According the the text Patricia takes him in around his fourteenth birthday. This would then have to be in 1953. However, chapter 21 which starts with Danny leaving the institution is subtitled with stating the year 1949. It shall be assumed that the age given in the text is correct and that Danny is in fact fourteen years of age when moving to Sydney.
141 Ibid., 208

not only subject to racist abuse by his peers, but also molested by his house father.[142] Although it seemed as if he rejected Patricia's efforts is the same way Daisy did it turns out that he always cared for her, showing a sense for family Daisy always lacked. Danny blames Bob for social marginalisation, fuelled by his envy for his brother's easiness to fit in and the intrigues plotted against him by Bob's white friends.[143] In comparison with the juxtapositions of Thomas and William, and Patricia and Daisy, Danny can be considered to be Bob's antipode.

Neil O'Reilly

Neil O'Reilly plays a minor part for the course of the story, but a significant role for the overall question of identity development. He perceives himself as an Irish Australian in accordance with his parents' Irish identity. His light tan contradicts neither Celtic roots, nor the possibility of being adopted from Italian parents.[144] It is because of the positive connotations Neil has perceived in connection with his Irish identity development that even learning of his adoption does not lead to a significant unsettling of his self-perception and complacency.[145] It is only in the context of the Sydney city park that he faces some form of recognition by an Aboriginal Australian.[146] The depiction of Neil's identity development and up-bringing in connection with the question of negotiating individual and group identities will be further examined below.

5.1.3 Candice Brecht

Candice Brecht is the first-person narrator of Larissa Behrendt's novel which is structured into three parts. The first two chapters, "the place where the rivers meet"[147], and the last two, "looking to the sky"[148], are framing the main part "through the years"[149]. These two parts, basically serving as an prologue and epilogue, are set in the present (1995) and narrated in first-person by Candice herself. She informs the reader about her experiences in contemporary Australia regarding cultural identity and identity perception. In between the story of her grandmother Elizabeth and her children is told, eventually leading up to the story line of pro- and epilogue.

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142 Ibid., 293
143 Ibid., 289-292
144 Ibid., 139-142, 144
145 Ibid., 139, 145
146 Ibid., 149-150
147 Ibid., 3-25
148 Ibid., 297-317
149 Ibid., 29-293

Just like the other protagonists Candice is also depicted with multiple identities. She is a lawyer who studied in both Australia and France, an activist for Aboriginal rights[150], a lover of classic English literature[151], and of both Aboriginal and European descent. Candice is well aware of her Aboriginality and fully contend with this part of her identities. Grown up in a predominantly white Sydney suburb and mostly brought up by her mother, one can assume that she and her brother, who were the only children with Aboriginal origins at school, have enjoyed a childhood generally similar to that of other Australian kids.[152] Candice is beginning to perceive her difference at school where she is occasionally singled out by some children, because of her darker physical appearance. Since she has grown up in a loving family environment, she only realises the impact of hatred based on racial prejudice as a teenager.[153] Racism might have decreased in mainstream Australia, but Candice is still often subject to assumptions based on her physical appearance. Even though her looks are sometimes misinterpreted as Mediterranean she cannot get away from "the skin thing".[154] Examples of misinterpreted identity will be further scrutinised in the sections below. Candice self-perception regarding her multiple identities can generally be described as positive.

Similar to the depiction of her father and his siblings, Candice and her brother Kingsley are constructed as antipodes. The striking difference, however, is that this is not perceived as a problematic contradiction, but as a complementary asset. They have a positive relationship profiting from their different characters, in both private and professional life.[155] Candice Brecht also functions as the bearer of messages regarding the process of Aboriginal rights and especially land claims. In her narration she includes information about the historic development of legal actions and how Australian courts have justified their respective rulings.[156]

5.1.4 Individual identities and identity environment

Larissa Behrendt constructs Elizabeth's and Sonny's identities as plural by depicting their various cultural preferences and repugnances. Elizabeth is clearly aware of their identities which becomes problematic when European Australians begin to forcefully

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150 Ibid., 14, 307, 313
151 Ibid., 11
152 Ibid., 11, 302-303
153 Ibid., 10-11, 297
154 Ibid., 304-305
155 Ibid., 6, 8-9, 11-12
156 Ibid., 10, 13-14, 303-304, 307-308

apply their idea of a dominant singular white identity upon her. Once removed from her Aboriginal environment and held hostage at the Howard's she is only barely able to live her plural identities. Even in Lithgow she perceives the pressure of white Australian culture not to show her Aboriginality evident in Grigor's own assumption of cultural superiority.[157] Plural identities are therefore possible and true for Elizabeth, however, even though she perceives this plurality she is forced to suppress some identities under the pressure of a European cultural environment that postulates a singular dominant cultural identity concept.

The cultural environment of the Brecht children is similar to Elizabeth's after taken away from Dungalear Station. They grow up and live in a European cultural environment based on assumptions of a singular dominant cultural identity concept. This is conveyed primarily through school and frequent racial abuse. They are aware of their Aboriginal identities, however, the connotations and attributes connected to this identity by European Australian culture are exclusively negative. Thomas and Bob perceive their Aboriginality in accordance with mainstream ideology as a stain and as a result try to assimilate by hiding their mother's heritage and making their European identity more prominent. William and Danny, whose Aboriginality is physically more evident, are often singled out and eventually refuse assimilation. In accordance with the predominant singular identity concept they are therefore rejected by Australian mainstream society. The demand to choose one identity at the expense of another is a clear indicator for an ideology of singular identities. Exemplary for the depiction of plurality is the following description of Thomas:

> "When he would die, at age sixty-five – pilot, expert on Greek antiquities, lover of Mark, eldest brother of five siblings, exile – he would sill be ashamed of his secrets. Ashamed of his mother's Aboriginality, ashamed of his father's German name and ashamed that his lifelong love was another man."[158]

In these two sentences Behrendt depicts the plurality of Thomas' identities and the struggle within the given environment. From what the reader already knows up to this point his shame is a result of outside interventions regarding Thomas' choice of identity priorities.

Although Behrendt depicts her protagonists with a variety of different identities it is almost always race and physical appearance that becomes their predominant identity denominator regardless of the particular context. That identities are in fact not inherited

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157 Ibid., 110
158 Ibid., 220

but learned and applied through a process of negotiating cultural aspects becomes evident through Neil's depiction.

In Candice's contemporary Australia the assumption of a dominant singular identity is still present. Although institutional racism and prejudice seem to have vanished in many areas and she was able to grow up and receive an education like anyone else, Candice still has to face racist assumption based on her physical appearance. It becomes evident that while there is a slow but steady progress regarding Aboriginal rights developments of cultural assumptions in European Australian society are still trailing behind.

5.2 Construction and Negotiation of Group Identities
5.2.1 Identifying identity themes and fields

What becomes apparent from the analysis of the protagonists' individual identities is the theme of Aboriginal identity and the always present negotiation of blackness. The fields of negotiation that are most relevant for this theme are ethnicity, culture, and visual appearance.

Ethnicity plays one of the most important roles in *Home*. The group identities that can be assigned to ethnicity are Aboriginal, European (with the sub-groups Irish, British, German, French, Spanish / Latin), and Chinese (representing Asian). Aboriginal ethnicity can be assigned to both Elizabeth and Sonny. It further applies to Neil, Thomas, Patricia, William, Daisy, Bob, Danny, Candice, and Kingsley. European ethnicity is evident in Mrs Carlyle, Miss Grainger, the Howards, Grigor, Neil, Thomas, Patricia, William, Daisy, Bob, Danny, the du Ponds, Candice, Kingsley, Toby, and several minor characters. Chinese Ethnicity is represented by Xiao-ying. These identities refer to elements of genetic origin and must not be confused with nationalities. As the distribution of ethnic identities above shows, it is obviously not an exclusive category, because several protagonists can be described to have at least dual ethnic identities.

Visual appearance refers to the visual impression a person conveys. This includes foremost physical aspects, such as skin, hair, frame, etc., but also aspects of attire. The relevant skin identities in *Home* are white, black, and tan. Attire is important in only a few contexts, most importantly in Candice's business attire.[159]

The field of culture covers group identities that relate to habitual and learned aspects

159 Ibid., 5

of the protagonists' modes of living and the respective ideas and ideologies. Defining group identities for culture is more difficult that for ethnicity, because these are not fixed. The volatile nature of these identities makes a clear denomination difficult. Therefore, group labels can refer to any possible identity, from delimitable aspects such as household organisation to rather vague denominators such as particular beliefs or points of view. The most important groups in regard to the theme of Aboriginality and the field of culture refer to the complexes of educational, family, or societal aspects. Identities denoting European lifestyles based on modes of living, career choices, or family organisation are evident for all characters. Sonny also maintains an Aboriginal lifestyle represented by occasional traditional hunting practices. Regarding educational identities the major protagonists all have at least a basic European school education. Further education is represented by Bob who is also a trained radio operator; Thomas, the Air Force pilot; and Neil, Thomas, Candice, and Kingsley who also achieved university degrees.[160] Other cultural group identities refer to the arts (Neil, Thomas, Bob, and Candice), science (Neil, biology; Thomas, aeronautics), and commercial skills (Patricia).[161] Larger societal group identities can be identified in habitual elements of culture such as education through oral narration which is depicted within both the Aboriginal and the European / Irish communities.[162] Further, the practise of arranged marriage is evident for Aboriginal as well as Chinese families.[163] In conjunction with the question of the general organisation of society it is obvious that the Australian Nation is based on a government of laws. This can also be confirmed for traditional Aboriginal society evident in Candice's quote of Justice Blackburn's assertions on Aboriginal society from 1975.[164] This denotes a common group identity of both Aboriginal and European individuals regarding the belief in a government of laws instead of men.

5.2.2 Identification and clustering of contexts

Three particular contexts depicting negotiation processes of Candice Brecht's identities will be highlighted. The first context is set in a post office in Walgett, a town near Dungalear Station, where Candice is having a conversation with the sales person at the counter.[165] The second context is the video evening with Candice, Toby, and at least

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160 Ibid., 144 (Neil); 216, 219 (Thomas); 223, 235 (Bob); 303 (Candice & Kingsley)
161 Ibid., 11 (Candice); 140, 144 (Neil); 176, 232, 233 (Bob); 215 (Thomas)
162 Ibid., 31, 120-122, 140-141, 313-315
163 Ibid., 34, 73
164 Ibid., 303-304
165 Ibid., 3-4; Behrendt does not explicitly refer to the town's name, however, it is near Dungalear

two more friends during their university days.[166] The third context refers to Candice's time in Paris and her experiences with Aboriginality in France.[167]

This cluster of contexts exemplifies the negotiation processes Candice is involved in regarding notions of her Aboriginality and other identities. It is evident that the field of visual appearance plays a significant role for Candice and the way her identities are interpreted by others. The woman at the post office recognises Candice's tan and business attire. While the suit nourishes assumptions that Candice is a member of the business world with the probable group attributes of a Sydney middle class woman, her tan seems to refer to a Mediterranean ethnicity.[168] The sales women seems to exclude the possibility of an Aboriginal ethnicity on a combination of these visual aspects. Similarly, Toby considers Candice's ethnic background to be Spanish. He agrees with his friends who consider most Aboriginal people to be dole bludgers, trouble stirrers, filthy, and feral.[169] What is happening in both cases is that Candice's visual appearance leads to assumptions about her cultural group attributes, and finally to the assessment of her ethnic background. That this also works vice versa becomes evident when her Aboriginal identity is revealed. Suddenly, Candice's cultural identities, such as business woman, lawyer, visitor / tourist, university student, or customer, are negated in favour of negative cultural attributes assumed for people with an Aboriginal ethnic identity. The problem is not that visual appearance raises the wrong assumption of ethnicity which then lead to false expectations regarding cultural identities. It is rather that when realising their false interpretation, neither Toby nor the post office woman seem to be able to re-evaluate their preconceptions about identities.

Candice experiences an opposite reaction in France where her visual appearance leads to the assumption of an Algerian or Armenian ethnicity. Similar to Aboriginality in the example above, these are considered to have "negative" cultural attributes. When her ethnic identity is revealed as Aboriginal, Candice is suddenly perceived exotic in a positive way.[170]

Station, where Behrendt's grandmother was born. Walgett is the closest to Dungalear and actually means "meeting of two rivers" (Cf. Walgett Shire Council 2007). This is what Candice explains about the town's name in the first sentence of the novel on page 3.

166 Ibid., 305-306
167 Ibid., 14-15, 310-311
168 Ibid., 4-5
169 Ibid., 306
170 Ibid., 14-15

The depiction of Neil O'Reilly's education and upbringing denotes the overall importance of cultural identity regarding the development of identity self-perception. His cultural identities, including those group memberships referring to aspects of Irish culture, are not perceived as contradictory to his visual appearance and therefore the assumption of an Irish ethnicity remains unquestioned. Although his parents must be aware of his Aboriginal identity, this ethnic aspect is not conveyed to him at any time. The negotiation process between the fields of ethnic and cultural identities becomes evident when Neil learns that he is supposedly adopted from Italian parents. Neil's struggle to find an Italian legacy is an attempt to link his ethnic and cultural identities. This ultimately fails since every aspect of identity he finds in Italy is determined through cultural identities, not ethnic, and a connection to Italian aspects based on inherited ethnic aspects is therefore not possible.[171]

His idea about a link between ethnic and cultural identities is also conveyed in Neil's assumptions about the inevitable extinction of people with Aboriginal ethnic identities. He is applying cultural group attributes such as lack of flexibility and inability to adapt to an ethnic group identity. This is not only problematic because of the cross linking of aspects belonging to two distinct fields of identity. His assumptions about these group attributes are also false, based on bias and misconceptions.[172] This becomes evident in the immense achievements regarding flexibility of for example Elizabeth, or Patricia, who managed to adapt under extremely difficult circumstances, albeit their Aboriginal ethnic identities.

Another interesting identity aspect in the context of Neil's education is conveyed through his father. Behrendt depicts the political suppression and dispossession of people with Irish ethnic identities through British colonialism, culminating in the 19th century famine and the death of a quarter of the population.[173] The similarities to Australian colonization are striking, especially when Neil's father asks:

> "How many years must you occupy something you have taken illegally before it becomes legitimate? And if it'll be legitimate after, say, three hundred, four hundred years, why not make it legitimate from the start? Take the land now, kill the people now, legally and by force since it is going to be legal in four hundred years?"

Cultural identity referring to experiences of suppression and dispossession is clearly

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171 Ibid., 146-147
172 Ibid., 149-150
173 Ibid., 141-142

one of the many possible identities of people who would also claim Irish or Aboriginality ethnic identities. Why Irish Australians, such as the O'Reillys, who apparently believe in the mainstream assumption of the extinction of Aboriginal Australians[174], apparently do not see this common identity will be addressed later.

The depiction of the development and perception of Neil's identities underlines the dominant influence of education and upbringing and the important role of the field of culture for the general process of identity negotiation. Therefore, the following cluster of contexts will concentrate on representations of schooling and the conveyed ideas and ideologies. This will help to explain the process of identity negotiation for both some of the protagonists and mainstream. The contexts under consideration are Bob's grade six and grade eight history lessons, his correspondence course to finish high school, and Candice's accounts of history class in high school.[175]

Regarding the class room environment there are two distinct issues to consider. First, the general negotiation of identities through the content of teaching, and second, how these negotiations and the general class room environment influence Bob's and Candice's identity development and perception. The representation of Aboriginal Australians in Bob's school days in the 1940s is limited to negative aspects in the history of white settlement in Australia. While prominent historic figures, such as W.C. Wentworth, are depicted as courageous discoverers and pioneers of civilisation in Australia, Aboriginal Australians are considered as a threat to both the endeavours to bring progress and the lives of the settlers.[176] In two quotations from F.L.W. Wood's *A Concise History of Australia*, issued to Bob in grade eight, Aboriginal Australians only feature as feral savages, who flee from civilised Europeans. The depiction of the Tasmanian genocide evokes the impression of dealing with animals. Similar to a pest, the Tasmanian Aboriginals are rounded up, the remnants are collected, and relocated on an island where they rapidly died off.[177] Aboriginal Australians are represented as a collective without any trace of individuality, let alone culture, and it seems impossible to recognise any consideration of identity within these accounts. This general assumption in mainstream Australia, according to which Aboriginal Australians are an inferior, uncivilised, and primitive species is enforced by opinions of other protagonists

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174 Ibid., 149
175 Ibid., 10, 299-300 (Candice); 171-173, 232-236 (Bob)
176 Ibid., 171, 173
177 Ibid., 172

such as Mrs Carlyle, Miss Grainger, and the Howards.[178] For Bob, these accounts of Aboriginal identity attributes are the only references of Aboriginality. Whenever the settlers' history is discussed in class he is singled out by his classmates as a representative of these attributes.[179] As a logical consequence and at the same time indirect demonstration of his plural identities, Bob is trying to make his European side more prominent[180]. Similar to Thomas this attempt to assimilate into mainstream culture works relatively well[181], however, both brothers suffer under the psychological pressure of feeling stained simply because they cannot escape the identity assumptions thrust upon them.[182]

This general notion of Australian history is still present when Bob takes the correspondence courses. However, as an adult who has read Conrad, Darwin, and Orwell, Bob is now able to question the canonical version of histories written by F.L.W. Wood or A.G.L. Shaw.[183] Through new historians like Henry Reynolds, who have rewritten Australian history introducing an alternative, Aboriginal perspective, Bob begins to understand that the truths told in his childhood are highly questionable. Wentworth the great explorer and pioneer now turns into Wentworth, racist, anti-democrat, and defender of class barriers.[184]

Candice is taught a similarly one-sided version of history. Aboriginal Australians might not be depicted in the way Bob was taught, but their role in Candice's classroom environment is still dominated by passiveness and the propensity to disappear.[185] However, even as a child she already senses that there are other versions of these stories.[186] Candice awareness of her ethnic identities and her self-perception are much more stable than Bob's which can be explained by her mother's support. Unlike Bob her Aboriginality is not negated.[187] She is also subject to occasional racist abuse, but also receives support from her (white) friend Kate. Because of her stable identity perception Candice is able to defend herself against those of her peers who take her Aboriginal ethnic identity as a cause for racist abuse.[188]

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178 Ibid., 46, 60, 85
179 Ibid., 171
180 Ibid., 172-173, 214-215
181 Ibid., 168-169, 212, 235
182 Ibid., 177, 220
183 Ibid., 232, 234
184 Ibid., 234-235
185 Ibid., 299
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid., 298
188 Ibid., 8, 11

5.3 Evaluation of Negotiation Processes

5.3.1 Plural identities

Larissa Behrendt has constructed the identities of all her major protagonists as plural in accordance with Sen's concept of plural identities. This becomes evident through several aspects. First, the struggle of choosing appropriate identity priorities is often depicted in inverted relations. Hence, the inability to choose one's preferential identity in a particular context is denied by external factors, although the presence of these multiple and competing identities is evident. Examples are found in the identity self-perceptions of Elizabeth, Thomas, Bob, and to a certain extend Neil. Second, the depiction of identity development of the Brecht siblings also denotes the possibility of multiple identities. This is supported by the antipodal construction of their characters and the subsequent different strategies within particular contexts. Third, the diachronic change in perception and evaluation of particular identities and their respective attributes is supported by Elizabeth's and Xiao-ying's renegotiation of community values regarding marriage and choice of partners. Both girls develop individual ideas about this particular attribute of their cultural identities without negating any of their related cultural or ethnic identities.

The depiction of Neil O'Reilly is an example for a protagonist who is constructed plurally – foremost through Aboriginal ethnic and Irish cultural identities – but does not perceive himself accordingly. Neil is constantly trying to understand his ethnic and cultural identity as one. When he learns of his allegedly Italian ethnicity his previous contentment with his Irish cultural identity (and assumed ethnicity) crumbles. Consequently, he is trying to establish a link to an Italian cultural identity. This ultimately fails and Neil has to resort to his Irish legacy.

5.3.2 Negotiation of individual & group identities

There are two distinct examples of misinterpretation of identities in *Home*. First, the context in the Walgett post office, and second the depiction of Toby's identity assumptions regarding Candice. In these contexts, both Toby and the woman in the post office misinterpret Candice's ethnic identity. As it was mentioned above, this is not problematic in general. However, both re-evaluate their partially correct cultural assumptions and attributions when they discover Candice's Aboriginal ethnicity and substitute these for cultural assumptions and attributions in accordance with their

preconceptions on Aboriginal cultural identities. Even though especially Toby is facing an alternative group identity concept regarding cultural identities of people with Aboriginal ethnic identity he is not able to re-negotiate his existing misconception of this particular group identity.

Similar inabilities to reconsider one's assumptions and attributions about cultural identities is evident in the depiction of opinions of Mrs Carlyle, Miss Grainger, and the Howard's. Their perception of Aboriginal ethnicity is plainly based on bias. Despite Elizabeth's achievements regarding her work (and later family) and the subsequent development of cultural identities compatible with European cultural group identities, she is always judged upon her ethnicity. Her contemporary European protagonists conceive any possible expression of individual identities as subordinated to her ethnic identity. Under these circumstances not even assimilation, let alone multiculturalism, is possible for Elizabeth. Elizabeth's children experience similar forms of rejection and exclusion. Especially, William, Danny, and later in life Bob understand that for some parts of mainstream society ethnicity in connection with prejudiced assumptions about cultural identities will always prevail over all other identities.[189]

> "But, Bob now realised, Danny had always known that it didn't matter how hard they tried, that some people would consider their blackness as a barrier they could not break through, that they would never be white enough."[190]

5.3.3 Within-group negotiation and assumptions

Another concept that becomes evident in the evaluation of individual and group identity negotiation above is that of singular identity assumptions. Toby, the post office woman, Neil, and Elizabeth's European contemporaries all base their group identity negotiations on the assumption of a predominant singular identity, subordinating all other possible group identities. This identity is an amalgam of ethnic and cultural identities that determine each other respectively. The assumption of singular identity is also evident in the depictions of school environments. Elizabeth, her children, and their peers are all subject to an ideology based on the identity concept described above. Although, especially Thomas and Bob recognise their competing identities, they are trying to pretend a singular European identity in order to conceal their Aboriginality.

In these contexts Predominant singular identities demand that each individual has to assigned to one ethnic group, which governs all subordinated attributes of the

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189 Ibid., 214-215, 221, 235
190 Ibid., 235

individual. In the present cases this is considered to be ethnicity, denoted by visual appearance. The result is a binary classification of individuals and groups in all areas of life, solely based on one particular aspect of their otherwise plural identity.

Behrendt uses the classroom environment to depict the predominant notion regarding the perception of identity in Australian mainstream society. This is evident in Bob's and Candice's reference to school and history books from different eras. Bob's second phase of schooling is used to make reference to a new phase of historiography. He mentions historians like Henry Reynolds and the rewriting of Australian history, now including an Aboriginal point of view into their work.[191] The existence of such a process of re-evaluation denotes a change in white Australian society and the possibility of renegotiation of group identity assumptions.

Especially Carole and to a certain extend Kate symbolise such a process of renegotiation. Although she is instantly aware of Bob's visual appearance this is only a marginal aspect.[192] Ethnic identity does not have any significance regarding her assumptions on cultural identities and attributes. It is therefore evident that Carole does not have the same group identity assumptions about Aboriginal ethnic identities and that a process of renegotiation of group identities must have already taken place. Contrary, Toby and the post office woman are apparently not ready, yet, to renegotiate their assumptions on group identity.

Interestingly, the O'Reillys are not able to negotiate a common group identity with people of Aboriginal descent. The assertions represented by Neil's father about the colonisation of Ireland and the subsequent suppression and dispossession over several centuries is strikingly similar to the experience of the Aboriginal people in Australia. It is these cases of common experience that provide opportunities for renegotiation of identities, however, Neil assumes the latter example to be an inevitable process of evolution and does not perceive any similarity to the Irish experience. Again, ethnic identity is considered to denominate and govern all other identities.

The inability of renegotiation in conjunction with the idea of singular cultural identity create an atmosphere of absolute inclusion or exclusion depending on whether the individual in question meets the requirements for group membership. Since the criterion in the example above is the fixed group identity of Aboriginal ethnicity which is assumed to govern all other identities, including other competing ethnic identities,

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191 Ibid., 234
192 Ibid., 161

membership in other volatile identity groups is barred.[193] This experience is confirmed by all three generations of the Brecht family, starting with Elizabeth and ending with Candice.

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193 Ibid., 291

6 Loubna Haikal: *Seducing Mr Maclean*

6.1 Construction of Individual Identities

6.1.1 Anonymous first person narrator

The central protagonist and first-person narrator of the story is the second eldest child and daughter of Hayat and Naiim, Lebanese war refugees settling down in Melbourne. Her name is not revealed by Haikal and therefore she will be referred to as first-person narrator (FPN). The anonymity of FPN and the apparently false names of some other protagonists can be understood as a device to pretend credibility and to suggest that the story deals with real events and people.[194]

Until emigration to Australia, FPN grows up in the Maronite Catholic community in war-torn Beirut. Education for both boys and girls is rated high and her parents pay a "fortune" to send her to a French / Arabic school.[195] Although they speak Arabic, with some French and Turkish borrowing, they consider themselves ethnically Phoenicians and not Arabs.[196] For her parents, identity expressed through ethnicity, nationality, language, and religion is extremely important and has to be preserved, protected, and defended.[197] Any cultural influence of Australian mainstream society is therefore considered a threat to their identity. In the story, Lebanese culture is represented mostly through references to food, cultural activities, occasional Arabic or French insertions, and the contrasting depiction of Lebanese and Australian cultures regarding family lifestyles.[198] There is also frequent reference to apparently typical Lebanese visual appearance regarding clothing and make-up.[199] In Melbourne, the Lebanese community is recreating life in Lebanon, with Lebanese papers, Egyptian movies and music, and community functions.[200] Within the community and her immediate family, FPN grows up in a cultural environment traditionally even more conservative than Lebanon itself, and consequently perceives herself as purely Lebanese.[201] Contact to the "outside" Australian world is almost exclusively depicted through her student life at university.

FPN's self-perception regarding her Lebanese identities is characterised by a

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194 Haikal 2002, 144, 166
195 Ibid., 3-4, 14-15, 31
196 Ibid., 11, 31, 189, 247, 250; 36, 93
197 Ibid., 58, 80, 84
198 Ibid., 3-4, 61, 65, 71-72, 86, 89, 114-115, 169, 241
199 Ibid., 16, 19, 185, 200-201, 290
200 Ibid., 7; 8, 64, 231; 111, 116-117
201 Ibid., 84

multilingual education, the particular ethnic and religious background, and a culturally conservative family structure, the latter mostly expressed by her parents protective attitude towards their daughters.[202] However, there is also a strong European / Western influence, depicted in the passion for everything French and FPN's Western role models from movies and magazines.[203] In Australia, FPN perceives herself as being labelled as "other", different, or exotic by both fellow students and teachers.[204] At first, her lack of English is an obstacle for participation in Australian society, but FPN quickly becomes fluent in her third language and begins to feel included. Since her parents believe in a singular, unique, genetically determined culture, integration into Australian society is considered to take away one's Lebanese identity, yet outside the Lebanese community FPN perceives her ability to study medicine being questioned by other Australians based on her ethnic background.[205]

With the slowly beginning process of integration into Australian society, FPN perceives herself in between two cultural realms, Australian mainstream society and the Lebanese community, which both consider the other to be culturally inferior, primitive, and backward. While her parents represent the Lebanese point of view, as referred to above, Australian cultural assumptions are conveyed mostly by Robby's parents.[206] From the very first day in Australia FPN is determined to integrate herself into Australian society.[207] This determination is persisting throughout the story, however, because of implications regarding identity and self-perception FPN is experiencing mixed feelings of belonging.[208] FPN's integration becomes evident in her development of an Australian accent, her interest in Australian men, her involvement in student culture, and the ability to blend into mainstream society.[209] However, it is not until her dad's funeral that FPN finally feels at home in Australia.[210]

FPN's identity is essentially constructed plural. This is evident in the depiction of both her Lebanese background and the process of integration in Australian mainstream society. Regarding her Lebanese identity it is questionable whether she does perceive plurality, or whether she considers her parents' culture as a predominantly singular

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202 Ibid., 14-15, 31; 36, 93; 72; 41, 53, 57, 63, 67-68
203 Ibid., 7, 15
204 Ibid., 36, 44-45, 51-52, 74
205 Ibid., 22, 41, 80, 284, 286; 73, 118, 150
206 Ibid., 66, 72, 74, 85-86
207 Ibid., 93
208 Ibid., 34, 129, 147-148, 150, 211, 279
209 Ibid., 14, 80, 147-148, 297
210 Ibid., 297

identity. At least regarding the multilingual and cosmopolitan Lebanese society FPN is aware of a certain plurality.[211] As referred to above, she is also aware of the process of integration at university, yet FPN is uncertain whether the adoption of new cultural identities is replacing the previous ones. This is represented by her fear of loosing her Lebanese identity, while not fully acquiring an Australian identity.[212] FPN perceives and describes this as crossing camps, denoting the assumption of two distinctive singular cultures.[213] The term "crossing camps" implies the possibility of adopting a particular identity within a certain context and can therefore considered to denote plurality.

6.1.2 Hayat and Naiim

Hayat and Naiim, mother and father of Samia, FPN, the twins, and their five younger siblings move to Melbourne in order to escape the war in Lebanon. As referred to above, they are immensely proud of their Lebanese cultural heritage and believe in a cultural superiority, especially in comparison with people from Australia, Egypt, and Turkey.[214] Integration is not on their agenda, simply because taking up residence in Australia is considered only a temporary solution for the duration of the war.[215]

Education is perceived as an important asset for both their children's and the family's future. This is because it secures their financial situation, increases the family's reputation, and enhances their daughters' prospects on the marriage market.[216] It becomes apparent, that their perception of education, especially regarding women, is not essentially shared by all Lebanese. Hayat and Naiim's point of view is influenced by their metropolitan background in Beirut, which is distinctively different from Lebanese country people.[217] After several years in Australia, both Hayat and Naiim show signs of integration, however, this is a subliminal process and neither of the two is aware of their adoption of attributes of mainstream Australian society.[218]

Hayat and Naiim are constructed plural in respect to the depiction of their cultural background. The plurality of Lebanese society is evident in their own accounts of achievements and cross-cultural exchange of Middle East societies over thousands of

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211 Ibid., 31, 95
212 Ibid., 129
213 Ibid., 276
214 Ibid., 22, 65-66, 69, 218-219
215 Ibid., 58-59
216 Ibid., 3-4, 10, 58
217 Ibid., 23, 57, 98, 119-120
218 Ibid., 69-70

years.[219] However, this plurality is not depicted in their self-perception. Both obviously perceive their identity as part of a predominant singular cultural identity. This is primarily depicted in the treatment of their daughter and the reluctance to accept FPN's individual development of identities. Further, they only accept FPN's boy-friend Robby as long as he is willing to subordinate himself to their cultural values.[220] Interestingly, the reservations expressed toward their daughter's choice of partners is also true for the twins choice of Sharon as their girl-friend. In both cases Hayat and Naiim fear a loss of cultural identity within the family.[221] There is some reconsideration of opinion evident for Naiim when meeting Elham. His previous insistence that Phoneticians are always better than Arabs is disappearing and he even starts to like Elham's Egyptian accent.[222]

6.1.3 The twins

The two younger brothers of FPN are initially depicted as keepers of their family's culture. They are visually recognisable as members of the Lebanese community, demand FPN to acknowledge their superiority as her brothers, and even offer to kill FPN and Robby in order to restore the family reputation.[223] Through their business with Mr Shareef and Mr Hunt, and after meeting Sharon, the twins begin to develop Australian identities. They begin to speak exclusively English with an Australian accent and avoid Lebanese functions and food.[224] After a while they also change their appearance and begin to dress according to their own ideas.[225]

Regarding the construction of their individual identities plurality cannot be assumed. This is primarily because they do not play any important role as individual protagonists. Plurality could have been assumed if their identities would have been distinctively different, especially since from the author's perspective twins are ideal to depict the development of individual characteristics. Nevertheless, they contribute to the overall possibility of plurality within the novel by representing alternative identity developments in contrast to their siblings.

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219 Ibid., 14, 31, 61-62, 65-66, 204, 218, 247
220 Ibid., 63
221 Ibid., 110
222 Ibid., 65, 93, 216, 232, 244
223 Ibid., 56, 78, 185
224 Ibid., 111
225 Ibid., 185-186

6.1.4 Mr Maclean and Robby

In contrast to the depiction of the Lebanese immigration community Mr Maclean and Robby represent mainstream Australian society. Like the twins, neither of the two is constructed with distinctively plural identities. Both protagonists are important because of their particular identities within the negotiation processes. Similar to Robby's parents, Mr Maclean and Robby primarily represent the assumption of a predominantly singular culture. At first, both perceive FPN as exotic and reduce her to ethnic and gender identities with preconceptions familiar from Orientalism.[226] Robby's perception of FPN and Lebanese culture begins to grow with their relationship and he eventually develops a different opinion than conveyed on TV and represented by his parents who belief in British cultural superiority.[227]

Mr Maclean begins to show a more sophisticated interest in Lebanese culture when becoming a regular at Antar. This is primarily evident in his reading of Lebanese and Middle Eastern literature.[228] Eventually, Maclean even changes his appearance to look like a member of the Lebanese community.[229] It is difficult to say whether this is sufficient evidence to assume distinctively plural identities, or whether the depiction of Mr Maclean suggests identity substitution. This is also because both Maclean's and Robby's motives for adopting Lebanese identity attributes are doubtful, since both men are courting FPN when beginning to show an interest in her cultural background.[230] Further, Mr Maclean is unattached when starting to visit Antar, and apparently has an abundance of spare time and nowhere to go to feel at home.[231] A final twist in the story is the revelation that Mr Maclean's biological mother is apparently Arabic.[232]

6.1.5 Individual identities and cultural environment

Loubna Haikal constructs only the main protagonist FPN with a distinctively plural identity. All other protagonists and characters are depicted either with restricted plural identities such as FPN's parents, or with singular identities. The twins and Mr Maclean show some signs of possible plurality, but there is not enough evidence to assume plural identities. This is primarily because communities in *Seducing Mr Maclean –*

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226 Ibid., 30-32, 45, 51; Cf. Ashcroft 2004
227 Haikal 2002, 74-75, 85-86
228 Ibid., 274, 278
229 Ibid., 281, 289-290
230 Ibid., 90
231 Ibid., 224, 267, 278, 281
232 Ibid., 316

mainstream Australian and Lebanese – are depicted as predominantly singular regarding identity structures and exist side by side in a society of plural monoculturalism. In this context, most characters represent the values and assumptions of either community. FPN is caught in between these two entities and tries to negotiate her identities without having to discard any of her individual identities.

Haikal shows, at least for Hayat and Naiim, how absurd the assumption of a predominantly singular identity is by making themselves provide the evidence for plurality in Lebanese society when marvelling about the achievements of Lebanese culture and its cosmopolitan influences. Their antipodes in Australian society are Robby's parents who claim the same cultural protectionism for their own cultural background.

Haikal therefore creates the possibility of plural identities, but denies her protagonists the perception of plural individualism. Even FPN has troubles recognising her plural identities and constantly tries to reconcile the two cultural spheres. This "crossing of camps" is a result of her restricted cultural environment created by her fellow Australians and Lebanese where choices are demanded, yet individual choice of context related identities denied.

6.2 Construction and Negotiation of Group Identities

6.2.1 Identifying identity themes and fields

The central issue of Haikal's *Seducing Mr Maclean* is the cultural adaptation and identity development of FPN in an apparently bi-cultural environment. The major theme regarding multiculturalism and cultural freedom is therefore "development of individual cultural identities." The fields of negotiation that are most relevant for this theme are ethnicity, visual appearance, and culture.

Ethnicity is important on two distinctive levels. First, there are two predominant ethnic group identities to be considered regarding the main issue in the novel, Lebanese and Australian ethnicity. Second, on a minor level the Arab speaking community is divided into distinct group identities itself, consisting of members who consider themselves Phoenicians, Egyptians, or Arabs. The latter term usually refers to people who speak Arabic as their first language, which includes both Lebanese and Egyptians, while Phoenicians inhabited the Levant 3.000 years ago.[233] Nevertheless, the Lebanese family in the novel insists of being Phoenicians, not Arabs. This can be understood as an

233 Weiss 1996, 2628

attempt to claim a certain cultural heritage, but cannot be considered as an ethnic group membership. Lebanese ethnicity can be assigned to FPN, Hayat and Naiim, the twins, Samia, Mr Shareef, and Mr Maclean.[234] Australian ethnicity can be assumed for Robby, his parents, Mr Whiteside, and Mr Hunt, although there is no direct reference in novel to verify these claims.[235] Whether Maclean has an Australian ethnic identity as well is unknown. Finally, Elham is ethnically Egyptian.[236]

The visual impressions conveyed through visual appearance are primarily physical features, denoting tan skin, dark hair, and body hair (FPN's family), or light skin and blonde hair (Robby, and his mother).[237] Since FPN is often perceived as different regarding her physical features it can be assumed that people like Mr Maclean, Robby's father, Mr Whiteside, and Mr Hunt physically appear more like Robby than FPN. Visual appearance further refers to aspects of attire and make-up. Accordingly, a certain Lebanese and contrasting Australian style of clothing, Naiim's and Mr Maclean's haircut, and Hayat's display of big fashion brands is evident.[238] These are closely linked to physical features and can be assumed to strongly influence the perceptions regarding a person's ethnicity. In the novel, physical features, clothing, and make up are often depicted denoting the appearance of a protagonist, yet the particular reason for a certain perception – physical features or apparel and make-up – is difficult to distinguish.

As referred to in chapter five, group identities relating to the field of culture are difficult to delimit.[239] Cultural group identities of particular interest in Seducing Mr Maclean refer to language, education, family ideology, views of society, and general interests or hobbies. English language skills are evident for native speakers, such as Mr Maclean, Robby, Robby's parents, Mr Whiteside, and Mr Hunt.[240] Further, FPN, the twins, and Mr Shareef have leaned English as a second language and FPN and the twins even adopt an Australian accent.[241] FPN and her family, Elham, and other members of the Lebanese community speak Arabic.[242] FPN is also fluent in French and her family – and most likely other Lebanese people as well – frequently borrows from French and

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234 Haikal 2002, 14, 36, 77, 93, 95, 316
235 Ibid., 50, 54
236 Ibid., 219
237 Ibid., 8, 17, 185-186; 53, 61, 73
238 Ibid., 16, 19, 185-186, 188, 200-201, 289, 290
239 cf.: Chapter 5.2.1
240 There is no direct reference of their ability to speak English, however, the language problems of the Lebanese protagonists indirectly confirm this assumption.
241 Haikal 2002, 80, 111
242 Ibid., 11, 14, 244

Turkish.[243] As referred to above, education plays an important part in the novel. FPN and the twins have finished high school, which can also be assumed for student Robby, the psychologist Sharon, and dean of medical school Prof Maclean.[244] University degrees are evident for FPN, Sharon, and Maclean.[245]

The two distinctive group identities referring to family ideology are FPN's parents' assumptions of a closely knit family structure, and Robby's parents' apparently more individualistic approach. For Hayat and Naiim the reputation of their family is an issue of great importance and each family member is responsible to maintain this reputation by observing the communities expectations.[246] For women this means to protect their virginity until marrying a husband selected or at least accepted by her parents.[247] Partners, both men and women should also come from the same community or subscribe to similar cultural values in order to protect the family's cultural traditions.[248] Failing to conform with the demands of one's family and community is punished by expulsion or the threat of physical measures.[249] Until they meet Sharon, the twins support this kind of family structure, but when beginning to integrate themselves into Australian society, they apparently become more indifferent.[250]

Robby's family seems to have a more tolerant point of view regarding family structures, however, there are some interesting similarities. Like FPN's parents they do have a very strong opinion what is be best for their son, although this is expressed as if reflecting Robby's own ideas.[251] Further, they also prefer their daughter in law to be from a culturally more similar cultural background or at least make sure that she will adopt their own perceptions and cultural identities.[252] It is not possible to say, whether Robby's parents would have granted the same amount of independence and freedom to a daughter. Just like Hayat and Naiim, their family values are at least partially influenced by their Christian religion and therefore a certain similar protectiveness can be assumed.[253] The distinctive difference between the two families regarding their evaluation of family ties becomes apparent when relaying the news of uncle Ted's death

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243 Ibid., 14, 31, 61, 189, 247, 250
244 Ibid., 12, 15, 107
245 Ibid., 12, 14, 16
246 Ibid., 79, 82
247 Ibid., 16, 40-41, 53, 56, 59-60
248 Ibid., 57-58, 67-68, 110-111
249 Ibid., 12, 78, 281
250 Ibid., 78
251 Ibid., 87
252 Ibid., 73, 85
253 Ibid., 72, 74

to Robby.[254]

Besides these two major opinions there is evidence for a third point of view represented by Mr Shareef and Joe. Both are Lebanese immigrants who already live in Australia for several years and apparently have developed a slightly more flexible approach to the question of family structures than Hayat and Naiim. Joe predicts that their children will develop their own ways, adopting elements of Australian culture and Mr Shareef even defends FPN when she is caught with Robby.[255]

Group identities regarding views of society are depicted primarily through Naiim and Robby's father. Naiim represents a ranking of societies according to cumulated cultural achievements. An individual and its culture are therefore judged upon a mixture of particular cultural and ethnic group memberships. The assumptions on which these judgements are made are often based on misconceptions or prejudice tailored to fit Naiim's perception of a particular individual. Australia is considered to be a primitive society, while Lebanon is an almost European country with a rich cultural heritage.[256] Although their views of Lebanese society and culture are often expressing superiority Hayat and Naiim seem to recognise other societies, such as European and particular French society, as equally "developed".[257]

Robby's parents have a similar opinion regarding British Australian society. His father's assumptions on civilised and primitive races and the necessity to keep these apart is indicating intolerance based on racism.[258] His believe in British Australian superiority is further evident is his elaborations on the inability and reluctance of less civilised immigrants, especially from former colonies, to assimilate into the superior society.[259] While both FPN's and Robby's parents are convinced of the superiority of their particular cultures Robby's parents also believe in a civilisation barrier and incompatibility of different "races", even suggesting to FPN to go back to Lebanon.[260] Hayat and Naiim on the other hand represent a culturally more inclusive approach, trying to convince Robby and Maclean to adopt Lebanese cultural identities.

Considering the assumptions on both family culture and views of society FPN's parents seem to support a predominantly singular cultural identity within a society of

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254 Ibid., 89
255 Ibid., 79, 93
256 Ibid., 17, 66, 112, 157-158
257 Ibid., 46, 61
258 Ibid., 85
259 Ibid., 86
260 Ibid., 73, 86

plural monoculturalism. Robby's parents, however, seem to consider their British Australian culture as superior to others and demand immigrants to assimilate as long as their state of civilisation is adequate. If this is not the case immigrants are to be kept out, since they will only create racial violence as result of their primitivism.[261]

Finally, there are some group identities referring to general individual interests or hobbies. Hayat has a passion for brands, while her husband Naiim is a passionate gambler.[262] The twins become possessed with body-building, and interestingly, both FPN and Robby's mother share a common group identity as fans of Grace Kelly.[263]

6.2.2 Identification and clustering of contexts

The first cluster of contexts refers to negotiations between FPN and Mr Maclean, primarily in his office and later at the pub and the Antar. While FPN perceives Maclean as a highly educated gentleman from the Australian establishment, he is essentially considering her ethnic and gender identities.[264] This becomes evident in the depiction of FPN's interview with Maclean regarding her admittance to medical school. When realising that Maclean is inclined to reject her application based on her academic record, FPN tries to impress him by expressing her French language identity, which she considers to convey education and European cultural attributes. Maclean, however, seems to either neglect this completely or perceives these signals as a gendered aspect of seduction, coupled with a perception of exoticness.[265] The result is the beginning of the apparently sexually motivated fondling of FPN's breasts, hair, thighs, and belly, and attempts to kiss her.[266] When FPN eventually tries to rebuff Maclean he basically accuses her of being the agent in their relationship and consequently feels offended.[267]

The second cluster of contexts deals with the identity negotiations between FPN and Robby's parents. Both his mother and father have strong preconceptions about people and cultures from the Middle East and are resistant to any correction of misconceptions. FPN is perceived according to her ethnic identity which is then connected with various cultural attributes based on their assumptions. It is evident that Robby's parents are neither able to differentiate the complexity of Middle Eastern society and political

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261 Ibid., 86
262 Ibid., 98-99, 188; 24, 156, 158
263 Ibid., 183, 300; 7, 89
264 Ibid., 18, 29
265 Ibid., 19-21
266 Ibid., 19, 20-21, 30, 33, 34, 36-37
267 Ibid., 37-38; 48

affairs, nor are they willing to reconsider their prejudiced opinions when negotiating identities with FPN.[268] FPN is reduced to her group identity as migrant from a less advanced civilisation and therefore considered unfit to assimilate to Australian society.[269] The possibility of any individual identities is not taken into account at all. Instead, Robby's parents suggest that FPN should leave the country and marry someone matching her own group identity.[270]

The third cluster of contexts depicts the negotiation of identities between FPN, her family, and Robby. In this cluster there are not two but three sides involved and therefore the process can essentially be described as a triangle negotiation. By making FPN's individual decisions regarding her choice of partner a concern of the entire family her parents reduce FPN to her group identity of being a Lebanese daughter, responsible for the protection of the family's reputation and future.[271] In this context the group identity of being a family member is superior to all other possible identities and consequently individual choice cannot be realised. Accordingly, the family assumes the responsibility to negotiate FPN's group identity and relationship with Robby. Her family perceives Robby's identity exclusively based on their assumptions of mainstream Australian group identities. Their judgement and rejection as a possible partner of FPN and therefore the family is made without meeting or speaking to Robby once. He represents the "other", a foreign entity, threatening to take FPN away from her family, community, and culture and therefore jeopardising their reputation.[272] However, meeting Robby as an individual changes their perception of him. Especially his visual appearance and its religious connotations, as well as his education are considered favourably.[273] Further, FPN's parents are impressed by Robby's apparent adaptation to their cultural identities and values.[274] The family's concern regarding his suitability as a son-in-law is now primarily based on Robby's family group identities and the assumptions regarding his identity attributes as an Australian.[275]

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268 Ibid., 72
269 Ibid., 73, 74, 86
270 Ibid., 73, 86
271 Ibid., 53, 64, 80
272 Ibid., 57-58, 62, 67
273 Ibid., 61-62, 63, 84
274 Ibid., 62, 63-66
275 Ibid., 58, 65

6.3 Evaluation of Negotiation Processes

6.3.1 Plural identities

Although the protagonists in *Seducing Mr Maclean* appear to be firmly embedded into group identities relating to their particular families and communities, Haikal does depict examples of plural identities. For FPN this becomes evident in her approach to university life and aspects of Australian mainstream society, such as drinking beer at the pub or having premarital sex with her boy-friend Robby.[276] She perceives this as living two distinctive lives, one within her family's community, the other with her peers.[277] There is further evidence for plural identities within the Lebanese community itself. These are possible if subordinated to the predominant singular identity of family and community values. If the community's reputation and consent are assured drug trafficking, divorce, and even change of religion are possible.[278]

6.3.2 Negotiation of individual and group identities

Three examples highlight the misinterpretation of identities in *Seducing Mr Maclean*. First, the process of negotiation in FPN's application interview with Mr Maclean and their subsequent informal meetings in his office and at the pub, second her negotiations with Robby's parents, and third, Robby visiting FPN's family.

The negotiation of identities between FPN and Maclean is exemplifying the problem of misunderstanding based on different cultural assumptions and language problems. Essentially, FPN is trying to highlight identities she considers to reflect education and Western values. Maclean, however, is primarily interested in her ethnic identity which he seems to associate with various attributes of exoticness and sexual availability.[279] FPN is uncertain how to interpret his physical advances and decides to let him touch her, as referred to above. It can be assumed that it is FPN's passiveness that encourages Maclean to abuse his position as teacher and to justify his sexual advances.[280] When Maclean and FPN meet again towards the end of her course, and Maclean becomes a regular visitor at Antar, the negotiation process is slightly different. He still has a strong sexual interest in FPN, but now also recognises cultural identities referring to her

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276 Ibid., 40-41, 81
277 Ibid., 83
278 Ibid., 102-103, 239
279 Ibid., 44-45, 48
280 Ibid., 34-35, 48

Lebanese and Middle Eastern identities. This becomes evident in his references of Lebanese and Persian literature and his apparently more sophisticated interest in the Lebanese community.[281]

FPN's identity negotiations with Robby's parents can be described as a complete failure. It is evident that they perceive FPN exclusively according to her ethnic identity and apply what they consider the appropriate attributes. Although, FPN is trying to correct their misconceptions about her cultural identities, Robby's parents are unable to re-evaluate and reconsider their preconceptions. In addition to the interpretations regarding FPN's ethnic and cultural identities, they also apply a comprehensive racist ideology to her migrant identity.

Similarly, FPN's family has also strong preconceptions and prejudices about Australians like Robby. However, beginning with their first meeting they start to recognise Robby not exclusively according to his Australian group identity, but as an individual as well. As a result, FPN's family is able to re-evaluate their perceptions and at least accept part of his cultural, as well as ethnic identities.[282]

6.3.3 Within-group negotiation and assumptions

What becomes evident regarding the question of within-group negotiations is the presence of two related though distinctively different assumptions regarding concepts of singular identity.

The common idea of identity in FPN's family and community is based on a predominantly singular identity which subordinates all other possible identities. This predominant group identity is based on culturally determined family values. Ethnic identity only figures in conjunction with the application of particular cultural attributes and is clearly subordinated to the predominant group identity. This identity perception is evident in the protection and defence of family values in FPN's community directed towards anyone threatening the reputation and honour of one's family. However, there is also room for acceptance and compromise through a process of negotiation evident in the partial acceptance of Robby.

Robby's parents also believes in a concept of singular group identity, yet with a distinctive difference. Ethnic group identity is inseparably connected with cultural group identities. Further, their predominant singular identity concept is considered

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281 Ibid., 274, 278, 289-290
282 Ibid., 61-63, 65, 133

superior to others and membership limited to certain ethnic groups. Although individuals or groups might comply with their cultural identities, if ethnically unfit access to their society is ultimately denied.[283]

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283 Ibid., 85-86

7 Hsu-Ming Teo: *Love and Vertigo*

7.1 Construction of Individual Identities

7.1.1 Pandora Tay (nee Lim)

Pandora is the central protagonist in *Love and Vertigo*. Beginning with her birth and ending with the wake of her funeral the story is depicting the lives of the Lim, Tan, and Tay families with Pandora as their common point of reference. The narration of Pandora's life can be separated into two distinguishable parts. First, her time in Singapore and later Malaysia, and second, life in Sydney after migration.

Singapore / Malaysia

The cultural environment in Singapore and Malaysia is clearly segregated into three distinct ethnic communities, Malaysian, Indian, and Chinese.[284] In the narration the Chinese community is omnipresent through the depiction of Chinese languages, cultural lifestyle, food, and general references to Chinese life.[285] The Malaysian community is only present through accounts of fundamentalist atrocities against the other two ethnic groups.[286] The Indian community is nearly as invisible in the novel as the Malaysian, however, there are some references to Indian locations and to influences of Indian cuisine in Singapore.[287] There is no evidence for any interaction between the three communities, at least not in Pandora's immediate environment. A British / Western cultural influence is also present, which is mostly depicted through Pandora's school education and the presence of movies and magazines.[288]

The Chinese community itself is further subdivided into different language groups, religious backgrounds, and social status.[289] These distinctions do not lead to segregation as marriage between people of different backgrounds is possible and evident in the novel. While Donald and Pandora, who come from a Buddhist family both marry Catholic partners, Pandora also marries someone with higher social status and different language background.[290]

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284 Teo 2000, 11, 130
285 Ibid., 77, 80, 103 (language); 14 (culture); 2, 65, 90, 107 (food); 31, 50 (Chinese life)
286 Ibid., 11, 130-131
287 Ibid., 53, 274-275
288 Ibid., 34, 51, 62, 95
289 Ibid., 14, 60, 77, 85, 203
290 Ibid., 60, 85, 113

Pandora's life within the Chinese community is dominated by the strictly patriarchal structures. Hierarchy within the families is clearly depicted in the distribution of food based on cultural perceptions of gender within the Chinese community: First patriarch, second his sons, then wives and daughters.[291] These family structures are omnipresent and enforced through a regime of violent punishment and rape.[292] Pandora's self-perception therefore develops in an environment where men and boys are regarded an asset, while women and girls are useless, bad, and a liability for the family's future.[293] Since the community is constantly emphasising the need of family traditions based on honour, obedience, and fate, even the women who are clearly suffering from these structures are helping to sustain the patriarchal order. This becomes evident in the constant excoriation of anyone considered to be in a weaker position and of women and girls in general.[294] For Pandora, the only way to perceive some acceptance is through total submission to elders and her older siblings, especially her brothers.[295] Consequently, she develops a self-perception of worthlessness, based on the general contemptuousness of all females as useless members of society and her personal victimisation and rejection as *"rubbish girl"* in particular.[296]

There are, however, alternative lifestyles available within Pandora's perception. Some are more distant, such as those in movies and magazines[297], others are from within her community. Examples of the latter are most prominently her sister Lida's refusal of conformity and the availability of education.[298] Lida's successful rebellion against conformity can be seen as a counter model to the traditional Chinese lifestyles. However, it is not clear in how far this has influenced Pandora's self-perception, because Lida leaves the Lim house only shortly after Pandora's arrival.[299]

The Anglican school is clearly the biggest influence of western culture on Pandora, who develops a *"schizophrenic life"* between *"dutiful Chinese daughter at home and an absurd lampoon of an English schoolgirl outside."*[300] Pandora's British / Western education is depicted primarily through her growing interest in English literature.[301] At

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291 Ibid., 40, 65, 90, 116-117
292 Ibid., 24-25, 48
293 Ibid., 36, 60
294 Ibid., 23-24, 35, 96, 125
295 Ibid., 41-42, 244
296 Ibid., 25, 36, 60; 41, 99
297 Ibid., 51, 63, 68, 95
298 Ibid., 44-45; 62
299 Ibid., 42-45
300 Ibid., 62
301 Ibid., 64, 98-99, 107, 108-109

the same time she is assigned the responsibility to prepare and serve her father's nightly supper, a traditional ceremony of submission and duty.[302] Pandora's teacher Miss Liu serves as a role model for the possibilities of further education and deliverance from the violent, predestined life within her community.[303] University is perceived as a way of gaining independence and freedom from the strictly patriarchal structures.[304] Breaking with her family, as Lida has, however, is no option for Pandora. Through her marriage with Jonah Pandora seems to try combining her need to escape with her perception of being a dutiful Chinese daughter.[305]

Sydney, Australia

The main reason for Pandora to demand emigration to Australia, Britain, or the USA is to escape the dangers of ethnic violence in Malaysia, yet she also seems to dislike the still perceived proximity to her stepmother.[306] Her environment in Australia is quite different from previous experiences. In Sydney, two factors are responsible for Pandora's self-perception. First, migration was not influenced by pre-existing structures, such as relatives and friends or any familiar community environment. Second, based on his conservative ideas about traditional family roles Jonah opposes Pandora's wish to get a job herself.[307] Consequently, the lack of social activity beyond her family home lead to problems of integration in Australian society. This becomes evident in her peer-group dependence on her overseas sisters and friends, Lida, Percy-phone, and Wendy Wu, and the increasing depressive states caused by isolation.[308] Pandora only perceives fleeting moments of integration when nursing her shopping addiction, because the interaction with salespeople creates a feeling of belonging.[309]

Consequently, a significant change in Pandora's self-perception is beginning with her involvement in church. For the first time she develops a distinct social life of her own and experiences happiness through integration into a local community.[310] This, however, does not solve the domestic problems Pandora experiences in her marriage. It becomes apparent, that the values and ideas in respect to family roles and options taught at

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302 Ibid., 66
303 Ibid., 97, 99
304 Ibid., 99
305 Ibid., 109
306 Ibid., 138-139
307 Ibid., 155, 173
308 Ibid., 184; 173-174, 184, 187
309 Ibid., 7, 141, 227
310 Ibid., 213

church are similar to those of the traditional ideology in her Singaporean Chinese community.[311] Again, Pandora perceives the paralysing power of cultural obligations and the incapability to emancipate herself.[312] After the failure of her last attempt to change her live she finally leaves for Singapore, *"[t]o trace the moment when she could have made another choice and life would have been completely different."*[313]

As a mother, Pandora develops a different approach towards her children compared to what her generation experienced in Singapore.[314] With the beginning of the process of immigration she is determined to make integration for Sonny and Grace as easy as possible and wants to turn them into "good Aussie kids."[315] She is further supporting both children in their ambitions and with homework, helping with school projects and even encouraging little cheats.[316] Also, at least in Australia, neither Pandora nor Jonah seems to speak much Chinese with their kids, since neither Grace nor Sonny is able to converse in their parents' languages.[317]

Pandora's identity is clearly constructed plural. This is first of all represented in the her differing identities as Chinese daughter and English school girl and further in contrast to alternative identity developments of her siblings and peers, most prominently Lida. A strong indicator for the perception of alternative identities are Pandora's attempts to break out of her culturally assigned role. During the course of the story Pandora is repetitively trying to escape her identity as Chinese (step-)daughter and wife. In the end, Pandora does not seem to be able to perceive any alternatives or choices.

7.1.2 Jonah Tay

Jonah has grown up in a similar cultural environment like Pandora characterized by the same hierarchical and patriarchal structures.[318] However, being the first born son of a wealthy estate owner, he is in some aspects constructed as an antipode to Pandora. Unlike her, he is the centre of his family, especially his mother, and nothing is left undone to make sure that he becomes a son they can be proud of.[319] In Jonah's perception severe discipline and physical punishment are part of parental love intended

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311 Ibid., 246-247
312 Ibid., 243
313 Ibid., 275
314 Ibid., 27, 46, 93
315 Ibid., 144
316 Ibid., 185-186
317 Ibid., 179, 274
318 Ibid., 89-90
319 Ibid., 85, 88-90

for the greater good of his future.[320] He perceives the overarching control of his mother as part of his cultural determination in life, not recognising that while he is the centre of his mother's life, she has also become the centre of his.[321] The almost Oedipal interdependence remains unquestioned by Jonah and he is not able to conceive the hurt he is inflicting on Pandora by putting his mother first. This becomes evident during his wedding night and when sacrificing the privacy of his marriage to keep his mother's company.[322] Nevertheless, Jonah does love Pandora and is prepared to temporarily sacrifice his traditional views. This becomes apparent on three occasions. First, Jonah is determined to marry Pandora against his mother's wishes and despite her various attempts to prevent the wedding.[323] Second, he agrees to move away from his beloved mother and renounces his rights to his father's estate when Pandora decides that living with her step-mother is no longer bearable.[324] Finally, he agrees to emigration in order to provide a safe home for his family and to keep them together.[325]

In Sydney, their activities and lifestyle is generally moulded on mainstream Australian society. This is evident in the upbringing, education, and development of Grace and Sonny. Jonah himself is showing signs of immersion into Australian culture by watching cricket, *Hey Hey It's Saturday*, and enjoying meat pies and sausage rolls.[326] Not incompatible with Australian ideas, Jonah's perception of family values is predominantly based on his experience in the Chinese community in Malaysia and Singapore. This is represented foremost in two aspects. First, from the moment of migration the first person narrator Grace only refers to Jonah as the patriarch. Second, in his expectations of his family and especially of Pandora to acknowledge his role as patriarch.[327]

Generally, there are various identities recognisable in Jonah, referring to preferences in food, music, and TV, or elements of culture and education, such as language, career, or religious views. However, these are mostly minor nuances in the depiction of the protagonist's character. The important identities in relation to this thesis are, first, his culturally determined view on family, second, his relation with and love for Pandora which he occasionally grants priority over his family ideology, and third, his identity as

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320 Ibid., 89
321 Ibid., 111, 115
322 Ibid., 114, 119-120
323 Ibid., 94, 106-107
324 Ibid., 126
325 Ibid., 9-10, 138-139
326 Ibid., 181
327 Ibid., 189-190

a conservative, demanding assimilation, and disapproving dual citizenship.[328] There is no sign that Jonah is expressing any awareness of plural identities or making distinctive choices. The only exemption is evident in an occasional awareness of feelings for Pandora, especially after having exercised his patriarchal power in domestic disputes. In these situations Jonah seems to feel a certain insecurity regarding his actions and choices.[329] Therefore, it shall be assumed that Jonah's identity is constructed only partially plural.

7.1.3 Sonny Tay

Sonny's development and perception of identities is almost exclusively influenced by his life in Australia. The construction of his identities is clearly plural which becomes apparent in the negotiation between his inherited Chinese attributes and the development of identities more closely connected to mainstream society in Australia.[330]

At school Sonny experiences some racism directed at his ethnic identity, however, this does not seem to play any significant role as there are students from many different ethnic backgrounds he can hang out with.[331] While British Australian kids point out his Asian identity children form the Chinese community consider him Australian, especially because of his inability to speak Chinese properly and his unawareness of Chinese customs.[332] Sonny's self-perception is more influenced by Australian aspects than by the Chinese culture of his parents. Their culture is basically foreign to him particularly the strict hierarchical and patriarchal family structures.[333] Unthinkable in the understanding of his father and his traditions, Sonny supports his mother and sister and defends them against Jonah's attempts to maintain his patriarchal authority.[334]

It can be assumed that Sonny does perceive plurality of identities. Although he has great reservations against certain cultural values represented by his parents and especially his father, he is not rejecting Chinese culture in general. Within his plurality of identities Sonny is able to choose aspects from various backgrounds. At times he enjoys martial arts or particular aspects of Chinese cuisine, while also developing a taste for jazz, basketball, and hip-hop culture.[335]

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328 Ibid., 181
329 Ibid., 9-10, 187-188, 239-240, 287
330 Ibid., 144, 177, 179, 192
331 Ibid., 176, 178
332 Ibid., 178-179
333 Ibid., 179
334 Ibid., 9, 156, 189, 205
335 Ibid., 178-179

7.1.4 Grace Tay

Grace Tay is both protagonist and first person narrator of the novel. Although Grace's character is depicted not as detailed as the other three there is sufficient evidence for a plural identity construction. Since Grace is the younger of the two Tay children, she also grows up nearly exclusively in Australia. At school, Grace is occasionally singled out because of her accent or the sound of her Chinese name, Pui Fun.[336] These events, however, do not sufficiently explain her ambition to assimilate.[337] While blending in with the majority is surely one of Grace's motives, her parents aspiration to fully integrate their children into mainstream society leads to a further depletion of Chinese cultural identities and consequently emphasises cultural aspects considered to be Australian. This is mostly evident in cultural aspects such as eating preferences.[338]

Grace does perceive the plurality of her ethnic and cultural identities. While she rejects her parents' cultural background as a teenager, she later begins to accept her Chinese identities as an integral part of herself.[339] In the end, Grace even performs a Chinese ritual for her dead mother in order to appease the *"Hungry Ghosts."*[340]

7.1.5 Individual identities and identity environment

Hsu-Ming Teo constructs the identities of the four protagonists described above as generally plural. The ethnic and cultural stratification of the environment in which Pandora and Jonah grow up in Malaysia (then including Singapore) comprises three distinguishable spheres. First, Malaysian society is segregated into three distinct ethnic groups, Chinese, Indian, and Malaysian. There is no sign of interaction between these communities, except for the outbreaks of ethnic violence referred to above. Second, the Chinese community environment is depicted in a variety of several cultural identities consisting of a combination of language background and religious practise. Unlike ethnicity, these identities do not function as a barrier within the community and interaction as well as reorientation is possible and evident.[341] The significant common denominator regarding cultural identity within the Chinese community is the strict hierarchical and patriarchal order of families. Third, construction of identities in the Lim family, and especially of Pandora and her siblings, denotes a certain possibility of

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336 Ibid., 164, 177-178
337 Ibid., 183
338 Ibid., 203, 214, 263, 271, 272
339 Ibid., 272, 285-286
340 Ibid., 285-286
341 Ibid., 60, 113

plurality. The comparison of Donald and Winston reveals the different characteristics regarding their business approach.[342] Further, Percy-phone and Pandora are depicted with strikingly different talents regarding the cooking of eggs.[343]

Pandora's perception of these structures is evident in her attempts to partially break with these traditions and escape them in order to live a more independent life. Although Jonah also suffers under the severe discipline and physical punishment of this environment, and on rare occasions opposes destined expectations, he is the one who later emulates these traditions with much more conviction than his wife. As a consequence Pandora perceives and experiences that every attempt of emancipation finally ends with the traditional cultural group identities recapturing her.

The structure of Malaysian society in the novel can be characterised as plural monoculturalism. Within these "cultures" based on ethnic identity the communities support the assumption of predominant singular identities. This predominant identity is the hierarchical and patriarchal family subordinating other possible cultural identities such as language or religion. Australian society is presented as a monocultural society in which other cultural or ethnic identities are integrated. The depiction of Australian society, however, is not of major importance for the story and therefore should not be overrated. Australian society only serves as a background for the negotiation of first and second generation conflicts within the Tay family.

The depiction of Grace and Sonny is conspicuous not because of any particular problems regarding integration, but in the delimitation to their parents cultural identity perceptions, especially Jonah's. His strong conviction of traditional family structures and his attempts to enforce these are frequently resulting in domestic conflicts.[344] Jonah's conservative political opinion, demanding assimilation and disapproving dual citizenship, does not contradict his family ideologies at all. However, these two identities become problematic in relation his children's identity perception and development. The very fact he supports the integration and assimilation of Grace and Sonny has the consequence that neither does identify with his view of traditional Chinese family structures. As a result, his position as patriarch is constantly questioned and eventually disintegrating.

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342 Ibid., 49-50, 56, 58
343 Ibid., 65-66
344 Ibid., 234-235

7.2 Construction and Negotiation of Group Identities

7.2.1 Identifying identity themes and fields

There are several interesting identity themes in *Love and Vertigo* worth of further scrutinisation. However, the dominant theme regarding questions of multiculturalism and cultural freedom is "cultural identity and migration." The two major fields of negotiation are culture and ethnicity. While ethnicity does not play an overly important role, culture needs to be distinguished into several sub-fields, such as education, family structure, interests referring to arts and sports, language, and religion.

Ethnic group identities in the novel are Australian, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Malaysian. There are several other ethnic identities, such as Italian, Korean, or Vietnamese which are only important in denoting a multi-ethnic society.[345] The Lim, Tan, and Tay family members are all ethnically Chinese, while an Australian ethnicity can be assumed for Pastor Rodney Philippe.

The complexity of the field of culture demands a distinctive scrutinisation of its sub-fields, education, family structure, interests referring to arts and sports, language, and religion. Religious group identities are evident for Pandora who comes from a Buddhist family and Jonah who is born to Catholic parents. There is no evidence for a particular religious education of Grace and Sonny, until all four join the Pentecostal church in Sydney. For reasons unknown, both Tay children drop out of church later on in the novel.[346] Language groups refer to Cantonese, English, Hokkien, Malay, Singlish, and Teochew. Pandora comes from a Teochew family, but also speaks Singlish and has learned English at school.[347] Jonah's first language is Hokkien and has learned English, Cantonese, and Mandarin.[348] Both Jonah and Pandora apparently also speak Malay.[349] Grace and Sonny grow up speaking Singlish and later learn English at school.[350] Several other language groups are present in the novel, such as Cantonese spoken by Chinese immigrants in Australia, or English spoken by mainstream Australians such as Rodney and Josie Philippe and their congregation.

Further, there are various depictions of group identities referring to arts or sports. A passion for English literature and Hollywood movies is evident for Pandora.[351] Both

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345 Ibid., 180
346 Ibid., 265
347 Ibid., 62, 178
348 Ibid., 80
349 Ibid., 129
350 Ibid., 177-178
351 Ibid., 64, 98-99, 108-109, 124; 110-111, 128

Jonah and Pandora enjoy Western pop music[352], while Sonny becomes a big jazz fan.[353] Jonah and Sonny independently develop an interest in sports, yet Grace dislikes the competitive aspects.[354] Pandora also develops a distinctive passion for shopping of all sorts which eventually turns into an addiction.[355]

The various beliefs and opinions regarding family structures and political views can be distinguished into several group identities. Jonah and most of the Lim, Tan, and Tay family members belief in a strictly hierarchical and patriarchal family structure. They also consider physical punishment as an appropriate measure to enforce these structures. Rodney Philippe opposes the latter, but agrees with Jonah and the majority of the Lim, Tan, and Tay family that marriage is eternal and divorce therefore unthinkable. In contrast, Pandora finally does consider at least breaking up with Jonah.[356] Grace and Sonny both oppose the patriarchal family structures demanded by their father and support Pandora as a coequal parent. Pandora, Jonah, Grace, and Sonny all support integration and Jonah is even in favour of assimilation. As referred to above, in addition to demanding assimilation he is politically conservative and opposes any concessions to immigrants, such as dual citizenship.[357] However, Jonah does support cultural diversity, if it is subordinated to predominantly singular mainstream culture.[358]

A general Western education is evident for Pandora, Jonah, Grace, and Sonny. While Jonah's mother insists that Pandora defers university when she becomes pregnant, Jonah receives a degree as a dentist.[359] Pandora never gets back to finish her course, which would have given her the possibility of becoming more independent. Unlike Sonny who drops out of school before the final exams Grace finishes high school but is reluctant to go to university.[360]

7.2.2 Identification and clustering of contexts

There are two particular context clusters interesting for the question of negotiation of cultural identity and migration. First, the relationship negotiations between Pandora and Jonah, and second, negotiations between the parents and their children Grace and

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352 Ibid., 121, 151, 184
353 Ibid., 185, 192, 199
354 Ibid., 145, 177, 181; 179
355 Ibid., 7, 141, 227
356 Ibid., 188, 258
357 Ibid., 181
358 Ibid., 180-181
359 Ibid., 124, 126
360 Ibid., 235; 263-264

Sonny.

Pandora's plan to escape from her community's oppressive culture and become independent is influenced by a mixture of romanticism and pragmatism. She longs for romantic love and to be rescued just like in the movies and her English novels, but when urged to face real life, Pandora finally agrees to Jonah's proposal.[361] In her perception he is distinctively different from other men in her community. Most importantly, Jonah does not oppose her career plans and even seems to be proud of her academic achievements.[362] These assumptions become a decisive criterion, once her father places all his culturally determined responsibility on Pandora's future husband, and therefore opens up a way of gaining independence, yet avoiding the reputation of her sister Lida.[363] Jonah now becomes both, the romantic knight of her dreams, and the pragmatic solution to her problem.

Not much can be said about Jonah's perception of Pandora, except that he is entranced by her noisy and rowdy family and the spiritedness of their daily life. Since he is denied contact with his own family Jonah misinterprets their behaviour as family affection.[364] In Australia it becomes evident, that Jonah is not the desired alternative, modelled on Pandora's perception of an understanding, romantic, European hero. Wendy Wu realises this even before the wedding but fails to convince anyone of her scepticism.[365] As a consequence of the lifelong attention and devotion Jonah has received by his mother combined with the traditional assumptions of hierarchical and patriarchal family structures Jonah perceive himself as the impeccable head of family. This becomes evident in his rejection of Pandora's desire to work, his attempts to turn her into a good and obedient wife, and his use of physical violence to enforce his way.[366]

Both Pandora and Jonah misinterpret the others group identities when considering their future as wife and husband. When facing each others identities as frustrated wife and patriarchal husband it is first of all Jonah who is not able to reconsider his points of view.

The second cluster is dedicated to the negotiation process between Pandora and Jonah, and their children, Grace and Sonny. There are two issues to consider regarding

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361 Ibid., 95-96; 100-101
362 Ibid., 101, 109
363 Ibid., 102, 109
364 Ibid., 106
365 Ibid., 111
366 Ibid., 155, 189-190, 239-240

the development of Grace's and Sonny's cultural identities. First, as referred to above, Pandora and Jonah have always supported integration into the new cultural environment. Second, both Grace and Sonny are young enough at the time of immigration to develop their own distinctive Australian identities. Especially Jonah's culturally determined views on family structures are now heavily contested. This becomes evident in several scenes in the novel. Sonny, the older of the two siblings, is frequently questioning Jonah's assumed authority as patriarch and is increasingly unimpressed by threats of physical punishment.[367] Further, both Grace and Sonny support their mother when facing either Jonah or his mother, Madam Tay. These aspects can be interpreted as a rejection of the traditional hierarchical and patriarchal family structures demanded by their father.[368] This is further supported when Madam Tay is visiting Sydney, representing the old traditional family values, both Pandora and Jonah grew up with. The contrasting depiction of Madam Tay and her grandchildren shows the immense gap in the interpretation and perception of culturally determined family values. Pandora, Grace, and Sonny are now on equal terms with her and submission to elders is not considered as a matter of course any more.[369]

7.3 Evaluation of Negotiation Processes

7.3.1 Plural identities

Hsu-Ming Teo has constructed all major protagonists – Pandora, Jonah, Grace, and Sonny – with plural identities. This is evident in the depiction of individual ideas and choices, both within and across generations. Pandora's perception and experience within the traditional Chinese community differs from those of her siblings and peers, most prominently her brothers Donald and Winston, Percy-phone, and Jonah. Although her objective is similar to her sister Lida's, Pandora follows a different strategy. Her ultimate goal to freely choose her preferred identities is repeatedly disrupted by Jonah's patriarchal family values and it takes almost until the end of the novel before she has the strength to stand up for her ideas.

The plurality of Grace's and Sonny's identities is evident in the depiction of their individual interests and their peers'. Regarding Sonny and his peers with Chinese backgrounds the subtle distinctions reveal that ethnic and cultural identities are not

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367 Ibid., 234-235
368 Ibid., 189, 205
369 Ibid., 205, 207

necessarily conditional. Sonny's distinctive plurality of ethnic and cultural identities is therefore confirmed by comparison with individuals of similar, though different identities. The plural construction of Grace's identities only becomes evident towards the end of the novel. Although like Sonny her identity development is predominantly influenced by Australian cultural attributes she does recognise her parents cultural identities as part of her own when in Singapore.

Jonah's identity construction is only partially plural. Most of his plurality is derived from the varying depiction of his peers and his environment. As a teenager, he is obedient to his mother and later demands the same authority for himself. This behaviour is solely based on conformity and traditional patterns and cannot be a source of individuality. When opposing his mother on rare occasions the possibility of Jonah's plural identity becomes evident. Plurality is further supported in comparison with the depiction of his peers and finally in his belated reconsideration of his relationship with Pandora.[370]

7.3.2 Negotiation of individual and group identities

There are two examples of misinterpretation of identities in *Love and Vertigo*. First, the relationship between Pandora and Jonah is based on mutual misinterpretation of each others identities regarding their distinctive expectations. Pandora believes Jonah to be the yearned for saviour. Since he seems to support her ambitions regarding education she does not expect him to interfere with her individual career plans. These assumptions are based on Jonah's courting. Although there is no direct reference in the novel it can be assumed that his supportive behaviour regarding Pandora's studies is based on their only common identity denominator, education and university. Jonah falls in love with Pandora at first sight. This clearly a sign of affection for her as an individual, however, his perception of Pandora as part of her family environment which he admires as being different from his own shows that Jonah bases his perception also on his interpretation of group identities. At least in Australia Jonah does not perceive Pandora as an individual any more, but as a Chinese wife who must conform with traditional patriarchal family values. It is therefore evident, that both Pandora and Jonah have substantially misinterpreted each others identities regarding their ambitions. Since neither of the two has been able to renegotiate their relationship their marriage, based on false assumptions, is slowly coming apart. Pandora is occasionally trying to create some

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370 Ibid., 287

free space for herself – getting a job or joining church – yet Jonah is unable re-evaluate his perception of her as obedient and submissive wife.

Second, Jonah has also problems to conceive his children as individuals with their own distinctive identities. He constantly blames them for being ignorant of his sacrifices by emigrating to Australia and demands their unconditional respect and submission.[371] Comparison of his and their childhood is also part of his allegations of ingratitude.[372] Jonah clearly neglects Grace's and Sonny's individuality and their own development of identities as Australians, as only a part of their distinctive identities is related to his perception of culture and ethnicity. Jonah, however, perceives their Chinese ethnicity as a liability to conform with his opinion of traditional Chinese family values. To add to the problem of misinterpretation Jonah also sends contradictory signals when supporting integration and assimilation, while demanding exclusive validity of his traditional values.

7.3.3 Within-group negotiation and assumptions

Pandora and Jonah originally come from an environment which can be described as plural monoculturalism regarding the distinction of ethnic communities. Within their community the assumption of a predominant singular culture is evident, based on the strictly hierarchical and patriarchal family structures. Accordingly, a woman's possibility of choosing her particular identities is subject to her husband's (or father's) discretion. Jonah subscribes to this assumption of family values and tries to apply them to his family accordingly. His ideas regarding integration and assimilation seem to contradict import of such traditional Chinese family structures to Australia, however, through Pandora's affair with Rodney Philippe it becomes apparent that similar patriarchal ideologies are not unknown to European Australian society. Although Rodney disagrees with Jonah's idea of enforcing his ideology through physical violence, his conservative Christian belief regarding a wife's unconditional submission to marriage is compatible with Jonah's. Patriarchal family structures are therefore neither denominated by ethnic, nor by religious identities, but constitute a distinctive cultural group identity of their own.

As referred to above, Jonah in incapable of re-evaluating or renegotiating his assumptions of a predominant singular cultural identity based on a patriarchal group

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371 Ibid., 196, 206, 234-235, 265
372 Ibid., 195, 234-235

identity. Pandora, however, decides to break with her acceptance of the traditional singular cultural identity structures and re-evaluates the relative importance of her individual identities. Yet, again, she makes herself dependent on someone whose ideas on family are not dissimilar to Jonah's. While their affair lasted Rodney has made sure to maintain the culturally determined idea of inseparable marriage, valid for both Pandora's traditional Chinese community, as well as for Rodney himself. Individual perceptions or choices have to be subordinated, and consequently, Pandora once again fails to archive cultural freedom. Her final journey to Singapore is almost like a confession to herself, that at some stage in her youth she has made one vitally wrong decision that has kept her imprisoned within the suppressive cultural group identity structures. It seems as if Winston's ignorant taking of her fish is perceived as another sign of her insignificance and insecurity and provides the final spark for Pandora to finally commit suicide.[373]

Grace and Sonny initially reject any notions of their parents' traditional Chinese culture, especially Jonah's insistence on implementing his idea of a patriarchal family. Just like his wife, Jonah perceives his children first of all as members of a particular Chinese cultural tradition and demands the appropriate behaviour. Sonny does not give in to Jonah's attempt to wield authority and eventually is thrown out of the family home.[374] At this stage, however, Jonah has already failed to establish his traditional Chinese family regime. As an adult, Grace begins a process of reconciliation and finally accepts her Chinese identities.[375] Sonny, however, seems to blame Jonah and the traditional Chinese family structures for his mother's suicide.[376] By slaying uncle Winston's cod god Sonny is burning all bridges to his Singaporean and Malaysian family.[377] This does not necessarily mean that he is rejecting all aspects of his Chinese identity, but it is certainly a statement regarding the negotiation of individual and group identities within his parents' Chinese family and community.

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373 Ibid., 278-279
374 Ibid., 235
375 Ibid., 272
376 Ibid., 279
377 Ibid., 20

8 Discussion

8.1 Sources of Conflict

The major source of conflict in all three novels is the prevailing idea of a predominant singular culture identity concept. These sources can be subdivided into three potential conflict catalysts.

First, the ideology of a singular cultural identity in Australian mainstream society is the foundation for exclusion based on an assumed governing identity attribute. This leads to a process of negotiatio regarding access (or membership) to the particular predominant group identity. In *Home* denial of access is evident in identity negotiations between Candice and Toby, and Candice and the post office woman, as well as on several occasions between Thomas, William, Bob, and Danny and their peers. On an institutional level, Elisabeth and her family, as well as most of her children experience exclusion from mainstream society based on the same assumptions. Similarly, in *Seducing Mr Maclean* Toby's family denies FPN the possibility of participation based on their perceptions of a predominant singular culture identity concept. In *Love and Vertigo*, Pandora experiences not exclusion, but the inability to choose her particular cultural priorities. The singular cultural identity assumptions of Jonah, her community, and also Rodney deny her the possibility and freedom of choice regarding her group identities.

Second, the singular culture identity concept combined with false assumptions about individual and group identities and the inability to renegotiate these errors can trigger a process leading to conflict. These inabilities are evident for Toby, the post office woman, Robby's parents, and both Pandora and Jonah. Neither of these protagonists is capable of re-evaluating and renegotiation his assumptions and preconception about the other individuals, although they are faced with possible and plausible alternatives.

Third, potential conflict is further fuelled by the disproportionate and institutionalised balance of power between a majority capable of defining cultural identities of others, creating an atmosphere of arbitrariness and injustice, and a small minority who cannot escape or defend itself against the resulting suppression and dispossession. In *Home*, this is evident in negotiation processes between protagonists with Aboriginal Australian identities and those assuming a singular European identity. In *Seducing Mr Maclean* and *Love and Vertigo* the power of within-group determination

of cultural identities over individuals becomes evident. FPN, and to a certain extend Robby, are subject to their families' and communities' power over their cultural preferences and identities. Similarly, Pandora can neither escape nor choose her cultural priorities regarding group identities, because these are determined by a dominant group hierarchy. Further, FPN is exposed to dominant singular culture identity assumptions and cultural identity determination while visiting Robby and when touched by Maclean. In these cases her apparent cultural group identities are determined and attributed by individuals from distinctively different groups.

It is obviously impossible to predict when and where conflicts between individuals and / or groups break out. However, the sources of conflict identified above – exercising power of cultural identity determination of third parties, inability to re-evaluate and renegotiate false identity assumptions and attributions, and the application of singular culture identity concepts resulting in inclusion and exclusion – can be assumed to be important factors for creating conflicts within society.

8.2 Multiculturalism and Cultural Freedom

Larissa Behrendt's novel features representations of both multiculturalism and plural monoculturalism. The general depiction of the predominant cultural ideology in Australian mainstream society is clearly based on the idea of plural monoculturalism. This is evident in the various examples of singular culture identity assumptions presented above, yet the institutionalised racism of Elizabeth's generation has vanished in Candice's Australia of today. There is a clear shift in the representation of society towards a more inclusive understanding, evident in the change in historiography and the possibility of university careers for Candice and Kingsley.

Individual initiatives of multiculturalism are present in the unconditional friendship between Elizabeth and Xiao-ying, the marriages of Grigor and Elizabeth, as well as Patricia and Pasquale, Bob's navy friends, or Carole's and Kate's perception of Bob and Candice. Grigor exemplifies the possibility of a coexistence of multicultural initiatives (marrying Elizabeth) and assumptions of plural monoculturalism and singular identity. The general notion of the narration regarding multiculturalism can be described with Ernie's assumption that Australian society has come a long way.[378] However, notions of plural monoculturalism are still omnipresent in Australian society.

Behrendt's uses the first-person narrator Candice to denounce the deplorable situation

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378Behrendt 2004, 236

of Australian Aboriginals by citing historic sources, giving examples of Australian jurisprudence, and using autobiographical elements.[379] This indicates an essential disagreement with society as depicted in *Home*. The distinctively plural depiction of her protagonists' identities in conjunction with acts of injustice and atrocities based on predominant singular culture identity concepts is further evidence to assume a general disagreement with the prevailing structures of society in Australian history. It can further be assumed that Behrendt is also demanding further efforts regarding reconciliation and the cultural development of society, especially on the individual level. Discontent is evident in the depiction of Candice's present day experiences in Australian mainstream society, represented in negotiations with Toby and in Walgett.

Larissa Behrendt's accurate depiction regarding the development of Australian society in relation to the negotiation process between Aboriginal and European Australians in the 20th century support these arguments. It can also be assumed that the evaluation of questions regarding identity concepts, multiculturalism, and cultural freedom, in the novel have considerable validity for Australian society in general.

In *Seducing Mr Maclean* Loubna Haikal constructs a society based on plural (in this case also dual) monoculturalism. Two antipodal communities are depicted – Australian mainstream society and the Lebanese community in Melbourne – both build on the assumption of predominant singular culture identities. The structures of these two communities are based on the particular determination of cultural group identities which define inclusion and exclusion of individuals and governs all other possible cultural identities. Initiatives of multiculturalism are only evident in FPN's attempts to assume cultural identities with apparently conflicting cultural backgrounds regarding the communities determinations.

Unlike Behrendt, Haikal's position regarding the desirability of either plural monoculturalism or multiculturalism is not unambiguous. Rejection of the strict interpretations of plural monoculturalism evident in opinions of Robby's parents and FPN's community can be assumed, because FPN's relationship with Robby is failing, while Maclean eventually begins to successfully "cross camps" and establishes a link between both communities. However, it does not take too many concessions on behalf of her parents for FPN to achieve both university degree and happiness, and therefore, the novel cannot be interpreted to demand comprehensive rejection of structures based

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379Behrendt 2008; Behrendt 2004, 10, 299, 303-304, 307-308; Stitson 2006

on plural monoculturalism.

Loubna Haikal's *Seducing Mr Maclean* depicts only a particular fraction of Australian migration history. It is therefore difficult to identify and evaluate corresponding aspects in the novel. However, there are two aspects in the story that do correspond with Australian history. First, the political and cultural assumptions represented by Robby's parents are similar to those described for Blainey, Hanson, and to a certain extend Howard. Second, the development of ethnic communities without much contact to mainstream society, as described for FPN's Lebanese community, was evident in Australia until the 1970s.

Hsu-Ming Teo depicts the reverse version of conflict regarding singular culture identity assumptions in a plural monocultural society. The conflicting issue is not the question of access, but the possibility of free re-evaluation of the individual's cultural priorities in a particular context. For Pandora this is not possible as her cultural identities and priorities are determined by others with similar cultural identities.

Teo's depiction of power structures based on singular culture identity assumptions in a society of plural monoculturalism is clearly critical of these concepts. Pandora's suicide as the only exit strategy from an oppressive community ideology is highlighting the despair of the individual trying to develop and negotiate identities and cultural priorities. The depictions of both Sonny and first-person narrator Grace supports this assumption. While Grace punishes her father by making him depend on her Sonny destroys what he considers a symbol of the cultural structures that pushed his mother over the brink.[380]

Teo's novel refers to aspects of Australian history only marginally. The focus of *Love and Vertigo* is on the internal struggle of migrant families regarding the individual process of migration, family expectations, and the negotiation of identities within a new environment. Australian society and its distinctive historic development do not contribute to these questions.

What becomes apparent when scrutinising the conflicts depicted in all three novels is the common issue of denying cultural freedom. None of the protagonists has the freedom to choose the particular cultural priorities of their plural identities in any context. Within these contexts cultural identities are determined and attributed by

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380Teo 2003, 279; 281-282

dominant group members without any consideration of the individual's preferences. The woman at the post office cannot perceive Candice as anything else than ethnically Aboriginal and accordingly applies false cultural identity attributes. Consequently, in this context Candice is denied the freedom to highlight any of her other competing identities, such as lawyer, Sydneysider, or European Australian ethnicity. Throughout her life Pandora tries to escape the role assigned to her by the community, but the cultural freedom to choose and develop an identity as a teacher or a working woman in order to gain independence is denied. Finally, FPN cannot built a relationship with Robby, because neither of their parents are willing to accept freedom of choice over their individual cultural priorities.

Multiculturalism, as defined by Sen, is therefore not possible. The common denominator of sources of conflict, as referred to above, is essentially the question of unconditional freedom of choice of each individual's cultural priorities. As long as the predominant determination and the choice of cultural priorities of an individual's cultural identities is subject to other individuals and groups the conflicts referred to above cannot be solved.

8.3 Conclusion

8.3.1 Amartya Sen's concept of plural identities in literature studies

The overall question of this thesis, whether Sen's theory can essentially be adopted for literature studies, can be affirmed. Amartya Sen's assumptions of plural cultural identities provide a comprehensive foundation for a theory of identity and the adaptation of his concept for literary texts works remarkably well.

Regarding the three novels selected for this thesis it was possible to identify distinctive individual and group identities. Further, plurality of cultural identities is evident for at least all major protagonists. It was also possible to establish distinctive causal connections between negotiation processes of individuals and / or groups and the conflicts described in the novels. All three novels depicted various models and opinions regarding structures of society. In all three texts the assumption of society based on predominant singular cultural identity structures was identified as a major source of the depicted conflicts between individuals and / or groups. Alternatively, Haikal and Teo also included versions of plural monoculturalism in combination with singular cultural assumptions. However, all three novels can be understood to suggest individual cultural

freedom as demanded by Sen as a viable solution for the depicted conflicts. Consequently, multiculturalism based on individual cultural freedom can be considered as a subliminal approach evident for the stories.

8.3.2 Outlook

The process of identifying the individuals' plural identities and the analysis of negotiation processes in particular contexts has proven to be an effective device in order to understand causalities. Sen's concept of plural identities is therefore not only a valuable tool for literary studies regarding cultural identity, it also provides a foundation for understanding identity negotiation processes of various kinds. The strength of Sen's model is therefore its universal applicability. Unlike other theories in transcultural and post-colonial studies which often approach a particular problem inductively Sen has approached the question of identity and violence deductively. The former often leads to a conglomeration of ideas and theories without much relevance beyond the particular context. Sen's apparent simplification of identity structures and negotiation processes of individuals and groups provides a foundational formula on which questions regarding a vast variety of issues – ethnicity, gender, hybridity – can be analysed and discussed. Within the framework of the present thesis only a fractious adaptation of Sen's model for literature studies was possible. It should be extremely beneficial if further scientific enquiries develop a more comprehensive theory of plural identities for literature studies based on Sen's model.

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10 Appendix

10.1 Zusammenfassung in Deutscher Sprache

Die vorliegende Arbeit befasst sich mit der Frage von Wahrnehmung und Entwicklung multipler individueller Identitäten in australischer Literatur unter Berücksichtigung von kultureller Freiheit und Multikulturalismus. Amartya Sen präsentiert in seinem Buch *Identity and Violence*[381] einen Identitätsansatz, der davon ausgeht, dass jedes Individuum plurale kulturelle Identitäten besitzt, deren Relevanz kontextspezifisch zu wählen ist. Die vorliegende Arbeit soll überprüfen ob Sen's Modell der pluralen Identitäten auch für den Bereich der Literaturwissenschaften adaptiert werden kann. Fragen der Identität sind selbstverständlich nicht neu in diesem Bereich. Insbesondere die *Transcultural-* und *Postcolonial-Studies* haben unter Aspekten wie Ethnizität, Gender, oder Hybridität verschiedene Modelle von Identität entwickelt. Da solche Modelle jedoch oft primär an einem dieser spezifischen Aspekte ausgerichtet sind, ist eine generelle Aussage über Wahrnehmung und Entwicklung von Identitäten oft nur bedingt möglich. Sen's Modell hat den Vorteil, dass es einfache allgemeingültige Regeln schafft, auf deren Basis alle identitätsbezogenen Aspekte verhandelt werden können.

Während vielen anderen Modellen ein serieller (diachronischer) Ansatz explizit oder implizit zu Grunde liegt, geht Sen von einer parallelen (synchronen) Identitätsstruktur aus. Außerdem rückt er im Gegensatz zu vielen gruppenorientierten Ansätzen das Individuum in das Zentrum seiner Betrachtung und entwickelt auf Basis individueller, pluraler Identitäten seine umfassende Theorie. Gerade die Betonung von Gruppenidentitäten sowie die Verhandlungen von Identitäten zwischen Individuen und / oder Gruppen macht Sen als potentiellen Ursprung von gesellschaftlichen Konflikten aus.

Dies liegt unter anderem an der gesellschaftlich weit verbreiteten Annahmen, dass kulturelle Identitäten singulär und gruppenorientiert strukturiert sind. Demnach ist jedes Individuum einer primären kulturellen Gruppenidentität zuzuordnen, welche alle anderen Identitätsaspekte determiniert. Gemeinsame Identitätsmerkmale zweier Individuen mit unterschiedlichen primären Gruppenidentitäten werden somit

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[381] Deutschsprachigen Ausgabe: Sen, Amartya. 2006. *Die Identitätsfalle. Warum es keinen Krieg der Kulturen gibt.* München: C.H. Beck

ausgeschlossen oder als sekundär bzw. nachrangig der primären Identität untergeordnet. Die Definition dieser singulären kulturellen Identitäten und die entsprechenden Regeln der Zugehörigkeit werden innerhalb der jeweiligen Gruppe verhandelt. Kommt es zwischen zwei Individuen zu Missinterpretation von identitätsbezogenen Kausalitäten, entstehen die von Sen beschriebenen Konflikten kommen.

Um dieses Konfliktpotenzial zu entschärfen fordert Sen für jedes einzelne Individuum die Freiheit seine Präferenzen kontextspezifischer Identitäten frei zu wählen, ohne Einflussnahme anderer Individuen oder Gruppen. Dies kann als allgemeine Forderung individueller kultureller Freiheit, analog zur Freiheit der eigenen Meinung verstanden werden. Das Bewusstsein für die jeweiligen kontextspezifischen Identitäten anderer kann somit durch ein größeres Verständnis von Kausalitäten zur Vermeidung identitätsbezogener Konflikte führen.

Da Sen seine Theorie nicht explizit für literaturwissenschaftliche Anwendungen beschreibt, muss im Rahmen dieser Arbeit zuerst ein methodologisches Modell für die Arbeit an literarischen Texten erarbeitet werden. Dazu werden verschiedene, auf Sen basierende, Aspekte definiert, die dann an den vorliegenden Texten auf ihre Gültigkeit überprüft werden. Erstens wird ermittelt, ob es generell möglich ist individuelle und Gruppenidentitäten zu identifizieren. Zweiten wird untersucht, ob die zentralen Protagonisten plurale kulturelle Identitäten aufweisen. Drittens wird die Frage gestellt, ob ein kausaler Zusammenhang zwischen den Identitätsverhandlungen von Individuen und / oder Gruppen, sowie den in den Texten beschriebenen Konflikten hergestellt werden kann. Viertens wird untersucht, ob die Erzählungen Konzepte von singulärer kultureller Identität, pluralem Monokulturalismus, oder Multikulturalismus widerspiegeln. Fünftens soll geklärt werden, ob Sen's Forderung nach individueller kultureller Freiheit einen realistischen Lösungsansatz für die in den Erzählungen beschriebenen Konflikte bedeuten würde.

Die zugrunde liegenden Primärtexte – Behrendt's *Home*, Haikal's *Seducing Mr Maclean* und Teo's *Love and Vertigo* – wurden auf Grund der vergleichbaren Identitätsthematik gewählt. Alle drei schildern die Wahrnehmung und Entwicklung multipler individueller Identitäten vor dem Hintergrund einer australischen Migrationsgesellschaft und deren Umgang mit Angehörigen der australischen Ureinwohner.

In Bezug auf die oben genannten Fragen weisen alle drei Texte eine große Übereinstimmung mit Sen's Theorie auf. In allen Erzählungen ließen sich individuelle und Gruppenidentitäten nachweisen, wobei vor allem die zentralen Protagonisten deutliche plurale kulturelle Identitäten aufwiesen. Ebenso konnte ein starker Zusammenhang zwischen den Identitätsverhandlungen von Individuen und / oder Gruppen, sowie den in den Texten beschriebenen Konflikten hergestellt werden. Auch war es möglich bei verschiedenen Protagonisten Vorstellungen von singulärer kultureller Identität oder pluralem Monokulturalismus nachzuweisen. Letztlich kann für alle drei Texte angenommen werden, dass individuelle kulturelle Freiheit einen realistischen Lösungsansatz für die in den Erzählungen beschriebenen Konflikte bedeuten würde.

Sen's Modell pluraler individueller Identitäten hat sich somit prinzipiell für den Einsatz im Bereich der Literaturwissenschaften bewährt. Für die Literaturwissenschaften hat dieses Modell den Vorteil, dass im Gegensatz zu vielen anderen Identitätskonzepten verschiedene Aspekte wie Ethnizität, Gender, oder Hybridität auf einem gemeinsamen theoretischen Fundament analysiert und diskutiert werden könnten.

10.2 Lebenslauf

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Bildung

Jan 2002 - heute	Hauptfach Anglistik M.A. mit den Nebenfächern Politologie und Amerikanistik
Okt. 1995 - Jan 2002	Studium der Politologie (Dipl.) und Volkswirtschaft an der JWG Universität Frankfurt
Februar 1995 - Juli 1995	Studium der Didaktik am Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
Juni 1994	Abitur in Englisch, Gesellschaftslehre, Biologie und Geschichte
1985-1994	Bettina Gymnasium in Frankfurt am Main
1981-1985	Grundschule in Frankfurt am Main

Beruflich Qualifikationen und Aktivitäten

Seit April 2001	Tätig für die Firma Fraport AG Im Bereich Marktforschung / Datenvisualisierung
20. November 2000 - 31. Dezember 2000	Tätig für die Firma PPD Bad Homburg im Bereich Personal / Recruiting.
1. Januar 2000 - 31. Juli 2000	verantwortlich für Inhalt und Gestaltung des Firmen-internen Mitteilungsblatts PPD-Inside.
26. April 1999 - 31. Dezember 1999	Tätig für die Firma PPD Bad Homburg im Bereich Personal / Abrechnung.
Jan./Feb. 1999	Praktikum im Media Department der Australian Football League (AFL) in Melbourne im Bereich Statistik/Datenverarbeitung sowie Research.

Jan./Feb. 1996	Praktikum bei World Wide Television News (WTN) in Frankfurt im Bereich Tontechnik und Kameraassistenz. Anschließend Aushilfearbeiten für WTN, Unit TV Mainz, Westend TV Ffm sowie die Firma Hemingway Productions London.

Weitere Qualifikationen

Gute EDV Kenntnisse folgender Anwendungen	RegioGraph Ms Office (Word, Excell, PowerPoint, Access) OpenOffice Adobe Acrobat, Photoshop, PageMaker GIMP Corel Draw Div. Internet Applicationen/Tools
Seit 1998 ehrenamtlich tätig im Bereich	Australian Football Organisation und Marketing / Awareness in Deutschland und Melbourne

Spracherfahrungen

Englisch	Fließend akzentfrei in Wort und Schrift
Französisch	Schulkenntnisse

Sonstige Aktivitäten

2006-2008	Mitarbeit im Organisationskomitee der 8th Summer School of the New Literatures in Englisch An der Johann Wolfgan Goethe-Universität Frankfurt Verantwortlich für Finanzen, Sponsoring, Reiseplanung und Event Management
Jan 1999 - heute	Präsident der AFLG
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Feb 1997 - Okt 1997	Erwerbung einer Übungsleiterlizens im Bereich Breitensport Für Kinder und Jugendliche beim Landessportbund Hessen
Nov 1995 - heute	Erster Vorsitzender des Frankfurt Football Club e.V.
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1988-1992	Stellvertretender Stadtschulsprecher des Stadtschülerrats Frankfurt

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10.3 Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt sowie die Stellen der Arbeit, die anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen sind, durch Angabe der Quellen kenntlich gemacht wurden.

Malte Schudlich