

Game of Thrones 8.2 _ The Knight of the Seven Kingdoms

The second episode of the eighth season continues on the one hand the linking of arcs to situations from the beginning of the series as well as to relevant subplots, in which the authors let further characters arrive in Winterfell or let actions take place between those who are already there. In this sequence, several conflicts of previous strands of action are resolved in order to be able to reposition figures. In order to be able to continue the principle of ensemble dramaturgy with a central figure, central elements of the basic conflict are remembered in this series, realigned, and organized as tensions between the figures of this season.

On the other hand, this episode intensifies the tension in the sense of waiting for the central battle between the living, the human world, and the embodied death and its hosts. This is called as a theme in variants again and again - in the dialogue between Arya (Maisie Williams) and Gendry (Joe Dempsie) for example. In their interaction the existing battle, the challenge to face the angels of death, Satan's hosts, is pointed out, but also the arc to the subplot and story of the character of Arya is created. Death can have a thousand faces and embody absolute evil as nobody (Arendt 2007, 101, Stutterheim 2017, 87/88). The adolescent Arya not only looked death in the face, but also in his 'workshop' (Season 5).

The theme of the confrontation with death and the possible total downfall and absolute oblivion appears again and again in this current episode. Here the basic conflict of the Christian conception of the world is reflected as the elementary struggle between God and Satan, which determines this series in its moral code and the motivation of the characters. Good versus evil. In order to represent and stand up for the good, one must be morally good, get forgiven for one's sins and free oneself or renounce them, put egoism and vanity at the back. For this fight, even the 'For the Family', which otherwise determines the canon of behavioral norms, stands back. For the family would no longer exist after the victory of evil. (cf. Stutterheim 2017, 32-43)

As already emphasized in the last blog text, in these weekly comments I can only deal with selected situations, and only analyze them to a certain extent so as not to go beyond the scope. And, attention, unfortunately, from here it does not go without more concrete descriptions, spoiler warning for those who have not yet seen the episode.

First, however, embedding the scene between Arya and Gendry, Jaime (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) had to be repositioned in this episode because he is one of the central and dramaturgically relevant flexible characters (cf. Stutterheim 2017, 94). It was not only introduced as a second figure at the complementary level of Kingslanding, but also as relevant to the conflict at this level of action. Actions of this figure are part of the conflict between the Lannisters and Starks, but especially for the basic conflict, the question of the right to the throne. The figure of Jaime Lannister keeps alive the basic situation of the problems surrounding the Targaryans family. And so implicitly refers to the Grail legend in which the land is threatened until the king is healed or a healed king reigns over it. Jaime embodies this conflict, is a living memory of it, because he prevented a mass murder by killing the last Targaryan king and could deceive the successor, who was a morally ill, sinful king. From this constellation, he can be managed as a variable character and not assigned to a family line. He is the protector of the rightful king, he fights for the living, as expressed explicitly in his dialogue, and in the sense of dramaturgy he is a character who, in the tradition of tragedy, stands for the survival of the community.

The scenes around Jaime Lannister represent the day of the last court for Jaime. He must answer for his deeds, his sins are balanced against his good deeds. Since, as Jon (Kit Harrington) sums it up in one sentence, every man is needed, and especially Jaime, who for dramaturgical reasons cannot be removed from the narrative right now, this character has to face his sins and survive this judgment. As already mentioned above and explained in more detail in earlier texts (Stutterheim 2017), conservatively Christian world views and traditions are decisive for the main strand and its development. First it is the young women who sit in court over him, then he faces Bran (Isaak Hempstead Wright) and finally Brienne of Tarth (Gwendoline Christie). The character of Bran gives Jaime absolution, because he acted for his family at that time, which is understandable in the context of the moral code that the characters of the series follow; and now it is ultimately about higher things than the earthly. A further moment of increasing the tension on the progress of the series is also interwoven here, in that the authors let Bran, the seer, ask: "How do you know there is an afterwards?"

With Brienne, Jaime is also brought into a balanced relationship, which is carried over several situations and results in Jaime knighting her.

It also seems interesting to me how the constellation of Sansa-Daenerys is further developed in this episode. As a reminder, the most urgent wish of both women since the beginning of the series has been to be Queen in Kingslanding. The figure of Sansa (Sophie Turner) as the king's wife, the figure of Daenerys (Emilia Clarke) as the one who is convinced that she herself is entitled to the throne on inheritance law grounds. This is implicitly conceived as a conflict between the morally good Stark family in the north, living in harmony with nature, and the degenerate and therefore insane Targeryan family from the south. The latter provoked their own downfall because they got involved with the 'heraldic animal of the devil', the lindworm, i.e. the dragon. In the course of the plot, sufficient situations were built in in which the figure of Daenerys was inscribed with irrational to excessively cruel decisions in her actions, which kept awake and confirmed this stigma of the family of the South and intellect and the associated impression of overestimating one's own self. To prepare for this situation, Winterfell Tyrion (Peter Dinklage) and Jaime talk about Daenerys and Cersei (Lena Headley) in the inner courtyard, an analogy is also made here and above all the third woman, whose aim in life is also the throne, is remembered.

As so often in the course of the series, Daenerys is advised by one of her male advisors to do something relevant to the achievement of her goal, but which would never have occurred to the character herself. (Almost all positive decisions made by this character in the course of the action have been initiated, advised, or prepared by male companions.) All my life I have known one goal: The Iron Throne." And it is very likely that for dramatic reasons they deliberately leave their brother unmentioned, whose aspirations determined the first years of their lives.

The moment the conversation revolves around their love for Jon, they get closer to each other, to the point that Daenerys lays her hand on Sansa's, which, however, also expresses an embodiment of hierarchy. But the figure of Sansa does not allow herself to be captured by the gesture and brings the conversation back to the basic conflict, the balance of power between the throne in the South/Kingslanding and The North/Winterfell.

Before Daenerys can respond, there is a reinforcement for the Sansas cause and its emotional power: Theon (Alfie Allen). Since the beginning of the series, these two figures have been dramaturgically linked to each other, as have those of Arya and Jon or Arya and Gendry.

Central to the further course of the explicit action is the scene of planning the impending confrontation in the middle of the running time of the episode. Since a time frame can now be given by the arrived fighters, one must make preparations for the forthcoming all-decisive fight. This makes it possible to unite all relevant figures in one room and to move Jon back into the center of the action. He, as the Parzival of the narrative, is the one who can heal the country, end the threat. A fight for that is inevitable. That this must be wisely prepared, since victory cannot be achieved by force alone, is obvious on the explicit level of narrative, and implicitly a clash of the spiritual divine with the representation of absolute evil, Satan, is equally inevitable. Here we are also working on the figure gang, which has already been led over the whole season. Through Bran's encounter with the Night King and the resulting physical networking of both characters, Bran can serve as a lure. Of course, the figure of Theon is the most suitable to be placed at his side. Explicitly for the reason that the character himself expresses: He conquered Winterfell when the child was Bran Burgherr, so now he has to defend her next to him. Implicitly, Theon is also the most suitable figure to stand by Bran's side, as he also suffered a non-healing physical wound from the hand of one of the figures representing evil in the human world. Like Bran, Theon has been transformed into a different character through the encounter with evil, according to the standards that apply to the cosmos of the series, a better character.

Arya and Gendry have been emotionally connected since episode 10 of the first season. The fact that the two become a couple in this episode is explicitly logical in relation to the situation in this previous plot. This is already apparent in the situations in episode 8.1 and the scene at the beginning of this second episode. Implicitly this is also logical, because in their relationship an arc is drawn to the friendship between the characters Robert Baratheon (Mark Addy) and Ned Stark (Sean Bean). Arya and Gendry take this relationship to a new level. So there is still another, alternative future royal couple for the build-up of tension: Gendry and Arya.

As an echo to the scene in 8.1, in which Sam (John Bradley) in the crypt tells Jon of his true origin, at the end of the second episode of this season it is again the situation in the crypt, in which Jon now opens Daenerys that he is her nephew. This circumstance not only excludes a love relationship, the reason why the Daenerys figure was able to develop a gentle and peaceful side, as she herself expressed in a conversation with Sansa.

Moreover, if Jon is now Aegon Targeryan, he is the rightful male heir of the family throne and stands before her in the line of aspirants. This calls into question the entire previous striving and doing of the figure, as well as its position. This situation enables a further change in the action, with which a new conflict is built into another internal action in a specific constellation of characters. An excellent cliff hanger.

This replacement does not come as a surprise, as it has already been prepared for a long time. Dramaturgically, this can first be deduced from the sequence and form of the introduction of the figures. The figure of the Daenerys has taken over the claim to the throne from her brother and now - in the sense of how the series is arranged - gives it back to her next male relative in a dramaturgically logical manner shortly before the end of the plot. And, in the course of the plot, it was not for nothing that Jon was familiarized in time with the dragons, which he can now take over from Daenerys, and with them determine the final battle. The figure of the Daenerys seems to me to be a transitional figure who enriches the plot between the two male heirs to the throne and gives it a necessary facet, but possibly according to the dramaturgical balance, has to give up her claim to the throne at the end to the central male figure. We'll see, but there's a lot to be said for it. Because with the parents, Lyanna Stark (Aisling Franciosi) and Rhaegar Targaryen (Wilf Scolding), the conflict between the south and the north would be solved, and the country could be healed, if the figure Jon/Aegon would become the new king.

I'm curious to see what happens next. The Nightking was already ready in the last shot to advance the plot in the next episode.