



UiT

THE ARCTIC
UNIVERSITY
OF NORWAY

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

**Ethics, Democracy and Education in Toni Morrison's
Beloved, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, and the New
Reform of Education in Norway**

*An approach to teaching these works in Norwegian upper secondary
education*

Tora Guttormsen

Master thesis in English Literature and Education

ENG-3983

May 2019



Abstract

The following thesis investigates how two novels, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), demonstrate ethical dilemmas and how they can be used to help students develop ethical awareness and educate democratic citizens with the ability to think critically. Furthermore, this thesis discusses and suggests ways and approaches to teaching these literary works in upper secondary school. The new Core Elements for education on all levels in Norway have been renewed and include new values and principles. These guidelines create room to discuss and evaluate teaching theories and methods for learning in today's school. Critical thinking and ethical awareness, democracy and citizenship are new values in the core curriculum, which are all ethical questions of human concerns, public society, and global challenge. *Beloved* and *Disgrace* both demonstrate issues within the societies they take place and pose moral dilemmas and provoke ethical discussions. Moreover, the novels confront historical traumas and present the relationship between empathy and ethics. In response to the novels' intensive moral controversies, the argumentation of this thesis addresses questions as to how and why we should educate children and adolescents to become 'ethically aware' and responsible human beings, and why and how we can use literature, in this case, *Beloved* and *Disgrace*, to accomplish that goal. Further, it problematizes the new Core Elements and its ambitions, and questions how educators incorporate ethical dilemmas in schools today. To discuss the ethical dilemmas in the novels further and in more detail, two opposing ethical schools are used to enhance and problematize the portrayal of the ethical dimensions of the novels. Ethics is a discipline in which the moral permissibility of actions is based on absolute values, yet in this discussion, the opposing ethics are used to portray and interpret the complex issues posed in *Beloved* and *Disgrace*. Kant's moral theory and Utilitarianism will be used to discuss the ethical dilemmas in the novels and how they portray a wider universal dimension of the racial and sexist system of society. This thesis will add to the discussion of the use of literature in Norwegian classrooms in an increasingly digital world. Additionally, it will discuss why novels with elaborate stories should be considered as learning material with excellent opportunities for ethical discussion and learning within a variety of themes. The goal is to bring new insights to the future of English education in Norway, and especially how we view the use of literature in discussions of ethics and morality in light of the new curriculum.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the excellent guidance and advice from my supervisor, Ruben Moi. Thank you for your invaluable encouragement and suggestions throughout this process.

I would also like to thank my wonderful family, my parents Tove and Sigurd, my siblings Martine and Sigve, for your encouragement, help, and endless belief in me throughout my education. I would especially like to thank Sigve, for proofreading and providing extensive feedback to this thesis.

Thank you to all my fellow lector students, for your discussions, help, motivation, friendships and five great years in Tromsø. Lastly, I would like to thank Øivind, for your everlasting support and faith in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	II
Acknowledgements	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Aim and scope	1
1.2 Didactic research	3
2 Ethics	5
2.1 Kant’s categorical imperative and Utilitarianism	7
2.2 Ethics, democracy and society	11
2.3 Ethical awareness, critical thinking, and democratic citizenship	12
2.4 Ethics and literature	14
3 Toni Morrison’s <i>Beloved</i>	17
3.1 Toni Morrison and ‘proceedings too terrible to relate’	18
3.2 ‘Sixty million and more’ – Why do we still talk about slavery?	20
3.3 “Love is or it ain’t” – Judgements of love	23
3.4 Infanticide and the ethics of <i>Beloved</i>	25
4 John Maxwell Coetzee’s <i>Disgrace</i>	29
4.1 Coetzee and the historical background.....	30
4.2 Rape and sexism in <i>Disgrace</i>	32
4.3 Racism and possession of power	34
5 Didactic Perspectives – Teaching <i>Beloved</i> and <i>Disgrace</i>	37
5.1 Basic skills, Core Elements and competence aims in LK06 and LK2020 ...	40
5.1.1 Competence aims in the new Curricula	41
5.1.2 Knowledge Promotion Reform 2006 (LK06)	43
5.2 Intercultural competence	44
5.3 Literature in education and literary competence	45

5.4	Didactic implications and suggestions for classroom activities	48
5.5	Further research	50
6	Conclusion	51
	Works Cited	54

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim and scope

The Reform of Education (Fagfornyelsen) in Norway is in progress, and the renewed Knowledge Promotion Reform will be implemented from the year 2020. It will include the renewal of the previous Core Curriculum and the subject curriculums in primary, lower and upper secondary education, as well as the vocational programs. The last Core Curriculum continued from the curricula R-94 and L97, will be replaced by “The Core Elements” (Overordnet del – Verdier og prinsipper for opplæringen) which was accepted and passed by Parliament in 2017, and will be a part of the new Knowledge Promotion Reform. The reform emphasizes renewed and specific values of critical thinking and ethical awareness, as well as three new interdisciplinary principles: public health and life-coping, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development. This overall renewal necessitates further discussion on how education shall contribute to attaining these principles, and in this also a discussion of how English education in Norway should be.

Critical thinking and ethical awareness, democracy and citizenship are new values in the Core Elements, which are all ethical questions of human concerns, public society, and global challenge. The new Core Elements for education in Norway states that “[s]chools shall contribute to educating students to become curious and investigative, develop scientific and critical thinking as well as being able to act with ethical awareness” (The Core Elements, 2017, translated by me). Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) and Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999) are two novels that engage with significant ethical and fundamental issues within the societies in which they take place, but also pose universal moral dilemmas and ethical discussions. These two novels confront historical traumas and present the relationship between empathy and ethics. Both novels have been widely debated throughout the decades after their publication, and pose many interesting questions regarding race, ethnicity, slavery, society, and how we address a country’s past and its wrongdoings as well as ethical issues in the process of developing democracy and citizenship.

Racism and sexism are the two major moral dilemmas in both novels and the many gruesome individual acts of violation, violence and murder work as a telescope to enlarge the universal dimension of racism, sexism, and slavery in society. To educate children and young

adolescents on how to become morally aware human beings and act as democratic citizens who respect one another can be a challenging task, yet I argue that by using literature, in this case, *Beloved* and *Disgrace*, one can create a unique gateway into the discussion of ethics and societal consequences of democracy. Kant's theory on moral law sustains a notion of man's inevitable worth and the free rational will, and thus argues for the self-governing reason in each person, and the idea of equal worth and respect. Utilitarianism argues for the best consequences for most people and not only for the person doing the act, avoiding any negative consequences and are agent-neutral, meaning that the well-being of all people is equally important. Fundamental ideals to Utilitarianism could also, if interpreted to an extreme, imply a degradation of the value of the individual which can be seen as problematic in relation to racism and the oppression of a minority. The broader ethical dilemmas of slavery and racism, of individual rights in a democracy, are still relevant to society today, and the historical aspect of learning from the past is inevitably a motivation for continued application of these works in school today.

This thesis will address questions as to how and why we should educate children and adolescents to become 'ethically aware' and responsible human beings, and why and how we can use literature, in this case, *Beloved* and *Disgrace*, to accomplish that goal. Furthermore, it will problematize the new Core Elements and its ambitions and question how educators choose and portray ethical dilemmas in schools today. Is it possible to 'teach' and in extent also learn, the ability to act with ethical awareness, and if so, how can teachers do this in their education of students? How can *Beloved* and *Disgrace* help students to develop the ethical awareness now prioritized in the new Core Elements? How can an English teacher attempt to educate democratic citizens and create critical thinking by using works of literature that pose dilemmas? Which ethical dilemmas do the novels raise, and how can we use them in education to attain an English competence that includes cultural and aesthetic aspects as well as language and history? These questions will be discussed and explored throughout this thesis, and the theoretical background for exploring ethical dilemmas through literature in education is an essential aspect to the discussion of English didactics.

The teaching of morals and ethical theories, dilemmas and principles have traditionally been assigned to the subject Religion and Ethics in upper secondary education, as well as the lower levels of education in Norway. The new interdisciplinary subjects included in the new Core Elements suggest that values important to education, such as ethical

awareness and democracy, are to provide a larger framework for the teacher's subjects. The subjects can also provide a larger syllabus and includes several topics that can be taught interdisciplinary. Important events in history, e.g. wars, holocaust, slavery and processes of peace and reconciliation are all matters of importance to education and the teaching of democratic citizens, as well as students' background knowledge of important events in light of multicultural and intercultural competence. Ethical dilemmas offer a gateway into the understanding of such processes. How we present them and teach these crucial human concerns are of vital importance to the students' ability to act with ethical awareness.

Within the field of English didactics, there has been an expanding amount of research, and scholars within the area have in the past decades developed the study of literature in English education in Norway. The research field is multi-faceted and includes student teachers, teachers in practice and schools and researchers. Ibsen & Wiland's *Encounters with Literature: The Didactics of English Literature in the Context of the Foreign Language Classroom in Norway* was one of the first books devoted to the use of literature in English education. They explore, discuss and address the different ways of teaching literature in English as a foreign language. *Teaching English in the 21st Century – Central issues in English Didactics* (2018) by Fenner and Skulstad brings together historical, theoretical and practical aspects of English didactics, and will also be of great importance to the theoretical background and discussion of literature and ethics in the classroom.

Consequently, this thesis will add to the discussion of the use of literature in Norwegian classrooms in an increasingly digital world. It will attempt to provide an answer to why teachers should choose complex and difficult novels, as it exists opportunities of ethical discussion and learning on a variety of levels. The goal is to bring new insights to the future of English education in Norway, and especially how we view the use of literature in discussions of ethics and morality in light of the new Core Elements of the curriculum.

1.2 Didactic research

Morrison's *Beloved* and Coetzee's *Disgrace* have so far not received substantial didactic research, despite the fact that many critics have addressed issues of the African tradition, such as Justine Tally in *Beloved: Origins* (2009) where she explores Morrison's engagement with both African and classical tradition, and how the multiple referents come together in *Beloved*. Judylyn S. Ryan discusses Morrison's narrative technique and social vision in "Language and

narrative technique in Toni Morrison's novels" (2007). Barbara Christian presents *Beloved* as a historical, political novel as well as a postmodern work and connects it to questions of freedom and individuality in her article "Beloved, She's Ours" (1997). As for *Disgrace*, many critics have attended to the historical, moral, and political aspects, such as Derek Attridge in *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the event* (2004) and *The Singularity of Literature* (2004). These works are both significant achievements on the principles of reading, and which propose a creative approach to reading with "an ethical responsibility-openness to the otherness and inventiveness of the text – that is paralleled in the ethics of literature [...]" and to focus on the open reading (Head 102). Among others, David Attwell has focused on race and the confusion of the future of South Africa, in works such as "Race in Disgrace" (2002) and "Coetzee's Postcolonial Diaspora" (2011).

Concerning the didactic aspects of literary research, many teachers share their teaching methods for these particular novels, but research on how these novels are used in education today has not been completed yet. My impression as a student and from practice-teaching during my training, is that many English teachers use literature to a small degree, if any. To avoid personal anecdote on this matter, I will refer to Fenner and Skulstad's and Ibsen and Wiland's discussion and analysis of the use of literature in English education in Norway, among other didactic research on the use of literature in EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom.

Habegger-Conti's study "Critical Literacy in the ESL Classroom: Bridging the Gap between Old and New Media" (2015) confirms my impression of the scant attention to English literature in upper secondary schools. She found that teachers "experience difficulty in getting their students to read longer fictional texts and have witnessed negative attitudes towards reading" (106). This research supports my observations that teachers to a small degree tend to use longer fictional texts in their education. The reasons for why this might be a challenge for teachers is discussed in this study, and it implies that teachers who do not succeed in the application of literature fail to motivate their students to some degree, and that students are losing interest in reading literature. Habegger-Conti asks the question of "how can the objectives set out in the basic skills section of the English subject specialization program – 'understanding, exploring and pondering demanding texts' – be met if students are losing the cognitive mode of deep attention that helps them read novels and longer texts?" (106). This question is also essential to this thesis as it relates to the ongoing debate regarding

literature in school, and how we shall fulfill the competence aims regarding reading and understanding texts, as well as being able to discuss ethical dilemmas.

The role of the teacher is inevitably vital to the education given to the students, and because of the open subject curriculum, the teacher is given much room to choose sources of information and examples for teaching individually. Klungland's study, "How Norwegian EFL teachers perceive the roles of literature and multimodal texts in our digitalized society" (2015), looks at how teachers perceive the use of literature in English education in a time where students are more digitalized in their learning habits and preferred tasks. Klungland's findings indicated that teachers still value the use of literature because of its associations with individual development, depth learning, language learning and more significant opportunities for reflection and concentration among students. The results indicated that multimodal texts are used frequently, but they are also seen as a tool to create variety in their education and to reach the different learning needs of the students, rather than the many other learning possibilities that these complex texts can offer.

This research seems to disagree with my observations, and it shows that there are teachers that highly value the importance of literature, but the study does not say anything about how the students experience literature in education. These studies and the questions they pose are valuable to the discussion of why and how we should teach literature in the foreign language classroom and will be addressed further throughout the thesis, as well as in-depth in the discussion of English didactics, the New Core Elements, and literature in chapter five.

2 Ethics

Ethics can be defined as the foundation that we base our decisions on, or the principles we follow in our decision-making. Morality can be explained as the personal values and opinions of right and wrong, whereas ethics are the greater systematizing concepts of right and wrong conduct. Very simplistically explained, ethics is how we are to others, our attitudes and actions, and about doing what is right, virtuous and good. The terms morality and ethics are often used interchangeably, yet they traditionally are given a different meaning. The morality in which we play out in our lives is based on what we refer to as an ethical foundation. Given

that the focus of this thesis is the ethical principles in the Core Elements as well as in literature, the term ‘ethics’ will be used in further discussions.

To assist us in decision-making we use several different sources for ethical values and use them to decide whether an action or inaction is right or wrong, morally good or bad (Donlevy & Walker). Examples of such sources are religion, society, organizations, and family. Also, a common belief is that individuals have an innate capacity of knowing what is right and wrong. Donlevy & Walker explains that “[...] being human means that we choose between what we believe to be the good and the bad, or the least of the bad and the worst, in many situations in life and we all seek a reason or reasons for making the choices we make – if only to be able to personally live with them or to explain to others the reasons for those choices”(4). Although most people would not explain their decisions on the basis of the different values or principles of the ethical schools, such as utilitarianism, feminist ethics, social contract theory or virtue ethics, their explanations and reasonings may be based on the same values.

In the discussion of ethics, the debate of individual rights versus utilitarian concerns of the collective is a controversial issue. The examples of where the individual’s rights have been infringed upon because of the rights of the collective are numerous. In historical relation to the novels *Beloved* and *Disgrace*, the arguments of consequentialism could be used to support and authenticate for example violation of individuals rights of the enslaved in the U.S. or segregated blacks in South Africa, because of the goal of producing the best possible outcome for most people. Consequentialism stands in contrast to both Deontology and Virtue Ethics, in which the Deontological ethics emphasizes the morality of an action and that the action is right or wrong, rather than the actions’ consequences. Virtue ethics, on the other hand, focuses on the virtues of character or the behavior, in which the ultimate goal is to possess positive virtues to become a good human being.

These contrasting foundations of ethics are not only crucial to philosophy and the discussion of moral principles in society, but to this thesis the importance will be the influence it may have on discussing ethical dilemmas in literature, and how they can be used to create discussion or expand a literary reading of a novel to comprehend a more considerable amount of relevance to the real world.

2.1 Kant's categorical imperative and Utilitarianism

The discussion of individual human rights and majority concerns come to great confrontations in discussions of ethical dilemmas. The ethical dilemmas presented in the novels are examples of cases where the rights of the individual are put up against the rights of the divine institution. Ethical theories can be used in the discussion of literary analysis despite being of two very different academic disciplines. By applying ethical theory, we can use a methodological approach to the ethical dilemmas presented in the novels. Utilitarianism and Deontological ethics stand as contrasting foundations of morality as they emphasize different reasons for ethical acts. While Deontological ethics evaluates an action's legitimacy in correspondence with a set of a priori principles, Utilitarianism focuses on the consequences brought on by the action. Alexander and Moore summarize the different deontological ethics, and that the theory exists of many formulations and falls within the category of normative theories in which choices are morally required, forbidden or permitted and guide our decisions of what we ought to do, in contrast to virtue theories that guide and assess what kind of person we should be. Deontology, which includes Kantian philosophy, is often divided into agent-centered deontological theories, patient-centered theories, and contractarian theories. Agent-centered approaches rely on the idea of agency, and that morality is personal and that we are personally obliged to keep our agency free of moral taint. Patient-centered deontological theories are premised on people's rights and posit the right against being used only as a means for others benefit, while Contractarian deontological ethics defines wrong acts as those "that would be forbidden by principles that people in a suitably described social contract would accept" (Alexander and Moore). Both the agent-centered, the patient-centered and contractarian branches of deontological theories can be argued as Kantian, and the continued focus in this discussion of ethics and the novels will be based on Immanuel Kant and his categorical imperative.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) argues for the moral law that is valid for every being of reason, and this moral law implies moral obligations derived from pure reason. The Categorical Imperative is a principle that is "objective, rationally necessary and unconditional" and must be followed despite our desires or inclinations (Johnson & Cureton). Kant gave five formulations of what he called the categorical imperative, and the two most known formulations are the formula of the universal law of nature, and the humanity formula. In the Universal law, Kant states that you are to "act only in accordance with that maxim

through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (cited in Johnson & Cureton). The Humanity Formula explains that one should treat humanity as an end and never as a mere means and emphasizes the notion that humans are self-governed and inhabit an absolute moral worth. As rational human beings, we must understand the motivations behind our actions and then ask ourselves if the action could become universalized based on the same reasoning. The motives behind actions are what define its moral permissibility.

By Kantian rules of ethics, the reasons for killing one’s child - in Sethe’s situation to escape the horrors of life as a slave – violate the humanity formula of the categorical imperative because Sethe’s motivation for killing her child is to avoid slavery, she is using her children as mere means to achieve that escape. Sethe fails to treat her children as ends in themselves and is unable to respect the absolute moral worth they inhabit because they are human beings. According to Kantianism then, the act of infanticide in Sethe’s situation is not valid and fails the categorical imperative. The formula of the universal law of nature would include allowing all mothers to kill their children if they believed death to be more gentle than other consequences of injustice or oppression. Consequently, Sethe’s immoral act states slavery as an even greater immoral act because of the treatment of an entire ‘race’ as a means to achieve money and prosperity for a seemingly more valuable group of people’s ends, and thus fails to respect the rationality of the slaves. The social system in which this evil could exist and evolve was justified and organized by the ideas of achieving high production of profitable crops and expansion of the economy. Despite being condemned by the people of the North, the institution of slavery was given acknowledgment by the renewed constitution which enabled the continued growth of slavery. The formula of the categorical imperative will undoubtedly also condemn slavery, as it would be impossible to create a maxim in which owning other human beings and deprive them of their worth as human beings would be the foundation of universal law.

Utilitarianism is a consequentialist theory which conveys the goal of maximizing utility, and by doing so, the goal is to produce the highest amount of well-being or happiness to the greatest amount of people. Jeremy Bentham is often referred to as the founder because he was the first to develop the theory systematically and is considered the modern developer of the theory that can be traced back to Epicurus (341-270 BC) as well as ancient Chinese philosophers (Driver 41). Bentham emphasized the importance of producing the most overall good, and not only focusing on the most good for the person doing the act. The goal is to

avoid any pain and promote pleasure. Sethe believes that if she did not kill her child, the pain and suffering she would have undergone in life as a slave would have been much worse than killing her. The consequences that Sethe has imagined is not unproblematic to the theory of Utilitarianism because she then foresees an outcome which she bases her decision on. She bases her decision on her belief that it will cause less harm and grief if she kills them herself and is therefore not taking into consideration the actual consequences of the murder. Paul D disagrees with Sethe's choice because of the implications it had for her other children, responding to her that "your boys gone you don't know where. One girl dead, the other won't leave the yard. How did it work?" (194). It is possible that she causes greater misery to the people around her because of the loss of a child, than the pain she prevented by not allowing her child to live the horrifying life of a slave. In conversation with Stamp Paid, later on, Paul D seems to have changed his mind regarding Sethe's choice, as he explains that "She ain't crazy. She love those children. She was trying to out-hurt the hurter" (276).

On the other hand, the principle of Utilitarianism to create the best consequences for most people would include a notion that one could sacrifice a few for the benefit of the many – both black and white. Such arguments were made by supporters of the institution of slavery in the South during its reign, and the utilitarian arguments based on the principle of utility, of providing the best interest for most people. In principle, this could work as ideological foundations and justification for the institution of slavery, as the goal is the sum of utilities and happiness, and the prosperity of the many will outweigh the suffering of a few. Bentham dismisses such conclusions regarding the legality of slavery because people need freedom and well-being, and the welfare and liberty of people is always a concern in Utilitarianism. Bentham also argued for the greatest happiness for most people; thus slavery, as a practice is condemned as the freedom and liberty of slaves, was not aligned with the moral scheme of utilitarian thought (Kilbride 470). The novel is not as categorical and absolute as the philosophical, ethical theories on the judgement of Sethe's choice. The many descriptions of the murder scenes, as well as the extraordinarily vivid and horrifying characterization of life in slavery, contribute significantly to the portrayal of Sethe's choice as an impossible one, and if not wholly acceptable, at least to a degree understandable. A continuation of the discussion of the multiple perspectives of the novel and how they affect the ethical implications are dealt with more thoroughly in chapter three.

As for *Disgrace*, the primary ethical dilemma of the novel is not as explicit as the baby murder in *Beloved* which stands as the most explicit dilemma but also becomes an enlargement of the greater injustice of slavery. There are several major ethical dilemmas present in the novel - prostitution, academic corruption, marital infidelity, abortion, exploitation, and violence - in addition to the overlying themes of racism and sexism as well as the remnants of apartheid regime and politics. The ethically questionable actions appear rapid throughout the narrative, and in an educational perspective, the novel is filled with great dilemmas for discussion – despite being a geographically far reach for students in Norway – still applicable to the intercultural and global perspectives of education in Norway today. The focus could be on the disturbing actions of David Lurie as he takes advantage of his position as a Professor to seduce one of his students, and unwilling to admit and apologize, he loses his job. A parallel to his violation of the student, the violent rape of his daughter becomes one of the most infringing acts and themes of the novel. Also, and as pointed to by several critics, such as Michta in “Framing Humanity by framing nature: John Maxwell Coetzee’s *Disgrace* in the context of Kant’s theory of morality,” is the perspective on human duties towards animals (2015). Michta argues that the Kantian view on animal rights and that Kant acknowledged that man could become more human through the moral treatment of animals. Michta further explains that David Lurie then experiences a renewal of humanity because of his growing concern for animal corpses.

The Utilitarian approach to dilemmas in *Disgrace*, the acts of rape and misconduct on Lurie’s behalf, are quite clearly to be dismissed as unethical acts of a person causing much pain and suffering to not only Melanie, the student, but to her family, his employer and colleagues. This suffering of the abused triumph the pleasure that the abuser feels, and in Lurie’s case, he fails to admit and acknowledge the pain and suffering he may have caused on another human beings’ autonomy, self-worth, and value. The act of rape is not an ethical dilemma, but Lurie’s attitudes towards his behavior versus the assault he and Lucy experience are questionable and worth discussing in terms of what is right and wrong behavior, and where the line goes for inappropriate behavior. Consequentialist views may be used to both approve and condemn acts of violence, depending on whom you ask. With the moral theories in mind, the existence of societies which create and maintain racist and sexist structures – and still advocate a moral and democratic legitimacy – become especially disturbing and creates a platform for debate. Is it ethically responsible to allow leaders of nations, groups, and

organizations to run their cause on a base set of values ‘most people’ in a democratic society would regard as unjust and discriminating? Problematic and ethically debatable societies then become an opening for those who apply the absolute worth of the individual and its rights to an extreme, and in turn, create a rationale for the individual outweighing the majority. A radical utilitarian approach would grow to provide openings for structures of abuse and racism, as they did in the old South, defending horrendous acts based on finding support in ideological philosophy of consequentialism and thus denying the existence of human unalienable rights.

2.2 Ethics, democracy and society

Democracy requires a society in which individuals value the principle of mutual respect, social equality, freedom, integrity and solidarity, and only functions if the majority of the people agree on these principles. Citizens depend on the fact that elected officials, as well as the man in the street, can observe the common ethical foundation that democracy is founded on. Society is based on rights and restrictions, rights and privileges which individuals can expect from society and contributions that we, in turn, have to provide for the common good. Such rights can, for example, be founded in the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention or the national constitution.

The values established in society are also implemented and manifested in the education we provide for the coming generations. As a result, the national curriculum becomes a reflection of the societal values all individuals should strive to attain. The Norwegian Education Act states that the “education and training shall be based on fundamental values in Christian and humanist heritage and traditions, such as respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, values that also appear in different religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights” (§ 1-1, 2014). It is noteworthy that the secular state of Norway includes Christian values in the core values of the education system, despite the evident detachment between state and church that the country has undergone in the past decades. It should be noted that the Education Act has been reevaluated, and from 2008 the education was no longer based on a “Christian upbringing” but centered on “Christian and humanist heritage and traditions”. From the perspective of religious science, discussed by Prof. Bengt-Ove Andreassen in *Religionsdidaktikk* (2016), these formulations can be seen as trying to promote specific values found in Human Rights to the religion

Christianity and can be interpreted as an attempt to construct Christian values to be universal (33). There exists here an interesting aspect of the values stated in the Education Act and how they lay directions for what is to be relevant to education, and as pointed to by Andreassen, the significance of values is not given but needs to be given content and meaning (33). As teachers and educators of children in an increasingly diverse country, the ethical dilemma of this favoritism towards one religion is prominent and has been a topic of public debate for some time but should also produce discussions in the future. The discussion of the influence and weightiness attributed to one religion in this national proclamation is one that will not be further deliberated in this thesis.

2.3 Ethical awareness, critical thinking, and democratic citizenship

Ethical awareness in the new Core Elements is described as the ability to “consider different views or issues and is necessary to become a responsible human being who is also able to reflect upon difficult matters. The education shall develop the students’ ability to make ethical assessments and make them familiar with ethical dilemmas” (The Core Elements 7, translated by me). Both critical thinking and ethical awareness are described as preconditions for being able to take part in a profession or a career, as well as many other contexts. These are also essential to being able to make decisions in life as well as attaining the ability to make judgments on behalf of one’s own and others’ interests. Furthermore, critical thinking and ethical awareness is vital to being able to consider other people’s situations and show compassion and responsibility in doing so. In light of the discussion on the use of literature in classrooms, the ability to “consider different views or issues”, becomes an activity vague in its definitions, but by using what we do as readers of literature, the discussions of a novel’s themes, historical background, and characters can lead to a greater understanding of what these abilities imply. Students may attain insight into what it is like being a mother, father, sister, enslaved, minority, oppressed, underprivileged or abused. In other words, reading literature and delving into a different world can provide access to other worlds, morals, and ethics we cannot experience ourselves, as well as giving insight into others’ choices and ways of living.

In the interdisciplinary value and subject democratic citizenship, the Core Elements state that the students are to attain knowledge about the rules of democracy and the

importance of maintaining its system in society (The Core Elements 13). The values mentioned are mutual respect, tolerance, and the principle of freedom of religion. Further, they are based on the ability to empathize with other human beings, and therefore also being able to feel other people's feelings. To be able to act and live in a democratic society, students must also be able to empathize with others and to consider others' wishes and interest in their actions. Reading literature can create that ability to be able to feel what others might feel. Literature is certainly not the only way to attain empathy or the only path to becoming "good" human beings, and real life is, of course, an area in which students learn this in practice. Examples of people who were avid readers but also tyrants and dictators are many, for example, Hitler and Stalin. The limitations of these examples are not prohibiting the notion that literature might lead to learning to become 'ethically aware'. Suzanne Keen has analyzed previous research and theory to find out how readers react to fiction, and how reading novels can evoke empathy within the reader and what that empathy means. In *Empathy and the Novel*, Keen explains how she does not assume that empathetic reading leads to social good. Further, she proposes that empathy for fictional characters can be present even when the characters and reader differ from each other (70). This implies that the use of characters with substantial differences can be used didactically to develop the reader's empathy, which in turn can be used to support the argument for using literature to create democratic actions (Keen 71). The curriculum further explains that these values must be promoted throughout the education of a child and that the democratic society relies on people's equal rights and ability to participate in decisions. These perspectives are a part of the students' education in democracy and are to help create room for cooperation, dialogue, and debate. A school is a democratic place per se, as much as an arena for developing concepts of democracy, and by that, the students experience that their opinions are heard and that their influence is genuine and real.

The Core Elements do not stipulate directions as to how these values are supposed to be attained, the more concrete aims are found in the subject curriculum plans which are still in the process of being renewed at the moment of writing, the spring of 2019. An essential aspect of the Core Elements is that the aims and values described are to be learned and attained throughout the children's education. These goals are based on long-term learning and development, and are supposed to be a part of a more extensive process of facilitating learning and to be a part of the students' process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and

habits. Consequently, these values are to be a part of the students' education on a daily basis and be present in all subjects. The teachers' challenge will then be to adopt these values into daily education in all disciplines.

2.4 Ethics and literature

The discussion of ethics in literary works has not been given as much room as other critical commentaries prior to the past decade or so. Many critics still believe that literature should be treated merely as aesthetic (George xi). Yehoshua, Gregory, Nussbaum, and Phelan argue for the importance of ethical dimensions in literary works. Gregory argues that ethical criticism matters because:

[W]ho we become matters, and because literature, [...] as an important midwife to our becoming, helps usher us into the world. Insofar as ethical criticism helps us understand how this influence gets exerted, how our responses get elicited, and how these responses get both shaped up and filled in by literary experience, it contributes to the ongoing human enterprise of getting to know ourselves better in order that, in our improved understanding, we can come closer to creating the world we want rather than settling for the world we have (61).

Literature, especially fiction, has been a place in which authors, narrators, and characters have been, and are, able to make decisions without any repercussions regarding the legality of their actions. This literary world stands as a sharp contrast to the governing rights and laws democratic societies aspire to follow and can, therefore, serve as a platform for discussion and a greater understanding of ourselves and each other. The relationship between ethics and literature is not one-dimensional and will imply differences in meaning and importance according to the discourses and debates. Yehoshua argues that the moral dilemmas of literature always suggest human relations:

[W]hether we like it or not, every artistic work that deals with human relations has in it a moral aspect because all human relationships may be evaluated according to moral categories (Yehoshua 18).

The moral categories he mentions are implicit in every reader's experience as one would judge the author's originality, knowledge, intelligence, truthfulness and interpretations of other ideas and sources (Yehoshua). Human relationships will, based on this argument, follow with implications of moral judgments of each other's choices and decisions and thus also one's values. Moral judgment and ethical values are therefore also significant in literature, weighing differently according to the reader's values and beliefs. Furthermore, it seems to exist a relationship between the values within these 'moral categories' and what is regarded as aesthetic values.

The debate over what literary study can contribute to the good of society is still an unresolved matter. It has been thoroughly discussed in recent literary exchange by Richard A. Posner in "Against Ethical Criticism" (1997-98), Martha C. Nussbaum in "Exactly and Responsible: A Defense of Ethical Criticism" (1998), and Wayne C. Booth in "Why Banning Ethical Criticism Is a Serious Mistake" (1998). Stephen L. Tanner further discusses it in "The Moral and the Aesthetical: Literary Study and the Social Order" in which he surveys the debate of "what literary study can or should do to promote the civic good" (115). Posner argues against the importance of ethical criticism, and focuses on the value of literature as literature, without taking into consideration its ethical or moral implications to define its value. By referring to Oscar Wilde's remark that "there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book", Posner proclaims that "the moral content and consequences of a work of literature are irrelevant to its value as literature" (1). Nussbaum defends ethical criticism in "Exactly and Responsible: A Defense of Ethical Criticism", then again, she is careful to make strong general claims regarding literature and ethics but suggests that "the sort of wondering and fancying encouraged by many distinguished works of narrative literature nourishes the ascription of humanity, and the prospect of friendship" (356). Nussbaum is also careful not to generalize about the ethical importance of all literary texts, but limits the claim to specific works, "and only in context already prepared for their impact" (356). Booth follows Nussbaum in defense of ethical criticism and in so challenging Posner's position, by arguing that the definitions of "ethics", "morals", and "aesthetic" need to be clarified. He argues that "if aesthetic quality is merely a matter of surface beauty or loveliness or attractiveness, and if by ethical we mean easily formulated moral matters like 'thou shalt not kill or commit adultery,' then obviously aesthetic quality can be separated from ethics: many a hero or heroine ethically admirable may kill or commit adultery, and many a villain may not" (376).

Booth claims that the debate of ethical aesthetics is heavily inconsistent, yet, as Tanner concludes in his analysis of the discussion, the consequent argument that both sides seem to agree on is that “reading good literature does not in itself make good people” (123). Tanner concludes that “ethics and aesthetics are not the same thing but taken in their proper breadth, they are symbiotic”, which can be used in the discussion of the relevance of literature in the education of democratic citizens (123).

In strong contrast to the world of ‘good literature’ is the societies in which we cannot violate morals without experiencing repercussions, at least that is how democracy is supposed to operate. Literature then, works in an imaginative space in which morals can be violated, immorality cultivated, and all principles of ethics challenged with impunity. To society, the literature of such nature may function as an escape from everyday life and its limitations of morality. The ambiguous relation of literature as a means of learning more about reality or escaping it appears to divide readers of literature. Thus, the interesting notion of literature in a ‘lawless’ space in which readers can escape to is especially relevant to the discussion of ethics and literature in education. How can students learn, and possibly adapt lessons, from the imaginative space of literature, and fiction especially? Is literature a better gateway to ethics because of its lack of limitations towards immoral actions, behaviors, and attitudes? Alternatively, does this imaginative landscape produce new challenges for the didactic relevance for literature in education?

The major ethical dilemmas the two novels encapsulate, racism and sexism, become apparent in the discussion of the unethical and debatable actions within the novels. As discussed in this chapter, the ethical foundations and schools in which we imply meaning to and live out in our lives are prominent to our decision-making and our understanding of the world. Racism and sexism, although condemned by moral theories, still occur and have been enabled by human beings. The discussion of educating ethically conscious human beings then becomes a challenging task of teaching the values and fundamentals of morality as well as discussing the consequences, impacts, and ramifications of one’s choices. Many will be quick to oppose and reject racism, yet the signs of increasingly extremist views and political amplifications are very apparent today. The ethics we teach and portray to our coming generations are crucial to their understanding of the world and how they choose to act upon injustice and discrimination.

3 Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

[...] before Sethe could make her understand what it meant – what it took to drag the teeth of that saw under the little chin; to feel the baby blood pump like oil in her hands; to hold her face so her head would stay on; to squeeze her so she could absorb, still, the death spasms that shot through that adored body, plump and sweet with life – *Beloved* might leave. Leave before Sethe could make her realize that worse than that – far worse - was what Baby Suggs died of, what Ella knew, what Stamp saw and what had made Paul D tremble. That anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind (Morrison 295).

The roaring of the dead limits the visitors of Bluestone Road 124, the haunting ghost of the baby girl lingers through and beyond the physical limitations of the door. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* offers a horrifying yet absorbing account of the experiences and consequences of the history of wrong that slaves underwent. The novel is also a part of the trilogy of *Beloved*, *Jazz*, and *Paradise*, a trilogy that consumes the memory, history, and language of African Americans in literature and history. As Carl Plasa notes “it would be misleading to isolate *Beloved* from the rest of Morrison's work”, nevertheless, *Beloved* is by far the novel that has contributed most to Morrison's considerable significance to African American literature and culture (6).

This chapter provides an analysis of the ethical dimensions in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and the alternating narrative perspectives which provide the unsettling experience of the controversial act of the main protagonist Sethe. Her decision to kill her daughter rather than let her be taken back to the plantation Sweet Home and experience the dreadful life of a slave is the main event of this novel, which also entails significant themes such as oppression, slavery, historical trauma, and mother-daughter relationships. Can the extreme and supposedly “unethical” act of infanticide be approved based on ethical principles or criteria? If so, which principles? Does the author suggest any ethical implications? How can the answers to these questions affect the teaching goals stated in the Core Elements, which says that the students are to become ‘ethically aware’ human beings? Before these themes can be discussed, the novel will be introduced briefly.

Beloved tells the story of a woman named Sethe, a runaway slave, who chooses to reach for her handsaw before the slaveowner Schoolteacher gets to her children. The novel is inspired by the life of Margaret Garner, a runaway slave who was arrested for killing one of her children rather than let them be brought into slavery. Reading the newspaper article summarizing the story of her life, Morrison found that “[Margaret Garner] was certainly single-minded and, judging by her comments, she had the intellect, the ferocity, and the willingness to risk everything for what was to her the necessity of freedom” (Morrison xvii). Sethe, alike Margaret Garner, only managed to pull the handsaw across the throat of one of her daughters. At that moment, she made an ethical choice based on her knowledge of the atrocities that would happen to her children if she did not prevent it. Morrison explains how she invented Sethe through Margaret Garner, “So I would invent her thoughts, plumb them for a subtext that was historically true in essence, but not strictly factual in order to relate her history to contemporary issues about freedom, responsibility, and women’s ‘place’” (xvii). Women’s place is a reoccurring issue in many of Morrison’s novels where the modern African American woman emerges.

Morrison does not take an ethical stand on this choice of her main protagonist, which in turn leaves the readers to decide for themselves if the actions are unethical or not. Morrison’s background is essential for the historical dimensions as is the narrative perspectives to the empathetic reading of this novel. The historical aspects of the novel connect to the didactic implications of teaching literature, as the student’s previous knowledge of the subject will lay consequences for how to teach a novel. The history of slavery in the U.S. will be of importance to the students as well as to the background of the novel.

3.1 Toni Morrison and ‘proceedings too terrible to relate’

Toni Morrison is undoubtedly one of America’s greatest novelists throughout time and is praised for having moved the center of the canon because through “her multi-faceted and untiring work, she has helped change a restricted, predominantly white, and male-centered literary world into a multicultural mosaic” (Tally i). The African American literary tradition was initiated by the slave narratives, at several levels acting as both “autobiographical in form and theme, a linear charting of the journey of its author from bondage to freedom” (Plasa 42). Plasa explain slave narratives as “a political text, designed to further the goals of abolitionist campaign becoming increasingly powerful in the period leading up to the American Civil War

of 1861-65”, yet also inclining imposing constraints as the abolitionist movement also brought with it a constraint upon the writing and speaking self (Plasa 42). Morrison’s standpoint on the subject of slave narratives compared to her writing is complex as she wants to present the ‘interior life’- not to tell a personal story of a slave or to persuade other people of the blacks’ human worth:

For me – a writer in the last quarter of the twentieth century, not much more than a hundred years after Emancipation, a writer who is black and a woman – the exercise is very different. My job becomes to rip that veil drawn over ‘proceedings too terrible to relate’. The exercise is also critical for any person who is black, or who belongs to any marginalized category, for, historically, we were seldom invited to participate in the discourse even we were its topic (Cited in Plasa, 46).

One of the first critical reviews of *Beloved* is A.S. Byatt’s “An American Masterpiece” (1987), which indicates the immediate critical response to the novel and touches upon themes such as motherhood, memory, the role of language, and above all, *Beloved*’s relation to American literature. Byatt argues that the representation of the lives of slaves is one of Morrison’s most significant achievements “What [she] does is present an image of a people so wholly human that they are almost superhuman” (“An American Masterpiece”). Among others, more focused on the post-colonialism and psychoanalysis readings of the novel, are Sally Keenan with her essay “Four Hundred Years of Silence” (1993). Keenan positions *Beloved* in a post-colonial context, and Carl Plasa demonstrates how the question of history stretches beyond the scope of slave-oppression in America and extends to Africa in “‘It’s Not Over Just Because It Stops’: Post-colonialism, Psychoanalysis, History” (1998). On the importance of slave narratives in the post-colonial state Keenan argues that: “Furthermore, in the United States, as elsewhere, the *post-* of that term should not be regarded as a sign that the processes of colonialism have ended; rather, their legacy continues to exist as a lived reality for many citizens” (Cited in Plasa, 118). She continues on *Beloved*’s importance in the literary examinations of U.S. culture and history, arguing that:

[...] its placing of the issue of motherhood and female resistance to slavery at the heart of an exploration of the processes of memory, recovery, and representation of

African American history and the dilemma that has long faced African Americans to find a language to speak and write about their past” (Keenan, cited in Plasa, 119).

Keenan also argues for the contradiction of *Beloved* that is the desire to remember the past but also avoiding the dangers of becoming too engaged with it. The discussion of the history that *Beloved* raises and the continued colonial oppression within the U.S. which still bears upon today’s society, is important to the novel’s everlasting relevance. Reviews and critical essays on the supernatural elements of *Beloved* can be found in Deborah Horvitz’ “Nameless Ghosts: Possession and Dispossession in *Beloved*” (1989) and Elisabeth B. House’s “Toni Morrison’s Ghost: The Beloved Who is Not Beloved” (1990). Horvitz among many other critics sees *Beloved* as “the ghost-child who comes back to life [...], she is also Sethe’s African mother” who also teaches Sethe “that memories and stories about her matrilineal ancestry are life-giving” (158). From a different view of Horvitz, House acknowledges *Beloved* as a literal, physical “young woman who has herself suffered the horrors of slavery” (17).

Morrison’s work as a whole also includes a social vision and narratives that intend to strengthen and expand reader competence. She is known for being able to give voice to the silenced African American slaves and their forgotten history. In 1988 she won the Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved* and 1993 she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In “Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature” Morrison examines the intersection of American literature and her fiction in light of the history of racialized thought. In her essay, she argues that “[...] much of the research and analysis has rendered speakable what was formerly unspoken and has made humanistic studies, once again, the place where one has to go to find out what’s going on. Cultures, whether silenced or monologist, whether repressed or repressing, seek meaning in the language and images available to them” (132). These scholars focusing on the psychoanalyst, intertextual dimensions, supernatural elements and post-colonialist readings of the novel are more or less excluded in this discussion of *Beloved* due to my focus on ethics, democracy, and didactics.

3.2 ‘Sixty million and more’ – Why do we still talk about slavery?

Often praised for her ability to characterize what we cannot live and to understand what the ancestors of African Americans today must have thought, Morrison undertakes the complex

task of exploring the possible mind and memory of the slave. She explains that “to invite readers (and myself) into the repellant landscape (hidden, but not completely; deliberately buried, but not forgotten) was to pitch a tent in a cemetery inhabited by highly vocal ghosts” (*Beloved* xvii). The landscape of the history of slavery, she characterizes as hidden and buried, but not forgotten, enabling the reader to understand the horrors of the past, not visible to us today because we are beyond that point, but still very much relevant to society. Due to the legacy of slavery and the still unsettled situation of the blacks in the U.S., the novel’s relevance is still evident today. It can enable the occurrence of the moral imperative of compassion and solidarity, and urge society and students today to always consider, evaluate and remember the wrongdoings of the past. Democratic states today heavily rely on learning from historical contexts, acknowledging its mistakes, and therefore also motivates themselves on the notion of a better future and prosperous lives. In the era of the Civil Rights movement, the struggle of fulfilling the freedom given to slaves was a long-term fight to attain equal rights in every aspect of modern life. In the past years, the spirit and principles of the Civil Rights Movement have been applied to that of the Black Lives Matter movement, yet the legacy of slavery is still a controversial and intensely debated subject. The ethical implications of the Civil Rights Movement can be linked back to the political and societal ramifications of the dissolution of slavery. *Beloved* manages to characterize the hidden landscape at the same time as it gives a voice to the unheard. Further, the ethical dimensions of the Nobel-awarded novel also challenge our understanding of our ethical awareness, personal morals and concept of democracy.

Barbara Christian is one of the critics who has argued for *Beloved*’s position as a historical novel, arguing that it, in 1987, was a part of a new historical trend. Christian explains that *Beloved* manages to interrogate our assumptions on literary narrative in western tradition, in that it questions our perception of our “orthodox notions of freedom and limits, of individual agency and society, ownership and excess, presence and absence, the past and the present, the living and the dead” (37). What we think of as past is often so far away from us that visualizing and trying to understand and comprehend its meaning can be ambiguous, especially if it did not happen close to our heritage.

Morrison dedicates the novel to the “sixty million and more” in the novel’s epigraph. She thus involves the millions of African slaves brought to the U.S. marking the beginning of the country’s long reign of unethical and inhuman treatment and oppression against slaves

and African Americans. In the novel, the haunting of the past and lost souls are evident not directly but represented through the memories and experiences of oppression in the characters. In the haunted house of 124 Bluestone Road the roaring voices had stopped Stamp Paid from being able to step through its door, but after some time is finally ready to:

So, in spite of his exhausted marrow, he kept on through the voices and tried once more to knock at the door of 124. This time, although he couldn't chipper but one word, he believed he knew who spoke them. The people of the broken necks, of fire-cooked blood and black girls who had lost their ribbons. What a roaring (213).

The lynching, the red ribbon around a lock of hair attached to a piece of scalp, and baby Suggs let Stamp Paid remember and recover in some way beyond the pain and fragmented memories. What history teaches us is never to stop learning our history, and the recent renewed social issues within segregated and mostly black parts of the U.S. is one of many examples. *Beloved* speaks for the voices of the unheard and is, therefore, a potent reminder of the injustice we must avoid at all costs in the future of our societies. The moral lessons of slavery should be heard, as the majority consequentialist view of using other humans to create the best possible outcome for the majority of the privileged white people should never be forgotten or misunderstood. Today, we strongly disapprove of and condemn the actions of the slave owners but should keep in mind that the enablers of such mistreatment of human beings were the elected officials of a state claiming to be rightful in their decisions on behalf of humanity. Sethe explains that nothing ever dies, which portrays the historical impact of slavery that Morrison enhances throughout the narrative:

'So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over – over and done with- it's going to always be there waiting for you. That's how come I had to get all my children out. No matter what.' Denver picked at her fingernails. 'If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies.' Sethe looked right in Denver's face. 'Nothing ever does,' she said (44).

Following Kant's categorical imperative and the humanity formula, slavery would, without doubt, be condemned and dismissed as a principally unethical act. The arguments supporting

slavery defeated those opposing, and the institution was expanded and justified by elected officials as well as plantation owners and shareholders. Most consequentialist views would condemn slavery as well as it would create misery and withhold the freedom of so many individuals.

3.3 “Love is or it ain’t” – Judgements of love

Personal morals and ethical concerns reach a climax in Sethe’s love for her children. The individual rights of a child are never considered as Sethe proclaims her children to be hers and only hers, as she is the ultimate protector. The moral obligations of a mother to protect one’s child seems inherent and obvious, but does her love for her children become morally questionable because of the suppression of slaves by racist plantation owners? Sethe proclaims her inevitable right to love her children, arguing that love is without limits:

‘Your love is too thick,’ he said, thinking, That bitch is looking at me; she is right over my head looking down through the floor at me. ‘Too thick?’ She said, thinking of the Clearing where Baby Sugg’s commands knocked the pods off horse chestnuts. ‘Love is or it ain’t. Thin love ain’t love at all’ (193).

Paul D condemns Sethe’s choice in this passage from part one of the novel, he implies that since the incident she not only lost one child, but her two sons have disappeared, and Denver does not want to leave the house. James Phelan argues for this event’s importance for the novel, not only because of its structural and temporal flow but also because of Morrison’s treatment of the infanticide and how it presents her readers with a challenging and unusual ethical problem (“Sethe’s Choice” 318). This is the only passage in which Sethe talks about the infanticide, yet she leaves out the exact words and descriptions of the murder. Later, Paul D reminds her that “You got two feet, Sethe, not four”, an accurate representation of the inhuman treatment of slaves (Morrison 194). The symbolism of humans as dogs or other animals occur throughout the novel and are a vivid description of what and how life as a slave was. Schoolteacher refers to the one who repeatedly raped and abused Sethe, as he saw a glimpse of her eyes in the moments after she had murdered her child:

She was looking at him now, and if his other nephew could see that look he would learn the lesson for sure: you just can't mishandle creatures and expect success (178).

Sethe suffers further degradation here, not even qualifying as an animal, but a love-less 'creature' that does not deserve the respect of the white privileged. The idea that their treatment of Sethe led to her extreme and seemingly unforgivable actions seems to have led to some enlightened moment in Schoolteacher, who realizes that his property is damaged goods. To a reader who has not experienced slavery, its extreme dehumanization, and its immense impact it must have had on those who lived through it, Morrison is extraordinary in her ability to illustrate and represent not only the slave's story but also the slaveowners and how their mindset affected the slaves.

The acts of motherhood gone too far as a result of oppression and abuse by slave owners are also what contributes to the reader's growing sympathy for Sethe. Barbara Christian argues for the importance of the mother-daughter relationship and that "[b]y focusing on mother love, our first love, that love which we all expect, Morrison challenges our very definition of what it means to be a mother and suggests that motherhood itself is constructed, affected by specific societal/political constructs, even as it is basic to all human societies as we know it" (38). For Norwegian students, the situation Sethe finds herself in is quite far from their reality, and the readers ability to empathize with the characters becomes a critical aspect of reading in this situation. So why does a mother kill her children? Moreover, what does it do to a person who has committed such a crime? What consequences did the murder ultimately lead to? Such a murder indicates that the society in which it occurs inhabits horrid structures of slavery, sexism, and racism, which in turn drives a person to commit such a crime. Sethe explains her loss of appreciating and seeing color as a result:

Every dawn she saw the dawn, but never acknowledged or remarked its color. There was something wrong with that. It was as though one day she saw red baby blood, another day the pink gravestone chips, and that was the last of it (47).

The amount of despair and hopelessness present in a mother who is able to do such a thing can appear unimaginable to an outsider looking in. In a mother who commits such an

unspeakable crime, there must have been no hope or other choices, and the amount of hopelessness must have outweighed the option of keeping them alive, which is the most primal motherly action. Sethe's dilemma thus constitutes a situation which outsiders could never understand or comprehend, even so, what Morrison ultimately does is to let us into the mind of Sethe. The juxtaposition of Schoolteacher and Sethe enhance our empathy towards Sethe and her impossible choice, and consequently, also enhance our disapproval of the racist and sexist structures of society which leads Sethe to the horrible murder.

3.4 Infanticide and the ethics of *Beloved*

Beloved brims with a range of ethical implications that imply a discussion of which aspects of the novel can be used in education to attain the goal of bringing up democratic citizens. The narrative techniques, extreme events, and alternating scenes create room for the reader to respond to the novel on one's own terms. Kant's categorical imperative always to treat human beings as an end in themselves, and never as a means to an end, becomes vividly relevant to the discussion of what humanity and democracy are founded upon. Despite the notion that Sethe treats her child as a means to achieve the goal of escaping slavery, she ultimately attains sympathy. The readers can attain this sympathy, not from the beginning, but throughout the narrative and the disabled memories from the Sweet home men, Baby Suggs, Sethe herself and the abuse she lived through. The sympathy she attains speaks volumes of what we in democratic societies uplift ourselves on, the notion that we are understanding, forgiving and respectful of others, still we are challenged by Morrison in this novel to see beyond the limitations of our own culture and history. The concept of an accepted institution of torture and murder – slavery, racism and discrimination – in a democracy challenges our idea of the modern man in a Western society as a righteous one. Dehumanization in the structures of slavery is presented through the experiences of former slaves which, in light of Kant's formula of treating humans as an end in themselves, is impermissible to any democracy.

Morrison has explained the intriguing and steep beginning of the novel as a result of her wanting to portray to the readers the experiences of the characters; "I wanted the reader to be kidnapped, thrown ruthlessly into an alien environment as the first step into a shared experience with the book's population – just as the characters were snatched from one place to another, from any place to any other, without preparation or defense" (xviii). By shifting through different narrators, Morrison enables the reader to sympathize with Sethe, as well as

nuance this sympathy by also being guided through the telling's of Paul D, Baby Suggs, and Denver. When Schoolteacher arrives to pick up Sethe and her four children, he and his entourage are met with what can only be described as a horrible view: "Inside, two boys bled in the sawdust and dirt at their feet of a nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest with one hand and an infant by the heels in the other (175)". This is the first telling of the murder and is focalized through the white oppressor, Schoolteacher. The name 'Schoolteacher' becomes an interesting, if not horrifying, connection to what we today think of as responsible and essential guardians and protectors of the children and adolescents of society. Being a schoolteacher implies authority and the links to the authorial oppressor being a teacher of values, in this case, the slave owner, leads to questions of how the name bears with it fundamental importance and heightening of value. Why has the most 'powerful' character been given such a contradicting and ambiguous name? To provide a more familiar role to ease the reader's response to those who were the owners and conductors of slavery? The irony of the name is especially interesting in the educational aspect as we traditionally perceive the teacher as the ultimate protector of children and supposedly the guide and educator of knowledge. Further, Schoolteacher becomes an enlargement of the moral justification slaveowners must have provided to themselves in their constant unjust treatment of other human beings. Even so, as pointed out by one of Schoolteacher's men, the "creatures" were their property, the "crazy niggers" a lower level of race and thus their racism justified by the enlargement of themselves as the righteous race.

In "Beloved: Sethe's choice and Morrison's Ethical Challenge" (2013) Phelan comments on the consequences of Toni Morrison's rhetorical choices for the overall progression and purposes of the novel. The shifting narration from Schoolteacher, to Sethe and her telling of the rape that paid for the tombstone, Sethe's troubling memories, and to Beloved and Denver, we are put in between sympathy and abhorrence. He argues that her "piecemeal disclosure of information not only requires the authorial audience to be very active in piercing the fabula together but also in recognizing implied connections between the events" (374). In this thesis the idea of an "unsolved ethical issue" is at the core of the debate, the question of the killing of ones' children can be morally accepted and approved of. Phelan also argues that Morrison poses an ethical responsibility to the audience because the story does not lead to any clear signal as to how the audience should judge the event of infanticide. Consequently, Morrison transfers the authorial responsibility to the reader, and "by accepting

that responsibility – and attending to the parameters within which Morrison asks us to exercise it – we have a more difficult and demanding but also richer reading experience” (Phelan 381). By moral theories such as Kantianism and utilitarianism, one would condemn the act of infanticide, as everyone would if told only the events of the killing. The negative consequences of killing a child would outweigh the believed protecting effects Sethe would argue for, as she believed she was saving her children. Our understanding of the situation creates sympathy with the complex character of Sethe, as readers indict slavery, racism, abuse and discrimination as the leading cause of this act, and a more extreme ethical abomination than her infanticide.

Phelan discusses the narrative strategies chosen in this novel and how they then are designed to increase the affective and political power of the novel. These strategies rely on what he defines as the “dynamic interaction of four ethical situations”. The ethical situations he mentions are; the characters within the story world, the narrator in relation to the telling and to the audience, that of the implied author in relation to the authorial audience (the narrative strategy chosen by the author will affect the audience’s ethical response to the characters), and that of flesh and blood reader in relation to the set of values, beliefs, and locations that the narrative incites one to occupy” (320). The characters within *Beloved*’s story world and the shifting narrators apply a dynamic interaction, and these complexities and layers of narrativity enable us to see Sethe’s choice as a true ethical dilemma where both options seem impossible:

Stamp looked into Paul D’s eyes and the sweet conviction in them almost made him wonder if it had happened at all, eighteen years ago, that while he and Baby Suggs were looking the wrong way, a pretty little slavegirl had recognized a hat, and split to the woodshed to kill her children (186).

Paul D’s sweet conviction, and ultimately his boundless love for Sethe, contribute to the “flesh and blood” reader’s understanding of the dilemma concerning the set of values the narrative presents.

The act of murdering children is not a new phenomenon in literature, and even though the reasons for filicide in Euripides’ *Medea* differ from those of Sethe, the connections are there. As the tale of *Medea* has fascinated throughout history, the act of murdering one’s children

are still acts that captivate and attract readers. Medea seeks to hurt the one who hurts her, Sethe's goal is to save her children from the abuse and violence she has experienced herself in years as a slave. Medea and Sethe both place two mothers in horrible situations that challenge the roles of women, the mores of the society in which they live and their dilemmas. Mothers making choices affecting the lives of their children are natural, however, Medea and Sethe make decisions to end their children's lives. The question becomes if they choose their acts based on the well-being of their children or for more self-centered concerns. Sethe would argue that her choices were based on the notion that she was saving her children from harm, and as a result, acting out of motherly love and could, therefore, be argued to be of utilitarian values. Even so, the harm and complete lack of happiness she ultimately provides for Beloved would be dismissed by consequentialist views. Medea, the vengeful wife seeking revenge for her husband's betrayal, finds her only option to commit maternal filicide. Although Medea does not evoke sympathy for her actions because of her vengeful murders, the mythic character still receives some form of understanding for her broken heart and to some degree makes her choice reasonable or understandable. Sethe and her daughter Beloved, the returned ghost and mixed metaphor of the enslaved past, reconnect and symbolize the complicated mother-daughter relations denied by the constitution of slavery. Motivated by Sethe's far too fierce love, the return of the baby ghost eventually leads to Sethe's confrontation with her past.

In "Beyond Empathy: Narrative Distancing and Ethics in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*", Molly A. Travis examines the 'transformative difference' in the reading of Morrison's *Beloved* and Coetzee's *Disgrace*. Travis argues that "the most ethical act of literature is not the bridging of gaps through the creation of empathy, but the articulation and keeping alive of intractable ethical questions about the asymmetrical relationship between self and other" (232). Travis refers to Derek Attridge's description of the singularity of literature as a "transformative difference", and the premise proposed by Attridge in *The Singularity of Literature*, that literature has inhabited the place of the other (232). Using Attridge's proposition of otherness, Travis argues that the two novels are suitable for students not only for their literary merits but because they can function as a supplement to other literary works that students have received previously. By focusing on the narrative distancing in these two novels and how "they confront historical traumas and foreground the contested relationship between empathy and ethics[...]", the aim of the analysis

will be to discover how these two novels can both complement each other, but also create room for further ethical discussions (Travis 231).

Travis argues for the importance of being open to otherness in relation to literature and ethics, and that it is not necessarily the ability to empathize with the other, but to position the reader as a judge and not as a friend. The argument relies on the notion that the reader can be open to otherness, as she states: “It is only through openness to alterity that there can be an ethical relation. Without a relation to that which interrupts our epistemological projects to contain the other, there would be no ethics” (Travis 232). From a didactic point of view, this openness is aligned with the values implemented in the Core Elements, which emphasize the tolerance and respect of other human beings in meetings with different cultures, yet the challenge becomes the acquiring of that competence to truly appreciate the differences and attempt to look beyond our limitations of empathy.

4 John Maxwell Coetzee’s *Disgrace*

‘[...] what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not.

It is my business, mine alone’

‘This place being what?’

‘This place being South Africa’ (Coetzee, 112).

This purely private matter, the violent rape which also made Lucy pregnant, David Lurie’s daughter, becomes a representation of a larger ethical discussion in *Disgrace* and what Travis argues to be the most ethical act of literature: the articulation of ethical questions about self and the other. In one of the conversations between Lucy and David, Lucy implies that the changes in the country have also changed how one reacts to violence against whites and that she pays the price for the unjust doings of her predecessors.

“David, I can’t run my life according to whether or not you like what I do. Not any more. You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who doesn’t make an appearance until

halfway through. Well contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not minor, I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions” (198).

Lucy’s thoughts and statements in this example show how David Lurie’s understanding of himself enables him to think less of others and the different major and minor characters, himself being a major, also shed light on how he ended up in disgrace. He is self-centred, unable to understand that he is not related to everything that happens. It also expresses a notion of owning and possessing others, as if he can decide for others, in this case, his daughter, what he thinks best for her. The name ‘Disgrace’ suggests events ethically and morally debatable as it can mean shame, dishonour, degradation or scandal. It indicates that there will be actions that may be regarded as wrong and will bring infamy. Sexual assault, molestation, rape, dog-killing, and violence are all important themes brought up in this powerful and morally debatable novel.

4.1 Coetzee and the historical background

Born in Cape Town in 1940, John Maxwell Coetzee is a well-known South African writer, famous for his novels portraying the post-apartheid societies of South Africa. In *Disgrace*, the recurring dilemma of what South Africa’s future will be is a larger ethical concern throughout the novel, leaving the reader with an ambiguous notion of redemption:

‘Yes, I agree, its humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity.’

‘Like a dog.’

‘Yes, like a dog’ (205).

Coetzee’s placement of *Disgrace* in a political context is what enables the characters to function as products of their new country as well as symbols of the old. Coetzee is often praised for his ability to grasp the world as it is and portrays what some argue to be the reality of life in South Africa in the post-apartheid regime. After the abolishment of the apartheid

regime, the people of South Africa were finally equal by law, and the recovery and reconciliation in the decades to follow have been difficult, if not impossible for us standing on the outside, to understand. So, to be able to educate and shed light on the real issues that are happening and have happened in South Africa, this novel is extraordinary in its ability to provide that insight. Unarguably, one of the most significant examples of Human Rights coming to life is found in the history of South Africa and its people, yet the issues that arise in the new political climate and a modern nonracial democracy should not be undermined. The challenges in a newfound democratic state must be considered with the seriousness it demands. In comparison, the U.S. history of slavery is still a sensitive subject to those affected by it. Coetzee aims at grasping the world as it is, whereas Morrison explains in an interview with Nellie McKay that “I don’t want to give my readers something to swallow. I want to give them something to feel and think about” (421). The authors’ goal of evoking feelings or grasping the world are vivid in their novels, and through their – very different – literary style, they succeed in provoking the readers.

Chou states that; “[t]hroughout his career, if not necessarily always pleasing the reader, Coetzee has more importantly engaged and provoked the reader”. The debate regarding *Disgrace* seems almost endless, but Chou comments on the criteria of evoking a feeling or response in the reader. By using dilemmas and incidents that provoke the reader *Disgrace* is especially suitable for education at an upper level, as the novel engages students to debate what morality exists in society and to which values we seek to justify our actions. By portraying the complex situation among the people in South Africa who are dealing with the issues of restructuring to a new democracy and the changes that includes.

The African National Congress (the leading political party in South Africa) criticized *Disgrace* because they believed that it portrayed stereotypical behavior of colored people as violent rapists, and as discussed by Travis in “Beyond Empathy: Narrative Distancing and Ethics”, the critics agreed “that it was the wrong kind of book for the new ‘Rainbow Nation’ of South Africa” (238). The statements on the importance and value of *Disgrace* will undoubtedly be met with disagreement amongst Africans who make out this novel as racist and stereotypical. *Disgrace* has received critique for not giving the African people the hope and optimism they needed at the time, and only portraying black men as violent rapists (Beyad and Keramatfar, “Subjection and Survival in J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*”). As discussed by Beyad and Keramatfar, the ANC ignored the issue of widespread problems of rape and

abuse of women in South Africa by solely focusing on the racism in the novel, and it further problematizes their ethical ground when the ANC encourages to portray only positive images of society. Even though the ANC criticized this novel for being racist, the importance and value of teaching the novel are clear from an educational aspect: we must discuss and confront such issues of facing views and opinions. The act of looking “beyond empathy” challenges us as readers in meeting with otherness. We must still aim to understand and discuss the societies and characters in which we are very different and distant from.

As discussed by Marais, the critique of Coetzee as racist is not legitimate, because what the novel does is an attempt to show the issues apparent in interhuman contacts in the post-apartheid society. Marais states that “[...] the novel appears to suggest that post-apartheid society, like apartheid society, is defined by an absence of ethical action and that recent political changes have not affected the base of sociality, that is, the way in which the individual conceives of his/her relation to his/her fellow human beings” (“The Possibility of Ethical Action” 58-59). Travis concurs with Marais in the critique of ANC’s view of Coetzee’s novel, and asks how it can be the wrong book for South Africa when the novel deals with the refusal of humanness “and the failure of mutuality, empathy, and the ability to imagine oneself as the other” (238). The relation to other human beings is what Travis also refers to in her discussion of the ‘transformative difference’ in the novels *Beloved* and *Disgrace*, and how we in encounters with the other have to look ‘beyond empathy’ to be able to react to ethical questions.

4.2 Rape and sexism in *Disgrace*

The personality of the main protagonist David Lurie is exposed in the novel’s opening sentence, as his first trait, is his sexuality: “For a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well” (Coetzee 1). The notion that sex is a problem to be solved illustrates the elevated conception Lurie has of himself and that he is the provider of the solution. He uses prostitutes to experience affection, and he is confidently aware of his immoral actions as he describes his sentiments as “complacent, even uxorious” (2). He does not dwell either on the morally debatable age-difference between himself and the woman he pays to have sex with him, he somewhat excuses it and explains that “technically he is old enough to be her father; but then, technically, one can be a father at twelve. He has

been on her books for over a year; he finds her entirely satisfactory” (1). The smug and smart justification for his actions is what characterizes his personality the most, he is reluctant to acknowledge his mistakes, and he relies on the confidence in his appeal to women throughout the years. “If he looked at a woman in a certain way, with a certain intent, she would return his look, he could rely on that. That was how he lived; for years, for decades, that was the backbone of his life” (7). The possession of power is with the man who can only look at a woman to get his way, and Lurie appears confidently aware of his promiscuous self:

“He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity. He had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in bars on the waterfront or at the Club Italia; he slept with whores” (7).

The ambiguous role of masculinity and male power in the novel is especially visible in the comparison of Lurie’s actions to young women, and his reactions to the rape of his daughter. In the aftermath of the accusations against him by Melanie, Lurie refuses to apologize directly or recognize his own mistakes. One of the most pressing and inflicting issues of the novel is the attack and rape of David’s daughter Lucy, and to David, the incomprehensible behavior Lucy shows in the time after the attack. Lucy explains that it felt personal, personal hate towards her. David replies with the following: “A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn’t. It came down from the ancestors” (156). Lucy’ and David’s experiences from the offensive attack become a metaphor for the wrongdoings and unjust treatment of the colored people in SA, and the notion that it “came back from the ancestors” imply that this rape is almost a revenge or some inevitable punishment. In education, this can also create a doorway into a discussion on moral standards and how justice is served in the modern society.

The old white regime of South Africa represented through Professor David Lurie, stands as a contrast to the new generation of South Africans that his daughter Lucy represents. Lucy is an excellent example of how the change in the country has broken with previous established and conventional ideas of the South African community; she is living alone, is white and has moved away from the metropolitan city of Cape Town.

Slavery and apartheid stem from the same perverted ethics and degradation of human beings, and connections between characters in both novels are present as we can notice a

violation of blacks from the white man in both. The Africans' function as resources in the capitalist system of the white man is one of the worst examples of dehumanization of the fellow man and using man as a means to an end. The combination of slavery and apartheid are deadly to the individual and to the societies that experience the violation of the principles of international human rights. The absence of ethical action argued by Marais is what causes the issues of post-apartheid South Africa within the relationships among the people, which have not yet assimilated to the change which includes the genuine appreciation of the value of equal worth.

4.3 Racism and possession of power

David Lurie is a glaring representation of the privileged white generation in South Africa, a heterosexual, middle-class man with a stable job and good health – he will not face discrimination because of who he is. Despite the fact that apartheid has ended at this point, the white population still holds a societal advantage in most, if not all, areas of society. The process of becoming a democratic society and country proves to be a challenge, not only for people such as David Lurie, who must experience that people with less power than him will oppose him, but also for Petrus, who must adapt to a situation in which he possesses the same fundamental rights as David Lurie. For Lurie, the journey of falling into disgrace centers around coming to terms with these changed conditions.

Mattos (2012) argues that “what is so unnerving about *Disgrace* is that it does not offer a solution, an easy moral lesson, to the conflicts South Africa is dealing with in its recent history; instead, it paints the new order with bleak colors that the official apparatus cannot correct as easily as desired.” (34). The fact that the novel does not imply an answer, or a lesson is related to its suitability for acquiring an ethical awareness for students of English. Mattos also argues for the historical importance of *Disgrace* because of its representation of the historical changes, the racial tension between blacks and whites, and the importance of land in the power play (34). The theme of racial issues is hardly ever mentioned in the novel explicitly, which creates much room for interpretation and discussion, such as in this example of a conversation between David and Bev:

It gets harder all the time, Bev Shad once said. Harder, yet easier too. One gets used to things getting harder; one ceases to be surprised that what used to be as hard as hard can be grows harder yet (219).

This quote refers to the dog-killing that Bev and David do regularly, but this is a quote that can also be seen in the light of the people of South Africa. When times could not seem to force more strength from the most oppressed, the liberation and freeing initiates another fight: to disrupt stereotypes. After the tremendous hardships of an apartheid regime, one could imagine and dream that the issues of oppression and discrimination would vanish overnight. An inclusive democracy does not arise from nothing, and especially not directly from the opposite.

The ethical dimensions of the dog-killing are also an essential aspect of Lurie's personal development throughout the novel, and to some readers, exceptionally provocative. The abuse of dogs appears to be a much more disturbing concern to him than the abuse of the fellow man. The ethical issues of post-apartheid South Africa are juxtaposed to the moral issues of the role of animals and how humans mistreat them. When talking to Lucy about what happened to him when he was let go from the University, he compares his actions to that of a dog: "A dog will accept the justice of that: a beating for a chewing. But desire is another story. No animal will accept the justice of being punished for following its instincts" (90). David Lurie indirectly justifies his misbehavior by proposing that he, in his endeavors with Melanie, simply followed his instincts and consequently reducing himself to an amoral and irresponsible beast. Throughout the narrative David Lurie's relationship to the dogs changes as his compassion for them grows:

"He and Bev do not speak. He has learned by now, from her, to concentrate all his attention on the animal they are killing, giving it what he no longer has difficulty in calling by its proper name: love" (219).

The growing compassion for the dogs works as an explicit illustration of the continued change he undergoes. However, as Lurie recognizes a sense of change within, he is reluctant to embrace the change and what it implies, as he thinks that "This is not what he came for – to be stuck in the back of beyond, warding off demons, nursing his daughter, attending to a

dying enterprise. If he came for anything it was to gather himself, gather his forces. Here he is losing himself day by day” (121). All his compassion and devotion to the stray dogs can also be seen as an act of grace, despite his ironic approach to the dealings with the dead dogs as he describes it as “little enough, less than little: nothing” (220). In the novel’s final sentences, Lurie presents ambivalence towards the crippled dog:

“Bearing him in his arms like a lamb, he re-enters the surgery. ‘I thought you would save him for another week,’ says Bev Shaw.

‘Are you giving him up?’

‘Yes I am giving him up’” (220).

The dogs represent invaluable life to Lurie, and his act of grace is driven by compassion beyond self-interest. To Lurie, the treatment of the dogs causes far more devotion and love than his treatment of other human beings, and in Kantian terms, he appears blind to his treatment of people as a means to an end and fails in treating humans with the respect and worth they inhabit from being human. Travis argues for the unethical character of David Lurie stating that “The fact that Lurie’s motivation stems from the personal need of an ageing academic and lothario -elitist, racist, and sexist – makes him anything but an ethical exemplar” (242). Lurie himself explains the incinerator work as an act, if not for the dogs, “For himself, then. For his idea of the world, a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing” (146). Attridge concurs with Travis on the unethical character Lurie is only moved by “a profound personal need to preserve the ethical integrity, the singularity of the self” (J. M Coetzee 185). Lurie’s altruistic work with the dogs subscribes to Kant’s moral theory of the sanctity of life, but still the humanitarian treatment of the dogs appears provocative and misunderstood amidst all the dehumanization around him. The larger intractable ethical dilemma between self and the other are pivotal to the empathetic reading of David Lurie. The discomfort in reading the narrative of *Disgrace*, as argued by Travis in “Beyond Empathy”, is what keeps the ethical questions alive.

5 Didactic Perspectives – Teaching *Beloved* and *Disgrace*

Professional competence of pedagogical theory, didactic expertise, and methodological variety facilitate the best learning outcome for the students in the process of teaching the complex subject of ethics and ethical implications in literature. The didactic theoretical background is significant to the learning outcome for the students. In addition to the national curriculum, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages can be found useful, as well as pedagogical theories of learning to adapt the education to best suit the individual class. The teacher is responsible for transforming the curricula into teaching methods and programs, and in this work, she has to incorporate and take into consideration the many different aspects of didactic work. These aspects are often explained through the didactic relation model in which assessment, activities, content, goals, contextual factor and readiness for learning are all important and related to the activity of teaching and learning (Lyngsnes & Rismark 86). The students' different expectations, knowledge, experience, background, and skills are all critical to the teacher's evaluation of how to attain the goals of the education. Consequently, the education will have to be adapted to the different qualities in a classroom and the teacher has to take into consideration the variable premises.

With novels such as *Beloved* and *Disgrace*, the teacher must consider the class and their background knowledge on the historical background of these novels, as well as their suitability for the course. How the teacher should angle the education and differentiate her methods to meet the variety of students and competence levels in a regular class, depends highly on the students' ability to read longer texts, their ability to discuss or write more extensive analysis and so on. Another important aspect is that if a student has a background of trauma or incidents related to the topics discussed, it can affect their reading of the quite troubling issues in the novels. For some students, discussing themes related to their own lives can be disturbing or especially tricky for them to participate in, and the teacher must then be aware of that. Based on the subject curriculum and competence aims in the new and old curriculum, the didactic implications of teaching these novels will be thoroughly discussed in this chapter.

On education and ethics, James R. Rest argues for the importance of discussing ethics with students in "A Psychologist Looks at the Teaching of Ethics" (1982). He points out that

“it is useful to think of morality as an ensemble of processes, rather than a single, unitary process” (29). To develop a moral framework, he lists four components that must be considered:

- (1) How does the person interpret the situation and how does he or she view any possible action as affecting people’s welfare;
- (2) how does the person figure out what the morally ideal course of action would be;
- (3) how does he or she decide what to do;
- and (4) does the person implement what he or she intends to do (29).

Rest argues that moral development entails proficiency in these components and that moral education shall be concerned with all these processes (29). The ability to perceive and interpret a situation in which other people’s welfare is affected can be difficult because our own emotions and ability to feel empathy plays in on our decision making. These aspects of teaching morality and ethics are relevant to this discussion because of the intended focus on using literature in the process of learning morality, and also the more significant connections to developmental learning throughout the years of education. It is not the intention to attain the goals of educating ethically aware students in the scope of a few months or weeks, but a long-term goal in all subjects of education. The developmental aspect relates to the didactic implications that follow with teaching the novels *Beloved* and *Disgrace*, the process of learning to act with ethical awareness necessitates a process in which the many components must be given attention to. These and other didactic aspects will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

As discussed in chapter two on Ethics and literature, the notion of a literary ‘lawless’ space becomes an essential aspect from a didactic point of view. Consequently, the teacher’s role and methods of teaching literature and engaging students in reading and understanding become vital to its success. Literature presents a representational approach of contemplation to learning about ethics and ethical dilemmas one might have to overcome in one’s own life. Therefore, teaching students to read literature in a manner that can create room for new aspects of life, as they can position themselves in extreme opposing situations from their own lives, might be the foundation for being able to act with ethical awareness in situations in real life at a later point.

Both *Beloved* and *Disgrace* are complex, challenging, and advanced both linguistically and as literary readings. It is therefore essential to adjust the education and the teaching of these two novels to the level of competence the students are at. This is a crucial part of all education and is often considered one of the significant factors to students' success and sense of accomplishment. Concerning the novels, the teacher must assess if the students are at a level of which they can comprehend and fully understand the novels, and if not, there are of course many other novels that raise substantial ethical questions which can be relevant to use. In this thesis though, I argue for the value of using difficult novels such as *Beloved* and *Disgrace* because they possess extreme ethical dilemmas which can be of great learning on many levels for students. In addition to the possibilities of learning from the ethical dilemmas, the novels also respond in topics, theme, and forms to the aims of ethical awareness and democracy in education.

Whom we sympathize with or feel affection for is at the core of the debate regarding ethical questions, yet if we are to follow a categorical moral imperative, or be true to ethical values, the treatment of people should be the same, no matter how disgusting or repulsive their opinions, attitudes or beliefs appear to us. Campaigning against capital punishment and miscarriage of justice is harder if the inmate is a detestable, evil person who does not regret, rather than if s/he is an inmate who is a likable, sympathetic person with whom we can empathize with. Both Lurie and Sethe are complex characters and the reader may not empathize with Lurie's moral code and sexual transgressions and Sethe's infanticide, but the ethical principles of these characters and the many moral dilemmas of the two novels trigger ethical awareness of individual conduct and abusive social structures beyond identification and empathy. The 'transformative difference' of other's opinions or beliefs is what challenges our conception of reality and our ethical ground. Through working with novels that portray this transformative difference, the students will be given an exercise in thinking and debating ethical dilemmas that go beyond empathy. Thus, the conventional idea of the reader identifying with the narrator and protagonist will be challenged as literature 'beyond empathy' stretches the works' ability to provoke empathetic feelings, as the reader is presented with ethical situations that require reflection.

5.1 Basic skills, Core Elements and competence aims in LK06 and LK2020

The new subject curriculum English for upper secondary education in the Knowledge Promotion Reform 2020, the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training emphasizes on English as a “work language” (1). The new focus on English as a ‘work language’ also includes a decrease and minimalization of English literature and literary competence, which raises important questions related to the role of literature in education, especially in upper secondary education. It is important to emphasize that the subject curriculum is still out for comments and has not been completed or implemented yet. The signals the draft sends out are essential for teachers to react to as it indicates what the subject curriculum highlights and hence also diminishes. Literature has historically been a significant component in English education, yet over time as curricula have focused less on specifying which literary works that should be taught, the importance of literature has been quite constant throughout the previous curricula. Students in Norway have a higher level of English than other foreign languages and reading both fiction and non-fiction is an important activity in the English classroom (Fenner 215). How should the goals of educating democratic citizens who are ethically aware be followed through and attained if the focus in education is mostly on linguistic terms such as grammar and spelling? The idea of English as a ‘work language’ is understandable, yet the outcome of eluding the importance of literature and focusing on producing well-written and grammatically correct students with less cultural competence is a possible consequence.

Another element crucial to the global subject that English is, the interdisciplinary subject “sustainable development”, has been removed from the first draft of the subject curriculum. The first draft included the explanation of sustainable development as important to English because it “facilitates the ability to obtain and critically assess English information from different sources. The student will have the opportunity to express and cooperate locally and globally. The subject will enable awareness and comprehension of the issue and the ability to make responsible choices” (Ulvestad, translated by me). As commented by Ulvestad, it is a disgrace that such an important aspect, not only of society today but of the relevance to the English subject has been removed from the subject curriculum. Interdisciplinary topics are part of connecting and providing a broader framework for the students to make connections and insight across different subjects.

The interdisciplinary aspect of teaching these novels also include other subjects and the possibility of covering competence aims in several subjects. In the second year of upper secondary education, the students should learn to “present a historical person and discuss how aspects of society affected this person’s actions” and after the third year: “explore different historical presentations of an incident and discuss the author’s approach and debate” (History subject curriculum). In Religion and Ethics, the students are going to be able to “explain essential ethical terms and theories and recognize and assess different methods for ethical thinking” as well as “participate in a dialogue on current ethical issues” (Religion and Ethics subject curriculum). The emphasis on ethical awareness as a core value should be treated as an interdisciplinary aspect of education, that it not only requires but also arranges for by including the overarching element of ethical awareness.

5.1.1 Competence aims in the new Curricula

The amount of competence aims have been reduced, and the plan opens for specialization in different subjects. The focus is to develop language skills to prepare students for higher level education and future working life. The new subject declares new “core elements”, and for English these are communication, language learning, and meeting with authentic texts. The interdisciplinary subject democracy and citizenship for the subject English involves developing the students’ tolerance and understanding of how we perceive the world depends on our own culture (Hearing English Subject Curriculum). It is stated in the hearing of the subject curriculum that students are expected to learn communicative skills in the language English, but also emphasize the cultural and historical aspects of English-speaking countries. It is further proposed that to be able to learn English, communicate with others, and experience meetings with different cultures opens up for the opportunity to interpret the world in different ways. “Through working with English as a subject the students will gain insight in the different shapes and expressions of democracy and that we cannot take democracy for granted” (Hearing English Subject Curriculum).

At the first year of upper secondary education the new competence aims that are relevant to teaching these novels in relation to ethics and morals in the new Knowledge Promotion Reform (LK2020) are quite many and involve a wide range of aspects, the students are for example going to be able to “listen to and be open to other viewpoints and use and follow up on others’ contributions to discussions” and “analyze different problems for

discussion in English films, games and other cultural expressions” (Hearing English Subject Curriculum). Both *Beloved* and *Disgrace* have been adapted into film, and thus proposes a comparative and digital approach to the novels. A second aspect of this competence aim is that in a debate or discussion, it is important for the students to learn the ultimate goal, which is not to convince others that you are right, but to try to learn someone something new or learn or understand an opposing viewpoint yourself. In a democratic society the importance of freedom of speech and the ability to freely speak your mind and participate in public debate is a vital point. Further, the students are expected to learn how to “express themselves critically and in a reflected manner in meeting with current issues” and “read and discuss different texts about cultural differences and social conditions” (Hearing English Subject Curriculum). By critically discussing current issues, the students will have to adjust to different cultural aspects of the issues as well as being able to review and use sources critically and with a sense of interest. The competence aims that are directly connected to literature states that students shall “discuss and reflect upon content and literary techniques in different literary works” and “read and discuss recent literature, also literature of their own choosing”. The new focus in this subject curriculum is that there is more focus on using literature of their own choosing, as well as the emphasis on recent literature.

In the second year of upper secondary education the students shall, among other aims, be able to “read and make use of different English texts, including scholarly and literary, as a starting point for own language learning and reflection” and “show compassion, independent reflection and critical thinking in analysis of current issues and debates in English speaking countries”. The competence aims have been adjusted to their expected level of competence after year one, and now include both scholarly and literary texts, as well as the goal of empathy, to show compassion and critical thinking in an analysis requires a student that is reflected and able to view issues from different sides and adjust to different debates.

After the final year of upper secondary school, students are going to “show independent reflections and critical thinking in reading and discussing different texts” and “interpret and discuss different literary texts connected to culture and society” (Hearing English Subject Curriculum). Related to educating democratic citizens competence aim to “immerse oneself in a subject connected to English-speaking countries’ language, cultural and/or political influence in the world” becomes relevant. To learn about political influence or cultures do not solely include present news but includes historical events and its relevance to society today.

In addition, the medium in which students should learn about subjects of cultural influence should not be limited to textbook excerpts, but also include authentic texts from the country of origin. These aspects are also relevant to the aim of being able to “immerse oneself in a subject connected to social or political aspects in one or several English-speaking countries by using English authentic sources in a critical manner” (Hearing English Subject Curriculum).

5.1.2 Knowledge Promotion Reform 2006 (LK06)

As noted by Fenner in *Teaching English in the 21st Century* the challenge for the new curriculum will be to create relevant competence aims which “promote dialogue between different cultures through the reading of literature” (227). In the previous subject curriculum LK06, which is still in use as the new reform will be implemented in 2020, the role of literature is stated in the purpose of the subject:

Literary texts in English can instil a lifelong joy of reading and a deeper understanding of others and of oneself. [...] Oral, written and digital texts, films, music and other cultural forms of expression can further inspire personal expressions and creativity (1).

Literature is further emphasized in the main area of written communication and the area of culture, society and literature, which states that it “involves working with and discussing expository texts, literary texts and cultural forms of expression from different media” and is “essential to develop knowledge about, understanding of and respect for the lives and cultures of other people” (English Subject Curriculum 2). The competence aims after Vg1/vg2 state clearly that the students shall be able to “discuss and elaborate on different types of English language literary texts from different parts of the world” and “discuss and elaborate on English language films and other forms of cultural expressions from different media” (English Subject Curriculum 10). As pointed out by Fenner, the fact that the focus in the competence aims relies on the student’s ability to discuss and elaborate on the texts is essential to the student’s learning outcome, and not the traditional non-fictional focus of answering questions about and be able to write summaries of texts (227).

5.2 Intercultural competence

Cultural competence in English education in Norway has undergone some changes in the past century and has gone from centering around learning “about” other cultures, to become a part of the development of democratic individuals who can communicate across cultural boundaries (Fenner & Skulstad, *Teaching English in the 21st Century: Central Issues in English Didactics*, 68-69). One of the aims of English education is to increase insight into other cultures and in extension also develop intercultural competence. This includes learning about the country, society and culture in question, and in the latest English curriculum from 2013 the students shall learn about “central topics connected to society, literature and other cultural expressions” (English Subject Curriculum). The curriculum also intends that students are to work with novels, short stories, poems and plays, and the main subject “Culture, society and literature” involves learning about and working with literary texts and cultural expressions from different media, which is “central to develop knowledge about and respect for others’ ways of living and cultures” (English Subject Curriculum). Knowledge of cultural expressions and traditions within the country is essential for many reasons, and in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* the European Council emphasize the importance of ‘interculturality’ and argues that the knowledge of the other “[...] enable the individual to develop an enriched, more complex personality and an enhanced capacity for further language learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences” (43). The Common European Framework further describes that knowledge about shared values and beliefs, religious beliefs, taboos and assumed common history are essential to the development of intercultural communication, which successively also implies that knowledge of such communication is also essential to the development of intercultural competence (11).

Reading literature and working with its contents can therefore be justified not only by the possible language learning of the reading experience, but also by the method of dialogue, by creating a sense of understanding of the ‘other’ and unfamiliar and “the alterity that pushes readers beyond empathy” (Travis 232). Intercultural competence is further important to avoid an excessive use of essentialism in the English language classroom from an outside perspective on culture. These areas of English education are involved in a larger discussion on how we teach ‘culture’ and how we portray countries and people in a classroom. Such questions are undoubtedly important to teachers, students, democracy and universal ethics, and should be reflected in the education, and as discussed by Lund in

Fremmedspråksdidaktikk, is potentially an issue when referring to the “country’s culture” as an unambiguous entity (173). To be able to teach the complexity of a culture is important seen in relation to the goal of educating democratic citizens, as they are expected to be able to communicate with others and respect other’s values or beliefs. Following Lund on the discussion on culture and the teaching of cultural aspects, Ibsen & Wiland argues that interaction is essential to aesthetic learning because “literature, with its ambiguity, offers potential for valuable aesthetic learning experiences, and it becomes a meeting place for different interpretations of different cultural norms and traditions (143). Through the interaction with *Beloved* and *Disgrace* readers are confronted with the haunting of the real that challenge the capacity of relating to otherness, and the novels’ “alterity that pushes readers beyond empathy” (Travis 232). This empathy has previously been linked to the reader’s ability to identify with the narrator and/or character, yet as argued by Travis, the relation to otherness can create a “transformative difference” which emphasizes the readers ability to reflect upon the ethical questions the novels pose.

5.3 Literature in education and literary competence

Literary competence in the English Classroom is a complex area in which teachers have to make decisions regarding which theoretical background for reading is best suitable for their students, as well as incorporating curriculum plans in the education. The term “literary competence” stems from Jonathan Culler in *Structuralist Poetics. Structuralism Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (1975). Culler describes this competence as a fundamental knowledge on conventional literary rules, and as Wiland has pointed to, one of the most common mistakes are made when teachers rely on the textbook to provide a recipe for reading literature. She argues that this leads to “sabotage the aesthetic reading by introducing exercises and questions that are incompatible with the aesthetic reading attitude (“How to Develop Literary Competence in the English Classroom”). In such an approach, the aesthetic value of the novel will be ignored. When approaching literary works in education, an important aspect to remember is to approach the works as what they are – literature. It is not the same as approaching non-fictional texts in the class textbook which often focuses on learning facts, vocabulary and linguistic structures. The focus with this classroom program is to learn and practice interpretation, reflection and analysis. Literature should not be seen as an

instrument for learning, but as a “cultural artefact with an aesthetic value in its own right”, and it is of vital importance that both the teacher and students recognize this (Fenner 217). The view of literature not only as an instrument for learning but with aesthetic value can be seen in connection to Kant’s humanity formula of never treating humans as a means to an end. The value literature inhabits for portraying historical, personal and cultural representations of society and the world throughout becomes an important aspect of using literature in education.

Students have to stretch their imagination, critical thinking and ethical awareness across the transformative difference in encounters with the Kantian type of literature as aesthetically autonomous. With easy readers, adapted texts and pedagogical text books, the value of literature is corrupted and reduced to fit a hypothesized and expected level of learning. Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of adapting the task and learning situation to the actual developmental level of the child, as opposed to testing students to be able plan education to a level where the students should be (Ibsen 140). In connection to Vygotsky and the proximal zone of development, the use literature in education is especially suitable to meet students at their level and to challenge the limits of transformative difference. The proximal zone of development is the place where students can learn with the help of others, and the use of literature can therefore work as a gateway into that next level through crossing the lines of individual work and expanding the scope. Thus, the importance of adapting the task and learning situation to the developmental level of the child as opposed to outlining a level where the students should be is Vygotsky’s crucial point. On language learning and the aesthetic experience, Ibsen argues – based on Vygotsky’s line of thought into foreign language learning – that aesthetic experience is not only the aesthetic language elements, rhythm and tonality, but also the “satisfaction of being able to receive and transmit concepts, ideas and opinions” (142-43). Ibsen argues for the possibility of intercultural competence in relation to reading literature in foreign language education:

With a new language, you put on a new language ego, you get a new identity, and within the fiction of another language you achieve a distance to your own homely and normal self. Simultaneously, you experience yourself between two cultures and thereby you create an internal meeting place for cultures to be examined. This

imaginary culture clash will stretch your own potential, your *zone of proximal development* (143).

Following Vygotsky's theory on zone of proximal development, Ibsen argues for the experience for students in English language education to connect with other cultures by distancing oneself from the "homely and normal self" providing an alternative meeting place. This is what is unique about English education, compared to other foreign languages, the student's high proficiency enables the education to comprehend more than just language and linguistic aspects and can be the foundation for learning on many levels. Learning on several levels in English education can also be seen in relation to the transformative difference argued by Travis, which enables the reader to look beyond empathy to position the reader not as a friend but as a judge of the ethical dilemmas. Through stepping away from the homely and normal self, the readers can expand the experience and challenge the ability to 'otherness'.

Different literary theories have affected the view of literature in education, starting as a means to gain insight into another culture at a time when culture was considered a static entity, and focus centered around becoming acquainted with the target language through reading authentic texts (Fenner 219). As the theories on reader and learner developed, the focus changed towards an intercultural encounter. Literary theory changed in the 19th century to be focused on the relationship between the author and the text, and the goal was to gain insight and "to assist the reader in discovering the so-called message of the text" (Fenner 220). The later part of the 20th century marked the emergence of a new theory that influenced English teaching, namely New Criticism. As discussed by Ibsen, the tradition focused on finding the message in a text and emphasized close reading activities (144). "The teacher, from his or her own literary studies, has the 'right' solution, and in class, he or she spends considerable time explaining to the students how *they* ought to experience the text", yet as Ibsen also argues, the teacher's knowledge is of course an asset, but should not be brought out as a message analysis which can impede the active role of the learner (144). A new approach to literature in the classroom focuses on the importance of the participating reader, emphasizing a dialogue between the text and the reader, and how the experiences and background can be part of determining what's important and how the work is interpreted (Ibsen 144). Further, the teaching of a complex novel would rely on the teacher's involvement which also includes the teacher's view of the importance of literature and the

goals of teaching literature in schools. In addition, the autonomy of literature and its invaluable worth as a source of ethical and moral dilemmas, as well as the possibility of transformative difference, justifies its use in any educational setting or level. Thus, the work of literature should be, in Kantian terms, be used for the value of itself, and not as a pedagogical means to achieve a technical language-learning end. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development opens up for the teacher as scholar and guide in the educational process of experiencing transformative differences through novels.

The new Core Elements and the aims of educating students to become democratic citizens that respect society's democratic form and value respect, tolerance and international human rights, as well as the new goal of ethical awareness and the student's ability to be responsible and reflected human beings in meetings with others, are vital to the complex activity of education. To learn to differentiate between conflicting moral theories, values and to make use of a critical mindset in meeting with obstacles, choices, or dilemmas of varying sort is part of the foundation to life that education is. Ethics, morals, or the foundation of principles one learns throughout education, upbringing from the home, or society includes a set of values. Be it the goal of always treating humans as an end in themselves and never as a means to achieve individual goals, or respect other human beings in that sense, or to consider the needs of the many or happiness of others based on the consequences of one's choices. The continuous encounters with otherness and with transformative difference of ethical dilemmas are fundamental to sustaining democracy from giving in to authoritarian abuse of power and totalitarian tendencies, and the gateway to such encounters are especially suitable through literature. Literature, together with arts, universities and freedom of speech, offers a valuable source for the development and continued existence of ethically responsible democracies.

5.4 Didactic implications and suggestions for classroom activities

Morrison's *Beloved* and Coetzee's *Disgrace* are specimen novels for studying and enabling the students to be exposed to and learn the importance of ethical awareness, the importance of democracy and the transformative difference in literature. A didactic program for doing so needs to take into consideration the didactic and pedagogic theories discussed previously, and also the class size, composition, and competence. Due to the scope of this thesis and the

length of such classroom programs, the discussion of classroom activities will only include some suggestions for classroom activities.

In addition to competence level, the teacher should also consider the students' maturity, as the themes of sexism and sexuality, racism, murder, and abuse can be regarded as too disturbing and harsh. If the teacher decides to work with these novels, she might experience that students appreciate texts that challenge the mind to grow and reflect. Approaching these works might also require input-work before reading depending on the student's knowledge about the historical backgrounds of the novels. If the class has recently worked with, e.g. the Civil Rights Movement this would be a suitable time to introduce *Beloved*.

One activity suitable for these novels in a classroom is to read selected chapters from both novels and to discuss them in class or smaller groups, focusing on the ethical dilemmas of the novels. Reading chosen chapters could be divided into weekly reading assignments and can be paired with journal notes for a weekly class-discussion. The journal notes can be assigned as an open assignment or exist of set questions that enable critical thinking or value the aesthetic aspects of the novels. If choosing a question-based chapter journal, the questions should be authentic and therefore engender answers that are not predetermined. If used in an interdisciplinary project including history class and religion and ethics, the questions given should also include ethical theory and aspects for further discussions on ethics. Ethical dilemmas are frequently present in both novels and should be emphasized in the chapter selection in the teaching of these.

As an alternative to individual chapter reading or group discussions, storyline is an activity that includes the class as a group and enables discussions beyond the scope of smaller groups. Storyline is an interdisciplinary, creative, theme-based method of teaching. Concerning these two novels, the activity could consist of choosing one of the main protagonists, either Sethe or Lurie, or one of the historical backgrounds of the two novels. In a trial storyline, or role play, the students will be able to choose character according to their knowledge of the novel. Karlsen et al. (2019) has researched students experiences of using storyline as a method for teaching overarching cross-curricular themes among teacher students. The findings indicate that the students found the method relevant and very educational. A suggestion for further research and education is to use storyline as a method for teaching complex novels, or as an introduction to the novels in an input-phase. In relation to the novels *Beloved* and *Disgrace*, they present and problematize issues that can be useful to

teach creatively and interdisciplinary with an overarching approach to larger issues. The assessment of such a long and in-depth project can be complex, both concerning the question of how the teacher can assess if the students can read, discuss, or act with ethical awareness, but also the fact that the competence aims can be broad in their definitions. Any suggestions of teaching these novels and the ethical dilemmas must be adjusted to the class, but the possibilities for aesthetic appreciation, ethical discussions, and democratic discourse are immeasurable.

5.5 Further research

The amount of research on the use of ‘difficult’ and complex novels such as *Beloved* and *Disgrace* in education in Norway, or even Scandinavia, is insufficient in terms of literary education and didactics. Students in Norway and other neighboring countries have a high level of competence in English and are very able to read and use literature. With the new Core Elements and the focus on democracy and ethical awareness, the education system will have to adapt to the questions of how we are going to teach and educate for that goal. A continued focus on PISA testing and other exams to measure and follow the progress of Norwegian students have been widely debated against among teachers in Norway. Students are experiencing stress at an early age, and the learning goals seem to have changed from being centered around one student’s progress to an entire class, school, or county’s development in national measures. In a broader sense, the impact of a reduced focus on aesthetics and practical subjects in schools should not be underestimated. A new smaller focus on English as a cultural, literary subject, and more focus on English as a “work language” have consequences we do not yet know of. Being able to progress as a critical thinker, express a creative mind, and becoming an empathetic human being necessitates the room and possibility to immerse oneself in creative aspects of every subject in school. A classroom program which includes the use of *Beloved* and *Disgrace* should also be further investigated in light of the new interdisciplinary values and the emphasis on ethical awareness as an essential aspect of all education. Further, the possibilities for learning and the use of ethical dilemmas in education has not received substantial research, and a classroom program which includes ethical awareness and democratic citizenship should be researched further.

In Kant’s categorical imperative the value of the rational human mind should not be undermined, and never reduced to a means to an end - and consequently by reducing

education to teaching for skills only - will become exactly that. The aspects of critical thinking and ethical meditation, as well as literature as an imaginative artistic form of expression, will be deprived of its significance and value. Consequently, the new introduction of interdisciplinary subjects that are based on democratic values such as welfare and sustainable development must be followed up and analyzed to discover which degree it provides benefits for students in their education. Further, the use of ethical discussions in other subjects than Religion and Ethics, and KRLE (Christianity, Religion, Life Stance and Ethics) in lower secondary education, should be investigated further and thoroughly to adapt to the new goal of democracy in all subjects of education. Ethics, democracy, and education are connected through their relevance to society, the values in which we base our democracies on, and the aim of providing students with a sense of decorum.

6 Conclusion

Literature is important to any democracy because novels inhabit both an aesthetic aspect and they present different ethical situations and dilemmas across cultures and people. The complexity of ethical dilemmas and ethical and moral theory that bear upon people at all times is of considerable significance to our understanding of ourselves and others. Further, literature is vital to any democracy because it inhabits an opportunity to learn, reflect and familiarize oneself with other human beings at a different time and place in history and other areas today. It enables critical thinking and the creative mind, as well as provoking an empathy beyond the traditional scope, the understanding for different people and cultures, and thus literature can be the gateway to ethical awareness. Moral dilemmas and ethical principles frequently challenge one's identity, social background, and conventional mores. The ability to cultivate humanity can create a foundation for a multicultural gateway through literature. The relationship between the self and the other, frequently cause and articulate the ethical aspects of humanity.

In a school system which continues to focus on national testing and European frameworks for knowledge and competence, and in which students experience stress and pressure, the Core Elements can work as a reminder of the values we aim to teach to the next generation. Stating the core values of citizenship, respect, tolerance and human rights, the curriculum must not be forgotten in the everyday education of children and young adults. The

aim of educating individuals with a critical and creative mind and its relation to aesthetic appreciation should be emphasized and followed through in the continued reform of education, and the consequences of reducing practical and creative subjects must be examined further.

Beloved and *Disgrace* are essential to democracy and ethical awareness because they pose and problematize difficult themes, historical events and provoke a sense of morality in the reader. On their own and together they work as great literature of difficult questions and situations, which may not be relevant to every reader, but nevertheless can provoke a feeling or response that may lead to growth or a higher sense of which values are most important. The novels can help students develop ethical awareness through their inflicting and provoking descriptions of the more expanding ethical questions of humanity, who we are and why we value democracy. The teaching of these novels in education in Norway is important because it enables students to develop their intercultural competence as well as contribute to the goal of becoming ethically aware citizens.

The larger themes of racism and sexism are still crucial as they are very much alive in society today, and teachers and other educators must consider the morality which they choose to emphasize in their daily education, as well as attempting to attain a higher goal of providing society with democratic, respectful beings. Knowledge is the foundation for further understanding and will build bridges between different cultures, societies, and people in the future, as it has in the past. The didactic implications for teaching these novels include possible challenges regarding the class or the students' prior knowledge of the subject, as well as the aspect of teaching novels that portray complex narratives, violence and traumas. An interdisciplinary focus is vital to the discussion of teaching ethics and literature in a coherent effort, not only for the language but for the broader aspects of teaching values of respect, tolerance, and critical thinking.

Beloved and *Disgrace* are filled with historical trauma, difficult emotions, and relationships, horrifying scenes of violence, oppression, racism, and sexism, even so, they are convincingly suitable for education because they challenge and interfere with conventional strategies of teaching ethics, literature, democracy, and language. The novels emphasize Kant's categorical imperative to treat humanity with respect and to act with awareness of one's choices. They also problematize a utilitarian approach which considers the greater outcome for the majority although also emphasizes happiness for most people. To understand

and fully comprehend such instances of injustice and oppression requires an openness to other voices and the possibility of looking beyond empathy to face the haunting of the real. The ability to act with ethical awareness is teachable, and the teacher should include both students and works of literature in the process, as well as considering ethical theories to include a dialogue of what that awareness is. Literature is exceptional in its presentation and authentic value of difficult matters and will be of great significance to the students' cultural education.

Works Cited

- Alexander, Larry and Moore, Michael, "Deontological Ethics." The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Winter 2016 edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ethics-deontological/>.
- Andreassen, Bengt-Ove. *Religionsdidaktikk : En Innføring*. 2. utg. ed., Universitetsforl, 2016.
- Attridge, Derek. *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event*. Chicago: U of Cicago P. 2005.
- . *The Singularity of Literature*. Routledge, 2004.
- Attwell, David. "Coetzee's Postcolonial Diaspora." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2011, pp. 9–19.
- . "Race In Disgrace." *Interventions*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2002, pp. 331–341.
- . *J. M. Coetzee : South Africa and the Politics of Writing*. EScholarship, California Digital Library, 2003.
- Beyad, Maryam, and Hossein Keramatfar. "Subjection and Survival in J. M. Coetzee's Disgrace." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 49, no. 2, Mar. 2018, pp. 152–170, doi:[10.1177/0021934717745066](https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934717745066).
- Booth, Wayne C. "Why Banning Ethical Criticism Is a Serious Mistake." *Philosophy and Literature*., vol. 22, no. 2, 1998, pp. 366–393.
- Byatt, A. S. "An American Masterpiece", rev. of *Beloved*, *Guardian*, 16 October 1987. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/1987/oct/16/fiction.asbyatt>. Accessed 24 Feb. 2019.
- Christian, Barbara. "Beloved, She's Ours." *Narrative*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1997, pp. 36–49.
- Coetzee, J. M. *Disgrace*. Vintage, 1999.
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Council of Europe. Modern Languages Division, Strasbourg. Cambridge University Press. 2001. <https://rm.coe.int/1680459f97>.
- Culler, Jonathan. *Structuralist Poetics : Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.
- Donlevy, J Kent, and Keith D Walker. *Working Through Ethics in Education and Leadership: Theory, Analysis, Plays, Cases, Poems, Prose, and Speeches*. SensePublishers, 2011.
- Driver, Julia. *Ethics : the Fundamentals*. Blackwell, 2006.

- Education act. Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education. August 2014.
<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1998-07-17-61>. Accessed 19 Jan. 2019.
- English Subject Curriculum. (ENG1-03). Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. 2013. <https://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/Hovedomraader?lplang=http://data.udir.no/kl06/eng>. Accessed 20 Jan. 2019.
- Fenner, Anne-Brit, and Aud Solbjørg Skulstad. *Teaching English in the 21st Century : Central Issues in English Didactics*. Fagbokforl, 2018.
- Fenner, Anne-Brit. "Approaches to Literature", in *Teaching English in the 21st Century : Central Issues in English Didactics*. Fagbokforl. 219-233. 2018.
- George, Stephen K. *Ethics, Literature, & Theory: an Introductory Reader*. 2nd ed., Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.
- Gregory, Marshall. "Ethical Criticism: What It Is and Why It Matters." *Ethics, Literature, and Theory: an Introductory Reader*, by Stephen K. George, Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, pp. 37–62.
- Habegger-Conti, Jena. "Critical Literacy in the ESL Classroom: Bridging the Gap between Old and New Media." *Nordic Journal of Modern Language Methodology*. 2015. Web.
- Head, Dominic. *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee*. Cambridge: New York : Cambridge UP, 2009. Cambridge Introductions to Literature. Web.
- Hearing English Subject Curriculum. "Læreplan i engelsk programfag - utdanningsprogram for studiespesialisering". Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. 2019. <https://hoering.udir.no/Hoering/v2/338?notatId=675>. Accessed 14 Feb. 2019.
- History Subject Curriculum. (HIS1-02). Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. 2009. https://www.udir.no/kl06/HIS1-02/Hele/Komplett_visning. Accessed 3 May 2019.
- Horvitz, Deborah. "Nameless Ghosts: Possession and Dispossession in Beloved." *Studies in American Fiction* 17.2 (1989): 157-67. Web.
- Hosseini Keramatfar & Maryam Beyad (2018) The worm in the apple: wretched bonds in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, *African Identities*, 16:3, 318-332, DOI: [10.1080/14725843.2018.1439731](https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2018.1439731).
- House, Elizabeth. "Toni Morrison's Ghost: The Beloved Who Is Not Beloved." *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1990, pp. 17–26.

- Ibsen, Elisabeth, and Signe Mari Wiland. *Encounters with Literature : the Didactics of English Literature in the Context of the Foreign Language Classroom in Norway*. Høyskoleforl, 2000.
- Ibsen, Elisabeth. "Meeting Literature in a Foreign Language: An Aesthetic Dimension", *Encounters with Literature : the Didactics of English Literature in the Context of the Foreign Language Classroom in Norway*. 137-185. Høyskoleforl, 2000.
- Johnson, Robert and Cureton, Adam. "Kant's Moral Philosophy." The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Spring 2019 edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL=
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/kant-moral/>.
- Karlsen, et al. "'... But, It's Really Grown on Me, Storyline, as Practical as It Has Been': A Critical Inquiry of Student Teachers' Experiences of The Scottish Storyline Approach in Teacher Education." *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 77, 2019, pp. 150–159.
- Keen, Suzanne. *Empathy and the Novel*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Kilbride, Daniel. "Slavery and Utilitarianism: Thomas Cooper and the Mind of the Old South." *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 59, no. 3, 1993, pp. 469–486. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2210004.
- Klungland, Silje. *How Norwegian EFL Teachers Perceive the Roles of Literature and Multimodal Texts in Our Digitalized Society. A Mixed Methods Study in English Didactics*, 2017.
- Lund, Ragnhild. "Kulturkunnskap og språkopplæring.» *Fremmedspråksdidaktikk*. Camilla Bjørke, Magne Dypedahl, Gro-Anita Myklevold (ed). Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2014.
- Lyngsnes, Kitt Margaret, and Marit Rismark. *Didaktisk Arbeid*. 3. utg. ed., Gyldendal Akademisk, 2014.
- Marais, Michael. "The possibility of ethical action: JM Coetzee's Disgrace." *Scrutiny 2: Issues in English studies in Southern Africa*, 5, 57–63.
(2000). 10.1080/18125440008565955.
- Mattos, Maria T. C. "Racial Tension in Post-Apartheid South Africa : a Reading of Disgrace." 2012.
- Michta, Kamil. "Framing Humanity by Framing Nature: John Maxwell Coetzee's Disgrace in the Context of Kant's Theory of Morality." *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, pp. 137–150.

- Morrison, Toni, and Nellie McKay. "An Interview with Toni Morrison." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1983, pp. 413–42.
- Morrison, Toni. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken - The Afro-American Presence in American Literature." *Michigan Quarterly Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1989, pp. 1–34.
- . *Beloved*. Vintage. 1987.
- Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. "Ny Overordnet del av læreplanen – verdier og prinsipper for grunnsopplæringen». The Norwegian Government. 2017.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. "Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism." *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1998, pp. 343–65.
- Phelan, James. "Sethe's choice:" *Beloved* and the ethics of reading." *Style* (1998): 318-333.
- . "Beloved (1987): Sethe's Choice and Morrison's Ethical Challenge." *Reading the American Novel 1920-2010*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, Oxford, UK, 2013, pp. 349-381.
- Plasa, Carl. *Toni Morrison, Beloved*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Print.
- Posner, Richard A. "Against Ethical Criticism." *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1997, pp. 1–27.
- Religion and Ethics Subject Curriculum. (REL1-01). Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. 2006. <https://www.udir.no/kl06/REL1-01/Hele/Kompetansemaal/etter-vg3>. Accessed 3 May 2019.
- Rest, James R. "A Psychologist Looks at the Teaching of Ethics." *The Hastings Center Report.*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1982, pp. 29–36.
- Ryan, Judylyn S. "Language and Narrative Technique in Toni Morrison's Novels." *The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison*, Edited by Justine Tally, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 151-161. Cambridge Companions to Literature.
- Tally, Justine. *Toni Morrison's 'Beloved': Origins*. Routledge, 2008.
- Tanner, Stephen L. "The Moral and the Aesthetical: Literary Study and the Social Order". *Ethics, Literature, Theory: an Introductory Reader*. Stephen K. George. 2nd ed., Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.
- The Core Elements. «Ny overordnet del av læreplanen – verdier og prinsipper». Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. 2017. <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/37f2f7e1850046a0a3f676fd45851384/overordnet-del---verdier-og-prinsipper-for-grunnsopplæringen.pdf>. Accessed 10 Nov. 2018

- Travis, Molly Abel. "Beyond Empathy: Narrative Distancing and Ethics in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*." *Journal of Narrative Theory*, vol. 40 no. 2, 2010, pp. 231-250. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/jnt.2010.0007.
- Ulvestad, Road. «Fagovergrep og temaene som forsvant». 16. April 2019, https://www.utdanningsnytt.no/debatt/2019/april/fagovergrep-og-temaene-som-forsvant/?fbclid=IwAR1y31ScO7ikhoJbH6LvYrb_n6X63V38sqjfKkMsx-D-jMyZq2snzjNQxko. Accessed 23 April 2019.
- Wiland, Signe Mari. "How to Develop Literary Competence in the English Classroom", Fremmedspråksenteret. Web. https://www.fremmedspraksenteret.no/nor/fremmedspraksenteret/larings---ressurser/leseveiledning-i-engelsk/reading-in-english-_a-basic-skill/how-to-develop-literary-competence?lang=nor. Accessed 4 Feb. 2019.
- Yehoshua, B Abraham. "The Moral Connections of Literary Texts." *Ethics, Literature, and Theory: an Introductory Reader*, by Stephen K. George, Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, pp. 37–62.