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Intercultural Competence and Postcolonialism in Nye's *Habibi* and Gordimer's "Loot"

*Promoting democracy and citizenship through literature in the Norwegian EFL
classroom*

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Abstract

There is broad agreement that the current use of literature in the Norwegian EFL classroom is not realizing its full educational potential due to a lack of practical approaches and an over ambitious curriculum. Thus, literature has become a rare and limited occurrence where students are asked to read for content and linguistical features, rather than for personal enjoyment and growth. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the potential of postcolonial literature in facilitating the development of intercultural competence in Norwegian upper-secondary EFL students as a step towards achieving the new interdisciplinary goals of promoting democracy and citizenship. Through providing postcolonial readings of Nadine Gordimer's short story "Loot" and Naomi Shihab Nye's young adult novel *Habibi* and an analysis of the texts in relation to the theories of intercultural competence provided by Barrett et al. and Michael Byram, this thesis seeks to discuss the potential of postcolonial literature as a genre in the development of intercultural competence through personal growth. The thesis found that postcolonial literature lends itself particularly well to the purpose of developing intercultural competence and that the variety within the genre presents a plethora of opportunities for facilitating this development. Specifically, the thesis found that Nye's *Habibi* could facilitate intercultural competence through its potential for student identification and imitation of the novel's main protagonist, and Gordimer's "Loot" was found to facilitate through challenging the readers preconceptions and focusing on the role of extreme conditions on human behaviour.

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Preface

To produce a thesis is, as many people before me has expressed, a long and meticulous process. Simultaneously, I must admit to feeling a little strange upon seeing all this effort materialized in the following pages. After all, the following thesis does not, in my opinion, accurately represent all the reading, writing, deleting, rewriting and editing that occurred in the process of its development. As such, it is perhaps only natural that it is exactly this thesis that marks the end of my five magnificent, varied, and challenging years at UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

The embryo of the following thesis has its origin in my deep and profound passion for literature and its potential in education. It has thus not been without an element of hurt and disappointment that I have witnessed the role of literature in the EFL classroom be diminished to a rare occurrence, with students reading a closed selection of classical poems in order to answer prefabricated questions pertaining to factual knowledge. After all, literature has, at least in the opinion of this candidate, an innate potential for much more: to provide insight into ourselves and how our personal and cultural identity relate to the rest of the world around us, or in the words of F. Scott Fitzgerald: “That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you’re not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong.”

In truth, this thesis would not have been possible without a strong support network. First, my parents and stepparents who have supported me with love, understanding, and encouragement through good years and bad. Second, I am eternally grateful to my lovely spouse for her loving support and patience throughout my university education. Finally, to

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1 Introduction

In her article “From Shelf to Classroom: Literature’s role in foreign language teaching” (‘Fra Sokkel til Klasserom: Litteraturens rolle i fremmedspråksundervisningen’), Vestli categorizes the current role of literature in the Norwegian school system as “a neglected chapter” (4).

Arguing that while linguistic approaches have been successfully adopted into the pedagogical toolbox of Norwegian foreign language teachers, the same could not be said for literary approaches, resulting in literature remaining an “elitist discipline, traditionally belonging in the language studies of the college and university level” (4). Thus, Vestli sees the current role of literature in foreign language classrooms as fractional, and its use “a rare occurrence, limited to a selection of classical poems from the textbook” (4). Vestli is, however, not alone in her concern for the role of literature in the Norwegian EFL-classrooms. In their book *Encounters with Literature*, Ibsen & Wiland characterize the current role of literature in foreign language teaching as “an instrument, a means to end” (12). In this context, the students are taught to read for content or specific linguistic or societal features but are rarely encouraged to treat literature as art - to read for literary value and artistic appreciation or for personal growth. In order to fulfil the full potential of literature in foreign language teaching Ibsen & Wiland proposes a view of literature as “an end in itself, taught as a true form of art and with due respect to its literary value and student responses” (12). After all, literature is endlessly more than sample texts of language. Literature is an artform concerned with values, emotions and the individual’s place in the world that surrounds him, and the true educational value of literature lies in the potential for personal growth accessible through the process of interpretation.

It is the context of this debate that this thesis aims to operate with the main purpose of investigating the potential role of literature in the teaching of English as a foreign language in the Norwegian upper secondary school. Specifically, the thesis will seek to investigate how

postcolonial English language literary texts can be used to accomplish the new interdisciplinary goals of promoting democracy and citizenship in Core Elements, the new imperatives in the LK20 reform known in Norwegian as Fagfornyelsen. The thesis will argue that literature in general and post-colonial literature specifically lends itself particularly well to the purpose of developing intercultural competence, a key concept in the Norwegian core curriculum's understanding of democracy and citizenship as well as in the specific curriculum for the English subjects. Furthermore, the thesis will argue that there is a current call for practical approaches to foreign language literature shaped to the needs of the Norwegian classroom. In extension, it will claim that in order to realize the full potential of literature these approaches will need to consider literature not as instruments for teaching specific language phenomena, or reading for content, – but as true forms of art. The approaches must promote literature as an end in itself and encourage student involvement beyond surface level indicators. The thesis will investigate the post-colonial literary texts “Loot”, by Nadine Gordimer, and *Habibi*, by Naomi Shihab Nye, and provide analysis and close readings exemplifying how and why they could be used in the process of developing intercultural competence. Gordimer's *Loot* will represent the literary cannon, works expected to be either known or close to the teacher's knowledge base and Nye's *Habibi* will represent young adult fiction. The selection is made on the basis of literary quality, subject matter, as well as geographical and literary variety, in order to provide examples of the possibilities available to the EFL teacher.

As teachers in the EFL classroom we are subjects to the ideology of the institution in which we teach and its subsequent rules and regulations. As will be discussed in the section regarding the role of literature in foreign language teaching, the different curricula's highlight different ideals for the outcome of the education in terms of both skills, knowledge, and attitudes. These differences in goals and ideals reflect what Kramsch calls the shifting

ideology of the institution, where teachers and learners in all educational systems are seen as “subjected to the ideology of the institution, which itself responds to national and international imperatives”. (67). In Kramsch’s paradigm, all educational systems share similar features, subject to aspects such as “[the] rapid development of media, children’s abilities in communication and technologies, [and] new teaching strategies and resources” (qtd. in Stan 454). In the last decade or two, we have seen scientific, and positivistic, world view generated policies and practices in the educational systems, carrying with them a “strong emphasis on cognitive learning, where results can be measured objectively” and with a strong focus on “the accumulation of knowledge, skills and competences”. (454-455). While these policies and practices may very well produce measurable results in line with the controversial PISA-tests, they do potentially leave little room for teaching and learning practices that promote creativity and imagination, such as literature. As such, modern trends in pedagogy has put a temporary end to the separation between language and literary courses and the structure of the Norwegian curricula reflects this trend.

While literature historically has held a central position in the Norwegian curriculum, recent trends in the Norwegian curricula indicates an abstraction of the role of literature, both in general and in connection with the EFL classroom. Despite this abstraction, the introduction of the current curriculum, LK06, specified literature as one of its “main areas”, and in the case of the English courses the curricula specify literature as essential to the development of language skills, accumulation of cultural knowledge, developing understanding of ‘the other’, and for promoting life-long readership (Fenner 41). As such, literature remains well embedded in the formal regulations of Norwegian EFL education.

However, while the curriculum is noble in its intentions and displays a view of the potential of literature beyond reading for content and prefabricated, measurable, answers, it lays no premises for the extent of the student’s literary exposure. Additionally, the curriculum

could be considered ambitious in the goals it sets for knowledge, skills and competences, and in some cases, it would even be fair to call it overambitious. The balancing of time, methods, and desired outcomes relies on a solid theoretical and didactical foundation. However, both Vesli and Ibsen & Wiland argue that practical approaches to literature teaching in the Norwegian EFL classroom are few and far apart. While practical approaches to linguistics have been successfully adopted into the didactics toolbox of Norwegian foreign language teachers, as well as practical approaches to literature among first language teachers, the same could not be said for literature in foreign language teaching. There are a few notable exceptions, with Ibsen and Wiland's *Encounters with Literature* serving as quality pioneer work. Additionally, there exist quite a few international approaches of promise, but these would need to be reshaped to fit the Norwegian policies and curriculums, a point that becomes even more acute with the looming introduction of the LK-20.

On September 1st, 2017, the Norwegian government passed what they named “a new constitution for primary- and secondary education” (Kunnskapsdepartementet “Press release 125-17”). Thus, the new *Core Elements*, set to replace both the current general part of the core curriculum as well as the old values and principles for education, was affirmed to be practiced with the eventual introduction of the LK-20. While only the superordinate part of the core curriculum is currently affirmed, large changes are expected for the course curriculums as well. The purpose of the new *Core Elements* is not to revolutionize the Norwegian education system but aims to update current policies to face the current challenges of the education system and society as a whole. As a step towards updating the educational system in line with more current and pressing challenges, the new *Core Elements* introduces three interdisciplinary themes, *public health and lifestyle management*, *democracy and citizenship*, and *sustainable development*, anchored in current societal challenges “requiring effort from individuals and communities, locally, nationally and globally” (13). As

interdisciplinary topics, they are to be approached by all disciplines, including the foreign languages.

Thus, the introduction of the interdisciplinary topics present teachers and students with new challenges and, perhaps, even new opportunities. These new opportunities may also provide new avenues and a strengthened purpose for literature in foreign language teaching, as you would have few problems finding literature that concerns the environment and its impacts on human life, or fictional literature concerned with the impact of health, illness, and lifestyle choices on the individuals and communities. However, the area that perhaps lends itself particularly well to literature use is ‘democracy and citizenship’. After all, what can literature provide that other media cannot?

According to Fenner, literature is unique in the way that it represents authentic, personal voices of culture. Its primary focus is not to speak about culture, but to represent characters that live in the culture, allowing the students to experience the culture through the eyes of the characters. Further, the experiences, emotions, and values of the characters is presented in a rich and varied language that requires interpretation by the reader (42). Furthermore, because literature represent the general through the individual and specific, literature use in foreign language teaching allows for involvement directly with the target culture: “the student reads as a member of a cultural community, with all their preconceptions and experiences, thus the reading-process involves a meeting between a minimum of two cultures – the student’s and the other’s” (42). Through reading we can arrange fictional cultural meetings with opportunities for cultural embedment and the challenging of cultural stereotypes. According to Ibsen & Wiland, literature, through its emotional appeal, has potential for both language learning as well as personal growth:

“Literature appeals to emotions, and thereby paves the way for a more profound and conscious attitude towards language. The potential for personal growth, through identification with fictional characters and a different culture should be exploited

more” (Ibsen & Wiland 12).

Literature and reading, in contrast to movies, requires engagement with the subject matter. It is virtually impossible to read as a passive recipient and the words are, if chosen carefully, capable of appealing and challenging our emotions. Through identification with both characters and cultures there is potential for personal growth and perhaps, as Stan suggests, a chance of getting in touch with our inner selves.

The innate capacities of literature, discussed above, seemingly lends itself particularly well to the development of intercultural competence. At its core, teaching intercultural competence in the EFL classroom concerns itself with creating opportunities for intercultural understanding and empathy within the context of EFL learning (see Byram and Hu). In *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*, Byram defines intercultural competence as consisting of “knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds” (Byram, et al. 5). While intercultural competence is not specifically mentioned under the interdisciplinary topic of ‘democracy and citizenship’, there are clear indications that it is required in order to fulfil the purposes of the topic:

The education should provide the students with an understanding of the connection between democracy and essential human rights such as freedom of speech, the right to vote, and freedom of association. They are to obtain insight into democracy’s different shapes and expressions. (...) The education is to provide the students with the required knowledge and skills in order to face challenges and disputes in accordance with democratic principles. They are to understand the dilemma of recognizing both the rights of the many, as well as the few. They are to practice their ability to think critically, and to peacefully handle disputes, and to respect disagreement.” (Norwegian Ministry of Education 13-14).

As we shall see in the later sections, there are apparent similarities between the new *Core Elements*’ understanding of ‘democracy and citizenship’ and Barrett et al.’s definition of intercultural competence, both in word choice, formulations, and sentiment. Thus, this thesis will argue that intercultural competence constitutes a significant part of the competence targeted by the new interdisciplinary goal of promoting ‘democracy and citizenship’.

2 Previous Research

Numerous scholars have set out to explore the potential role of literary texts in the development of understanding of other cultures in students. According to Short (131), literature "provides a means of building bridges of understanding across countries and cultures" in a number of ways. Firstly, through immersing themselves in the story worlds of literature, readers learn about how other cultures live, think and feel, allowing them to move beyond superficial understandings of the target cultures and developing a deeper understanding, perhaps even empathy, with these cultures. Secondly, by providing opportunities for comparison, literature can assist the readers in learning about other cultures as well as their own, with due respect to the unique differences of each culture.

Scott & Huntington propose a student-centered model for the development of intercultural competence via literary texts, where the students "affective awareness and cognitive flexibility" (Hibbs 9) is considered essential to his or her development of intercultural competence. With the student in the center, the model sees literature as a bridge between the student and the target culture through which the student can learn about the target culture and meaning is created and co-constructed through the interaction between the student and the target culture.

More recently, scholars have set out to affirm the role of both children's- and young adult literature in promoting intercultural competence. According to Lütge (104) literature written for children, adolescents and young adults, "offers a fascinating platform for exploring questions of identity, values and worldviews, the basic ingredients of intercultural learning". What sets children's- and young adult fiction apart from adult literature is their potential for "raising an awareness of different levels of otherness" (103) achieved by allowing the students to see and experience the world through the eyes of characters with whom they can identify

with, providing an experience of other cultural perspectives. Furthermore, Alter concurs to this perspective, adding that experiencing otherness "lays the foundation for the development of intercultural competence" (156) because students may encounter cultural words that they are not familiar with. Reichl shares a similar perspective, arguing that through the process of reading children's and adolescent literature which explore characters' experiences in intercultural encounters and reflecting on the character's experiences as preparation for their own future intercultural encounters, the student is in fact "doing identity" (112), a process of "identifying other people around [us] and learning about the world and about cultural connections in the process" (112). While Reichl is specifically talking about children's- and adolescent literature, there is no apparent reason for why this should not be applicable to young adult fiction as well, due to the generality of the requirements of the selected literature. Narrowing the scope to young adult fiction, Lee argues that young adult fiction can promote intercultural understanding by encouraging students to "compare and contrast their own cultural values with those of young adult characters", thus exposing the students to other, often new, cultural perspectives (Hibbs 9). Finally, Kidd and Castano, through a series of experiments intended on investigating the impact of reading fictional texts and other genres on subject's ability to maintain empathic responses to others and their interpretation of other's beliefs and intentions, found consistent results showing that reading fictional texts enhanced both the affective and cognitive aspects of the subjects compared to other genres. Kidd and Castano attribute these results to the texts abilities to emulate real interpersonal interactions, allowing the students to "refine their capacity to construe and interpret others' beliefs and intentions just as they would normally do in interpersonal interactions" (Hibbs 10).

Quite a few researchers have set out to investigate the function of literary texts in building intercultural competence in students. Firstly, a study by Gomez found that Colombian university students who read short stories in English, simultaneously acquired communicative

competence and intercultural knowledge. Furthermore, discussing the short stories encouraged the students to compare opinions, life experiences and cultural references with other classmates, assisting the students in constructing and expanding their intercultural competence (Hibbs 10). Secondly, Scott and Huntington determined a connection between the reading of poetry and affective awareness and cognitive flexibility with respect to the target culture. In their study, introductory-level French students reading poetry by the Côte d'Ivoire native Véronique Tadjo were found to show a greater level of affective awareness and cognitive flexibility regarding the culture of Côte d'Ivoire compared to students who read sheets of cultural facts of the country. In effect, the students were found to increase their intercultural competence through the process of establishing connections between their own culture and the target culture (Hibbs 10). Furthermore, a study by Hecke found that high school and university students in Germany who read graphic novels from Iran and Mexico gained new perspectives and recued existing stereotypes of these countries through the process of learning about these cultures from the inside (Hibbs 10). Additionally, a study by Garcia, found that authentic literary texts could assist in the development of new attitudes towards the targeted culture. The study, conducted among fourth-semester university students studying Spanish, found that students who read Latin American legends and folktales reported an increased knowledge of Hispanic culture and indications that the texts had helped them develop new attitudes towards Hispanic culture through "contain[ing] so much cultural value" helping the students to be "more accepting of [other] beliefs" (124).

Although the research cited above are all essential to the purpose of demonstrating the potential of literature in the development of intercultural competence, they also serve to demonstrate gaps in current research. Firstly, most of the research mentioned above features only shorter works of fiction, often over a short time-span, with effects measured on very limited group selections. For instance, Gomez's study was conducted with participants on a

university-level whom only read short stories, rather than novels. Similarly, Garcia's study consisted of participants at an intermediate level reading relatively short folk tales. Scott and Huntingtons's study consisted of elementary-level students reading a poem for a twenty-minute session, with little or no interaction with the poem on a deeper level, and Hecke only included the graphic novels as a part of an after-school reading program. Secondly, as we shall see from Byram's theories of intercultural competence, the development of intercultural competence is strongly connected to the relationship between the context and background of the learner and the target culture. The research mentioned above rarely takes this relationship into account and says little about what we can expect when the relationship between the learner's background and the target culture is less apparent or, in some cases, involves a level of conflict. The present thesis will seek to investigate parts of these gaps in both research and curriculum by including two works of different length and complexity featuring cultures that could be considered alien to the Norwegian upper-secondary student of English.

2.1 Literature in the Curriculum

Traditionally, literature has held a central position in the Norwegian curricula. While literature as a discipline was explicitly mentioned in previous curricula, notably the Reform of 1988-1996 which even listed specific authors and titles such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and Bernard MacLaverty's *Cal*, the current curriculum (LK-06) lists non-linguistic components under the terms culture, cultural competence, and insight into foreign cultures, religions and values. While this abstraction of the role of literature may, at first glance, overshadow the role of literature, the fact that the curriculum emphasizes the innate capacity of for personal growth that foreign language learning provides, shifts the attention beyond the purely instrumental language components and focuses on the cultural dimensions of foreign language learning.

The main purpose of foreign language learning is to open doors: “When we learn other languages, we get the opportunity to establish contact with other people and cultures, which in turn can enhance our understanding of how people live and think” (“Læreplan i Fremmedspråk (FSP1-01) “Formål”). Furthermore, through these meetings we develop “a more nuanced picture of international processes and events” (Ibid.) and “ can contribute to enhanced insight into our own culture” and serve as “[...] an inspiration for personal growth”

While this abstraction of the role of literature in foreign language teaching provides little assistance for teachers in selecting methods to reach the desired goals, where quite a few of whom could be described as vague, a closer look reveals familiar elements of both traditional language teaching and literature teaching: “Literary texts should be a natural choice. There is hardly any other medium that provides the same insight into how other people live, think and feel; through literature the reader is faced by other people, as well as himself” and the purpose of foreign language teaching as it sits in the current curricula closely resembles “a paraphrasing of the capacities of literature” (Vestli 6)

Moving from the general purpose to the specific competence aims, literature appears well suited for approaching a large variety of goals. First, the competence aims states that the students are to find relevant facts and information, and understand the core concepts in authentic texts (see the curriculum for foreign language learning, level I, under communication), use different sources for authentic texts (level II, language learning), understand the contents of longer authentic texts, reading formal and informal texts of different genres and to be able to explain the views of the author (level II, communication), sticks out at first glance. Furthermore, if we utilize the full didactical toolbox available additional competence aims are also within reach, most of them related to communication and language learning.

The current core curriculum also states that all subjects and disciplines are to contribute to the student's development of the five basic skills: reading, writing, oral skills, digital skills, and numeracy (see Framework for Basic Skills). Literature should naturally be a part of the development of reading skills and has historically been heavily involved in the development of writing skills, while oral and digital skills could be utilized more, something trends in both children's literature and young adult fiction is contributing to through webpages, blogs, chats and wikis.

The use of literature in foreign language teaching is well anchored in both the purpose of foreign language learning and in the specific curricula for foreign language learning. Furthermore, literature provides authentic language in a wide variety of genres and with the variety and ability to reflect both oral and written discourses unmatched by other text forms. Finally, reading literature also offers the opportunity for student involvement in cultural discourses. Thus, the current curriculum does not prevent the use of literary texts in foreign language teaching: "on the contrary" (Vestli 7) and the issues regarding the use of literature in foreign language teaching is related to how we solve it in practice.

2.2 Intercultural Competence and Democratic Citizenship

According to the COE, intercultural education, which aims at developing intercultural competence in students, is closely related to and supportive of both "Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC)" and "Human Rights Education (HRE)" (21). As EDC is primarily concerned with empowering learners "to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life" (Council of Europe on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education 7) and HRE with empowering learners "to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life" (7), the new *Core Elements* show some apparent similarities in its own understanding of democracy and citizenship. In the case of EDC the new *Core*

Element's understanding of democracy and citizenship contains all the elements of EDC, almost in a word-for-word fashion:

[The students] are to practice their ability to think critically, learn to handle differences in opinion and to respect disagreement. [...] The education should stimulate students into becoming active citizens, and provide them with competence for participating in the further development of the Norwegian democracy. (UDIR 14-15).

Similarly, the *Core Element's* understanding of democracy and citizenship also contains elements of HRE, but only partially and in less confrontational language:

The education is to provide the students with and understanding of the connection between democracy and essential human rights such as freedom of speech, the right to vote, and freedom of association. [The students] are to attain insight into the different forms and expressions of democracy. (14-15).

The elements of HRE in the new *Core Element's* understanding of democracy and citizenship only views human rights in light of democracy and without the global perspective of the COE. Thus, the *Core Element's* understanding could be seen as more nationally than globally oriented.

Furthermore, by including "action" as a component in intercultural competence, the COE highlights the active perspective of intercultural competence: "equipping learners with intercultural competence through education empowers learners to take action in the world" (21). This active perspective of intercultural competence is central to the new *Core Elements'* understanding of Democracy and Citizenship, where the verbs participate and apply are frequently used:

[T]he education is to provide the students with knowledge of the prerequisites, values and rules of democracy, in order to enable them to participate in democratic processes [...] the students should be made to understand the relationship between the rights and duties of the individual [in society]. The individual has the right to participate in political activities, simultaneously as society depends on citizens applying their rights to political participation and the shaping of civil society. [...] The education should stimulate students into becoming active citizens, and provide them with competence for participating in the further development of the Norwegian democracy (14-15).

As the active perspective is central to both EDC and HRE, both central components in the NCC's understanding of democracy and citizenship, as well as in the NCC's understanding of

democracy and citizenship in general, intercultural competence forms one of the key objectives for the education of students in the new interdisciplinary topic of "Democracy and Citizenship". Thus, intercultural education, regardless of the practical approach, needs to contain and maintain this active component.

3 Theoretical Foundation

3.1 Intercultural Competence in the EFL Classroom

The majority of the theoretical foundation of this thesis rests on the definition of and criteria for intercultural competence, as suggested in large my Michael Byram, both alone and in cooperation with others, and particularly in the Council of Europe's (COE) rapport "Developing Intercultural Competence through Education" (Barrett, et al.). This thesis will, in similar fashion to the COE, consider intercultural competence in the context of education rather than providing general definitions.

At its very core, intercultural competence in the EFL classroom concerns itself with creating opportunities for intercultural understanding and empathy in a foreign language classroom (Byram and Hu). In this perspective knowledge and understanding of other cultures is seen as seminal to the study of language in general, and thus to English specifically in its extension. The concept of intercultural competence is complex and has no simple universal definition and carries several related concepts such as identity, competence, culture and cultural encounters. This thesis will seek to approach the definition of intercultural competence from the perspective of both Byram and the Council of Europe. In *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*, Byram defines the concept of intercultural competence as consisting of "knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values on holds" (Byram 5). Similarly, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, a sub-division of the Council of Europe (COE) defines the concept as:

[A] combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either singly or together with others, to: understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself; respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people; establish positive and constructive relationships with such people; understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural 'difference' (Barrett, et al. 19).

According to the COE, the components of intercultural competence can be broken down into attitudes, knowledge and understanding, skills and actions (19). In essence, attitudes concern itself with the ability to be both open, willing, and curious in encounters with other cultures:

valuing cultural diversity and pluralism of views and practices; respecting people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own; being open to, curious about and willing to learn from and about people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own; being willing to empathize with people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own; being willing to question what is usually taken for granted as 'normal' according to one's previously acquired knowledge and experience; being willing to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty; being willing to seek out opportunities to engage and co-operate with individuals who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own (19).

Furthermore, the knowledge and understanding that contribute to intercultural competence means moving beyond surface level, factual, knowledge and towards a state of understanding and awareness:

understanding the internal diversity and heterogeneity of all cultural groups; awareness and understanding of one's own and other people's assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and overt and covert discrimination; understanding the influence of one's own language and cultural affiliations on one's experience of the world and of other people; communicative awareness, including awareness of the fact that other peoples' languages may express shared ideas in a unique way or express unique ideas difficult to access through one's own language(s), and awareness of the fact that people of other cultural affiliations may follow different verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions which are meaningful from their perspective; knowledge of the beliefs, values, practices, discourses and products that may be used by people who have particular cultural orientations; understanding of processes of cultural, societal and individual interaction, and of the socially constructed nature of knowledge (19-20).

In this context, the skills component involved in intercultural competence include a wide variety of skills ranging from empathy to critical assessment and evaluation, but also cognitive flexibility and behavior.

multiperspectivity – the ability to decentre from one's own perspective and to take other people's perspectives into consideration in addition to one's own. skills in discovering information about other cultural affiliations and perspectives; skills in interpreting other cultural practices, beliefs and values and relating them to one's own; empathy – the ability to understand and respond to other people's thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings;

cognitive flexibility – the ability to change and adapt one’s way of thinking according to the situation or context; skills in critically evaluating and making judgments about cultural beliefs, values, practices, discourses and products, including those associated with one’s own cultural affiliations, and being able to explain one’s views; skills in adapting one’s behaviour to new cultural environments – for example, avoiding verbal and non-verbal behaviours which may be viewed as impolite by people who have different cultural affiliations from one’s own; linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse skills, including skills in managing breakdowns in communication; plurilingual skills to meet the communicative demands of an intercultural encounter, such as the use of more than one language or language variety, or drawing on a known language to understand another (intercomprehension); the ability to act as a mediator in intercultural exchanges, including skills in translating, interpreting and explaining (20).

Attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills, despite being essential components of intercultural competence are however alone insufficient for an individual to be credited with intercultural competence. It is only by deploying these components into action and put them to practice during intercultural encounters that competence emerges (20-21). In this context, relevant actions include:

seeking opportunities to engage with people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one’s own; interacting and communicating appropriately, effectively and respectfully with people who have different cultural affiliations from one’s own; co-operating with individuals who have different cultural orientations on shared activities and ventures, discussing differences in views and perspectives, and constructing common views and perspectives; challenging attitudes and behaviours (including speech and writing) which contravene human rights, and taking action to defend and protect the dignity and human rights of people regardless of their cultural affiliations. This last may entail any or all of the following actions: intervening and expressing opposition when there are expressions of prejudice or acts of discrimination against individuals or groups; challenging cultural stereotypes and prejudices; encouraging positive attitudes towards the contributions to society made by individuals irrespective of their cultural affiliations; mediating in situations of cultural conflict (21).

In short, intercultural competence contains components that provide a solid foundation for both global and democratic citizenship. The components of intercultural competence reveal strong active, interactive and participative dimensions, "requiring individuals to develop their capacity to build common projects, to assume share responsibilities and to create common ground to live together in peace" (21) and thus, as will be discussed further in the next

section, it could be viewed as a core competence in developing "democratic citizenship within a culturally diverse world" (21).

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a definition of intercultural competence and its constituents. The majority of theoretical foundation of this definition relies on the works of Michael Byram both singularly, in cooperation with others, and through his work in the Council of Europe. The main arguments for choosing the definitions provided by Byram is a twofold: the quality of his conducted research and the way he views intercultural competence in the context of education in general and the EFL classroom specifically. In Byram's perspective, intercultural competence in the EFL classroom concerns the creating of opportunities for intercultural understanding and empathy in the foreign language classrooms. As such, the development of intercultural competence is already a task for the Norwegian EFL teacher, as one of the purposes of the English subject in the Norwegian school system is, in addition to the development of communicative- and linguistic skills, to develop cultural insight: "[together, these skills] may promote increased cooperation, understanding and respect between people of different cultural backgrounds, (...) contributing to democratic participation and citizenship" (UDIR, LK-06 "Formålet med faget – Engelsk"). Furthermore, breaking intercultural competence down into the components knowledge, skill, attitudes, and actions, allow us to recognize elements of intercultural competence in both the specific course curricula, as well as in the *Core Elements*' definition of 'democracy and citizenship'. As such, it is clear from a curricula perspective that the development of intercultural competence is an important part of language learning in the EFL classroom. Finally, Byram argues that formal education is one of only three arenas through which intercultural competence can be acquired, carrying with it the added possibility of planned inclusions of learning outcomes anchored in the components of intercultural competence.

3.1.1 Developing Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence can be developed in different ways through different types of education and this section will seek to explain how intercultural competence can be developed through three different forms of education. According to the COE there are mainly three forms of education through which intercultural competence is developed: informal education, non-formal education, and formal education. While all are essential, formal education is naturally the most relevant arena in the context of this thesis.

Informal education refers to the education that takes place when the learner "acquires attitudes, skills and knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment" (Barrett et al. 27). As such, it is a lifelong process that draws on daily experiences and conversations outside the classroom, with everything from family, friends, neighbors and mass media. In terms of intercultural education, informal education rarely deliberately approaches the subject, with perhaps a few exceptions in the way of parents and certain segments of mass media, thus the intercultural outcome could be considered random and depending on the exposure to foreign and different cultures and influences with deliberate agendas. Non-formal education refers to "any planned programme of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences outside the formal educational setting, and throughout lifelong learning" (27). Intercultural competence is considered a pedagogical goal in non-formal education, provided by local communities, NGOs, youth or social work, and adult education, and pursued through deliberate inclusion of specific activities for learning" (27). Formal education refers to "the structured education and training system that runs from pre-primary and primary through secondary school and on to higher education" (28). What separates formal education from the other two is that the pedagogy of intercultural competence is "planned inclusions of learning outcomes defined in terms of the components

of intercultural competence" (28) and that the responsibility for the development of intercultural competence is imbedded in the institution and shared by all teachers.

All the different forms of educations mentioned above are important to the development of intercultural competence in young adults and contribute to the acquisition intercultural competence in different ways. Both formal- and non-formal education usually involve a relationship between a facilitator of learning and the learner, often with a clear intent or purpose. For informal education the situation is more complex. While parents may occasionally plan activities for their children, they can also adopt customs for their community, follow advise from the television or books, or act on intuition. Thus, informal learning, "where people are constantly learning from each other", the facilitator may have intention, more or less consciously, of influencing others, but learning also occurs through observation and imitation without explicit intention.

In the context of this thesis formal education forms the natural platform for the development of intercultural competence which in turn carries some practical implications. First, any attempt to describe how we can develop intercultural competence, through postcolonial literature or others, must involve the planned inclusion of learning outcomes grounded in the components of intercultural competence. We cannot expect the students to develop intercultural competence through osmosis, we have to select texts, assignments and activities based on which parts of intercultural competence (skills, attitudes, knowledge, understanding or actions) that we aim to develop. This element of planning for learning will be further discussed in chapter 3.3, where the selected texts will be discussed in relation to their target learning outcomes. Secondly, while this thesis only concerns itself with the development of ICC within the confines of the EFL classroom, student development of intercultural competence is reliant on it already being imbedded in the institution. This entails that the school must display intercultural competence in both its institutional values and in its

daily operation and that the values of intercultural competence must be shared by all teachers. Finally, similarly to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research's treatment of 'democracy and citizenship' intercultural education is, in the perspective of Byram et al., an interdisciplinary responsibility for all the teachers of the institution.

3.2 Postcolonial Literature

More than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism. It is easy to see how important this has been in the political and economic spheres, but its general influence on the perceptual frameworks of contemporary peoples is often less evident. Literature offers one of the most important ways in which these new perceptions are expressed (...) (Ashcroft et al. 1)

The term postcolonial literature can be defined in a myriad of different ways, depending on the context and perspective of its user. It is therefore essential that it is clarified what is referred to as postcolonial literature within the context of this thesis. In *The Empire Writes Back – Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin use the term “to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2). In this context, the term is strongly connected to both postcolonial theory and to colonialism itself, and thus these related terms will need some clarification.

Firstly, we can, according to Uchendu & Ekwueme-Ugwu's “On Postcolonial Literature: Ideological and Generational Shifts South of the Sahara”, trace modern colonialism back to the fifteenth century when the European nations of Portugal and Spain pioneered voyages into ‘the new world’ “for the purposes of economic and territorial expansion” (15). This new world included the Americas, the African coasts, the Middle East

and parts of Asia, and towards the end of the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, other European nations such as Britain, France, and Germany had put numerous territories and peoples under their colonial rule. As more countries joined the hunt for foreign colonies the outer limits of the colonial powers were stretched into the African interior, the Caribbean Islands, India and parts of Asia. However, the motives and justifications for this territorial expansion did not remain constant, and Benedikt Stuchtey lists European capitalist drive for profit, a perception of colonies as outlets for Europe's overpopulation, and an urge for exploration as central forces driving colonialism forward in its early days (15). Later, religious and ideological inclinations served to motivate these quests. There was a clear sense that Europe was on a "civilizing mission", liberating the Africans and the Indians from their backward and uncivilized cultures:

[W]ith the military might of their home governments behind them, European missionaries entered hinterland nations, upturning and overthrowing native cultural practices, religion, politics, economic and social systems, and substituting them with their own, where possible (16).

It is in these colonial experiences that postcolonialism, as an ideology, has its roots. Its main purpose is "to restructure and re-authenticate the precolonial identities of persons from the former colonies" (16) through the exploration and addressing of issues associated with colonization, such as "authority, identity, voice, subjectivity, and location" (16), by authors and thinkers alike. As such, postcolonial literature concerns itself with the depiction of colonial realities. It refers to writings that depict "the colonial realities of conquests, occupations, subjugation, and exploitations; and the emancipation that follows" (16) and "reflects the experiences of both the colonizers and the colonized" (16). Furthermore, many of the assumptions that are considered central to postcolonial literary studies emanate from the postcolonial theory of Edward Said, and particularly his *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). As such, postcolonial theory could be considered a relatively new field, that along with gender, feminism, ecocriticism and queer-theory, to name a few, belongs

under the superordinate category of cultural studies. In his *Postcolonialism – Theory, Practice or Process?* Quayson defines postcolonialism as the following:

[I]t involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies as well as at the level of more global developments thought to be the after-effects of imperialism. Postcolonialism often also involves the discussion of experiences of various kinds, such as those of slavery, migration, suppression and resistance, difference, race, gender, place and the responses of the discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, anthropology and linguistics. (2)

As postcolonialism often involves discussions of the experiences of colonialism, postcolonial literature forms an important part of postcolonialism. In *The Concise Oxford Companion to Literature*, the term is considered a “way of embracing the diverse body of literary responses to the challenges presented by decolonization and the transition to independence and after” (563) and is defined as “that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship and offers a reshaping or rewriting of the dominant meanings pertaining to race, authority, space, and identity prevalent under colonial and decolonializing conditions” (563). Within this body of literature are several well-respected authors, many of which are Nobel Prize winners in Literature, such as Doris Lessing, Tony Morrison, J.M. Coetzee, V.S. Naipaul, Wole Soyinka and Nadine Gordimer. Furthermore, notable authors such as Amitav Ghosh, Chinua Achebe and Anita Desai are all considered prominent postcolonial authors deserving of recognition.

Why then should postcolonial societies continue to engage with the colonial experience years after these societies obtained political independence? Ashcroft et al. points to three main reasons for why postcolonial literature is still important today. Firstly, despite obtaining political independence many colonies still suffer under the cultural hegemony of their former colonisers. Through their literary cannon and language norms countries such as Britain, Portugal, and Spain continue to dominate the cultural production of many of their former colonies. Second, by installing “a ‘standard’ version of the metropolitan language as

the norm [through imperial education]" (7), all other variations receive second-rate status. It is through the language that the "hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and [it is] the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order', and 'reality' become[s] established" (7). As such, it is only in the emergence of an "effective post-colonial voice" that this power is rejected, and through a combination of language and writing that the remnants of power can be wrestled out of the hands of the "dominant European culture" (7). Third, one of the main features of postcolonial literature is the way it concerns itself with place and displacement, and the postcolonial crisis of identity. Through dislocation, either in the form of "enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour", or destruction through "cultural denigration" (9), the valid and active sense of self has eroded. One of the most common discursive practices within which this alienation can be identified is the construction of 'place': "The gap which opens between the experience of place and the language available to describe it forms a classic and allpervasive feature of post-colonial texts" (9). It is therefore possible to argue that in order for the complete de-colonizing of a nation or people, "the experiences of a new place, identifiably different in its physical characteristics, (...) demand a language which allow them to express their sense of 'otherness'" (11). As such, Postcolonial literature is relevant in the way it concerns itself with the problematic legacies of colonization evident in today's society, such as the positions of black people in the US, the Windrush generation in the UK, and, at least partially, the vast numbers of irregular immigrants from former colonies to the European nations.

Thus, to answer the question of the relevance of postcolonial literature in today's society posed earlier in this chapter, I would argue that its relevance is closely tied to both the process of decolonization in general, as well as the problematic legacy of colonization evident in today's society in its extension. First, on the local and national level of the former colonies, postcolonial literature is a powerful tool in the process of re-establishing the former culture

eroded by colonization as well as the construction of a new collective identity. Through postcolonial literature former colonies gradually remove themselves from the cultural hegemony of their former colonizers through the establishment of both an individual culture and a language apt for describing it. Furthermore, postcolonial literature may also be relevant in the way it concerns itself with dislocation, a problem that is highly relevant in a society where social interactions to a larger degree could be categorized, in Tönnies' dichotomy of social ties, as affected by 'gesellschaft' rather than 'gemeinschaft' (See Tönnies' *Community and Civil Society*, 2001). In Tönnies' dichotomy, 'gesellschaft' describes social ties consisting of indirect interactions and impersonal roles, where our sense of selves is not necessarily as closely connected to the people around us and to the place in which we live. In this regard, postcolonial literature could serve useful in educational practices on the simple basis of its concern with the process of creating identity where only pieces exist, a situation that perhaps carries relevance for young people living in a 'gesellschaft' - world.

As mentioned at beginning of this chapter, postcolonial literature can be defined in a myriad of ways depending on the context and perspective of its users. In Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back*, the term is used to "cover all the culture affected by imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. In this context, the term carries strong connections to both colonialism and postcolonialism. Colonialism, with its long and complex history and shifting motivations, forms the backdrop from which postcolonialism, as an ideology, arises, with the purpose of restructuring and re-authenticating the precolonial identities through the exploration of concepts such as authority, identity, voice, subjectivity, and location. In this context, postcolonial literature becomes the medium of postcolonialism as it sets out to depict and reflect on the colonial realities as experienced by both the colonized and the colonizers. Furthermore, the continuing relevance of postcolonial literature is connected to both the process of decolonization and its concern with

the problematic legacy of colonization evident in today's society. As such, postcolonial literature functions as both a method of reclaiming power of definition for postcolonial cultures as well as a discourse apt to enhance our understanding of the long-lasting effects of colonization.

3.3 Intercultural Competence and Postcolonial Literature

In an attempt to further clarify the connection that I claim exist between working with postcolonial texts and the development of intercultural competence in the EFL classroom, I am here going to introduce two vastly different works of postcolonial fiction, Nadine Gordimer's *Loot and Other Stories* and Naomi Shihab Nye's *Habibi*. The texts have been selected in order to represent a portion of the width available to a teacher both in terms of genre, geography, complexity and artistic impression. The purpose is for these texts to serve as concrete examples of how postcolonial literary texts can function within the confines of the EFL classroom and how each of the texts can contribute to the development of different aspects of intercultural competence. The texts, along with claims of how and why I believe that they can contribute to intercultural learning, will be introduced in this section before the texts are discussed in greater detail and in relation to Byram's model of intercultural competence in the next chapter.

3.3.1 *Loot*

When the Nobel Prize in Literature of 1991 was awarded to Nadine Gordimer "who through her magnificent epic writing has – in the words of Alfred Nobel – been of very great benefit to humanity" (Swedish Academy, "The Nobel Prize in Literature 1991"), it was the ultimate recognition of the quality of her works as well as her prominent role in the opposition against apartheid. While perhaps mostly recognized for powerful novels, such as *July's People* (1981) and *Burger's Daughter* (1979), her shorter works, "characterized by her feminine

experiences, her compassion and her outstanding literary style”, are telling for her literary quality and “show Gordimer at the height of her creative powers” (Swedish Academy, “The Nobel Prize in Literature 1991”). According to critics such as Margaret Atwood and Justin Cartwright, Gordimer’s writing shares apparent similarities with the personality Gordimer by her unique ability of reading and depicting the society in which she lived as well as her apparent sensuality, to two qualities that Cartwright argues have contributed to Gordimer becoming “a part of the South Africa’s literary landscape for the last fifty years” (Cartwright, “Loot by Nadine Gordimer”). According to Atwood, we can consider Gordimer’s writing as reflections of her personality: “Human beings are human: their motives are mixed, their actions often shoddy no matter what ideologies they purport to embrace, and hunger is an astonishing motivator for behaviour. In that respect, Gordimer the writer is entirely un sentimental. She doesn’t go in for heroes.” (Atwood, “Nadine Gordimer: evergreen, ageless and an inspiration to all writers”). Gordimer’s writing reflects her own ferocious, fearless and uncompromising nature and served as “a voice of rectitude that spoke above the political din, addressing itself to our common humanity” (Ibid.). Much of Gordimer’s writing concerns itself with moral and racial issues, and particularly under the apartheid rule in South Africa, where both *Burger’s Daughter* and *July’s People* were banned. In total, Gordimer has published a staggering fifteen novels, two plays, twenty-two collections of short fiction, and several essays. The totality of her works, both in terms of mass, quality, and political contribution, has cemented Gordimer in the modern literary canon of both South-Africa and perhaps even the world.

Loot and Other Stories is the twentieth of Gordimer’s collections of short fiction and, along with *The Pickup* (2001), marks a significant shift in her short story writing. While it is only natural to expect changes in inspiration, themes, and expressions in a career spanning nearly 65 years, these newer collections are perhaps more profoundly different than anything

Gordimer has ever done before. As South-Africa has settled into its post-apartheid state, Gordimer seems to feel “less burdened by social responsibility, and freer to engage with reconstitutions of the civil imaginary” (Dimitriu 95). Gone is the pressure of engaging with a dramatic social context and Gordimer finds herself freer to step outside the confines of the national context and engage with the larger, post-ideological, world scene.

In her early short fiction, Gordimer explores the intricacies of the time-honoured themes of “initiation, transformation, dislocation, catharsis, frontier experience, ritualisation and exoticism” (94). Gordimer has frequently admitted to being inspired by the tradition of Chekhovian storytelling, with the hoarding of apparently trivial details that curb rather unremarkable lives, and this inspiration is evident in her earlier works such as “A Present for a Good Girl,” “The Umbilical Cord” or “The Defeated”:

[T]he external data of setting and mood tend to overwhelm her characters’ ability to surprise us: irrelevant details in a near-plotless succession create an expectation of catharsis through epiphany, only to end inevitably and relentlessly in anti-climax. (94)

With her later collections (*The Moment Before the Gun Went Off* (1988), *Jump* (1991), among others.), Gordimer’s approach changes significantly and while the Chekhovian influence appears more or less gone in her writing, replaced by a perceived influence of the postmodernist-movement of the 1980s, Gordimer still writes compelling literature deeply structured by theme and mood. The focus of her short fiction has, however, shifted from the national allegories of the 1950s and 60s, to “focusing on the actions of people, sometimes in brutal encounters” (95):

Here we find issues of initiation, dislocation and transformation, but also of struggles towards deeper forms of awareness. The general temper of the collection is appropriate to the 1980s, and different from the stories of the 1950s. (...) Its motivations are crucially those of human behaviour in extreme times. Its place in Gordimer’s oeuvre may be identified in the tensions between the responsibility to witness the social issue and the responsibility to perceive the underlying mental process. (95)

Published in 2003, *Loot* displays a profound shift in Gordimer's short-story writing. Gone is her morbid fascination with the extremes of human emotions in extreme circumstances and the shift in scope from the national to the universal is progressed and developed further. Less obliged and inclined to concern herself with the social drama of post-apartheid South-Africa, Gordimer feels the need to provide literary answers to an important global question: "How, in national specificity, does each country go about moving beyond itself, to procreate a culture that will benefit self and others?" (Gordimer, *Living in Hope and History* 212). In line with the political changes, dictatorial regimes giving way to democratic processes in the post-Cold War and post-apartheid era, both Gordimer's subjects and inspirations change in similar fashion: "Gordimer permits herself to be inspired and 'selected' by the spirit of the new political world order, both locally and internationally. She does not transcend social reality to take refuge in aesthetic experimentation (...)" (Dimitriu 36). With *Loot*, Gordimer demonstrates her ability to reflect the times in which she lives as well as preference for social imperatives over artistic.

According to Dimitriu, Gordimer, through *Loot*, "expresses a new interest in the dynamics of the local and global, of the global beyond the local" (96). Gordimer referred to this newfound perspective as "global localization, a global outlook adapted to local conditions" (*Living in Hope and History*, 2017), signalling a new interest in the broader issues of postcolonialism found in the world today. The stories of the collection engage with material experiences originating in the postcolonial context: "identity and (dis)location, migration and exile, hybridity and liminality - (...) steeped in the tension between 'centre and periphery' as a global phenomenon" (96). As such, Gordimer appears to have taken on a 'postcolonialising' perspective, a term coined by Quayson as a process "meant to suggest creative ways of viewing a variety of cultural, political and social realities, both in the West and elsewhere, via a postcolonial prism of interpretation" (12). This new perspective is evident in *Loot's*

engagement with postcolonial issues, such as identity and place and displacement, as global phenomena and it is in this engagement with postcolonial issues as global phenomena that the true power of this collection lies.

According to Lazar, “Gordimer always chooses the title of her anthologies and the order of the stories within each collection ... The titular story, habitually at the start of each collection, often sets its tone and establishes its salient questions and scenarios” (283). This is certainly also the case for *Loot*, where the title story, “Loot”, set outside the country and referring to an incident that took place in Chile, tells a fable-like story of the boundarylessness of human greed. Appearing first as a rather mundane allegory for human greed, closer analysis and interpretation reveals Gordimer’s attempt of striving towards a larger understanding through the depiction of the particular.

3.3.2 *Habibi*

Naomi Shihab Nye’s language makes English feel very rich and full, however, as she deftly tells this tale and teaches her readers about this family and their country.

(Hanley 125)

Habibi is a semi-biographical young adult novel by American/Palestine author, poet, and songwriter Naomi Shihab Nye. Born in the US to a Palestinian father and American mother, Nye considers herself a traveling poet, contributing to over 30 volumes of poetry and publishing young adult fiction, picture books, and novels from places such as St. Louis, Jerusalem, and San Antonio (among others). With her 1997 debut novel *Habibi*, meaning ‘beloved’ in Arabic, Nye received international attention and acclaim, culminating in several listings in yearly book selections, such as the ALA Best Book for Young Adults, the ALA Notable Book, the New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age, the Texas Institute of Letters Best Book for Young Readers, as well as winning the Jane Addams Children’s Book Award for advancing the causes of peace and social equality. The novel is critically acclaimed

as a sensitive and beautifully written novel about the teenage struggle of identity and the challenges posed by a multicultural background, a novel which Teri Lesesne calls “a gift” taking “readers into a new culture as Nye moves into a new genre” (Lesesne & Beers 694).

Similar to Nye’s upbringing, the novel tells the story of fourteen-year-old Liyana Abboud and her family, her Arab father, American mother, and brother Rafik, who move from St. Louis to her father’s native home of Palestine in the 1970s. Fourteen years old and ready to start high school, Liyana is both troubled and fascinated by the notion of moving to a place “where no one but your own family had any memory of you” and with the sudden challenge of taking on the former role of her father, being ‘the immigrant’. The Abbouds move to a white stone house between Jerusalem, where her father will practice as a physician, and Ramallah, home to the Abboud’s relatives. Just as the epigram to one of the chapters, Liyana sees Jerusalem as “a cake made of layers of time”, compounded by the shared history of Arabs, Jews, and Greeks, but fragmented by contemporary politics. Liyana finds herself caught in the intricacies of contemporary politics and its conscious and unconscious effects on her small family. Her father is jailed and released, her grandmother has her tiny bathroom destroyed by Israeli soldiers, and despite her father openly arguing for the unity of the people living under the middle-eastern sun, he is displeased at the notion of Liyana inviting a Jewish boy over for dinner.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will argue that Liyana’s constant struggle for identity and the depiction of place and displacement in Nye’s *Habibi* makes it well suited for the purposes of developing inter cultural competence. The potential for human growth through identification with fictional characters plays an important role in this context and is explored more in the section regarding intercultural competence in *Habibi*.

3.3.3 Text Selection and Justification

While this thesis aims at investigating how these two specific texts can contribute in the development of intercultural competence it is important to remember that in the larger scheme of things they are only intended to serve as examples of how postcolonial literature in general can contribute to this formation. Thus, it is important to highlight why these texts justify their role as examples of a genre with a vast number of titles of different complexity, length and genres. In this section text selection will be discussed first from a curricula perspective and secondly from a didactic standpoint.

There are many elements to take into consideration when selecting texts for educational purposes. As the curriculum offers a few limitations, you will probably be able to find curricular support for almost any text imaginable, within reason. According to Ariel Sacks' *Whole Novels for the Whole Class: A Student-Centred Approach*, there are five dimensions that teachers need to consider when selecting texts for their class: *development, identification level, reading level, thematic connections, and literary strength* (37). Firstly, the teacher must consider how the text connects to the students' developmental stage, which essentially means that the teacher has to consider whether the book is age appropriate. Secondly, the teacher has to consider whether the content and setting of the text has potential for the students to relate their own experiences to. Thirdly, the complexity of the language compared to the reading level of the students has to be considered. Fourthly, the teacher has to consider whether or not the students possess the required background knowledge in order to understand the contents of the text. Finally, the teacher has to assess the literary elements of the text and consider whether these elements provide opportunities to "focus on the author's craft" (37). Though the novels chosen for the purposes of this thesis do not have a specific class in mind, it was stated initially that the books were selected for the purpose of investigating their potential for developing intercultural competence in Norwegian upper-

secondary school students, and thus the answers to the questions posed by Sacks' five dimensions will be based on a general, rather than class specific, foundation.

As upper-secondary students in a secular society, there are few immediate concerns for whether the content of either *Habibi* or *Loot and Other Stories* is age appropriate for this type of student mass. However, a few of the stories in *Loot and Other Stories* features sensuality, sexuality and even adultery. While these subjects too have their place in the Norwegian school system, one has to be conscious of the fact that some of these topics may be sensitive to some students, parents and members of the school administration. Despite not posing to many concerns, one does how to consider why exactly these texts are appropriate for this age group, and not something else. The 2009 Young Adult Library Association's Best Book for Young Adults winner *Climbing the Stairs* by Padma Venkatraman would be a natural choice, and the same goes for the 2012 winner *Now is the Time for Running* by Michael Williams. Thus, and as Sacks argues, the student's developmental level alone does not dictate literature selection, but rather serves as a first filter.

When Sacks talks about the identification level of the texts it is not a prerequisite that the students are fully able to relate their own experiences to the text. The text can either serve as a *mirror* (familiar) or as a *window* (unfamiliar) and the connection can be either direct or indirect (37). Out of my selected texts *Habibi* probably offers the most chance of students relating to the content and setting of the text, as the novel features a young person dealing with issues of identity in an unfamiliar place. This text would thus be likely to function as a mirror for many of the students, while *Loot and Other Stories*, featuring more adult subject matters such as looting, exploitation, violence, and sexuality in South-Africa, would, at least on a surface level, offer few opportunities for recognition. However, if we look beyond the surface level indicators the common denominator of these stories is human greed, a feeling that everybody is able to relate to. Other notable options in this regard could be Chigozie

Obioma's *The Fishermen* for *Habibi* or José Eduardo Agualusa's terrific novel *A General Theory of Oblivion* for *Loot*.

Reading level is a component that is perhaps particularly important when choosing books for the foreign language classroom. The question of whether the book will be accessible for all, half, or just some of the students relies heavily on the overall language and reading proficiency of the individual class. In relation to *Loot* and *Habibi*, both should be well within reach for most upper-secondary students, but not without offering a few challenges. The length of *Habibi* could be disheartening for some of the struggling readers, if one is to read the entire novel. Similarly, the complexity of Gordimer's allegories requires a high level of language proficiency in order to fully comprehend. In these situations, a teacher could consider bringing in a graphic novel in order to accommodate all proficiency levels, and Aboutet & Oubrierie's *Aya* would be an excellent option in this regard.

When it comes to thematic connections this dimension is not so relevant in connection to this thesis. It is however important for the teacher to consider the preconceptions of his students before embarking on literary texts, in order to fully utilize the potential of student interpretations. In the context of *Habibi* and *Loot*, the teacher would need to ensure that the students have some preconceptions of both the Israel/Palestine conflict and the apartheid regime.

Finally, considering the literary strengths of the text is a dimension that can assist in the process of singling out the perfect book. If we are to fulfil Ibsen & Wiland's wishes for a literary approach with due respect to artistic quality and student responses, we have to select quality literature for the students to respond to. However, quality is often subjectively determined, but literary canons, reviews and awards can often serve as useful supplements to personal intuition. Both *Habibi* and *Loot* display different literary qualities, such as the richness in the allegories of Gordimer's writing or the subtle, yet provoking language of Nye,

and thus both have literary qualities that provide opportunities to focus on the craftsmanship of writing. However, the same could also be said of Tony Morrison's *Beloved*, Coetzee's *Disgrace*, or Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

While considering all the five dimensions suggested by Sacks does not necessarily provide you with one perfect options, it does provide some useful points to consider when choosing literary texts for educational purposes. Eventually, there will always be an element of intuition involved in this type of process but combined these dimensions can assist you in ruling out ill-suited options and guide you towards better options. While there are quite a few novels that could fit the requirements of this thesis a few other conditions also applied, such as diversity in both geographical spread and literary complexity, accessibility, genre, and how they can function differently in approaching the different components of intercultural competence.

4 Analysis

4.1 Intercultural Competence in *Habibi*

4.1.1 Attitudes

“Literature is the question minus the answer.” – Roland Barthes

Before any investigation into how *Habibi* can contribute to the development of intercultural attitudes one has to consider to what extent literature in general has the capacity for developing or changing attitudes in readers. According to Lin Yutang, the discovery of a favourite author is like finding the reincarnation of the same soul: “like a person finding his own image” (381). Similarly, George Eliot described her initial reading of Rousseau as an electric shock, and Nietzsche felt the same way about Schopenhauer (before he eventually rebelled against his former master). Others would say that reading provides them with a design for living purposefully or experiencing life more understandably. In this regard, literature is both intellectually enlightening and empathically challenging, and since the sparse beginning of what we can consider literature and up to the wide variety of contemporary fiction available today, literature has acted as a reflective tool with which we mirror our society through works which aesthetically or intellectually provoke.

In *How to Read a Book* Adler and Van Doren identify four levels of reading, where the fourth level is related to values that the reader “takes for his own” and which he may incorporate in his emerging life pattern (2). Strang maintains that, through identification with and imitation of characters in books, a reader achieves insight into the solutions of personal problems, developing a new self-image and a new concept of his own worth in the worldly scheme (4). Furthermore, with reference to the words of French critic Roland Barthes, “literature is the question minus the answer”, it can further be argued that literature, in its very essence, dismantles established truths, acting as a disruptive force inciting critical analysis of

the reader's perceived reality through the implication of doubt. Thus, it seems that literature, from a theoretical perspective, may have the capacity to form and change attitudes through both identification and imitation with fictional characters as well as in its ability to challenge our perceived realities, particularly for more advanced readers. A doctoral study by Shirley entitled "The Influence of Reading on Concepts, Attitudes, and Behavior" confirms, to a certain degree, the idea of literature's capacity for eliciting change in attitudes, stating: "Adolescents read widely and are influenced positively more often than negatively by both fiction and nonfiction" (369). While there are clear limitations of the study, as well as a formidable time-gap, the study at least provides an indication as to the possibilities of literature in eliciting change in reader's attitudes.

Firstly, intercultural attitudes concern the ability to value cultural diversity and pluralism of views and practices as well as being open, curious and willing to learn from people of different cultural orientations and perspectives of others. In *Habibi* Liyana, despite being hesitant at first, eventually develops these attitudes, both in regard to her father's native culture as well as for Omer's Jewish culture. Upon her arrival in Jerusalem, Liyana, who "would rather not have to change her life" (9) appears hesitant to immerse herself in the native Arabic culture of her father, as is evident in her reluctance to accept her grandmother Siti's wishes for them to spend time together alone in the village: "Sitti kept Liyana's bed in the village ready, the pillow puffed. She pointed it out each time the Abbouds arrived for their regular weekend visit, but Liyana turned her face away" (85). This episode shows Liyana's unwillingness to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty, one key aspect of intercultural attitudes, stating that it would "all be a guessing game" without her father present to "*explain* – who was who, what was what" (85). However, as Liyana continues to develop her personal multicultural identity, the fear and reluctance disappears: "as if a compass had swung around inside her and held" (84). By being willing to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty, Liyana

comes to the realization that “she didn’t need him [her father] so badly after all”, as Liyana and Sitti are able to communicate and learn from each other non-verbally.

This newfound willingness to immerse herself in more or less foreign cultures eventually transcends the confines of the extended family and their Arabic culture, allowing Liyana to immerse herself in the complex cultural maze of Jerusalem and befriending Arabs, Armenians, and Jews along the way. Her fearlessness allows her to ask questions and to seek out opportunities to learn about the different cultures and their views and practices, eventually leading to an appreciation for Arabic food, Israeli craftsmanship, the linguistic differences, and cultural and religious customs and oddities. Furthermore, it is through this willingness to seek out opportunities to engage with culturally different individuals that Liyana eventually befriends Omer, a Jewish boy from Jerusalem.

Upon meeting Omer for the first time, in the Arabic ceramics store where he worked on occasion, Liyana mishears his name and believes him to be named Omar and thus be an Arab. Upon learning of Omer’s Jewish background, Liyana experiences a sense of surprising shock, suddenly remembering the suffering of the Arab population while simultaneously trying to figure out the perspective of Omer and adjust her world view accordingly:

‘I mean, this fighting is senseless, don’t you think? People should be able to get over their differences by this time, but they just stay mad. They have their old reasons or they find new ones. I mean, I understand it mostly from the Arab side because my father’s family lost their house and their money in the bank and lots of their community when my father was a boy and the Palestinians were suffering so much (...) I know the Jewish people suffered so much themselves, but don’t you think it should have made them more sensitive to the suffering of others, too?’ (...) He stared at her quietly. ‘I do.’ (...) As a kind of finishing touch, Liyana blurted, ‘I have hope for peace, do you?’ And he stared at her closely. ‘of course I do. Would you still like to go to the museum?’ (165-166)

This episode is telling of Liyana’s curiosity towards people of different cultural affiliations than her own, as well as her willingness to “question what is usually taken for granted as ‘normal’ according to [her] previously acquired knowledge and experience” (19), both central aspects of intercultural attitudes. She is innately curious of Omer’s perspective on their

contradicting cultural backgrounds and questions both her own and Omer's preconception of the other's cultural perspectives.

Throughout the novel the reader witnesses Liyana's developing intercultural attitudes, gradually moving from a state of ethnocentrism, valuing her American cultural background as superior to the Arabic culture of her father, to a state of cultural relativism and eventual multiculturalism. It is eventually through changing and adapting existing attitudes and developing new ones, that Liyana is finally able to settle into life in Jerusalem:

She did not feel like a foreigner in the Old City anymore. Now she had her own landmarks and scenes to remember. She had Hani, the banana seller, Bilal, the fabric seller, and Bassam, the spice man. She knew where a certain stone corner was chipped away. Maybe a vendor had bumped into it with his cart long ago. She knew where the cabbages were lined on burlap in front of a radiant old woman who raised one hand to Liyana as if she was blessing her. She knew the blind shopkeeper who sat on a stool in front of his shop nodding and saying, '*Sabah-al-khair* – good morning' – to the air. The Old City was inside her already. (245).

It is the knowledge acquired through her willingness to explore, her respect of different cultures, and her fearfulness and toleration of ambiguity and uncertainty in engaging with individuals of different cultural orientations, that eventually allow her to feel a part of the culturally diverse Jerusalem.

4.1.2 Knowledge

Literature has for a considerable period been considered as a crucial part of the student's development of cultural awareness and cultural knowledge, as observed by scholars such as Bredella (1996, 2000), Burwitz-Meltzer (2001), Delanoy (1993) and Kramsch (2000, 2003). One of the principal arguments for including literature within the foreign language classroom and within intercultural education is literature's ability to enable readers to observe the world from multiple perspectives with due respect to the individuality of perception. According to Wąsikiewicz-Firlej's paper "Developing Intercultural Awareness through Literature" the power of literature "lies in its unique ability to deeply involve the reader both at a cognitive,

as well as emotional level” (3). The world, as perceived through the eyes of the literary protagonist, has the potential to not only fascinate and allure the reader, but also to transfer them to a different reality, regardless of their own otherness or limitations. In this perspective, literature is seen as a reflection of both culture and society, “portraying people’s ideas and dreams set in certain time and space frameworks in the most creative and imaginary way” (3). Literature should, however, not be treated as true representations of a society in a truthful and objective way (Schewe 204), because the world we experience through literature is fictitious, regardless of the “broad and vivid context for literary protagonists, whose background, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, values, habits and everyday life reveal to the reader codes and rules of the real society (Collie & Slater in Schewe 204). Furthermore, to use literature as representations of the target culture would also be to attribute immense power of definition to the individuals portrayed in the text. As such, critics such as Edmondson question the usefulness of literature in cultural education, arguing that the subjectivity and the individual perspective is not always representative of the entire culture. Thus, one has to consider whether or not literature is a valuable and credible source of cultural knowledge. According to Hanauer (396) “literature is a valuable source of cultural knowledge precisely because it does present a personal interpretation of the life and values as the author of the literary work experiences them”. In this perspective, literature becomes valuable because it, rather than denying the importance of the individual perspective, presents us with multiple individual viewpoints, allowing us to compose more complex pictures of the target culture.

The knowledge aspect of intercultural competence concerns the understanding of the intricacies of cultural-, ethnical-, and religious identities. It involves the understanding of the internal diversity and heterogeneity of all cultural groups, as well as the awareness and understanding of one’s own and other people’s assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices. Additionally, intercultural knowledge involves the understanding of the influence

of one's own language and cultural affiliations on one's experience of the world and other people. In *Habibi*, the reader is certainly faced with these intricacies as Liyana struggles with the process of finding her own identity in the intersection of her American upbringing, the traditions and customs of her Arabic family, and the cultural stigmas of multicultural Jerusalem.

In the early stages of the novel, Liyana goes through a process of figuring out who she is in order to form the basis of her identity. Being of dual heritage, this process is not without frustration, as Liyana is not willing to accept the values and norms of her family, community and culture without question. On the contrary, Liyana tries to explore their value system, often challenging or rejecting it in the process, as becomes evident when her father asks, as the family is packing for their move to Palestine, not to pack her shorts because "No one wears shorts over there" (Nye 19):

Lately Poppy kept bringing up Arab women and it made Liyana mad. 'I'm not a woman or a full Arab, either one!' She slammed her bedroom door, knowing what would happen next. Poppy [her Arab/Palestinian father] would enter, stand with hands on his hips, and say, 'Would you like to tell me something?' Liyana muttered, 'I'm just a half-half, woman-girl, Arab-American, a mixed breed like those wild characters that ride up on ponies in the cowboy movies Rafik [her brother] likes to watch. The half-breeds are always villains or rescuers, never anybody normal in between.' (20)

In the process of forming her own identity, Liyana raises questions to the effect of: "Who am I?" and "What can I become?", searching for her own uniqueness and looking for what makes her different from the others. She shows concern for how she is to define herself and the values and convictions that structures her life, a process that Oswald considers a rather normal process to go through for adolescents, as it "is a prime time for youth to explore their cultural heritage and identity" (Oswald, "Erik Erikson and Self-Identity"). This exploration may involve interest in learning about the family heritage, as well as questioning "what it means to be part of their culture in contemporary society" (in "Erik Erikson and Self-Identity") which certainly is the case for Liyana. Her immediate challenge is the cultural differences between

the culture she was brought up in and the culture of her father, her father's family, and the Arab community of her new home country.

When the family eventually moves to Mr. Abboud's native Palestine, Liyana is faced with the challenges of these cultural differences and, as the move is considered permanent, is forced to resolve these issues. The cultural issues range from the language she speaks, to the way she dresses, her manners, her beliefs and values, her social interactions, and, eventually, her relationship with the other sex, and Liyana often finds herself caught between two worlds, as when her father catches her combing her hair on their front balcony: 'Don't be so public about it. You're making a *display*. Comb your hair in the bathroom. Comb your hair in your own bedroom! Don't do it out there where all the taxis and shepherds can see you' (Nye 123). This situation portrays how Liyana is uneasily swinging between her Arab and American cultural backgrounds, finding it hard to adapt her understanding of the world and her value system to the expectations of her father's culture:

The minute Poppy told her to stop combing her hair on the balcony, she toppled on to the American side, thinking. If I were at home on a beach I could run up and down the sand with just a bathing suit on and no one would even notice me, I could wear my short shorts that I didn't bring and hold a boy's hand in the street without causing an earthquake, I could comb my wet hair in public for a hundred dumb years. (125)

It is clear that Liyana's duality is a source for frustration both internally and externally. Her father, caught in a similar position between the expectations of his native community and the values and lifestyle of his own family, is frustrated by Liyana's apparent inability to adapt to the cultural norms of Palestinian-Arabs and Liyana is equally frustrated at the cultural expectations of a community that she does not identify with. In the process of her identity formation, the cultural differences of her dual heritage have left her in a sort of cultural limbo; a hyphenated "Arab-American", "half/half", not fully American, nor Arab either:

Sometimes she heard her father say, 'We are *Americans*,' to his relatives – when she walked the village streets alone just for exercise, pretending she was giving Jackson [a former fling in the US] a tour, or when she flipped the round dial on Sitti's [her Arab grandmother] radio, or when she slouched in the corner of Sitti's room with a book in

front of her face. *Americans?* Even Poppy, who was always an Arab before? Of course there was never any question about their mother being an American, but Rafik and Liyana walked a blurry line. (124)

This duality is, however, not only a source for frustration. Eventually, it is her dual heritage that allows her to adapt and include various components from different cultures into her own identity formation. In Jerusalem, Liyana finds herself in a society consisting of multiple cultures, languages and religions and it is through her experiences from both of her hereditary cultures that she is able to orient herself in this complex cultural landscape. For instance, when her parents decide to enrol her in an Armenian school with a strict policy of only enrolling students of Armenian descent, where “the students were trilingual, speaking Arabic, Armenian and English” (76), Liyana employed the knowledge and skills accumulated from both of her cultures in order to be admitted:

She was afraid he might ask her to say the Armenian alphabet or something, which she certainly did not know. A fan spun and a water cooler clicked. All the books on his shelf were in Armenian. Then something wonderful occurred to Liyana. “I love William Saroyan.” “Who?” When she said, “The great Armenian-American writer who lived and wrote in California,” he said, “Oh yes, oh yes!” (...) Liyana leaned toward the priest, suddenly inspired. “I feel very close to what I know of Armenian culture through Saroyan’s stories and look forward to learning even more.” That’s when the air in the room changed. (...) The priest enrolled her. (77)

Liyana learned of Saroyan while attending school in America and feels close to the Armenian culture due to the similarities between Saroyan’s stories and those of her father. Thus, the cultural duality of Liyana serves to open doors that would otherwise have been shut, a point that also transcends to her ability to befriend people from many of Jerusalem’s different cultures.

Throughout the novel Liyana’s identity is gradually changing and developing along with her developing her Arabic language skills and adopting a wide selection of customs from the different cultures of Jerusalem. While she initially was relatively fixed in identifying as an American, opposing many of the cultural aspects of being Arabic in the process, she gradually begins to accept the notion that she might be a cultural hybrid: “in Jerusalem, she was just a

blur going by in the streets. The half-American with the Arab eyes in the navy blue Armenian school uniform” (84). While hybridity historically has carried negative connotations, considered as a “living in a state of in-betweenness which would result in discomfort and suffering” (Yousef 56), it has in the last two decades gained a different, more positive sense, especially “in the discourses of identity, multiculturalism, race, postcolonialism, and globalization” (56). In this context, hybridity involves the ability of carrying two or more identities at once and concerns itself with the effects of cultural mixing upon identity, cultures and human interactions (56). As we can see from the excerpt from *Habibi* above, Liyana is gradually reaching a stage of cultural hybridity to the extent that she has become aware of the physical representations of the different cultures on her body. She is able to drift in and out of each culture, not necessarily without problems, but more or less in accordance with what the situation requires or what she pleases.

In his “The Dialectic of Borders and Multiculturalism in Naomi Nye’s *Habibi*”, Tawfiq Yousef argues that hybridity, in political terms, “involves intercultural and international communication taking place amidst differential power” (56) and critics such as Bhabha and Kraidy have explored hybridity in the context of the postcolonial novel, celebrating its resilience to “imperial ideology, aesthetic, and identity, by natives who are striking back at imperial domination” (56). In Bhabha’s opinion, hybridity is an act that challenges the colonizer’s authority, constituting an act of self-empowerment, but as Ang argues in his “Together-in-difference: Beyond Diaspora, into hybridity”: “Hybridity is a concept that confronts and problematises boundaries, although it does not erase them” (149-150). In this context, hybridity cannot be considered a harmonious fusion of world cultures: “Hybridity is not the solution but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution (149-150). Whether or not Nye considers cultural hybridity to be the solution to decolonization or as an eyeopener to the

difficulties of living with cultural differences is difficult to say with precision. However, the way cultural identities function within the universe of *Habibi* may provide some clues as to Nye's position. In *Habibi* cultural identities are not fixed (Yousef 57): they are dynamic and shifting between different positions, drawing on different cultural traditions and becoming a product of cultural cross-overs. The novel criticizes the very notion of cultural purity and presents a discourse where mixed populations can live harmoniously, going against racial inequality and racial discourse.

In *Habibi* the reader gets to experience a mix of religions, cultures, races, and social and cultural identities, along with the tension between the local and the global (57). Although Nye presents her views of multiculturalism against the backdrop of what we could call the democratic and multiculturalist age of the late 90s and early 00s, the reader also witnesses the insistence on fundamentalist identifications and the “conflict between fundamentalist border mentality and liberalist multicultural open-border mentality” (57). Thus, the role of identity in border formation and its relevance to the growing right-wing populism and nationalism in both European- and world politics cause the novel to maintain its relevance more than 20 years later. In this context, *Habibi* presents a counter-narrative to the border mentality often found in the new alt-right movements by promoting and celebrating cultural hybridity by providing examples of its flexibility.

4.1.3 Skills

Literature-based reading has an important effect on the development of critical thinking. A reader must recognize patterns within text, fit details into these patterns, then relate them to other texts and remembered experiences. (Madison “Critical Thinking and Literature-based Reading” 1)

Before discussing the possibility of *Habibi*'s contribution to the development of intercultural skills, a brief account of the potential of literature in the development of skills in general has to be provided. As the quote from Madison above suggests, there is evidence suggesting that

literature has an important effect on the development of critical thinking skills. This effect can, according to a study by Tung & Chang (“Developing Critical Thinking through Literature Reading”) be attributed to the mental processes of literature reading’s requirement of critical thinking skills:

Literature reading is a complex process that requires readers to recall, retrieve and reflect on their prior experiences or memories to construct meanings of the text. While they are doing so, they need to demonstrate the following capacities: to differentiate facts from opinions; to understand the literal or implied meanings and the narrator’s tone; to locate details related to the issues discussed; to find out the causal relationship or the connections between the events or actions; to detect an inferential relationship from the details observed; to be perceptive of multiple points of views; to make moral reasoning and fair-grounded judgments; and **most** of all, to apply what they have learned from this process to other domains or the real world. (291)

In this sense, readers are exercising “explanation,” “analysis,” “synthesis,” “argumentation,” “interpretation,” “evaluation,” “problem-solving,” “inference” “logical reasoning,” and “application”, which Chang argues, in sum, is what constitutes critical thinking skills and is why Lazere argued that “literature (...) is the single academic discipline that can come closest to encompassing the full range of mental traits currently considered to comprise critical thinking” (“Critical Thinking in College English Studies” 3). Thus, there seems to be evidence implying that literature in general has the potential of affecting student’s intercultural skills through the requirements of the mental processes involved in the act of reading itself.

As intercultural skills involve the ability to synthesise our own perspectives with those of other people, interpreting other cultural practices, beliefs and values, as well as evaluating and making judgments about cultural beliefs, values, practices, discourses and products (Byram 20), the components of critical thinking, as they are defined by Tung & Chang, form(s) the basis of considerable parts of what Byram constitutes to be intercultural skills. In addition, intercultural skills concern the ability to decentre from one’s own perspective and to take other people’s perspectives into consideration, as well as the ability to discover

information about other cultural affiliations and perspectives (20). In *Habibi* the intercultural student will be faced with the challenge of interpreting and evaluating multiple cultures (American-, Arab-Christian-, Arab-Muslim-, Israeli-, Armenian-, rural/urban) as the culturally mixed main protagonist moves between the different cultures of Israel. Liyana's father (Mr. Abboud) originally stems from a rural Arab-Muslim family from a small village of farmers on the west-bank between Jerusalem and Ramallah. The family lives in a pre-globalized world with limited access to modern technology and follows a combination of Islam and Arabic traditions and superstitions. As mentioned in the section regarding *Habibi* and the knowledge component of intercultural competence, the cultural differences between the Abbouds from the village and the Abbouds from America are not without an element of conflict and frustration, and the previously discussed example of dress code and expectations of decency is one such example of cultural practices that would require interpretation by the students. An example that is perhaps even more poignant in this regard is that of arranged childhood marriage between members of the extended family, an archaic but commonly practiced tradition in certain Arab communities. In *Habibi*, Liyana is faced by this tradition quite immediately after arriving in Palestine, as one of her uncles "asked 'for her hand' for his son on their second trip to the village" (60):

Poppy got so furious, he actually hissed, and translated his answer for them later. 'We do not embrace such archaic customs, and furthermore, does she look ready to be married? She is fourteen years old.' In the village everyone seemed to be staring at her as if she were an exotic animal in a zoo. She felt awkward around her relatives, as if they had more in mind for her than she could ever have dreamed. (60)

Arranged childhood marriages between members of the extended family is without a doubt a cultural tradition that would need interpretation and critical evaluation by the intercultural student. While I personally, similarly to Mr. Abooud, do not support this tradition, it is, in the context of intercultural competence, important that the student seeks to understand the tradition in the broad context of its origin and the culture in which it exists. This would entail

that the student would have to consider a wide variety of variables, such as gender roles, way of life, religion and values, and globalization, in the formation of this cultural tradition. It would be easy to denounce and condemn such traditions as archaic, in the same manner as Mr. Abboud, but to the Norwegian intercultural student it would be important to remember that arranged marriages have been a common feature in both Norwegian and Scandinavian culture for centuries and that free marriages form a relatively new tradition in the larger schemes of world history. In the context of Palestinian Arabs, arranged childhood marriages are today considered a rural phenomenon, though the importance of family consent still remains to some degree (IMEU on Palestine Society). Thus, when interpreting this event in the context of *Habibi*, the intercultural student would have to consider the role of rurality and globalization when evaluating this tradition.

The tradition of arranged marriages also tells us something about the importance of family in the Arab culture. In *Habibi* the family is present for all landmarks of life, and the family is not limited to what we in the West refer to as the immediate family. Instead, the entire extended family often participate in both small and large events, and both Liyana and Rafik experience a sense of being overwhelmed at the sheer amount of family members present to welcome them to Palestine:

Indeed, they were not like any relatives Liyana had ever met before. In the United States their extended family (except for Peachy Helen [her grandmother on her mother's side], who always acted cozy) held back from the politely as if they might have a cold. Uncle Leo had never hugged Liyana yet. He shook her hand like an insurance man. Aunt Margaret spoke formally to children, about general subjects. *Are you enjoying the summer? Do you have nice friends?* But this bustling group of aunts and uncles swirled in circles as Sitti, their grandmother, threw her hands around each one of them in succession, squeezing so tightly that Liyana lost her breath. 'She's blessing you,' Poppy whispered.

Just as Liyana and Rafik, it is easily imaginable that Norwegian students would have similar feelings regarding the role of the extended family in their culture, with minor variations.

Thus, the intercultural student is forced to consider this difference and why it occurs. One

mode of interpreting the significance of family in Arabic culture could be to see it as taking on certain functions that in western societies are considered parts of the state, and thus the role of family in Arabic offers the opportunity to discuss the different role of family and state in different cultures, including the student's own.

The cultural discourse of *Habibi* also provides some noteworthy opportunities for interpretation. *Habibi* mirrors the central role of stories in Arab and Middle-Eastern cultures, where personal or community stories become an important part of the discourse and the collective memory. Liyana first recognizes the importance of these stories in the process of getting to know her grandmother (Sitti), noting that while Americans tended to remember little of their past, or at least are willing to share little of it, "*Sitti remembered everything.*" (Nye 131) and was willing to share it: "*Tell me a story.* 'About what?' Sitti laughed. She offered Liyana an apricot. *The whole world was a story. Stories were the only things that tied us to the ground!* (...) Sitti placed both hands over her own eyes, as if casting a spell on herself, and began speaking" (132). In a culture where knowledge is largely passed from mouth to mouth, stories often form an important part of memory and discourse. Nye's use of stories in *Habibi* is cleverly executed, never outright stating the significance of each one, but leaving them open for interpretation. Some may seem as more or less irrelevant anecdotes, while others carry clear undertones of deeper meaning, leaving the reader to decide their significance. For the intercultural student, the stories provide an opportunity for evaluating the discourse of the culture: how do we communicate and pass on knowledge? And how do we remember? For the Norwegian intercultural student, the stories offer opportunities for discussing the similarities between the Arabic story culture and the Scandinavian traditions of the Sagas and the Norwegian tradition of fairy-tales and folklore.

In terms of beliefs and values, *Habibi* contains plenty of material for both analysis, evaluation and discussion. Perhaps most poignant in this regard, would be the opposing

values and beliefs of the Israelites and Palestinians – and in its most extreme form ultra-Zionism versus anti-Semitism. Nye threads quite carefully when approaching the subject, and one must look at the discourse in order to find evidence of the opposing views. One notable example occurs when the Abbouds first encounter the Israeli border guards upon their arrival in Jerusalem:

Today the guard chose his words carefully. ‘Why are you planning to *stay* here?’ Poppy had written ‘indefinitely’ on the length of their visit when he filled out the papers on the plane. (...) She hear her father explain, in an unusually high-pitched tone, ‘I happen to be *from here*, and I am moving back’

Despite the subtlety of the discourse between the border guard and Mr. Abboud, it is clear that there is significant differences in opinion as to whose homeland it really is. However more extreme accounts follow later in the novel, for example, Liyana’s first encounter with a Jewish man in the Armenian quarter reveals elements of ultra-Zionism and racism, discussed in previous sections.

There is, however, also instances of generalization and disgust on the account of Arabs towards the Jews throughout the novel. Upon befriending Omer, a Jewish boy of Liyana’s age, Liyana asks her father, per Omer’s request, whether he could accompany her to the family’s village on the west-bank. Her father, despite all his preaching about unity and the silliness of the fighting, reacts with disbelief, first refusing, but eventually accepting her proposal:

Omer had said how much it meant to be with them. He thanked them for their welcome and said they felt like family to him. He wished they didn’t have all these troubles in their shared country. Sitti said, ‘We have been waiting for you for a very long time.’ But Abu Daoud, who now realized Omer’s identity, hissed, ‘Remember us when you join the army.’ Later Liyana would try to remember exactly what the room looked like during the next few moments. Maybe the light changed. Maybe the sunbeams falling across Sitti’s bed intensified, and the small golden coffee por glittered on its tray. The day turned a corner right then, but you would have to have been paying close attention to see it.

The excerpt is quite revealing of the Arab’s perception of the Jewish population, as it is presented in *Habibi*, and although it is only Abu Daoud that expresses them, Lyana’s

observation of the day turning a corner, reflects the notion that there are more people present sharing in this opinion. From the context, we can interpret Mr. Daoud's comments as a view of all Israelis as violent colonists, a point that is often found between the lines in other discourses between the Arab characters of the novel. However, the excerpt also shows how Sitti, a woman who has had her son arrested and her bathroom destroyed by Israeli soldiers, is capable of refraining from generalization, welcoming Omer into her family.

The skills component of intercultural competence concerns (among other things) the ability to take on the perspectives of others. Through Liyana, and her friendship with Omer, the reader is offered the opportunity to take on the perspectives of two opposing cultures with a long and complex shared history. While there are obvious indications as to Nye's commitment to the Palestinian cause, Nye skilfully depicts the complexity of the conflict, allowing the reader to form personal opinions and even empathy for both sides.

4.1.4 Actions

Similarly to the question of whether literature can contribute to the change of attitudes, one has to consider whether literature has the capacity for changing attitudes. As it was concluded on the question of literature's effect on attitudes that literature can, to a certain extent, change attitudes through identification with and imitation of fictional characters and through challenging the preconceptions of the reader, there is naturally some potential for contributing to changes in actions as attitudes often form parts of the basis for our actions. Furthermore, the aforementioned doctoral study by Shirley ("The Influence of Reading on Concepts, Attitudes and Behavior") found that reading had the strongest positive effect on behaviour compared to attitudes and concepts (371).

This assumption is, however, not without problems. Firstly, there is little that is, according to DeBoer's "Literature and Human Behavior", "definitely known as to what effect the reading of literature has upon behaviour" (76). Considering the fact that DeBoer's paper

was published in 1950, one has to be cautious in generalizing this statement to present day, but the literature searches of this candidate reveals similar results. Plenty of research has revealed that reading literature can have an effect on personality (Kidd & Castano 2013, Pino & Mazza 2016, among others), but few have set out to explore the effect of literature reading on behaviour. Nevertheless, it is a common, and necessary, assumption that the reading of literature will influence the way we think, feel and act, to some extent. After all, reading allows us, either symbolically or vicariously, to go through the experiences described and one has to assume that the experiences of the reader will, in the words of DeBoer, “be similar to those of comparable experiences in real life, although perhaps less intense” (76). Thus, we should, at the bare minimum, entertain the possibility of literature having the potential for affecting the actions of the individual and the purpose of this section is to investigate whether *Habibi* offers experiences apt for the purpose of developing intercultural actions.

Intercultural actions involve the individual’s ability to engage with people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one’s own. It involves effective and appropriate communication, cross-cultural cooperation, discussing differences and constructing common perspectives, as well as challenging attitudes and behaviours which contravene humane rights, including taking action to defend and protect the dignity and human rights of people regardless of their cultural affiliations (Byram 21),

As Liyana’s ability to engage with people of different cultural orientations than her own has been discussed in detail in previous sections, it will not be discussed further in this section. However, to summarize briefly, Liyana portrays an openness, interest and willingness to engage with new people that could definitely serve as a model for the intercultural student, lowering the bar for communicating across cultural lines.

When it comes to the ability to communicate effectively and respectfully across cultural borders *Habibi* promotes the importance of non-verbal communication in situations

where individuals do not have the luxury of a shared language. This becomes evident in Liyana's recollections of the first day she spent alone with her Arabic grandmother, learning about her daily routines and customs, yet without using words: "Later Liyana realized how many things they had all communicated without trading words" (Nye 88). In the place of language and words, Liyana and Sitti used gestures, mimicking, and practical examples in order to communicate. While this may seem an obvious option to many, the fact that they manage an entire day together, learning from each other, without speaking a single word, speaks volumes of Nye's faith in non-verbal communication as a cross-cultural door opener. Furthermore, Nye uses language as a common ground that can connect characters closer together. This is evident in her use of words such as "Habibi" and "Omer", which serve as indicators of the cultural and linguistic hybridity of Israel/Palestine, showing that both cultures are interlinked or have common origins. Finally, by forcing her different characters to communicate regardless of racial or ethnic differences or cultural backgrounds, creating a variety of parallel and interlocking relationships between the Israelis and the Palestinians, Nye underlines the possibility of friendship between two characters (or two peoples?) regardless of their ideological, political and religious differences:

When my father was growing up in the Old City of Jerusalem (...) he and the kids on his street liked to trade desserts. My father would take his square of Arabic hareesa (...) outside on a plate. His Jewish friend Avi from next door brought slices of dare rolls. And a Greek girl named Anna would bring a plate of honey puffs or butter cookies. Everybody liked everyone else's dessert better than their own. So They'd trade back and forth. (...) My father used to wish the politicians making big decisions would trade desserts. It might have helped. He would stand on his flat roof staring off to the horizon, thinking things must be much better somewhere else. Even when he was younger, he asked himself, 'Isn't it dumb to want only to be next to people who are just like you?'

In Nye's world dialogue is the key that opens for cross-cultural understanding, opening the doors to unlimited possibilities for personal and cultural enrichment. In this sense, cross-cultural communication is something to be, and which it is in Nye's writing, celebrated and encouraged.

Habibi also concerns the individual's responsibility to challenge and intervene in the defence of human rights and human dignity. Most notable is the example of Mr. Abboud standing up against the Israeli soldiers in order to prevent them from shooting a young innocent Arab boy and allow him (as a doctor) to treat him after they eventually did:

'What was happening today was the bomb in the Jewish marketplace (...) The soldiers got a tip that someone in Khaled's camp had something to do with it. That's why they came into territory they're not supposed to be administering anymore. Maybe they thought Khaled did it! But we *know* how much Khaled hates violence... how could I stand by saying nothing? He's not a bathtub for God's sake....' (230)

The "bathtub" is a reference to when Israeli soldiers busted into Sitti's house looking for a relative of hers and upon not finding him destroys the old woman's bathtub. Mr. Abboud chose not to react to this act of meaningless destruction but faced with the possibility of the same happening to an innocent boy Mr. Abboud feels the need to intervene. Similarly, but to a less extreme, Liyana experiences the hateful speech of a Jewish directed at an Arab in the Armenian district, but Liyana is shocked and unable to react:

They were talking about the Armenian sector and the best music stations on the radio when a Jewish man in a *yarmulke* walked by the shop addressed Liyana loudly in Hebrew. (...) 'What?' she said, and the man switched over to English. 'Why you bother with this animal?' he said pointing to Bassam. 'Be careful. Don't trust animals. Go to better stores in our part of town,' so she knew he thought she was Jewish. (94)

Liyana is so shocked at the man's blatant disregard for Bassam's feelings and dignity that her "legs start shaking" and "her mouth opened wide and puffed out nothing" (94). This goes to show the amount of respect that Nye has for the difficulty of standing up and challenging hateful speech, attitudes, and actions. As such, *Habibi* contains events where people display the intercultural action of defending and protecting the dignity and human rights of other people, but simultaneously displays the complexities and challenges of doing so.

4.1.5 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate how *Habibi*, as an example of postcolonial young adult fiction, can be used to facilitate the development of students' intercultural competence.

From a theoretical standpoint, literature has the capacity to form and change attitudes through both identification with and imitation of fictional characters, as well as through challenging our perceived realities, and *Habibi* certainly contains the potential to do so in regard to intercultural attitudes. As a character through which the students can identify with, and potentially imitate, Liyana gradually develops and displays attitudes in line with Byram's definition of intercultural attitudes, such as curiosity and respect when approaching new cultures, the ability to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity, and a willingness to engage and learn from new cultures.

Literature's ability to transmit cultural knowledge lies in its ability to involve the reader both cognitively and emotionally. While the question of the reliability of literature as a source for cultural knowledge is under debate, it is hard to disregard the importance of multiple representations of culture in the understanding of the culture as a whole. Through Liyana's process of finding her own identity, *Habibi* explores the intricacies and difficulties of cultural-, ethnical-, and religious identities, and celebrates cultural hybridity as a method of transcending cultural borders.

The mental processes involved in the act of reading requires the involvement of critical thinking skills, a key concept in what Byram defines as intercultural skills. In *Habibi*, the reader is faced with the challenge of interpreting multiple cultures, values and practices, both separately and in relation to his own culture. This process is not without challenges and frustration, as the reader frequently could condemn practices and values when considering them outside of their cultural context. As such, *Habibi* celebrates cultural diversity while

simultaneously highlighting the importance of interpreting cultures in larger historical contexts.

Whether or not literature can contribute to changes in behaviour is a subject of much debate. Thus, we can only assume that literature, through the similarities between experiences read and experiences lived, influence the way we think, feel and act, to some extent. To this regard, *Habibi* does offer a few distinct experiences that could have some potential for influencing actions towards the intercultural. First, Liyana's continuous engagement with different cultural orientations could potentially contribute to reduce the fear associated with such engagement. Second, *Habibi* highlights non-verbal communication as a method of transcending language barriers. Third, through the creation of parallel and interlocking relationships between characters of different cultural-, ethnical-, and religious backgrounds Nye highlights the potential for cross-barrier friendships through dialogue. Finally, *Habibi* also contains experiences of the individual standing up in defence of human rights and human dignity, arguing for its necessity while respecting the difficulty of doing so.

4.2 Intercultural Competence and "Loot"

In 2007, the Modern Language Association's committee on foreign languages published a report arguing that foreign language programs should seek to cultivate "educated speakers who have deep translingual and transcultural competence", which they proceed to define as "the ability to operate between languages [and between cultures]" (MLA 3-4). Transcultural understanding is here understood as "the ability to comprehend and analyze cultural narratives" (4). The emphasis of the MLA's report on cultural narratives have according to Hibbs led to a fourth movement of cultural teaching in language education, namely using literature to facilitate the development of students' intercultural competence (8). The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the story "Loot", by Nadine Gordimer, as an example of

postcolonial literature, can be used to facilitate the development of students' intercultural competence.

4.2.1 Analysis

“Looting” - the indiscriminate taking of goods by force as part of a military or political victory, or during a catastrophe, such as war, natural disaster or rioting. (“Looting” *Wikipedia*)

“Loot” is both a short parable of greed and an allegory for regime change. When asked whether “Loot” was a ‘moral fable’ or a ‘political allegory’, Gordimer replied: “I suppose it’s a little bit of each. Maybe it’s more of a political fable” (Gordimer and Lee, 316). “Loot” features the telling of the same story twice, juxtaposing a generalised allegorical perspective against a particularised, historically specific one. Beginning with the infamous, fable-like, first sentence, “Once upon our time”, the story proceeds with the description of the unorthodox earthquake: “the most powerful ever recorded” causing “the ocean to draw back “as a vast breath taken” revealing “the most secret level of our world” (Gordimer, *Loot* 3). On the, now exposed, seabed lies the treasures and scraps of all human history heaped together in non-chronological order:

wrecked ships, facades of houses, ballroom candelabra, toilet bowl, pirate chest, TV screen, mail-coach, aircraft fuselage, cannon, marble torso, Kalashnikov, metal carapace of a tourist bus-load, baptismal font, automatic dishwasher, computer, swords sheathed in barnacles, coins turned to stone. (3)

The treasures of the sea, now revealed to the population above, prompts a voracious period of looting, as “People rushed to take; take, take” and “heave out of the slime and sand what they did not know they wanted” (3). While the looting provides the people with an “[o]rgastic joy” that allows them to forget “the wreck of their houses and the loss of time-bound possessions there” (4), their consummation with inanimate objects, fuelled by greed, cause them not to recognize “a distant approach of sound rising as a great wind does”, as the sea comes back

and “engulfed them to add to its treasury” (4). The generalised allegorical perspective of the story ends here, with a brief remark of the media reports from the incident:

That is what is known; in television coverage that really had nothing to show but the pewter skin of the depths, in radio interviews with those few infirm, timid or prudent who had come down from the hills, and in newspaper accounts of bodies that for some reason the sea rejected, washed up down the coast somewhere (4)

The story then proceeds to retell the story from the perspective of an individual, a collector, who, rather than participating in the indiscriminate and senseless looting is hunting for something very specific. What the man is searching for, however, he is yet to know, until he finally discovers it: “there, ornate with tresses of orange-brown seaweed, stuck fast with nacreous shells and crenellations of red coral, is *the* object. (A mirror?)” (5). It transpires that man is no ordinary man, but rather someone “well-known in the former regime circles in the capital” (4). This does, however, not spare him from the vengeance of the returning sea, as “the great wave comes from behind (...) and takes him” (4).

4.2.2 Towards a Global Perspective

According to Quayson, Postcolonialism “involves the studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies as well as at the level of more global developments thought to be the after-effects of imperialism” (2). As mentioned and in previous chapters, there is evidence indicating that Gordimer’s later writing is moving in the direction of a global perspective, addressing the effects of colonialism by describing the particular and striving for that which exceeds it (Riach 1087).

On the surface, “Loot” appears as a rather mundane allegory of the greed that occurs in the wake of political change, but it also performs a second function: “as a meta-textual reflection of Gordimer’s own authorial practice. The pull in her work between a commitment to material detail and the desire for meaning that exceeds the particular is here made the

substance of the story” (Riach 1087). With the opening paragraph’s refashioning of the standard fairy-tale opening, ‘once upon a time’, to “[o]nce upon out time” (Gordimer, *Loot* 3), Gordimer establishes tension between time and timelessness, and between the static world of myth and the changing one of our time. In this world the “apocalyptic warnings” of the gods coexist with the scientific “invention of the Richter scale” (3) and, when the sea pulls back to reveal the “materiality of the past and present as they lie” in “no chronological order”, Gordimer creates a world where “all is one, all is nothing” and “all is possible at once” (3). In a manner recalling the recursive narrative movement of other Gordimer stories, such as “Jump”, “Loot” loops back to beginning, halfway through the story. When it does, the narrative mode switches, as mentioned initially, from allegory to something more materially specific. A short account is given of the media coverage that the event receives, of “bodies that for some reason the sea rejected, washed up down the coast somewhere” (4), before the story opens up to an uneasy space in which references to real-world object and events coexist with their symbolic counterparts. Most notably of these symbolic pairs is the print, “The Great Wave”, by Hokusai, “hanging above the collector’s bed, and its symbolic counterpart, the great wave of change that sweeps the collector away. While we in the first half of the story are presented with the action from the distance of “men, women and their children” (3), the second half presents us with the perspective of one character who is, according to Riach, “in a limited way, developed” (1088). The reader is plunged into the triviality of his bedroom furnishing and the details of his home and relationships, which according to Riach, “pits the allegorical perspective detailed in the first half of the story against a realism that seeks truth through the particular experienced over time” (1088). As such, the theoretical pull in Gordimer’s work, between commitment to material detail, “the trails made by ordinary lives”, and the will to abstract from that material to reveal the “arcane pattern of abstract forces of

which [those lives] are the fingerprinting” (Gordimer, *Telling Times: Writing and Living* 412), is here made inherent to the structure of the story (Riach 1088).

4.2.3 “Loot” - The Effects of Extreme Conditions on the Human Psyche

It is significant that “Loot”, the titular story of the collection, which, as is usual in Gordimer’s collections, sets the tone of the volume as a whole, is not specifically situated in South-Africa. Critics such as Oliphant and Dimitriu claim that the story refers to an incident that took place in Chile (see Oliphant 2003, and Dimitriu 97), when an earthquake at sea caused a massive tsunami, but the story itself does not specify its location. However, if we consider the reference to people “dropped [into the sea] from airplanes during the dictatorship” (Gordimer, *Loot* 6), a sentence that Gordimer has stated is a “reference to (...) that part of the world, especially Argentina, where political opponents were thrown into the sea” (Gordimer and Lee 317), it is perhaps fair to argue that the story is set somewhere in South-America. Regardless of the specificity of its location, other than it being situated outside of South-Africa, Gordimer makes use of the particularity of the earthquake to reflect on the effects of extreme situations on the human psyche and the universality of the human response to these effects.

Human greed, as exemplified through the indiscriminate looting of inanimate objects revealed by the receding sea, is shown to have no boundaries as it contaminates all people, regardless of nationality, gender, age, and social status, to “take; take, take” (Gordimer, *Loot* 3). No one is spared from this disease as “men, women and their children” (3) rush out, “feet slipped and slithered on seaweed and sank in soggy sand”, and even the collector, whom as “divorced” the rest of society races out “over the glistening sea-bed” along with “all the other looters with whom he doesn’t mix” (5). In this sense, the all-consuming greed, sparked by the disaster, becomes the leveller of all people, as no one, except for a “few infirm, timid, or prudent” individuals, partake in the act. The broad participation in the looting also serve to reveal the delicacy of human convictions in extraordinary circumstances, as exemplified by

Gordimer's inclusion of an allusion to times of political uprising, when "the ordinary opportunity of looting shops was routine to people" (3). While we are all aware of, and most of us living by, the conviction of looting and stealing as unethical, we still witness it happening under extreme circumstances, such as catastrophes, wars, natural disasters, or riots. According to Tiwari, we can interpret the looting as a way of highlighting "human voraciousness that is not confined to any particular locality" (48) as it exposes the failing of all human convictions in crucial moments and under extreme conditions and circumstances.

Furthermore, it appears as though Gordimer is expressing a sense of disenchantment in human interaction. This becomes evident in the way that the inanimate objects acquired through looting provide the people with an "[o]rgastic joy" that enables them to "forget the wreck of their houses and the loss of time-bound possessions there" (3-4). In this sense, new material possessions become the only way of processing the loss of old ones, regardless of sentimentality and value. As such, materiality and not human interaction and comfort, becomes the method for settling trauma. Eventually, no one is spared Gordimer's ironic gaze, as looting and death by drowning are shown to be the ultimate levellers.

4.2.4 Looting as Returning Power

According to Quayson postcolonialism also "involves the discussion of experiences of various kinds, such as those of slavery, migration, suppression and resistance, difference, race, gender, place and the responses of the discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, anthropology and linguistics" (2). As a postcolonial text, "Loot" is concerned with many of the elements mentioned by Quayson above, but perhaps most notably in this regard is its discussion of the experiences of the discourses of imperial Europe in the form of history, anthropology, and linguistics. Previously in this chapter, looting was discussed as a human response to extreme circumstances, but the story also suggests a larger, more

symbolic, meaning: 'Looting' as a way of returning power from the oppressors to the oppressed.

Unlike "[t]he ordinary opportunity of looting shops which was routine to people during the political uprisings", the looting that occurs after the earthquake was "no comparison":

Orgiastic joy gave men, women and their children strength to heave out of the slime and sand what they did not know they wanted, quickened their staggering gait as they ranged, and this was more than profiting by happenstance, it was robbing the power of nature before which they had fled helpless. (Gordimer, *Loot* 4).

In this context, the looting of the seabed becomes an act of returning power from the nature that had robbed them of their homes and their time-bound possessions. Coincidentally, Gordimer performs her own looting in the process of writing the story through the stealing of allusions and lines from perhaps the most famous Western author of all time - William Shakespeare. The story ends in a final lyric coda, moving from "a politically immediate question of cultural memory, through a floral allusion to Hamlet's Ophelia, to a final direct quotation from *The Tempest*" (Riach 1089): "Who recognised them, that day, where they lie? No carnation or rose floats. Full fathom five" (Gordimer, *Loot* 6). However, these allusions and lines, the historical loot of Gordimer if you will, also serve to contrast the eventual fate of the protagonist. Where Prospero, the textual representation of the western protagonist, vows to bury his staff, drown his books, and give up his magical powers in order to return to humanity, the protagonist of Gordimer's "Loot" is not afforded the same opportunity. Haunted by his past deeds, the collector is, contrary to Prospero, not allowed to return to a life lived in normal society but meets his demise at the bottom of the ocean. One could argue, as Riach does, that Gordimer, through the fate of the protagonist, places the burden of the past upon the shoulder of the present by presenting a postcolonial counternarrative where the protagonist has to suffer the consequences of his actions, drawing attention towards the

continuing effect of the legacy of colonisation and apartheid on both the post-apartheid nation and the postcolonial world in its extension.

Whether Gordimer knowingly was inspired by Walter Benjamin's depiction of history as "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of [the angel of history's] feet" (257) is not known, but the scattered rubble of the past seems to be both the loot of the characters of the story, as well as the loot that Gordimer takes from reality to fuel her fiction. In this context, Gordimer's looting of the literary past of imperial Europe could be seen as a method of returning power to the former colonies through the development of narratives more along with their own perceptions of history, anthropology, and linguistics.

4.2.5 Conclusions

The potential for "Loot" to facilitate the development of intercultural competence primarily lies in two things: its aspirations to address the universalities of the human condition and its requirements for critical thinking skills.

By pitting the allegorical perspective detailed in the first half of the story against the realism that seeks truth through the particular experienced over time, the theoretical pull in Gordimer's work, between commitment to describing the particular, while striving for a deeper meaning that exceeds it, is made the very structure of the story. Thus, the intercultural student is forced to engage all of his faculties, and his critical thinking skills particularly, in order to extract the true meaning behind Gordimer's story. In this context, two alternative interpretations of the function of 'looting' in the story was provided: 'looting' as a reflection of the effects of extreme conditions on the human psyche and 'looting' as a method of reclaiming the power of definition by former colonies and colonized. The first interpretation considers looting as a universal response to extreme conditions, uncontrollable by the individual, and revealing the fragility of human convictions in extraordinary circumstances.

The second interpretation sees looting both as a consequence of colonial history and as a method of regaining power of definition over one's own discourse. In this context, the loot of the story is both the burden of the colonial past on the shoulders of the present, as well as the historical loot that fuels Gordimer's fiction.

5 Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate how postcolonial literature can facilitate the development of intercultural competence as a step towards promoting democracy and citizenship within the context of the Norwegian EFL classroom.

First, a brief investigation of the role of literature in the EFL classroom was conducted from a curricula perspective. This investigation revealed that literature use was well anchored in both the purpose of foreign language learning and in the specific curricula for English as a foreign language. Furthermore, the investigation found that literature was intended to serve multiple purposes in the EFL classroom, ranging from literature as a source for authentic language to literature as a method of acquiring cultural knowledge and understanding. The investigation also revealed that the current issues regarding the role of literature in foreign language learning are most likely related to a lack of practical approaches to literature teaching, customized to the Norwegian EFL context. Next, A comparison of the definition of the new interdisciplinary goal of promoting democracy and citizenship and Byram's definition of intercultural competence revealed close similarities between the definition of intercultural competence and the new *Core Elements*' understanding of 'democracy and citizenship'. In light of these similarities it was concluded that intercultural competence could be considered a central aspect of 'democracy and citizenship' and it was suggested that the contribution from the foreign languages should be the facilitating of intercultural competence.

Chapter 3 concerned the theoretical foundation of this thesis and focused on the underlying theory of intercultural competence and postcolonial literature. First, intercultural competence was defined, using the theory provided by Barrett et al. and Michael Byram, as a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action, which enables one to understand and respect people of different cultural affiliations, respond appropriately and respectfully in interactions, establish constructive cross-cultural

relationships, and to understand oneself and one's own cultural affiliations through encounter with cultural difference. The purpose of intercultural education in the EFL classroom was thus understood as providing opportunities for intercultural understanding and empathy, a position that was found to be defensible from a curricula perspective. Second, postcolonial literature was defined as the medium of postcolonialism and concerned with restructuring and re-authenticating the precolonial identities through the exploration of concepts such as authority, identity, voice, subjectivity and location. The continuing relevance of postcolonial literature was also discussed and found to be related to both the process of decolonization, as well as its concern with the continuing problematic legacy of colonialism. Third, the texts selected to serve as examples of postcolonial literature were presented and justified. The texts were selected and discussed in relation to Ariel Sacks' principles for literature selection and justified accordingly. Combined, the texts were selected to represent the literary width available to the EFL teacher in terms of genre, length and complexity. Predictions as to how the texts were believed to facilitate the development of intercultural competence was made, and *Habibi* was predicted to facilitate through its potential for student recognition and imitation with the protagonist, while "Loot" was predicted to facilitate through the strengths of its allegories and their requirements for critical thinking skills. Finally, intercultural competence was considered from a curricular standpoint, and found to be justified both in the old *Core Curriculum*, the new *Core Elements*, as well as in the specific curricula for the English subject.

In Chapter 4 the texts were analyzed with the purpose of demonstrating how they, as examples of postcolonial literature, could potentially facilitate the development of intercultural competence. Nye's *Habibi* was analyzed according to the components of intercultural competence (attitudes, knowledge, skills, and actions) and was found to have potential to shape and re-shape attitudes through identification and imitation with the main

protagonist, as well as in challenging the readers preconceptions. In regard to its ability to transmit cultural knowledge, *Habibi* was found to transmit cultural knowledge through the exploration of the intricacies of cultural-, ethnical-, and religious identities and its celebration of cultural hybridity as a method of transcending cultural borders. Furthermore, *Habibi* was found to facilitate the development of critical thinking skills through challenging the reader with multiple cultures requiring interpretation by the reader. Finally, *Habibi* was found to contain some experiences that have potential for influencing actions toward the intercultural, particularly through disarming cross-cultural interaction and curiosity, highlighting non-verbal communication as a method of transcending language barriers, promoting dialogue as way of forming cross-cultural relationships, and promoting the responsibility of individuals in the defense of human rights. For “Loot”, the potential for facilitating the development of intercultural competence was found to be connected to its complex allusions and allegories and their requirements for critical thinking skills and analysis in order to unravel the imbedded secrets of the text. This was exemplified through the two alternative interpretations of the ‘looting’ in the text, and “Loot” was also discussed in the context of the continuing legacy of colonialism and found to be searching for universal conditions through the particular observed over time. As such, it was concluded that “Loot” facilitates intercultural competence both in terms of requiring advanced critical thinking skills, as well as transmitting cultural knowledge through its discussion of the continuing effects of colonialism. As such, the potential of “Loot” in facilitating the development of intercultural competence primarily lies in two things: its aspirations to address the universalities of the human condition, and its requirements for critical thinking skills.

At its very core, intercultural education concerns the creation of opportunities for intercultural understanding and empathy. The previous research presented in this thesis indicates that literature may serve as a method for creating cultural meetings between the

culture of the reader and the culture of the characters. The analysis of the selected texts revealed that literature can create cultural meetings between multiple cultures, as in *Habibi*, and cause us to reflect over cultural similarities and differences in a universal perspective, as in “Loot”. The power of postcolonial literature as a facilitating medium for intercultural education lies in its ability to question our preconceptions through depictions and discussions of extreme experiences and their effect on the individuals sense of identity and culture. As representatives of postcolonial literature Nye’s *Habibi* and Gordimer’s “Loot” both

In Nye’s *Habibi* the intercultural student is presented with the intricacies of identity and culture through a protagonist with whom they can identify and in a language that they can understand. As such, the novel has a clear potential for facilitating the development of intercultural competence through identification and imitation, and through challenging preconceptions. However, as a young adult novel, *Habibi* is perhaps a little weak in postcolonial terms. While students may develop intercultural competence through identification and imitation the novel only partially confronts established truths and concerns itself little with the complexities of postcolonialism. In this regard, Gordimer’s “Loot” presents a narrative with clearer connections to postcolonialism, addressing the entirety of the human condition through the depiction of human actions under extreme conditions and the frailty of morals and ideals under duress. Thus, while both *Habibi* and “Loot” can serve as examples of how postcolonial literature may contribute to the development of intercultural competence, the teacher has to consider text selection in relation to target competence, student level, and teaching method.

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