

**Reading Cultures:
Teaching English Multicultural Literature in the Netherlands**

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Abstract

This study examines the possibilities for teaching multicultural literature in English literary education in the Netherlands. Several theoretical perspectives on culture and multiculturalism in the literary classroom are discussed, after which two case studies are conducted analysing William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee as multicultural works. Finally, several teaching strategies are suggested.

Contents

Abstract	p. 2
1. Introduction	p. 5
2. Theoretical Framework	p. 7
2.1 Culture, Multiculturalism, and Intercultural Contact.....	p. 7
2.2 Cultural Ideologies and Canonisation.....	p. 9
2.3 Teaching Multicultural Literature.....	p. 11
2.3.1 <i>Theories Behind Multicultural Literature</i>	p. 11
2.3.2 <i>Multicultural Practices in the Literary Classroom</i>	p. 14
2.4 The English Literary Classroom in the Netherlands.....	p. 17
2.5 Thesis Statement.....	p. 20
3. Methodology	p. 22
3.1 Procedure.....	p. 22
3.2 Material.....	p. 25
3.2.1 <i>The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare</i>	p. 25
3.2.2 <i>Disgrace by J. M. Coetzee</i>	p. 27
4. Case Studies	p. 28
4.1 <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> by William Shakespeare.....	p. 28
4.1.1 <i>Historical Context</i>	p. 28
4.1.2 <i>Literary Context</i>	p. 29
4.1.3 <i>The World of the Text</i>	p. 30
4.1.4 <i>The Text and the World of Today</i>	p. 38
4.2 <i>Disgrace</i> by J. M. Coetzee.....	p. 41
4.2.1 <i>Historical Context</i>	p. 41
4.2.2 <i>Literary Context</i>	p. 42

4.2.3 <i>The World of the Text</i>	p. 43
4.2.4 <i>The Text and the World of Today</i>	p. 49
5. Teaching Strategies	p. 51
5.1 Goals.....	p. 51
5.2 Material.....	p. 51
5.3 Activities: Content, Setting, Time Frame, and Cooperation.....	p. 54
5.4 Teacher Roles.....	p. 57
5.5 Evaluation.....	p. 58
6. Conclusion and Discussion	p. 59
Works Cited	p. 61

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in multiculturalism in education. Especially language education provides a platform for discussing cultural issues, values, differences, ideologies, and identity markers. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), mentions multicultural aspects in its opening paragraphs: “As a social agent, each individual forms relationships with a widening cluster of overlapping social groups, which together define identity” (1). The CEFR also states that “it is a central objective of language education to promote the favourable development of the learner’s whole personality and sense of identity” (1) and to do this “in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture” (1). In the Netherlands, the CEFR is partly implemented in the secondary educational system; in the final exams of language education the CEFR has to be taken into account, and the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science is considering to further implement the CEFR (Beeker et al., “ERK”).

Language education is related to literary education, and literary readings with a focus on multicultural elements in the text allow pupils and teachers to explore not only the story in a new way, but also their own cultural ideas and values compared to others. In chapter 2, research conducted on culture, cultural ideologies, representation, and multiculturalism in literature and literary education will be evaluated. Chapter 3 will explain the case study method chosen for this MA thesis, which is designed for a multicultural analysis of literary works. In chapter 4, the case studies conducted for the present study critically examine two works that could be taught in Dutch upper *vwo*: *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare and *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee. Both historical and literary contexts are outlined, and not only are the texts discussed but their relevance to the world of today as well. The case study design is based on the CEFR. Furthermore, several teaching strategies for in-class

exploration of multicultural literature will be offered in chapter 5, concerning teaching goals, supporting material, activities, teacher roles, and evaluation. This study thus seeks to discuss the opportunities for teaching multicultural literature in English literary education in the Netherlands.

2. Theoretical Framework

Before exploring multicultural literature, it needs to be pointed out how problematic the concept of “culture” can be. Section 2.1 reveals a wide variety of views on what constitutes culture, multiculturalism, and intercultural contact. It should also be kept in mind that cultures carry certain ideologies which affect the literary canon, as can be seen in section 2.2. Cultural ideologies and canonisation are vital features of the discussions concerning multicultural literature and in section 2.3 a multitude of research conducted on (teaching) multicultural literature is reviewed, followed by a short outline of English literary education in secondary schools in the Netherlands.

2.1 Culture, Multiculturalism, and Intercultural Contact

Culture appears to be a vague concept; although much research has been conducted on culture and many researchers claim it to be crucial for understanding human beings, a clear definition is lacking. Srikant Sarangi includes the works of different authors to point out how culturally determined the concept of culture can be. For instance, culture was synonymous to civilisation until the eighteenth century, after which it became “an abstraction and an absolute (way of life)” (2) and people started talking about a plurality of cultures. Due to its human origins, culture is often contrasted to nature; people have a self-reflexive capacity which makes it possible to reflect on reality and culture (4). Sarangi draws attention to the following aspects of culture: it determines both social structures and individual conduct; it includes all facets of social life; and the variety of facets constituting a culture all interrelate to each other (5).

Sarangi distinguishes three different kinds of approaches to culture. Firstly, there is the mentalist approach which regards culture as the thoughts and feelings of individuals. In this view, however, culture becomes difficult to research as it is “least observable” (7). The

behaviourist approach considers culture to consist of the behaviour of individuals, and their behaviour is determined by their culture (7). Finally, according to the semiotic approach, culture is “a system of symbolic meanings” (8) enabling individuals to understand social actions. Still, Sarangi warns that all definitions of culture may be considered to be reductionist.

To illustrate how differently culture can be viewed, one could consider two researchers who have tried to define culture by using different dimensions which consist of binary oppositions in between which a culture can be positioned. The first example is Geert Hofstede’s work, establishing the dimensions of high/low power distance, individualist/collectivist, masculinity/femininity, high/low uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation/short-term orientation (Signorini et al. 254-57). Another well-known example of cultural conceptual tools derives from Edward T. Hall, who distinguishes between: fast/slow messages, for which the message decoding time is decisive; high/low context, referring to cultures where the message is mainly derived from implicit/explicit information respectively; etc. (Hall 3-17). Like Hofstede, Hall tends to equate culture with countries, even though a country may hold various cultures and cultures may stretch beyond national borders.

Michael Agar describes culture with a focus on contact, which underlines the meaning of culture in a multicultural setting. In his view, culture becomes a construct which fills in the blanks: “Culture is something you create, something you invent to fill in the differences between you and them . . . It includes emotions. And it isn’t logically pretty. It includes contradictions and ambiguities” (138-139). It is through intercultural contact that people may become aware of how culturally determined their behaviour actually is. This cultural relativism can also be found in studies on cultural ideologies and multicultural literature.

The articles discussed above indicate that culture is omnipresent in human life and emerges through behaviour, expectations, and many or perhaps all other aspects of daily life.

Culture is social; it connects people, but can also create feelings of difference. This poses difficulties for multicultural societies where intercultural contact occurs. Multiculturalism refers to a plurality of cultures; intercultural communication implies interaction between different cultures. E. Lamar Ross draws attention to interethnic communication, “communication under conditions of ethnic differences” (6), which could be argued to be a form of intercultural communication. Ethnicity refers to peoples or nations and is often linked to race, the latter assuming biological differences between people. Some studies are cross-cultural and compare different cultures yet do not concern contact between these cultures (Sarangi 22). In intercultural studies, so when contact occurs, one has to be aware of two pitfalls according to Ten Thije and Deen: intercultural research should not only focus on cultural miscommunications and it should be careful not to use culture as the only explanation for results. These are the pitfalls of the minimal object and the maximal interpretation respectively (Ten Thije and Deen 97).

2.2 Cultural Ideologies and Canonisation

Culture does not only connect, but also disconnects. Sarangi points out the emergence of the Other, often occurring together with culture, as opposed to the cultural Self; “This often means a dominant culture using colonial modes of representation of the cultural otherness – a form of cultural imperialism” (11). On a global scale, the dominant culture is often Western and the dominated culture non-Western. Non-Western cultural identities, Edward Said argues, are constituted by Western sources; the non-Western object is thus considered from a Western perspective (Said in Sarangi 11). Related to this, Gayatri Spivak distinguishes between *vertreten* and *darstellen*: German words that signify “to speak for” and “to portray” respectively. These two terms reveal the multiple sides of representation: representation is not

only an artistic/philosophical *Darstellung* but a political act of *Vertretung* as well (Ponzanesi 102), and cultural ideologies play an important role to these acts.

What this postcolonial criticism reveals, is “a discourse of exclusion” (Sarangi 11), since the non-Western object does not have a voice in the discourse of cultural imperialism. Sarangi argues that “in the discourse of stratified multicultural societies, culture is something the minority groups have either in terms of trivialities (ethnic dress, music etc.) or in terms of a system of absences (institutions)” (13). The concept of cultural identity/identities in multicultural societies is problematised by cultural adaptations or creations of minority groups, as is also demonstrated by e.g. J. W. Berry. Berry states that ethnocultural groups can integrate, assimilate, separate, or become marginalised. This affects society as a whole, which consequently results in multiculturalism, a melting pot, segregation, or exclusion respectively (Berry 618). Still, the cultural dynamics elementary to societies do not seem to fit static definitions. As Sarangi puts it, “culture is in a constant flux” (14).

Cultural ideologies carry direct implications for canonisation and the teaching of literature(s). Paul Smith discusses the role of teachers in the “transmission of cultural capital” (sec. 4), a term coined by Pierre Bourdieu, and argues that to teach literatures is to have political responsibility. Cultural capital relates to cultural value and, as Karl Marx argues, value facilitates the circulation of capital. Smith therefore concludes that teaching literatures should concern “the function and uses of literatures in the establishment of largely hidden affirmations and assumptions of cultural value” (sec. 1), of which both teacher and learners should be or become aware. Smith’s use of a plural form for the word “literature” already implies a political statement: there is a plurality to choose from. Thus, “within our dealings with cultures no text can remain privileged over any other, and the ideological construct of ‘Literature’ itself cannot be taken for granted” (sec. 2). Here lies an important challenge for literary education.

2.3 Teaching Multicultural Literature

One way of critically examining cultural ideologies in texts, is to read multiculturally, i.e. with a focus on multicultural elements. The general vagueness of the idea of culture may very well be the main cause of the wide variety of definitions given to so-called multicultural literature. The following paragraphs illustrate several theories and accompanying guidelines for teachers, which vary in their inclusiveness. Much research on English multicultural literature has been conducted in the United States, a melting pot of immigrants and cultures, but multiculturalism may be considered a global phenomenon and literature goes beyond borders. In some respects, multicultural literature seems to signify not so much a genre as a way of critically examining literary works with (multi)cultural elements; overall, it seems to imply multicultural criticism.

2.3.1 Theories Behind Multicultural Literature

In the mid-nineties, Mingshui Cai published an overview of different perspectives on multicultural literature. The first is inclusive: “multicultural literature is the literature of multiple cultures” (313). Yet multiculturalism does not only imply diversity, but “power structures and struggle” (313) too, Cai argues. It is thus important to distinguish dominant cultures from marginalised cultures and to identify power mechanisms in multicultural literature, or the meaning of multiculturalism will disappear. The second view is that multicultural literature concerns racial and ethnic issues. If racial and ethnic inequalities occur in society, people in the mainstream will be able to relate to and discuss multicultural literature as well, because they are part of this society. The third view is that “all literature is multicultural” (316). This perspective allows the reader to expand his/her views of multicultural literature, Cai explains. Yet the term seems to lose meaning if it can be applied

to every kind of literary fiction, and one would move towards multicultural criticism instead of literature.

Glazier and Seo have a broad, inclusive definition of multicultural literature: “literature that represents voices typically omitted from the traditional canon” (686). However, with a reference to Cai’s article, Glazier and Seo emphasize that not only minorities but also the role of the white majority in multicultural texts needs to be examined in secondary education, in order to avoid an opposition between Us and Them, Self and Other. Their article points out that neither curricula nor the canons they incorporate are impartial. Silenced topics such as culture result in silenced individuals. Using a metaphor of mirror and window, Glazier and Seo say:

Adding multicultural texts to the curriculum will not by itself create respect for cultural differences or an understanding across cultures . . . The text must instead be interrogated from multiple perspectives and act as a comparison point for students’ own lives . . . As a result, it must act as both mirror – allowing students to reflect on their own experiences – and as window, providing the opportunity to view the experiences of others. (688)

This can be achieved through dialogic instruction to facilitate the learners’ meaning-making of the text, Glazier and Seo argue.

Like Glazier and Seo, Seiwoong Oh highly values the reader’s role as meaning-maker of the text. Oh also explicitly refers to the role of the reader by employing Dasenbrock’s definition of multicultural literature: “works that are explicitly about multicultural societies and . . . are implicitly multicultural in the sense of inscribing readers from other cultures inside their own textual dynamics” (5). Inaccessibility is an important feature of multicultural

fiction, which is partly the author's choice; Oh illustrates this argument by referring to multicultural stories with glosses, and, on the other hand, authors such as Toni Morrison who refuse to "translate" (Morrison in Oh 14). Oh suggests that multicultural literature should hold a balance between the writers, who "employ unintelligibility as a tool to engage their readers in the world of multicultural dynamics" (15), and the readers, who are willing to "approach a text with spontaneous susceptibility to what it says" (15). However, one may wonder whether the reader can be expected to be susceptible to cultural-specific content which may not even be recognised as such. As Hall's concept of high/low context (see section 2.1) already demonstrated, the balance of implicit and explicit information differs per culture, and outsiders are likely to need more explicit information to decode a message than insiders. In education, the teacher would be expected to supply pupils with sufficient information, although the teacher's own cultural background will also influence his/her knowledge.

Susan M. Landt uses a very inclusive definition of multicultural literature, explicitly including "groups that have been marginalized because of race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, age, social class, religion/spirituality, and/or sexual orientation" (Muse in Landt 691). However, in her article she confines herself to race and ethnicity (691). Landt argues that adolescents and young adults are particularly interesting as readers of multicultural literature, as they are in the process of becoming independent adults in society (691). Also, Landt argues that coming of age is a cultural universal, which poses possibilities for teaching multicultural literature.

The authors discussed in this section provide a very brief overview of possible perspectives on multicultural literature. Most of them employ a very inclusive definition of multicultural literature. Apart from ethnicity and race, other forms of diversity are considered multicultural as well. The role of the reader is highly valued by all of the authors: the reader interacts with the text and extracts meaning from it, yet the reader should be aware of

ideology and representation in the text. After all, not only the reader is important but the author as well for determining the accessibility of a multicultural text. The next section offers a set of views on practices in the multicultural literary classroom.

2.3.2 Multicultural Practices in the Literary Classroom

Cai offers three practical guidelines for teachers. Firstly, teach diversity and equality. Also, do not simply inform but let learners empower themselves, i.e. encourage them to “develop the ability to identify, analyse, and take action on cultural/ethnic issues” (320). Furthermore, reading multiculturally focuses on “multicultural issues that are not apparent” (320) and the teacher should help his/her pupils to realise that characters and stories have multiple cultural markers (e.g. ethnicity, gender, etc.) which can help the reader relate to them. By teaching multicultural literature, Cai states, one can “cultivate pluralism at the core of education” (322).

Glazier and Seo describe a research conducted in an American secondary school where the teacher discussed a story with Native American elements and included small-group work, whole-class discussions, text, and film. The lesson units including the highest rates of text-to-self connections went hand in hand with the highest pupil response rates, especially by the minority pupils. The classroom became a “third space” (697) in which pupils exchanged features from their own culture. Third space is a concept of postcolonial theory, referring to cultural hybridity: “. . . the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” (Homi Bhabha in Rutherford 211). The teacher needs to beware of a distance between the multicultural text and the majority reader, and dialogic instruction is one of Glazier and Seo’s key tools. Of course the teacher also has his/her culture(s), which influence the teacher’s reading of the text.

Landt distinguishes several teacher goals. Apart from decreasing cultural prejudices and bias and the diversification of pupils' world views, the teaching of multicultural literature should be reader-oriented. This facilitates the reader's realisation of textual relevance to both themselves and their culture. Landt suggests that teachers select multicultural literature which is accurate, authentic, diverse, empowering, and realistic (695). These criteria are demanding, but the empowerment criterion can be historically problematic: "Cultural minorities do not play a supporting or subservient role while whites are seen as possessing all the power" (695), Landt says. This is written from a U. S. perspective, yet for a couple of centuries the white part of the population has possessed most of the power in this particular country. It would be problematic if teachers could not select historically accurate texts, which seems to be the consequence of Landt's criterion. Critical reading seems to be the answer: awareness of cultural bias should enable learners and teachers to discuss literary texts holding cultural prejudices. In line with this, Stallworth, Gibbons, and Fauber reflect upon various studies which suggest that traditional and multicultural works should both be taught, and that multicultural fiction ought to be placed in its wider literary context (480).

Belinda Y. Louie lists several guidelines for teachers who want to teach multicultural fiction, without specifying her definition of the latter. The first guideline concerns authenticity; Louie warns that this is not automatically implied by the author's background. The reader should "[s]ee the world through the characters' perspectives" (439) as well, which makes the reader aware of his/her own perspective. Louie also argues that since conflict management is culturally determined, characters' conflict strategies should be analysed. A reader-oriented approach explicitly emerges in the advice to "[r]elate self to the text and critique the portrayal of characters in the text and in popular media" (439). Also, the teacher can "[u]se variants of the same story" (440), although this option is confined to folk tales mostly, or use a "collection of books across genres to attain a more balanced understanding"

(440). What Louie fails to mention, is that a story collection will not always fit curricula's time restrictions. This is also a teacher obstacle listed by Stallworth et al., together with a lack of resources and an expertise shortage (485-486). Finally, Louie recommends discussing multicultural texts both through spoken and written responses (440). Louie has used her guidelines for her own research in an American secondary school. This involved the analysis of literature classes in which different versions of the *Mulan* story, about a female warrior in ancient China, were discussed. Although Louie's sample was small and only concerned ten lessons, several pupils displayed increased awareness of cultures afterwards.

John Yandell cites the British National Curriculum, which prescribes both attention to English literary heritage (e.g., Arthurian stories) and texts from different cultures (30-31). Such a distinction is not literally found in the CEFR or Meijer and Fasoglio's guidelines (see section 2.4), although intercultural competencies are listed as a separate category compared to other skills. Yandell considers that such a "schematic distinction is tendentious" (31) and that a canonical list of authors is "arbitrary" (31). In line with this, he argues that cultural indexes in anthologies can be, "simultaneously, inclusive and exclusive: one poem, one poet, one culture" (32). Anthologies and other overviews should thus not attempt to make one author represent an entire cultural minority. It is precisely because of this that e.g. Louie suggests teaching a collection of works from a particular culture.

In Yandell's observations of a Year 10 English class, reflection on language use by the pupils makes clear they already possess a considerable body of linguistic awareness with regard to the discernment of nuances. The discourse in the classroom creates new definitions, Yandell argues, quite similar to the third space discussed by Glazier and Seo. Yandell also points out that the context outside the classroom will influence the situation inside: for instance, he ascribes some of the pupils' emphasis on their British background, in spite of their mixed roots, to complex debates about migrants in Britain (38). However, Yandell does

not seem to have asked the pupils about this, and such debates would be able to cause opposite reactions as well.

In summary, each of the authors discussed in this section provides a different set of teacher guidelines. Still, several main tendencies can be identified which inform one about the nature of multicultural reading: stimulation of the reader's identification with the text; teaching through teacher-pupil dialogues; critically discussing ideologies and representation in the text; analysing the characters' context and views. All in all, teaching and reading multicultural literature is to conduct an intercultural activity, during which Self and Other are evaluated and third spaces can be created for hybrid identities and new views on cultural identities.

Still, this is more easily said than done. As Stallworth et al. point out, teachers struggle with a lack of time, expertise, and resources. However, not only the teacher decides for the pupils, but the canon that the teacher/school/country employs makes a choice as well. Not only (multicultural) literature should be dealt with critically, but the literary canon as well, in spite of the abstractness of the latter concept. Of course, it is important to realise that the researchers discussed in this section discuss English literary education for English native speakers. Teachers abroad have yet another barrier to face: linguistic limitations.

2.4 The English Literary Classroom in the Netherlands

On the instructions of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, Dick Meijer and Daniela Fasoglio list the three ultimate attainment levels for English, French, and German literary education in Dutch *havo* and *vwo*:

- *Havo* and *vwo*: “The candidate is able to provide an argumentative report of his reading experiences with at least three literary works” (Meijer and Fasoglio 55);

- Only *vwo*: “The candidate is able to recognise and distinguish between different literary texts, and apply literary terms for the interpretation of literary texts” (55);
- Only *vwo*: “The candidate is able to outline the main features of literary history and to place the literary works read in this historical perspective” (55).

In upper *vwo* (class 4-6), 80 hours are designated for literature of the modern foreign languages. This is 30% of the total number reserved for English education. Of these 80 hours, 30 to 40 hours are meant for the pupils’ individual reading of three literary works, according to the teacher’s guide by Bolscher et al. (164). Bolscher et al. broadly distinguish between two teaching approaches: the traditional, cultural approach and the modern, reader-oriented approach. Apart from the fact that teachers are likely to combine features of both teaching styles, it is interesting to note that “cultural” is here connected with “traditional” and implies the transmission of literary heritage, yet the reader-oriented approach fits most of the authors discussed in section 2.3. Literary heritage seems to mainly imply the traditional canon, although authors such as Stallworth et al. stress the importance of traditional fiction in combination with multicultural fiction.

Bolscher et al. have dedicated a section to “intercultural texts” (212) only concerning Dutch literary education, so with regard to literature originally written in Dutch. This seems to apply to most research conducted on multicultural (also called “intercultural”) literary education in the Netherlands. One of the problems could be that there is a language barrier in English literary education. Nevertheless, as the theories in section 2.3 suggest, multicultural reading demands a mind-set that critically examines representations of culture in a text, and this activity transcends language. However, not much has thus been published concerning English multicultural literary education in the Netherlands.

What can be found about English education in the Netherlands, is that it seems to have little cultural variation; for instance, the teaching method *Of Course!* was rated the least

culturally diverse method compared to French and Spanish counterparts in a secondary school, and it mainly contained references to the United States and Britain (Cruz et al. 6-7). *Of Course!* is not the only English method in the Netherlands, but it is used nationwide. Moreover, Fasoglio and Canton have conducted a survey to determine the role of intercultural competence in modern foreign language education in the Netherlands. The sample consisted of 176 teachers of whom 66% were teachers of English. It should be noted, again, that this study concerns language education rather than literary education. Yet it reveals something about teachers' attitudes concerning culture in the classroom: literature is hardly used by teachers to discuss (inter)cultural elements, as they mostly use films, documentaries, and the Internet to do so (Fasoglio and Canton 43). Foreign language teachers also pay most attention to intercultural knowledge, as opposed to intercultural skills and attitudes (29). All in all, Fasoglio and Canton observe that teachers have a need for educational ideas and materials carrying (inter)cultural elements, because teachers currently find these elements to be too abstract (29).

Fasoglio and Canton refer to the Common European Framework, which distinguishes three components of intercultural awareness: knowledge, awareness, and understanding. The CEFR singles out "regional and social diversity" (103) and mentions cultural diversity¹. The resulting sociocultural knowledge includes knowledge of social conventions, beliefs, values, etcetera (Fasoglio and Canton 8). Moreover, in the section on sociocultural knowledge other kinds of diversity are pointed out as well, e.g. ethnic and religious diversity, and race relations (103). Assessment remains undetermined, as Fasoglio and Canton point out, but the CEFR also pays attention to intercultural skills and know-how. These aspects do not enjoy an official

¹ "Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community' produce an intercultural awareness. It is, of course, important to note that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of regional and social diversity in both worlds. It is also enriched by awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learner's L1 and L2. This wider awareness helps to place both in context. In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers an awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes" (CEFR 103).

status in literary education of the modern foreign languages in the Netherlands, but they contain the following features: “bring[ing] cultures into relation; cultural sensitivity; fulfil[ling the] role of cultural intermediary; overcom[ing] stereotyped relationships” (8)².

These skills and attitudes play a major role in the largely reader-centred discussion of multicultural literature as well. Moreover, the CEFR states that many parts of the Framework may be useful for literary education and teachers of literature and that “[l]iterary studies serve many more educational purposes – intellectual, moral and emotional, linguistic and cultural – than the purely aesthetic” (57).

2.5 Thesis Statement

Multicultural literature and teaching multicultural literature have become popular topics during recent decades. However, there is still much debate about what exactly constitutes “multicultural,” or what is “culture.” Definitions differ in their in- and exclusiveness, but they all concern voices that seem to be silenced in traditional canons. Analysing multicultural elements in literary fiction allows the reader insight into cultural dynamics in the text, which can be placed in a historical and literary context and can be related to the reader’s context to increase the reader’s intercultural awareness and cultural relativism. This poses interesting challenges for English literary education in the Netherlands. For the present study, a case study approach has been chosen to allow an in-depth analysis of works that could be used in the classroom as well.

This thesis thus aims to examine the possibilities for teaching multicultural literature in English literary education in the Netherlands by offering a variety of theoretical perspectives on multicultural literature and the teaching thereof, a case study of two works

² The CEFR distinguishes between the following intercultural skills and know-how: “the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other; cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures; the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one’s own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations; the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships” (104-105).

that could be read multiculturally, and teacher guidelines for the in-class exploration of these works.

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure

A case study approach was chosen because this allows an in-depth thematic analysis of the works. The design of the case studies is based on the CEFR's different aspects of intercultural awareness. After all, reading multicultural literature is an intercultural activity. Cultural elements are present both within the text, between reader and text, and within the classroom. Even though many theories concerning English multicultural literature originate from the United States, the CEFR places the case studies in a more European context and increases their relevance to literary education in the Netherlands, where the CEFR is nationally applied. Also, the CEFR mentions that it is "much to be hoped that teachers of literature at all levels may find many sections of the Framework relevant to their concerns and useful in making their aims and methods more transparent" (56). Table 1 summarises the CEFR's views of intercultural awareness.

Table 1. Intercultural Awareness (CEFR 103)

Intercultural awareness	<i>is produced by</i> →	knowledge, awareness, and understanding	<i>of</i> →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the relation between the "world of origin" and the "world of the target community" which both possess <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) cultural diversity; b) regional diversity; c) social diversity. ▪ the communities' perspectives and stereotypes of each other.
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Following Table 1, the case studies will examine the "world of the target community" (i.e., the world of the text and the historical and literary context in which it was published) with its inherent cultural, regional, and social diversity, and relate this to the "world of origin" (i.e., contemporary (Dutch) society in which teacher and pupils are living), which is the reader's

departing point. The CEFR has a very inclusive notion of diversity, ranging from cultural and ethnic to religious and racial to regional and social (103-105). The case studies focus on cultural aspects, without neglecting regional/social/etc. axes of differences between individuals; not only are they interesting, but these kinds of diversity can be hard to keep separate from one another. Also, with reference to section 2.3 and the “perspectives and stereotypes” the CEFR mentions, the case studies critically discuss cultural ideologies and representation in the story.

The case studies are followed by an overview of teaching guidelines which will allow teachers to put theories into practice. These guidelines apply both findings from the theoretical framework and the case studies, and distinguish between goals, material, activities, teacher roles, and evaluation. The first four are all somehow concerned with the CEFR’s intercultural skills and know-how, but because these skills and know-how are rather abstractly formulated the teaching strategies will contain more specific and practical elements: i.e., the previously mentioned goals, material, activities, teacher roles, and evaluation. As Fasoglio and Canton recommend with respect to intercultural competence in language education in the Netherlands, teachers will benefit from practicable suggestions for applying intercultural elements in education (Canton and Fasoglio 29; also see section 2.4).

The CEFR distinguishes between four different skills and kinds of know-how; firstly, “the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other” (104), which enables intercultural awareness (see Table 1). Secondly, there is “cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures” (104), which underlines interaction between individuals and is thus less relevant to the study of literature. Thirdly, “the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one’s own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations” (105); this ability focusses on

intercultural contact, yet the role of cultural intermediary has been put forward in the discussion of multicultural literature as well (see section 2.3); the reader becomes a cultural intermediary by reading multicultural literature and discussing the work with its own context from the reader's perspective. The classroom can become a third space with place for cultural hybrids, and thus the CEFR's third intercultural ability is relevant to multicultural literature. Lastly, there is "the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships" (105), which is highly relevant to multicultural literature, since both characters and readers can hold stereotyped views of culture in the text.

As for the teaching practice, the present study aims at forms 5-6 in *vwo* (ages 17-18). This is due to the level of pupils' language proficiency, the number of hours available for literary education, and the level of literary education. Theo Witte distinguishes between six different literary competence levels for pupils in secondary education, ranging from very limited literary competence on level 1 to very extensive literary competence on level 6. Pupils are supposed to have reached level 4 in *vwo* 6, i.e. a somewhat extensive literary competence (Witte 12). Level 4 is characterised by interpretative reading; readers can understand, interpret, and reflect upon literary fiction that is not too complex. Furthermore, the readers are able to dedicate their attention to points of view, emotions, and events that are far removed from their own perspectives. The readers have a growing sense of literary aesthetics and style, and are able to give a motivated account of their taste and thoughts with regard to literature. (34).

Witte's work is designed for Dutch literary education in the Netherlands, yet it can be applied to the modern foreign languages as well. For instance, University of Groningen's website *Lezenvoordelijst.nl* offers both Dutch and German book titles according to Witte's levels. Moreover, Paulien Hommersom-Schreuder provides an overview of Witte's levels of literary competence complemented with levels of linguistic competence. After all, most pupils

are non-native speakers of the modern foreign languages. Hommersom-Schreuder has conducted her research from a French point of view, but emphasises that her findings can be put to use for English, German, and Spanish as well (26). E. B. Stolz has applied Witte's levels to English literary education, yet he limits his analysis mainly to levels A1 to B1 whereas this study focusses on 5-6 *vwo* where pupils attain CEFR level B2 in reading, although 15% reaches C1 in the 6th form (Beeker et al., "Welk").

According to Hommersom-Schreuder's insights, the combination of Witte's level 4 with CEFR level B2 features the following, additional characteristics: the reader is an analyst; works typically have 150-250 pages; and pupils read "[s]hort literary works in the target language, preferably complemented with vocabulary lists; simpler poetry in the target language" (Hommersom-Schreuder 27). The case study material will take into account this outline, yet vocabulary lists are not the only facilitating materials for teachers to support pupils' reading and enrich reading experiences. For instance, teachers can provide films, music, and/or other art forms that relate to and support the literary work. Also, teachers can offer text segments instead of the entire work, as e.g. Meijer and Fasoglio suggest (56).

3.2 Material

Two works have been selected for the case studies which both contain multicultural elements, yet they are quite different from each other. The first is written by an author who has traditionally had a place in the canon and the second is a contemporary work set in the world of today: *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare and *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee.

3.2.1 The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare

According to the three ultimate attainment levels for English literary education in Dutch *vwo* (Meijer and Fasoglio, also see section 2.4), pupils should not only be able to distinguish

different literary genres and to provide a literary analysis of works; they should also be able to place works in their historical context and thus be familiar with literary history. Traditionally, Shakespeare has had a place in English curricula worldwide, including the Netherlands.

Discussing a work/works by the most famous author of the Early Modern English period in the light of multicultural fiction would combine tradition and more contemporary views, which poses interesting questions and enables the learner to place multicultural aspects in a historical context (also see e.g. Stallworth et al.). Another Shakespearean work that could be read multiculturally is e.g. *Othello*, with a title role for a Moor.

One could argue whether *The Merchant of Venice* is multicultural fiction; some researchers insist on a sense of authenticity, and Shakespeare wrote about multicultural Venice whilst being in England. One may also wonder how limited or extensive the dramatist's views on Jewishness were. However, every kind of fiction is confined to a certain author, period, and space; in this sense, authenticity is a very abstract concept. Moreover, upholding authenticity as a criterion for discussing fiction with a multicultural focus prevents one from critically examining a large body of historical texts. Many of these texts will display types of colonial, racial, and/or other prejudice. Yet this does by no means imply that the cultural dynamics within these texts should not be analysed. Contemporary views of cultural relativism cannot rewind the traditional roles of Western centrism/ethnocentrism/et cetera, but they can enable a re-examination of traditional texts.

Since *The Merchant of Venice* dates from the late sixteenth century, pupils are likely to experience difficulty reading it. The teacher can choose from a variety of solutions, such as providing vocabulary lists, using the *No Fear Shakespeare* edition, or only discussing textual fragments that mainly concern multicultural issues. Furthermore, one of the various film adaptations can be (partly) viewed in class to support pupils' understanding and diversify their experience of the text (also see section 5.2).

3.2.2 *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee

Whilst trying to select a contemporary work with multicultural features, teachers can come across a wide variety of different lists on the Internet provided by e.g. publishers and websites for teachers. Each list uses different classifications and their inclusiveness varies. In short, the choice seems endless. To select J. M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* for a case study is merely an example of showing how a work can be analysed through multicultural reading. However, several arguments support the choice for this South African work.

In the first place, the Netherlands and South Africa share a historical bond due to Dutch colonialism. Not without coincidence, the notorious Apartheid is indicated by a word with Dutch roots. Providing Dutch pupils with the historical context of South Africa thus includes their own country's history. In addition, discussing *Disgrace* offers an opportunity to explore a part of the Anglophone world that does not often receive attention during English education in the Netherlands. However, these two reasons only explain why this work could be taught; the question remains whether this novel is "multicultural." And indeed, *Disgrace* contains several differential axes that are included in the definitions of multicultural literature: racial issues emerge, both ambiguously and violently. Moreover, gender, age, and sexual orientation also play important roles.

The most obvious supporting material for *Disgrace* is the eponymous film released in 2008 (see section 5.2). The teacher could also hand out vocabulary lists, although the novel's style is rather straightforward.

4. Case Studies

4.1 *The Merchant of Venice*

4.1.1 *Historical Context*

The Merchant of Venice, more elaborately called *The Comical History of the Merchant of Venice, or Otherwise Called the Jew of Venice* was written by William Shakespeare (1564-1616) and presumably first performed between 1596 and 1598 before it was printed in the Quarto in 1600 (Mahon 3-6). The play's release thus took place during the Elizabethan period, a golden age for arts such as literature and drama. It was also an era of Reformation, merchant ventures abroad, overseas settlements, and colonialism.

Not only did England move beyond its borders; Greenblatt points out that a considerable number of immigrants settled in London, mainly Protestant refugees from mainland Europe. The distinctions between Catholics/Protestants, English people/foreigners, and English/Irish/Scottish/Welsh people caused tensions and conflicts, and a “way of partially masking the sharp differences . . . was to group these people together in contrast to the Jews” (Greenblatt 22). In 1594, a couple of years before the *Merchant* premiered, the Queen's Jewish physician was accused of plotting to murder his royal client and, overall, “Elizabethans appear to have been fascinated by Jews and Judaism” (Greenblat 22) yet remained “uncertain whether the terms referred to a people, a foreign nation, a set of strange practices, a living faith, a defunct religion, a villainous conspiracy, or a messianic inheritance” (22).

However, Shakespeare chose Venice rather than London as the setting for his play. This choice is not coincidental since the trade centre Venice was famous for its multicultural blend of inhabitants, ranging from Turkish to Jewish to Arab people. Venice was “unusually

tolerant of diversity” (Eisaman Maus 247) for a sixteenth-century city, carrying direct implications for the accumulation of the city’s wealth. Katharine Eisaman Maus points out that Shakespeare overstated Venice’s tolerance since Venetian Jews lived in a ghetto that was locked during night time, and there is no such thing in the *Merchant*. However, she concludes that “Venice thus provided Shakespeare with an example – perhaps the only example in sixteenth-century Europe – of a place where people with little in common culturally might coexist peacefully solely because it was materially expedient to do so” (249).

Cultural encounters did not only happen in Venice or in the *Merchant*; the play implicated another cultural gap, namely that between the play set in Italy and its English audience. Exotic settings are not exceptional in Shakespeare’s work, but R. W. Desai argues that the *Merchant* excels in this compared to other Shakespearean drama “in terms of an enactment of dealing with characters from another country, another culture, another code of values, even another language” (319). The latter is referred to by the character of Portia, who declares she hardly speaks English, thus asking “the audience to imagine its medium to be Italian – a transposition unique in the canon” (Desai 306). In the sense of cultural Othering, Desai’s argument implies that the text would be a cultural Other to the English Self (also see Desai 319), which is an interesting revelation if one takes into account the Self/Other dynamics within the text.

4.1.2 Literary Context

In the introductory essay to *The Merchant of Venice: New Critical Essays*, three plays are named which were performed in the twelve years preceding the first staging of the *Merchant* and which contained Jewish characters as well: Gerontus in Robert Wilson’s *The Three Ladies of London*, Barabas in Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, and Abraham in Robert Greene’s *Selimus*. These Jewish characters are classified as “heroic,” “a parody of the

stereotypical Jew, obviously designed to show how un-Christian the Christians are” and “ a poisoner probably inspired by [Marlowe’s] Barabas” (Mahon 17) respectively. John W. Mahon concludes that these plays do thus not suggest anti-Semitism as a mainstream disposition, and the variety of Jewish characters also suggests that Shakespeare hardly had a single literary or theatrical tradition to observe (17).

The argument of Shakespeare’s originality is extended by Joan Ozark Holmer, who identifies Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s additions of pretty Jewish daughters who want to convert to Christianity for love as a unique feature of sixteenth-century drama. Moreover, Shakespeare is unique in allowing his female Jewish character to marry her Christian suitor (108-109). One may wonder whether this is a celebration of love, or whether the emphasis should lie on Jessica’s assimilation, be it positive or negative.

4.1.3 The World of the Text

Shylock is a Jewish usurer in Venice, who lends Antonio money on the condition that he will take a pound of Antonio’s flesh if Antonio does not repay him. However, when Antonio is unable to return Shylock’s money, the Venetian court decides the deal must be cancelled; Portia, disguised as a man, calls attention to a law stipulating that Venice will confiscate half of the goods of any foreigner who threatens the life of a Venetian citizen, and the other half will go to the victim. Earlier in the play, Portia has fallen in love with Antonio’s friend Bassanio after having had several suitors. Another friend of Antonio and Bassanio, Lorenzo, has fallen in love with Shylock’s daughter Jessica and she runs away with him to marry and convert to Christianity. In the *Merchant*, cultural and social diversity take a variety of forms: issues included are ethnicity, religion, colour, nationality, gender, and, arguably, homosexuality.

spat on by Antonio and robbed by his daughter Jessica. This is also acknowledged by Mahon (12-13).

The play's representation of Jewishness and Judaism is questioned by scholars. Eisaman Maus identifies Shakespeare's portrayal of Judaism as typical for a Christian playwright in the sixteenth century, since it mostly displays "a set of dramatically vivid contrasts with Christian norms" (Eisaman Maus 250), in spite of Mahon's earlier mentioned conclusion that a single tradition of Jewish characterisation was absent. According to Eisaman Maus, using one's own perspective, the Jew is made into the Other. Shylock is discussed by Christian characters from a Christian perspective, viewed and read by Elizabethan Christians (or in the beginning at least), and written by a Christian; it brings to mind Spivak's distinction between *Vertretung* and *Darstellung* (see section 2.2), since a Jewish character is not only portrayed but also spoken for. In spite of this high rate of objectification, Shylock is given a voice that calls for sympathy, especially in the following lines:

SHYLOCK: He [ANTONIO] hath disgraced me . . . and what's his reason? – I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passion; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you [Christians] in the rest, we will resemble you in that. (3.1.46-57)

However, the complete speech is ambiguous. First it evokes sympathy, but then Shylock promises to resemble the Christians in their cruelties too; his revenge will be even better (3.1.61). In the play, the Christians emphasise Shylock's Otherness by calling him a "villain

Jew” (2.8.4), a “dog Jew” (2.8.14), a “devil” (1.3.94, 3.1.19), an “infidel” (4.1. 329), et cetera. Shylock’s speech above, however, stresses the similarities between him and other people: he underlines that he is just like them. Thus, “Shylock asserts that a common human experience of embodiment ought to override considerations of religious or racial difference” (Eisaman Maus 252). These differences seem to emerge most prominently in everyday cultural customs if one considers Shylock’s list of things he will not do with Christians: praying, drinking, and eating. Notwithstanding this, he is willing to share activities such as walking and talking (1.3.29-32).

The disapproval of Shylock’s ethnicity is even present in his own household. His servant Lancelot claims that Shylock is “the very devil incarnation” (2.2.22). Lancelot thus decides to run away from his master, stating that if he continues to serve Shylock Lancelot will become a Jew himself (2.2.99-100). He becomes an employee of the Christian Bassanio. Shylock’s daughter Jessica is also dissatisfied with her father: “Alack, what heinous sin is it in me / To be asham'd to be my father's child! / But though I am a daughter to his blood, / I am not to his manners” (2.3.15-18). Hereby she acknowledges her ethnical background, but rejects her father’s practices without specifying whether she is referring to his practices as a Jew, as a protective father, or as something else. However, her solution is to convert to Christianity and join Lorenzo in wedlock. Jessica is described in more positive terms than her father; for example, Lancelot calls her “most beautiful pagan; most sweet Jew” (2.3.10-11) and Lorenzo praises her fairness. Still, some scholars argue that Jessica seems largely ignored by the Venetians when she warns them that her father is more interested in the fulfilment of his contract with Antonio than money (3.2.283-287), suggesting that she is not truly accepted.

The Christian characters’ rejection of Jewishness in the *Merchant* has resulted in many arguments proving or refuting the play’s alleged anti-Semitism. Especially Shylock’s forced conversion instigates heated debates. Ozark Holmer points out that contemporary audiences

are more likely to disapprove strongly of this due to more liberal views on religion, in contrast to the original sixteenth-century audiences (129). In line with this view, Hugh Short argues that for Elizabethan Christians conversion offered Shylock a chance at salvation (210).

Maryellen Keefe refers to Portia's statement that the "same prayer doth teach us all to render / The deeds of mercy" (4.1.199-200) as an argument against anti-Semitism because it emphasises a shared experience between Christians and Jews (220).

The topic of conversion emphasises the religious aspect of Jewishness. One may distinguish between "anti-Judaic" (religiously biased) in contrast to 'anti-Semitic' (racially biased)" (Mahon 20), yet the present study views Jewishness in terms of ethnicity (peoples, nations, tribes) and not of race (assumed biological differences). The distinction between Jewish religion and ethnicity can be blurry, since people with a Jewish ethnicity may not be religious or may have converted to another religion, for instance. A textual example of the blurriness is Shylock's reference to "our sacred nation" (1.3.43): "sacred" emphasises religious views and "nation" implies the bond of his people. Shylock also refers to his "tribe" (1.3.107) and Jessica calls Tubal and Cush his "countrymen" (3.2.284). Moving from ethnicity to religion, it is time for the next section.

Religion

Although some critics argue that the *Merchant* is anti-Semitic, others identify the play as a critique on Christianity. Shylock's Jewishness may not be the main issue; indeed, he eats and dresses differently, but John Drakakis argues that Shylock is most of all "a subject position *and* a rhetorical means of prising open a dominant Christian ideology no longer able to smooth over its own internal contradictions, and therefore a challenge and a threat" (Drakakis in Mahon 13). Keefe concludes that the play is not anti-Semitic, because the Christian Lorenzo and Jessica rob her father and thus make the audience question the values of

Christian characters (217). Other references to Christian misbehaviour are: Antonio spitting on Shylock; Shylock calls out “what these Christians are, / Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect / The thoughts of others!” (3.1.156-158); Shylock discusses the Christian slave trade, employing slaves “in abject and in slavish parts / Because you bought them” (4.1.92-93); Shylock’s refers as follows to Bassanio and Graziano who wish they could use their wives to save Antonio: “These be the Christian husbands” (4.1.290); Bassanio claims that in religion text can cover “the grossness with fair ornament” (3.2.80); and so on.

If the text indeed displays Christian hypocrisy, Short provides two explanations for this. It may have been Shakespeare’s intention to do so and Shylock has villainous traits because he is a victim of Christians’ treatments. On the other hand, Shakespeare may have been unaware that the play could be interpreted in a negative way for Christians and their prejudices, thus involuntarily proving the deep-rootedness of Christian prejudice against Jews (200).

Still, the only character who converts to Christianity without court intervention is glad to do so: Jessica assumes she will find salvation because of her husband, who initiated her conversion (3.5.15-16). Ozark Holmer describes their union as the Jewish Other becoming the Christian “us” (110) but it could also be phrased as the Jewish Other becoming the Christian Self, which emphasises the assimilation inherent to Jessica and Lorenzo’s marriage. The term “assimilation” is also employed by Eisaman Maus, in contrast to “mutual tolerance” (25). In the power struggles between Christians and Jews, both Jessica and Shylock are converted, by choice and by force respectively.

Colour

The present study prefers to use the term “colour” rather than “race”, because the latter is a problematic concept which assumes a certain hierarchy dating from the colonial era, and

earlier. Although many scholars focus on Shylock's Jewishness and the relationships between Christians and Jews in the play, skin colour is another feature used as marker of difference in the *Merchant*. When the Prince of Morocco, "a tawny Moor" (2.1), talks to Portia, he tells her: "Mislike me not for my complexion" (2.1.1). He knows his skin colour may be a problem to an Italian, Western woman.

In compliance with Portia's father's will, men who want to marry Portia will have to choose between a golden, silver, and leaden casket. The inscriptions on the caskets should reveal which one is the right choice. If the suitor selects the wrong casket, he is not allowed to marry any woman. When the Prince of Morocco picks the wrong one, Portia wishes: "Let all of his complexion choose me so" (2.7.79); she does not want a coloured husband, even though the Prince explains that his blood is as red as a northerner's, i.e. a white man's (2.1.4-7).

Lorenzo accuses Lancelot of "getting up of the Negro's belly. The Moor is with child by you, Lancelot" (3.5.32-33). This is the only reference in the play to a black woman, or to a pregnancy. Desai argues this is "once again an expression of Shakespeare's personal challenging of the stereotypical belief that gentlemen prefer blondes" (314), but Lancelot is hardly a gentleman. Instead, the Moorish woman could be another Other, and a reference to the stereotype of black people's sexual drive.

Nationality

Portia's collection of suitors includes men from many different places: a prince from Naples, the Count Palatine, an English baron, a Scottish lord, a German duke, the Prince of Morocco, the Prince of Aragon, and a "Venetian, a scholar and a soldier" (1.3.95) called Bassanio. Portia discusses her suitors with her maid and says she does not approve of them, with a stereotypical range from German drunkenness to horse-crazy Neapolitans. Six of her suitors

do not have a voice in the play and are only described by Portia; the Prince of Morocco, the Prince of Aragon, and Bassanio all feature on stage and choose a casket.

Portia rejects the Englishman Falconbridge, who is unable to speak any of the languages that Portia speaks and ridiculed for wearing international fashion from everywhere around Europe. Instead, Portia from Belmont chooses a fellow Italian. Falconbridge is seen and judged from the outside, as an Other, in terms of the play. Because the play was written for an English audience, the audience also becomes Othered by the play using stereotypes of the English.

Gender

When Portia goes to court to save Antonio from his contract with Shylock, she and her female servant cross-dress as men. Eisaman Maus says:

The power that she [Portia] achieves by her transvestism signals an interesting development in Shakespeare's treatment of the relations between men and women. Earlier plays often differentiate sharply between the sexes . . . Perhaps when the most serious social threats seem to be posed by outsiders [like Shylock], there is more freedom for women within the 'in' group: the crucial bifurcation is no longer between male and female but between 'us' and 'them'" (253)

Two Gentlemen of Verona also features a girl dressing as a boy, yet it is usually seen as an early play. However, perhaps this is why Eisaman Maus says that the earlier plays "often" do not feature gender bending. Her view suggests that Portia's cross-dressing proves to the audience that women are as capable as men in court; however, it can also be emphasised that Portia will only be heard as a man and not as a woman, leading to a more negative

interpretation. Also, in the Elizabethan period, only male actors were allowed on stage. Portia's cross-dressing meant the audience was watching a male actor who played a woman who played a man. Perhaps this comic effect contests the female power that some scholars read in Portia's performance. Jessica also dresses like a man, but she only does this to escape with Lorenzo in the night (2.6.39).

Homosexuality

Some scholars argue about Antonio's sexual preference. Antonio is Bassanio's wingman, but he remains alone at the end of the play and Bassanio's other friend Graziano ends up with Portia's maid Nerissa. In Act 1.1 it is hinted that Antonio lacks a happy love life, Antonio promises Bassanio the latter can ask anything from him (1.1.138-139), and Solanio thinks "he [Antonio] only loves the world for him [Bassanio]" (2.8.50), suggesting homoerotic content. This is also discussed by Tiffany, who provides an interesting comparison with other Antonios in Shakespearean drama (353-356). Still, one must keep in mind that although modern audiences may perceive homoerotic feelings, the division between homosexuality/heterosexuality is not a universal construct: sixteenth-century England seems to be "much more casual" (Mahon 54) than contemporary society in this respect.

4.1.4 The Text and the World of Today

In contemporary society, one may question the relevance of a play from the 1590s. Regarding its content, some scholars view its alleged anti-Semitism as highly problematic. The Second World War has drastically changed people's attitude towards hatred for Jews, and the treatment of Shylock is now more frequently viewed as an offensive threat than in the Elizabethan period. However, the previous section revealed the multi-layered qualities of the

text with respect to multicultural elements, including Shylock's ethnicity. And, to quote Terence Hawkes:

To accept that they [the plays] have no once-for-all essential or stable identity is precisely what permits a probing of the play's unique legacy: it may even help to create it. That they seem to foster these siftings differently from generation to generation as well as from performance to performance is an inescapable –and happy– conclusion. (Hawkes in Mahon 50)

Shakespeare's relevance thus lies hidden in the challenges offered by his plays' unstable meanings. This quality is transhistorical: "as long as anxieties about racial, national, sexual, and religious differences continue to haunt the way we imagine ourselves and respond to others, Shakespeare's world will remain 'not of an age, but for all time'" (James Shapiro in Keefe 221). In the Netherlands and in many other countries these "differences" indeed cause tensions that need to be considered. A way of doing this is by discussing multicultural elements in literature, and the power struggles implied by these elements.

The *Merchant* depicts a society divided by cultural issues that are still relevant to today's Dutch people. Interestingly enough, an adaptation of Shakespeare's play called *De Arabier van Amsterdam* ("The Arab of Amsterdam") was staged by De Nieuw Amsterdam in 2007; it featured the Jewish-Arabian Rafi who runs a shawarma business in Amsterdam and who lends money to a local entrepreneur called Antonio. Dasha van Amsterdam explains that Shakespeare's text is combined with fragments from Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and a play by Fassbinder; sometimes Shakespeare enters the stage to discuss his play with Rafi; contrary to the original text, the outsider Rafi eventually wins by taking revenge and is "freed from the judgement of the other" (Van Amsterdam); and the adaptation questions the "We/They

division in our [Dutch] society . . . The judgements, stereotypes, and the lack of knowledge of or interest in the Stranger in Dutch society are critically examined in this performance (‘not all Arabs are Muslim, some are Christian and Jewish..’)” (Van Amsterdam). *De Arabier van Amsterdam* is an example of how the issues presented by the *Merchant* can induce one to self-reflection and reveal human universalisms not only across cultures, but also across time.

4.2 *Disgrace*

4.2.1 *Historical Context*

Disgrace was published several years after Apartheid had ended. One of the issues addressed is the relationships between black and white people, disturbed by Apartheid. Apartheid indicates *apartness*: blacks and whites were supposed to live separately, while the white minority held most of the power in South Africa.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the first European colonisers landed in South Africa: in 1601, a Dutch fleet led by Joris van Spilbergen arrived in Table Bay, and the Dutch East India Company opened a refreshment station in the same bay in 1652. A year later, the first slave arrived. Not only did South Africa become a refreshment place in the shipping route to the East, but it also attracted permanent settlers such as the French Huguenots and the Dutch Boers. After South Africa became part of the British Empire in 1806, slave trade was abolished although slave ownership remained legal. The official emancipation of slaves did not come until 1834. Meanwhile, the Voortrekkers, Boer farmers, wanted to establish an independent state. This resulted in bloody conflicts with native tribes, such as the Zulus, and the British (SAHO).

In May 1948, the Nationalist Party became the ruling party in South Africa and this marked the beginning of Apartheid. The era of Apartheid would last for more than 45 years and notoriously included racial segregation with respect to settlement, marriage, et cetera. In 1994, anti-Apartheid revolutionary Nelson Mandela became president and the time had arrived for South Africa to discuss its own racist past; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a well-known court-like body handling this complicated task.

When *Disgrace* was released in 1999, it was awarded the Booker Prize yet strongly disapproved of in and outside its home country South Africa. People did not see how it

“contributes to the understanding of the historical situations in South Africa” (Wang and Tang 50) and “[f]eminist indignation filled the popular press, and the political establishment branded the work with the scandal of racism. Even in sophisticated literary discussion, both local and international, the book was greeted with deep misgivings” (Morphet in Wang and Tang 50). These misgivings should not prevent one from critically examining the text, which other scholars praise for its multi-layered qualities.

4.2.2 *Literary Context*

Coetzee is the first author to be awarded the Booker Prize twice: for *Life & Times of Michael K* and *Disgrace*, in 1983 and 1999 respectively. Shortly after the second, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003. In their press release, the Swedish Academy described Coetzee as an author “who in innumerable guises portrays the surprising involvement of the outsider.” This is an interesting feature with respect to multicultural literature, characterised by the dynamics between cultural majorities and minorities, insiders and outsiders, Selves and Others. *Disgrace*, the Academy said, portrays “the struggle of a discredited university teacher . . . in the new circumstances that have arisen in South Africa after the collapse of white supremacy” and concerns “a question that is central to his works: Is it possible to evade history?”

In 1992, Coetzee said that most people are likely to exchange a “literature of agonized cries in return for peace and social justice” (Begam 431). He stated this while South Africa was struggling to leave Apartheid behind. When asked about canonisation in South Africa, he pointed out that non-Islamic Africa does not have a tradition of written literature; this is a Western tradition, and there is also a Western perspective implied by concepts such as “postcolonial” and “Third World” (Begam 429), Coetzee warns. He also points out South Africa has developed a “critique of ethnicity” (428) after having suffered from Apartheid, and

that he does not feel “a duty to fulfill toward some ideal corpus or other” (429). It would indeed be hard to place Coetzee in a certain literary tradition; the novel is a Western genre and the author is a white male. Yet he grew up in South African society split by its notorious Apartheid regime, and this ambiguity may make his work even more suitable for a multicultural reading.

4.2.3 The World of the Text

David Lurie, age fifty-two, is a university professor fond of women who seeks the company of prostitutes now he is becoming older and less attractive. When he has an affair with one of his students, Melanie Isaacs, she eventually makes a charge against him for sexual harassment which costs him his job. So, he travels from Cape Town to the Eastern Cape where his daughter Lucy lives. When three strange men enter her house, she is raped and David’s head gets burnt. Afterwards, they both struggle with their traumas in very different ways.

Throughout the novel, multicultural themes such as colour, gender, homosexuality, and age arise. The power struggles between people of different colours, genders, sexual orientations, and ages are sometimes confusing and supported by hidden racist and sexist notions, as the paragraphs below will demonstrate.

Colour

Skin colour matters in South Africa, even after Apartheid. The reader knows that characters such as David, Lucy, and Bev are white, whereas Petrus and Pollux are black. Then there is a woman like Soraya, Muslim and categorised as “Exotic” by her escort service; and, finally, there is Melanie. The ambiguous description of her allows several interpretations: “She is small and thin, with close-cropped black hair, wide, almost Chinese cheekbones, large, dark eyes” (11). If she is black or coloured, this would cause a dramatic contrast: the white David

is accused of sexual harassment of a black girl before three black or coloured men rape his daughter Lucy.

The end of Apartheid has changed society, yet society has not forgotten the sharp divide between white and black people. When David is working with Lucy's co-proprietor Petrus, he thinks it is "Just like the old days: *baas en Klaas*" (116) although he does not order Petrus around like the white *baas* would have done. When David mistrusts Petrus after the attack, he realises some of the disadvantages of modern times: he cannot simply hire someone else and dismiss Petrus. David realises that it has become hard to define Petrus, who is paid but no hired help. Roles are shifting: "It is hard to say what Petrus is, strictly speaking. The word that seems to serve best, however, is *neighbour* . . . It is a new world they live in, he and Lucy and Petrus. Petrus knows it, and he knows it, and Petrus knows that he knows it" (116-117). They have arrived in a Post-Apartheid era that still needs to be defined and understood, but the relationships between people of different colours have radically changed.

The divide between different colours emerges during moments such as when Petrus calls Pollux, his relative and one of the rapists, "my people" (201). As a response, David thinks: "So that is it. No more lies. *My people*. As naked an answer as he could wish. Well, Lucy is *his people*" (201). A passage like this reveals that not speaking of the opposition Self/Other and us/them does not erase the complicated relationships between people of different colours. David realises how impractical and dangerous the divisions can be when he is trapped by the three men; following Western traditions, he has learnt French and Italian. Yet these languages "will not save him here in darkest Africa" (95). His Western *Bildung* has not fully prepared him for encounters in his own country. However, he still holds on to his upbringing when he does not want Lucy to marry Petrus. He warns Petrus that "This is not how we do things" (202). Then David realises he actually means to say "*We Westerners*" (202).

The deep-rootedness of disturbed relationships between people of different colours is marked not only by referring to the olden days, but also by stereotypes such as Ettinger's: "Not one of them [black people] you can trust" (109), the German says. When Lucy wonders why her rapists seemed to hate her so much, David tries to provide her with an answer. He refers to the country's problematic past: "It was history speaking through them . . . A history of wrong. Think of it in that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors" (156). He places hatred in a historical tradition. One may wonder how to break loose from this history of violence that inspires new violence.

Some reviewers have called *Disgrace* a racist novel, portraying a white nightmare of South Africa after Apartheid. Carine Mardorossian argues that the novel does not so much concern the attack on Lucy and David as its aftermath, thus revealing hidden racist notions: "That he identifies his daughter's violation as rape while being unable to recognize his own act as such exposes his sexism as well as his racism" (80). David's different attitudes to the two sexual offences against Melanie and Lucy, and his (in)ability to recognise them as rape, reveal a "racist ideology that allows him to do what his investment in sexist norms prevented him from doing earlier . . . He can only see rape as what black men do to white women, an attitude that ultimately exposes him as a white anachronism of the colonial era" (Mardorossian 80). Wang and Tang provide a similar argument, calling Lurie a "colonizer in mind" (52). Not the novel, but its protagonist seems to be racist.

Gender

"I hear no female voice" (52), David Lurie says when he talks to the committee of inquiry, after Melanie has reported his misconduct. Two committee members try to help him, but David realises they are both males. The female voice is silenced in other ways, too: for instance, there is a male focaliser. Moreover, this focaliser seems to prefer passive women.

Melanie is highly passive in the bedroom, whereas David's colleague Dawn actually enjoys herself whilst having sex and this "only repels" (9) him. The fact that two women in the novel are sexually harassed illustrates the repression of women even more painfully. Moreover, Wang and Tang point out the colonial discourse that lies underneath David's smooth talk as they discuss "Lurie's self-righteous sexuality under the excuse of Western literature and the guidance of Romantic writers" (52); using Western tradition, he exercises his sexuality and male power.

During the first sexual offence, David is the perpetrator; during the second, he is *a* victim and his daughter is *the* victim. This drastically changes David's views with regard to women. First, he tells Melanie that she does not owe her own beauty: "Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone . . . She has a duty to share it" (16). Then Lucy is raped, and David is confronted by the horrifying consequences of men's claim to a woman's body. Even though he is haunted by his daughter's rape, Lucy underlines that he is a man, too:

"Hatred... When it comes to men and sex, David, nothing surprises me anymore. Maybe, for men, hating the woman makes sex more exciting. You are a man, you ought to know. When you have sex with someone strange – when you trap her, hold her down, get her under you, put all your weight on her – isn't it a bit like killing? Pushing the knife in; exiting afterwards, leaving the body behind covered in blood – doesn't it feel like murder, like getting away with murder?"

You are a man, you ought to know: does one speak to one's father like that? Are she and he on the same side? (158-159)

David's idea of this "same side" seems to concern victim/perpetrator, or perhaps white/coloured, but Lucy distinguishes between female/male. The sharp divide between men

and women is further established by, for example, David's finding that "blood matters" (104) are not discussed with men, only with women. He asks himself "whether women would not be happier living in communities of women, accepting visits from men only when they choose" (104).

David cannot stand this gender divide when he is trying to help his daughter. As a man, he is not listened to: "Or do they think that, where rape is concerned, no man can be where the women is? Whatever the answer, he is outraged, outraged at being treated like an outsider" (140-141). However, he is an outsider: an outsider to the female body, and an outsider to being raped. David has haunting images in his head of Lucy's attack; "he can, if he concentrates, if he loses himself, be there, be the men, inhabit them, fill them with the ghost of himself. The question is, does he have it in him to be a woman?" (160). This thought, the question whether a male can fully take on a woman's perspective and a victim's perspective, occurs in the head of a male focaliser written by a male author.

Lucy's response to her trauma frustrates most feminist readings of the novel. Lucy tells David that the rapists "see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves" (158). Lucy's philosophy reveals a horrifying outcome of so-called white guilt, of which she becomes the victim. David thinks: "Not her story to spread but theirs: they are its owners. How they put her in her place, how they showed her what a woman was for" (115). The suggestion that it is not her story to tell but the rapists' signifies how women are placed out of the discourse. Not only is Lucy made an object of sexual violence; she is also objectified in its narration. And, as a woman alone, she feels a need for "patronage" (204) and thus turns to Petrus. The word "patronage" itself implies an unequal social relationship between a patron and a client; between husband Petrus and wife Lucy. Yet she feels this is what she needs to do to stay where she lives. It is a much-debated solution.

Homosexuality

Lucy falls for women, but her girlfriend Helen has left her before David arrives. He wonders whether the violence of the three attackers was induced by Lucy's sexual preference, and thinks that "[r]aping a lesbian [is] worse than raping a virgin: more of a blow" (105). Also, he assumes that "[p]erhaps he is wrong to think of Lucy as homosexual . . . perhaps that is all that lesbians are: women who have no need of men" (104). David's doubt can be connected to his insecurity and lack of knowledge concerning lesbianism: "But what does he know about what women do together? Maybe women do not need to make beds creak" (86), he thinks. Then he realises that he should not group lesbian women together but acknowledge individual differences as well: "And what does he know about these two in particular, Lucy and Helen? Perhaps they sleep together merely as children do, cuddling, touching, giggling, reliving girlhood – sisters more than lovers . . . Sapphic love: an excuse for putting on weight" (86). It is a curious way of presenting lesbianism; David does not seem to take it seriously, perhaps because he is unable to imagine it. He is not able to change his standpoint and stays uninformed because he does not talk with his daughter about her sexual preference.

Age

David is a man in his fifties who has noticed that his seductive powers of the past have left him, whereas he always used to be attractive to the opposite sex. He still has occasional affairs such as with Dawn, and he sleeps with prostitutes. His age thus affects his sex life, and his ex-wife Rosalind critically points out to him that he should not have sex with younger girls such as Melanie: "You're what – fifty-two? Do you think that a young girl finds any pleasure in going to bed with a man of that age? Do you think she finds it good to watch you in the middle of your...?" (44). The age difference is further emphasised by Melanie's

boyfriend who summons David to stay with his “own kind” (194), although this could also refer to colour or professor/student divisions. David’s background as a professor of literature is often revealed in his musings; this is also the case when he recalls that “[h]alf of literature is about it: young women struggling to escape from under the weight of old men, for the sake of the species” (190). He even goes as far to call it “*contra naturam*” (190), against nature. The old are decaying, and should not reproduce with the young. Deirdre Coleman more elaborately discusses this generational divide and procreation, with references to Darwin and Malthus.

Even though his aging brings along certain difficulties, David stresses that his character is set in stone by now: “His temperament is fixed, set” (2), he thinks. He thus refuses to take counselling after Melanie’s complaint against him: “I am a grown man. I am not receptive to being counselled” (49). He positions himself as a static, old man: youth’s adaptability is lost on him. When Lucy and he are attacked, his world turns upside down. Slowly, David becomes receptive to the changes inside and outside of him; he struggles with his trauma, and realises what direction his life is heading towards: “He think of himself as obscure and growing obscurer. A figure from the margins of history” (167). The white male has grown insignificant, he feels; it is an assumption combining colour, gender, and age issues.

4.2.4 The Text and the World of Today

“Holland may not be the most exciting of places to live, but at least it doesn’t breed nightmares” (162), David says. It is not the only time he mentions Lucy should go to the Netherlands; she has family and friends over there, since her mother is Dutch. David thinks his daughter should move away from a dangerous society still torn by Apartheid; even though the word is Afrikaans, its roots are visibly Dutch. It seems ironic that the South African Lucy

should start a new life in the country which four centuries ago established a colony in South Africa.

In the Netherlands, Toneelgroep Amsterdam performed a theatrical adaptation of *Disgrace* called *In ongenade* in 2011-2013. A critic's comment on the play also reveals why the novel should appeal to audiences outside South-Africa, in this case a Dutch audience: "The performance goes far beyond the level of racial differences in postcolonial South-Africa. It discusses forgiveness and humanity, the difference between men and women, 'the stranger' [the Other], what distinguishes people from animals and the meaning of art" (Prinssen). With respect to a multicultural reading, especially the first universals play an important role: "race"/colour, humanity, gender, Self and Other. These issues go beyond the borders of South-Africa and are relevant to Dutch and other audiences as well.

5. Teaching Strategies

This section provides several guidelines for teachers who want to teach multicultural literature, with reference to the case studies of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Disgrace*. Goals, material, activities, teacher roles, and evaluation are discussed.

5.1 Goals

Teaching multicultural literature has several goals. First of all, there are the goals that apply to literary education in general, such as letting pupils acquaint themselves with literature, enabling them to discuss their reading experiences, and taking into account the production and reception of literary texts. Multicultural literary education focusses on diversity; in the present study not only ethnicity and race, but other forms of diversity are considered multicultural as well. Culture is everywhere. Multicultural reading asks for a critical examination of culture in texts, being aware of cultural bias, prejudices, ideologies, and representation. This may diversify pupils' views and perceptions of the world.

5.2 Material

Apart from the primary material written by Shakespeare and Coetzee, the teacher could use a variety of supporting materials. Table 2 shows the possibilities for showing film and theatre material in the classroom. Because pupils' language proficiency may not be sufficient to read the original Shakespeare text, the *No Fear Shakespeare* version could be helpful.

Table 2. Supporting Material

Medium	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Disgrace</i>
Film	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> (dir. Michael Radford, 2004) ³	<i>Disgrace</i> (dir. Steve Jacobs, 2008)
Theatre (trailer) ⁴	<i>De Arabier van Amsterdam</i> (DNA, 2007)	<i>In ongenade</i> (Toneelgroep Amsterdam, 2011-2013)
Text	<i>No Fear Shakespeare:</i> <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> (ed. John Crowther) ⁵	---

The supporting materials allow pupils to reflect on the original texts from different angles; they can discuss what they think of these adaptations and how the adaptations seem to relate to the original texts. For instance, it is striking that in the film *The Merchant of Venice* homoeroticism and the repression of Jews are more stressed than in Shakespeare's screenplay. Homoeroticism is quite explicitly suggested in the film by, for instance, the longing way in which Antonio calls Bassanio's name when the latter makes his first appearance on screen, the kiss on the mouth shared by the two men, and the talk they have on a large bed. As for the suppression of Jews, the opening of the film immediately provides the historical background of the marginalisation of Jews in sixteenth-century Venice: it mentions that Jews were locked up in a ghetto at night and were obliged to wear a red hat. Also, a Jewish prayer is briefly shown, whereas the original text does not mention this. Pupils and teacher could discuss how this affects their interpretation of the film and the original play. Also, they may discuss why

³ This is only the most recent film adaptation of the *Merchant*. Film adaptations have been released from 1914 onwards.

⁴ The trailers of both theatrical adaptations can be found on YouTube. They have been uploaded by "denieuwamsterdam" and "toneelgroepamsterdam."

⁵ The online version of this *No Fear Shakespeare* can be found on the Sparknotes website.

the film has more heavily stressed the repression of the Jews and homoeroticism and link this to post-Holocaust society with gay rights activism.

In the novel *Disgrace*, Melanie's skin colour remains unclear; in the film, she and her family look non-Western. However, the film adds something: during the play in which Melanie features, a white and a black woman order their coffees white and black respectively. When Melanie enters the stage, the hairdresser taking the orders says: "And one cappuccino coming up," referring to Melanie's colouredness. Speaking of colour relationships, David in the film points out the "historical piquancy" of him helping Petrus; in the novel, he also dedicates some thoughts to this subject of "*baas en Klaas*" (Coetzee 116). The emphasis on age differences is largely left out of the film; for instance, Rosalind does not point out to David what it must have been like for a young girl to have sex with an old man, and the film lacks David's numerous statements that he is beyond counselling because of he is too old to change. The film opens with David and Soraya discussing Lucy's sexuality and the dangerous situation in South Africa, whereas the novel starts with David's thoughts about sex with Soraya. The ending has been altered as well: in the book's final chapter, Lucy invites David for some tea and then, in the next and final scene, David tells Bev he is willing to give up the last dog. In the film, these scenes have been reversed, thus making the final scene about a reunion of David and Lucy, with Petrus' new house seen in the last shot: the new status quo. Pupils and their teacher can discuss why these alterations have been made and in how far these changes affect the story's meaning and their understanding of the text.

As has been explained in section 4, the theatre production *De Arabier van Amsterdam* can serve to link Shakespeare's play to contemporary Dutch society. The trailer of *De Arabier van Amsterdam* features Raffi saying: "No money, a pound of flesh. I am not Shakespeare, Shylock. Raffi is my name. A shawarma trader from Amsterdam and whoever wants to, can

get to know me.”⁶ The teacher and pupils can discuss what happens if the story of the *Merchant* is placed in a contemporary Dutch context, thus discussing its universal relevance. The trailer of *In ongenade* is less revealing with respect to the story’s multicultural elements, unfortunately. However, it still offers an interesting view of the stage filled with black mannequins and the video commentary provides the director’s view that the story is about “the gap between poor and rich and white and black in South Africa, and thus also about the state of the world” (Toneelgroep Amsterdam).

5.3 Activities: Content, Setting, Time Frame, and Cooperation

Following Glazier and Seo’s mirror-and-window metaphor, activities with respect to multicultural literature should both stimulate pupils’ self-reflection and their empathy, thus increasing their understanding of themselves and the world. Reader-text interaction is crucial and activities should be aimed at pupil response; according to Glazier and Seo, high rates of text-to-self connections are closely associated with high pupil response rates. Reading activities should not only involve the reader’s role as meaning-maker of the text, but also the author’s: these factors concern the text’s (in-)accessibility. Similarly, Louie suggests discussing the story’s authenticity, and to ask for both spoken and written responses. During the reading activities, pupils must become aware of cultural ideologies and representation. Awareness of cultural prejudices should enable readers to discuss material which holds a cultural bias. Activities can involve the following:

- A discussion of multicultural aspects of the original text with respect to its historical and literary background:

⁶ Original lines: “Geen geld, dan een pond vlees. Ik ben niet Shakespeare, Shylock. Raffi is de naam. Een shoarma-handelaar uit Amsterdam en voor ieder die het wil, kan me leren kennen” (DNA).

- *In how far does an explanation of the story's historical and literary context change your views with respect to the markers of diversity (colour, ethnicity, gender, et cetera) it contains?*
- *How can Elizabethan-English views with respect to religion, gender, etc. be linked to the story of The Merchant of Venice?*
- *What traces of Apartheid can you find in Disgrace?*
- *Et cetera.*
- A discussion of the role of markers of diversity in the text:
 - *Do you think one could call The Merchant of Venice anti-Semitic? Why (not)?*
 - *How do Christian and Jewish characters discuss each other's faith in The Merchant of Venice? How do they discuss their own faith? Compare and contrast.*
 - *What is the role of colour in The Merchant of Venice?*
 - *Read Portia and Nerissa's dialogue about nationalities (Scene 1, Act 2). How are other nationalities discussed? What effect would this have had on the original English audiences?*
 - *What does cross-dressing in The Merchant of Venice mean to male/female relationships?*
 - *In how far could one call Antonio and Bassanio's relationship homoerotic?*
 - *Is there racism in Disgrace? Why (not)?*
 - *What is the role of women in Disgrace?*
 - *(How) do the sexual assaults directed at Melanie and Lucy interrelate?*
 - *How is Lucy's sexuality portrayed?*
 - *What role does David's age play in Disgrace? (How) does it affect his relationships with other people?*

- *Et cetera.*
- A discussion of multicultural aspects of the original text by linking it to the pupils' environment and examining the text's relevance to the world of today:
 - *What did you find most striking about the markers of difference (colour/ethnicity/gender/etc.) in The Merchant of Venice/Disgrace?*
 - *Can you link the story's treatment of colour/ethnicity/gender/etc. to contemporary Dutch society? Explain differences and similarities.*
 - *How would you explain/tell/perform this story to a Dutch person who has not read it or heard about it before?*
 - *Et cetera.*
- A discussion of adaptations (films, theatre, et cetera), their relation to the original text and the way they affect the story's meaning with respect to multicultural aspects:
 - *Does the film The Merchant of Venice treat ethnicity, religion, colour, nationality, gender, and homosexuality differently from the original text? Why (not)? Provide at least one example per marker of difference.*
 - *Watch the trailer of De Arabier van Amsterdam. What do you think of it? Can the story of Shylock be transferred to a shawarma merchant in Amsterdam?*
 - *Compare and contrast the roles of colour, gender, homosexuality, and age in the film and novel Disgrace.*
 - *Watch the trailer of In ongenade. The director says the story of Disgrace is about "the gap between poor and rich and white and black in South Africa, and thus also about the state of the world" (Toneelgroep Amsterdam). (Why) do you think it is relevant to perform the play in the Netherlands?*
 - *Et cetera.*

Apart from the actual reading, reading activities can be conducted in various ways:

- Discussions in pairs, groups, or with the entire class;
- Presentations (solo/pairs/groups), using a poster/PowerPoint/Prezi/et cetera;
- Written responses, ranging from essays to posters;
- Online responses, by using e.g. Google Hangouts, enabling pupils to not only use text but video and music segments as well;
- A performance of the text, particularly if the text is a screenplay;
- Et cetera.

Depending on the teacher's choices, the activities can be conducted at home or at school and alone or in pairs/groups. With respect to the time frame, the present study aims at *vwo* 5-6; in upper *vwo*, 80 hours are designated for English literary education of which 30 to 40 hours are assigned to pupils' individual reading of three literary works. The teacher should thus estimate how much time s/he want to dedicate to a piece of multicultural fiction and decide what reading/processing ratio is suitable.

5.4 Teacher Roles

Jan Mulder distinguishes between four teacher profiles for literary education: the pedagogue, transferer of cultural values, coach, and language teacher (17-19, 177-178). In multicultural literary education, the first three are most important: the pedagogue focusses on vision on life, the transferer of cultural values teaches culture and literature, and the coach works in a pupil-oriented way. These features fit the teaching of multicultural literature very well.

For instance, Glazier and Seo point out that dialogic instruction facilitates the learners' meaning-making of the text. The teacher should be aware of both reader-text interaction and pupil-teacher interaction. An important feature of multicultural literature is its (in)accessibility, discussed by Oh: the teacher has to assess the text's accessibility to the pupils and facilitate supporting materials if necessary, e.g. vocabulary lists. Through dialogic

instruction, pupils can discuss their understanding of the text with their teacher, thus informing the teacher whether they need further support. Important factors here are both the teacher's and the pupils' cultural backgrounds. The teacher can point this out to his/her pupils, thus not only creating awareness concerning cultural ideologies in the text but also on the side of the reader. Furthermore, the teacher can call attention to the fact that one author does not represent an entire culture (also see Yandell). Not only does diversity need to be pointed out, according to Cai the teacher should also help the pupil to try to relate to the text by pointing out different cultural markers. The diversification of pupils' world views ought to go hand in hand with a decrease of cultural bias.

5.5 Evaluation

In the Dutch exam programme, the "leesdossier" (*reading file*) is no longer obligatory, but schools can still decide to let pupils construct one through various processing tasks (Meijer and Fasoglio 57). Different kinds of processing tasks have already been outlined in section 5.3, and each processing task demands a different evaluation: for instance, an essay may be easier to evaluate than the performance of a play. However, one of the most crucial elements of multicultural literary education is in-class interaction: it both stimulates pupils' awareness of multicultural aspects of the text and enables the teacher to assess pupils' developments and insights.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

This MA thesis has given an account of and reasons for the use of multicultural literature in secondary education in the Netherlands. This study has investigated various theoretical perspectives on culture and multiculturalism in education; culture is an immensely complex concept which affects numerous aspects of human life, and it more or less logically follows that multicultural literature thus has various definitions as well, which vary in their inclusiveness. A rather inclusive understanding of multicultural literature includes any marker of difference which distinguishes between people: ethnicity, “race”/colour, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, et cetera. These markers of difference also tend to affect power relations between people. The case studies conducted in the present study are embedded in the CEFR and are designed to determine the effect of a multicultural analysis of literature that could be taught in Dutch upper *vwo*: Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* and *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee. Returning to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that multicultural readings allow teachers and pupils to relate to the story by analysing identity markers and their inherent power struggles which are still relevant in the world of today, without losing sight of the story’s historical and literary context.

This study has found that most authors regard multicultural literary education as a reader-oriented evaluation of Self and Other. Through dialogic instruction, pupils should be stimulated to identify with the text and its characters. An implication of this is the possibility to counter cultural ideologies and cultural bias, and to enhance pupils’ understandings of cultural dynamics and variety. The findings of the case studies suggest that a multicultural analysis of literature leads to interesting insights in the story and new ways to understand the text’s relevance to contemporary audiences; the latter is not only shown by analysing identity markers, but also by referring to twenty-first-century adaptations of the works. The method

for these case studies may be applied to other works which contain markers of (multicultural) difference as well.

The current investigation is limited by its length and its number of case studies. Also, most research found on multicultural literature and the teaching thereof originates from the United States; to firmly embed the case studies in a European/Dutch context, the CEFR was thus also applied to the case study design. The current study has maintained a very inclusive definition of multicultural literature, whereas some researchers argue it should only concern “race”/colour and ethnicity. Also, this study examines works by two white, male authors, although they are from different countries and different time periods. Furthermore, this thesis has not examined teacher or pupil opinions on multicultural literary education, and neither has it put theories into practice.

A future study investigating other multicultural fiction would be very interesting, especially if it concerned authors with various backgrounds (female/homosexual/coloured/et cetera), although one of the advantages of critically reading multicultural literature is that each kind of diversity is included in the analysis spectrum so white males, for instance, should not be excluded either. Further research might also explore actual classroom practices with respect to multicultural literary education, or investigate teacher and pupil experiences of and attitudes towards using multicultural literature in the curriculum. It would also be interesting to assess the effects of multicultural literature in the classroom and to see if/how pupils develop their views. Further research regarding the role of multicultural literature in the Dutch classroom would be of great help in developing methods for this; languages other than English could also be included, e.g. Dutch, French, German, and Spanish.

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