



LUP – Faculty of Education

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Master Thesis

**Magical Realism in the ESL Classroom:
Democracy, Citizenship and *The
Famished Road***

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Acknowledgements

As a teacher in a Montessori school, I studied the map of Africa with two boys aged six. I asked them if they noticed something different with this map, and one of the boys said that the borders between the nations were straight lines. I explained to them how colonial powers had met in Europe and decided amongst themselves which country they would take as colonies and used a ruler to divide the continent. One of the boys said, “That is not fair,” and the other agreed. As did I.

The notion of fairness in children being higher than in adults is interesting to examine. Also, the spiritual world of children is more vivid than older students. When I started my master’s education at the Inland University in Hamar, I had an idea to write about something that included the narrative of Magical Realism and post-colonial literature. With some help along the way, I ended up with this thesis.

This has been a rather daunting process for me. The ups and downs of the development of this thesis, along with working full time, have been an effort to say the least. However, I am grateful for all the help and insightful comments I have received from Matthew Marlingford Williamson at Inland University, always available until the final days before delivery! Also, how he and Svern-Arve Myklebost met me enthusiastically when I wanted to write about Magical Realism made me more confident that I was on to something.

Finally, to my wife and kids, who have endured all my ups and downs and shifting moods during this process. Thank you for the space and considerations made that allowed me to wear blinders when working on this thesis.

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Norsk sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven argumenterer for at om man skal opponere mot en hegemonisk vestlig diskurs samt se «den andre» i den tredje verden, så må den litteraturen som benyttes i undervisningen ta et steg bort fra en tradisjonell europeisk oppvekstroman og isteden benytte en postkolonial oppvekstroman med narrativet Magisk Realisme. Gjennom en dokumentanalyse av pensum i norsk skole, en undersøkelse av eksisterende teori og en litterær og didaktisk analyse av romanen *Den sultne veien* av Ben Okri så vil forskningsspørsmålet «Hvordan kan *Den sultne veien* benyttes på VG1 SF i et engelsk klasserom for å undervise i emnene Magisk Realisme, othering og vestlig hegemoni og påvirkning» bli besvart.

Den litterære og didaktiske analysen er gjennomført ved en grundig lesning av romanen med et søkelys på temaene vestlig hegemoni og påvirkning, othering og narrativet magisk realisme. Den litterære analysen viser at *Den Sultne Veien* er relevant når man skal undervise i pensum i norsk skole. Romanen bidrar til å møte kravene i overordnet del og i det tverrfaglige temaet demokrati og medborgerskap. Romanen vil skape en forståelse av den ikke vestlige andre hos studentene og den vil utvikle studentenes interkulturelle kompetanse. Den didaktiske analysen gir forslag til hvordan boken kan bli benyttet i aktiviteter i klasserommet for å undervise i henhold til tanken bak overordnet del og samtidig nå noen av kompetanse målene i pensum i Engelsk på VG1 SF.

Abstract

This thesis argues that to oppose hegemonic Western discourse and see the third world “other”, the literature used in school needs to move away from the traditional European Bildungsroman and choose the post-colonial Bildungsroman instead, with the dual narrative of Magical Realism. Through a document analysis of the curriculum, a theoretical research chapter, and a literary and didactic analysis of *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri, the research question of “How can *The Famished Road* be used in the VG1 general studies EFL classroom to teach the topics of Magical Realism, othering, and western hegemony and influence?” is answered.

The literary and didactic analysis is conducted by a close reading of the novel with a focus on the themes of othering, western hegemony and influence, and the narrative of Magical Realism. The literary analysis shows that *The Famished Road* is relevant when teaching the curriculum. It contributes to reaching the core curriculum's demands and the interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship. The novel will create an understanding of the non-western other in the students and lead to the development of intercultural competence. The didactic analysis suggests how the book can be used through classroom activities to teach the curriculum and reach the competence aims in the English subject in VG1 general studies.

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1. Introduction

Through the inter-disciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship, the curriculum in English invites us to see “the other”. In the English subject, Democracy and Citizenship refers to helping the pupils understand that how they view the world is culture-dependent. By learning English, the pupils can experience different societies and cultures by communicating with others worldwide regardless of linguistic or cultural background. This can open new ways to interpret the world, promote curiosity and engagement, and help prevent prejudices (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b). According to Lenz, the understanding of the fact that the way we view the world is culture-dependent, the development of multi perspectivity and the prevention of prejudice are the aspects that the English subject carries from the definition of Democracy and Citizenship in the core curriculum. What is prioritised from the democracy aspect in the English subject is democracy as a culture and lifeform and democracy as a protection of the minority (Lenz, 2020, p. 66). This thesis will argue that to see the third world “other” and oppose a hegemonic discourse in the West, the literature used to teach students in upper secondary schools in Norway need to move away from the traditional European Bildungsroman and towards the post-colonial novel with the multiple narrative of Magical Realism.

Choosing post-colonial literature with the dual narrative of Magical Realism to be used in education will ensure that the discussion and reflection happening in a Norwegian classroom will not be limited to identity and othering. The students will in addition enter a discourse of hegemony and imperialism. This will skew their perspectives towards seeing not only the European other but also the third-world other. Maggie Ann Bowers claims that Magical Realism allows writers to express a non-dominant or non-Western perspective in opposition to dominant cultural discourse. (Mambrol, 2017). Blurring the lines between fantasy and reality, the tool of Magical Realism allows for fantastical things to happen in a real-world setting (Boehmer, 1995). For a post-colonial author wanting to describe the effects of colonialism and the aftermath on a nation, the binary opposition of the magical and the real allows for this, with the magical opening a realm to describe the culture of a colonised population in existence before the European nations began asserting their power over them. Furthermore, it creates an opportunity to resist imperial discourse (Kenyon, 1985). A reshaping to undercut Western discourse is happening in post-colonial literature that is not available in traditional European literature. After colonialism came a change of power, this

demanded a reshaping of the meanings and the culture of the coloniser imposed on the native population. Part of this reshaping happens through literature, where the writers aim to undercut colonial discourse. Therefore, post-colonial writing is influenced by the historical lack of power in the colonies and the division they faced during colonialism (Boehmer, 2005). When creating a space in education for seeing the other much importance should be placed on the other being someone that does not look, or act like us. When a nation has lost much of its former culture and language through colonisation and the acts of the colonial powers, there exists a need for a space in which the original culture can be presented to the world. Placing this previous culture in the magical and mythical realm alongside the real allows the reader to see the double identity of the post-colonial subject. Choosing post-colonial literature with a dual narrative will allow for this to happen.

While no longer directly under colonial rule, the former colonies are still in a position of financial and cultural influence from their former colonisers in the Western world. In many cases, their original culture has vanished along with their language, and they operate in a landscape where the power structures work against them. At the same time, the Western reader of post-colonial literature reads from a position of power, arguably from a legacy of imperialism. The curriculum in English is trying to address this perspective with an emphasis on an outward look from a power position towards minorities and people with less power. If educators in Norway are to teach the core curriculum and the interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship as a protection of the minority, it creates a need to see and understand the people of a minority to properly communicate in a way that can further democracy. The students and the teacher must transform into an anti-imperialistic state of mind.

The idea of the child in a traditional European Bildungsroman functioned as a precursor for imperialistic discourse. The invention of a child that is undeveloped and in need of education and guidance and the creation of a discourse along these lines to be used against other human beings was used as a justification for imperialism (Wallace, 1994). When the post-colonial author willingly chooses an imperialistic genre, they create an anti-imperialistic agenda with questions of identity and power (Va'zquez). Western education is presented with an alternative from the post-colonial author to the dominant Western discourse. When choosing this literature, the educator will challenge the student reader to develop language and cultural awareness.

To develop a more nuanced understanding of the world, the students need to be able to imagine people and context with empathy and sympathy. According to Nussbaum, Literature can play an essential role in developing what she calls a “sympathetic imagination” (Nussbaum, 1997). The post-colonial Bildungsroman will challenge the students with a different perspective and identity from their own. Following Nussbaum’s argument, the students will develop a more nuanced understanding of society when developing the capacity to understand the other. Furthermore, it connects literature with developing intercultural competence (Carlsen, 2020). Intercultural competence references decentering as being able to see the world from different standpoints than our own. This can be achieved using a Bildungsroman with a dual narrative set in a post-colonial context. This will link the educators to the core area “Encounters with text in English” in the LK20, which states that reading gives students “knowledge about and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity” and it helps develop the students’ awareness about “different ways of life, mindsets, and communication pattern” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b). When choosing a post-colonial Bildungsroman, the educator can achieve decentering in the students. This will open an anti-imperialistic perspective, which will achieve an awareness of different ways of life, mindsets, and communication patterns, three main components of intercultural competence. This will render the students better able to communicate with third-world others.

The LK20 does not specify which literature the teachers can choose, thus leaving the choice to the teacher. If the teacher does not research what literature to select and makes an active choice, it will lead to the literature used being excerpts from the textbooks the schools have chosen. The new curriculum provides teachers with the agency, but there is a need for the teacher to exploit this. In her survey in the dissertation “English teachers’ choices and beliefs about literature in the Norwegian upper secondary classroom” Marit Elise Lyngstad found that more than two in three English teachers in upper secondary use textbooks as the go-to source for literature. This creates a dependency on others to deliver the diversity in the classroom that the curriculum calls for. When she asked the teachers participating in the survey to give examples of literature that they believed to be suitable and would work well in upper secondary, *Of Mice and Men* by Steinbeck was mentioned the most. However, the top of the list includes European Bildungsromane as *The Hunger Games* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, and *The Kite Runner* and *Slumdog Millionaire* were included, which at least is set in previous colonies (Lyngstad, 2019). Standard canonical novels can be used when teaching identity and othering. However, the anti-imperialistic effect of a post-colonial setting

and context with the help of Magical Realism to throw political punches that allow for the development of a perspective that makes the students see the third world other would go amiss with the literary selection in Lyngstad's survey.

Post-colonial literature offers a different perspective to the existing dominant discourse. Perspective is a mental view which will always be subject to influence and changes. When the LK20 states that "In the English subject, the interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship refers to helping the pupils to develop their understanding of the fact that the way they view the world is culture-dependent." (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b), it's the mental view of the students the teachers are asked to challenge and broaden. Furthermore, broadening their perspective will make the students better understand and communicate with others situated in a non-dominant discourse through direct conversation with empathy and understanding provided by their encounters with texts in English. It is an aspect of Bildung in how this topic is formulated for the English subject. The students are to be guided into being (good) empowered citizens with empathy and sympathy towards the unknown other. Using literature with textual examples of othering as the process of defining and identifying oneself as different from others will invoke empathy in students in their future conversations with the others. However, using textual examples from a novel that opposes imperial discourse will add an understanding of hegemony, creating an understanding of the global subject.

This thesis argues that *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri is an excellent novel to teach for educators wanting to create a "third space" for students. It allows the student to understand and reflect upon what we in the West regard as universal values and allows for a perspective from a position of less power. Being set in Nigeria in a time when the nation can be seen as new-born out from being a colony, it not only explores the forming of identity in a post-colonial experience but also highlights the disparities between the rich and the poor on a social, economic, and cultural stage. The juxtaposition of the protagonist as a child with Nigeria as a nation also like a child will create an understanding of the Bildung process evident for people and post-colonial countries. This will lead to an emerging generation with more sympathy towards the complex structures of nation-building and young democracies. The othering of not only the spirit child protagonist Azoro but also the women, his father, the ethnical othering of his family, and the poor inhabitants of the compound are starting points for reflections and discussions among the novel's readers. The hegemonic powers of the colonisers and the influential members of society can be used to show one group's dominance over the other through power and, in a post-colonial context, more importantly, cultural

influence. The teaching of the lasting impact of imperialism on a nation will find many examples in *The Famished Road* as it explores the effect British colonialism has had on the nation's fundamental structures. From following the protagonist Azoro through the realm of the magical and real, the reader will gain an insight into the forces of imperialism that will create an understanding of the discourse from the West towards the more undeveloped parts of the world that are still in play today.

This thesis is structured in eight chapters. Following this introduction will be a document analysis of the curriculum in English, where the subject curriculum is restricted to the VG1 curriculum for general studies. The third chapter is a theory section divided into three parts: Magical Realism, post-colonial literature and intercultural competence. The literary analysis is divided into three thematic chapters using a close reading of *The Famished Road* regarding the themes of the narrative, othering and Western hegemony and influence. These chapters will have a subsection of the didactic use of the novel when focusing on the three themes. The thesis will end with a conclusion of the research.

The purpose of this study is to show through a literary analysis of *The Famished Road*, along with suggestions for the didactic use of the novel, that if the goals of the curriculum are to be achieved, the teachers in EFL classrooms in VG1 general studies need to choose post-colonial Bildungsromane which utilise the Magical Realism over the more traditional European Bildungsromane. The literary analysis will show Okri's approaches to the themes of othering, western hegemony, and the narrative of Magical Realism. The didactic analysis will show how the curriculum goals can be met by teaching the abovementioned themes.

2. Curriculum

2.1 Introduction

According to the then-conservative government in Norway, the most important contribution to the development of young students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to master their own lives in a diverse and democratic society is the education system. Participation in the education system lays the foundation for social mobility and enhances democratic understanding and participation (Kunnskapdepartementet, 2016). Part of the reasoning behind updating the knowledge pledge was that the general part of the curriculum, the principles for the education, the core curriculum and the curriculum in the different subjects had been developed at different times. The reasoning behind the LK20 was that it would make a connection between all the issues and that education should be looked at as a whole (Kunnskapdepartementet, 2016). At the centre of the LK20 are the core curriculum and the introduction of the three interdisciplinary topics Health and life skills, Democracy and Citizenship and Sustainable Development.

These three interdisciplinary topics in the curriculum are based on prevailing societal challenges which demand engagement and effort from individuals and local communities, nationally and globally. The pupils develop competence in connection with interdisciplinary topics by working with issues from various subjects. They shall gain insight into challenges and dilemmas in these topics. Pupils must understand where we can find solutions through knowledge and collaboration, and they must learn about the relationship between actions and consequences (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a).

As stated in the Meld. St.28 regarding the subject of Democracy and Citizenship is that it, among other things, contains interaction in a multicultural society. Furthermore, the subject is linked to the Education Act, which clearly states that education should further democracy and that the students have a right to participate. Strengthening the students' understanding of democracy and their ability to participate in democratic processes is also emphasised (Kunnskapdepartementet, 2016). These topics are introduced based on the knowledge of global challenges and the need for the next generation to be engaged in confronting some of these challenges.

Democracies across the world for some years now have been under solid pressure, which might explain some of the political wills that exist in teaching students about democracy. The election of Trump as president in the US and the storming of Congress as one final act of defiance towards democratic values from the outgoing president and his supporters, the vote for Brexit in England and the pressure put on both the democracy and constitution of Hungary by Victor Orban to name a few, hardly goes unnoticed when it comes to what is emphasised in the curriculum. The LK20 mirrors essential changes in the strength of democracies worldwide—still, the Meld. St.28 also states that the interdisciplinary topics should only be included in subjects where they are a central part of the curriculum, they shall be prioritised above other interdisciplinary topics, but they shall not exclude other substantial curricula (Kunnskapdepartementet, 2016). This points to the core curriculum delivering the overriding values for all the different parts of the curriculum. The topics are essential but should not trump the core curriculum when teaching towards reaching the competence aims but rather work in flux with the core curriculum. When the competence aims take a step away from basic skills in a subject and move towards critical thinking and understanding texts and topics, the flux between the core curriculum and the interdisciplinary topics might be easier to achieve.

2.2 Document analysis

To further understand the role that Democracy and Citizenship plays in the LK20 and the thinking behind the choice of the government and school politicians and influencers to include it, there is a need for a document (content) analysis of the core curriculum. Document analysis is a form of analysis where the research question is answered through other's words, sentences or stories of a subject (Sander, 2022). Grønmo claims that the characteristics of content analysis, regardless of design, is a systematic review of the content in a document that aims to find relevant information on the studied subject. Furthermore, the documents are content not brought to life by the researcher's effort (Grønmo, 2015). A document analysis is a good tool when we want to know how others interpret a document's content, and a document analysis can be either quantitative or qualitative. A qualitative content analysis builds on a systematic document review registering data relevant to the research question (Grønmo, 2015). This thesis argues that to oppose a hegemonic discourse and see the third world other, we need to change the type of literature used in schools in Norway. One must

have a good understanding of how the developers of the curriculum view the intended meaning behind the content relating to this when performing the argument. It will be shown in the following analysis that the core curriculums have an outward view of the world and an emphasis on the need to see others from a different culture than our own. And educators in Norway need to be aware of this to make the right choices when teaching the curriculum to the students.

2.3 The core curriculum

The definition of Democracy and Citizenship included in the subject of English is partly made through a view of the other. The era of multiculturalism that the Western world has entered through the migration of people from the third world is incorporated in the structure and the inherent values of the LK20. In the introduction of the core curriculum, it is stated that:

The core curriculum of the curriculum elaborates on the core values in the objectives clause in the Education Act and the overriding principles for primary and secondary education and training. The core curriculum gives direction for the teaching and training in the subjects, and all the subjects contribute to realising the broad purpose of primary and secondary education and training. The core curriculum describes the fundamental approach that shall direct the pedagogical practice in all lower and secondary education and training” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017).

The objective clause in the education act states that education shall open the doors to the world and give students historical and cultural insight. The education shall be rooted in human rights and based on equality and solidarity. Furthermore, the education shall provide an insight into the international cultural tradition and cultural diversity and promote democracy, scientific thinking, and equality. The values expressed in the objective clause are uniting values in Norwegian society. The values are a foundation of our democracy, and the knowledge of these shall help students understand a complex world (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017). These statements from the objective clause of the education act show a clear intent towards regarding the world and not only the Norwegian society’s values of equality and solidarity. The human rights that function as a basis for the objective clause are the same as in the UN Charter for human rights, including children and young adults. The emphasis on strengthening the students’ understanding of democracy is made in

Meld. St.28, in the context of the outward view of the core curriculum, points toward an understanding of democracy not only in the Norwegian democracy but also democracies across the world where some are weaker than others. To open the doors to the world and to provide an insight into international cultural tradition, the literature that the teachers choose in the EFL classroom in VG1 general studies must resonate with these values. When selecting a post-colonial Bildungsroman over the traditional European Bildungsroman, the teachers increase their success in teaching the curriculum while following the direction of the core curriculum.

The student's experience of Democracy that the core curriculum elaborates on must be viewed in connection to the protection of the minority voice. The core curriculum states that "School shall provide the pupils with the opportunity to participate in and learn what democracy means in practice. The teaching and training shall promote belief in democratic values and democracy as a form of government. It shall give the pupils an understanding of the basic rules of democracy and the importance of protecting them."

(Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 9). This statement might be best viewed in the context of an in-house democracy, not only the Norwegian democracy but participation in local democracy as in the way the school is governed. However, the focus is rapidly placed on the need to protect the minority in society. "All the participants in the school environment must develop an awareness of minority and majority perspectives and ensure that there is room for collaboration, dialogue and disagreement." (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 10). If the students are to develop an awareness of minority and majority perspectives, they need to encounter these perspectives through the teaching in school. Post-colonial literature covers these perspectives while, at the same time, it often involves a conflict of interest between an indigenous population and a hegemonic oppressor. In allowing the students to encounter the post-colonial subject through the chosen literature, the teacher will facilitate the development of the awareness the curriculum desire.

The curriculum views the Bildung part of education in connection with an understanding of others from a different culture. The core curriculum specifically states the interlinking of overall development or, rather, "Bildung" and education. This is described as a school's dual mission, the mutual dependency of the Bildung and the education. "Primary and secondary education and training is an important part of a lifelong process which has the individual's all-round development, intellectual freedom, independence, responsibility, and compassion for others as its goal. The teaching and training shall give the pupils a good foundation for

understanding themselves, others and the world, and making good life choices.” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 10). Again, there is a combination of an inward and outward view of the students’ future thinking that is brought forward as an essential aspect of education. The understanding of themselves is linked with understanding the other and the world, and the goal of considering the other with empathy exists. To develop this understanding, the students must encounter others different from themselves. This understanding will be achieved by getting to know the protagonist Azoro through reading *The Famished Road* and working with the novel's central themes through well-founded classroom activities.

The outward view of the core curriculum implies that the mention of others in the curriculum must be viewed in a global context alongside the local one. There is a recognition in the curriculum of the fact that a student’s identity and self-image grow in interaction with others. “The ability to understand what others think, feel, and experience is the basis for empathy and friendship between pupils.” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 11). The expressed meaning of this can be interpreted as being something that happens in a diverse environment at the local school. Still, given how the core curriculum is designed to take an outward view, one can see “the other” in a post-colonial theoretical context. “The other” does not have to be the person sitting next to you but can be translated to an “other” the students can meet through literary interaction.

The desired values communicated through the interdisciplinary topics must be met with the other’s perspectives in the encounter of text the students experience in the classroom. The curriculum states, “School shall facilitate for learning in the three interdisciplinary topics health and life skills, Democracy and Citizenship, and sustainable development.” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 14). This thesis focuses on the core curriculum along with the Democracy and Citizen part of the interdisciplinary topics. Still, it can be argued that Health and Life Skills play a role if we successfully want to teach the students about the former. A positive self-image and a confident identity are helpful if we demand that the students be open to different perspectives from others worldwide. Under the topic of Health and Life Skills also comes the issues of value choices and relations with others and respect for the boundaries of the other (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 15). Reading literature from a different setting than their own, with ideas that counter a hegemonic discourse, will work towards the students being open to discussing ideas that will help them when communicating with others around the world.

The connection between democracy and human rights in the curriculum implies a global notion of democracy. The teaching of Democracy and Citizenship shall further an understanding in the students of the connection between democracy and fundamental human rights. Democracy has different forms worldwide, and the students shall gain an insight into how the different democracies work. The relationship between obligations and rights in a democracy shall be made clear for the students, and the school shall encourage students to become active citizens. Dilemmas that arise between the preponderance of the majority and the rights of the minority shall be understood, and the need for constant maintenance of a democracy and critical thinking shall be trained (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 16). The student's direct interaction with democracy will be locally through school and through decisions that the government make for them. The fact that the core curriculum again emphasises the relationship between the majority and minority and fundamental human rights implies the desire for a global perspective being developed in the students while thinking of democratic values. This perspective can be achieved by choosing literature with a setting and a development in the protagonist that differs from that in a European Bildungsroman. The protagonist in *The Famished Road* has many encounters with a weak beginning democracy that does not account for the minority voice. This will present a global perspective for the students regarding how they view democratic values and the importance of them being universal.

The need to view the subject of English competence aims in direct relation to the overall values of the core curriculum is stated explicitly in the core curriculum. "Schools shall understand that teaching and training in the subjects is linked to the values and principles the entire education path is based on." (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 12). This creates a clear link between a subject's curriculum with its competence aims to the values and ideas expressed in the core curriculum. What follows is that when choosing how to reach a subject's competence aims, the teacher needs to account for the core curriculum's values and direction before making a choice. For example, when choosing literature to reach some of the competence aims in the subject of English, this literature needs to carry global perspectives and create the understanding in the students the curriculum seeks. Moving towards post-colonial literature with a dual narrative of Magical Realism which gives room for the minority voice, will give the teacher a solid platform for achieving this.

The content of each subject's curriculum is based on the following definition of competence:

Competence is acquiring and applying knowledge and skills to master challenges and solve tasks in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations. Competence includes understanding and the ability to reflect and think critically. (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 12)

Additionally, the core curriculum states, “The competence goals must also be understood in light of the objectives clause and the other sections of the curriculum.”

(Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 12). This again means that the competence aims of each subject need to be viewed in connection to the core curriculum and its values, specifically to the interdisciplinary topics in each subject. The interdisciplinary topic in English is reduced to just two from the core curriculum, Health and Life Skills and Democracy and Citizenship.

2.3.1 Bildung

Bildung is a complex term with roots in European thinking and education. From the 1800s, Bildung was explored secularly, linking the term to moral, emotional, and intellectual development. Focusing on the role of being a citizen through education by thinkers like Herder and Schiller. This German notion of Bildung again inspired the Danish invention of folk Bildung, meaning that Bildung no longer only applied to the wealthy but also to the masses. This led to the empowerment of the underclass and a peaceful transition from an agricultural society to an industrialised democracy in Denmark (Andersen). Andersen argues, "Today, our civilization is transforming from industrialized nation-states to a digitized globe where everybody needs to thrive. For this to happen peacefully, we need to empower everybody and we need folk-Bildung for the 21st Century" (Andersen, p. 1). Being able to teach the core curriculum to students through post-colonial literature can go some way in fulfilling Andersen's call for a “digitized globe where everybody needs to thrive”. The ability to take on marginalized groups perspective and be a facilitator for the thriving of marginalized people in the future can help democracy become more robust in the others roots and culture. Andersen goes on to use the definition of Bildung that the European Bildung Network uses:

Bildung is the combination of the education and knowledge necessary to thrive in your society, and the moral and emotional maturity to both be a team player and have personal autonomy. Bildung is also knowing your roots and being able to imagine the future.

The aspect of Bildung is emphasised throughout the core curriculum.

The core curriculum clarifies the responsibility of the school and training establishments when it comes to education and overall development (Bildung) and the development of the competence of all participants in primary and secondary education and training. Everyone working in primary and secondary education and training must allow this fundamental approach to guide the planning, implementation and development of teaching and training. (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a)

Furthermore, the core curriculum states, “The school's mission is the education and all-round development (Bildung) of all pupils. Education and all-round development are interlinked and mutually dependent, and their underlying principles should help schools accomplish this dual mission.” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a). The competence goals in each subject and the Bildung aspect of education are linked throughout the curriculum. Erik Ryen describes the process of Bildung as “one that occurs in a dialectic relationship between the external world and the individual, where the former is at the same time constraining and being constructed as meaningful by the latter” (Ryen, 2020, p. 220). The educator is the provider of this external world, and this world can be presented through literature. Post-colonial literature can provide a glimpse into a world that can challenge and change perspectives in the students that can fill some of the aspects of Bildung in education.

Lene Rachel Andersen’s four aspects of Bildung are a good starting point when considering the Bildung aspect of education. She describes the four aspects: transferable knowledge and understanding, non-transferable knowledge and understanding, expansion of the sense of responsibility, and civic empowerment (Andersen). Transferable knowledge and understanding regard a student’s ability to understand the world and what we can teach each other to achieve this understanding. For example, suppose some of this understanding is to come through literature from the third world with Magical Realism as a literary effect. In that case, the students must be taught how to read the novels they are presented to see the perspectives offered.

The civic empowerment aspect of Bildung directs us to the Citizenship part of the curriculum as it has to do with the ability to engage as citizens. The student needs an inner drive and confidence to speak up against injustices and get involved. The educator needs to make the students brave and play on their frustrations or personal interest to invoke activism in the students (Andersen). Exposing the injustices in the world through literature can be a valuable

trigger to invoke this activism. Literature can be used in the classroom to develop the Bildung aspect of education.

2.4 The curriculum in the English subject

The curriculum in English highlights the subject's importance when it comes to cultural understanding and identity development. It emphasises the student's ability to communicate with others regardless of cultural background. The students are expected to develop an intercultural understanding of other people's ways of life and how they think and communicate (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b). One of the subject's core elements is "Encounters with texts in English". The curriculum states that this is where language learning takes place, and it accounts for a broad definition of texts, including most means of expression available for the students. The core elements highlight intercultural understanding through the texts the students encounter as it says that working with texts in English helps develop the student's knowledge of cultural diversity and gives insight into indigenous people's way of life and their thinking. By reflecting upon the texts they encounter, the students will develop intercultural competence and build the foundation for seeing others and their identity in a multicultural context (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b). The subject curricula in English elaborate on and further the outward worldview found in many sections of the core curriculum. If the teacher is to successfully guide the students in increasing their knowledge of cultural diversity and giving an insight into how the indigenous people think and justify their actions and ideas, the literature must mirror this. The opposition to hegemonic discourse and the different cultural settings in post-colonial literature with a narrative of the magical and the real will create classroom activities to help the students achieve this.

The subject curriculum in English defines the topic of Democracy and Citizenship as:

In the English subject, the interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship refers to helping the pupils develop their understanding that how they view the world is culture dependent. By learning English, the pupils can experience different societies and cultures by communicating with others around the world, regardless of linguistic or cultural background. This can open for new ways to interpret the world, and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices.
(Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b)

Apart from the topic title, there is no direct reference to democracy in this definition on the topic in the English subject. The core curriculum clearly states that the students should know democracy, its functions, and their participation in it. Different aspects of democracy carry different weight in the different subjects in school. According to Lenz, the understanding of the fact that the way we view the world is culture dependent, the development of multi perspective and the prevention of prejudice are the aspects that the English subject carries from the definition of Democracy and Citizenship in the core curriculum. What is prioritised from the democracy aspect of the subject is democracy as a culture and lifeform and democracy as a protection of the minority (Lenz, 2020, p. 66). This definition could signal that in teaching the Democracy and Citizenship part of the curriculum, one can choose literature similar to a European Bildungsroman in setting and structure for the students that focuses on local minorities to develop multi perspective and prevent prejudices. However, this does not account for the design of the curriculum with the core curriculum's overarching function and the outward view in its values.

2.5 Final thoughts

The English subject partly defines Democracy and Citizenship through the Other. The creators of the LK20 have incorporated in the curricula that at the end of the twentieth century, the world entered an era of multiculturalism. We enter this era on the back of experiences from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment era, both important for the foundations of colonialism and how we in the West viewed our non-western other. European thinkers beginning to seek new knowledge and challenging traditional assumptions during the Renaissance provided a route to discovery and exploration. Expanding on their powers led to the European nations taking up colonies in other parts of the world. The idea of progress in its linear European understanding evolved during the Enlightenment with a focus on science and reason. This being the correct way for all people brought a discourse that signalled a superiority of European culture. The ideas and the stereotypical discourse towards the non-western other stemming from the Enlightenment era were used to justify the colonisation of the non-western peoples viewed as uncivilised. The notion of fundamental human rights also came into play during the Enlightenment era. Unfortunately, this coincided with a view of the colonial subject which meant that for these rights to apply for them, they needed to change in line with the European notion of progress.

The end of WW2 gave the colonies and the indigenous people courage to break free of colonialism. Maybe seeing white people killing each other in the millions gave them this courage. According to Kapuscinski, the era of multiculturalism coincides with two other events, the end of the cold war and the electronic communication revolution (Kapuscinski, 2018). This leaves the world an open space, and the curriculum lays upon educators to explore this space. We enter this space as white Europeans, formerly the dominators with the most important position at the negotiation table, now one of many participants around a table of more equal people. Nevertheless, we as Europeans are still part of a dominant Western culture, and the curriculum's emphasis on protection for the minority can be seen as cultural protection in the English subject. When entering dialogue and communicating with non-western others, western participants also need to be aware that if the language that forms the base of this communication is English, it is often forced upon them by the former colonial powers. This requires Western people to be sensitive and open to the double identity the non-western other suffers because of this. The way the student sees the world is culture dependent. From a cultural viewpoint, they see the world from the majority's position. Until now, our view of the other has been asymmetrical, and the 500-year existence of this asymmetrical discourse has produced habits in the participants (Kapuscinski, 2018). By learning English through encounters with texts, the creators of the curriculum call for a challenge of this perspective and a new discourse.

The inclusion of the Democracy and Citizenship topic must be viewed in relation to the end of the cold war. The end of this 50 yearlong cold war also was the victory of Western democracy and created what Kapuscinski calls the "rebirth of the spirit of democracy" (Kapuscinski, 2018). The end of the cold war also signalled the end of one-party systems, military coups, regimes, and dictators. The end of the cold war was also a victory for the discourse surrounding democracy; no one protested it anymore. The discourse after the cold war and the spreading of democracy as the finest form of governing has also created meeting points for and mobility of people worldwide. This creates a need for communication with others, and the topic of Democracy and Citizenship in the subject of English accounts for this need. It has also created many new democracies different from ours. These may be weaker and easier to exploit politically. In a new democracy, many people might struggle for identity and position, and the number of poor people will be higher in post-colonial democracy. This leaves people open to nationalist and racist viewpoints, portraying the other as a threat (Kapuscinski, 2018). We are the other for emerging nations that impose their power through being financially very

strong. It is in our interest to “open for new ways to interpret the world, and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b).

3. Theory

3.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a presentation of the theoretical framework that will guide the discussion and research on *The Famished Road* and lay the foundation of the study. Critically examining the theory relevant to the thesis statement and research questions will inform and support the claims made in this thesis. In addition, it will serve as a framework for comparing the findings with existing secondary literature. This chapter will review post-colonial literature, othering, Magical Realism, and intercultural competence. Finally, this theory will provide an understanding of the field of research when we move into the literary analysis of the thesis.

3.2 Post-colonial literature

To define post-colonial literature, it is first necessary to define postcolonialism itself. Quayson argues, “A possible working definition for postcolonialism is that it involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies and at the level of more general global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire.” (Quayson, 2020). Postcolonialism involves discussions of the experiences of the colonised in response to the discourse and material practises of empire for historical reasons, most often European imperialism. The experience of slavery and resistance is juxtaposed with the discourse of European history, philosophy, and language. Postcolonialism refers to people's experiences after colonialism ended and the experiences and effects of colonialism at the time it occurred. In the latter years, the term has also been expanded to include the experiences of minorities and diasporas in the West and, as such, embracing the discourse of native and African Americans, the indigenous people of former states ruled by empire. This expanding the term makes it almost all-inclusive. Hence it can be used for many discourses around power or the lack of such in the modern world (Quayson, 2020). Post-colonial literature inhabits all these discussions from the field of postcolonialism expressed through text in its broader definition. This makes post-colonial literature a broad term, including text from authors living in previous colonies and members of minorities and diasporas in the Western world (Quayson, 2020). The stories and

experiences told in post-colonial texts are some of the voices of the other that the curriculum in Norway invites us to hear and reflect upon. The position of power students in Western democracies possess is one of the perspectives the curriculum wants to challenge when they ask for an understanding that the way we in Norway see the world is culture dependent. To challenge this perspective, choosing a post-colonial Bildungsroman with the dual narrative of the magical and the real that oppose Western discourse will render the task of reaching the curriculum's aims and teaching it aligned with its spirit accessible.

This thesis focuses on postcolonial literature written in English because of the connection to the English curriculum in Norway and how the curriculum invites us to discuss the other from a European perspective in the English subject. Elleke Boehmer writes, "It is on the British Empire that my attention will be focused – though I might equally have looked at Spanish, Portuguese, French or Dutch colonialism. The last two hundred years have witnessed both the moment of the greatest expansion of that empire and its demise" (Boehmer, 2005, pp. 1-2). It will be essential to provide context for the students to understand that this is not solely an English issue, not even a European issue. Still, it concerns empire, imperialism, and imperialistic ideas worldwide. Rising empires in the present use economy and financial power to impose their culture and beliefs on us as Europeans, like China and some of the oil-rich gulf states like Qatar and Saudi Arabia. They view us from a position of power, thus making the concept of "the other" something that is used towards us. When the curriculum invites us to see the other, an understanding of the existence of states with an imperialistic mindset that does not share the spirit of the curriculum will make the students improve their knowledge of the world.

The post-colonial writer is writing from a position of less power. Boehmer argues, "Rather than simply being the writing which came after empire, postcolonial literature is generally defined as that which critically or subversively scrutinises the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonial perspectives." (Boehmer, 2005, p. 3). After colonialism came a change of power which also demanded a reshaping of the meanings and culture of the coloniser. Part of this reshaping happens through literature, where the writers aim to undercut colonial discourse. Therefore, post-colonial writing is influenced by the historical lack of power in the colonies and the division they faced during colonialism (Boehmer, 2005). While no longer directly under colonial rule, the former colonies are still in a position of financial and cultural influence from their former rulers. This is addressed in *The Famished Road* through the struggle for political power between the party of the rich and the

party of the poor. This makes the novel well suited to creating classroom activities to increase students' understanding of this issue for post-colonial nations.

Writing in English from the former colonies makes it easier to be heard, but it creates a discussion of the use of language. The postcolonial writer often celebrates the culture of a liberated colony in the language and literary form of the former coloniser. Thiong'o questions whether this can be seen as "on a cultural level continuing that neo-colonial, slavish and cringing spirit?" (Ngugi wa, 1998, p. 1). Edwards argues, "This is a paradoxical issue that has, of course, invited analytical and theoretical response in postcolonial writing. After all, if language is power, then language must be the site of contestation in the struggle for decolonisation – a struggle that continues to this day" (Edwards, 2008, p. 29). The devaluation of cultures in social history had language repression at the heart of it, which in turn also made English a dominant world language. "Postcolonial writing in English, then, poses a challenge, for the native writer and for the non-native reader, because both enter into domains that are foreign to their own backgrounds." (Edwards, 2008, p. 29). Frantz Fanon argues that possessing a language makes man possess the world that is expressed and implied by this language (Edwards, 2008). This concept can be challenging to understand, coming from a Western education with one's language as the basis of it. When communicating through the literature written by the oppressed in the oppressor's language, this must be understood by the Western reader to fully grasp the perspectives offered by the writers of postcolonial literature. The imbalance of power within this must be accounted for in the teaching of this literature. Fanon's point is that language has the power to name, creating the common ground where understanding takes place (Edwards, 2008). Thus, this common ground has an inbuilt inequality to it, and an understanding of this is necessary to achieve a good communication between different cultures which again is an apparent demand of the core curriculum.

3.2.1 Othering

In part, this thesis focuses on the concept of "the Other". For the theme of this thesis, the term "the other" is seen distinguishing white Europeans or white people from the West with non-white people from other parts of the world. This way of seeing the other is shared by Kapuscinski (Kapuscinski, 2018, p. 13), and this is a view of the other that aligns with post-colonial theory and has an air of imperialism to it. Moreover, this is a sociological view of the

other and the concept of othering and refers to othering as assigning inferior moral codes to others to create a difference (Pickering, 2001) and in discourse as a critical tool of discrimination against people based on them belonging to marginalised groups and with exclusion as an end game (Boreus, 2006). This exclusionary effect creates a symbolic exile and thus becomes the oppressive force of otherness (Hall, 1997). When one views othering in this context, there is a clear connection between Eurocentrism and Edward Said's concept of Orientalism. The Democracy and Citizenship part of the curriculum addresses this notion of Eurocentrism as it highlights the importance of helping students see that how they view the world is culture dependent. Furthermore, it calls for getting to know the other by learning English regardless of cultural background or where the other resides. Through getting to know the other, the students can combat their and previous generations' stereotypes of the other. However, the thought that getting to know the other will create a different discourse towards the group that the other belongs to is refuted by Riggins. He claims that "their existence does not affect the perceptions and attitudes the Self holds about other members of that group who continue to be marked as different" (Michal Krumer-Nevo, 2012). Although Riggins might have a fair point here, deciding to teach literature from a post-colonial setting with a narrative meant to oppose Western discourse towards the other will be helpful to combat his argument.

Knowledge of the history and culture of the other can help change the attitudes towards a group that Riggins states cannot be altered just through getting to know the other on an individual level. Todorov speaks of three dimensions in the relationship between the self and the other (Todorov, 1984). First, the Self passes value judgements; the other is either good or bad. There is a significant social distance between the Self and the Other; the Other is physically and psychologically distant. Finally, there needs to be more knowledge about the culture and history of the other. Working on value judgements can be done individually, given that Todorov's dimensions originate from 1984. The distance between people can no longer be seen to be so distant, physically through the internet and globalisation, and psychologically using social media. Providing context and teaching the students the history of the Other in question can be used to disturb the notion the students have of the other as a group and make Riggins's somewhat fatalistic statement obsolete.

Said's concept of Orientalism shows how the West, through stereotypical descriptions of the other justified imperialism. Orientalism is a term that describes instances when the "West constructs critical generalizations about the "East" for the sake of reinforcing a superior self-image" (Edwards, 2008, p. 21). Othering is therefore in a post-colonial understanding linked

to hegemony. The concept of the other and the use of the other in discourse stems from an imperialistic mindset. At the end of othering, an “other” loses power. Said argues that “Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”)” (Edwards, 2008, p. 21). When teaching post-colonial literature, the term orientalism and othering can be used to show the students an “us/them” perspective and explain how we view the world as hegemons. This will make it easier for the teacher to teach according to the spirit of the core curriculum.

3.3 Magical Realism

Although deemed by Bhabha to be “the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world” (Bhabha, 2006, pp. 6-7), Magical Realism did not begin as a tool for the post-colonial author to display binary positions in emerging post-colonial societies. The term was first used in 1925 by the German art critic Franz Roh, indicating the end of expressionism. Roh argued that Magical Realism is the tension between innerness and surface, and Alejo Carpentier later picked up some of this argument in the prologue to his novel *The Kingdom of this World*, where he describes his experience of Magical Realism in Haiti in 1943: “I was in a land where thousands of men, anxious for freedom, believed in Mackandal’s lycanthropic powers to the extent that their collective faith produced a miracle on the day of his execution.” (Stephen M. Hart, 2010, p. 2) The execution of Mackandal, the centrepiece of Carpentier’s novel, is a split event. The enslaved people witnessing his execution instead witnessed his escape, while the French colonists witnessed his death. Throughout the novel, Mackandal keeps appearing as different animals described as a matter of fact, thus blurring the lines between the magical and the real. When the magical operates at the real level of human condition, this creates a “black archive hovering within the white, empiricist narrative of a slave rebellion” (Stephen M. Hart, 2010, p. 3). Although the elements of Magical Realism have changed and evolved, Carpentier’s novel became a hallmark of Magical Realism leading up to its canonical incarnation in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1967 (Stephen M. Hart, 2010). Teaching literature with a “black archive” will show the students that the experiences of people in the third world do not align with European discourse and mindset, thus creating a need for multi perspectivity when communicating with the third world other.

One Hundred Years of Solitude gives birth to the notion that Magical Realism stems from the gap in belief systems between the “First World” and the “Third World”. Ghosts, levitation, and people ascending to heaven are magic for inhabitants of the “Western” First World but real and unremarkable for the inhabitants of the Third World. Aligned with this, planes, trains, and false teeth are natural for the First World but magical for the Third World. By using a paradigm and then reversing it, Marquez prevents a reader's perspective of us/them regarding the magical. Thus, Marquez draws the reader into the narrative and the story with their guards down. Then he starts throwing political punches and creates an allegory of political injustice in Latin America. Both Carpentier and Marquez show a deeply fissured world; there exists a deep divide between the world of the powerless and the realm of the powerful (Stephen M. Hart, 2010). Using Magical realism to show a world with a massive gap between the Western First World and the Third World regarding power and the distribution of resources, Marquez then creates a tool for other post-colonial writers worldwide. The use of Magical Realism as a tool to show a world fissured can be an essential tool to teach the curriculum in Norway. For a fruitful recognition of the curriculum’s invitation to see the other, the students need to know that they see the other from a Western first-world perspective and to be able to emphasise with the third worlds perspective. The teaching of Magical realism in post-colonial literature allows the students to code-switch and heighten the level of communication and understanding of the other. For students in Norway to reflect upon the world while “minding the gap” between their world and the world large parts of the population resides in, they must know what the gap consists of. A post-colonial Bildungsroman will bridge this gap.

The binary opposition of the real and the magical makes Magical Realism a literary practice especially suited for writers trying to describe the effects of post-colonialism on a nation. Robert Kroetsch and Linda Kenyon argue the link between Magical Realism and the perception of “living on the margins”, resisting totalising systems, and the imperial centre (Kenyon, 1985). The established generic classification systems, constructed almost exclusively by Western texts, can be viewed as a centralised totalising system. Magical Realism signifies a resistance to being assimilated into this and other theories of literary practice, suggesting something about the literature that employs it goes beyond genre systems. (Slemon). “Read as post-colonial discourse, then, magic realism can be seen to provide a positive and liberating response to the codes of imperial history and its legacy of fragmentation and discontinuity.” (Slemon, p. 21). The fact that magical realism has not differentiated itself enough from fantasy and fiction as a genre has made some critics abandon

the term. In contrast, others keep it as a critical currency in literary theory despite the vacuum in which it lies. This separates Magical Realism from mainstream culture and gives it a uniqueness; the practice bears a stamp of cultural authority (Slemon). The teaching of literature which uses Magical Realism as a literary practice can make students in former imperial nations in the West see the others that reside in the margins. To be able to communicate with others throughout the world and especially from a position of power when speaking to inhabitants of the third world, create a need for seeing the history of a nation in the third world through their eyes. Using magic and myth from post-colonial authors such as Okri might stem from a dissatisfaction with the limits of the real in trying to describe a culture existent in a nation before colonialism. The way the post-colonial authors use myth as a mode of access to a nation's culture from before colonialism and the imposing of Western hegemony is essential for students to grasp when deciding how to communicate with “the other” and how they see “the other’s” perspective. How Magical Realism manoeuvres between the two narrative modes of the real and magical without letting them arrange themselves into any hierarchy highlights for the students the value of different perspectives without imposing a hegemonic position on either. This knowledge will lead the students to communicate with “the other” directly or mentally in a linear mode rather than vertically.

The opposing discursive system in the language of a Magical Realism novel without a hierarchical order can be used to allow a new space for the marginalised people residing in the borders. It can go some way in showing the difficulty of communication in a second language for language learners. In a post-colonial novel, the battle of the narrative modes of the magical and the real prevents interpretive closure in a literary theory system containing established Western representation systems. This way of using language has significant contextual consequences for the culture of post-colonial nations. The act of colonisation has left a binary opposition within the language resulting from imposing the colonisers’ language on the indigenous population. How people see reality is constructed through language and how language allows people to see. Time is needed for a colonizer’s language to express local reality (Slemon). A narrative constructed by magical realism will bring light to this dialectical struggle by showing a formerly colonised relation to the world through its pre-colony culture through myths and the magical.

Slemon argues that “In other words, the magic realist text reflects in its language of narration real conditions of speech and cognition within the actual social relations of a post-colonial culture, a reflection Garcia Marquez thematizes in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a

"speaking mirror." (Slemon, p. 4). Using a narrative consisting of binary oppositions like the magical and the real, the social relation of post-colonial cultures appears. The social relation is presented in three separate ways. Firstly, the site of the text represents the post-colonial culture. Secondly, the history in a magical realist novel is foreshortened to contain the whole process of colonisation and its aftermath. Finally, they present the gaps, absences and silences which have been produced from being colonised. The most important feature here, a magical real narrative style will work to display images of both borders and centres, and it will work to destabilise their fixity of them (Slemon). This makes Magical Realism as a narrative style a good tool for post-colonial writers to suggest a future strategy. The reader must visit and rethink the past. Colonial practices have created otherness, a hegemonic world, and closed discourses. We need new ways to create space for the marginalised to find a voice and enter the hegemonic Western discourse. Furthermore, the difficulty of losing a language and being imposed a new language creates a more complex way of seeing one's identity. Understanding this might lead to an emphatic attitude from learners of a language with some of the same problems in expressing oneself in a foreign language towards people in the third world who have encountered colonialism. This can lead to less of a Eurocentric perspective when seeing the other.

3.4 Intercultural competence

To approach the issue of othering, the dual narrative of the magical and the real, and Western hegemony in the classroom, it is necessary to turn to the concept of intercultural competence. Different definitions of intercultural competence revolve around the same themes. Dypedahl defines it as "The ability to relate constructively to people who have mindsets and communication styles that are different from one's own" (Dypedahl, 2019, p. 102). The word relate is used because it alludes to the fact that intercultural competence is relevant both when you try to interpret texts in the wide definition of the word and when you communicate with people in person (Carlsen et al., 2020). Byram defines intercultural competence in students as "Their ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality" (Michael Byram, 2002, p. 11). Intercultural competence stems from the recognition that knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language are not enough. The innovation of communicative language teaching addressed the need for the ability to use

language in socially and culturally appropriate ways. While embodying the innovation of a communicative approach, the CEFR also emphasises intercultural awareness, intercultural skills, and existential competence and introduces the intercultural dimension into language teaching. The goal behind this is to help the learner of a language to meet other speakers of a language on an equal base, to be aware of their own identity, and at the same time be mindful of the identity to whom they speak. The hope is that the learner shall be able to communicate with people from other cultures, developing an understanding of other people and cultures. Byram calls this “the culture turn” (Michael Byram, 2002). In English, the Democracy and Citizenship part states that “by learning English, the pupils can experience different societies and cultures by communicating with others around the world, regardless of linguistic or cultural background” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b). This can open for new ways to interpret the world, and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b). This corresponds well to both the definitions presented of intercultural competence and highlights the importance of teaching in a manner that makes students develop this competence. Using Post-colonial literature with Magical Realism in teaching intercultural competence will make the students develop an understanding of other cultures and people.

What texts to offer the students are important as intercultural competence is recognised in the curriculum. One of the core elements of the curriculum is “Working with texts in English”.

Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils’ knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples. By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus, the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns. They shall build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others’ identities in a multilingual and multicultural context.

(Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b)

This places much responsibility on the teacher to find the correct texts for the students to work with that can develop the intercultural competence the curriculum seeks for the students. The wording in this passage is strong and leaves no room to manoeuvre. “The pupils *shall*

acquire”, “the pupils *will* develop”, and “they *shall* build a foundation”. The demand is apparent, but it is up to the teacher to find suitable material for the students to gain this competence. This thesis will show that the teacher can fulfil the curriculum's demands by choosing the post-colonial Bildungsroman over the traditional European Bildungsroman.

Cross-curricular teaching of intercultural competence and the integration of intercultural competence in the different competence aims to suggest that it should not be taught explicitly as a subject but as an overarching subject integrated with other aims. Carlsen states, “The development of intercultural competence should not come as an additional element on top of all the other aspects of the curriculum that should be worked with in the English classroom. Rather, the goal should be to integrate intercultural issues into other learning aims” (Carlsen et al., 2020, p. 84). This view of intercultural competence is similar to how the curriculum wants us to view the core curriculum and the interdisciplinary topics. This again places a demand on the teacher seen as they need to be competent in the field of intercultural competence and on how to integrate the topic into language education, working on it alongside the values of the core curriculum and Democracy and Citizenship. Thus, the curriculum must be seen with all parts working together towards the overarching aims.

Few tools exist for assessing intercultural competence, and teachers must be aware not to judge each student’s attitudes. Carlsen argues, “The assessment of intercultural competence is a field that needs more research and further development” (Carlsen et al., 2020, p. 95). Two of the tools available contain a form of self-assessment. The European language portfolio has a component called the Autobiography of intercultural encounters, where students can record their intercultural observations. The INCA project, Intercultural competence assessment, is a framework used when working with portfolios, interviews, role play or cultural observations (Carlsen et al., 2020). Reflecting on literature may be one form of assessment that can be made. Discussing the content of a book or text, reflecting upon the perspectives offered by the author and the context it appears in, can be an excellent way to establish and observe a dialogue among the students and assess whether they have reached intercultural competence based on how they argue. Evaluating whether the students have achieved intercultural competence is close-knit to assessing the attitudes of the students. Students differ in their empathy levels, and the empathy training starts in each student’s home. Thus, the ability to ensure a shared understanding of different social identities will differ for each student. The students' different levels of empathy and understanding may be recognised and something one may work on improving, but the educator should not judge them morally.

3.5 Final thoughts

Combining these theories when analysing *The Famished Road* will ensure that we reach the targets set in the curriculum and that we teach the subject of Democracy and Citizenship in its intended meaning. Post-colonial literature inhabits the discussion of the experiences of the colonised during and after colonialism. The expansion of the term to also include experiences of diasporas and minorities in the West make post-colonial literature usable for discussions of power and equality (Quayson, 2020). The concept of othering as assigning inferior moral codes to others (Pickering, 2001) is the basis of the European discourse against the third world that, although in a more minor part than before, still exists. This is referred to in this thesis as Eurocentrism. Magical Realism resists the imperial centre and Western classification systems and allows for descriptions of the experience of colonialism and the loss of culture (Kenyon, 1985). It is a narrative that allows for European discourse to be opposed and a correct representation of the post-colonial subject to be made. Intercultural competence, as defined by Dypedahl as “The ability to relate constructively to people who have mindsets and communication styles that are different from one’s own” (Dypedahl, 2019, p. 102) will allow room for the perspective of the powerless in the novel and ensure that the students communicate with the post-colonial subject sensitively with equality and representation as a goal. Teaching the novel with these theories as a foundation will ensure that new ways are opened for the students to interpret the world. It will help prevent biases and leave the students engaged and curious about their encounters with others in the third world (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b).

4. The Famished Road

4.1 The novel

The Famished Road by the Nigerian author Ben Okri follows the protagonist Azoro, an Abiku spirit child. Azoro decides to reside in the realm of the living rather than return to the spirit world, thus not honouring the pact of the spirit children of always returning. This leaves him constantly torn between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The story is set in post-colonial Nigeria, which experiences a time of political unrest, spiritual crisis, and poverty. Azoro lives with his mother and father in a compound comprising the area's poor people. Life is a constant struggle, and when his parents choose to vote for the party of the poor, it becomes even more challenging. The consequences of Azoro's navigation of the two worlds make it even harder for his family, often leaving them in debt when caring for their child, who often ends up lost and sick. Through Azoro, the reader can observe the difficulties when two political parties fight for control of a developing nation and the aftereffects it suffers from colonialism. The novel's exploration of themes like spirituality, identity, growing up, belonging, political change and the struggle for social mobility renders this novel well suited for use in the EFL classroom in VG1 general studies. With Nigeria being in a time of change, the way *The Famished Road* connects the elements of Magical Realism, societal commentary, and mythology creates a portrait of post-colonial Nigeria that will catch the attention of Norwegian EFL learners.

4.2 The novel and the curriculum

When one of the characters in *The Famished Road* announces, "We must look at the world with new eyes", he echoes the spirit in the LK20 and the demands it places upon students and teachers alike. The Democracy and Citizenship part of the curriculum demands of the students an understanding of the fact that the way they view the world is culture dependent. When they learn English, they will be better able to communicate with others by achieving an understanding of their cultural background (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b). When the objective clause states that education in Norway shall give the students historical and cultural insight and open the door to the world (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017), we need to include literature in education which allows for this to happen. The spirit who tells Azoro, "When you see everything from every imaginable point of view you might begin to understand" (Okri,

2021, p. 368), creates a direct link with the novel and the goals and spirit of the curriculum. We need to be able to see different perspectives to understand people of different backgrounds and create room for communication.

The novel invites the reader to open their minds and senses to look for what is not directly visible or, to quote Ben Okri, “Not the things we see, but the things in between, the myths in between, the tone in between” (Guignery, 2021, p. 8). This, along with central themes of post-colonialism and identity, poverty and inequality, and politics and corruption, make the novel suitable when working with texts in English and teaching Democracy and Citizenship to students in year 11 in Norwegian schools. Guignery states further:

The reader is therefore encouraged to let go of previous assumptions, entrenched reading habits and Western binary conceptions which separate the living and the dead, the real and the supernatural. Instead, *The Famished Road* privileges circulation, the free flow of ideas, sensations, stories and worlds without boundaries. This implies that, in accordance with West African modes of being and perceiving, the spirits and the dead are part of the everyday environment of the living, making it possible for them all to eat at the same table and for a character of the compound to fight with the ghost of a deceased boxer (Guignery, 2021, p. 8).

Being able to read and reflect upon the novel in the way Guignery shows in the previous paragraph will enable the students to meet the demands of the core element of “Working with texts in English” and develop intercultural competence, understanding others’ ways of thinking, and building a foundation for seeing the other in a multicultural context (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b).

The method in this chapter consists of a close reading of *The Famished Road* and a study of secondary literature discussing the novel. Magical Realism, othering, and Western hegemony are identified as themes that Okri covers, creating a wide range of literary examples to use when teaching this novel in the VG1 EFL classroom. These themes are important. Teaching them makes the teacher and students reach the targets set for them in the curriculum.

Furthermore, the argument this thesis makes of the need to move away from the traditional European Bildungsroman towards the post-colonial Bildungsroman with the dual Narrative of the magical and the real is given validity through a discussion of these themes.

After discussing the novel's didactic benefits, three chapters take a closer look at *The Famished Road* through the theme of the narrative of Magical Realism, othering and Western

hegemony and influence. These chapters will include a literary analysis of the different themes and a didactic analysis of the novel.

4.3 Didactic benefits of *The Famished Road*

Literary texts can improve students' critical thinking and how they relate to the world. Learners can better understand others through literature (Lyngstad, 2020), and Carlsen argues that the students, through texts, can "read the world in a critical way (Carlsen, 2018, p. 121). The double consciousness of the post-colonial subject represented in Okri's protagonist will resonate with teenagers negotiating their identity. Teenagers navigate their existence in different contexts and situations with an unstable and shifting identity, whether to get their parents' approval, find community among friends, or reach the targets in school set for them by the curriculum. This ambivalence in the teenager will lead to recognising the same challenges when presented in the literature. In *The Famished Road*, the protagonist's liminality of existing in both the world of the living and the world of the dead is a metaphorical representation of the double consciousness of the post-colonial subject. The Magical Realism used by Okri creates a style in the novel that allows an ambivalence to be reproduced (Va'zquez). The ambivalence of Azoro can be recognised by teenagers who might be stressed by imagining what possibilities are available. This supports the suggestion made by Appleyard that imagined lives in fiction can support this process (Appleyard, 1991). The ambivalence in Azoro when he claims that he is "Disliked in the spirit world and branded by the Living, our unwillingness to stay affected all kinds of balances" (Okri, 2021, p. 9) can be recognised in the teenagers as the ambivalence they feel when trying to rise to the challenge of their parents while still being cool with their friends and succeeding on other arenas.

When choosing a post-colonial novel with a dual narrative, you avoid the danger of a single story and provide a setting unfamiliar to the students. Sandhaug argues that literature viewed as a cultural expression can "provide some of the cultural frames of reference that *Kunnskapsløftet* holds as essential to understanding the way people live and how they communicate" (Sandhaug, 2017, p. 386). When educators choose literature for students that is similar in setting to the setting they occupy, it becomes harder to understand how other people live and communicate. Furthermore, it complicates fulfilling the mission of the objective clause, which states that education shall give the students historical and cultural insight in addition to an insight into the international cultural tradition and cultural diversity

(Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a). When Okri combines myth and realism in *The Famished Road*, he avoids what Adichie describes as the danger of a single story. “Present a people with only one thing over and over again, and that is what they become” (Adichie, 2009). The protagonist can describe the socio-political problems for the reader while staying in the real world but also represent the beauty of a nation and the culture of the indigenous people when situated in the world of fantasy. This will work against a stereotypical view of the other, while at the same time, it will facilitate a correct understanding of the other in the students. Furthermore, it gives them the tools necessary for communicating with them in a way that can further democracy. Okri achieves what Reichl refers to as a puncturing of stereotypes by describing the socio-political problems through the individual Azoro rather than a collective description. The dual narrative gives a picture of the culture in Nigeria in a more nuanced and fuller way (Reichl, 2013). This again will remove the students from an imperialistic discourse of the stereotypical non-western other, making understanding the post-colonial identity more accessible.

The struggle for power between the party of the rich and the party of the poor in a newly decolonised nation gives good examples to learn what democracy means in practice. It will enhance the students’ belief in democratic values and show how corruption can destroy democracy from within, complying with the core curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 9). Furthermore, the political oppression endured by people experiencing poverty can be used to develop an awareness of minority and majority perspectives and facilitate space for dialogue, disagreement and collaboration (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 10). Using Literature to accomplish this will, at the same time, put the teacher in a position to reach competence aims such as “read, discuss and reflect on the content and language features and literary devices in various types of texts, including self-chosen texts”, “read, analyse and interpret fictional texts in English” and “explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b).

Using a post-colonial novel in education will ensure the students value the protection of the minority voice. Okri chooses in *The Famished Road* to write a Bildungsroman following a protagonist’s identity development. This will lead to the students being able to interact with the non-western other that are different from themselves, happening simultaneously as they develop their own identity. Furthermore, it will make the students more likely to achieve the goal of “The ability to understand what others think, feel and experience is the basis for

empathy and friendship between pupils.” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 11). Choosing literature from a post-colonial context will resonate with the outward view expressed in the core curriculum, and the encounter with the non-western other is made possible through literary interaction. The theme of poverty and inequality in the novel can be used to give the students an insight into how sensitive the Western form of democracy is when inequality in a population grows too big. In the novel, the difficulties in forming a democracy when the population has a great divide between the rich and the poor are described. This results in the people in power attacking and asserting hegemony over the less powerful. This will give the students a clear connection between fundamental human rights and democracy. Furthermore, the teacher can easily translate this to a European context and use it interdisciplinary when studying society and how it functions in Norway. In addition, teaching *The Famished Road* will create an understanding of the dilemmas that arise between the rights of the minority and the preponderance of the majority mentioned in the core curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 16). Finally, teaching a post-colonial novel like the one Ben Okri has written will lead the minority of a multicultural classroom to feel that the literature chosen in Norwegian schools also includes them. In a classroom, this can lead to a greater understanding of the diverse identities that exist among the students.

5. The narrative

5.1 Introduction

Like most of Ben Okri's writing, *The Famished Road* is a Bildungsroman. Despite the Bildungsroman being imperialistic in the genre, it attracts post-colonial writers like Okri to use it. From his first novel *Flowers and Shadows*, to the trilogy of *The Famished Road*, *Songs of Enchantment*, and *Infinite Riches*, we follow the protagonist Azoro. Although different in setting and technique, they describe a passage of moving from innocence to experience in the protagonist (Va'zquez). The Bildungsroman describe in its traditional form the development of a protagonist moving from "unformed childhood towards the emergence of a "total personality" in adulthood" (Peterson, 1986, p. 21). This linear development from child to adult that the traditional Western Bildungsroman possess and the idea of this being the one correct path in a coming to age has created an image that made it possible for predominantly European nations to take other parts of the world as their colonies. Contrasting this, the post-colonial Bildungsroman with a narrative of Magical Realism oppose this structure and the imperialistic backdrop. This makes an analysis of the dual narrative of Magical Realism and what classroom activities the novel can activate interesting.

Wallace argues the imperialistic feature of the European Bildungsroman through the idea of "the child".

An idea of "the child" is a necessary precondition of imperialism – that is, that the West had to invent for itself 'the child' before it could think a specifically colonialist imperialism . . . it was an idea of 'the child' – of the not yet fully evolved or consequential subject – which made thinkable a colonial apparatus dedicated to, in [Thomas] Macaulay's words, "the improvement of colonized peoples." (Wallace, 1994, p. 176)

Following this imperial notion of the Bildungsroman from Wallace, the choice of the post-colonial authors to situate their novels in a traditionally dominant Western genre becomes interesting to examine. Post-colonial nations are "new-born" compared to Western countries. The post-colonial nations are moving from innocence to experience, just as the protagonist in a Bildungsroman. Furthermore, some of the authors are writing from a position of exile. In

Okri's case, he resides in the former colonist of his home country Nigeria, namely England. Using a child as a protagonist might account for a feeling of nostalgia in the author. However, no matter the reasons for choosing this genre, it appeals to the post-colonial agenda, emphasising questions of power, pedagogy and identity (Va'zquez). Most important for Norwegian educators is that in choosing to write a Bildungsroman, the post-colonial author render an alternative to the traditional European Bildungsroman to be used in education for students that find themselves in the dominant Western discourse. When Okri chooses a spirit child as the protagonist in *The Famished Road* and allows his protagonist a sensitivity that sets him apart from other protagonists in European Bildungsromane, he creates a valuable novel to use when teaching Magical Realism, othering, and hegemony.

The dialectic process of a traditional European Bildungsroman leaves little room for the experience of colonised people. Va'zquez states, "The traditional Bildungsroman is based on a dialectical process: the protagonist exhibits a profound disagreement with his family or society. At the end of the novel this opposition is resolved and some kind of compromise is established" (Va'zquez, p. 87). However, the compromise reached for the usually white protagonist and the return to the centre will often not respond to the need of people fighting for agency, whether it be racial or sexual minorities, women, or formerly colonised people (Va'zquez). In *The Famished Road*, Azoro is forced to exist between the once-dominant colonial culture and the native culture. The reason for this coexistence is the obliteration of language and culture that happened during colonialism. The difference between the colonial and native culture is that the first was imposed on them, and the latter is a culture trying to find its values. When the curriculum calls for the students to be able to communicate with an "other" from the third world, the literature educators employ in the classroom needs to allow the students to achieve this. The post-colonial Bildungsroman will be the answer to this issue.

5.2 Literary analysis of the narrative

The ambivalence in a post-colonial identity is reproduced in the dual narrative of the magical and the real that Okri chooses for *The Famished Road*. The protagonist wandering between the world of the living and the world of the spirits reproduces the existence between two cultures, obscuring the balance that would typically exist in a European Bildungsroman. "Disliked in the spirit world and branded amongst the Living, our unwillingness to stay affected all kinds of balances" (Okri, 2021, p. 9). The need for Okri, like Gabriel Garcia

Marquez, to throw political punches is resolved in the dual narrative. On the one hand, he wants to describe the beauty of the African continent and uses the spirit world of the Abiku protagonist to do so. On the other hand, he also intends to describe the struggles of the African continent, and the real world allows him the opportunity. However, when Okri combines the magical and the real, the political punches that Stephen M Hart mentions about Marquez's work (Stephen M. Hart, 2010) hits the hardest:

“While I watched his silhouette, the moon fell from the sky into the empty spaces of darkness. I went looking for the moon. I followed great wide paths till I came to a shack near a well. The photographer was hiding behind the well, taking pictures of the stars and constellations. His camera flashed and thugs in dark glasses appeared from the flash and proceeded to beat him up. The camera fell from the photographer's hands. I heard people screaming inside the camera. The thugs jumped on the camera and stamped on it, trying to crush and destroy it. And the people who were inside the camera, who were waiting to become real, and who were trying to get out, began wailing and wouldn't stop.” (Okri, 2021)

Okri starts with a poetic style when describing Azoro walking looking for the moon. The down-to-earth language in explaining that he sees the photographer being attacked by thugs after the blitz of his camera goes off then transforms into a fantastic vision of people screaming inside the camera only to be stamped on by the thugs later. When reading this, the reader must think hard to separate the narratives in the paragraph, which might be Okri's point. The reader will react to the people inside the camera's experience as if they were real. And although they are not real, their struggles are. When the reader sees the people inside the camera, that is when they come out of the camera and become real.

Using Magical Realism, Okri escapes reducing the complexity of his Nigeria to only the social and political problems that tear his country apart. He creates a “black archive hovering within the white” (Slemon). But the duality remains, things are not black or white or good or bad. This will give the novel's reader insight and an understanding of a discourse opposing the Western discourse. The understanding that a post-colonial novel like the one Okri has written could not have been achieved in a European Bildungsroman without a dual narrative, and the spirit of the curriculum would be lost. The magical/fantastical excluded in the European version of the genre is used as a token of otherness in Okri's novel, creating room for discussions on how we view the other.

The dual narrative of the magical and the real, and the education of the protagonist through both the myth and the real allows for Okri not only to reject the notion of Edward Said's definition of Orientalism to the reader but also imperialism through the adaptation of the genre of the Bildungsroman to a post-colonial context. In a European Bildungsroman, the child usually grows up through a rejection of fantasy, implying a Lacanian view of the self where identity is being constructed by removing states of being that are unwanted in society (Va'zquez). Said demonstrates this view to have paved the way for a realist West to remove agency and the right to make their own decisions by a fantastical orient (Said, 1978). The stereotypical notion of the oriental subject, asserting inferior qualities to people who also reside in myth and fantasy performed by Western discourse, is rejected in this quote from *The Famished Road*.

“I saw a spirit today,” I said.

They both sat up.

“What spirit?”

“With three heads.”

“Where?”

“In Madame Koto's bar.”

“When?”

“When we were fighting”

Dad looked at me dubiously. Then slowly he sat back.

... “If a spirit calls you,” Mum said, “don't go, you hear? Think of us.

Think of your father who suffers every day to feed us. And think of me who carried you in my womb for more than nine months and who walks all the streets because of you.”

“Yes, think of us,” Dad added. (Okri, 2021, p. 342)

The mother and father of Azoro never question that he has seen a spirit. This opposes the Lacanian view of growing up being a process of removing different states of being. Azoro's parents champion his spirituality, and in choosing to write this, Okri opposes Orientalism.

The rejection of imperialism when choosing a dual narrative as opposed to a realistic novel is argued by Firdous Azim when he deems a realistic novel to be part of an “imperialist project, based on the forceful eradication and obliteration of the Other” (Azim, 1993, p. 37). The rejection of otherness in realistic novels creates a need to introduce other literature to the students. The rejection of orientalism and imperialism performed by Okri and other writers of post-colonial Bildungsromane creates a new discourse that makes it possible for Western people to see the non-western other. Educators choosing a post-colonial Bildungsroman will give room for this discourse, making it easier for the students to see the non-western other.

When using a dual narrative with magical realism as an effect, Okri replaces the notion of “the journey” in a European Bildungsroman, with his protagonist making several journeys into the spirit world instead. “In the Bildungsroman, the protagonist usually moves from the country to the city or goes out into the world for some time. This journey guarantees the hero’s access to maturity and the development of an autonomous personality” (Va’zquez, p. 8). This way of reaching maturity in literary discourse allows arguing the benefits of colonialism, as a European coming of age through exploration of other continents opens the way for imperialism. When Okri replaces this journey motif with several journeys into the spirit world, he “preserves the notion of the journey as a positive experience for the development of the hero” (Va’zquez, p. 8). Still, he also rejects a discourse that has given power to the centre over the periphery.

The journey in a traditional Bildungsroman is often egotistical, with the protagonist’s evolution the only object. However, Okri chooses his protagonist to be a spirit child, which allows him to move about the world with more sensitivity and empathy towards other people.

“But this time, somewhere in the interspace between the spirit world and the Living, I chose to stay. This meant breaking my pact and outwitting my companions. It wasn’t because of the sacrifices, the burnt offerings of oils and yams and palm-nuts, or the blandishments, the short-lived promises of special treatments, or even because of the griefs I had caused.

...But I sometimes think it was a face that made me want to stay. I wanted to make happy the bruised face of the woman who would become my mother” (Okri, 2021, pp. 9-10).

From the novel's beginning, the protagonist sees the other and chooses, as an infant, to act with empathy. By deciding to stay in the world, Azoro not only makes a choice before coming

to age but also acts compassionately towards his mother. Azoro chooses to break a pact when he knows it will have consequences for him, and he knows he has let go of something beautiful in the spirit world. When Okri introduces empathy so early in the process of coming to age, he makes yet another breach of the structure of the traditional Bildungsroman. This makes the post-colonial subject more human and aligns them with the current values of the Western world. This rejection of imperial egotistical behaviour in the novel can create a starting point to discuss the Western discourse we find ourselves in, make the students reflect from a different perspective than their own and make it easier for them to see the other. Furthermore, it goes a long way to affirm that a change of literature used in education is needed to fulfil the requirements of the LK20.

When the post-colonial author utilises the dual narrative of Magical Realism, they breach the structure of the traditional Bildungsroman. This goes against a Western view of progress as universal, represented in the Bildungsroman as a linear structure. The protagonist in a European Bildungsroman might wander off a straight line, but they will always come back in the fold and reach a compromise. When a post-colonial Bildungsroman works circularly in structure, it allows for more agency for nations in the third world. The breach of structure allows for an alternative path to be presented for the post-colonial subject; they can choose their journey independent of the one from the West. A traditional Bildungsroman has a linear development of the protagonist. The protagonist moves in a “direct line from error to truth, from confusion to clarity, from uncertainty to certainty” (Tennyson, 1968, p. 137). This linear movement contributes to a historicist philosophy followed in the West that views universal progress as the ruling principle of historical change (Swales, 1978, p. 16). When Okri calls his novel “*The Famished Road*”, he alludes to the fact that the progress made from the symbol of the linear road in Western literature as universal progress comes at the expense of others.

I travelled on the wind of amnesia till we came to a mighty green road.

“This road has no end,” said the three headed spirit.

“Where does it lead?” I asked.

“Everywhere. It leads to the world of human beings and to the world of spirits. It leads to heaven and hell. It leads to the world we don’t even know about.”

...” Are we travelling this road to the end?”

“Yes,” the spirit said, walking as if distance meant nothing.

“But you said the road has no end.”

“That’s true,” said the spirit.

“How can it be true?”

“From a certain point of view the universe seems to be composed of paradoxes. But everything resolves. That is the function of contradiction.”

“I don’t understand.”

“When you can see everything from every imaginable point of view you might begin to understand.” (Okri, 2021, pp. 367-368)

The description that Okri presents to us of travelling a road in the spirit world is far different from the linear road in Western discourse, and it offers a view of how understanding is created that is interesting in a debate around the discourse the student in the West finds themselves in. In a linear European Bildungsroman, understanding is made with the compromise reached at the end of the novel. The protagonist reaches an end to the road and an agreement with the Western point of view. The road Azoro travels with the three headed spirit leads to both the spirit world and the world of the living; it leads to separate points of view. According to the three headed spirit, understanding is created when seeing everything from every point of view. The post-colonial subject is not seen on the linear road, and the progress of a linear road will come at the expense of others.

The way Okri describes the construction of a road in the spirit world also goes against the thought of the universality of the Western idea of progress.

“The road is their soul, the soul of their history. That is why, when they have built a long section of it, or forgotten the words of their prophet and begun to think they have completed it, land quakes happen, lightning strikes, invisible volcanos erupt, rivers descend on them, hurricanes tare up their earth, the road goes mad and twists and destroys itself, or the people become distorted in spirit and start to turn the road into other things, or the workers go insane, the people start wars, revolts cripple everything and a thousand things distract them and wreck what they have built and a new generation comes along and begins again from the wreckage.” (Okri, 2021, pp. 370-371)

As the three-headed spirit said to Azoro in the previous quote, the road described is never-ending. By describing the Nigerian road this way, Okri tries to make the readers see that not all roads work like the Western Road of progress. This challenges the post-colonial subject faces in building their roads differ from what we face. This challenges our point of view and understanding this is vital when seeing the non-western other and communicating with them.

The narrative of Magical Realism provides the post-colonial author with an opportunity to describe the ambivalence in the identity of post-colonial subjects. When the author combines the real with the magical, it creates an opportunity for being political and represents a clear voice against the Western world. At the same time, the dual narrative allows for a presentation of the previous culture of the colony along with the harsh reality. This can go some way in ensuring an empathetic reader towards the challenges of post-colonial subjects. Furthermore, Magical Realism allows for spirituality in the protagonist, thus countering a traditional European notion of the process of growing up as a removal of spiritual thinking. Utilising the narrative in the former described ways will make the Western reader see the post-colonial other. This will ensure communication between the hegemonic West and the third world on a more level term and align with the spirit of the curriculum.

5.3 Teaching the narrative

Alongside an understanding of Magical Realism as an opportunity for a writer to oppose the dominant Western discourse, creating “a black archive hovering within the white” (Stephen M. Hart, 2010), the core curriculum's elaborations on the values of the objective clause make the dual narrative of the magical and the real well suited for reaching the targets set in the Core Curriculum. The objective clause's call for education to open the doors to the world, being based on equality and giving the students an insight into historical matters and cultural contexts (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017), will be achieved when using Magical Realism in education. Moreover, the call for education to give an insight into the cultural tradition and diversity is allowed by using the magical realm to present a pre-colonial culture eradicated by the colonial powers. In addition, using the realm of the real to explain the challenges facing post-colonial democracies will create discussion and a context for the students to learn what democracy means in practice. It will give the students a belief in democracy as a form of government, and Okri's portrayal of a weak and corrupt beginning democracy in *The Famished Road* will show the need for fundamental democratic values to the students aligned

with the core curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 9). The resisting of the imperial centre performed by post-colonial authors using Magical Realism (Kenyon, 1985) will create an awareness in the students of minority and majority perspectives, which in turn will make a good opportunity for solid discussion and dialogue on issues concerning the minority voice which is given importance in the curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 10).

When using a post-colonial novel with the dual narrative of the magical and the real in schools, the students will most likely need some scaffolding before reading the novel concerning the narrative of Magical Realism. A post-colonial context must be given, and the narrative as an opposition to the dominant discourse and hegemony, resisting the imperial centre and the opportunity of the narrative to combat stereotypical descriptions of the other must be emphasised to the students. Furthermore, the option the narrative gives in the magical realm to present a culture undermined and removed from the colonial powers must be made clear to the students before reading. Regarding the teaching of *The Famished Road*, a presentation of the Nigerian context of the effects of colonialism on the nation and the current political climate will lead to the students getting more out of the novel when they start reading. If there is enough time, including secondary literature in the discourse present in England when discussing whether taking other countries as colonies is a good idea will lead to an awareness in the students that will further the understanding they achieve while working with the novel.

When working with the novel, using some while-reading strategies can be helpful when teaching Magical Realism. For example, the quotes project is a strategy that involves the students putting post-it notes when they find passages in the novel that they feel are important. Using this strategy will leave the students with several quotations that they can use to discuss in class (Strobbe, 2013, p. 49). Another similar strategy for the students to use while reading the novel is keeping reading files and logs (Sandhaug, 2017). Creating a character file of Azoro and dividing it between what is real and what is magic will develop an awareness in the reader of what the author is trying to achieve with the dual narrative. "In a reading log, pupils can sum up the action so far, note down anything that stands out as interesting, make predictions about and express their responses to the text" (Sandhaug, 2017, p. 402). Discussing and working with the specific narrative will create an awareness in the reading process that can help the students when they discuss the novel later.

For the classroom activities, the teacher can either focus on what they feel are essential passages of the magical and the real or make the students use their own examples they

collected while reading. Using the in-classroom activities with the students' choices might bring some enthusiasm and make the students take ownership of the work. Still, the students' competence level might indicate that the teacher must choose more of the material used. The following examples of how the book can be utilised in the classroom combine these approaches.

One way of working with *The Famished Road* is to have the students continue a paragraph of the ending. The ending consists of 11 pages where Azoro and his mother await his father waking from his three-day sleep. The end consists of a mixture of the magical and the real, and the students can be instructed to write a paragraph of either. First, the father redreams the world as he sleeps. This is narrated through Azoro, which leaves him omniscient.

Dad was redreaming the world as he slept. He saw the scheme of things and he didn't like it. He saw the world in which black people always suffered and didn't like it. He saw a world in which human beings suffered so needlessly from Antipodes to Equator, and he didn't like it either. He saw our people drowning in poverty, in famine, drought, in divisiveness and the blood of war. He saw our people preyed upon by other powers, manipulated by the western world, our history and achievement rigged out of existence (Okri, 2021, p. 548).

The quote continues with the father seeing all the problems in Nigeria and can be used in the full length, although not included here. Azoro, at one point, joins the father in his dream only as an observer. The students can be asked to create a dialogue of hope for the future where Azoro plays the part of a child with high hope for the future and joins in a conversation with his father in the dream where he argues for a better world and how this might occur. Using the same paragraph, the students can discuss why the author chooses to comment on all the problems of how the world sees Africa and the internal issues in Nigeria in a dream of the father and not in a real-world setting. This contradicts the notion of the magical realm being used to describe a culture lost for colonised people or to combat stereotypes.

The last three paragraphs of the ending can be used to continue writing from where the book ends. Rewriting or continuing writing will activate the students' skills of interpreting, writing, reading and reflecting on what might continue to happen (Sandhaug, 2017, p. 403).

...It was so silent and peaceful that after some time I was a bit worried. I was not used to such a gift of quietude. The deeper it was, the deeper was my fear. I kept expecting eerie songs to break into my mind. I kept expecting to see spirit-lovers entwined in

blades of sunlight. Nothing happened. The sweetness dissolved my fears. I was not afraid of Time.

And then it was another morning. The room was empty. Mum and dad were gone. And the good breeze hadn't lasted forever.

A dream can be the highest point of a life (Okri, 2021, p. 558).

Azoro's night can be interpreted as without a dream and a visit from the spirits. The students can be asked to rewrite the ending with a paragraph or a short story of a dream that Azoro did have that night, they can be asked to rewrite the end with a short story of an encounter with the spirit world, or they can be asked to continue the novel writing about what happened the morning when he wakes up alone. The final line in the novel can be used to request the students to write a dream that would be the highest point of their life. This line can also be used as a reflection task. Questions to be asked before this task can be "Will the fact that Azoro grows up in a young nation with an unstable democracy and poverty give the last line a different meaning than in the context you live your life?", "Is realising one's dreams easier for people in the first world than in the third world?" and "View the last line in the novel in connection to the previous paragraph where Azoro describes quietude. What do you think Azoro means when stating that "a dream can be the highest point of a life" when just describing a night where his mind finally gets a rest?".

Passages from the novel where Okri uses both the magical and the real can be used to further the student's knowledge of literary techniques and symbolism and why Okri uses the language and the narrative in the way he does. For example, a comparison of the two following passages will create a foundation for discussing the use of the narrative and language use:

I could still hear the voices in passionate gardens, could still hear their sunflower cantatas. I saw delicious girls dancing tarantellas in fields of comets. The woman's head turned to give me a last smile before she vanished altogether in a Milky Way of music. The air became void of riddles. I heard the last notes of a flute adagio floating across a lake of green mirrors. Mum took me home over the mud and wreckage of the street, over the mild deluge, under an arpeggio of watery stars. She was silent. I smelt the gutters and the rude plaster of the corroded houses. Then all I was left with was a world drowning in poverty, a mother-of-pearl-moon, and the long darkness before dawn (Okri, 2021, p. 345).

As I sat in the car, overcome with fear, I saw the dead rising. I saw them rising at the same moment that the second wave of havoc started with the chants of the antagonists. The dead joined the innocents, mingled with the thugs, merged with the night, and plundered the antagonists with the cries of the wounded . . . The dead shook off their rust of living and seized up steel. Their lips quivered with the defiance of the innocents, with the manipulations of politicians and their interchangeable dreams, and with the insanity of thugs who don't even know for which parties they commit their atrocities (Okri, 2021, pp. 206-207).

Va'zquez argues that "The narrative technique that Okri deploys in *The Famished Road* could be described as a synthesis of the two main aesthetic tendencies in postcolonial African literature: the down-to-earth style practised by Chinua Achebe and the mythic writing developed by Amos Tutuola and D. O. Fagunwa" (Va'zquez, p. 4). The first passage might suggest that the switch in perspective from the poetic language and spiritual gallery to the realistic description of the place where Azoro lives with his family means Okri is using fantasy for the sake of escapism. However, this is contradicted in the second passage, where the inclusion of the spirits to fight for people experiencing poverty in a real setting indicates that the discussion of socio-political issues is not exclusive to the realm of the real (Va'zquez). These passages skew the notion of Magical Realism to exclusively render the discussion of political problems in the real and "the black archive" in the realm of fantasy. This leaves a question to be the foundation for a conversation with the students about why Okri constantly critiques political corruption with fantastic resources in *The Famished Road*. Could it be that Okri feels that some of the reasons for the political problems lie in the culture that existed in the nation before imperialism, or is it a way for Okri to not relieve the indigenous population of the responsibility of the problems in a post-colonial setting?

When working with *The Famished Road*, which relates to colonialism and post-colonial identity, the pupils can be asked to research the background of colonialism and the trouble with forming an identity when you are situated in two worlds. This can also be used for cross-curricular work in another subject, like social studies (Sandhaug, 2017). When Magical Realism creates room for a precursive culture to the colonial one, the students can be asked to investigate what Nigeria was like before being included in the British Empire. The students can also take a closer look at the decisions that led to colonialism and be asked to investigate the discourse that created room for the ideas that colonialism is built on. Using texts from Edward Said on Orientalism will be helpful as background for this task.

5.4 Final thoughts

An understanding of the fact that what we in the West see as universal truths do not include all people in the world is vital in how we communicate with non-western others. Using a post-colonial Bildungsroman in education with a dual narrative of the magical and the real opens for a change in perspectives among the students and a possible change in the discourse used when talking about others in the third world. The open end, or an end in which the protagonist is not yet fully developed and reaching “certainty”, in *The Famished Road* contrast the end in a traditional Bildungsroman, which usually ends with the protagonist re-entering their previous environment as an individual grown into the discourse they once left. One reason for an open ending might be for the author to make a claim towards rejecting the notion of a finished self. Used in education, this will make the students humbler. An open ending points to the fact that we as individuals are never completed in our development, and we can always strive to change and be better and more open to alien discourses. “When you can see everything from every imaginable point of view you might begin to understand.” (Okri, 2021, p. 368). In current discussions of identity, gender othering, the West vs the rest and rights of the trans community, to name a few, using novels with an open ending can lead to a more accessible conversation on the challenges that face the young in a society like ours.

The dual narrative of *The Famished Road* will speak to the students in the upper secondary who belong to a diverse classroom not only in the socio-cultural sense but also in a wide range of different identities and backgrounds. The modern classroom will usually have several people belonging to a minority or coming from a different cultural background than the majority. Choosing literature that is inclusive to this group is essential when ensuring they feel represented. Post-colonial literature can create rooms for reflection and discussion where the voice of the minority will be important in education, and they will be seen. Furthermore, teenagers generally live in a world where they sometimes feel powerless while standing on the brink of independence. Teaching the two realms of Magical Realism will be recognisable to students who render their dreams of the future in daydreaming while existing in a challenging reality, using fantasy for escapism.

6. Othering

6.1 Introduction

Teaching othering through literature can create the understanding in the students which the curriculum calls for in the Democracy and Citizenship part, that the way they view the world is culture dependent. Learning of the process of othering as defining and identifying oneself as different from others can alter the student's perspective of the other and lead to a reflection of their position in the world. Furthermore, they can see the results from othering, such as exclusion, discrimination, or marginalisation, through literature. This will meet Lenz's interpretation that developing multi perspective and prevention of prejudice alongside democracy as a protection of the minority are the critical aspects of understanding that the way we view the world is culture-dependent (Lenz, 2020, p. 66). Working with othering through reading *The Famished Road* and working with it in the classroom will give good examples of the exclusion and discrimination of a minority through othering. The perspective of the students is constantly challenged by Okri, leading them to see the other better. The discussions when working with othering will increase the students' understanding of how they see the world.

6.2 Literary analysis of othering

Azoro's family are often treated as outsiders on the compound because of belonging to a different ethnic group than most others. For example, when the family celebrates Azoro's return to the compound after being lost during a riot at the novel's start, Azoro's father borrows money and goods to throw a party with food and drinks for all the guests. Unfortunately, the family do not manage to pay the debts in time, so the creditors visit the family when the father is not there, taking inventory as collateral for the debt. This results in the father losing his temper, and he retrieves all the inventory the same night under threats of violence. The following morning Azoro describes how others treat him and his mother on the compound:

The next morning no one spoke to us in the compound. Dad went off to work early and suffered nothing of the whispering that followed us everywhere or the silence that greeted us when we went to the backyard. Mum bore it all very well. She said her

greetings to people when she passed them, and her face remained impassive when they didn't reply. She bore it all as if she were used to that treatment all her life. It was harder on me though. The children stared at me with sour faces and made it clear they didn't want my company. The compound people became united in their dislike of us. (Okri, 2021, pp. 116-117)

The down-to-earth language Okri uses when describing this signals his desire for the reader to see the othering of Azoro and his mother. Okri also makes Azoro see his mother and the treatment she has endured all her life. Okri creates a protagonist who sees others' suffering and is less egotistical than protagonists in the traditional European sense. The othering in the quote occurs within the compound. Okri then establishes the term as something that does not need skewed power structures to happen.

As a spirit child, Azoro exists in both the real and the spirit world, which in itself makes him an "other" in the eyes of the other children and adults on the compound. For those who do not understand his spiritual nature, he is often viewed with suspicion, making Azoro the subject of much speculation and gossip. The spiritual othering that Azoro encounters in *The Famished Road* signals a complexity in spirituality and highlights some of the problems that people who do not conform to society's norms can face. When Azoro encounters spirits and ghosts in Madame Koto's bar, he often acts weird, leading the rest of the customers to state that he is insane and unbalanced and him being attacked (Okri, 2021, p. 156). Considered a nuisance and a disturbance, Azoro is throughout the novel marginalised and stigmatised. Azoro is often labelled in the novel as "that spirit child," which refers to him being Abiku or Ogbanje, thus putting him in a group feared and mistrusted in Nigerian folklore. He is referred to as "that boy-thing" to dehumanise him. This distances him from the regular human beings in the novel. His being referred to as "poor boy" is an excellent example of the socio-economic othering resulting in his and his family's marginalisation.

The symbolism of the Abiku child as the nation of Nigeria makes the othering Azoro as an Abiku face interesting. Ikechi argues, "It is pertinent here to state that Abiku symbolises Nigeria. Azoro's experience is synonymous with the nation's historical experiences. Like a child, a nation has the capacity for growth and development but ours as Okri suggests neither grows nor advances." (Ikechi, 2016, p. 249). Ikechi compares the way Azoro fights for existence after birth with the way Nigeria fights for existence after colonialism, and connects the way the people of Nigeria resist nationhood and separation from the colonial power with how the spirit children keep coming and going (Ikechi, 2016, p. 250). This begs the question

of how we encounter new things, how we talk about unknown things, and if we encounter people and the processes they face with empathy. Okri's optimism for a new nation can serve as a reminder of hope for us all when Azoro states, "One day it will decide to remain. It will become strong" (Ikechi, 2016, p. 250). Understanding that all spiritual beings can symbolise a young nation can change how people view others differently from the mainstream.

Azoro's family are socio-economically and politically othered throughout the novel, and this kind of othering can translate into current affairs in the students' world. Azoro's poor family lives in a compound with slum-like living conditions. Their low socio-economic status makes them outcasts in society. The people who possess more means and are economically more privileged treat them as inferior, evident in how the landlord and their creditors treat them and how his father is treated at work. The landlord's power over the family is apparent in the conversation taking place in Azoro's home.

"The photographer was very pleased with the result and quoted prizes for copies. One of the creditors said he would get his copy when Dad paid up. The landlord said:

"I look like a chief."

"Thief," I said.

Mum knocked me on the head.

"Your son looks like a goat," the landlord said.

The creditors laughed. Mum said:

"We want to sleep now. Everyone should leave."

"Is that how you talk to your landlord?"

"Okay everyone should stay," Mum said. (Okri, 2021, p. 108)

And then I saw dad amongst the load-carriers. He looked completely different. His hair was white and his face was mask-like with engrained cement. He was almost naked except for a very disgusting pair of tattered shorts which I had never seen before. They loaded two bags of salt on his head and he cried "GOD, SAVE ME!" and he wobbled and the bag on top fell back into the lorry. The men loading him insulted his ancestry, wounding me, and Dad kept blinking as the sweat and salt poured into his eyes. The men loading him shouted about how he had given them a lot of trouble and

behaving like a woman, and if he couldn't carry mere bags of salt he should crawl back into his wife's bed. (Okri, 2021, p. 171)

The landlord acts and speaks as if he owns not only the home of the family but also their time. He has clear boundaries regarding how his mother can talk to him, and she respects these boundaries and backs down when confronted. The mother does not speak back when the landlord insults her son. The landlord is a man of power and treats the people he feels are beneath him however he likes. When the father drops a bag of salt at work, the men loading him insult his ancestry, and he is compared to a woman. In the continuing of the novel, the father does not speak back but keeps on carrying an even heavier load, perhaps to show he is not a woman.

The Famished Road is set in a time with great political unrest in Nigeria and a struggle for political power, illustrated in the novel with the battle between the party of the rich and the party of the poor for political power and influence. Azoro's mother and father state in the novel that they will vote for the party of the poor. This leads to his mother being denied sales booths at the market and constantly harassed when trying to sell her goods. His father is handed a much tougher load and worse working conditions when unloading goods from the trailers. The father in the novel symbolises the human beings who root for justice and equity in society. He fights the cause of the poor and people who possess less power, and this is represented by his declaring on several occasions that he will vote for the party of the poor and also that he plans to run for office himself with the help of beggars and the compound people (Ikechi, 2016, p. 251).

The way the women are treated in the novel and their position in society are examples of gender othering. The marginalisation of women in the decision processes and the expectation placed on women to occupy traditional gender roles are highlighted in the treatment of Azoro's mother, who is often powerless towards her husband and other men in her community. When her husband is away, and the landlord and other creditors occupy their hut wanting money and taking items for collateral of the debts, she does not argue against it. "All right, if I can't get my money now I'm going to seize something". He got up from the bed, lifted the centre table, and went to the door. "Good night landlord" he said and left. Mum didn't move. Another creditor, asking the landlord to light a match for him, took dad's booths" (Okri, 2021, p. 108). Azoro's mother always prepares the food, and on several occasions, the father eats first while the mother and Azoro either wait for him to share or eat what is left. Azoro connects his mother's suffering to the suffering of all women when he

looks for his mother at the market, realising that every woman there could be her. “I went about the market confused by many voices that could have been Mum’s, many faces that could have been her’s, and I saw that her tiredness and sacrifice were not her’s alone but were suffered by all women, all women of the marketplace.” (Okri, 2021, p. 187). However, the women in the novel are not always portrayed as powerless, and they are sometimes given agency. From hanging around in Madame Koto’s bar Azoro learns about society from the women who frequently visit, “The ways of women, I learned a lot about what was happening in the country through them. I learned about the talk of independence, how the white man treated us, about political parties and tribal divisions” (Okri, 2021, p. 90), “In the backyard they talked about politics, about the thugs of politicians and how businessmen and chiefs sprayed money at parties and celebrations” (Okri, 2021, p. 123). The mother in the novel is used as a symbol of the suffering woman and juxtaposed with Madame Koto. While economically challenged, she has a humanitarian outlook, whereas Madame Koto is financially well off but morally only cares for herself. The mother in the novel directs her anger towards the forces of oppression, while Madame Koto directs her violence against the poor and the compound people (Ikechi, 2016). The difference in character and symbolism between the mother and Madame Koto can also symbolise how power corrupts regardless of sex. Noticing and discussing gender othering will give the students a different perspective when encountering people and stories of women in the third world and increase an understanding of a difference in agency between themselves and the female other, which in turn will create empathy in communication that will lead to a deeper understanding of the struggles of the female other.

As a symbol of the pauperising of the rich class towards the poor, the othering of Madame Koto makes for a good discussion of the othering of people in a position of power. Koto is the recipient of both slander and ridiculing. Azoro listens in when the women of the compound say of her that “she had buried three husbands and seven children and that she was a witch who ate her babies while still in her womb. They said she was the real reason why the children in the area didn’t grow, why they were always ill, why the men never got promotions, and why the women in the area suffered miscarriages. They said she was a bewitcher of husbands and a seducer of young boys and a poisoner of children” (Okri, 2021, p. 118). Okri uses satire when describing Madame Koto, defined by M.H. Abrams as “the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation.” (Abrams, 1988, p. 320). “As a

form of writing, satire disapproves or ridicules persons, customs, ideas or objects. It amuses while exposing vices, follies and stupidity. In applying humour, it derides and aims at waking men up to their responsibilities. The satirist, among other issues, responds to the political and social events of his or her time.” (Ikechi, 2016, p. 246). Okri uses this device to make Madame Koto into a clown-like figure.

In *The Famished Road*, Madame Koto turns out looking like a clown. Thinking she is making a fashion statement, she ends up being satirised. She is decked “in fantastic dresses of silk and lace edged with turquoise filigree, white gowns, and yellow hat, waving a fan of the feathers, with expensive bangles of silver and gold weighing her arms and necklaces of pearl and jade round her neck” (373-4). The ridicule continues: “When she walked all her jewellery clattered on her,... she painted her fingernails red. Her eyelashes became more defined. She wore lipstick. She wore highheeled shoes... walking stick always in hand” (374). (Ikechi, 2016, p. 247).

When pointing out the othering of a person that also possesses a significant amount of agency which Madame Koto does, the students can recognise a discourse they use when talking about others in a position of power. Although the othering of power positions is not directly the aim of the curriculum when seeing the other, being able to see that othering and ridiculing a person belonging to the ruling class is a discursive weapon of people who possess less power, the students can identify and recognise this in their encounters with the third world, be it literary, through text or in person.

The different literary examples of othering in *The Famished Road* can make it easier to connect with the other. Seeing people in a position of less power and being themselves in a power position as part of the first world means the students can allow for a more significant deal of agency to the third world others in the future. The diverse range of othering in the novel will create a need for the reader to constantly switch perspectives to empathise with people. This will help the students develop the multi perspectivity that Lenz incorporates in her definition of Democracy and Citizenship in the English subject (Lenz, 2020).

6.3 Teaching othering

The inherent values of the core curriculum oppose the use of othering, understood as creating an us/them rhetoric in imperialistic discourse. The goal of developing compassion for others

and understanding the world, others and themselves, stated in the core curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a), creates an apparent demand for the teacher to explore others through activities in the classroom. To understand what the other thinks and experiences to create empathy (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a, p. 11), the students need classroom activities that not only allow them to meet and get to know the other. In addition, they need examples of the othering imposed on people to understand the effects of being exposed regularly to being an “other”. In resisting imperialistic discourse and writing back to empire, post-colonial literature is a good source for finding examples of different kinds of othering created by the discursive power of Western hegemony. In opposing the creation of an inferior other, post-colonial literature will give the teacher literary examples of othering that will fulfil the targets set by the curriculum.

The Famished Road includes different kinds of othering that can be used as starting points of activities in the classroom when working with the novel. The compound that is Azoro’s community has a diverse ethnic composition who interacts with suspicion and mistrust towards each other, resulting in ethnic and cultural othering. The women’s roles in the novel and the expectation placed on the female characters in *The Famished Road* give examples of gender othering for the students. As a leading character in the novel and a symbol of the exploiting class, the othering and ridiculing of Madame Koto is an excellent example of the othering of people in a position of power. The spiritual othering of the protagonist Azoro can bring discussions of how we treat spiritual beings who do not conform to the norms of society, and the socioeconomic and political othering suffered by Azoro’s family can be used as a starting point for discussions and work in the classroom which will be of use when teaching the interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship. Easily translatable to current affairs, the political othering in *The Famished Road* can be used to draw historical lines that will connect the novel’s context to the context of the struggles in the world today.

The students must be prepared before working with the examples of othering in *The Famished Road* on the different definitions of othering and, more specifically, on othering as a way of justifying colonialism. Kapuscinski’s view of othering as used to distinguish white Europeans from non-western others of colour will be helpful when working with a novel in an African setting. Making the students aware of othering as a tool to create a difference between people through assigning inferior moral codes (Pickering, 2001) and as a tool of discrimination of marginalised groups in discourse that has an ultimate goal of exclusion (Boreus, 2006) will create a knowledge of the term that will lead to an understanding of othering as an oppressive

force thus making the students reflect upon the novel in a way that will oppose imperialistic ideas. Creating the possibility for the students to notice the different kinds of othering that occur in the novel while reading requires some scaffolding on the various definitions of the term. It will also further successful communication with the non-western other on a level playing field and create an understanding of the students of the differences in identities and contexts in the world at play.

Having the students work with the novel while tracing attitudes and development is an excellent way to show the othering of Madame Koto that develops as *The Famished Road* progresses. The teacher can provide the students with 5-10 quotes while reading to trace the development of a character (Sandhaug, 2017, p. 404). Madame Koto is a multi-dimensional and complex character, and the othering of her character works on different levels. Madame Koto has susceptible moral values and more economic power than the rest of the compound. As a woman who runs her own business, she defies the traditional gender roles that occur in the novel. This leads to her being viewed as an outsider by the poor people on the compound. The different kinds of othering that Madame Koto endures in the novel while belonging to the elite make her character enjoyable to follow for the students. Some of the quotes that can be made available for the students while reading are:

It was from them that I first heard the rumours of Madame Koto. The women talked quite crisply about our association with her. They talked and kept eying me maliciously. They said of Madame Koto that she had buried three husbands and seven children and that she was a witch who ate her babies while still in her womb. They said she was the real reason why the children in the area didn't grow, why they were always ill, why the men never got promotions, and why the women in the area suffered miscarriages. (Okri, 2021, p. 118)

And because the lamp was on a stool below the counter, her face, bright in patches, looked big and ugly. For the first time I began to dislike her. From where she stood, her eyes seemed oddly deranged, somewhat crossed. It was only a trick of the light, but that didn't stop it from feeding my growing distrust of her. She had changed completely from the person I used to know. Her big frame, which had seemed to me full of warmth, now seemed to me full of wickedness. I didn't know why she had changed. (Okri, 2021, p. 281)

In the midst of all this, Madame Koto grew bigger and fatter till she couldn't get in through the back door. The door had to be broken down and widened. We saw her in fantastic dresses of silk and lace, edged with turquoise filigree, white gowns and yellow hats, waving a fan of blue feathers, with expensive bangles of silver and gold weighing her arms, and necklaces of pearl and jade around her neck. When she walked, all her jewellery clattered on her, announcing her eminence in advance. ...She began to resemble a great old chief from ancient times, a reincarnation of splendour and power and clannish might. (Okri, 2021, p. 419)

While using these quotes as they read to make them pay attention to the character, the students can create a log of findings for themselves regarding the othering of Madame Koto. The logs can later be compared to the rest of the students, leading to a fruitful discussion on othering. Questions to be asked of the students might be "Why do you think Azoro changes his perception of Madame Koto?", "Why were the others on the compound bothered by Azoro's family enjoying a special relationship with her" and "Do you see any resemblance in the fashion statements you give and how Madame Koto displays her wealth through her clothing and jewellery?". Preparing reflection questions for the students that bring the novel into their context will create a much deeper reflection and make the students think of how they act and dress and why they make their choices.

The students can be made to make a speech that one of the characters in the novel could have made. The students can be divided into pairs where one creates and delivers a speech from the perspective of the party of the rich, while the other creates a speech on behalf of the party of the poor. When the speeches are finished, the students can critique the other's speech with special emphasis on othering and whether the speeches contributed to us/them rhetoric. When working with this, the teacher can show examples of speeches from Norwegian politics and ask the students to notice othering or us/them rhetoric. This will create clear-cut examples for the students that othering and us/them rhetoric exists not only in a first world/third world discourse but also inside a nation like Norway. This will lead to examples of othering in Norway of the rich vs the poor and socialist vs conservative. When the students see this connection, the othering in the novel will have a universal appeal, easily translated to their context.

The socio-economic othering happening in the novel can be used as a starting point for a discussion among the students to describe instances where they feel they have been othered because of having a different background from the community. This will create an

opportunity for people from a different cultural background from the majority with identity issues to gain a voice and agency to speak up against the majority. This might be difficult for students around sixteen to do. Still, if the teacher has worked on creating a safe learning environment with room for different voices and opinions, this will lead to the students reflecting upon how they face diversity in their society.

Working with the theme othering in the VG1 EFL classroom can be combined with the advanced Leader, Sceptic, and Scribe activity. This activity “teaches evidence-based argumentation and clear communication” (Gleason, 2016, p. 23). Pupils are divided into three where one takes the role of the Leader, supplying ideas and arguments while supporting them with evidence, the Sceptic tries to counter the arguments by asking critical questions, and the Scribe keeps a record of the argument to make them clarify uncertainties (Sandhaug, 2017). While using this method, the students will be given open-ended questions about the othering that is portrayed in the novel, such as “Can the othering endured by the women in the novel be found in Norway” and “Can the othering of a spiritual being like Azoro be seen against religious minorities in Norway”. After the activity, the students can be asked to share their main arguments, pros and cons and discuss them in a teacher lead activity. Connecting the prompts to a Norwegian context while basing them on things that happen in the novel will make the further reading of the novel more interesting for the students. At the same time, it will bring similarities between different cultures, making the students develop a more positive mindset and a sense that the cultures are not that different. This again will change how the students view the third world other and develop their understanding that the way they view the world is culture dependent.

6.4 Final thoughts

Emphasising othering when teaching this text to students links to an imperialistic discourse where othering was used as a defence to take colonies. Teaching the term Orientalism while at the same time teaching othering in the classroom will link this in an understandable way for the students. Learning from history, understanding that how we speak of the others has great consequences for people with less power and developing a mindset different from previous generations will connect the curriculum’s values and further intercultural competence. What Byram refers to as “the cultural turn” is meeting speakers of a different language on an equal playing field and being aware of one own identity while at the same time being aware of the differences in culture with whom they speak (Michael Byram, 2002). Understanding other

cultures and people will be achieved by teaching othering in a Norwegian foreign language classroom.

7. Western influence and imperialism

7.1 Introduction

The notion of imperialism and the influence of the former English coloniser are seldom mentioned directly in *The Famished Road*. They float in the background and the setting in the novel adding context to Azoro's growing up. This makes the few times Okri includes these themes stand out in importance to the reader. He is aware of the significance of hegemony. Still, in focusing on the actions of the indigenous population in Nigeria rather than victimising them on their experiences during colonialism, he places the responsibility of the future of Nigeria into the hands of the Nigerians themselves. The agency that Okri allows the indigenous population when making this choice goes against a Western notion of the colonised as a child that needs help from the Western world. Working with the novel in the classroom through the theme of Western influence and experience must be done with the former in mind. Choosing a Western perspective will work against the agency assigned to the Nigerian people by Okri.

7.2 Literary analysis of western influence and imperialism

One of the ways to take a deeper look at the Western influence and some of the white European hegemony forced upon Africa is through the character of the photographer in *The Famished Road*. The photographer first appears at the party celebrating Azoro's return after the riots, taking pictures of all the guests. Throughout the novel, he uses his camera to document the people's struggles on the compound. He functions in the novel as the eyes of the West upon the native population. The photographer places himself on the side of the poor. This, along with the power of the pictures he takes, makes him harassed by the people in power. The symbolism of the photographer will vary depending on the reader's perspective, as all symbolism in literature will vary with each perspective. The photographer is not explicitly described as white in the novel, nor is the character's ethnicity all that important. But he is regarded as an outsider and a foreigner on the compound. Through the camera he wears around his neck, he represents a part of Western technology that is not common for the people of the compound to see or use or experience the effect of.

While the room quivered with jagged drumming on the table, syncopated rhythms of voices, the bottle-music, and general revelry, the photographer from across the road turned up, wearing a white hat. His name was Jeremiah. He had a wiry beard, and everyone seemed to know him. He became the instant butt of jokes. Some mocked his bad timing at missing the tastiest boar that ever ran amok in the forests. Others urged him to take off his white hat and get drunk as swiftly as possible. And the women wanted to know why he hadn't brought his camera. He went back out and soon returned with his camera, and everyone abandoned the dancing and organised themselves for a group photograph. The men fought for the most visible positions. The old man, claiming right of seniority, posed in front of everyone. The women went out to brighten themselves and came back to disrupt the photographer's arrangement. Mum picked me up and posed with Dad next to the old man. The photographer gave many instructions as he set up his camera. He went back and forth, making us contort our heads. He made Dad twist his legs, made Mum hold her neck at an awkward angle, and made me fix a quite insane smile on my face. After much fussing, the photographer proceeded to embark on his own set of dramatic poses. He crouched, stood on tiptoes, knelt, climbed on a chair, and even seemed to imitate an eagle in flight. He drank generously from a bottle of beer. Swaying, leaning backwards, his eyes shining, he made us say:

“Sheeze.”

While we played around with the word, fishing humour out of its strangeness, he took the first picture. When the camera flashed, followed by an odd explosion, ghost emerged from the light and melted, stunned, at his feet. I screamed. The crowd laughed. The photographer took five pictures in all and the ghost kept falling at his feet, dazed by the flash. When he went to his studio to drop of his camera, the ghosts followed him. When he came back they weren't with him. He joined the boisterous merriment and got wonderfully drunk. (Okri, 2021, pp. 56-57)

His white hat sets him apart from the rest of the compound, and he is encouraged by some to take it off and get drunk as soon as possible. The others at the feast drink the traditional drink of ogogoro while he drinks beer. He is also named “Jeremiah”, a western or American-sounding name, different from the few others named in the novel, like Azoro or Madame Koto. From this extract alone, he is othered from the rest of the compound, alluding to his contact with other parts of the world. The way he arranges the people in the photo to not look

like themselves is important to note. The photographer has an outsider's look and wants to portray the people in the photograph in a unique way. He makes the dad twist his leg, the mum keeps her head at an awkward angle and Azoro fixes an insane smile on his face. This can be interpreted as the West wanting to portray a view of Africa and Africans in a certain way to correspond with the existing European discourse regarding the continent of Africa. It can also be interpreted to be an example of Eurocentrism. The photographer wants them to say "Sheeze" and how the people of the compound play with the word and its strangeness alludes to a different background for the photographer than the rest of the people through the language he uses. The ghost melting and falling at the photographer's feet when the camera flashes can be seen as the African culture of myths and the spiritual evaporating from the eyes of the West and not being represented through the images the West see of Africans. Important to notice also that when the ghost melts, Azoro screams while the others laugh. This alludes to Azoro being part of the spirit world and the others not. This makes the protagonist in the novel an all-seeing creature with his feet in both worlds.

How the West looks at Africa with othering as a discursive aim through the images and the representation it gives Africans can be one way of interpreting Azoro's reaction when he looks at the pictures. He views them differently from the other adults in the compound.

When I looked closer at the pictures we all seemed strange. The pictures were grained, there were dots over our faces, smudges everywhere. Dad looked as if he had a patch over one eye, Mum was blurred in both eyes, the children were like squirrels, and I resembled a rabbit. We all looked like celebrating refugees. We were cramped, and hungry, and our smiles were fixed. The room appeared to be constructed out of garbage, and together we seemed a people who had never known happiness. Those of us that smiled had our faces contorted into grimaces, like people who had been defeated but who smile when a camera is trained on them. (Okri, 2021, pp. 107-108)

The way Azoro describes the pictures can be interpreted as how the West views the people of Africa, as celebrating refugees that smile every time a camera is put up in front of them. Azoro sees the images as of them being hungry with fixed smiles, taken in a room constructed of garbage and portraying people who have never known happiness. The perspective of Azoro is important for the students to see because it is double-layered. Azoro does not recognise himself or his family and friends from how the images portray them. To correctly see and engage with the third world other, the students must recognise that the way we see the third world other in images might differ from how they view themselves. This is what constitutes

Eurocentrism. This moment of looking at the picture is also the first time Azoro reflects upon how an outsider considers him and his family.

The misrepresentation and discursive othering through his images is not the whole part the photographer plays in the novel. He has a positive role in showing the struggle of the poor through his images. When the party of the rich returns to the compound to pester the inhabitants with their message, the photographer not only takes pictures of the events and riots that follow, but he also chooses to take the side of the poor. He is described as having “woken from his hunger and fever”, walking around with his camera although not yet taking pictures. His camera makes him conspicuous in the eyes of the thugs accompanying the politicians from the Party of the poor. When the vehicle described as the van of bad politics in the novel knocks over a woman, he starts taking pictures.

The driver started the vehicle; it jerked forward and knocked a woman over. The photographer recorded the moment. The woman howled and the men hurled stones, breaking the side windows, and shattering the windscreen. The crowd surged to the front of the van, preventing it from moving. The thugs jumped down and whipped people, the photographer frenziedly took pictures, and the people went on stoning the side windows till they gave completely and then they threw rocks at the men handing out garri. (Okri, 2021, p. 178)

And it was only when the police were pulling away that we saw the faces of those taken in for questioning. The photographer was one of them. He had managed to get rid of the evidence that was his camera. He looked stony-eyed and brave. He waved at us as they dragged him away. (Okri, 2021, pp. 179-180)

This can show that the poor and marginalised represented by Azoro, his family and the inhabitant of the compound need help from outsiders to document the abuse they experience from whoever is in power. It can show how, for the poor, it does not matter who has power, white or black, when the people in power are corrupt and do not care for the whole population in a country. The fact that the thugs view the photographer with consciousness alludes to people in power never reacting positively when their actions are documented.

The importance of the role of the photographer is shown in the novel in a later paragraph.

For the first time in our lives, we as a people had appeared in the newspapers. We were heroes in our own drama, heroes of our own protest. There were pictures of us,

men and women and children, standing helplessly round heaps of the politicians' milk. There were pictures of us raging, attacking the van, rioting against the cheap methods of politicians, humiliating the thugs of politics, burning their lies. The photographer's pictures had been given great prominence on the pages of the newspaper and it was even possible to recognize our squashed and poverty ridden faces on the grainy newsprint. There were news stories about the bad milk and an editorial about our rage. We were astonished that something we did with such an absence of planning, something that we had done in such a small corner of the great globe, could gain such prominence. Many of us spent the evening identifying ourselves amongst the welter of rough faces. (Okri, 2021, p. 181)

The two ways of showing the images of Africa and its inhabitants, displayed through the words and mind of the novel's protagonist Azoro, let the students see that perspective matter. The way we in the West see the third world other deeply affects the people we are seeing. The last quote from the paragraph also depicts the compound's inhabitants as helpless, squashed and with poverty ridden faces, much like the first photographs from the feast after the return to the family by Azoro. But they are depicted as heroes in their own drama and of their own protest. Through the thoughts of Azoro, Okri clearly shows the difference in perception in the two images of the poor people of the compound. They portray the inhabitants almost identically, but the agency behind the pictures is different.

When the photographer is last mentioned in the book, Okri uses the encounter between him and Azoro to show how white violence against the black man also happens on other continents through a photo of what can be interpreted as an enslaved person that has been hung. As Azoro looks through the pictures of the photographer he comes to the last one.

And then I am upon the strangest photograph of them all, which the photographer said he got from another planet. It was of a man hanging by his neck from a tree....

“What happened to him?”

“They hanged him.”

“Is he dead?”

“Yes.”

“What happened?”

“They hanged him.”

“Who?”

“Across the seas.”

“The sea hanged him?”

“No. Another continent.”

“A continent hanged him?”

“No.”

“What?”

“They.”

“Who?”

He paused. I was confused.

“Some white people.” (Okri, 2021, pp. 295-296)

It's important to note the similarities in the descriptions of the hung man with how Azoro sees his family and the people on the compound in the photographs taken when the photographer first appears in the novel. A strange, almost familiar face alludes to recognising the similarities of the struggles on both continents, the twisted mouth, and the crooked and crossed legs of the enslaved person, compared to the smiles contorted into grimaces on the first photo of a people that have never known happiness. The image of the hung man in a post-colonial setting also alludes to the power dynamics between the white and the black man, the Western world and the third world. The white man is the ruler, and the black man is the governed in a hegemonic world.

There are few mentions of the white colonial power and its effects in the novel. However, some sections mention the past through the previous colonial power, which creates an opportunity to discuss the context and setting of a country that has just gained its independence. For example, at the end of a political discussion at Madam Koto's bar, Azoro's father asks him about school.

“What did they teach you at school today?”

“About Mungo Park and the British Empire”

“They are all corrupt,” said the carpenter. (Okri, 2021, pp. 239-240)

This extract is interesting in an imperialist setting because of what Azoro learned in school. Mungo Park was a British explorer who mapped the river of Niger. After escaping local captivity, he later wrote a book on his return to England called *Travels in Africa* in 1797, which greatly affected later explorers of the African continent. This goes right into the heart of European discourse on Africa. Readers of *The Famished Road* can also be challenged on why Azoro in a Nigerian school learns about the British empire rather than Nigerian history.

At Madame Koto’s bar, Azoro encounters a man described as a chief with inherited dignity, whom Azoro recognises as one of the men from the truck of the Party of the Rich who distributed the bad milk that poisoned the people on the compound. After a short argument where Madame Koto defends the politician, Azoro observes the Politician whom Madame Koto calls a “chief”.

The chief, satisfied with the tribute, smiled, and went on drinking. The noises resumed. Some of the people commented on my behaviour and lamented the way children no longer respected their elders and blamed it all on the white man’s way of life, which was spoiling the values of Africa. (Okri, 2021, p. 269)

This quote is probably something that the young in the first world can relate to the others of the third world and feel some kinship. Not only is this a critique by Okri of how the colonial powers have altered how the young people of Nigeria respect their elders, but this is also a critique that exists in the Western discourse regarding how the new generations are different from the ones that came before. When seeing others different from us, it is also positive that we can relate and see that we have something in common. The discourse in Nigeria towards the next generation is similar to the discourse in the West regarding teenagers.

Nigeria’s past is positive when the Mum tells Azoro the story of the white people returning to the compound after one of Azoro’s father’s boxing matches.

“When white people first came to our land,” she said, as if she were talking to the wind, “we had already gone to the moon and all the great stars. In the olden days, they used to come and learn from us. My father used to tell me that we taught them how to count. We taught them about the stars. We gave them some of our gods. We shared our knowledge with them. We welcomed them. But they forgot all this. They forgot many things. They forgot that we are all brothers and sisters and that black people are

the ancestors of the human race. The second time they came, they brought guns. They took our lands, burned out gods, and they carried away many of our people to become enslaved people across the sea. They are greedy. They want to own the whole world and conquer the sun. Some of them believe they have killed God. Some of them worship machines. They are misusing the powers God gave all of us. They are not all bad. Learn from them, but love the world. (Okri, 2021, pp. 315-316)

His mother's story surprises Azoro. He has many questions, but his mother's mood changes, so he does not get to ask them. Not reflecting further upon the story of the white man in the novel, Okri, through Azoro, leaves the reflection to be done by the reader. Suppose we, as Europeans are to see and engage with the third-world other correctly. In that case, we must reflect that knowledge and culture were already present when the Europeans colonised Africa. It is interesting to note that through this story, Okri connects Nigeria and Africa's history to the slave trade for the second time in the novel, the first being through the photographs shown to Azoro by the photographer. A culture already present, the white people using their power through weapons, and the slave trade are all mentioned in this quote. However, the mother ends with a statement that white people are not all bad and that Azoro needs to "learn from them, but love the world". This statement is linked to the fact that Africa must change to compete globally. They need to become more technically advanced, but it needs to happen with a genuine love for the world. This is also important for first-world students to know that the connection to nature is maybe more present in the third world other, and that must be in the back of our minds when we choose how to communicate with others in the third world.

At the end of the novel, how the Western powers collaborate with the party of the rich against the poor and that Western imperialism seems to be never-ending appears when Azoro reflects upon the rising power of Madame Koto.

The political parties waged their battles in the spirit spaces, beyond the realm of our earthly worries. They fought and hurled counter-mythologies at one another. Herbalists, sorcerers, wizards and witches took sides, and as the trucks fought for votes in the streets they fought for supremacy in the world of spirits. They called for djinns and chimaeras, succubi, incubi and apparitions; they enlisted the ghosts of old warriors and politicians and strategists; they hired expatriate spirits. The Party of the Rich drew support from the spirits of the Western world. At night, over our dreams, pacts were made, contracts drawn up in that realm of night space, and our future were mortgaged, our destinies delayed. (Okri, 2021, pp. 552-553)

This part is narratively interesting because Okri and the descriptions of the spirits in his world add spirits from the Western world. The magical and the real co-exist in this paragraph in a way that takes some effort on behalf of the reader to sort facts and fiction. Although this maybe is Okri's point in writing it this way, it shall not be easy to know which narrative we are in when reading this paragraph. Though not described, one can imagine that the Western spirits consist of technology and weapons used to win the election. However, the Party of the Rich only manage to win by mortgaging the future of Nigeria by giving away contracts. Although not explicitly stated, we can probably say it concerns oil; Nigeria has much of it. This mixture of the spirits in the magical and how we see the other, with what we deem real as in technology but the other sees as magical, can give a change of perspective to the reader. The cited paragraph also provides insight into the loss of agency through using Western spirits to gain power. Albeit with a more indirect use of power, it can be seen as continuing imperialism from the Western world. The end game is still Africa being drained of resources without much profit to share with the population.

The photographer in *The Famished Road* is, in some parts, both the perception of Europeans of Africa and the representation of the world of the colonial subject. The camera possesses the power to misrepresent and portray the colonial subjects in how we, as Europeans, are used to seeing them in discourse. It also presents the people's struggle on the compound in the riots and their fight for equality and justice. When Okri mentions imperialism and colonialism in the novel, he uses it to show the ambivalence in the post-colonial subject. Moreover, he uses the passages of imperialist and colonialist references to show that the previous culture of the indigenous people was informed and with good values.

7.3 Teaching western influence and imperialism

The core curriculum has a spirit aimed at removing Eurocentrism as a mindset. Eurocentrism denotes attitudes, ideologies and ideas that place Europe in the centre and uses the European culture as a guideline for other cultures to aspire towards. There are several mentions in the curriculum that counters the hegemonic and imperialistic notion of Eurocentrism. The students shall develop an awareness of minority and majority perspectives. The students shall

develop an understanding of others and the world and appropriate an understanding of how others think and feel to develop empathy (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020a). Alongside an understanding of the dilemmas that arise between the rights of the minority and the preponderance of the majority, these goals from the Core curriculum indicate a step away from a Eurocentric discourse and towards an understanding of people outside of Europe. The core element of “Encounters with texts in English” state that when working with texts in English that students encounter in the classroom, they shall develop an understanding of cultural diversity and give an insight into how the indigenous people think. This again will bring intercultural competence (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b). Increasing the students’ intercultural competence will affect their mindset, leading to a less Eurocentric thinking towards other parts of the world. The interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship states that “By learning English, the pupils can experience different societies and cultures by communicating with others around the world, regardless of linguistic or cultural background. This can open for new ways to interpret the world, and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices.” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020b). The goal of opening new ways to interpret the world signals that a new way to think and speak of the world beyond Europe is a desired result of education in The EFL Classroom in Norway.

Following the protagonist Azoro in *The Famished Road*, the students will encounter textual examples of Western hegemony and imperialism that are cornerstones of Eurocentric discourse. His interaction with the Photographer and the many stories from his father often responds to the imperialism suffered during colonialism. Furthermore, the way the party of the rich in the novel acquire the help of the West in assuming political power in Nigeria through the signing off on contracts for the nation’s riches is a clear sign of the hegemonic influence of the imperialistic European nations. Basing classroom activities on the many examples that are found in the novel will give the students an understanding of the hegemony of the West towards the poorer countries around the world, and they will encounter a context which will give life to these and create an opportunity for the teacher to bring these issues into current political global affairs. The suggestions for classroom activities using the novel will show that working with these topics through *The Famished Road* will help the students and the teacher reach the goals of the curriculum.

The story of the white people is a good passage for close reading. When doing close reading, the passage the teacher chooses must be central to the plot. The passage shall be transferred onto a paper with wide margins and generous line spacing where questions regarding the

passage can be added (Sandhaug, 2017, p. 404). While hegemony and imperialism might not be part of the central plot in *The Famished Road*, the theme is important enough for a close reading to work. The story of the white people referenced in the literary analysis is told to Azoro by the mother rather reluctantly while walking towards the compound, insisting that she will tell the story another time she changes her mind and shares the story with Azoro. The questions that might follow this story are for the students to increase an understanding that hegemony and imperialism can be “Reflect on the culture that made the indigenous people welcome the strangers and share of their knowledge and how might this have changed post-colonialism?”, “What does the mother allude to in the last sentence when she says, “Learn from them, but love the world, and how can this be viewed in a context of climate change?” and “How do you think this story makes Azoro feel about his education where he learns of English culture and Mungo Park in school?”.

Using quotes which directly reference imperialism and hegemony can be used to research the background and context of the quote (Sandhaug, 2017). This will give the students an understanding while working with the novel that can be translated to other subjects like social studies or ethics. For example, in a political discussion between a carpenter and his father, the following happens:

The carpenter went silent. Madame Koto went out. The two men resumed drinking.
Dad turned to me.

“What did they teach you at school today?”

“About Mungo Park and the British Empire”

“They are all corrupt,” said the carpenter. (Okri, 2021, pp. 239-240)

When presented with this quote, the students can be asked to research and prepare a short presentation of Mungo Park. This British explorer greatly affected those who came after him to the continent of Africa through his book *Travels in Africa*. The students can also be asked to reverse the roles of coloniser and colonised by choosing things from the Nigerian culture to be taught in Norwegian schools. This can be used as a point of discussion of the Norwegian identity and how the school, through the curriculum and Building aspect of the education, ensure that we develop a Norwegian identity with a good knowledge of the past culture of our country. Further reflection on what the teaching of Azoro might lead to with a dual identity residing in two cultures can be made through teacher lead discussion. Topic points of how the

loss of language and the learning of the imperial powers' culture might affect the indigenous people's identity will give the students an understanding of minority perspectives and how others think and feel. The students can then contrast their identity development with the protagonist's development in a post-colonial nation.

To focus on a discussion of a story, having the students work with symbolism in the novel will be helpful. After picking one of two symbols, the teacher will lead the class to explore the symbol and what the symbol can represent in general before the students start reading the novel (Sandhaug, 2017). One of the symbols the students can be made aware of before reading *The Famished Road* when working with hegemony and imperialism is the camera of the photographer in the novel. The camera changes the symbolism throughout the story; the students need to be aware that it plays a part in the novel. The camera starts off misrepresenting the indigenous people as we in the West often view the non-western other. However, it becomes an important representation of the poor in the riots in documenting the abuse of power towards them by the people in control. Furthermore, in showing Azoro the images of a hung enslaved person from over the seas, the camera becomes a symbol of the slave trade as part of the history of the indigenous people. When the students have read the novel and paid extra attention to the symbolism of the camera, this can lay the ground for a discussion of hegemony and imperialism in the classroom or be the foundation of a hand-in of written work. The fact that the authorities started following and abusing the photographer as he was documenting the abuse suffered by the indigenous people can be used as a link to discuss examples of how the fact that everyone now has a camera on their phone has led to the revealing of police brutality and corruption in the world.

7.4 Final thoughts

Using *The Famished Road* to discuss the terms hegemony and imperialism will lead to an understanding in the students of the context the non-western others reside in. Relating to others with a different mindset from one own (Dypedahl, 2019) and interacting with others that have multiple identities (Michael Byram, 2002), which are central definitions of intercultural competence, will be achieved when using examples of Western hegemony and imperialism from the novel. For the students to achieve the targets set in the different parts of the curriculum, creating awareness and an understanding of imperialistic discourse and a

Eurocentric way of thinking are important elements. In the current political climate, it will be helpful for the students to know about imperialistic discourse and hegemony in understanding the world. The students being able to recognise the hegemonic position of leading countries like the USA, China, Russia, and Britain are important when trying to make sense of the things happening around them. When meeting not just third-world others but also others from parts of the world enjoying a hegemonic position, an understanding of hegemony will guide the students in how they communicate with others from different backgrounds. The way *The Famished Road* alludes to the influence of colonial powers on the third world other makes the novel an important tool to be used in the EFL classroom when teaching the curriculum. How this novel can be used to cover the different subjects discussed in this section opposed to how a European Bildungsroman might lack some of these, highlights the need for teachers in the EFL classroom to include post-colonial literature in their teaching.

8. Conclusion

This thesis has argued for a change in literature used in the subject of English in the VG1 general studies classroom. This will oppose a hegemonic discourse and make the teachers and students reach the target set for them in the curriculum. The LK20 needs to be taught while following the spirit of the curriculum. The post-colonial Bildungsroman with the narrative of Magical Realism will offer a different discussion and classroom activities than the traditional European Bildungsroman, thus creating the necessary space to teach along the idea of the curriculum. The post-colonial author writing a Bildungsroman with Magical Realism as a literary effect presents an alternative to the dominant Western discourse. The teacher can use this to develop cultural awareness and multi-perspectivity among students. This will make the students see the non-western other, leading to a communication that will further democratic ideals. The curriculum in English looks at the world from a position of power towards minorities and people of less power. Both the teacher and the students need to transform into an anti-imperialist mindset for them to see people who are powerless or possess less agency.

Magical Realism presents an opportunity for the post-colonial author to speak against a Western imperialistic discourse while at the same time being able to present the ambivalence in the post-colonial subject. As Bhabha calls it “the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world” (Bhabha, 2006, pp. 6-7), Magical Realism uses the binary opposition of the dual narrative to describe how colonialism has affected nations in the third world and their population. Okri deploys the narrative of Magical Realism to allow his protagonist Azoro to reside both in the world of the living and the world of the spirits. The narrative allows for a special sensitivity that will enable Azoro to make choices the protagonist in the European Bildungsroman cannot make. Okri uses the realm of the real to portray the effects of colonialism and the struggle between the rich and poor in a down-to-earth language. The magical realm allows Okri to present the culture existing before colonialism while opposing the European notion of linear progress as the only alternative. Okri uses the narrative to show the European outsider that the African post-colonial subject evolves through the existence of multiple roads travelled. The road never ends but ends metaphorically in the need for coexistence between the spiritual and the real in the post-colonial subject. When Okri blurs the line between the magical and real, the political punches he throws, like in the writing of Marquez, hit the hardest (Stephen M. Hart, 2010).

Okri includes different kinds of othering to show the difficulties experienced by the population in the post-colonial society. This creates examples for the teacher to use in classroom activities when working with the book. The universality of othering makes it easy for the novel to cross the border between the Third and the Western world. The teacher will have many opportunities to juxtapose the othering portrayed in the novel with othering in their local community and Norwegian political discourse. For example, suppose the teachers connect the othering in *The Famished Road* with Orientalism and colonial discourse. In that case, the students will better their chances of realising that the way they view the world is culture dependent.

The examples of Western hegemony and imperialism represented in Okri's novel are used in a manner that neither makes the post-colonial subject free of choice nor leaves the European reader with the idea that this will never be made right. Through the story of the white man told by Azoro's mother, Okri acknowledges the atrocities performed by the white man. At the same time, he presents a pre-colonial society that existed in its own right. At the same time, he manages to find a cultural compromise between the post-colonial nation and the West in his mother saying to Azoro that "They are not all bad. Learn from them, but love the world" (Okri, 2021, p. 316). When doing this, he sets the tone for further communication between cultures skewed in power that the curriculum desire.

This thesis outlines possible ways the novel can be used in education to teach the curriculum. However, this task has been theoretical without field studies conducted in Norwegian schools. Therefore, for the conclusions and findings in this thesis to be regarded as scientifically proven, there is a need to present the novel and classroom activities as suggested in the thesis to several EFL classrooms in VG1 general studies.

The Lk20 leaves the choices of literature to the teacher. This requires well-informed teachers with a knowledge and understanding of the spirit of the core curriculum and how it positions itself towards the world. For the students to see the non-western other, we need intercultural encounters in education. This thesis has focused on an intercultural encounter through post-colonial literature with a narrative of Magical Realism. The famished road travelled by the post-colonial subject, the ambivalence of this road, and the opportunity in the dual narrative of Magical Realism to present an alternative representation of the non-western other render the post-colonial Bildungsroman well suited for the English students in VG1 general studies. Azoro's navigation of the spirit world and the world of the living create an understanding in

the students of a world previously unknown. This understanding will lead to choices in communication towards the other that will further democratic ideals.

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