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ESTABLISHING INTERFAITH DIALOGUE THROUGH FILM

Johannesburg 2007

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in the Department of English, University of the Witwatersrand

Thanks

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this research project represents my own unaided work that has not been submitted to any other University for any examination or degree.

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20th January 2008

Abstract

This study establishes whether the shared experience of learning texts, and the engagement of ideas elicited from such texts can lead to 'discovery', 'negotiation', 'tolerance' and 'acceptance' among senior secondary school students of Moslem and Jewish faith. Thus, the central focus combines three key areas of enquiry: firstly, whether the study of literature can lead to a change in attitudes; secondly, an examination of how text selection influences the educational environment for fostering the principles of multiculturalism; thirdly, whether this exercise could lead to a programme of interfaith study to serve the explicit aims of the National Curriculum Statement of 'Education for Democracy', taken from the Preamble of the Constitution which aims to heal the divisions of the past, free the potential of each person and build a united South Africa [1]. The principles that "underpin the curriculum are social transformation, outcomes based education, and high knowledge and high skills."[2]

[1] Department of Education, *National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (General)*, Pretoria: Department of Education, 2002, p1
[2] Ibid

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Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:

There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,

And drinking largely sobers us again.

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There is no practice in the English classroom

which is not laden with social significance.

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If culture means anything, it means knowing what

value to set upon human life: it's not somebody with

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That's not culture. Culture is the openness of the individual

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Chapter One

1. INTRODUCTION: THE WHY AND THE WHAT.

A little learning is a dangerous thing
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.
[Alexander Pope: An Essay on Criticism]

My research investigates the possibilities for meaningful dialogue between groups of learners from different religious backgrounds, stimulated by their shared learning of multicultural texts. My approach interrogates what may be achieved by revising some aspects of the curriculum to shift from traditional notions of literacy to valorization of multiliteracies: cultural literacy, media literacy (in this context the 'reading' of two films), as well as critical literacy. Such an interrogation presupposes that English language learning is not an end in itself but a way to establish relationships, a way of acting in the world.[3]

The end of Apartheid led to the creation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) which provided a basis for curriculum transformation and development in South Africa, and for creating a united, tolerant and respectful South African community. Despite the emphasis on multiculturalism in the post-Apartheid curriculum design, it is not clear that conceptions of what is appropriate for text selection have altered since

[3] *National Curriculum Document* http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/discuss/language.html, 2006, p.2.

Apartheid's demise. The matriculation literature syllabus for the national and independent examining boards (see appendix 1) is a case in point.

In the Independent Examination Board's poetry syllabus there are twenty one poems, the majority of which are drawn from the traditional canon. Only three engage with a cultural identity that reflects diversity: *A young man's thoughts* deals with the 1976 race struggle against Apartheid; *Circumcision* deals with the loss of innocence that the Muslim ritual of circumcision provokes for the narrator; and *On aging* deals with the universal problem of aging but reflects the voice of a black American poet. [It is also interesting to note that only two set poems are written by women, which similarly bears examination in the multiculturalism debate. This argument is developed further on pages 18 and 19]

In the section on the novel there is a choice of a Kenyan text which engages with indigenous African voices, and in the Portfolio section an effort to explore some 'other voices' in the Arundathi Roy, Lauretta Ngcobo, Mda, McBride and Morrison selections. But these are not compulsory and could be replaced by a play or film drawn from the list which again reflects by and large the absence of cultural diversity.

The national examining body, the Gauteng Education Department, has a literature syllabus that is even more startling in its failure to engage with the principles of multiculturalism explicitly stated in the National Curriculum Statement. All the poems are by dead white male poets, the plays are by

Shakespeare and in the choice of novel the selection is from Dickens, Orwell, Gordimer and Bessie Head (and hence some diversity).

Clifford[4] cites Bahktin who believes that there are no integrated cultural worlds or languages. All attempts to posit such abstract unities are constructs of monologigal power. A "culture" is, concretely, an open-ended, creative dialogue of subcultures, of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions.[5] It is to this ideological position that the new national education principles speak.

Thus, the contribution such text selection makes to nation building, and the elimination of racism requires interrogation, and the thick description of the interfaith exchange that has formed the core of this research has some interesting possibilities to contribute to such an interrogation.

The context of my teaching experience is a Jewish monocultural site, where learners have limited opportunity for dialogue with other learners whose racial and religious identity is different from theirs, and particularly, almost no opportunity for dialogue with Muslim learners. It seems, thus, important to establish whether such insularity has led to tensions regarding Muslims, and of course whether Muslim learners feel tensions regarding Jewish learners. Moreover, it seems to me to be crucial to interrogate questions of identity, and whether there are common markers of identity within these groups to establish links between these learners.

[4] Clifford, J. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art,* Harvard University Press: 1998.
[5] Ibid, p. 46.

Research Questions

My research is focused around three key questions:

- Can the use of multicultural texts lead to dialogue?
- Can dialogue lead to breaking down of divisive stereotypes?
- If so, what then are the implications for the selection of texts in the language curriculum given that the National Curriculum Statement sees language as a means to act in the world, and prioritizes cultural literacy as much as literacy that enables reading, writing, and numeracy.

We are a society consciously undergoing transformation, The study of texts that engage with our differing cultural identities is pedagogically appropriate for opening a window into our differing (and common) identities and can play an essential role in building values of democracy and anti-racism which are transformative. Critical literacy development may be generated through texts that enhance cultural literacy. Visual literacy and media literacy all provide "access to the world and to knowledge through development of multiple capacities within all of us to make sense of our worlds through whatever means we have." [6]

The following anecdote illustrates my central concerns about the assumptions we make about individuals (or groups) from racial or religious backgrounds different

[6] *National Curriculum Document*, 2006. p.2.

from our own, and leads me to investigate what happens when a teacher engages with texts from outside the traditional canon in the English classroom.

A friend tells of an experience at a university in the United States in which he did a course on conflict resolution as part of his Master's Degree. Four Palestinians and four Israelis were brought from the Middle East to participate in the study. There was a particularly gregarious Jewish fellow who participated in the research. He engaged warmly with all the students except for a female Palestinian student. She gauged that as he was South African, he was probably racist, and as he was Jewish, he was probably virulently anti-Palestinian. Each day, he would come into the canteen and join the international students, and deliberately ignore Maha.

Towards the end of the programme, he came up to her one day and told her that he could hardly bear to look at her, because she looked so much like his ex-girlfriend, and it caused him so much pain to be near her.

In that instant, she realised how utterly false all the stereotypes, and preconceptions that she had imagined, were.[7]

As the anecdote above indicates, it is most often the case that students are divided, not by actual realities, but by perceptions based on political visions of reality. Edward Said in his *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978*)* makes some interesting observations on stereotypes. He stated that the "universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space

[7] As narrated by Howard Sackstein of his International Conflict Resolution class- Harvard University, 1991.

beyond ours which is 'theirs'…is enough for 'us' to set up boundaries in our own minds; 'they' become 'they' accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are different from 'ours' ".

What is ironic, is that according to Said, languages such as Arabic, Hebrew, Indian, Mongolian, Chinese, Burmese, Japanese, and so on, are all "the strange (the Orient, the East 'them')",[8] yet we, Moslem and Jew, perpetuate our own distance from one another by upholding the stereotypes to which we ourselves are subjected.

My interest in the work of Said has led me to an interest in researching whether, in fact, there is a bridge between cultures through the study of film texts, and whether such a bridge may encourage an interfaith dialogue, and so forge a bond between students, from these two faiths whose positions have been established by traditional narratives. These narratives, derived from political and military conflict elsewhere in the world, are 'scaffolded' by polarising religious allegiances. It is hoped that literature's great power may generate a new chain of responses, a transformative heuristic narrative, an abandonment of the monocultural narrative.

[8] E. Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Penguin, 1978, p.43.

Chapter 2 : Methodology

There is no practice in the English classroom

which is not laden with social significance.

Gunther Kress: Writing the Future

Dialogue is a pedagogical method which I, like Elizabeth Ellsworth, believe has a "constitutive force"[9]. It has the power to establish and enact. The philosopher Martin Buber believes that "[t]rue dialogue expresses an essential element of the human spirit, when we listen and respond to one another with an authenticity that forges a bond between us."[10]

Modes of address are crucial to this research framework. Dialogue and film are modes of address both with their own political and theoretical possibilities. How the learner engages with film inherently assumes a relationship between the viewer and the film's story and image system. Elizabeth Ellsworth in *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy and the Power of Address* states that in order to make sense of a film text, "the viewer must be able to adopt – if only imaginatively and temporarily – the social, political and economic interests that are the conditions for the knowledge they construct."[11]

Moreover, her analysis of dialogue as "constitutive force" scaffolds the debate within the New London Group theories around pedagogy as a basis for future worker

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[9] E. Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy and the Power of Address*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1997, p.15.

[10] M. Buber, "Island of Freedom: Philosophy of Dialogue, a Religious Existentialism", in Interfaith Dialogue in Post 9-11 America

[11] E. Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy and the Power of Address*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1997, p.25.

participation and the conditions that a successful globalised and culturally diverse workplace requires. From my own pedagogical position, dialogue infers mutuality. Learning that is teacher-centred or 'monologic' is ultimately a contested relationship. Dialogue as learning, as I suggest in this research, particularly dialogue among students in a co-operative learning and cross-cultural framework, may be the answer that Vandeyar - whose theoretical position on Multiculturalism is explored in Chapter Three - seeks.

Thus dialogue in education can lead to full understanding, which is a powerful learning style, different from the more passive rote learning, reading and memorizing, or teacher-centred learning. It is both conscious and unconscious curriculum. **Dialogue as pedagogy** can lead to new discourse, new narratives about one another.

Visual literacy (film text) is consistent with the National Education policy on multi-literacy. The *National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12* (2003) is the text I have consulted primarily with regard to the **Principles** of the government's new Education policy, which is an education system designed for Democracy. The principles therein, for my purposes, are *Social transformation; Human rights, inclusivity and social justice.*

The National Curriculum Statement requires that "the learner is able to read and view for understanding and to evaluate critically and respond to a wide range of texts." The assessment standards require that a learner can "explain and evaluate the meaning of a wide range of written, visual, audio and **audio-visual** texts." In this discipline they must "analyse how selections and omissions in texts affect meaning; explain the character's viewpoint and give supporting evidence from the text; analyse

and explain the socio-political and cultural background of texts; evaluate the director's inferences and conclusions and compare with own; give and motivate personal responses to texts with conviction." (NCS: 2003)

The methods used in this study were entirely consistent with the government's policy on multiliteracy.

Research Site and Research Participants

The pilot observation took place at my educational site, in eastern Johannesburg. An announcement was made to my Grade 12 class about the research that I would be undertaking and although twenty eight learners were interested, six students were individually approached by me to participate. My selection was based on my desire to have a balance of genders and a variety of religious and political affiliations represented.

A number of colleagues from my marking cluster group were approached, and I was introduced to the head of the English department at a school in western Johannesburg, where there are a large number of Muslim students owing to the existence of a large mosque in the area. A teacher within the English department was to be my liaison person and she made three announcements over the intercom, and an announcement at assembly, to invite senior students of the Muslim faith to be part of a research project being conducted by a student studying for a Masters Degree. Two girls and four boys volunteered themselves.

Finally, the two films selected - one Iranian, *The Children of Heaven*, and one Israeli, *The Summer of Aviya*,- look at the world through children's eyes. Both directors position the viewer/reader to make sense of the world through a child's perspective. This, in my opinion, was a crucial aspect of the interfaith engagement among a group of teenagers.

The first meeting took place on a Sunday in June 2007 at the school where I am employed. Five Jewish learners and four Muslim learners participated. Two non-participant teachers with whom the Muslim learners were familiar attended. When the Muslim students and their teachers arrived, general introductions were made, and the group moved to my classroom to begin the process as I had envisioned it.

The process was based on the following methods:

* The learners were invited to seat themselves in desks that had been arranged in a semi-circle around the television set.
- An introduction to one another and a discussion about identity and how these may be found in 'naming' was facilitated through the handing out of a questionnaire, and teaching of the poem *My Name* by Magoleng wa Selepe.[12] Thereafter, a discussion about our names and their origins and meanings followed.
- A questionnaire regarding the learners' perceptions regarding what constitutes identity was handed out for learners to fill in, based on their instinctive understanding of identity. [13]

[12] See page 32
[13] See page 35

- Introducing film as a text (some general comments about what constitutes a text in English lessons) began the process. It was not necessary to hand out a list of film-technique terminology, as originally planned, as all the students had studied film during their two senior years of high school.
- Showing the two films with a short introduction to each followed. The Iranian film, *The Children of Heaven* directed by Majid Majidi was to be shown first, as the Muslim students may have felt more strained in an unfamiliar environment with an unfamiliar facilitator conducting research. Thereafter,the Israeli film, *The Summer of Aviya,* directed by Eli Cohen was shown.
- After the first film, a dialogue about the concerns raised in the film, and a discussion about the director's point of view took place.
- Time was allocated for an informal set of questions to be written up by the learners regarding issues they would like to ask one another, using the film as a starting point for questions about cultural practices.
- An extended opportunity for discussion not facilitated by the teacher but by the learners within the group occurred.
- The first session was allocated seven hours but took eight hours as a result of the extended discussions. It took place on a Sunday. Lunch, cognisant of dietary laws of the learners involved, was provided.
- A follow up session which gave learners an opportunity to write their own stories, based on their own family history regarding some aspect of their immigration to South Africa,[14] took place five months later.
- The data from the first session was recorded through my note taking during the session, learners' written responses to questionnaires, and learners' written

[14] See Appendix 3 C. van Wyk, *Memory*, and Appendix 2 (Extracts from) L. Mark (unpublished) *What's On At The Apollo?*

comments and observations after the session. This session was not filmed or taped given the possible tensions that I presumed may exist among the learners in the group, and to ensure that learners did not feel uncomfortable.

- The follow up session was also not filmed based on the same (flawed) assumption. Data collected was based on my note taking, journal reflections, and participants' own writings. The second session was a three hour timed creative writing workshop.

Two teachers from the school from which the Muslim learners are drawn observed the unfolding of the interaction of the participants (during the first session only) and were seated in the background so as not to influence the proceedings or collection of data in any way. My own participation was, at times engaged, and at others merely observing and recording. Patten (2002), identifies this research characteristic as "personal experience and engagement"[15] in which the researcher has direct contact with, the people, situation and phenomenon under study. The researcher's personal experiences and insights, and in this case selection of material, are an important part of the enquiry.

Furthermore, according to Patten (2002), the case study approach for data collection of qualitative research requires that the observations yield thick description; that inquiry is in depth; that it captures direct quotations of participant experiences and personal perspectives, and that it takes place in a limited time frame.

[15] M.Q. Patton, " Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods", Third Edition, Sage, 2002, Available URL: http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/johnson/oh_master/ch12/Tabl12-01.pdf

Chapter Three: Multiculturalism

If culture means anything, it means knowing what value to set upon human life: it's not somebody with a mortarboard reading Greek. I know a lot of facts, history. That's not culture. Culture is the openness of the individual psyche…to the news of being.

Saul Bellow: The Glasgow Herald 1985

The theoretical and philosophical context for this research is **multiculturalism**. It is **NOT** within the scope of this analytical framework to interrogate the debate about multiculturalism as a social movement that challenges the academy, and seeks to prove that ***any*** literature is as good as the literature within the western canon. Literature accepted within the canon is upheld by the military and economic empowerment of those whose Eurocentric cultural hegemony and vested interests it serves. It **is** within this framework to study the possibilities for interfaith negotiation that texts representing *other* voices may induce.

Multiculturalism is not a neutral term. In most cases, multiculturalism has arisen to give a voice to marginalized people who are silenced by enduring dominant traditionally-accepted writings. Multiculturalism, as Vandeyar (2003) points out, takes slightly different forms in the countries in which it has arisen as a movement:

from ethnic studies courses to aspirations for systemic change to bring about educational equality for all learners; to minority studies about disabled or gay people who felt marginalized and victimized; to sensitivity training to improve the school situation; to social reconstructionist teaching or neo-marxist education which teaches about power, political and economic oppression; to anti-racist education; to the Australian model as a "social philosophy which recognizes the value of cultural and linguistic diversity within a framework of shared values to achieve a harmonious society".[16]

My ideological position in the multiculturalism debate, with which I engage in this research study is **closest** to the Australian model as indicated by Vandeyar (2003).
The South African government follows the Australian model in its efforts to "provide for the needs of a diverse society and foster shared values that could contribute to unity, social cohesion and productive diversity."[17] After all, the *National Curriculum Statement* slogan is "Education for Democracy" to address the injustices of the past. My position is **different** in that I do not believe that "shared values" are the only solution to achieving "a harmonious society". I do believe that **dialogue** which opens up an understanding of 'shared' and 'different' values may lead to negotiation (possibly acceptance and tolerance). Moreover, as Clifford (1986) states, "Cultures do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship".[18] The learners from the Muslim and Jewish faiths do not represent unequivocally discrete cultural groups: I do believe that there are

[16] S. Vandeyar., "The Jagged Paths to Multicultural Education: International Experiences and South Africa's Response in the New Dispensation", South African Journal of Education, 23 (2003): p. 195.
[17] Ibid
[18] J. Clifford & G. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986, p.10.

many ways of being ordinary, of being human, and for the purposes of this dialogue, of being young.

Thus far, the matriculant learners who are part of this study, and who attend a private Jewish Day School have engaged in texts prescribed by the official syllabus of the Independent Education Authority (the IEB) that entrenches particular stereotypes. The matriculation syllabus for the Muslim students at a western Johannesburg school who write the GED exam, similarly, as explained earlier, merely nods at pluralism. Appendix 1 which outlines the official literature syllabus for both Government and Independent schools leads me to my assumptions about what has been included and, more significantly, omitted from the syllabi.

As schooling is "the major mechanism of secondary civic socialization"[19] I would contest the view held by dissenting voices such as Cynthia Ozeck (1995)[20] who contend that multiculturalism "pretends to be about literature, and engages in social work based on population ratios and bloodlines"[21]. This could be seen as a potential weakness: however, I suggest that the English classroom is a space for negotiating meaning within the highest order of critical thinking, evaluation and synthesis, and alternative text selection (whether film, play or novel) is **literature** usefully and broadly redefined by Terry Eagleton as "non-pragmatic discourse"[22]. Also, the required higher order thinking is available through pedagogic methodologies beyond

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19 L Outlaw Jnr, "Multiculturalism, Citizenship and American Liberal Democracy" in Theorizing Multiculturalism, ed. C. Willett, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, p. 392.

20 C. Ozick, "Making Our Way Back to the Mother Ship" in Writing Jewish Fiction In and Out of the Multicultural Context, ed. J.L. Halio & B. Siegel. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997, p.9.

21 A. Furman, *Contemporary Jewish American Writers and the Multicultural Dilemma: Return of the Exile*, Syracuse: University Press, 2000, p. 9.

22 T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, p. 9.

Formalism or Practical Criticism. Njabulo Ndebele offers some interesting insights into "*Redefining Relevance*" (1991) which are useful for our South African context.

Ndebele states that "what may need to be emphasised is that if the recognition that English belongs to all who use it is more than academic, then in multicultural societies, English will have to be taught in such a way that the learners are made to recognise themselves through the learning context employed… as self-respecting citizens of the world".[23]

Thus, I do **not** declare for the purposes of my research or for English teaching in general, that we throw out all traditional texts, but that we consider a programme of text selection that facilitates an opening to the "other". This then presents an opportunity, a challenge and an advantage for the critical rethinking of text selection and what its implications could be for the new curriculum.

This does **not** mean, in my opinion, that we replace traditional texts from within the canon to "protest literature that merely changed emphasis: from the moral evil of Apartheid, to the existential and moral worth of blackness"[24]. When we consider, as Ndebele suggests, what kind of education we want for our future we must consider a future with an "alternative ideology"[25] one with which, I suggest, this study engages.

A most relevant study by the New London Group (2000) critiques curriculum and how social conditions, internationally, require the interrogation of the role of

[23] N. Ndebele, "The English Language and Social Change in South Africa" in Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture, Johannesburg: COSAW, 1998, p.115.
[24] N.Ndebele, "Redefining Relevance" in Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture, Johannesburg, COSAW, 1998, p.64.
[25] Ibid, p.66

pedagogy. Crucially in their chapter on *Designing Social Futures*[26] they outline what has to be "the new norm"; that through a redesigned curriculum, a new vision, through pedagogy, of a transformed set of relationships and possibilities for social futures exists.[27] This theoretical analysis, of pedagogy as design, points to the research question with which I am concerned regarding selection of texts and the implications for curriculum design.

The situational and circumstantial contexts of each of the groups of learners in my proposed research is central to my study, because each group, without design, manifests exactly what appears to be the weakness of government policy on multiculturalism: policy which is at one level ideologically sound, but which seems logistically improbable with regard to implementation. Saloshna Vandeyar (2003) would argue that "silence is also policy."[28] Therefore, it follows that the government's failure to address the problems of implementation of multicultural education is a problematic policy of non-engagement, or silence. Rhetoric without strategies for implementation is useless.

With this dilemma in mind, I have chosen this area of research, as my own learners, who attend a co-ed homogenously Jewish school, do not have opportunities to confer meaningfully with learners of the Muslim faith, although they do have many opportunities for engagement with Xhosa, Pedi and Zulu teenagers who are English Second Language learners (through outreach work which comes with its own problematic patronage issues).

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[26] For further reading see B. Cope & M. Kalantzis, *Mulitliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures,* South Yarra, Australia: Macmillan , 2000, p.18.
[27] Ibid p.19
[28] S. Vandeyar., "The Jagged Paths to Multicultural Education: International Experiences and South Africa's Response in the New Dispensation", South African Journal of Education, 23 (2003): p. 193.

Moreover, the Muslim students from a co-ed non-denominational, multiracial government public school may have, I venture to assert, few if any opportunities for meaningful dialogue with Jewish learners despite there being a number of Jewish learners in the school.

The government has no intention of handing over religion in education to religious communities. It is the express intention of the government for schools to deal with religious instruction under the banner of constitutional protection for all. Moreover, it shifts the focus of equating religion with morality: it sees religion in education as having a "formative function"[29] as religion asks fundamental questions about humanity, about what it means to be human. It asks questions "about society, about the poor, the weak and the lonely, and about our responsibility to them… It asks about scarce resources, and about sustainable living."[30] The 1995 Deputy Minister of National Education, Smangaliso Mkhatshwa, stated that central to the discussion document of the Committee on Teacher Education Policy (or COTEP 1995) is "[t]he development of an awareness of the religious dimensions of life and of religion within a multicultural society".[31]

One of the key influences in my methodology has been my meeting and interviewing of a Libyan exile, David Gerbi, who has written an autobiography, *Making Peace with Qaddafi* (2007*),* from whom I have learnt that *tolerance does not come from a place*

[29] S. Mkhatshwa, (Opening address to conference on religious education) *Multireligious Education in South Africa: Problems and prospects in a pluralistic society*, UNISA, (3-4 July 2007), p.xvi.
[30] Ibid
[31] Ibid p. xvii.

of weakness, but a place of consciousness. Gerbi, a Jungian psycho-analyst, uses dramatic performance and dance as a trigger to dialogue and negotiation

The two films chosen for the purposes of this research are *Children of Heaven* a 1997 Iranian film by director Majid Majidi, in Persian with English subtitles, presented by Miramax Films, and *The Summer of Aviya* a 1988 Israeli film by director Eli Cohen, in Hebrew with English subtitles based on the autobiographical novel of Gila Almagor. Both films are stories about young children and the issues they deal with are universal issues like poverty, alienation, bullying, parent-child relationships, love, respect, and honour. This is, as far as I can tell, an innovative way of doing research in the field of multiculturalism, as my analysis of the work of, for example, Felman and Felluga (1992), as follows, will illustrate. It is in the everyday that we find our common humanity.

Selecting suitable texts has been an important part of the process. Considerations about the amount of time the learners would have available to participate in the research, as well as the suitability of texts, have informed my choices. Short stories by Jewish authors, Saul Bellow, Tilly Olsen, Grace Paley, Malamed and Salinger had unlikeable neurotic characters whose adult eccentricities and contexts were fairly unfamiliar to the learners. A South African short story, *The Zulu and the Zeide* by Dan Jacobsen was a consideration, but again, I felt that while it was relevant to a local context, the adult characters were not the subject or identity with which I wished the learners to engage. *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood* by Ibtisam Barakat (2007) is an ideal text, which I wish to use in future interfaith teaching and dialogue. This was not selected as a primary text because of the learners' time constraints,

however many ideas and issues from this text are integrated into the research methodology. It is a story of a child's experience of war and dispossession, and how language and writing lead to healing. **Writing our own South African immigrant stories** during the research process was an opportunity for recognition that we, Muslim and Jew, have common integration and resettlement histories and experiences, in this African landscape that was alien to us both.

Shoshana Felman, Professor of Comparative Literature co- wrote a book with Dori Laub entitled *Testimony, Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, (1992) and in the first chapter, "Education and Crisis or The Vicissitudes of Teaching",[32] she describes how her graduate students responded to her showing of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*(1985), a film about the Holocaust. She describes how Princeton students responded to the traumatic nature of the subject in similar ways to people who had actually gone through the trauma of such an event, and so make sense, perhaps, of such an event. This essay provides useful theory about "witnessing", and how it could lead to "a fundamental shift in thinking and in being"[33]

Felman uses raw documents not usually regarded as 'literary'. Her account of the students' reactions, and the way she documents their experience is useful to my research, in the interplay between the ordinary, the practical, the lived experience of the research and its theoretical framework. However, for my purposes, it is not the grand crises of history that are our common experiences, but the ordinary sufferings of ordinary people. This has informed my primary text selection.

[32] S. Felman & D. Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York: Routledge, 1992.
[33] Ibid, p 25

I have found further evidence for this in the work of Professor D. Felluga.

Professor D. Felluga, in his Eng 696 *Theory and the Holocaust"* course at Purdue University looks at the pragmatic goal of history and the relationship between "history", and the "real". While both Felman and Felluga use a similar methodology to mine, the focus of their work is different. They do, however, offer several psychological and literary ideas that enrich my research. One question that Dr Felluga asks resonates strongly with the unconscious, perhaps, choice of my particular film texts: "What happens when one abandons the "grand narratives" of political and military history in favour of the "petit recits" of the everyday." I am reminded of the poem "Commonplaces" by the South African poet and lecturer, Stephen Watson, who writes of the "scandals of the everyday, tortures of the ordinary."[34] This, for me, is the route to multicultural exploration.

What I find limiting in the work of, say, Felluga is the teaching of Holocaust in relation to one racial group only. A comparative exploration of texts is my area of interest.

Multiculturalism as "counter-hegemonic discourse" [35] is the orientation for this work. The key text that has informed my theoretical framework is *Theorizing Multiculturalism* (1998)[36] which is a guide to the current debate on multiculturalism from socio-political and philosophical perspectives. This collection, edited by Cynthia

[34] S. Watson, *Commonplaces,* in Worldscapes, ed R.Malan, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 233.
[35] P. Ntuli, "The Missing Link between Culture and Education: are we still chasing gods that are not our own", in African Renaissance, The New Struggle, ed. M.W. Makgoba. Matube: Tafelberg, 1999, p192.
[36] For further reading see C. Willet, *Theorizing Multiculturalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

Willett, has twenty papers dealing with the issue of multiculturalism from a range of political standpoints I have found beneficial. Bill Martin's (post-Marxist) examination of issues of class in his *Multiculturalism: Consumerist or Transformational* is a particularly useful analysis that deconstructs liberal oversimplification of the purpose and effects of multiculturalism, which, I find, relevant to our South African context.

Critiquing the tensions between equality and difference and the challenges and weaknesses in this pluralistic ideal was enhanced by ideas within Alan Touraine's *Can We Live Together: Equality and Difference*. (2000)[37] His analysis of how procedural democracy guarantees respect for personal and collective freedoms is interesting for the uncovering of the weaknesses of the *National Statement* ideal that entrenches "equality" and "inclusivity" in its educational curriculum. His assertion is that procedural democracy institutionalizes tolerance, yet while safeguarding co-existence, does not ensure communication. [38] This French study is similar to the position adopted by Saloshna Vandeyar (2003)) of Pretoria University who attacks the current anti –racist education policy for its failure to spell out how transformation is to be achieved beyond the utopian discourse around rhetorical terms such as "democratic".[39] Since both sets of students with whom I am working are from immigrant backgrounds, even if they are already second or third generation, they also have ethnic identity and national loyalties that inhere elsewhere. [40]

[37] A. Touraine, *Can We Live Together*, Oxford: Polity Press, 2000.
[38] Ibid, p7
[39] S. Vandeyar, *The jagged paths to multicultural education: international experiences and South Africa's response in the new dispensation*, *SA Journal of Education*, 23 (2003): p. 196.
[40] For further reading particularly relevant to the South African immigrant context in Touraine's work are the chapters on identity politics, the integration of immigrants, ethnicity, and cultural democracy.

Vandeyar's (2003) study attacks policy which uses rhetoric such as the following within the new national curriculum which "supports the advancement of multilingualism in the South African classroom recognizing its inherent value in cognitive learning and affording learners the opportunity to develop and value:

- their home languages, cultures and literacies;
- other languages, cultures and literacies in our multi-cultural country and in international contexts; and
- a shared understanding of a common South African culture."[41]

Her criticisms concerning implementation are valid, and her support for the work of Gunther Kress (1996)[42] with regard to the equality of cultural trade places her in the Bill Martin[43] camp since he believes that addressing class is the way to a transformative multiculturalism.[44] My area of interest, however, arises out of my educational context and as such focuses on **race and religion** as an area of enquiry rather than **class**.

Questions of Cultural Identity (1999) edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay assists my enquiry as to whether the dissonance between "values traditional and modern" influences students' responses to pre-determined stereotypes about race or whether a fascination with popular culture is a unifying identity which transcends divisive stereotypes. Marilyn Strathern, (1999) in this edition, talks of a post-traditional society, (a term that I find very useful) in a world that has so many of its peoples on

[41] Vandeyar (2003), p 196
[42] G. Kress, "Representational Resources for the Theoretical Development of Critical Discourse Analysis in a Multi-Cultural Society", in Texts and Practices. Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis, eds R.M. Caldes-Coulthard & M. Coulthard, London: Routledge, 1996.
[43] B. Martin," Multiculturalism", in Theorising Multiculturalism, ed. C.Willet, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998, Pp 121- 150.
[44] Ibid p135

the move. Thus I was looking for any links in the relationship between learners (Muslim and Jew) whose immigrant histories include values that are considered traditional and those that are considered modern. There are some interesting responses to the questionnaire in the chapter that follows that look at this relationship.

Finally, the text which propelled me into this study is *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said whose writings inform most post-colonial studies, and, thus, must inform how we select, and teach texts in a post-colonial society that wishes to reject 'cultural and religious constructions and racial and religious prejudices' and reclaim
a space for the 'dynamic variety of human experience'.[45]

[45] D. Sered, "Orientalism", www.english.emory-edu/Bahri/Orientalism.html, Fall 1996.

Chapter Four: Praxis.

The end of man is an Action and not a Thought, though it were the noblest.

Thomas Carlyle: Sartor Resartus

I have chosen to adopt a narrative style for the description of the events that transpired in the collection of my data. In this chapter, I will be using italics to differentiate the narrative from my theoretical observations or conclusions.

On a Sunday the Jewish learners and I waited for the Muslim learners and their teachers outside the school library. When the participants arrived, all shook hands and introduced themselves, as did the two non-participant teachers.

We made our way to the classroom where the desks had been arranged in a semi-circle around the television and DVD machine. It is interesting to note that the participants arranged themselves in two groups: Muslim learners on the left, Jewish learners on the right. The two non-participant teachers from the Muslim students' school arranged themselves at the back of the class.

I began by introducing myself to everyone in more detail and outlined my qualifications, professional career, and the subject of my research. I explained my English name (Linda), and my Hebrew name (Leah), and wrote them on the board in both languages. I then distributed the poem "My name" and read it, as an introduction to the importance of identity and how it is linked to naming.

My name **Magoleng wa Selepe**[46]
Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa

Look what they have done to my name…

The wonderful name of my great-great-grandmothers

Nomqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa

The burly bureaucrat was surprised.

What he heard was music to his ears

'wat is daai, sé nou weer?'

'I am from Chief Daluxolo Velayigodle of emaMpondweni

And my name is Nomqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa.'

Messia, help me!

My name is so simple

And yet so meaningful,

But to this man it is trash…

He gives me a name

Convenient enough to answer his whim:

I end up being

Maria…

I…

Nomqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa

The participants discussed the meaning of the poem and what point wa Selepe is making about names. They discussed the Apartheid erosion of identity and culture

[46] R. Malan, *Worldscapes: A Collection of Verse*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town: 1997, pg 248.

through giving names to members of other cultures "[c]onvenient enough to answer [their] whim".[47]

"*Arabic and Hebrew- two Semitic languages, sisters for centuries.*"[48]

Taryn, Hayley, Jonathan J, Jess S, Jess F, Adila, Nabeel, Taariq, and Jameel introduced themselves through their names. It is interesting to note that the Muslim participants each had only an Arabic name, but the Jewish participants each had a Hebrew name and an English or anglicised name by which they were commonly known. The Jewish participants, except for Jonathan and Jess F did not know the meaning of their English names, but knew the biblical references of their Hebrew names.

Taariq explained his name as 'bright star'; Nabeel as a 'noble man'; Jameel as 'beautiful'; Adila as 'justice'. She said too, that the alternate spelling of her name as Adela is Polish and that it means 'noble'.

Jonathan explained that his English and Hebrew name are the same, with the Hebrew pronunciation being Yonatan, and that this name means 'gift of G-d".

Jess F said that her name did not mean anything but that her father had named her and her twin sister after Jesse James. She further informed us that her Hebrew name is Tal which means 'dew'.

Jess S agreed that the English name had no meaning but that her Hebrew name is Leah which is a biblical name.

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[47] Line 14, "My name", Ibid
[48] I. Barakat, *Tasting the Sky*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007, p. v.

Taryn said that her name had no meaning, but that her Hebrew name is Yisraela Esther called after Israel, and the heroine of the story of Purim. Purim, she explained, is a Jewish religious festival which takes place usually in late February or early March of the English calendar. In this holiday, Jews read the story of Esther who saved the Jews from the wicked Haman who sought to annihilate them.

Finally, Hayley stated that she too did not know of any meaning for her English name nor her Hebrew, and that her Hebrew name is Channa.

The two non-participant observers introduced themselves too: Sancia explained that her name is Spanish and that it means ‘holy’, but that her mom told her it was an amalgam of her aunt’s name, Sandra, and her late grandmother’s, Patricia.

Roy said that his name is Gaelic and it means ‘red’.

I added that my daughters are Amy and Faryn and that Amy has a Hebrew name, Ayelet which means ‘little deer’, and that Faryn has a Yiddish name, Feijga, which means ‘little bird’.

I handed out questionnaires that asked a number of questions around identity. These were answered with some unease by the Muslim learners and with more casualness by the Jewish learners, and I sensed that the familiar environment of their school gave the Jewish learners a sense of trust at this early stage of the research investigation. However, I was thrilled with the detailed and sophisticated responses of **all** the participants.

The questionnaire on identity asked seven questions:

- What is identity?
- How do you define your identity?
- Is there a difference between National and Cultural Identity?
- Is there a teenage identity? Explain.
- What contributes most significantly to the formation of your identity?
- Do identities shift in different contexts?
- Do you hang out in places where your identity does not matter?

The second questionnaire was on the meaning of names and asked two questions:

- What does your name mean?
- Is the meaning of your name important to you?

The questionnaires elicited some interesting answers, and I think that these answers require some detailing in this report rather than a summarized overview. The fact that there were only nine participants allows for this.

The answers ranged in complexity and detail. One participant described identity as that which makes a person who he is, how he is seen by others and **the mask** a person wears to be identified by others around him.

*The recognition of identity as a **mask** is an interesting concept. This instinctive understanding, by Taariq, reflects Alan Touraine's position that "most young people experience, either alone or in primary groups, combinations or sequences of all sorts of things that cannot be integrated, rather as though every individual were home to several personalities. They live several different temporalities"*(Touraine; 2000).

Four participants described identity as the means used to define oneself, in terms of

values, culture and religious beliefs, race, socio-political stance, religion, nationality or gender. Another extended this idea to explain that it is the means that a person uses to learn to understand himself as well as others, and that identity acts as a uniting factor and allows one to classify oneself and relate with others. Another participant repeated the idea of classification, and one participant used the terms “comfort zone” and “safety zone”, “passion and pride”. One participant took issue with the term identity arguing that it “implies that individuals have identities which are constant and do not have the potential to change which [he] find[s] problematic”.

The next question regarding how the participants defined their own identity also elicited fascinating responses. One participant clearly and unambiguously defined himself as an Indian Muslim.

Another defined herself as a South African girl whose Jewish faith adds to her identity rather than defines her. She regards herself as a “cultural Jew”. A third participant defined herself as a Zionistic Jew for whom Zionism rather than Judaism is the marker of identity, attributing this to her parents’ secularism. She feels that being South African also forms part of her identity, but having been at a mono-religious (and white) school has limited her exposure to South Africa’s cultural diversity. A fourth participant simply felt that her identity is defined by ‘feeling safe”.

One participant identified that how one defines one’s identity determines one’s way of life, and that as people need to feel part of something greater than themselves, group identities are formed which leads to stereotyping. She tries to be an individual and keeps her own opinions and ideas while relating to “others in their groups”.

One thoughtful response outlined that this participant defined his identity by the

people around him, television and real life. These show him who he "should (try) to be or who [he] should not be".

One participant admitted to finding this a "rough" question, as it engages whether she is "Jewish South African or a South African Jew". She feels that she is Jewish South African and that her life experiences make up her identity.

A response that interrogated the question further breaks definition of identity into two ways: "pre-determined and inherent", and secondly "chosen". For this respondent, the pre-determined and inherent identities are "male, South African, white Jew", and the chosen identity is the "beliefs"/ "truths" that could change throughout his life like "liberal", "agnostic", and his "personality traits".

One participant did not answer either question one or question two. Only three of the remaining eight participants did not engage with religion directly as a marker of his or her identity.

These answers reflect that the teenage participants in the study are sincere and sophisticated thinkers and not what Touraine (2000) *calls "communitarian" – obsessed with purity and religious separation.*

The question that sought to interrogate whether there is a difference between national and cultural identity had already been touched on in some of the participants' earlier answers. Again, one participant outlined that a national identity is "tied in with religion", and that "culturally [he is] an Indian". For another of the male participants, the concept of identity is synonymous with individuality, and words like national and cultural "seem to strip/restrict" individuality. A third respondent sees national and

cultural identities as intertwined and affecting and adapting one another.

A fourth respondent saw a clear distinction between these two identities. For her, a national identity is determined by your country and surroundings, whereas a cultural identity is linked to religious heritage and personal history. This response from a Jewish participant was mirrored directly by a female Muslim participant who stated that as "South Africans part of our identity is shaped by our experiences in this country with fellow South Africans; another part is shaped by our families and background." These ideas are endorsed by a male participant who put it clearly when he stated that "[c]ultural identity is more of where you come from and national identity is where you are now with those around you".

The participant who did not answer questions one and two gave a detailed answer to this question expressing certainty that national and cultural identity are different. National identity, for him, is linked to patriotism and history and is separate from culture which tends towards religion, one's own complexities and way of life.

I found this interesting, as this participant is a twin whose brother sees both national and cultural identity linked to religion. Moreover, while South Africa is striving to forge strong national identities among its youth, "the nation state is not a primary point of identification and belonging".[49]

The response that I found most entertaining regarding teenage identity is the participant's who claimed that a teenage identity is passion, energy and being "dangerously strong-minded". Another stated that there are common links in teenage identity related to going out with friends, and partying. A third response stated that

[49] N. Dolby, *Constructing Race, Youth, Identity and Popular Culture,* New York: UNY Press, 2001.

teenage identity is related to a “mixing of cultures” which is an answer that requires further interrogation.

Nadine Dolby (2001) identifies popular culture as a key site for formation of identities. She suggests that youth are not passive receptors for an undifferentiated onslaught of corporate generated popular culture, but instead carefully select, mould, and combine specific commodities and other aspects of popular culture to create identities that are always contextualized within particular circumstances”.[50] *Thus national and cultural identities are not “pre-given, essential traits, but constitute an array of available cultural meanings and identities into which one places or sutures oneself, at the same time internalising those meanings in an attempt to stabilize both oneself and the surrounding world”.*[51]

One participant explained that as teenagers, “our ideals are constantly shifting”, and thus age and experience affects identity. This idea of shifting ideals is endorsed by the response that explained that people are “confused about their identities in their teenage years”, and are trying to “find themselves while fitting in to the boundaries of school”. She added that teenagers are trying to live up to everyone else’s ideals. This is a point that was made by a male participant in response to the question about how you define your identity. Both the Jewish girl and the Muslim boy are struggling with the social expectation of living up to others’ “ideals”.

A clear response agreed that there is a teenage identity which derives from association with fellow teens, which is supported in more detail by the girl who notes that “teenagers have a culture of their own, specific to this period in their lives”, and value

[50] Ibid, p14
[51] Ibid, p9

things relevant to the "space they find themselves in now". This is extended by the boy who ponders that he supposes that there is a teenage identity because teenagers are going through similar "genetic" (physical) changes and "seem to share something with each other".

A female respondent altered the focus of the general trend of the responses to this question asserting that teenage life "is a time when you start to formulate your own identity: the transition from the identity that was taught to you as a child to the identity you yourself begin to believe in".

There appeared to be consensus among the participants regarding what contributes most significantly to the formation of identity: environment, family values, religious beliefs, One participant mentioned that her youth movement contributed to the way she viewed "the world and issues". Another participant made an interesting observation that "society's reaction to your stereotypical identity" influences your identity.

This indicates that acceptance within the larger framework is crucial for moulding identity. This indicates, also, that the Muslim and Jewish participants cannot be identified (for the most part) by their answers. This is particularly significant given my central thesis that Muslim and Jew are not discrete or naturally divided groups, but become positioned, in society, by what Touraine (2000) calls the "majority", who are threatened by what they perceive to be cultures which are "communitarian" and therefore stronger, and so marginalise such communities socially, but permit their economic activity. As mentioned in Chapter One, we perpetuate our own distance from one another by upholding the stereotype to which we ourselves are subjected.

Six out of the eight learners strongly agreed that identity shifts in different contexts, with one student commenting again on the masks one adopts in different contexts. A third student recognised that identity is complex, and different "parts" are adopted in order to relate to others in certain situations". One student did not fill in this page, and the twins disagreed that identities shift, stating variously that the contexts "shape to your identity", and that a strong identity does not shift in different contexts.

One of the twins felt that identity always matters and affects how he reacts to different situations and surroundings. A female participant believes that she does 'hang out' in places where identity does not matter, but that one's identity is always present and cannot be ignored.

A male participant stated that he is comfortable with his identity wherever he goes so hanging out in places where identity does not matter is not an issue. Another indicated that he hangs out with people of all types, and a provocative response suggested that "such places do not exist".

This is a profound concept, indeed. Dolby adopts the term "site" (*Foucault,!972)* *to suggest that popular culture, race, religion or any other site is not "a solid, fixed object , but instead an ever-changing network of movement, which is structured by and through apparatuses of power, and is itself a result of struggle." I am amazed that teenagers have such an acute understanding of the issues, and that the responses reflect intellectual variety that is independent of their being classified according to cultural or racial identification. James Clifford states that "Twentieth century identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures or traditions".*[52] *With one*

[52] James Clifford: 1998, p14

exception, the participants responses clearly reflect this vision.

I had decided to show the Iranian film, *The Children of Heaven*, which opens a window to a number of Islamic cultural practices regarding the taking of tea, Mosque attendance and rituals, dress code, Koranic school attendance, shoe removal in homes, as well as a universal story about parent-child relationships, sibling relationships, and economic hardship. The story is about a young boy who loses his sister's red shoes while taking them to be mended, and his and his sister's efforts to share shoes and still cope with punctual school attendance. The film looks at the young boy's efforts to come third in a long distance race for which the (third) prize is a pair of shoes, and how, poignantly, winning (the race) may be losing.

The DVD would not work on my classroom audio-visual system (It was bought on Amazon.com and I had not thought to check this detail, given that I had watched the film repeatedly at home without any problems.) Thus, we watched the Israeli film, *The Summer of Aviya.* This film does not open a window to specifically-Jewish practices, although Jewish identity is intrinsic to the story which explores the lives of new immigrants in a post war, (post Holocaust) emerging Israeli state. It takes a look at immigrant Israelis from European countries (particularly Germany) and their efforts as pioneers to transpose European culture to the agrarian, rough, Israeli context. The film looks at alienation through characterization of a woman who fought as a partisan in the underground, against the Nazis and who has become marginalised in, an derided by, her community for her unbalanced mental condition. Her daughter is mockingly called 'Partisanke' and loses her own identity in the community's rejection of her and her mother. The film looks at bullying, at marginalisation, at mental illness, at children's dreams and fantasies and how the imaginative world and reality collide

with one another.

At the end of the film, we discussed the themes and cinematic expertise of the director. The participants kept steering the discussion to identity, probably because they thought that that is what I expected, given that I had given them the worksheets on identity.

Adila made an important observation that the head-covering that the child, Aviya, had worn had masked and shrouded Aviya's identity. We discussed the role of Aviya's white head-covering and what it signified: shame, humiliation, and difference. She wears the head-covering to shield her bald head which had been shaven to rid her of lice-infestation.

I steered the topics to marginalisation, children's cruelty to one another, group identity and its force against the 'outsider'. Taariq was deeply moved and disturbed by the community children's mocking and hurtful treatment of the young Aviya. He expressed a sense of incomprehension at how a group could 'gang up' against a vulnerable young individual. I wondered if this had been his own youthful experience as, of all the participants, he was most moved by the sequences of child bullying.

Jonathan J made the point that it was typical even in his own school context, a mono-religious context, for petty cruelties to be the order of the day, rather than the exception. I reminded the participants of the poem in the IEB matriculation syllabus which speaks of "the cruelty in the commonplace", the "scandals of the everyday, tortures of the ordinary".

Jess F paraphrased the poem for the Muslim participants who had not studied this

Hayley repeated the idea that the mother was a partisan, a hero in a resistence movement, and had become ‘Partisanke’ which was an insult rather than an acknowledgment of her heroism.

We looked briefly at the issue of childhood fantasies and how young children make sense of the difficulties in their lives through fantasy, and how fantasy and reality become indistinguishable when a need to reorder the world is so desperate.

Taryn commented that there was a similarity between the refined dancing teacher and the vagabond child. Both were ‘only children’ (no siblings) of single parents (mother only). This was interesting for me as I had not thought of this connection, and Adila continued the point that Taryn had raised in that both mothers were out of touch with their child’s needs and aspirations, therefore there was marginalisation within the family too, not only in the wider community. She continued to observe that exterior material differences separated the girls but common isolation and mutual understanding united them.

I was excited by these ideas, some of which had extended my own ‘reading’ of the film. I was even more excited by the general response to the film and the thoughtful discussion it had evoked. I observed a clear distinction in the tentative response of the Muslim participants to the questionnaire, and their comfortable and sincere engagement with the ideas portrayed in the film. The discussion by the group was a discussion that did not split the participants into Muslim and Jew. The discussion reflected the participation of insightful and articulate senior students who had advanced visual literacy skills, and comprehensive verbal skills to articulate their sophisticated interpretations of a text. This was what I had hoped for and what I could

build on with the next film.

We broke for lunch and moved to my office where lunch was simmering on a portable stove. Lunch consisted of a vegetarian soup, kosher rolls, and fruit. The participants helped themselves, and then moved to sit on the balcony in the sun of this warm winter's day. They chatted in pairs or in groups sharing their 2008 gap year plans. Each of the pairs or groups was a random mix of Muslim and Jew. The participants did not gravitate to familiar associations. I had not instigated the mingling. The non-participant teachers and I commented to one another with amazement at the natural integration of the participants. I noted that it appeared to be inspired by teenage physical attraction and that they had selected grouping according to unconscious interpersonal attraction. I thought about this a great deal that night and made reference to it in my notes wondering what it was that caused attraction. Was there an instinctive recognition of similarity, of similar interests and world view? Was it physical attraction? Was it an attraction to personality? The overwhelming recognition was, of course, that given the normal engagement of teenagers these interpersonal attractions would occur irrespective of religious or racial division, and given their shared experience of a learning context in which they had all expressed ideas, former stereotypes about one another were (during those hours) replaced by teenage chatter.

Adila spoke about her planned trip to India; Jameel and Nabeel spoke of their gap year as a time to study the Koran off by heart; Jonathan J and Jonathan G -who had joined the group late having been delayed by his obligation to do his matriculation oral during the morning- spoke of their plans to go to Israel on various leadership and learning programmes. Jonathan G was very excited about his oral

examination that morning and wanted to deliver his prepared speech for all the participants. He was very proud of the controversial nature of his chosen topic which was homosexuality. Jonathan J kept encouraging him to say his ‘cool’ speech, but the others were too involved in their own conversations to pay attention to Jonathan G’s desire to perform his speech.

Adila had brought some sour-sticky sweets and spices in two small plastic packets for us to try. The sour fruit had the texture of a date, but the deep maroon colour of a plum. It had a pip in it but was sweet and sour in a synthetic way not in a pulpy fruit way. The Jewish participants who tasted this sweet found it too sour, but enjoyed the grainy spices that Adila had brought for us to chew.

Jess F refused to participate in the tasting and I wondered if this had anything to do with her obsessive weight consciousness, noting that Taryn who is kosher wanted to taste the spices.

Hayley, Taryn, Nabeel and Jameel discussed their plans for 2008. The boys want to study accountancy but branch off into other areas too. Jameel described to Hayley his aspiration to open an indoor soccer club, and she described her hopes to do property studies at the University of Cape Town. Jameel and Nabeel told Hayley about all the places they had lived in, in South Africa, and about their favourite holidays in Plettenberg Bay and Cape Town. The boys described all the extreme sports they would like to attempt like sky-diving, parasailing and absailing. The boys described their forthcoming winter schooling and Hayley described her upcoming trip to America, as part of a GYLC programme. (Global Youth Leadership)

When reflecting on the unguided conversation of the participants, I am aware, again,

of the problems and possibilities facing the government with regard to its aspirations for multiculturalism in education, and how this impacts on teachers with regard to text selection . The South African government has recognised that "efforts to prioritize African music dance and so on" (Ngugi: 1981) [53] *(and especially literature in education) is unlikely in the local context given the huge cultural influence of so many waves of immigration from so many diverse cultural groups. Moreover, to assume that all black people identify with the "myth" (Ngugi:1981) of an unified African cultural identity based on an idealized past, a golden age, is problematic given that it is exactly this sectionalization or division that the Apartheid government used, to create an ethnic divide and rule policy.*

The contemporary models on which young people mould their identity are various and mixed. 'Africanization' of the syllabus must evolve according to what influences the learners value, rather than an extrinsically imposed ideological educational or literary model.

Thus the point is that literature in education that serves the multiculturalism ethos through a policy that only looks at black and white is sectionalization, whereas a view of multiculturalism that unites different cultures by giving an insight into a host of cultural stories as part of "the lived experience of life" (Touraine:2000) will, surely, give multiculturalism a greater chance of success.

"The economic, material, language religious and other differences between colour groups are ***real****. They influence and determine the ways in which people live and experience their lives".*[54] *To assume a national identity can be imposed by a*

[53] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics,* London : Heinemann, 1981, p 38.
[54] Neville Alexander, *Sow the Wind,* Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1985a, p 52-53

standardized educational model is to ignore the reality of our differences. Alexander suggests that the way to draw all of this diversity into a national culture is to make the "songs, stories, poems, dance… common property of all". He suggests that "in this way, we shall eliminate divisive ethnic consciousness and separatist lines of division without eliminating our cultural achievements and cultural variety."

We then moved to my house which is a kilometre away from the school, after the non-participant teachers and I had discussed the alternatives of postponement of the screening, or the shifting of venues as a solution to the DVD problem. All three teachers felt that postponement would present logistical problems given the time constraints of the matriculants, and would, moreover, break the flow of what had been initiated. After consultation with all the participants in the group who were comfortable with the venue shift, we all piled into cars and made our way to my house, where the students arranged themselves in the lounge. This time there was a clear division in seating positions as the Muslim students sat on upright dining room chairs, and the Jewish children arranged themselves on the couches and on the floor. Clearly, the shift in venue had introduced a vibration of tension or uncertainty.

The film *The Children of Heaven* (which is in Persian with English subtitles) was shown (without any technical glitches), and the students became absorbed in the daily lives of the children, Ali and Zhara, whose struggle to share a pair of shoes without their parents' finding out, or their being caught for late arrival at school, captivated the hearts of all the students (and teachers).

After the film was shown, I discussed the cinematic devices used by Majidi, particularly his use of visual images rather than dialogue, music, water and the

goldfish symbolism and his use of the street life of an Iranian village rather than a contrived set for his filming. When the sequences shift to the rich suburbs of Tehran, a new dimension of altered perceptions about what constitutes Islamic culture, in a more Western and economically privileged environment, is raised.

That all the little girls in Zhara's school wear white head-scarves (like Aviya did), but for reasons of religious observance, was an interesting starting point for discussion. Adila explained that the little girls wear the hijab or head-covering as adherence to the dress code of modesty, as they do the uniform grey cloak, jilbab or chadar, over their other clothes. What is visible are the shoes, which form such a key element of this tale. Taryn explained that there is a similar practice among orthodox Jewry which is a modesty code governed by rules of Tzniut.

Tariq explained that the word hijab originally meant a veil separating the space between male and female, and Taryn added that Jews still have a veil or Mechitzah which is used to separate men and women during prayers.

The group discussed how in the film *Children of Heaven* the wearing of the headscarf conferred identity and group acceptance (without which there may be persecution) , whereas in the film *The Summer of Aviya* the head-scarf conferred alienation, difference, exclusion from the group and became, itself, a marker for persecution. The group discussed their own dress codes, and how they identified themselves religiously, despite not conforming to strict dress codes. The Muslim male students explained that they do wear traditional garb for mosque attendance, and there was some discussion about identity at this point.

Adila explained that a Muslim is first and foremost a Muslim. All other identities are

subordinate. It is that identity that unites Malaysian, Iranian, Indonesian, Saudi Arabian, Indian and all other Muslims above and beyond national, popular, global, political and any other identity. All Muslims can read the Koran in the same language irrespective of language differences.

Jonathan J explained that there were similarities in Judaism. The Torah is written in Hebrew and Aramaic and is read in the same language by all Jews, although all Jews do not understand this language and pray without understanding the meaning of the words. Also, many Jews do not learn to read Hebrew and may or may not follow traditional festival observances and may or may not observe the dietary laws, but identify themselves as Jewish.

The group divided into private conversations. Hayley asked Jameel and Nabil about the difference between the Sunnis and the Shiítes. It was difficult to follow all the conversations at once, but the boys explained some differences of interpretation of the Koran, and the position of the Imam with regard to adhering to Islam. They stated that they had been warned against the Shiites.

The group with Taariq, Adila, the Jesses and the Jonathans talked about their 2008 plans to undertake study programmes overseas. The Jewish participants were, by and large, going to Israel to participate in leadership programmes run under the auspices of Habonim, their youth movement. Jonathan described the Zionistic and pluralistic vision of Habonim and its Labour political allegiance. Taryn interjected that she was going to a seminary for girls in Jerusalem to embark on religious studies for the year. She explained the difference between the Habonim youth movement and Bnei Akiva which is the movement with which she is aligned. Bnei Akiva is Zionistic but this practice of Zionism is inextricably bound with Torah observance. Bnei Akiva

supports orthodoxy in Judaism.

Hayley continued her discussion with the twins about language, and about the different countries in the world which observe Islam. The twins described their Indian heritage and how aspects of the film were similar to, or different from, their own cultural and religious practices.

Taariq was excited to explain mosque observance, and prayer rituals. He described the five prayers a day, facing Mecca, the ritual wash or wudu, and the use of prayer mats. He described the fast of Ramadan. Jonathan J, in turn, spoke of prayers facing Jerusalem, the Jewish fast days particularly of the Day of Atonement, and about Tefillin, the ritual of male binding of leather straps across the arm and head during morning prayers as a signpost of observance. Both religions discourage fasting for people who are ill, under certain conditions.

Taariq described the Prophet Mohammed and how he received G-d's word through the Angel Gabriel. He spoke about the five pillars of faith, particularly the pilgrimage or Hajj, and the Prophet Abraham who is regarded, also, as the forefather of the Jews. He stated that Islam recognises as primary prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. The students were fascinated by the intersections between the faiths. Taryn explained that Noah's son Cham was punished for looking on his father's nakedness, by being forced to be the water carrier, and that it is this burden that underpinned, ideologically, the legitimising of Apartheid: sons of Cham were to be labourers for eternity.

The conversations were called to a close because of the advanced hour in the day and the need for the non-participant teachers to get back. There was a strong sense that the

teenagers could have continued their conversations onward into the evening, and that they were pleased to have an opportunity to meet again in a few months for the second workshop.

All participants were asked to think about their family's immigration to South Africa, and to look for photographs that told some aspect of their family's history and culture (if they so chose).

The participants swopped cellphone numbers and promised to contact one another on the internet communication site: *Facebook*.

Chapter v: The Act of Writing is a Discovery

Good prose is like a window pane.

(George Orwell)

In this chapter, *italics* are used to identify **the stories** written by the participants, not my observations as in chapter 4.

The date for the interfaith creative writing workshop was difficult to co-ordinate. The learners were writing final matriculation examinations for separate examining bodies: GED and IEB and the dates for these examinations did not coincide. Moreover, the learners were reluctant to sacrifice a day for this research investigation prior to their writing as they felt pressure to study, and were tense from this pressure.

A date was set for a Thursday afternoon, in November (at 2pm), the day after all the students would have completed their exams. It was arranged that we would meet at the *Mugg and Bean*, a coffee shop in the Killarney Mall which seemed to be the mid-point between both schools. The teacher who had been a non-participant observer in the first session was not available on this (difficult-to-arrive-at) date and I judged that an open and public venue would be more suitable than once again meeting at the school at which I work, and from which the Jewish learners were drawn. This would create more of an **informal setting**, and would also remove any tensions or feelings of patronisation since the school to which the Muslim learners belonged was unavailable as a reciprocation-venue.

I arranged the meeting, individually, with each of the Jewish learners, but I arranged

the meeting with the Muslim learners through the female Muslim matriculant, Adila, whose cell number I acquired from one of the Jewish learners who had set up an internet communication with her, after the first interfaith encounter. The teacher with whom I had formerly communicated, and who had facilitated my meeting with the participants was unable to make the required contact for me, and encouraged my independent arranging of a suitable time and venue as the learners were intermittently at school as they had study leave and then examinations. My concerns about the ethical problem of dietary laws were assuaged by Adila, as the representative of the Muslim learners, and by each of the Jewish learners.
I was anxious that all my communication had been with only one Muslim learner, although I had sent text messages to all the Muslim learners. None but Adila had responded. She assured me that the Muslim learners would be attending.

I arrived early and explained my requirements to the manager of the coffee shop who was happy to oblige and set up a long table outside the shop but out of the way of passers by.

I waited anxiously for the learners to arrive and the first group of three Jewish learners – Jess F, Jess S and Jonathan J arrived. Moments later, the Muslim learners arrived – Adila, Taariq, and Akeel. Nabeel and Jameel, two of the triplets (whom I had thought were twins) did not arrive, but Akeel had come in their stead. Taryn and Hayley, two of the Jewish learners, also, did not arrive. No explanations were given for this, and none was demanded or sought. Jonathan G arrived a few minutes later. There were three Muslim learners in the group and four Jewish learners. Co-incidentally, among the four Jewish learners both boys are named Jonathan, and both girls are named Jess. This became an interesting topic for conversation later.

Warm hugs and salutations ensued among the learners who had met five months before, and introductions to Akeel were made. Adila had maintained writing contact with Jonathan G by cellphone text messaging and through *Facebook*, the internet site, as had Taariq and Hayley (who was not present at this second meeting.) The learners seated themselves around the rectangular arrangement of tables and continued chatting about examinations. Many agreed that mathematics had been "toxic" and two of the Jewish learners described the horror of the history exam questions which examined a section that had not been taught.

It was a pleasing vexation as to how to interrupt the flow of teenage chatter and begin the creative writing process. Cold drinks were ordered and I self-deprecatingly called the group to order.

I explained that the encounter would be a creative writing workshop and acknowledged that all they had been told in advance of the meeting was to look for family photographs, and to think about some old family stories. During the first encounter I had handed out extracts from my own creative writing portfolio called *What's on at the Apollo* which captured 1940s Doornfontein, Johannesburg in all its sounds and colour. (See appendix 3)

The specific requirements were not prescriptive but they were to think about their South African identities in relation to their families' immigration to South Africa, before they came to the meeting. They had been invited to bring photographs if they chose. Only Jess F and I brought photographs.

I showed the photographs that I had brought and spoke about my father and his being

a tenor saxophone player, and his being ambidextrous. The group began discussing handwriting and Jonathan G made a classic malapropism as he said that he too was “bilingual”.

Jess F showed her photographs of her family in the 1940s in Port Elizabeth and then in the 1950s in Israel. There was some discussion about how they got to Israel, and why and when they returned. Jess told the story of her grandmother being put into an orphanage and the hardship of her life and how she had succeeded in becoming a famous and highly respected Johannesburg actress and impresario, despite this early hardship.

Adila asked about whether the families had come from Lithuania or Latvia and whether we knew anything about Riga. She said that she had been doing some reading about Latvia and Lithuania. She did not volunteer any explanation at this point, but this question was to become significant later.

Jonathan asked about why Jews left from Lithuania. He seemed muddled about the historical causes of the mass exodus and immigration into South Africa, England and the United States in the 1920s.

Jess F gave some details about pogroms in the early 1900s in Russia and about life and poverty in the “shtetls” for Jews confined there, whose areas of residence and types of employment were prescribed.

The students were instructed to think of a childhood experience (their own). They were then instructed to draw this memory, and were given four minutes to do so. There was much laughter and self deprecation, as they criticised their own lack of artistic expertise. There was much sharing and showing of drawings.

I then instructed them to describe this childhood memory in **written** form but using their non-dominant hand. They were given five minutes for this task. [This was an exercise that I had learned from Pieter Oberholzer who conducted the creative writing module that so inspired me in the coursework section of this MA.]

There were once again giggles and laughter and peering over shoulders to look at one another's writing. John G and Jess S completed the task early and chatted thoughtfully about grandparents they had met and lost.

I sat and recorded while they wrote.

These are their memories in the order in which they were read:

Drawing-story number 1

I was about 6 years old and I spent the first day at school, [sic] when I came home I saw my father after work and spent the night talking to him and fell asleep on his boep.

……

So much for a "new"BMX – Number 2

I was testing out my new BMX and the breaks failed on me and I was going rather fast, and flew straight into the gate…face first. OUCH!!

……

The Birthday – Number 3

It was my cousins [sic] birthday at the Emmarentia dam. There was a man fishing and I went to go and see what he was doing. I then started to look for worms so I could fish.

……

Drawing –story Number 4

I was 5/6 years old, and thought I was a millionare [sic]. I found my dads [sic] wallet on the couch and took upon myself to see the contents within. hiding [sic]behind a cupboard [sic] I took all the cards out and placed them in pretty patterns on the floor

……

Drawing-story Number 5

This is when me [sic], joff [sic] & cook got drunk for the first time at Joff's house when we were +- 11 years old. My dad had to pick me up cause [sic] I was sick!

……

Drawing-story Number 6

A bright blue mini, but i [sic] am open air pat methany concert – rain…

This student only wrote key words to describe her drawing of a convertible mini in which two people are sitting, under an umbrella in the rain, listening to a concert.

……

The day Ad learns about "Elloluthings"(evolution) – Number 7

At the tender age of three dad tries to explain why fish breathe underwater but dad and Ad can't!

……

It occurs to me how dangerous it can be to make assumptions or draw generalised conclusions from apparent evidence. The stories are ordinary stories, not culturally or religiously specific, but the Muslim learners have given their stories titles and underlined them. I have simply numbered the remaining four stories. So what may one deduce? Muslims are more formal, neat and orderly or better students? Or that the Muslim participants attend a school that trains them to be more particular about format, or that Jews are sloppy? Can such sweeping claims be made? I would suggest that the only fair assumption that avoids falling into the trap of stereotyping is the conclusion that the Muslim learners provided and underlined their titles. Surely these question highlight the "non-sense" of such universal stereotypes.

So do the above examples reflect Jewish writing or Muslim writing? It is pretty awful writing given that these learners are about to write their matriculation exams, but is that an ethnic judgment or an observation that kids are careless and write in a casual and careless manner? The rhetorical questions highlight the danger of glib conclusions.

As is obvious from the stories, there was much laughter and Jonathan began telling another story about having little bottles of aeroplane alcohol and getting drunk on a

balcony. More teenage drinking boastfulness ensued with three of the Jewish students trying to outdo one another with stories of their drunken rites of passage. Taariq explained that Muslim students do not drink alcohol and that he, Akeel and Adila have not in fact had alcohol, although they listen to popular music, are addicted to the internet communication site ‘Facebook’ and sms - cellphone text message communication.

The Jewish students seemed unaware that any tensions may have arisen during the alcohol discussion, and perhaps there were none. Perhaps it is my own hypersensitivity that made that brief moment a little awkward.

This thought recollected later in my notes, reminded me of the tensions I had felt (or expected) in the first interfaith encounter when many issues around Israel were discussed. The Jewish learners had at that time described their 2008 gap-year plans most of which included a gap year in Israel working on various religious, agricultural or youth leadership courses.

I was reminded then that I had felt a similar unease, not felt by the Jewish learners and was then, and now, amused and thrilled with the sincerity with which the students were able to share their (what was for me potentially controversial) ideas without any preconceptions or affectations about ‘saying the right thing’.

The Muslim learners explained their own food and drink restrictions, and a short discussion about the differences between halaal and kosher dietary laws ensued. Jess S remarked that kosher food is halaal but halaal food is not kosher.

A further discussion here was prompted by the digression to laws of circumcision. I

mentioned that both faiths had circumcision for males as obligatory practice. Joff remarked that a poem “Circumcision” (by Tariq Rafat) within the (IEB matriculation) syllabus described the circumcision of a six year old boy. All the Muslim students vehemently agreed with one another and disputed the possibility that circumcision was commonly practiced in boyhood not infancy as the poem suggested.

They insisted that circumcision was at seven days old, and the Jewish children found that very easy to accept because they explained that Jews circumcise at eight days. Some joking was made of the sweet blessing-wine given to Jewish male infants to try dull the pain of circumcision.

At 3.15pm my daughter, Amy, arrived with her camera, and I asked permission for some photographs to be taken. I explained that I had been uncertain about filming the process because of maintaining learners’ anonymity, and showed the learners the permission form to be signed for allowing me to video the process. I altered the permission form to indicate that the learners were giving their permission to be photographed rather than videotaped. Much primping and preening was done by both boys and girls to prepare themselves for the camera, and there was some disappointment that the photos were taken in long shot, not medium close up. Once again, this decision was based on protecting participant anonymity.

In my reflection notes that evening, I was aware, once again, of how my own sensitivity had been exaggerated. The learners, without exception, were happy to be photographed, expressed criticism of their lack of photogenic potential, and were vain that they should appear flatteringly in the photographs. Again, I was aware how

inaccurate my assumptions were about possible tensions regarding recording the interaction between Muslim and Jewish learners.

Adila and Taariq began recounting what they did to one another in grade 9 which had something to do with photographing, which I was unable to hear and record. This tale made all the learners laugh, and led to a discussion between Joff (Jonathan G) and Akeel about a particular advertisement, and then Jess F joined in the discussion about television in general, and *Gray's Anatomy* in particular.

I had to interrupt the flow of conversation to begin the next creative-writing task. The participants were asked to write a family story, that had come out of their own family's tapestry of tales, or legends. Their story had to reflect the sounds, smells and atmosphere of the setting to give us a sense of a cultural feeling, a cultural nuance that captured the family history.

The learners were given fifteen to twenty minutes to write their stories. When the time was up, Jonathan J insisted on going first as he claimed his would be the worst story.

Number 1 Jonathan. J

This is the story of my grandfather's 'trek' into Southern Africa, from his shtetl-homeland of Lithuania, which was no longer a safe haven for its'[sic] Jewish population. He took a ship down to the tip of S.A, with money that his family had saved up for years. He entered the country and was given an ID document. This was in Cape Town; he purchased a donkey and trekked with it up till Vereeneging [sic], a then rural area, in which he settled. This is the man who was named 'Ben', as it signified the Biblical story in which a mother died while giving birth to her son. He

then opened up a furniture store in which my father Ian later worked at [sic].

And Ian was the second child of Ben and Mary. One day, Ian took frogs and placed them into his sister, Rilein's bed. This was while they were living by the Riviera Hotel, on the Vaal dam [sic]. Ian often missed school with his friends and went down to the river. One day, him and his friends build [sic] an underground hut, they stayed in the hut every day for about a month; this all ended when there was a terrible storm and the water from the river filled up their hole; the boys were extremely upset! ***The smell of cinnamon was present.***

Jonathan's witty adherence to my instruction about smell despite a (we must agree with his self assessment) "worst story", nearly hijacked the whole exercise. We all laughed and laughed, recognising in Jonathan a street-smart teen with a humorous and irreverent style.

Number 2 Jess F

My great grandfather on my father's side was a furrier to the zaar [sic] in Russia. His brother however was a supporter of Trotsky and member of the white army. My great grandfather was warned and told to flee Russia. He boarded a ship along with his wife and my grandfather not knowing to where the ship sailed. It arrived at the cape [sic].

My dad has never actually been to Russia & he's always told me how strange it is to have no concept of his father's birthplace.

Jess's story had a strand of my own family background and I described my grandmother's furrier trade and my grandfather's being a tailor for the commandant in his area. I described how my grandfather came to South Africa and worked as a tailor for McCoullagh and Bothwell, a men's outfitting shop, and how my grandmother came by ship to South Africa with four small children, the oldest of whom was ten, and the youngest, my mother, four. I described the **quota** cards they were given on their arrival in Cape Town, and the anglicization of their names. My grandmother Seijna became Sonia, and my mother Feijga became Fanny.

Number 3 Adila

The Elopement

It all started in 1980 in hustling [sic] Hillbrow with a 'free-thinking' nineteen year old student called Eric who wanted to explore 'the other side'. In 1980 South Africa was under the Apartheid Regime [sic] which prohibited mixed marriages and discouraged inter-cultural mingling.

Eric found the other side (the Indian Muslim kind) in the form of a girl – Ayesha – at Wits. The girl wasn't very studeous,[sic] but Eric often caught glimpses of her near the musty entrance of Wits library sitting with her politically active buddies.

Both being politically inclined wits [sic] students, they inevitably met at protest meetings, and struck up strong feelings for one another.

On meeting Ayesha, Eric decided to be less studeous [sic] and explore the mystical orient a little more.

The young couple were immediately faced with cultural and religious difficulties, and to avoid conscription, as well as bigger trouble, and also to be able to express their

relationship freely, in 1982 they made a dash for it to Zimbabwe.

Adila ended reading her story at this point and spoke a great deal about her parents' relationship and the difficulties they faced. Her father, a Jew and white in an Apartheid dominated society, and at twenty one, was also ten years younger than her Muslim, 'black' mother. This was a very strange story for me as I had left Wits University to begin teaching in 1980, and had I remained to finish my Law degree, I would, without question, have known her parents given that our student political activism would have placed us the same social circles.

She spoke of her parents' social and familial alienation as a result of religious, racial, political and age-related prejudice.

She spoke matter-of-factly about another issue which moved the participant group greatly. Adila is a practicing Muslim. She identifies herself utterly with Muslim values. It was she, I recalled from my notes, who had explained so pointedly and earnestly at the first participant encounter, that for Muslims, there is no other identity but a Muslim identity. She had insisted that the question about whether one is a South African Muslim or a Muslim South African did not apply. She had explained that being a Muslim dominated everything else: your gender, national, political, religious, teenage and every other possible identity.

Yet here was Adila explaining to us that according to Judaism you are determined Jewish by the (orthodox) Jewish identity of your mother, whereas in Islam, you are Muslim, according to the Muslim identity of your father. She was thus, she explained, NOTHING.

Jess S asked Adila why she had to chosen to identify herself as a Muslim and adopt Muslim practices. Adila explained that her father is Jewish by birth, but was non-practicing whereas her mother is a devout practicing Muslim. She expressed a desire to go into a shul (synagogue) in her area and to listen to the singing and read the prayers. She said that her father had agreed to accompany her, but that they had not yet managed this.

This information clarified Adila's earlier question about Latvia and Riga and attested to her private search for clues to her father's heritage.

The participants chatted among themselves or listened while Adila and I continued to talk about Wits in the late seventies and early eighties, and I spoke of the 'ninety-day' detention-without-trial laws, and what political activism was like during these years. I spoke about NUSAS (the National Union of South African Students) and of the uncertainty of whom could be trusted on campus and which students could have been police spies working for BOSS (the Bureau of State Security) and informing on other students in return for university fee sponsorship. I spoke from my own experience of the dangers of any interracial engagement, and Adila was fascinated by another voice describing the era, about which she had heard so much, from her parents' experiences.

She spoke in some detail of the extended family dynamics regarding the acceptance or non-acceptance of her parents' union.

Once again, the stories did not reflect distinct cultures but teen stories, family memories, stories of immigration and adaptation, of alienation and resilience, of the trials and tribulations of the **ordinary.**

It points to what Clifford (1986) calls “the historical predicament of ethnography [in] the fact that it is always caught up in the invention, not the representation of cultures”.[55]

Number 4 Jess S

My very fertile great grandmother gave birth to 6 children, in Lithuania, three girls and two boys. At the ripe age of 16 my grandfather, one of the two boys, was married. An age when the man goes out to work and the wife stays home with the children. His older sister on the other hand was not married and had no intention of doing so any time soon. The war broke out and mindsets were shifted and security for my grandfather’s sister, Hannah, suddenly seemed more important. The six siblings fled the country with their spouces [sic] and parents and arrived in South Africa. Hannah, at the age of 19 an age that was considered old and dried up, in that day and age, could not find a husband. A wealthy man, Silo, arrived on a business [sic] trip from Italy and met Hannah, they fell in love. They wrote to eachother [sic] for a year after Silo returned to Italy, Much [sic] to the disaproval [sic] of my grandfather, her brother.

One morning as Hannah searched desperately through their rusty red post box she came across a letter, thicker than expected. The letter at a time when wax seels [sic] and messages were no more, but would have been suitable for what the letter contained, a [sic] aeroplane ticket and a proposal.

[55] (Wagner: 1975) as quoted by G. Clifford, *Writing Culture*, London: UCP, 1986, p2.

They were married for 30 years in Italy with 3 children only to be seperated [sic] by the death of Silo, however to this day, they still have their letters and love.

Number 5 Akeel

My Grand Parents, and the WW

When my grandparents, (my moms [sic] father and mother), came from India, they wanted to come to Africa for economic reasons. There were boats leaving the shores every half hour intervals.[sic] And when my grandparents finally reached their destination, they found out that both the boats ahead of them had been blown away and the boat after theirs too. It was during the war, and come to think of it, if their boat had been blown up too, I wouldn't be here…

My grand dad told my mom that the reason why they took that boat, and not the boat ahead of them was because my grand mother needed to go to the bathroom, and they had a tough time finding one, and eventually got left behind, so they took the next one. The urgue [sic] to go to bathroom by my granny was a good thing.

Number 6 Jonathan G

My moms [sic] soup:

You know that T.V add [sic], where the little boy calls his mother on a pay fone [sic] and asks "Maa, what you making" to her reply "Just, my death by chocolate cake", whilst she smeers [sic] the creamiest wad of chocolate icing you have ever seen on this tire sized cake.

Well that's how I feel about my moms soup. When I'm away from home for long, I call to ask what soup she is making. It's the first thing I look forward to when I get back. Usually around the shabbas table on a Friday nite [sic].

My taste buds have broadened there [sic] little minds, from the brat I was a few years ago, who culd [sic] sit at the table, for two hours at a time after supper refusing to eat his greens and veggies. Mushroom, brocholli [sic], chicken and asparagus soup are what tantilise [sic] my taste-buds now. They just so good, I'm the one usually going back for thirds.

My mom used to make cake when I was in my nursery school years. From a big cake book, I would choose the crazy space ship or the green dinasour [sic]. Sure my moms [sic] icing was better than that ladies [sic] chocolate icing, she would go out of her way to make the cake exactly like the picture in the book. But I've grown up and whilst I'm still rather into my cake. I call home, when homesick, asking "Maa, what you making?" and long for the,[sic] reply "Just my death by Mushroom soup!"- aah pure bliss!

Number 7 Taariq

Years and years ago, it was the year of the soccer world cup, I'm not sure which year but it was when Brasil [sic] was in the final. My house was open to all friends and family and there would be people over during the matches. The house was never quiet because each and every person had there [sic] own favourite team and fights about the best team always errupted [sic] without fail. I remember the roars from the TV room everytime a goal was scord [sic] and swearing when a player was sent off. The

room was full with everyone sitting on chairs tables and the floor. The excitment [sic] that came out of the room was amazing because even if the people were on opposite teams we all had so much fun which lasted into the early hours of the morning. It was a warm fun time full of excitment[sic] and antisipation [sic] to see the winners of the world cup. Even though we all were thousands of miles away from the soccerfield the room felt like the actual stadiuam [sic].

Adila observed, astutely, in response to Taariq's reading that soccer world cups are a **safe form of nationalism.** Jonathan G asked what she meant and she explained that sport overrode racial, religious, class and other divisive social limitations and created a safe space for national unity, national pride, nationalism.

It is astonishing to me that Adila should be intuitively aware of, and able to articulate, an understanding of what Karen Press in her "*Building a National Culture in South Africa"*[56] describes as "submerging class differences in a populist nationalism".

Press quotes Ali Mazrui[57] whose analysis of East Africa provides a "recipe" for nation-building :

> Four guiding principles help to determine the planning behind social engineering when the ideology is nationalistic. The principles can be formulated in terms of four imperatives: first, indigenizing what is foreign; second, idealizing what is indigenous; third, nationalizing what is sectional; and fourth, emphasizing what is African. The four principles are interrelated and often reinforce each other.

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[56] Karen Press, 'Building a National Culture in South Africa', in Rendering Things Visible, Ravan Press, Johannesburg: 1990, p29.

[57] Mazrui, Ali A. *Cultural Engineering and Nation-Building in East Africa*, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992

Adila has understood from Taariq's story that the fragmentation that exists in society may be "safely" overcome through a united national culture in the sporting arena in that it reaches beyond class, race, economic and religious divisions. Furthermore, she has transmitted this understanding to Jonathan G as a means of decoding Taariq's cultural memory or story.

The conversation veered from political or propagandist strategies to a discussion of television advertisements. Jonathan G was determined to explain the reference in his story to a television advertisement, in which a child asks what the mother is making, and she replies that she is making a tyre sized cake. He explained his reference to his mom's soup which, he clearly felt, none had fully appreciated. The conversation then veered to a general discussion of favourite advertisements, and there was much mirth in the shared recollection of clever, effective and humorous advertisements.

I interrupted the chatter to present the final creative writing task for the afternoon. The participants were to rearrange themselves around the table in groups, that I had determined, and tell one another a story from their family collection. Each member of the pair (or group of three) was then to write the other's story, to write what had been heard. Again, the participants were asked to tell a story that captured a cultural aspect of their identities or families. Once one another's stories had been written, the writer of the story had to tell the story that he or she had been told: in other words they had to tell one another's stories.

Again, this was an exercise that I, myself, had experienced in the creative writing module that I had taken in the coursework choice for my MA. I remembered the

moving way we could translate one another's stories. However, during my own creative writing experience, we were encouraged to embellish or create characterization within the exercise. I did not instruct the participants to do this, as I wanted to explore whether they would characterise intuitively to make the teller's story more intelligible, more accessible, when they were doing the telling of another's story.

I attempted to listen to, and record, as many stories as I could, but knew that I would have, at times, to rely on the participant's opinion as to whether his or her story had been fairly, accurately or meaningfully retold.

Before this exercise began, a short ten minute break was given. The participants disappeared, together, to the toilets and to the mall sweet shop, *Sweets of Heaven.* They returned bearing little paper packets of sweets which they shared among themselves, urging one another to taste their selection of favourites.

The pairs or group of participants were arranged to mix genders and religions: Jess S and Taariq, Jess F and Akeel, Jonathan J, Jonathan G and Adela.

This was the most interesting exercise of all for a number of reasons. In this task, there was a telling of stories to one another, not a reading. The story-telling was enthusiastic and animated. I was amazed that the most shy or least effusive participant, Taariq, was so involved and ebullient. In his engagement with Jess S, he did most of the talking, particularly, with digressions.

The second reason this exercise was so interesting is that there were so many

digressions. They participants kept talking and interrupting the writing. The writers kept interrupting the telling to ask questions which kept diverting the linear narratives. Jonathan J repeatedly interrupted Adila's narration to ask about her father and teaching. (I missed the connection here.) He probed Adila further (and without fear of giving offence) about her extended family's acceptance of, the inter-racial (Apartheid forbidden), inter-religious, marriage of her parents. Jonathan G (who was part of this group but who had to wait his turn to tell his story to Adila) was happily eating his popcorn and observing, while Adila engaged closely and earnestly with Jonathan J.

In the pair with Jess F and Akeel, Jess was smiling a great deal. I record this seemingly minor detail, because Jess is an intense young lady not given to frivolity. I was unable to record their conversation.

The stories that follow are 'a playback' written by the participants who had heard one another's stories.

Number 1

Setting: Simons[sic] *Town*

Occupation: Navy!!

Name: Ein Jacobson

Hobby: Jew Warrior

He was a courageous young man, 16 years of age and still in high school, whilst bunking most days to laze about with friends in the basement hole they dug, next to the river. So after lazing about in there [sic] *hide out, it was P.T and Ein and his friends deciding to go to PT as they rather enjoyed it. Ein got his P.T kit on and was*

excited for his lesson, but the P.T teacher started out with a highly derogitory [sic] *Nazi joke and Ein would absolutely not stand for this. He put is* [sic] *Jew warrior cape on and his head band across his eyes and took to this P.T teacher like a punching bag. This was great Ein was the town hero and then got expelled.*

Fast forward a few months and NOW we're in Simons [sic] *Town and Ein after being expelled is still 16 and in the navy. Most his friends are 2/3 years older. Its* [sic] *a lovely meal for once, corn poridge* [sic] *instead of plain poridge, and Ein got up for seconds! Apon* [sic] *asking the chef for more, the chef replyed* [sic] *with a Jewish eat-so-much racial slur. Town hero, Jew warrior Ein slapped on his cape J head band and sprang into action, to the dismay of the chef, who got a few too many knocks than he could handle – and landed up in court and Ein's outcome pending* [sic] *in Jail* [sic].

The chef was later visited by Eins [sic] *older friends, his side kicks in the Jew name and after a massive 3 day arm wrestle the chef was beat* [sic] *once more! He retracted his complaints against Ein. The town hero was free, the defender of Jewish dignity.*

Number 2

Eric and Ayesha

This is the story of how Harry met Sally.

The political situation in S.A was tough and the liberal students were getting tough. Eric, the 21 year old yiddishe [sic] *boy lay his eyes on Ayesha, a fellow student-activist against the Apartheid machine. The 31 year old muslim* [sic] *lady was getting*

her Honours while the young Jewboy swept her off her feet. As the segregation laws were childishly scary, as well as the mindsets of the respective families, the lovers left to Zimbabwe in order to get married and settle; after finishing their studies.

So in 1982, the young lovers bribed their way through the borders, while the Mozambican Resistance Movement bombed government infrastructure. On their first night, the two so-called 'terrorists' spent the night in a police interrogation room. That night Ayesha was irritated by thee mosquitoes. The next night, Eric ordered some "the killer, which sounded alot [sic] *like tequila, which scared Ayesha; she was hysterical.*

The two settled in Zim for 5 years, and returned to South Africa, the home of their unaccepting [sic] *families. The couple developed different relationships with their family members, depending on how open-minded the couple's family were.*

But this whole story marks the start of an even bigger one. That is the story of Adila and her stance on these arbitrary theistic beliefs. That all depends on how much she can handle unanswered questions.

This narrative reflects a number of interesting issues: the necessity of **editing techniques to be taught in the classroom**, the failure of teenagers to record or summarise in a coherent or fluid manner, and the insistence of the writer to impose a judgment into another's story. These conclusions open other areas of research entirely: the transference (or not) of language and grammar lessons into pupil's writing, and possibly a study into how messages are decoded and subsequently encoded and recorded, and how meaning shifts in this process. But these topics are for another study. For the purposes of this study, the key observation for me is contained

in the title of the chapter: The Art of Discovery is in Writing. I would suggest that dialogue has enabled 'discovery', 'negotiation', 'tolerance' and 'acceptance' among senior secondary school students of Moslem and Jewish faith. It shows the possibilities for the study of literature to lead to a change in attitudes, and how text selection can influence such changes and end marginality.

The value of this interfaith dialogue through the teaching of film texts presupposes that English language learning is not an end in itself but a way to establish relationships, a way of acting in the world.[58]

Number 3

Jesse's family history.

Jesse's grandmothers{sic} *mom's family, they were 6 siblings, and their parents passed away, and left their fortune in the hands of a Rabii* {sic}*, who ran away with all the money. And so Jesse's grandmothers* {sic} *mom started working in a post office. Oh ya, alll* {sic} *the siblings were put into an orphanage. so* {sic} *Jesse's grandmother helped provide for the family, and helped them along.*

There is no judgment placed on the actions of the Rabbi by the use of any descriptive epithets. This is an almost short-hand recording that is different from the styles used in 're-tellings' numbers 1and 2.

[58] *National Curriculum Document* http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/discuss/language.html, 2006, p2

Number 4

The Ledgend [sic]

Jesses [sic] *grandfathers-cousin* [sic] *and his family were taken during the Hollocast* [sic] *in a cattle cart to the consintration* [sic] *camp. On the way while going through a forrest [sic] his mother told him to jump off. At the time he was 12 years old and he lived in the forrest* [sic] *for 4 years untill* [sic] *he got out.he* [sic] *then narrated his story to a man who got the story published. Now at about 85 the story is getting republished into a new book.*

To me I think it is amazing that a 12 year old was able to survive and live on his own in the forrest [sic]. *I don't thing* [sic] *I could ever do that.*

In this re-telling, Taariq felt compelled to add his own *response* to the story, not through attempts at satire or humour as is apparent in some of the 're-tellings'.

Number 5

Family reunion [sic]

He really enjoys his family reunions festive atmosphere – memory of one at Emmerentia dam. Only his father's family since his mother's relatives are in Zambia. They have a family game involving 3 tins & a tennis ball – it seems they have a close connection even with extended family.
They all sat, spoke, braaied.
He lives nearby & his [sic] *they all went back to his house – where his mom made her famous masala & mint tea…. Day concluded with a movie with all the cousins.*

Number 6

The Myth

The myth at Taariq's [sic] family has been passed down many generations, finally ending with Taariq as he tells his story me [sic] *Taariq's great great great …..great as he puts it, grand father traveled* [sic] *through India to Asia all the way through Europe down Africa to South Africa where they settled in middleberg* [sic] *where he started his family and eventually gave birth to Taariq* [sic].

The story of incest

Taariq's great grandfather married a woman name Fattimeh [sic] *and had two children, Fattimeh* [sic] *unfortunately died in while giving birth to her third child. His grandfather went to India and organised a wedding with a 13 year old girl, who until very recently Taariq and his family thought that this 13 year old girl was their biological great grandmother.*

Number 7

-Dafonin

- Jafonin

- Joffie

- Joff

On the 3rd of January 1989 baby Jonathon [sic] *made his gooey appearance into the world. (congratulations by the way)*

“Hello Jonathon!”…

When introduced to older brother Jason, the two-year-old wise one decided that Dafonin was definately [sic] *a more dignified name for his new sibling…*
As Jason’s linguistic skills improved Dafonin’s name developed, to Jafonin… and then Joffie…

Joffie got abrieviated [sic] *to Joff and so baby Jonathon gained a new and lasting identity as Joff.* ☺

The quotation chosen to illustrate this chapter was George Orwell’s statement: Good prose is like a window pane. The writing elicited in this interfaith creative writing workshop was primarily intended to continue the dialogic engagement of the participants and through telling and writing facilitate further ‘discovery’ about one another and one another’s ordinariness, difference and similarity. The writing itself was **not** very good (from the perspective of a red-pen-pushing-teacher such as I), but the experience of writing and of discovery was very powerful.

Chapter 6: Conclusions – What a difference an ‘n’ makes.

East is East, and West is West
*And **ever** the twain shall meet.*

(Adapted from Rudyard Kipling)

I was thinking about how to draw all the strands together; how to make sense of the process of this engagement between students whose accident of birth placed them in faiths that had been polarized by conflict elsewhere in the world, and at different times in history, yet found themselves amid tensions in a multicultural society, itself forging a new identity around nationhood. I was thinking about how to place a value on the dialogue among these students, when an incident occurred last week, in the steam room of the Old Edwardian-Virgin Active Gym, that I attend.

I was minding my own business in the steam room, sweating out the accumulated toxins of the week, and was forced to listen to the conversation of two Hindu women, who were in the steam room with me. The one woman was describing an incident the previous day, where she had witnessed a Muslim woman shaving her legs in the shower. She had rebuked the Muslim woman and pointed to a health warning sign, which said that there was to be no shaving in the showers. The Muslim woman replied to her, “F.. off Coolie”. I was startled by the repugnance of this (narrated) reply, but even more startled by what the Hindu woman then said: “If she was Jewish, I would have been able to say to her that Hitler had not done his job well enough, but as it

was, she was a Muslim."

I thought of the incongruity of that statement, as we all lay in that steam room: two Hindu women and a (clearly invisible) Jewish woman, and how easily I could have responded with a defensive racial slur of my own. The temptation to do so was great. And then I understood the simple value of the exercise that I had undertaken.

In my idealistic naivety, I had expected the research to have a "warm fuzzy" outcome, and I had carefully orchestrated both meetings, with a heightened sensitivity to respecting religious dietary practices and religious identities, hoping to avoid possible tensions that could be aggravated by indifference.

I found that my own assumptions were challenged, about the tensions that may arise. I found my hypersensitivity to discussions about contemporary Israeli politics not shared by these Muslim or Jewish learners. I discovered that my own hypersensitivity to photographing or filming the workshops to have been ridiculous, and my anxious recoiling from Jonathan and Joff's boastful competitiveness about who could be more drunk, similarly ridiculous. This was mildly reframed by Taariq who patiently explained his and the others' non-indulgence in alcohol, and the prohibitions observed with regard to drinking. I found my own panic about discussions around Zionism and the gap year programmes, (some faith based, and some leadership based) not to have been shared by the students, who were quite comfortable sharing their plans to study the Koran off-by-heart in Dubai, Egypt and Johannesburg, learn in a Yeshiva (institution for the study of Torah) in Israel, or attend Zionist leadership programmes.

That I had selected students from similar economic backgrounds and focussed on films that dealt with children's adaptation to hostile conditions in their environments,

also contributed to the defusing of possible tensions. I am certainly aware that had I chosen students from more militant communities and chosen films that dealt with terrorism or territorial claims, the outcome may not have been so ‘feel-good’. (I do, however, believe that dialogue that engages directly with confrontational political issues also has a place in educating young people in more collaborative understanding and vision for the future. This study, however, was based on interrogating text selection for use in the English classroom and what implications text selection may have for the government’s policy on Multiculturalism.) Also, to suggest that the entire dialogue was de-politicized would be untrue. The entire practice was driven to exploring a pedagogy that promotes truly democratic practices in South Africa, not simply the rhetoric or the institutionalised ‘de-jure’ reality but the actualization of these principles, a ‘de facto’ experience of negotiation of ideas.

As Vandeyar states, South Africa should work towards a deeper and proactive diagnosis of the content of the culture of its diverse peoples and find spaces for dialogue. Surely then, in education, transmission of an understanding of one another’s cultures can have a transformative outcome.

I must, surely, conclude that the students who participated in this extended dialogue would not make such glib statements like the ones I overheard in the shower room. I must conclude that the Jewish students’ detailed questions and thus understanding of the reasons Muslim girls of school going age wear white head-coverings, and the practice of taking tea, and of eating rituals, and removal of shoes on entering the home preclude their future dismissive contempt for faith rituals (not formerly understood). I must conclude that Taariq’s sensitivity to the Israeli Aviya’s experience of bullying and Nabeel and Jamil’s questions to Taryn and Hayley about Jewish

practices of lighting candles, observance of festivals, and their discussion about the forefathers Abraham and Isaac whom both faiths revere, have lead to an understanding, acceptance and mutual recognition of one another as youngsters with similar hopes, dreams and obstacles. I must conclude that Adila, who confessed her Jewish/Muslim background during the second encounter, had discovered something about her Jewish heritage, and had found an acceptance among Jews that was denied her in her extended family political dynamic. I am utterly certain that none of these learners could make the kind of remark that dehumanises the other as they, Muslim and Jew, have become person-identified. It seems that in this context that multicultural education works not simply as being "nice-to' the other but in recognition of one another.

James Clifford in his introduction to *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* argues that identity, considered ethnographically, must always be mixed, relational and inventive. [59] Further, a "sense of difference or distinctiveness can never be located solely in the continuity of a culture or tradition."

Moreover, in the South African context, we do not have a monoculture or a national culture. We have an 'interculture' a 'conculture' (Clifford: 1988) which is a useful neologism to explain our diversity. Thus, multiculturalism is important in the South African classroom, because the new South African curriculum demands the consideration of cultural aspects in a text, and the exploration of strategies for overcoming social problems which are the legacy of Apartheid (as well as narratives

[59] Harvard University Press, Cambridge: 1988, p10.

about religious difference).

Literature is a useful tool for encouraging students to grapple with their own experiences, feelings and ideas. If students may be engaged in texts that seem more relevant to their own experience, it follows that a crucial space for debate, dialogue and interaction may result in transforming beliefs. Old beliefs inform knowledge that has distorted histories and cultures, and thus past, current and future perceptions of particular peoples. The group clearly underwent a shift in beliefs about one another as Jew and Muslim and recognised one another as the same: different and similar in normal community.

The (disappointingly limp for such articulate teenagers) stories produced in the workshop are not stories of cultural practices or religious rites, but are stories drawn from autobiography and memory "in which the self and society can be brought to consciousness"[60] In **most** of the responses, the writings of their own and one another's stories, the religious identity of the participant was not apparent. This is significant.

This may give weight to the findings of Dolby that popular culture has become common culture, but, as has been shown, the responses to the questionnaire on identity indicated that the students are strongly faith identified too, both for the more religious Jews and Muslims, and for the secular Jews. Moreover, the discussion after the viewing of the Iranian film elicited a response from the Muslim students which insisted that Muslims are Muslim first and foremost, and that all other identities are peripheral. Yet I re-iterate, that faith identity was not primarily evident in all the stories. This would suggest that perhaps faith does not isolate and separate. It does not make one part of a discrete group with unusual (demonized) practices.

[60] Ibid, p142

Faith is simply a way of worshiping G-d, while life is what we all do in the potpourri of the “commonplace”.

The responses of the Muslim participants to the suffering of an Israeli child, and the recognition of the symbols used by the director to signify suffering are indexical of the randomness of suffering. The cinematic character’s predicament (in both films) is not delegitimized by his or her religious or racial identity, and their dilemmas were most poignant to the group as a whole, who identified with the obstacles the cinematic characters experienced.

There is some repetition of ideas expressed both in the first and second encounters, but these are owing to shifts in groupings and the non-attendance of four of the participants from the first session, and the joining of a new participant, Akeel, for the creative-writing session.

It is, perhaps, as I suggested that in the “cruelty of the commonplace” that we are united and vulnerable.

I did not intend that my work would produce measurable scientific evidence, but I do feel that the findings of this subjective process, exploratory and open- ended, may, I hope, reflect a “dynamic reality” [61] that will contribute positively to the way we think about how we teach, and what we teach.

Thus in incorporating such engagement in the classroom, learners may become “culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts”[62]

[61] http://uk.geocities.com/balihar_sanghera/ipsrmehrigiulqualitativequantitativeresearch.html

As Touraine suggests, Multiculturalism must not be reduced to meaning an unrestricted pluralism. On the contrary, it must be defined as an attempt to establish communication between, and the partial integration of, cultural ensembles that have long been separated. All texts in the English classroom must not be chosen to reflect ethnic diversity. There must be a legitimate place for the study of traditional (canonical) texts that reflect the literary traditions of the past centuries. I do not believe, either, that this is a 'cop-out', a pandering to traditionalists and multiculturalists. I do believe that the interests of both can legitimately and meaningfully be exercised. One serves the agenda of promoting the study of valuable and magnificently written English texts; the other serves the agenda of democratization of education through the teaching of valuable and magnificently written (or filmed) texts that promote an authenticity to and valorization of a multiplicity of cultures.

I have shown that there are weaknesses in multiculturalism, but the entrenchment of diversity and difference as a regulative principle which paradoxically serves to embrace humanity as a unifying force, and not flatten out the differences is not a weakness but a strength.

The observation of the dialogue, teaching of the texts, critical readings, and evaluation and synthesis of all the research was aimed at making suggestions with regard to transformative pedagogy with regard to visual texts, but serves equally for print bound texts. It was aimed to interrogate the vision of what it is that we, as educators, hope to achieve in the English classroom.

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[62] Revised National Curriculum Statement.

Appendix 1

Literature Syllabus IEB 2006-2007

ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE HIGHER AND STANDARD GRADE
PRESCRIBED WORKS
SENIOR CERTIFICATE 2007

A. POETRY
Anthology: Worldscapes (Robin Malan) OUP 1997 ISBN – 0195714571
When in Disgrace : Shakespeare : p5
Death be not Proud : Donne : p8
On his Blindness : Milton : p9
The World is too much with us : Wordsworth : p11
Ode on a Grecian Urn : Keats : p15
Ozymandias : Shelley : p14
Windhover : Hopkins : p 27
Ulysses : Tennyson : p17
The Second Coming : Yeats : p30
Do not go Gentle : Thomas : p72
I thank You God : Cummings : p50
Funeral Blues : Auden : p65
Constantly Risking Absurdity : Ferlinghetti : p81
Ambulances : Larkin : p96
Circumcision : Rafat : p111
On aging : Angelou : p114
Daddy : Plath : p 142
Preludes : Eliot : p 40
Commonplaces : Watson : p233
A young man's thoughts : Johennesse : p237
Decomposition : Gose : p 150

B. SHAKESPEARE : Antony and Cleopatra
(any rigorously annotated edition)

C. NOVEL
EITHER
Wuthering Heights : Emily Brontë : ISBN 0 14 04 3001 6
OR
Petals of Blood : Ngugi wa Thiong'o : ISBN 0 908396 856

PRESCRIBED WORKS 2007-2008: Aug 2006

D. OTHER GENRES (PORTFOLIO)
At least ONE of the following:
Novels/Short Stories Authors ISBN Numbers
Black Water : Joyce Coral Oates 045 2269 865
The Color of Water : McBride 074753831x
Cat's Eye : Margaret Atwood 077 0428 231
The Smell of Apples : Mark Behr 0349107564
The God of Small Things : Arundathi Roy 00065506810
Remains of the Day : K. Ishiguro 0571171273
The Color Purple : Alice Walker 0704339056
Brave New World : Aldous Huxley 0586044345
The Life of Pi : Yann Marten 978 184 195 3922
The Killing Bottle : Jane Fox 0864863969
The Bluest Eye : Toni Morrison 0 09 975991 8
The Mosquito Coast : Paul Theroux 0140060898
Shades : M. Poland 0670855006
Room with a View : E. M. Forster 0140180788
Change of Tongue : Antjie Krog 0 958 4468 4 9
Buckingham Palace: District Six : Richard Rive 08648606
Encounters (short stories):edited by David Medalie (1999)
And They Didn't Die : Lauretta Ngcobo 0869809636
The Good Doctor : Damon Galgut 067 004 7910
Ways of Dying : Zakes Mda 0 19 571498 9
The Secret History : Donna Tartt 014 016 717 3

Plays
Billy Budd : Coxe and Chapman
Road to Mecca/Blood Knot/Lesson
from Aloes/Fugard as playwright: Athol Fugard
Amadeus/Equus (Either/or) : Peter Shäffer 0140481 605/850
The Crucible : Arthur Miller 0435232819
The Glass Menagerie : Tennessee Williams 0435229605
Dr Faustus : Christopher Marlowe 0510338216

Films
The Truman Show/Pleasantville (must study both)
South African movies (including The Promised Land)
The epic as genre (eg Lawrence of Arabia – David Lean, Spartacus – Stanley Kubrick,
Gladiator – Ridley Scott, Troy – Wolfgang Petersen)
Merchant and Ivory period films
A Reasonable Man/The Storekeeper (must study both)
Shakespeare in Love/Twelfth Night/Romeo and Juliet (study first one, view other two)
Romeo and Juliet : Luhrmann/Zefferelli (must study both)
Looking for Richard/Richard III (must study both)
The Talented Mr Ripley
Dead Man Walking
The work of Weir/Tarantino/Stone/Kubrick/Hitchcock/Welles (choose one)
A selection of "Dance" movies to be studied as a sub-genre

Literature Syllabus GED Senior Certificate Examination 2006- 2007

ENGLISH PRIMARY LANGUAGE HG
SECOND PAPER PRESCRIBED WORKS

A. POETRY

Let me not to the marriage: Shakespeare
On his blindness: Shakespeare
Death be not proud: Donne
Anthem for doomed youth: Owen
Dover Beach: Arnold
Ulysses: Tennyson
Mending Walls: Frost
Preludes: Eliot
Do not go gentle: Thomas
Hawk Roosting: Hughes

B. SHAKESPEARE

Julius Caesar
Macbeth

C. NOVEL

Tale of Two Cities: Dickens
Nineteen Eighty Four: Orwell
Maru: Head
July's People: Gordimer

Appendix 2

Extract from *What's On At The Apollo?* By Linda Mark (unpublished)

Sister Sheila has a baby girl nine months after the wedding. There is a new life, a new soul to name after the 22 year old uncle lost in a genocidal vacuum.

Cousin Solly comes home having escaped an Italian prisoner-of-war camp, and hidden by gentle charming Italian village folk.

Family celebrations once again hover like fireflies above the sadness of first born Lazar's absence. Sculpted smiles move through toasting uncles, tipsy and rowdy from Melamed wine, red and rich and sweet; hot burning Lechaims of whiskey brought to the host by a rich potato-farming cousin. Sweet latkes and chopped herring, platters of chicken, kichel, teigel and ingberlach served by matronly aunts in stilettos, diamante glasses and fur stoles.

"Es mein kinde…Es mein bubela," - eat and feast and pain and loss will be forgotten. It's the traditional way – our people's suffering ameliorated by family gatherings and family feeding – reasserting survival, unity and joy for 'landsleit' – Yiddish speaking Poles in an alien landscape clinging to an incontrovertible identity. Solly has come home – a son has survived.

Appendix 3

from Shirley, Goodness and Mercy: A Childhood Memoir, Chris van Wyk, Picador Africa, 2004, pages 4-5

My mother is so pretty and life is good. Even after the accident.
I am my parents' firstborn and I have a little brother, Derek, who the aeroplane has dropped off at our house…I don't know when. Either while I was out on my backyard wanderings or when I was asleep.

One evening Ma is making *vetkoek.* Derek and I are watching her. Watching her roll Out the dough from a fat blob into a thick buttery eiderdown on the kitchen table. Watching her cut it into squares, sprinkle on flour. The blue panelyte table is white and powdery. The primus stove is hissing an angry blue flame. I am four years old and big enough to see all of this if I stand on my toes. Derek is two so he has to get on to a chair to see, and he's sucking his dummy since breasts are so close but oh so far away.

The pan is on the primus stove and into its hot oil Ma places the wads of dough. The pan greets each one with an excited sizzle …*chishhh* … *chishhh* … then something goes wrong and it all turns into a poem that I would write a quarter of a century later.

Memory

Derek is dangling on the kitchen chair
while I'm shuffling about in a flutter of flour.
Mummy is making *vetkoek* on the primus.
Derek is too small to peer over the table,
that's why Mummy has perched him on the chair.
His dummy twitters so he's a bird.

I'm not that small; I was four in July.
I'm tall enough to see what's going on;
I'm a giraffe and the blotches of shadow
on the ceiling and the walls
from the flames of the primus and candle
are the patches on my back.

Daddy's coming home soon
from the factory where they're turning him into
a cupboard that creaks,
but the *vetkoek* are sizzling and growing
like bloated gold coins.
We're rich!

Appendix 4

14/05/2007

I, ……. give my son/daughter…….. permission to take part in a research project which explores interfaith dialogue through the study of text. The pedagogy for such a study is multiculturalism. The two schools involved are Greenside High School and King David High School, Linksfield.

The interfaith research is being conducted by Mrs Linda Mark, HoD English at King David High School as part of an MA degree at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Appendix 5

4th September 2007

Dear Participants

The second session of the study would be assisted by a photographic recording of the process. If you are comfortable with this, please sign this letter which serves as a consent form.

Should you be uncomfortable with a recording, you are under NO obligation to sign this letter.

Yours faithfully

Mrs L. Mark

Signature of participant: ……

Appendix 6




Cigar Lounge
Cigar Lounge

Names Who am I? Taariq طارق طارق

You do **NOT** need to put your name here

What does your name mean?

Morning star (sun) Night traveler.

Is the meaning of your name important to you?

I've never really thought about it but I am a night traveler in the way that I can spend the hours awake at night and still function in the day

What is 'Identity'?

Where one comes from, and how one would define themselves. The idea of identity helps one to understand themselves as well as others. It can act as a uniting factor as it allows one to classify themselves and relate with others.

w do you define your identity?

ow one define's their identity determines their way of e. Essentially people feel the need to be part of nething greater than themselves and group identies formed. This leads to stereotyping. I define myself an individual rather than a group. I try to e to others in their groups, but to keep my individu ideas and opinions.

e a difference between a National and Cultural Identity?

individual's identity would be moulded and ued by a number of factors and experiences. outh Africans part of our identity is shaped by experiences in this country with fellow South Africans, part is shaped by our families and background.

eenage identity? Explain. Both factors as well as others act together in the develo of one's identit

* people our ideals are constantly shifting. different experiences come different beliefs s, age and experience would therefore affect utes most significantly to the formation of your identity? one's identit

Do identities shift in different contexts?

Yes

Do you hang out in places where your identity does not matter?

I try to I guess but part of my identity is an open approach to other people's identities so it is a twisted answer.

Do identities shift in different contexts?

The identity one adopts in different situations would most definately differ. ~~Bec~~ Identity is a complicated idea, and people act and think differently by adopting different parts of their identity in order to relate to others in certain situations.

Do you hang out in places where your identity does not matter?

I feel that such places do not exist.

Appendix 7



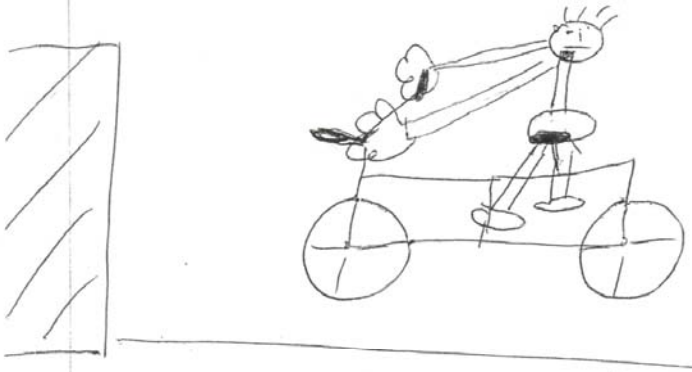
The Birthday

It was my cousins birthday
at the Emmarentia dam.
There was a man fishing
and I went to go see what
he was doing. I was going
to look for worms to go
I could fish



My a ~~the~~ bright blue mini, but I on open air at nethearly lonely — rain ...

Years and years ago, it was the year of the Soccer world cup, I'm not sure which year but it was when Brasil was in the final. My house was open to all friends and family and there would be people over during the matches. The house was never quiet because each and every person had there own favorite team and fights about the best team always erupted without fail. I remember the roars from the T.V room everytime a goal was scored and swearing when a player was sent off. The room was full with everyone sitting on chairs tables and the floor. The excitment that came out of the room was amazing because even if the people were on opposite teams we all had so much fun which lasted into the early hours of the morning. It was a warm fun time full of excitment and antisipation to see the winners of the world cup. Even though we all were thousands of miles away from the soccer field the room felt like the actual stadium.



So much for a "new" BMX...

I was testing out my new BMX and the breaks failed on me and I was going rather fast, and flew straight into the gate... face first. Ouch!!

My Grand Parents, and the WW

When my grandparents, (my moms father and mother), came from India, ~~they traveled to come to Africa, for~~ ~~economic reasons~~. There were boats leaving the shores every half hour intervals. And when my grandparents finally reached their destination, they found out that both the boats ahead of them had been blown away ~~by~~ and the boat after theirs too. It was during the war, and come to think of it, if their boat had been blown up too, I wouldn't be here..

My grand dad told my mom that the reason why they took that boat, and not the boat ahead of them was because my grand mother needed to go to the bathroom, and they had a tough time finding one, and eventually got left behind, so they took the next one. ~~It guess~~ The ~~rest~~ argue to go to bathroom by my granny was a good thing..



The day Ad learns about "Evolutions" (evolution)

At the tender age of three dad tries to explain why fish can breathe underwater but dad and Ad can't!

The Elopement.

It all started in 1980 in hustling Hillbrow with a 'free thinking' nineteen year old student called Eric who wanted to explore 'the other side.'

In 1980 South Africa was under the Apartheid Regime which prohibited mixed marriages and discouraged inter-cultural mingling.

Eric found the other side in the form of a girl -Ayesha- at wits. The girl wasn't very studeous but Eric often caught glimpses of her sitting near the musty entrance of wits library with her politically active buddies. Both being politically inclined wits students they inevitably met at protest meetings and struck up strong feelings for one another.

he Indian muslim kind.

On meeting Ayesha, Eric decided to be less studeous and explore the mystics orient a little more. Eric had recently moved out of home because

The young couple were immediately faced with cultural and religious difficulties and to avoid conscription, as well as bigger trouble, and also to be able to express their relationship freely, in 1982 for it to Zimbabwe

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