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Teaching the Swedish Common Principles as Virtue Ethics: The
Unjust Narrator, Gender Inequality and the Arena of Societal
Transformation in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

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Abstract

According to Skolverket, the Swedish school has two missions: conveying knowledge and teaching values. These values are taught through the common principles (värdegrund) and instruct students about democratic values and human rights. However, Skolverket also reports that students lack such knowledge. Therefore, this essay aims to create a module with the main purpose of formulating and teaching the common principles, by using Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, a text with the ability of presenting ethical issues whilst also making the reader respond to them. To achieve this, the values of the common principles will be extracted with the help of virtue ethics, which creates a conjunction with the book, where three topics are selected: sexism, gender identity and societal transformation. Virtue ethics, representing the common principles, together with Adichie's definition of African feminism inform the analysis of sexism and gender inequality in the book and show how they are prevalent and extensive. Societal transformation is conceptualised and investigated through the use of narratology. Sexism and gender inequality are located in the horizontal plane of an arena, where the vertical expansion of narrative levels creates the urge for societal transformation. Such an expansion is made possible by an implied author, which provides the effect needed for reader inclusion. As such, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is described to entail an ethical challenge, that forces a responsible reader to emerge. Issues of sexism and gender inequality are then used together with the arena of societal transformation to construct a module in English 7, where students may themselves become reasonable readers through a process of critical self-reflection, a vital part of virtue ethics. This is done by employing Socratic and deliberative dialogue and an affective-humanistic approach, which together promote democratic values and human rights.

Keywords: Phaswane Mpe; virtue ethics; African feminism; sexism; gender inequality; societal transformation; arena; narrator; implied author; responsible reader; Socratic dialogue; affective-humanistic approach

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1. Introduction

Swedish teachers face a plethora of challenges. Not only do they need to adhere to the curriculum, integrate current research in their teaching and satisfy students and parents in an increasingly for-profit school system, they also need to harmonise all instances of education with the contents of the Swedish common principles (värdegrund). Such a harmonisation usually occurs without active choice, which Skolverket, the author of the common principles, is aware of and promotes. It speaks of how teachers should develop an attitude constructed from fundamental democratic values and apply that in settings where they interact with students (Skolverket, 2013, 8). However, Skolverket also mentions how the common principles often are presented as an entity separate from other aspects of education or forgotten altogether; consequently, students have limited knowledge of the values contained in them (Skolverket 2013, 5). This inadequacy in implementing the common principles is the reason for this essay, which aims to provide an answer to how the common principles can be integrated in an educational setting. To answer this question, two facets need consideration. First, appropriate methods and a pedagogical approach need to be found, that can be argued to further the over-arching values inherent in the common principles. Second, the content and form of the educational setting must also be connected to the discerned values. However, the values first need to be formulated with the help of a framework that corresponds to them, after which aspects of the content can be selected and analysed with the help of the mentioned framework; those aspects together with methods and approach can be used to construct an educational setting that teaches the common principles.

The common principles consist of teaching human rights and fostering democracy. Teaching human rights can be summarised to teaching everyone's equal

worth (Skolverket 2013, 10; 20; 24; 34), whilst part of fostering democracy comes from human rights being respected (Skolverket 2011) and from participation in Socratic and deliberative dialogue, which encourage students to engage in critical and self-reflection dialogue (Skolverket 2013, 72-73). Socratic and deliberative dialogue are thus chosen as methods for integrating the democratic values in the common principles. To also include the values of human rights, I have chosen the affective-humanistic approach, which values respect, relations between students and between students and teacher as well as civil, positive communication (Celce-Murcia 2014, 7-8). However, methods and approaches say nothing of content, which is why a framework that can formulate such matters is needed.

The framework that compares in a satisfying manner to the common principles is virtue ethics, which, according to Anscombe, values justice as a virtue, asks whether actions are unjust rather than wrong and states that one should strive to become a virtuous, just person (Athanasoulis n.d.). Virtue ethics corresponds to the common principles in three manners: human rights promote justice through equality and inhibit injustice such as discrimination and prejudice (Skolverket 2013, 10), democracy depend on human rights, and they both have a lack of static rules. Through the intersection of virtue theory, the common principles and the literary work chosen for teaching the common principles, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, three relevant topics are discerned: sexism, gender inequality and societal transformation.

I chose *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* because of its ability to interact with the reader in a way that promotes self-reflection. To analyse it I will employ African feminism as defined by Adichie, who argues that acting in a fair manner means acting as a feminist (Eze 2018, 45) and that justice is the “universal moral principle” (Eze 2018, 45). African feminism contains perspectives on two of the aforementioned issues: sexism can be viewed as “the woman’s body as a violated entity”, a concern of African feminist writers (Eze 2018, 3) and gender inequality is problematised by Adichie through how women are shamed and silenced (Eze 2018, 44-48). Furthermore, African feminism is connected to virtue ethics: both promote justice as the ultimate virtue and urge for people to act in a fair, or just, manner.

Welcome to Our Hillbrow was written by South African Phaswane Mpe and published shortly after the fall of apartheid. Consequently, major themes in the book are xenophobia, human rights and the (re)building of the nation (Negash 2001, xiv). It has been subject to readings dealing with masculinity (Crous, 2007), post-colonial

cosmopolitanism (Hunt, 2006)(Frassinelli & Watson, 2013)(Dannenberg, 2011)(Davis, 2013), linguistic integration of the reader (Dass, 2004), a humane society (Hlongwane, 2006)(Barris, 2009), gender and identity (Clarkson, 2006)(Mari, 2014), sexuality (O'Connell, 2012), and space (Nivesjö, 2020). As mentioned, my foci are sexism, gender inequality and societal transformation. After situating the novel, I locate sexism and gender inequality with the help of African feminism, virtue theory and Crous, who interprets the text as a display of toxic masculinity and reinforcing of masculine stereotypes to consider the effects on the male population of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. I agree with this interpretation; however, I believe that further elaboration on this might be necessary. Therefore, I use Crous' arguments to view how toxic masculinity affects women, especially how it constructs gendered inequalities through sexism, sexual violence towards women, the silencing of women and the removal of women's independency.

These issues are located in what I define an arena; created by horizontal expansion over place and perceived space, which Nivesjö defines after Lefebvre as the space can be interpreted as social practices (2020, 14) and by vertical expansion over narrative levels, defined by Pier as "the levels at which the narrating act and the narratee are situated in relation to the narrated story" (2014). With the help of Dannenberg, Dass, and Hunt, I argue that the ethical issues of sexism and gender inequality as well as places described in the text are in the horizontal plane. Dannenberg creates the idea of a horizontal expansion by stating that Hillbrow is the centre of prejudice in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2012, 45), whilst Dass (2004, 172) and Hunt (2006, 114) argue that borders between places in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are gradually shattered, which I use to expand the horizontal plane. Inspired by Hlongwane, who states that *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* calls for moral metamorphosis (2006, 69), and Barris, who describes how the book creates a "moral 'stage'" (2009, 44), I argue that the vertical expansion creates an urge to reach and affect the reader. This is possible because of the existence of an implied author, defined by Schmid as the originator of the narrator and values and implied meaning in the text (2013), and because of a lower narrative level being showcased through the integration of a book within *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.

However, the implied author is not an agent and can therefore not create a narrative. Instead, the narrator is created in a manner such that the reader may reject it. This is done by incorporating instances of narratorial judgement, irony and contradicting statements, which according to Margolin serve to render a narrator

refutable (2012). Since the narrator is the originator of issues in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, promoting sexist views and gender inequality, the urge for the reader to respond reasonably to the narrative is created.

The prevalence of sexism, gender inequality and an urge for societal transformation in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is the content considered in the educational setting. A module is constructed with the aim to teach the common principles: through employing Socratic and deliberative dialogue with an affective-humanistic approach, through using *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* because of its ability to interact with its responsible readers and through presenting an arena of ethical dilemmas and moral metamorphosis. Thus, students are tasked with reflecting upon their own ethical positions via a foreign setting by themselves entering it.

2. An ethical background to the Swedish common principles

Using *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* as an ethically problematic text to teach students about the Swedish common principles is accomplished by employing Socratic and deliberative dialogue, which both promote open-ended discussions, with an affective-humanistic approach. Socratic dialogue focuses on communicative abilities and encourages participants to consider questions without correct answers, thus practicing cooperation and critical thinking to evaluate their own standpoint (Skolverket 2013, 72-73). The deliberative dialogue views communication as a direction to decision-making and values compromise and participation (Skolverket 2013, 74). The foci of the affective-humanistic approach are respectful and meaningful communication in a civil atmosphere and learning as a self-realisation process. (Celce-Murcia 2014, 7-8). Since the purpose of the assignment is to teach the common principles, the discussions need to be connected to their values. It becomes necessary to consider the essence of the common principles and find what ethical framework they correspond to.

The Swedish common principles aim to prepare students as future members of a democratic society through teaching human rights and fostering democracy (Skolverket 2013, 5; 20; 24; 48-49). Since the common principles should be applicable upon any educational setting, they are vague by default. However, Skolverket explicitly mentions how the foundation of democracy can be viewed as deliberative (2013, 12), where communicative abilities and the opportunity to participate in dialogue concerning common issues or societal unconformity are central (Skolverket 2013, 61)

in enhancing the democratic expertise (Skolverket 2013, 64; 74). Yet another stone in the democratic foundation is the Socratic dialogue, since questions regarding the common principles are philosophical in nature (Skolverket 2013, 82). The Socratic dialogue focuses on dialogical virtues such as respect and humility, while the dialogue itself is examinational in nature (Skolverket 2013, 89). Socratic and deliberative dialogues both encourage participation from the students in a manner where their critical and expressional abilities are strengthened, which is promoted by the common principles (Skolverket 2013, 72-73). Consequently, Socratic and deliberative dialogue are relevant to employ to integrate values of democracy whilst discussing ethical difficulties in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Human rights foremost promote equality, which is inherent in the affective-humanistic approach through it valuing respect and all voices being heard. Thus, I argue that human rights can be indirectly integrated with such an approach. Now, both human rights and democracy are incorporated in methods and approach used to teach the common principles, which means that the next step is to consider their content.

To know how to formulate discussion questions it is necessary to view the key values of the common principles with the help of a specific ethical framework. Considering how the common principles feature vague descriptions of what to aspire for, rather than rules for how to act, it is proper to relate them to a framework that displays a similar attitude. One such framework is virtue ethics, originally formulated by Anscombe. She presented virtue ethics as a response to the “modern way of talking about ‘moral’ goodness [and] obligation” (1958, 2) and “call[s] for a return to concepts such as character, virtue and flourishing” (Athanasoulis n.d.). Rather than questioning whether something is wrong, Anscombe speaks of how one should ask whether something is unjust, which would present an answer in a manner the previous question cannot (1958, 9). She states that “a just man is a man who habitually refuses to commit or participate in any unjust actions for fear of any consequences, or to obtain any advantage, for himself or anyone else” (1958, 16). As such, the values of virtue ethics can be compared to those contained in the purpose of the common principles: teaching human rights and fostering democracy.

First, human rights in the common principles consist of teaching equality to inhibit discrimination, racism and prejudice (Skolverket 2013, 10; 24; 34)(Skolverket 2013, 20)(Skolverket 2011), all of which can be considered unjust actions. Thus, the common principles encourage acting in a just manner, which agrees with virtue ethics.

The common principles also mention how it is important to view and interact with norms around and inside us and consider whether they should or could be modified (Skolverket 2013, 26-27), which translates to how Anscombe dictates how one should ask whether something is just (1958, 9).

Second, democracy is fostered through teaching communicative strategies, source criticism and historical aspects (Skolverket 2013, 67-68), as well as including students in decision-making regarding their physical and social spheres (Skolverket 2013, 12-13). The connection to virtue ethics here comes from democracy being dependent on human rights and from the freedom a member of a democratic society possesses. A functioning democracy presupposes that the human rights are honoured (Skolverket 2013, 20), since it is impossible to value all voices equally without valuing their bodily counterpart equally. Individual freedom means that all are responsible for being decent members of society (Skolverket 2011), insinuating that there is a good and just way to act in accordance with what a fully developed member of democracy would; that is, a virtuous person in virtue ethics.

As such, the values of the common principles bear resemblance to those of virtue ethics; though, perhaps the greatest denominator is the lack of static rules in both, but present in other ethical frameworks (Athanasoulis n.d.). The fluidity given in the common principles allows for students to use critical thinking and form responsible yet independent notions of justice, values and ideological positions (Skolverket 2013, 41). Asking questions about what kind of person to be and what implications to expect from certain choices is a critical part of virtue ethics (Athanasoulis n.d.).

Having collected Socratic and deliberative dialogue as methods, the affective-humanistic approach for teaching and virtue ethics for angling the questions asked, what remains is to find content for teaching the common principles. This content must be controversial to or interesting in relation to the values of the common principles and in extension virtue ethics, thus it may be derived from their intersecting aspects: human rights, democracy and a lack of authoritative demands on how to act. When comparing these facets to issues in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* it becomes clear how they may be problematised: sexism is an example of flawed human rights, gendered inequalities may be attributed to a non-democratic society and the encouraging of societal transformation is an indirect illustration of lack of authoritative demands on how to act. As these three issues are explored in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, the blueprint by which to construct discussions in the practical application is produced.

3. Ethical issues and societal transformation in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

The gathered issues: sexism, gendered inequalities and societal transformation, then have ties to the common principles, African feminism as defined by Adichie and virtue ethics according to Anscombe; most importantly they appear in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Additionally, the common principles and African feminism share values with virtue ethics; however, since the common principles are both geographically and culturally divergent from South Africa, where most of the novel takes place, they are not used to interpret *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and instead applied in the next section, where the module is constructed.

This section describes how African feminism and virtue ethics are connected, then situates and locates the novel and considers instances in it that are connected to the issues described with the help of African feminism, virtue ethics and dialogue with relevant critics. Starting with a horizontal excursion to locate sexism and gender inequality in the previously mentioned arena, I continue to give a validating account for how the arena is constructed and its limitations. Thereafter, I provide an explanation of how the narrator is created as flawed in order to act as a juxtaposition to the reader's own views and promote self-scrutinization. Finally, I show how the use of second-person address concludes this integration of the reader and is used to advocate for societal transformation.

Adichie's definition of African feminism is one of fairness. She "equates fairness and feminism" (Eze 2018, 45), which means that all that is fair is contained within feminism: being a feminist is defined by acting in a fair manner. Her belief is that justice is the "universal moral principle" (Eze 2018, 45). Furthermore, Eze argues that Adichie's African feminism is that of feminist empathy, especially focused on sharing the pain contained in "the woman's body as a violated space that needs healing" (2016, 317). Since virtue ethics is based on the belief that justice is a virtue and that a good man acts in a just manner, it is easy to see how justice and acting justly are vital components of both theories. Sharing women's pain can be constructed as a call for a stop to actions that bring pain and violation as consequence. Thus, it is an application of how Anscombe describes a just man to act; that is, he refuses to participate in unjust actions that could bring consequences or that could bring him advantages (1958, 16).

As such, it is possible to view African feminism and virtue ethics as allies who not only share the same goals, but also the similar values, which is helpful when both are used to analyse occurrences in a specific arena.

Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is a novel set in post-apartheid South Africa. Hillbrow is a socioeconomically challenged neighbourhood situated in central Johannesburg, which partly explains why the novel has been called a new take on the "Jim comes to Jo'burg" trope. However, most similarities come from how this trope tells the tale of a young man who leaves his village only to be broken "by city life and city women" (Dannenberg 2012, 39), which is a theme discussed in the book. Nivesjö describes how the "Jim comes to Jo'burg" trope is a reactive literary creation, concerned with how quickly rural South Africa migrated to urban areas in Johannesburg, which had become a capitalist "modern city" due to gold drilling (2020, 62-63). Being post-apartheid, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is influenced by the effects of apartheid being abolished, one being the escalation of poverty and violence in areas like Hillbrow, which was initiated when whites fled urban areas and brought their livelihood (Hlongwane 2006, 71). Another effect being the blueprint of "racialised grids", introduced by the apartheid government by removing natives from urban areas and settling them in rural spaces, that continues to provide the grounding on which post-apartheid builds (Hlongwane 2006, 70). Moreover, the South African setting implies traditional African values: what womanist¹ writer Ogunyemi describes as a "mother-centered ideology" (Eze 2018, 9), where African women are expected to be caring and nurturing to an even greater extent than their "Western (white) counterpart[s]" (Eze 2018, 9) and what Adichie argues entails teaching girls to be ashamed, to feel guilty of being born female (Eze 2018, 48).

Welcome to Our Hillbrow features the protagonist Refentše; a young man from the village Tiragalong, who moved to Hillbrow to attend university, addressed by the narrator as "you". Considering the story from a chronological perspective, we are told of how Refilwe, Refentše's first girlfriend, cheats on him with multiple others, which results in him leaving her. After arriving in Hillbrow, Refentše forms a new relationship with Lerato, another student at the university. During this relationship, Refentše is unfaithful with Bohlale, his friend Sammy's girlfriend, after which he realises that he

¹ Womanism: Argued by Ogunyemi as an ideology "designed for African women by African women to take care of issues that are specific to African women in Africa and the Diaspora" (Eze 2016, 315)

might have been too judgemental of Refilwe. However, when Lerato cheats on Refentše with Sammy, Refentše is unable to summon his previous clarity and decides to commit suicide. His suicide results in two additional deaths: Refentše's mother is accused of bewitching him and consequently killed, Lerato is driven to suicide after a man named Terror threatens to tell her mother about her infidelity. After dying, everyone ends up in "Heaven", from where they can watch the consequences of their actions on earth. Refentše's mother has throughout the novel hated Lerato for her being from Hillbrow; when they meet in Heaven, the mother leaves prejudice behind and accepts Lerato. Considering the instances of death, infidelity and their consequences, it is made clear how sexism and gender inequality are relevant initial angles from which to analyse *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.

Sexism and gender inequality are shown through an interrogation of relations between men and women where they together create a plea for societal transformation. They both have deep roots in mentioned traditional African values, as well as in the "phallographic point of view, [where] the masculine principle is the active and penetrating principle whereas the feminine principle suggests passivity and 'being penetrated'" (Crous 2007, 23). African feminist writer Unigwe argues that this relation between men and women is used to "highlight women's rights" (Eze 2018, 145), which agrees with how Clarkson defines African identity as relational (2005, 453). Therefore, I have chosen to include relations between genders as an approach when investigating sexism and gender inequality. However, I wish to address how these issues should already have been eliminated. The fall of apartheid entailed the creation of a new constitution, which was inherently non-sexist and insinuated the importance of men not acting intimidating and rather placing value on listening (Crous 2007, 17), but from the increase of sexual violence towards women (Crous 2007, 18) it can be assumed that the constitution is yet to produce positive effects. After all, "all men benefit from sexism" (Crous 2007, 18) and creating a context where they willingly abandon their benefits is challenging. But, this is exactly what Mpe tries to accomplish with *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and what leads to the third topic discussed in this analysis: societal transformation through moral metamorphosis in the responsible reader. Through a global presentation of wicked thought and through a welcoming and including of the responsible reader, Mpe constructs an arena of prejudice containing a narrative which neither questions nor falsifies the current post-apartheid narrative, suffering from sexism and gender inequality, but rather demands that the reader considers their own

ethical standpoint in relation to the text. This wicked thought is discussed through a presentation of sexism and gender inequality residing in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.

Sexism is displayed partly through women suffering from sexual harassment, violence and the assumption that their bodies belong to men. The patriarchal view of how women's bodies are not their own is described by Unigwe as the assumption "that women's bodies belong to society, that is, men" (Eze 2018, 147). This is visible in how sex or things with sexual connotations are referred to in relation to women, such as semen (Mpe 2001, 123), sanctity and AIDS (Mpe 2001, 121) or "under-waist bliss" (Mpe 2001, 21). A consequence of this is violence towards women becoming sexual violence. According to Eze, this is a concern of third generation African women writers, who place focus on the stress and violation women's bodies must endure (2015, 317). Sexual abuse targeting women is an example of the sexist belief that women are lesser. Such is the case when Terror wishes to damage Refentše by using his girlfriend Lerato: "Because he was full of spite towards you, Terror wanted to take Lerato's thighs for a playing field, in which his penis would be player, referee and spectator" (Mpe 2001, 64-65) The usage of "because" insinuates that the grudge is a valid reason for Terror to punish Refentše by making advances to Lerato. However, such advances are rape, since Terror is placed in a position of ultimate power. A person that in sports is the "player, referee and spectator" is in control of every outcome the match could have, as well as being the only active component. Meanwhile, Lerato is reduced to "a playing field", something passive and static that can be used and disregarded. How violence differs between women and men can be seen in how "white madams [got] raped and gagged [whilst] white men [were] found hanging like washing waiting to dry" (Mpe 2001, 23). Thus, the punishment for being white is sexual if one is also a woman. Men suffer no such desecration, who are more likely to lose their life albeit without first losing their bodily autonomy. As such, there are multiple displays of unjust behaviour based on the patriarchal assumption that women's bodies are the property of men. This behaviour is an example of what a virtuous person spurns, an observation that helps in creating a persona that acts in a just manner.

How women's bodies are not their own is part of the sexism displayed; the other part is the unjust behaviour that resides in shaming and judging women. This is visible in three manners: objectification of women, shaming of women's "loose" behaviour and lack of blame on men. Objectification is visible after Refilwe learns she has AIDS and travels back to her home village, Tiragalong, when she is described as a "[f]ormer

beauty turned into a scarecrow” (Mpe 2001, 121), useful when “the birds [are] becoming a problem in the fields” (Mpe 2001, 122). Bohlale’s “full lips” (Mpe 2001, 37) are also mentioned, whilst Lerato is compared to a playing field. Thus, their humanity is disregarded.

When women are judged to display “loose” behaviour, the shame placed on them is immediate and relentless. Adichie argues that such shaming is exercised even when they are young girls, teaching them that they should be ashamed for being women: “‘Close your legs!’ ‘Cover yourself!’” (Adichie qtd in Eze 2018, 48). Women’s bodies are their prime attribute, but they are concomitantly not supposed to use them, lest they become “a loose pair of thighs with voracious appetite [...] in search of wandering penises [...]” (Mpe 2001, 116). Performing a sexual act as a woman is rewarded with thenceforth being referred to as “open-thighed” (Mpe 2001, 32; 54) and all consequences that might arise from the act are attributed women. When Refentše writes a book about a woman suffering from AIDS, she is the target of such consequences: “what had she hoped to gain by opening her thighs to every Lekwerekwere that came her way?” (Mpe 2001, 54), Refilwe suffering from AIDS is another (Mpe 2001, 121) and Lerato becoming “cheap” in Terror’s eyes if he raped her (Mpe 2001, 65) is a third.

The final example of unjust behaviour in relation to shame and judgement is the non-existent blame of men; they suffer no consequences for acting in a manner that for women is “loose”. Instead, they may commit “sexual error[s]” (Mpe 2001, 32), but such errors do not entail them being labelled “open-flyed” or otherwise held responsible for their actions. This constitutes a sexist narrative that denies men’s capability to err, whilst women are considered born faulty. When Refentše is unfaithful with Bohlale, his sex is called “the boy in his trousers” (Mpe 2001, 37), which Crous argues removes responsibility from Refentše since boys lack self-control (2007, 27). Terror, who is “making a career for himself as a rapist” (Mpe 2001, 64), is labelled “a womaniser of the worst kind” (Mpe 2001, 64). Using the word “womaniser” insinuates that Terror is a charmer, someone prone to achieve consensual relations with women rather than forcing himself upon them. Additionally, the positive connotation in making a career for oneself serves to not only forgive Terror, but instead encourage him. As such, the narrative applauds Terror’s “sexual endeavours” and condemns women’s “loose thighs”, which is the opposite of justice and fairness and thus the antithesis to Adichie’s definition of African feminism (Eze 2018, 44). The only instance where blame is placed

on a man is when Refilwe is contemplating the affair between Lerato and Sammy, where Refilwe is mentioned to question Sammy's behaviour, but this is soon described to be of minor importance and she continues to portray Lerato as the culprit (Mpe 2001, 83). This unending blame directed at women unerringly results in women losing their voice and individuality, thus regressing into the roles assigned to them, which leads to the topic of gender inequality.

Gender inequality is portrayed through women adhering to the traditional feminine identity, described by Ogunyemi as an ideology focused on women as mothers and the assumption "that African women do not perceive themselves as existing independently of their menfolk" (Ogunyemi qtd in Eze 2018, 10); they are ascribed to the role of silent homemaker whose life orbit men. Both Lerato and Refilwe are attributed motherly traits: Lerato cooks and waits at home (Mpe 2001, 24; 38) and Refilwe's cooking is part of her identity (Mpe 2001, 38). A society constructed as unequal diverges from what Rawls argues constitutes a feminist society, which is "just and fair: a condition in which people are free, equal [...]" (Rawls qtd in Eze 2018, 49). If justice is lacking, so is virtue and it is rendered impossible to enter Adichie's ideal feminist world, where "the African woman [may] raise her daughter in virtuous ways" (Eze, 2018, 48). Especially important is the concept of silence, because a silent or silenced person lacks agency and may not act in any manner, just or unjust, and is unequal to one with an agency.

All women are silent or fall silent at some point and it is generally due to actions of men. Lerato is silent from the beginning, indicated by how she has to wait for Refentše to proclaim his feelings for her: "Coward! You could have said something long before today!" (Mpe 2001, 24). Adichie argues that women silencing themselves in such a manner is due to them being taught to feel shame and guilt as girls (Eze 2018, 48), from which I extrapolate that if a woman rejects this silence she will instead be silenced by men, as is the case when Bohlale wants to break her silence and tell Sammy about her and Refentše's indiscretion. She is consequently silenced by Refentše: "[...] this is not the time for such discussions. I wish we could simply confess [...] But it's not that easy [...] We need to think through carefully what we will say [...]" (Mpe 2001, 53). Refentše insisting on her remaining quiet shows how even the seemingly progressive protagonist is guilty of enforcing the traditional feminine identity (Crous 2007, 25). Yet more effective in the silencing of women is, of course, death. When Tiragalong is convinced by medicine men that Refentše's mother brought about his

death, she is silenced by necklacing: “[the villagers] put large tyres round her neck and poured [...] onto them and onto her whole body. Then someone gingerly lit a cigarette before throwing the match into her hut [...]” (Mpe 2001, 43). Two more elderly women meet the same fate after bone throwers confirm them as witches guilty of murder (Mpe 2001, 45; 77). Refilwe dying of AIDS cannot be attributed to a man, yet she is silenced by Tiragalong through the shaming she endures before her passing. Considering that acts of silencing and death are approved of and carried out by men, it is obvious why Crous argues that “the main nexus of social power is determined by gender, class and heterosexual masculinity” (2007, 20). In this narrative, women exist and act solely with the permission of men, which immensely fortifies the notion of inequality between genders, further reinforced through women’s dependency of men.

Women are depicted as incomplete if they lack a man. The narrator speaks of how Refilwe’s life would become good “when she had a good partner of her own” (Mpe 2001, 91) and her characteristics and choices are tied to men: her literary interest is mentioned only to acknowledge Refentše’s book (Mpe 2001, 95), her conversations with her best friend expand solely upon her love life (Mpe 2001, 98) and her years in Oxford focuses on a man she meets (Mpe 2001, 109). Thus, women are not allowed to create an independent identity and their existence is only authorised if it can be tied to a man. As such, gender inequality plays an extensive role in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, which shows how the novel is problematic both in relation to African feminism, where equality is a fundamental element, and in relation to virtue ethics, where enforcing inequality is considered unjust behaviour. Since issues of sexism and gender inequality are both apparent in the novel, the question is whether Mpe is part of the issues or attentive of them. If the issues resided in a novel with merely a horizontal aspect, I would argue that Mpe indeed is part of the issues due to him offering descriptions of unjust behaviour without anything tangible to counteract them. However, as discussed previously, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* also has a vertical aspect, which gives depth to the issues described and spans the three-dimensional space that constitutes an arena of societal transformation.

Constructing an Arena: Horizontal Space and Vertical Narration

This arena is constructed by considering the dialogue Mpe provides regarding ethical dilemmas in South Africa as an urge to guide the reader towards societal transformation. This becomes possible only if the arena is formed by both an expansion

of space in horizontal aspects, such as place, and in vertical aspects, such as narrative level. If both expansions take place, it becomes possible to view issues in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* as both spectator and participant. The space spanned by horizontal and vertical expansion is labelled an arena because of opposing views and perspectives creating conflicts: on the horizontal plane through tensions between characters and between narrator and characters, in the space formed by the vertical axis between the implied author and the narrator and between the narrator and the reader. The arena is constructed by everything contained in the novel, but also what is implied by it; however, it is reasonable to begin with what can be read factually from *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, that is, what constitutes the horizontal plane.

The expansion the horizontal plane starts in Hillbrow, which Dannenberg argues is the heart of prejudice in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2012, 45). I agree with this view and thus consider Hillbrow the centre of the horizontal plane in the arena. Prejudice towards Hillbrow originates in the village Tiragalong, which initially produces the idea of a monstrous city that devours virtuous villagers, a reconstruction of the “Jim comes to Jo’burg” trope (Dannenberg 2012, 39). However, this notion is gradually shattered, since it is villagers settling in the city who are responsible for the degeneration. Clarkson speaks of how crimes in Hillbrow are due to villagers bringing feuds to the city to resolve them (2005, 454) and Dannenberg explains how the fluid characteristics of relationships between characters serve to eliminate the distinct borders between village and city (2012, 45). Thus, as both Dass (2004, 172) and Hunt (2006, 114) argue, the concept of a pestilent city and virtuous village is eradicated, and the arena expands to Tiragalong.

The reader is then introduced to Heaven, described by Davis as a place which exists parallel to reality (2013, 109), where dead characters can view events on the earthly plane albeit not interfere. Characters residing in Heaven may reflect upon consequences of their actions and communicate with other residents, which Barris argues result in them ultimately becoming a humane version of themselves (2009, 45). Heaven is thus a utopia, the part of the arena where prejudice is transformed into justice, that cannot reside on earth; it is rendered imaginary and therefore, as Clarkson (2005, 455) and Frassinelli (2013, 8) argues, not in conflict with the tragedy taking place on its earthly counterpart. Towards the end, Oxford is introduced as a place which harbours the same kind of prejudice as Hillbrow and Tiragalong, which shows how a supposedly progressive Western civilisation also has a place in the arena. As such, the arena

becomes global. Prejudice and ethical wrongdoing are prevalent wherever in the arena one resides, but the arena also contains a humanitarian utopia that cannot be reached except through death.

Since Heaven cannot offer a satisfactory contrast between a space of injustice and one of justice, due to its inaccessibility, such contrast is instead presented through the vertical expansion, which I argue is possible only if the implied author is defined and accounted for. The implied author is described by Schmid as an image of the author invoked by the text, which is the source of both the narrator and the values and norms of the text (2013) just like the narrator is the originator of the plot. However, the implied author does not communicate and is not considered an agent, it is rather the embodiment of values contained in the text. The existence of an implied author is in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* explicitly shown through “mise en cadre”, defined by Pier as the effect achieved when an element in a lower, or framed, narrative level reveals something about the higher, or framing, level (2014). Such an element is the book Refentše writes, which constitutes a narrative level framed by the one in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Refentše’s novel presents prejudice in a similar manner to the one presented in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, the difference being that Refentše offers no alternate perspective. Instead, the implied author in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* creates a narrator who is compelled to disclose how some people reading Refentše’s book are critical towards the prejudices in the text: “[a]nyway, if she was [in love with a Lekwerewere], what was wrong with that? Who said that the people of Tiragalong were cleaner than everyone else?” (Mpe 2001, 54-55). In presenting voices critical of the narrative in Refentše’s book, the narrator is forced to adopt a didacticism which shows how critical voices should be heard also when ascending to the higher narrative level. Thus, the reader of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* reacts in the same manner as the readers of Refentše’s book. This promotes what Hlongwane calls social and moral metamorphosis (2006, 69) through what Barris argues is an example of “creating a moral ‘stage’” (2009, 44), which bears resemblance to the vertical aspect of the arena through visualising what the implied author considers problematic; sexism and gender inequality being two such occurrences.

The existence of a moral stage, or conflict in the vertical aspect of the arena, is shown through the implied author’s view of unjust behaviour, which the reader may choose to accept or reject in the same manner the reader may accept or reject the narrator’s stance. To interact with a perspective in this way, consider it and decide to

integrate or distance oneself from it based on one's own experience and critical analysis, is specifically how someone who has conformed to virtue ethics operates. As such, the book within the book is a catalyst for summoning the responsible reader, it enables a dialogue where the implied author may present the dominant narrative to the reader without refuting it, but instead form what Dass calls a relationship with it (2004, 172). This relationship is constructed so that the dialogue may covertly counter prejudices, such instances can be discovered and examined by a virtuous reader. As Dass argues, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is quintessentially an ethical response to issues of stereotypes and geographical and social boundaries in South Africa (2004, 179), which I wish to expand to the issues of sexism and gender inequality. The implied author's collection of narratives is used to construct what Hunt calls Mpe's vision of the city (2006, 119), that I argue belongs to the implied author; a vision that extends to a global setting. Frassinelli states that Mpe "looks at the nation with an estranged gaze" (2013, 6), which I once again contend is the gaze of the implied author, but Frassinelli's depiction of the gaze I think serves to insinuate how the implied author wishes the reader would regard their own surroundings. In the constructed arena the implied author is free to use the narrator to integrate the angles and issues needed to portray a specific set of values.

As such, the implied author is the originator of the language used to create a narrator which probes the reader for ethical ambiguities in the constructed society. The narrator is presented as omniscient, since it knows everything about all characters, including their thoughts and reasons. It is also what Rimmon-Kenan calls heterodiegetic, because of how it does not participate in the narrated story (2002, 97). It communicates with the second-person addressee supplied with its individuality, which Margolin argues originates from the telling of non-factual aspects of the narrated domain (2012). Those aspects consist of judgement, irony and contradicting statements, which serve to accumulate reason for the reader to reflect upon and either accept or reject the narrator (Margolin 2012).

Narratorial judgement is applied to showcase how the narrator sympathises with or condemns the actions of characters, which Dannenberg argues is strengthened by second-person address (2012, 47). The narrator is capable of scolding characters, such as stating that Refentše leaving his first relationship was an act of betrayal: "betrayal of her faith in your capacity to forget and live happily ever after with her" (Mpe 2001, 34). However, when addressing Refentše, the narrator also mentions that "you had learnt

that you were as vulnerable as the drunks and womanisers that you used to criticise for their carelessness [...]” (Mpe 2001, 59). The word “vulnerable” is used for Refentše rather than careless, insinuating that the narrator sympathises with him after he has accepted his flaws. This sympathy for a character who has become humbled is also evident when the narrator considers Refilwe’s return from Oxford. When Refilwe considers the feelings of those around her, the narrator addresses her directly rather than in third-person as before: “Refilwe, you were very grieved by this show. You felt sorry for those who loved you so much [...]” (Mpe 2001, 119), suggesting that Refilwe has been accepted by the narrator. Dannenberg argues that second-person address is reserved for those who have gained “the approval or the sympathy of the narrative” (2012, 47) and I agree with this distinction, but also wish to refute the use of narrative as the narrator through judgements as those outlined becomes distinctly humanised. Such a narrator notifies the reader of how it might be flawed and gives the reader opportunity to view the narrative with a critical perspective; the reader may enter the communication proposed by the implied author and with an estranged gaze analyse the narrator’s point of view.

The narrator is further humanised with irony. Such an instance is found when Refilwe is besmirching Refentše and Lerato after Refentše’s suicide, calling Refentše naïve (Mpe 2001, 42) and Lerato a “loose-thighed Hillbrowan” (Mpe 2001, 43). The narrator presents this as negative through stating that Refilwe “sent you towards your second death” and “blemished your name more than anyone else could have hoped to do” (Mpe 2001, 42). However, her words are also described as “a generous flow of milk” (Mpe 2001, 42) which is identified by Hunt as ironic due to the use of “generous” and “milk”, both having positive connotations (2006, 116). Another example of irony emerges when discussing the topic of witchcraft, presented as something the people of Tiragalong believe in, but also viewed as something that can be treated with scepticism: “you did not really believe in [witchcraft]. But [...] nobody from Tiragalong could afford to treat such stories with the scepticism that you thought they deserved” (Mpe 2001, 90). Thus, when the narrator declares that “[a]t least AIDS came by accident, unlike such malicious acts as sending lightning to strike Tshepo” (Mpe 2001, 55) it becomes ironic. Sending lightning is an act of witchcraft, which makes it no act at all and especially not a malicious one. This quote is also an example of the narrator consciously using contrast to promote the irony of the statement.

Further contrasting, which is not as clear whether it is a conscious decision or not, may be found when the narrator describes implication in deaths. When addressing Refentše's part in his mother's death, the narrator says that "[you] killed yourself. And unintentionally, you have also killed your own mother. You are a killer, Refentše [...]" (Mpe 2001, 47), since a killer may be labelled as such even without intention, this is appropriate. However, the narrator then describes Lerato as "[...] in effect, a murderess [...]" (Mpe 2001, 69) because of her act of infidelity being described as a cause in Refentše's suicide. Since the definition of a murderer entails intention, the narrator insinuates that Lerato intended for Refentše to die by her being unfaithful. Yet, when a murder takes place after a character had "[...] organised [it] with two men, professional killers [...]" (Mpe 2001, 79), where the intention is clear, the men causative of the death are labelled killers. The narrator then makes no distinction of whether the death was intentional or not, which would be suitable considering the definitions of the words, but rather whether it was a man or woman who committed an act leading to death.

This is an instance of the narrator displaying part of its questionable view on gender. Another may be found in the narrator's disjunct description of infidelity, where Refentše's former girlfriend is described as "sexually loose" (Mpe 2001, 34) for being unfaithful, but where Refentše instead "[...] made love with [his] friend Sammy's lover [...]" (Mpe 2001, 34). Reflecting back on the discussion regarding sexism and gender inequality, it is now visible how the culprit is the narrator; or rather, an agent constructed by Mpe's implied author to showcase issues prevalent in South Africa so that a reader may take a conscious stance in relation to them.

The reader may consider their own relationship to the society portrayed and coloured by the narrator; even though the narrator as a person is not part of the novel and seems omniscient, a state which according to Rimmon-Kenan promotes reliability (2002, 106), it is possible to discover instances of judgement and through those reveal the narrators moral standpoint. The use of irony further personifies the narrator and its conflicting choice of words aids in creating a corporeal narrator. As such, the reader may consider the narrator as a person with a potential for dialogue regarding the views that are narrated. In this dialogue the reader is forced to respond reasonably since, as Dass argues, the narrator has already accounted for the less reasonable responses (2004, 183). Thus, the reader must respond reasonably, in a just manner, to the implied author's ethical challenge. This kind of connection with a potential reader is achieved by addressing the reader directly. Such an address creates a perceived vacuum in the

arena that an external spectator may fill; the reader is obligated to enter the arena as well as let the contents of the arena enter him- or herself. This satisfies the required preconditions for a setting where a reader may consider their own ethical standpoint in relation to the one presented and thus adopt the doctrine of virtue ethics.

To achieve this state, the narrator is convinced by the implied author to use second-person address to engage and integrate the reader, which results in the reader being forced to respond to the text when reading it and to be included in the ever-extending “us”. “Our” is used already in the title of the book, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, whilst “you” appears as the second word in the text (Mpe 2001, 1). Clarkson discusses how such immediate inclusion makes it a challenge for the reader to remain distanced (2005, 457), a phenomena explained by Barris (2009, 41) and Dass (2004, 170) as humans being conditioned to react with “I” and “we” and respond as such when reading the words “you” and “our”, respectively. Clarkson continues to illustrate how this essentially makes the reader the addressee just as much as the protagonist (2005, 456), which Margolin says implies how the producer of the current discourse is present as well as the addressee (2012) and Clarkson argues elicits thought regarding what position the reader holds towards what is presented in the text (2005, 457). This is one of the reasons *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* makes an excellent literary text to use for teaching students to interact with ethics: it forces readers to engage with the text and the values contained therein. Even though readers may initially feel discomfort by the usage of “you”, it is an ingenious protest to what Dannenberg calls the traditional splitting of addressee prevalent in texts in the form of “I” and “he/she” (2012, 46), where the reader can remain a spectator and has no obligations to enter the narrative. Thus, the usage of second-person address is yet another way to create a responsible and just reader.

Remaining a spectator is then difficult, since the usage of second-person address has the possibility to include “[...] entities existing beyond the sphere of narration [...]” and thus a reader “[...] participate[s] in both story and discourse systems [...]” (Margolin 2012). This is how issues of sexism and gender inequality become potent and identifiable: the reader must access the text by entering the narrative. As expressed by Margolin, the second-person address is able to include a reader who is prepared to access the story by entering the position of the addressee (2012); if a reader enters the narrative they become, as Dass explains, part of the prejudices portrayed (2004, 168) by continuously being referred to in relation to such statements. Dass

(2004, 165; 177) and Clarkson (2005, 458) describe how the reader is then compelled to produce a responsible reaction to this inclusion. Dass continues to explain how the text becomes an agent with which a reader must interact and experiment in order to find a solution to the awakened self-problematization (2004, 181), a practice similar to Socratic dialogue. This interaction together with the responsible response it produces I consider effects of the urge for justice through societal transformation evoked by *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, accessible as soon as a reader picks up the book.

The expression *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* entangles the reader before the book has been opened. It is an ambivalent sentence, “welcome” indicates that the reader is addressed and has arrived in Hillbrow, but the “our” provides distance in how it does not include the reader. This results in what Dass describes as a memorable invitation which says that the gates are open, but with a concomitant shrug conveying the readers’ free choice (2004, 183), since the reader is not yet part of the gated community. To join the group defined by “our”, the reader must enter the arena.

As the novel progresses, so does the “our”. It expands to include “our Oxford” (Mpe 2001, 100), “our Heathrow” (Mpe 2001, 100) and finally “our Heaven” (Mpe 2001, 124). Frassinelli argues that this ever-growing and ever-including spread of what is “ours” entails the existence of a community and a humanism (2013, 7) which “embraces all the divided layers of global humanity” (Dannenberg 2012, 47) and in which Davis states that the reader is an active participant (2013, 102). However, this also means that the reader is an active participant in everything negative. Dannenberg argues that the reader takes part in “our” racism (2012, 46), I wish to extend this argument by stating that the reader also takes part in “our sexism” and “our gender inequality”. Non South African readers perhaps consider it strange to take part in an geographically and culturally divergent “our”, but I urge those to consider the global inclusion found in the horizontal plane of the arena; the issues may be portrayed in South Africa, but they are prevalent worldwide. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* creates the opportunity for the reader to reflect upon their inclusion and how to create a community, which Frassinelli says would transgress the boundaries set in place by limits applied on identity (2013, 9). *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* presents a narrative based in South Africa, but its implied author transgresses both geographical and cultural borders.

As such, it has been shown that sexism and gender inequality are common issues in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and how they are problematic in the eyes of African

feminism and virtue ethics. These issues are enacted by a refutable narrator, created by an implied author whose values and urge for societal transformation are what give the novel its depth, thus virtuous readers may look past the issues provided by the narrator and see them as examples of unjust behaviour whilst considering their own position in relation to them. Such a consideration evokes a responsible reader who enters the arena with a want for justice and to enforce this upon unjust instances faced.

When using *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* in a setting where the goal is to develop ethical thinking, it is especially important to begin by focusing on what is problematic and then learn how to counteract such problems. Therefore, in the following section where a module for English 7 is constructed with *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* as literary text with the aim to teach ethics, the students are, in relation to reading the book, asked to reflect upon issues such as women being objectified, shamed and silenced: what implications such behaviour has and the difference in treatment between men and women. The students are then tasked with considering judgement and irony used by the narrator and think about what tone this sets on the text and how it changes the message it sends. Such questions are discussed in Socratic dialogue, which places the students in a position where they can engage with the content in the self-reflecting critical manner the text, as well as virtue ethics, promotes.

4. Module for English 7

The purpose of the following module is to use *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* as a literary text to engage students in active discussion regarding ethics and morality in their vicinity and to teach the common principles in an external setting; encouraging them to draw parallels between a familiar and foreign society. Using a text written by and about a South African man is a way of incorporating a social and cultural context that may not be divulged to them otherwise; using literary texts to develop cultural awareness is recommended since such texts often incorporate multiple facets of culture (McKay 2014, 497). Additionally, it is vital to include works that serve to acknowledge students of different backgrounds (Skolverket 2013, 12). Choosing specifically *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* for teaching ethics is due to how it interacts with the reader and promotes societal transformation; not only can the students view issues of sexism and gender inequality displayed, they can also consider the manner the issues are presented in and the interactivity it creates with the reader. To teach ethics in a proper manner for

Swedish students, the module is heavily anchored in the common principles as both the reasoning for choosing tasks in the module as well as the content that is taught have their grounding therein. The content also relies on findings declared in the previous section whilst the format of the tasks is justified from the perspective of an affective-humanistic approach.

To give the findings and the common principles context, the module consists of three different sections. The first section provides a background to South Africa, thus making sure that the students are familiar with the culture before interacting with *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. The curricular purpose of this section is regarding the communicative core content for English 7 stating that students should consider “ethical and existential issues in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used” (Skolverket 2021). The second section introduces the common principles in a manner where the students may derive them from their own experiences and values, to then formulate them in a brief written assignment. As such, this section considers communicative core content through “theoretical and complex subject areas [...] related to students’ education, [...] societal issues and working life; thoughts, opinions, ideas, experiences and feelings” (Skolverket 2021). Finally, the third and largest section is where the students get to read and interact with *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* through a series of Socratic dialogues and a written assignment. The curricular purpose for this section is an amalgam of the two prior and receptive core content regarding forming “strategies for drawing conclusions about [...] texts in terms of attitudes, perspectives, purposes and values, and to understand implied meaning” (Skolverket 2021). The content and form of the sections mentioned engender, through the implementation of the module, supplementary core content and evaluative criteria, which is considered and included in the assessment.

The first section should span three lesson-hours and its content is an introduction to the module as well as a background to the historical and spatial context of South Africa. Providing background and context to a foreign setting serves to inhibit cultural stereotyping (McKay 2014, 499) that might otherwise take place when reading *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. To promote this inhibition the section is structured so the students reflect upon and interact with parallels between a South African and a Swedish setting. After the module and its purpose has been presented, the contextual background is introduced through viewing a South African comedian called Trevor Noah perform a stand-up bit named “It Makes No Sense!” (2019), which deals with cultural

stereotyping towards Africa with a humorous perspective, as well as viewing an episode of “Blood and Water” (Netflix 2020), which depicts the life of a high-school student subject to family drama in South Africa. This serves to, in accordance with the core content of the course, acquaint the students with the South African dialect and use “strategies to take in and structure information in [...] longer sequences of spoken language” (Skolverket 2021). Furthermore, it develops the students’ listening, which is one of the four core language skills together with speaking, reading and writing. It is important to differentiate between listening and hearing: Goh describes listening as an operative action rather than passive and argues how listeners use both text and context to construct meaning (2014, 73). Therefore, it is important that the module and its purpose get introduced before the South African background; information about the module provides the context necessary for the students to create meaning when watching the videos. If context is not provided, the students may not listen with a purpose and thus lose an important factor in “the understanding process” (Goh 2014, 73).

The choice of specifically a stand-up comedian and an episode of a drama series is due to familiarity in multiple areas. First, both Trevor Noah and “Blood and Water” are featured on Netflix, thus it is not improbable that the students have already seen at least the names at some point. Second, the format of stand-up and drama are both widespread and the students are bound to have encountered both previously. Finally, both have content that the students can relate to: in “It Makes No Sense!” Trevor Noah teases USA and its citizens for being prejudicial against African Americans, which is a commonly known occurrence, while “Blood and Water” is in a high-school setting with characters in the same age group as students taking English 7. Thus, the students will in various ways recognise the presentation of the substance, then being able to focus on the unfamiliar content as the South African context has not yet been introduced to them. This is a conscious choice, if the students are provided with information about what they will learn from listening rather than why they are listening – the difference between providing how they should listen and why they should listen – Goh argues that their interpretations and constructions of meaning could suffer (2014, 77). If said interpretations are too similar, it could produce an inhibiting effect on the following task, where the students use inspiration received from the videos to do an oral presentation on a topic related to South Africa.

After viewing the videos, the students are asked to form groups to do their own research on a topic related to South African history or culture, after which they present their findings to the rest of the class. They are given a list of topics to choose from in case they struggle to find their own and a list of questions to answer for inspiration (see Assignment 1 in appendix). Allowing the students to themselves choose topic and use their own ideas or content that they consider important is recommended by Lazaraton when planning for student presentations (2014, 113). This, together with how they perform the task as a group, is important for motivational reasons: if given choices on how to construct and carry out a task and having to cooperate rather than compete, the students can claim ownership of their work and are as a group accountable, thus according to Brinton become “more apt to assume responsibility for their own learning” (2014, 343). Additionally, the affective-humanistic approach promotes work in groups, as this promotes positive relationships between students and a constructive classroom climate, as well as “communication that is personally meaningful to the learner”. (Celce-Murcia 2014, 7) The suggested topics are influenced by the analysis in the previous section as they include African feminisms and gender roles, but since the presentations are supposed to create an overarching context to South African rather than to the presented analysis it is proper to not limit the students to such comparatively narrow topics. The slimmer focus of the analysis is instead considered when discussing *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* in the third section.

Including a task such as oral presentation is a way to integrate both speaking and listening, two of the core language skills, as the groups practice speaking when presenting and listening when other groups present. The listening groups are asked to compile a summary of the key points in each presentation for peer evaluating purposes, so that they may summarise the presentation and present strengths and areas of improvement. The students have a pre-constructed set of questions to answer that are based on the evaluative criteria for the task. Focus of this assignment is fluency and how well the students give an account of and compare a foreign context to their own. Since the task is developed for learning rather than testing knowledge, formative assessment is proper to employ when the teacher provides feedback to the student presentations (Katz 2014, 322). The student created summaries will, in addition to provide understanding for assessment, help the students better remember the South African context when reading *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, as well as being able to reference to it during later group discussions. As such, the group presentations result in

the students providing each other with the necessary background rather than the teacher conveying all information, which they remember with the help of their constructed summaries from the other groups' presentations. The teacher instead takes an assisting position, through providing material and scaffolding to the students so they may create their own learning. The students teaching each other effectively creates an environment where they are co-creators: the foundation of a democratic society. Having the students work in groups and present the context serves three purposes: fostering second language acquisition through interaction and mediation with their peers (Brinton 2014, 343), removing the teacher from the position of conveyor of knowledge, which is vital in the affective-humanistic approach (Celce-Murcia 2014, 8) and levelling the lingual differences between students and enabling them to actively assimilate presented knowledge. Striving to align proficiencies and capabilities of students is something that is required by the Swedish education act (Skolverket 2013, 36) and as such it seems proper to integrate immediately.

The second section of the module spans two lesson-hours and serves to introduce - but hopefully only reinforce - the common principles. Students taking English 7 usually are, or are about to be, allowed to vote; therefore, this section borrows material from Swedish politics. During the first lesson-hour the students are presented with five campaign posters from five different political parties, preferably as recent as possible. This selection is made so that the students have the opportunity to discuss questions that are close to themselves and relevant in their everyday life (Skolverket 2013, 49), which in connection to the South African context they created earlier serves to insinuate how there exist parallels between issues located in a Swedish and a South African setting, that they may explore and consider.

This section is constructed according to the classic think-pair-share method (Robertson 2006), where students first are asked to individually *think* about the message conveyed through the posters and whether they agree with the message or not, as well as consider whether they consider the sender, or narrator, of the message trustworthy. After some initial solitary action, the students are asked to *pair* up and talk about their findings. In pairs they are supposed to consider what values are presented by the posters, what values the students have based on their agreeing or disagreeing with the message conveyed and what they think about the sender. This provides the students with an opportunity to explicitly consider where their values lie and critically analyse whether it is a just position, enhancing their chances of developing their stance on

human rights and democracy (Skolverket 2013, 41). Additionally, the students are provided with a soft introduction to narration by considering who is giving them the message. In pairs they *share* some of their findings with the rest of the class where key points are extracted and written on the board by the teacher. This affirmation of contribution is made so that the students feel like they and their thoughts are respected, which is an important aspect of the affective-humanistic approach (Celce-Murcia 2014, 7), and so that the students may later use each other's findings, which is helpful when they are writing their essays in section three. The teacher's role is here to listen to the students' discussions and provide formative feedback that students can use to improve their communication. This discussion is practice for those that take place in section three.

After the initial thoughts of all students have been heard, the class is asked to discuss which of the written values they consider as just and why, and whether they can come to an agreement on a set of values, thus creating the open environment that fosters democracy (Skolverket 2013, 66) through the employment of deliberative dialogue. This discussion is the grounding upon which the students can stand during the second lesson-hour, where they write a short conclusion on what their idea of a virtuous person is; that is, what values that according to them are just and the most important to have and what their reasoning is for their choices. Considering how this section is introductory, the assessment of the written assignment is formative as well. Focus is placed on the students' fluency and ability to structure their communication. Due to the self-reflecting nature of the assignment, it is in accordance with the affective-humanistic approach, which views language learning as a "self-realisation process" (Celce-Murcia 2014, 8). Such an assignment serves to finalise the critical thoughts that were voiced during the previous discussion, where the students subconsciously adopt virtue ethics, and consequently the common principles, through an analytical consideration of individual norms. As explained in the ethical background to the common principles, the value of interacting with norms and asking whether they are just, as well as considering how one may act in a just manner, are important processes in both virtue ethics and the common principles. As such, this section delivers the students to the state of mind required for reading *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* with a perspective coloured by a critical viewing of ethics.

The third and final section of the module consists of eight lesson-hours and contains the reading of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* as well as the corresponding tasks.

Since the students by this point have been introduced to both South African culture and history as well as faced their own values, they have context relevant to personal growth and incorporation of foreign culture to consider when reading the book. The first five lesson-hours encompass the actual reading and the last three lesson-hours are allocated for the students writing their essays, meaning that the two core language skills of reading and writing, that have not yet been implemented to a great extent, are now included in the module.

For the first lesson-hour, the students receive an introduction to the section and a brief outline of the keywords accompanying the first discussion (see Assignment 3, Part 1 in appendix), followed by some time for the first segment of individual reading. It is important that the students receive the keywords and their meaning, as they provide the students with what Anderson calls a reading purpose (2014, 175). Since the discussions that follow each individual reading consider certain aspects of the text, it is essential that those aspects are disclosed to the students so that they may focus their reading and be prepared for the discussion questions, described below. The students need to know how, why and for what outcome they are discussing to promote engagement and activity (Lazaraton 2014, 112), as the questions ask the students to analyse the text in a specific manner. However, this manner of analysis needs to remain open, so the students may infer their own meaning from the text. As McKay argues, if one central idea is forced upon the students to accommodate to, they surely lose interest and engagement (2014, 490). A better way is then to provide a climate which places the student in the centrum and supports them in creating their own meaning (Carter qtd in McKay 2014, 490), as is the purpose of the open-ended questions asked during the following four lesson-hours, where the discussions regarding the content of the book takes place.

The four lesson-hours succeeding the first introductory entail one third discussion and two thirds reading. This produces a schematic where the students end the lesson with reading, so they have time to consider what they have read until the next lesson, which then introduces a discussion on the current selection of text; the introductory discussion also assists in reminding the students of what they read during the previous lesson. The discussions have two parts and are carried out in smaller groups with varying members to further strive for the positive classroom climate of the affective-humanistic approach, where the students feel safe and able to interact with everyone. In each group, there is a designated chair, secretary and timekeeper, roles

that rotate amongst the students. This creates instant commitment, as both succeeding and failing in an explicit task is noticeable. Lazaraton states how such responsibilities need to be present and self-selected by the students before the discussion starts (2014, 112). Students then open the discussion by reacting to the text, which is an important step in making students feel like their opinions matter (McKay 2014, 491), which is followed by students being given a set of pre-constructed questions related to the text. These questions follow the schema of the previously presented analysis; that is, focus is on the ironic and problematic view of the narrator and how it affects the story (see Assignment 3, Part 1 in appendix). To achieve this, the first discussion acquaints the students with the narrator, as can be seen in the example provided, and the following three focus on aspects of it, inspired by the analysis, in turn: sexism, gender inequality and the creation of the responsible reader.

To scaffold these discussions, it is important to ask the right questions. The first discussion, regarding the narrator and the students' view of it, serves as an introduction to how one can interact with a narrator; therefore, the questions are designed so that the students start to think about the role of the narrator and how different narrators affect different texts. For example, the first question asks the students to argue whether they think the narrator is a person and whether they think it takes part in the plot, thus the concept of a heterodiegetic narrator is indirectly established. It is not important that the students know the names of narratorial features, but rather the effect they have on the narrative. In this case, most students probably view the narrator as a person because of how it uses "you" to address Refentše; however, the lack of name on the narrator as well as the fact that it does not participate in the narrative hopefully spark a counterargument that the humanness is not conclusive, thus defining participation in the narrative as a vital aspect. The students are then led to consider the possibility of refuting the narrator by considering its values and its view of Hillbrow. This serves as a preparatory exercise, so that the students may view issues during following discussions critically and ultimately as effects produced by the narrator, that they may analyse on a deeper level than merely the prevalence of such issues.

The second discussion focuses on the portrayal of sexism in the second chapter of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, specifically the shame applied on women's sexuality. Implications of using expressions such as "open-thighed" (Mpe 2001, 32; 54), "the boy in his trousers" (Mpe 2001, 37) and asking questions such as "what had she hoped to gain by opening her thighs to every Lekwerekwere that came her way?" (Mpe 2001,

54) are analysed. The students are asked to consider these implications in relation to how it is the narrator that is the originator of the narrative; whether their view or opinion of the narrator's values changes. When gender inequality is examined in the third discussion regarding the third chapter, the implicational and narratorial angle are the same. The silencing of women is central to gender inequality in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, therefore this discussion builds on the instance of killing due to alleged witchcraft found in this chapter: when an older woman is necklaced due to bone-throwers confirming her guilt as a witch (Mpe 2001, 77). Questions for this discussion encourage students to consider what impact such killings have in relation to gender equality, and once again whether the narratorial view of deeds like this affect their view of the narrator's values. The second and third discussion serve to place the students in the arena of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, by making them interact with the issues and make them their own, thus promoting self-realisation. This is made explicit in the final discussion, which further includes the students as responsible readers. Students are inquired as to how the text affected themselves: how the narrator has made them reconsider or reinforce their own values and whether they can extract issues from the book for application in their own lives. This expansion of view serves to make students shoulder the part of responsible reader and prepare them for their upcoming essay.

Focus during the discussions is not to arrive at one conclusive answer, but rather to explore the students' thoughts regarding what is presented in the book and how it affects their own thoughts. This is why all discussions are constructed as Socratic; they have no right nor wrong answers and the focal point lies within accessing the students' own interpretations and drawing parallels to their own lives, which Skolverket says is an important aspect of any task set for students (2013, 93). As explained in the ethical background to the common principles, the Socratic dialogue is exemplary to use in order to further values inherent in human rights and a democratic society because of how it values every participant equally and promotes a positive and mannered climate. This also creates an overlap with the affective-humanistic approach, which is driven by the similar values of mutual respect and meaningful communication. Additionally, since the structure of the discussions are repeated multiple times the students have the opportunity to submit input regarding rules of conversation or other conditions and have them reasonably modified, something that is recommended by Skolverket to create a democratic setting where the students feel like co-creators of their environment (2013, 79). After the initial discussion in small groups, the designated secretary in each group

shares gathered thoughts with the rest of the class through a short oral summary of the group's key points. Students are encouraged to react to each other's summaries, as this further accommodates the collective exploration of thought that the Socratic discussion aims to create (Skolverket 2013, 89). The teacher does not partake as a discussion leader, but rather encourage participation and provide scaffolding if needed. The main task for the teacher is to assess the students' performance, where focus is on communicative abilities such as fluency, improvements between discussions and strategies to solve communicational issues. Students receive formative feedback after each lesson when applicable, to be able to further improve their communication, and summative assessment that considers participation in all discussions together with the assessment of the essay.

After finishing the book, the students have three lesson-hours for working on an individual essay focusing on the power of narrative. The main curricular purpose of the essay is to assess the students' abilities to interact with a text with the purpose of extracting values and implied meaning, thus the individual summative assessment considers these aspects as well. As discussed extensively in the analysis part of this essay as well as in the previous student discussions, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is told by an especially present narrator. Therefore, the students' ability to consider the effect and purpose of this narrator is tested, by the students pretending they themselves are the narrator communicating with Refentše and Refilwe, through second-person address, and argue instances where they would have communicated differently. The essay should be based on their own ethical standpoint with basis in the values they presented in the second section of this module as well as showing how their modification changes the tone of the text. As such, the students have now explored the ethics of the common principles, and hopefully returned with a greater understanding of themselves, their values and their relation to issues prevalent in all parts of the world.

5. Conclusion

In this essay I have shown how *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* can be used to teach the common principles, implemented with the perspective of virtue ethics and African feminism, by using Socratic and deliberative dialogue as methods and an affective-humanistic approach. To achieve this, I have shown how Socratic and deliberative dialogue are foundational elements in democracy and how an affective-humanistic

approach conveys values inherent in human rights, as well as how values of virtue theory accurately can represent those of the common principles. Through an interaction between virtue theory, the common principles and *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, I found three topics that were relevant to investigate in the novel and use in the teaching of the common principles: sexism, gender inequality and societal transformation.

Sexism and gender inequality were found to be prevalent issues in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and consequently located in the defined arena. However, the arena's vertical expansion through narrative levels showed how those issues created an ethical challenge, which evoked a reasonable reader. This was possible due to the narrator becoming humanised through instances of judgement, irony and contrasting statements. Through combining the views of the questionable narrator with the plea for societal transformation, a module aiming to teach the common principles was created. This module values critical self-reflection and contains discussions where the students may engage in such activity whilst also residing in open communication with each other, exchanging ideas in a Socratic fashion and consider their own values in relation to the ones presented. The extent to which self-reflection is part of this module is what I consider unique, it is prevalent in all three sections in different manners, continuously nudging the students to extend their perspectives through integrating and modifying what is presented to them. This is, of course, especially potent when considering *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, where they have the possibility to enter the text rather than view it from a spectator's perspective. Such an interaction would be difficult if *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* did not expand into a three-dimensional room that allows a reader to don armour, enter the arena, and contend in it, thus promoting societal transformation through individual responsible responses.

As for further research, it might be significant to consider how virtue ethics is a Western concept with ties to Western ideologies. Applying such a concept on South African literature is possible; it has been shown to share values with Adichie's definition of African feminism. But it can be questioned whether a Western ethics is proper to employ in relation to African literature and if perhaps there are other ethics that are more closely tied to a South African perspective, that may interact with South African literature in a more productive way.

Additionally, the concept of implied author is still recent and its relevance and implications face criticism; it is argued that the implied author is a reader construct and thus changes form with every reading. One may ask whether the implied author is a

relevant tool to employ in relation to narratology, or if the use of such a concept only is applicable when discussing a certain interpretation.

As such, teaching the common principles is essentially about awakening a responsible, self-reflecting, critical process within the students. I believe *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is an excellent tool for this purpose, and that the structure of the module is required for the teaching to be effective. However, other literary works may serve the same purpose with the same module format, if they expand from the plane into the room.

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Appendix – Assignment Descriptions

Assignment 1

As a group, choose a topic from the list below or your own topic related to South African history or society. Notify your teacher of your choice.

Topic suggestions:

- Apartheid/post-apartheid
- Xenophobia
- Religion/witchcraft/honour killings
- African feminism
- Gender roles

Prepare to present your chosen topic in front of the class. Your presentation should be 5-10 minutes long and include answers to the following questions:

- Why is your topic interesting?
- What implications does your topic have in a South African setting?
- Can you see how your topic would be relevant in a Swedish setting?
 - For example: African feminism could be relevant by comparing it to Western feminism or viewing how values in African feminism could benefit a Swedish context.
- Can you draw any parallels between your topic and the videos we watched?

Assignment 3

Part 1 – Instructions for discussion 1

Key concepts: Narrator, second-person address

You have now read chapter 1 of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.

In groups, take a few minutes to think and talk about your individual experiences. You can use the following questions to guide you:

- What was I told in this chapter?
- What characters did I get to meet?
- How did I feel when reading this chapter, and why?
- What was the tone of the chapter?
- Was there anything in particular I thought about or noticed whilst reading this chapter?

You now have fifteen minutes to discuss the following questions, after which you will be asked to provide a summary for the rest of the class of your group's discussion. Use examples from the text to validate your arguments. Feel free to ask other groups about their summaries, there are no right nor wrong answers to these questions.

- How do you view the narrator? Is it a person? Is it part of the story? Why?
- What values does the narrator possess? Are they just?
- What effect does the usage of "you" (second-person address) have on you as a reader?