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Beyond the 'glass bead game': a critical investigation
into the theorising acts of teachers of Literature in English Secondary schools

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of Leeds Beckett University for the degree of Doctor of Education

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Abstract

In this submission I investigate the ways in which Secondary English teachers theorise the concepts of Literature, writer, and reader as they plan and teach literary texts to students in Key Stage 3.

At degree level, the disciplinary codes, rules and conventions of literary study are deconstructed in formal courses on Literary Theory; I argue that an increased focus on these modes of operation at school level would help teachers and their students gain confidence in understanding the utility and implications of and alternatives to particular reading positions. It would also help both teachers and students re-appraise and validate their roles as stewards and contributory actors to the discipline, to rebalance the asymmetric relations of epistemological power.

This research contributes new empirical findings to the literature on the disciplinary identity of school literary study, the ways in which knowledge is framed and authorised within it, and the status of teachers and their students as theorists. Via a sequence of semi-structured interviews, I explore the theorising trajectories of 4 experienced English teachers as they plan, teach and review a scheme of learning on a literary text at Key Stage 3. Using a Critical Pedagogy lens, I examine the participants' acts of disciplinary framing, their conceptions of disciplinary power, authority and influence, and how they induct students into critical identities and dispositions.

I conclude that epistemological awareness of the constructed nature of disciplinary codes and conventions can help teachers move towards a more inclusive version of school literary study, one which acknowledges the contextual contingency of any response and shows knowledge and meaning to be the products of ongoing discourses, including those which students bring into and create within the classroom. I present recommendations for practice in the form of a new framework for school literary study in its compulsory phase, and a call for an increased emphasis on epistemological questions as professional development for teachers of Literature across the sector.

Dedication and Thanks

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to John Murphy, the English teacher who was pivotal in helping me find confidence, a voice, and inspiration to pursue a career teaching English myself.

List of Acronyms used in the text

AQA	The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
CPL	Continued professional learning
EA	The English Association
ECT	Early Career Teacher
HE	Higher Education
LATE	The London Association of Teachers of English
NATE	The National Association of Teachers of English
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Problem and Why It Matters

In 2017, Cambridge University English student Lola Olufemi co-authored a letter to Cambridge University English department calling for greater representation of ethnic minorities in its undergraduate English curriculum. Here was a student-stakeholder in the discipline of literary study who was able to hold the practice of a venerated institution to the light, appraise her own place within it, and feel confident to contribute to its evolution. Here was a student-stakeholder – along with her co-authors – who understood her right to participate in disciplinary development. Olufemi valued literary study, but had not seen herself represented in the curriculum and had responded by forging a space for her reader-identity to be validated.

Olufemi's action caused me to think about the fact that there must have been many students over my 29 year career as an English teacher in state education who had not found their own identities or experiences reflected in the texts we studied and the routes we took into those texts, or their own reactions and readings validated in opportunities for formal response. Many students in the compulsory phase up to Year 11 are likely to have encountered school literary study as a set of prescribed texts with a narrow range of formally authorised readings. It would be understandable if those students felt a sense of institutional alienation from the discipline and walked away from literary study at 16 without looking back.

Olufemi's action also caused me to think about English teachers' position and influence within the discipline. School literary study has become a landscape dominated by discourses of accountability that pivot firmly on exam results and draw oxygen from the space in which English teachers might conceptualise their professional knowledge and identity, and contribute to disciplinary debate and reformation. Christine Counsell, in a foreword to David Didau's *Making Meaning in English* (2021), invites English teachers to 'examine their 'sense of responsibility to the future as stewards of literature and language as a tradition.. precisely so that anyone can renew that tradition through challenge, creativity and debate' (p.xx). I use this thesis to argue that we need a new focus on theorising around and inside the classroom, so that English teachers and their students have the impetus, imperative and tools to consider how the discipline of literary study is constituted and conceptualised, and to develop confidence in recognising themselves as both stewards and contributory actors in that 'tradition'. We need to continually renew debate about the purpose of literary study and how it should simultaneously serve and enrich its specialist and its co-opted investors. Without such a focus, disciplinary structures and discourses may continue to quietly promote some viewpoints and ways of reading and exclude others, and whilst I recognize the

difficulties of honouring all viewpoints in the restricted spaces of the school timetable and analytical essay, I think we as English teachers could do more to define and expand those structures, so that school students might have alternative readings validated and fitted into disciplinary networks of thinking. Olufemi's call to decolonise text choices within an English curriculum is one step towards the democratisation of the discipline; I see the establishment of a theorising dimension in classroom literary study as another.

Ashbee (2021, p.11) points to the importance of school stakeholders being helped to see themselves as connected to the disciplinary community when she calls on teachers to:

open up the disciplinary codes for students so that they may learn not only the great claims and contributions of the disciplines but also their modes of operation, their rules and conventions, so that they may see knowledge and meaning as the products of ongoing discourses: discourses that they are empowered to join, participate in, and challenge as educated people.

'Challenges' to the 'disciplinary codes', 'modes of operations', and 'rules and conventions' for literary study do have a conspicuous and expansive dimension in Higher Education in the form of Literary Theory. This theory as a body of work asks us to bring explicit consciousness to the act and practice of reading and studying Literature, and to consider enduring issues about the positionality of author, text and reader. Undergraduates setting out into a Literature degree in England are likely to enter into a systematised study of the nature of literary analysis, often encapsulated in a discrete Literary Theory module, and often at some remove from their other textual work and from the disciplinary logics of their A Level in Literature. Value structures which remained submerged during school study are suddenly brought into view in such modules, and for many undergraduates, consumption of the Theory apple leads to a permanent altering of the landscape of literary study. As an undergraduate on a Literature degree myself, I remember feelings of excitement during these first heady encounters with Literary Theory, but also a sense of confusion about why these hidden dimensions had been withheld from view in earlier study, and a simultaneous assumption of intellectual deficit because I had not realised such perspectives existed before.

In this thesis, I aim to advance an argument for earlier, school-based work on disciplinary codes and modes of operation through the promotion of active theorising around classroom conceptualisations of text, writer, and reader. I see this as a route by which teachers and students might consciously access 'ongoing discourses' that should not be reserved for elite study. Theory, after all, is innate and integral – we are 'always already theorists' (McCormick, 1992a, p.114) – even if current school subject structures and assessment systems might not acknowledge this idea.

I explore the way that academic literature classifies Literary Theory in Chapter 2; however, I am not using this study to call for transmissive teaching of schools of theory to younger students. Instead, I choose from the outset to focus on advancing school literary theorising first as a disposition: as Eaglestone points out, learning a subject ‘involves more than knowing about a list of texts, equations or processes: it teaches ways of thinking and approaching material, it teaches habits of mind. Because of this, a discipline also teaches an identity, a way to be’ (Eaglestone, 2016, p.4). I draw on the tenets of Critical Pedagogy to characterise my school teacher-theorist or student-theorist as having a dispositional confidence to question underlying principles, and as seeing the value in doing so. She can articulate her approach to literary study, identifying and consciously framing her conceptualisation of literary text, writer, reader and context. She is aware that readings are never ‘natural or neutral’ (Scholes, 1985) but always advance particular positions and perspectives; she is not threatened by this. She is not pinioned to one reading and is able to consider the utility, implications and alternatives to her own readings. She can see disciplinary structures, and work within them, but can also consider their current limitations and latent potential for development.

Thus the concepts of power, authority, identity and self-determination are central to this study, both for the individual teacher-stakeholder and student-stakeholder, and for their collective representation in the disciplinary community of literary study. A third group of stakeholders for whom this work is undertaken is those English educators working in Higher Education. The majority of undergraduates who populate Literature Degrees find their way via school literary study, and yet a schism exists between the school and the University in terms of educational approach and knowledge of each other’s practices. Drawing on the work of Arthur Applebee (1994, 1997), Robert Eaglestone and Barbara Bleiman have recently called on English teachers to help students join ‘the conversation’ about Literature, yet that conversation could almost be characterized as happening in different languages between the two sites. Research by Ballinger (2003), Atherton (2005), Green (2006) and Snapper (2009, 2011b) points to ‘a continuity of confusion’ (Atherton, 2005, p.182) between school and university English as each pursues ‘dichotomous paradigms’ (Green, 2006, p.111). As recent declining figures for the uptake of A Level Literature indicate a subject heading towards crisis, there is a renewed urgency for the different phases of the sector to work to close this gap through joint reappraisal of disciplinary identity and purposes, and review of participatory incentives and sightlines between stakeholders. I hope to stimulate such reappraisal through this work.

In ‘Doing English: A Guide for Literature Students’ (2000), Robert Eaglestone offers two key objectives for literary study:

English – including theory – is not an abstract glass bead game played only for pleasure, it is a discipline that, through the study of literature, attempts to comprehend better the world around us and to appreciate the others that inhabit it. (Eagleton, 2000, p.236)

A focus on theorising could help teachers close a gap between what we say and what we do (Coles, 2024): that is, to pay attention to our own construction of reader, writer and text in the classroom even as we support our students to do the same, in order to know what the discipline is and does, and could be and could do.

1.2 The Background to the Research

When Peter Griffith published *Literary Theory and English Teaching* in 1987, it was the first book specifically inviting secondary teachers to engage with literary theory, and thereby to examine the apparatus underpinning literary study at a school level. His General Editor Anthony Adams states in an Introduction that Griffith's brief was to 'enable the concerned, but new, reader in this field, especially the classroom teacher of English to understand and apply modern critical theory to his or her own teaching' (p.xv). Griffith is a radical guide: in making the case for theory and theorising literary study in schools, he also points out the permeable contours of both the school discipline and its authorities, in that pupils, as well as teachers, have always already been theorists all along:

The classification and framing of knowledge within an English lesson, where there is so little that can count as knowledge in a quasi-positivistic way, is a fascinating area in its own right, and it is perhaps naïve to imagine that pupils taught in such a context have not, in some more or less intuitive way, always carried out that kind of exercise anyway. (p.86)

He edges towards the idea of pupils cultivating a conscious awareness of the reading positions created in the classroom: 'Certain applications of literary theory can lay bare what the text does not say as well as what it does, and, as part of the same process, to make certain aspects of the context in which the reading takes place visible as well..' (my italics) and advocates for a sharing of disciplinary choices as 'to be able to offer pupils this sense of power over their environment seems a desirable goal' (p.86).

Just such a theorising call can be heard again in the year 2000, when Robert Eaglestone published *Doing English: a Guide for Literature Students*, seeing once more a need to bridge the 'gap between 2 worlds' of English studies – the world of secondary school English, and the world of degree course English. He describes the arrival of a new section in the library: 'a section called 'literary theory' which 'simply wouldn't have been there twenty years ago' (p.2). He explains that this section 'is about new ways of doing English that have been taken up and used in higher education' but also

how these 'ways' 'might not seem to reflect the English taught in many schools and colleges at all' (p.2). Then, in 2017, in a fourth edition of *Beginning Theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory* 22 years after a first edition, Peter Barry comments that '[literary] theory is no longer newsworthy.. so many of its ideas have become the common currency of the intellectual climate we now live in' (p.305). Yet the extent to which this 'common currency' has made its way into schools for use by teachers and students is debatable. School study of English texts still lacks a clear theoretical dimension, and if theory's precepts are barely visible for the majority of those in compulsory education, they will remain specialist tools for a minority, rather than everyday utensils.

Current state-sanctioned curricula and syllabi in English secondary schools indicate that Griffith's gauntlet has still not been taken up with any conviction. Literary theory makes just one spectral appearance in a corner of one A level Literature syllabus. Students graduating from English secondary schools could be forgiven for remaining unaware of differing discourses and issues of positionality within and around Literary study. Indeed, investigations into undergraduate reactions to Literary theory courses in Literature degrees show that many are affronted when the curtain is pulled back: Johnson, for example, highlights the way that such courses can uproot 'firmly held ideological stances' and 'common sense assumptions' carried from school study: 'some students reject theory precisely because they want to believe in the 'universality' and 'correctness' of their positions and can't bear for these positions to be made historical and contingent' (Johnson, 2015, p.58).

However, this absence of explicit theory in the codifying curricula and assessment cannot be taken as indication that English teachers themselves are operating in an epistemological vacuum. Teachers are already theorists, as Carr and Kemmis attest – 'anybody engaged in the 'practice' of educating must already possess some theory of education which structures his activities and guides his decisions' (1983, p.110). Indeed, this process even begins before a would-be teacher reaches the classroom, as many PGCE interviewers can report (see Mathieson, 1975, Goodwyn, 2002, Ellis, 2003 for examples of beginning teachers' theorising). Yet as teachers beyond their training year or years are rarely encouraged via formal channels to articulate their theories about Literary study, those theories are likely to remain tacit, and undervalued.

Direct attempts by researchers to 'capture' teacher theorising or 'force it into the open' show that the venture can be problematic. For example, Ireland, O'Sullivan and Duchesne (2017) undertook an investigation into the relationship between literary theory and 'teacher beliefs' in the wake of changes to the New South Wales English curriculum. In their study, they interviewed English teachers to explore the extent of their accommodation, support and contestation of the new

syllabus, in order to ‘hear their voices’ and evaluate the impact of epistemological positioning on syllabus interpretation. Yet teachers found identifying the theoretical bases of the syllabus to be very difficult, and when offered a list of 19 different theories, ‘more teachers claimed to identify with no literary theories than with any of the 19 listed theories.’ One teacher cited in the study remarked that she struggled with ‘the idea of teaching literary theories’:

‘while I find the theories interesting, I am often at odds with them (especially postmodernism) and feel that they disrupt students’ experience of literature.’ (Ireland et al , 2017, p.59)

This suggests a protectiveness about both the canon, and, perhaps, a protectiveness about the guardianship of student experience of English. The teacher positions theory as an extrinsic and potentially invasive body of thought, rather than seeing herself as already resident within an arena of theorising as she makes choices about her teaching of literature.

Other interviewees communicate a sense of active resistance, a feeling of their independence being under threat from cultish dictates:

‘I have VERY strong beliefs in NOT espousing one particular ‘ism’. That’s so narrow and self-defeating. I want to inject my students with my passion for literature. That’s what will sustain them, not some mindless adherence to a philosophical literary theory.’ (p.59)

Thus a call to embrace literary theory from outside the school might well involve dissonance and practical predicament for the teacher who strives for a feeling of coherence. The idea of stable reader identity might come undone; induction into the craft of literary analysis might become more knotted; and with no explicit place for learning about theory in current examination requirements up to GCSE, it could be argued that there might be a kind of moral imperative for teachers to prioritise attainment in relation to exam grades.

Ireland et al (2017) do not conclude by judging their subjects, but focus instead on profession-wide uncertainty about what teachers and students are expected to know and do with theory, and confusion arising from the medley of theories represented in the new syllabus without due recognition of their epistemological roots or the tensions between them. They conclude that any new curriculum should take into consideration teacher beliefs, warning against marginalisation of practitioners in any curricular decision-making process and calling for due attention to be paid to the potential destabilising effect of abrupt curricular change.

Ireland et al’s 2017 study also raises questions about gaps between researcher and teacher discourse. In the defensive tone of some of the responses, one can sense a feeling that teachers

felt tested, and pushed back against the application of a discourse from Higher Education from which they felt alienated. Their resistance raises questions about literary theory within the discipline of Literary studies, and highlights a lack of cross-phase debate or consensus about its ultimate utility and purpose.

Davies (1992) expresses concern about the way research 'on' English teachers could produce accounts of thinking and practice distanced from their subjects, created 'by professionals whose expertise lies in their capacity to express the kind of systematic theories about the subject that practising teachers might literally have no time for' (Davies, 1992, p.195). Davies himself undertook research into English teachers' theorising by looking closely at department syllabus statements as narratives of intent. Ironically this work did not always satisfy the very practising teachers Davies sought to support, as we can see in a published response from one such teacher, who alerts us to expediencies not always spotted by the researcher:

Statements which preface school syllabuses, to which Davies refers, are nearly always platitudinous. They are exercises in 'directed writing', usually undertaken at speed for heads, governors, parents, inspectors. Whether compiled by a working party or by a head of department, they are unlikely to represent the views of any individual at all fully. Moreover it is expedient for them to be modelled rather closely on the wording of GCSE and A level syllabuses, most recently on the wording of the national curriculum documents. (Scott Stokes, 1991, p.66)

Ellis (2007) finds a different point of entry to teacher thinking. He highlights the theorising already evident in shared subject paradigms and pedagogies in schemes of learning and department policy, representations of a department's collective knowledge, but then recognises the wider field of activity as individual teachers have scope for working on the rules of knowledge validation themselves. Gordon (2012) shows how active work to theorise the subject specific discipline also becomes visible in mentoring work, as English mentors explain the reasoning behind their decisions and choices to the beginning teacher. Here the mentoring English teacher occupies a sanctioned position of expertise, working in a low-threat forum where they can 'establish and continually re-examine purposes for teaching' (Gordon, 2012, p.376).

The National Curriculum (2014) stipulates that pupils should be taught to critically evaluate texts in order to be able to offer informed personal response, whilst also recognising and evaluating other possible responses. This implies that pupils should be helped to understand that there are alternative positions for reading. Didau reaches further in stating that pupils should learn to 'ask questions of claims made by others and from their own responses to the substantive knowledge

they encounter' (Didau, 2021, p.77); in order to teach these skills effectively, English teachers need to apply them themselves, continually working on their consciousness of their positionality. Thus bringing their own framing practices into view should be an important part of their work, in an active dialogue about the core purposes and possibilities of literary study. Elliott suggests that a core element of school English should be learning how an argument has been constructed (Elliott, 2021, p.17). English teachers might start by looking at how they themselves construct and justify their thinking and practice in the teaching of literature.

1.3 The Personal Context for the Research

When I completed my Masters' thesis in 2002, I was 6 years into a career teaching secondary English, and feeling frustrated that the strata of the English teaching community with which I had contact were not choosing to, or able to, ask the question 'why' about our approach to literary texts in the secondary English classroom. At that time, the A level literature syllabus seemed to allow for more time to ask this question than the lower years, as there we could dedicate longer periods of time to the study of each text, and the students had more capacity in which to consider the question, having reduced the number of subjects they were studying. However, literary theory was notably absent from the syllabi, despite the introduction of engaging materials from the English and Media Centre (see Ogborn et al, 2000), and the language of theory did not permeate department discussions.

This was a cause for concern for me, as I had experienced a sense of disorientation upon first encountering literary theory in my undergraduate degree. I was keen to provide my own students with an induction: at degree level, the notion of positionality of readers, critics and texts had been invigorating, linking English assertively to notions of social justice. To know that all readings of texts are contingent is to know that other positions can be valid and validated, an aspect of English education that I felt was worth sharing in a school context.

In that MA thesis (Barry, 2003), I undertook exercises with the students around the work of Seamus Heaney, encouraging them to step away from the idea of unified reader response by examining the positionality of critics' readings in relation to their political allegiance, and looking at covers of critical texts on Heaney for signs of that positionality. The Icon Critical Guide (Andrews, 1998) was my preferred text. This work was significant as it juxtaposed critics with distinctly different political, some lionising Heaney, some condemning him for his continuing ambiguity over the Irish Troubles. A cartoon hand graced the cover, anarchically scribbling over Heaney's face with green crayon. Students used this critical collection to start to unpick positions and evaluate their transparency, whilst also articulating and analysing their own readings.

I felt the benefits of such work might reach beyond more conventional classroom literary study – in giving an account of themselves, in interrogating the positions of literary ‘experts’, in surveying criticism and its underpinning theory as cultural artefacts, students (and their teachers) might be strengthening their own sense of agency and authority. Johnson (2015, p.38) notes how use of theory is often a marker of ‘distinction’: ‘the writer or speaker who can reference theoretical ideas with confidence and accuracy is marked as an expert and accorded at least a measure of respect’. I hoped that this work might have immediate potency for my A level students in the context of the university admissions interview: I imagined that a candidate who was able to consider multiple positions on any text or issue raised by academic staff might distinguish themselves as an independent and critical thinker.

I converted my MA findings into an article for the NATE magazine English Drama Media (Wright, 2006) but the line of enquiry ended there: I was not able to prolong my study into professional dialogue, even though it had raised subsequent, difficult questions for me about my own identity, and the ultimate project of English as a subject. Then – and now - I question what I perceive to be an absence of theorising in the English classroom and staffroom, a lack of formal recognition of the importance of conversation about theorising and positionality. I seek to challenge the status of literary theory as a kind of intellectual game reserved for elite study at university, inappropriate to English study for younger students, and ultimately inapplicable and somehow alien to the very work of the English teacher, to their thinking patterns and habits, or to the lives of their students.

The motivation for this thesis stems from a sustained belief that theorising requires a more explicit presence in the processes of the English teacher’s professional life. This study aims to explore strategies to assist English teachers to identify a connection between thinking practices in the university, thinking practices in the staffroom and thinking practices in the classroom. Brenton Doecke (2016) attempts to trace such a line in an article about the formation of his professional knowledges. He recounts his train journey on an ‘old red rattler’ from Melbourne to Noble Park, during which he ‘ploughs through’ Georg Lukacs’ *The Theory of the Novel* (1971). His destination is the school in which he is teaching a ‘discrepant’ class of Year 9 students the Paul Zindel novel, *The Pigman* (1972). Doecke does not like this novel – ‘this is not a novel that I have chosen to teach, not one that resonates with me in any compelling way.’ But his students are ‘engrossed’ by it ‘turning their pages in wide-eyed anticipation’. He asks the question:

Would it have been possible for me to conceive of my students’ pleasures in *The Pigman* on a continuum of development that might have stretched from their delight in the story to some kind of appreciation of the subtleties of Lukacs’ analysis of the novel form? (Doecke, 2016, p.299)

He further juxtaposes these two scenes with an image of his study floor strewn with notes and resources from conferences and workshops, highlighted and annotated articles and papers, the 'stuff' garnered during courses where he worked on his self- and professional- development as an English teacher. This juxtaposition forms part of what he defines as 'continuing efforts to negotiate a pathway between the rich particularities of the educational settings in which I have worked and my knowledge and values as an English teacher'. He attempts to 'make the standpoint from which [he] is writing an object of scrutiny', an act which he sees as 'a necessary dimension of a politically committed praxis' (Doecke, 2016, p.292).

Unlike the rickety red rattler, Doecke then makes some deft traverses between his activity contexts, fuelled by Lukacs' concept of 'reification', that is, a situation where people are made passive by structures that have lost any trace of their roots in social relationships that originally gave rise to them. Tangible examples of such structures in the schools might include policy documentation, lesson observation requirements, or English curricular maps and plans. For Doecke, these structures include corresponding forms of subjectivity or consciousness, influencing teachers' sense of identity, agency and collective potential: teachers (and, hence their students) could be 'reduced to the status of 'individuals' who are increasingly incapable of envisaging collective social action that might bring about change' (Doecke, 2016, p.304).

Doecke's autoethnographic work also reflects a kind of journeying I feel I witness often as the programme co-ordinator of an MA in Education, in which practicing teachers navigate the frequently unfamiliar concepts of ontology and epistemology. These teacher-students often speak of a school culture in which asking teachers to articulate their world views, values and beliefs has come to be seen as some kind of strange, irrelevant or even destabilising act. Accountability and inspection measures often preclude the articulation of a personally held stance, and I see work on the epistemologies of English teachers as important 'at a time when teachers' knowledge methods, theories and practices are hyper scrutinised, undervalued and grossly misunderstood if taken into account at all' (Juzwik and Cushman, 2014, p.89).

In my PGCE role, I am involved in interviewing prospective English teachers, who enthusiastically describe their ontological stance in relation to the reading and teaching of Literature. Green (2006, p.113) describes the dynamic way that beginning teachers of English 'enter into a reconstructive dialogue with their degree level knowledge .. to come to an understanding of how these linked but distinct knowledges can be made to co-exist and interrelate with one another within effective teacherly practice'. This 'reconstructive dialogue' does not end at the point of entry into the profession, not is it confined to comparing degree work with teaching work: teachers continually reconstruct their understandings of what schooling in their subject is and is for, but the

opportunities for articulation of these reconstructions is likely to diminish as subject-specific education recedes.

Predictably, the research landscape concerning English teachers' identities and philosophies primarily focuses on novice teachers, reflecting the fact that PGCE tutors conduct much of the research as they have access to participants as they start their careers, and the fact that new teachers are supported in adopting a vari-focal lens on English teaching, both within and beyond their first school placements and jobs. More experienced teachers are less accessible, less visible in the literature, and without the impetus to articulate their positions may well feel themselves to be further removed from a theoretical realm.

1.4 The Research Focus

This research is an investigation into the ways in which secondary English teachers theorise Literary study and its teaching in school, both individually, and within a wider community of professional peers. The particular focus of the study is the thinking of teachers responsible for curriculum design at a departmental level; volunteering participants proved to be teachers with 5+ years of experience and job titles of 'Head of Department' or 'Head of Key Stage'. I am interested to gain deeper understanding of the influences shaping their conceptions of Literature as a school subject. I also want to see how these relate to their conceptions of the wider discipline of Literary study, and teachers' status and influence within this discipline.

The study is especially relevant in the context of teaching being increasingly characterised as a generic activity, with recipes for effectiveness being generated by research into 'what works' and 'what makes good teaching' irrespective of subject specialism. Fordham (2016) also reminds us that whilst teacher competency and appraisal models might include a subject specific element, teaching as a disciplinary activity is neglected in favour of 'technocratic conceptions of teaching, that emphasise means and processes over ends and purposes' (Fordham, 2016, p.420). A technocratic focus can marginalise key questions of disciplinary identity and its internal grammars, and disregard important considerations of how teachers shape their own telos as they practice within and upon that discipline. By gathering and juxtaposing detailed narratives relating to subject conception, I hope to foreground the work that teachers do as theorists, in order to stimulate reflection on the current discourse around Literary study and its teaching in secondary schools, and its relation to the Higher Education sector, in which notions of Literary study are more explicitly theorised.

The research is located within a theoretical framework that brings the idea of conscientization (Freire, 1970) from the field of Critical Pedagogy to teacher thinking about disciplinary practices and 'modes of operation...rules and conventions' (Ashbee, 2021, p.11). Ashbee (2021) makes a strong case for specialists to be supported in ongoing curriculum exploration, and in applying theory and engagement in specialist discourse; the research takes the form of a project in which teachers are invited to conceive of themselves as 'always already theorists' (McCormick, 1992a, p.4) and articulate their thinking about themselves, their students and the framing of foundational concepts of literary study in school.

The project draws on key principles of Action Research in several ways. Teacher-participants have undertaken an experiment in articulating their own theorising work during a cycle of planning, teaching and reflecting upon a unit of work on a literary text at Key Stage 3. Each teacher's cycle of discussion, action and evaluation is consciously value-based. Local knowledge is afforded attention and importance. It is intended to be educative and knowledge-producing for all involved, and is linked with the concept of reflective practice (Schon, 1991). The project does not sit neatly within some definitions of Action Research in other ways, however. My primary data is interviews, and therefore distance is created in time and place between the classroom and the data collection. Munn-Giddings states that 'the purpose of Action Research is to work towards practice change' (2017, p.72). A desire for change underpins my own motivation for undertaking the study but this was not generated by participants in a joint enterprise; rather, participants took part in a spirit of generous curiosity.

Experienced English teachers participated in semi-structured interviews before and after the teaching of a Key Stage 3 Scheme of Learning of each teacher's choice. They were asked to think about how they conceptualised and framed text, author and reader for their students, at the planning stage, and in the teaching of their Scheme. This represents a form of literary theorising with direct consequence: their conceptualisations shape and affect the experience of their students. These discussions were undertaken with a practical aim; that is, to inform a proposal for a reformulation of school literary study intended to benefit

- all students in the compulsory years of schooling via a more inclusive model of practice that validates readings from differing positions
- English teachers, via the promotion of theorising as a means of developing confidence as disciplinary stewards and actors within the discipline of literary study
- The disciplinary community as a whole via strengthened bonds between ways of thinking promoted in school and ways of thinking promoted in literary study in Higher Education

I hope to make an original contribution to the field by:

- a) Surveying how literary theory and theorising are presented in academic summary work, research literature, pedagogical guides, and teacher accounts, to clarify why theory and theorising hold problematic status in and between schools and Higher Education
- b) Collecting examples of English teacher theorising in relation to the identity and positioning of themselves and their students in school literary study, and how key concepts of literary study are framed in the classroom in relation to those identities and
- c) In response to literature and data findings, constructing a viable proposal for ways in which literary theorising might be incorporated into school curricula, to redistribute disciplinary power and to benefit stakeholders at every level of the discipline of literary study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Literary theory and theorising

When Griffith published *Literary Theory and English Teaching* in 1987, it was the first book specifically for secondary teachers on the subject. At this time, debates about literary theory had permeated higher education, and had given rise to curricula change and an influx of new practices, authorities and terms to define the act of reading. The early 1980's had seen 'the moment of theory' (Hunter, 2006). Yet the possibilities and provocations of literary theory had barely reached practising school teachers of English, in spite of a growing number of articles in subject specialist magazines, journals and conference proceedings¹. Adams, in his introduction to Griffith's book, highlights the gap between university and school English approaches to literature, in that he characterises Griffith as a necessary mediator of unfamiliar and difficult ideas (Griffith, 1987, p.xiv).

More than 30 years later, literary theory still has little by way of a foothold in school curricula. Interested teachers of English might find it tucked away in a coursework component of one of 5 possible A Level English Literature Specifications, where a short critical anthology introduces students to 'six different ways of reading literature' which 'provide a lens, if you like, through which you can look at texts, enabling you to access them from a variety of angles and challenge them if you so choose' (AQA, 2019b, p.5). The unit is called 'Theory and Independence', and its stated purpose is for students to 'engage with the notion that meanings in literature are not fixed and are influenced by many external factors that may be brought to bear on texts' (AQA, 2019c). The approaches covered in the anthology (for example 'Marxist ways of reading', 'Feminist ways of reading', 'Post-colonial ways of reading') represent the first time for many students - and their teachers - that any ways of studying literature will have been formally named and given precedence over the texts themselves. Although this component does not go as far as conceding that the kind of work already done in classrooms in secondary schooling might not have been 'theory free', it does mark the first time that literary study in English steps back, begins to acknowledge its own apparatus, and makes visible the multiple possible lenses through which literary texts might be viewed.

The fact that so little value is ascribed to literary theory in terms of syllabus space is both a reason and a reminder that it is likely to remain peripheral in the minds of those delivering the curricula at secondary school level. Much research literature presents English teachers less as offering active resistance to and rejection of theory, and more a sense indifference to or disconnection from what

¹ For an authoritative summary, see Snapper, 2008, pp. 25 – 41

could be described as a set of irrelevant precepts. For example, a NATE survey of English teacher attitudes to Literature at A level found 'low importance given to literary theory, 14 respondents seeing this as of low or no importance, and only five rating it as important' (NATE, 2005).

In determining the parameters of the literature review, I have first sought to understand how literary theory is framed, taught and promoted within the discipline of literary study. In the 5 schools in which I have worked, colleagues, including those with degrees in Literature have been ambivalent, resistant or indifferent to theory; I wanted to explore how it might be being presented to undergraduate teachers-in-waiting, and to teachers, as one route to understanding its absence in school curricula. In the first half of the review, I look at the ways in which literary theory and its value are articulated in summative texts. I survey research and commentary on its teaching in Higher Education, where it has an established place in the curricula. I review the pedagogical guides available to teachers, and accounts of English teachers' forays into theory and theorising in the UK, Australia, and the US.

In the second half of the review, I then turn to secondary schools to review texts more specifically concerned with the identity, knowledge and the status of teachers and students as theorists in the English classroom. I look at the ways in which English teachers' identities are categorised, and the ways in which their relationship with disciplinary knowledge has been framed. Finally, in accordance with the concerns of the Critical Pedagogy movement, I examine the ways in which the literature presents ideas about the status and authority of teachers and their students within the discipline of literary study. Questions of identity and authority must be addressed in my final recommendations if teachers and students are to be encouraged to engage in foundational theorising work; I wanted to see how existing literature might already have posed and answered such questions.

Taken together, the two parts of the review offer pointers as to why the articulation of theoretical positioning might be both important and problematic for English teachers and their students.

2.1.1. How does the literature define literary theory and theorising and its importance?

A survey of summative guides does not reveal a singular definition. 'Literary theory' is commonly used as an overarching label for a diverse group of approaches to reading literary texts. What these approaches have in common is the way that they bring an explicit consciousness to the act and practice of reading, with each strand of theory establishing principles for interpreting and evaluating literature. Key questions that literary theory seeks to address are philosophical: for example, what is literature? Who decides? What can and might literature do for us? Is there a

correct way to read? How can differing interpretations be accounted for? It draws our attention to issues of process, choice and positionality in relation to the reading of literary text.

The question of where to locate authority for meaning is central when approaching (often competing) traditions in literary theory. Moss (2000) offers the following clear taxonomy of 'schools' as a starting point, for example²:

	Other texts	
	Canonicity...	
	...	
	Intertextuality	
Writer(s)	Text(s)	Reader(s)
Authorial intention	Formalism	Phenomenology
Psychoanalysis	New Criticism	Reader-Response
	Structuralism/Semiotics	Psychoanalysis
	Linguistics/Stylistics	Hermeneutics
	Narratology	
	Poetics	
	Context(s)	
	New Historicism	
	Marxism / Cultural	
	Materialism	
	Post-Colonialism	
	Feminism	
	Queer Theory	
	Minority Discourse	
	System(s)	
	Deconstruction	

² Although its boundaries are in constant development in response to current social concerns. Eco-criticism, for example, might now be added to the Context(s) list.

Post- structuralism/Post- modernism

Summative texts use varying singular collective and abstract nouns to define literary theory as a whole: it is a 'field' (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.), a handy 'toolkit' for reading (Rapaport, 2011, p. xii), an elegant 'repertoire of critical lenses' (Appleman, 2009, p.4), an orderly 'systematic account of the nature of literature and the methods for analysing it' (Culler, 1997, p.1) but also a disorderly, energetic, anarchic 'buzzing, booming confusion of phenomena' (Marshall, in Sadoff and Cain, 1994, p.81).

But whilst some may see this as a cacophonous field, Culler (1997, p.1) points out that 'treating contemporary theory as a set of competing methods or approaches misses much of its interest and force, which come from its broad challenge to common sense and from its explorations of how meaning is created and human identities take shape'. He urges us to enjoy its 'pugnacious disrupting of common sense notions' (Culler, 1997, p.4) in pursuit of 'a better sense of the implications of the questions you put to the works you read' (Culler, 1997, p.16).

Within these guides, accounts of its evolution vary too, in terms of their entrance points into its genealogy, although all draw on the history of the development of English Studies. For example, Eagleton (1983, p.ix) directs us to begin in 1917, 'the year in which the young Russian Formalist Viktor Shlovsky published his pioneering essay 'Art as Device'; Selden (1985) chooses F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot as influenced by Matthew Arnold; Webster (1990, p.5) begins with the formation of the English Association in 1907 and the publication of the Newbolt Report on The Teaching of English in England in 1921. Barry (1995) is more self-conscious about the choice of gateway into literary theory for the novice. He announces that he intends to start with liberal humanism, which he defines as the kind of criticism that prevailed before theory but then then steps off the genealogical track by asking his readers to articulate their own experience of literature study before continuing into a historical account. He even offers a brief epistemological self-portrait in which he identifies where literary theory began to materialise within his vision – 'around 1973 the words 'structuralism' and 'semiotics' began to feature in notes about what I was reading..' (Barry, 1995, p.10).

This attention to ontological formations recognises that all 'custodians of the discourse' (Eagleton, 1983, p.175) are likely to have come to a consciousness of literary theory in Higher Education, rather than in a school setting where literary study was introduced. That Barry foregrounds the

formation of his theoretical sensibility alongside the application of that sensibility itself is significant: whilst the fundamental challenge and point of theory is to analyse underlying principles and assumptions, it seems ironic that few other summative guides align author practice with student practice, instead 'handing down a tradition of knowledge and skills from their own secure place on the ladder of history' (Durant and Fabb, 1990, p.1). Griffith's *Literary Theory and English Teachers* (1987) is more typical in that it does not ask teachers to scrutinise their own contingent positionality, but begins with a litany of 'big name' theorists.

As continuing bestsellers, the works of Eagleton (1983) and Culler (1997) are worthy of closer attention in that they are representative of attempts to offer an overview of the field, and feature heavily on university reading lists in the U.K. whilst embodying very different styles. A brief comparison raises key questions about points of access into the discourse of literary theory, questions which matter acutely in terms of the status of the discourse for English teachers, and their perceptions of its potential patterns of use.

Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983) was published at a time when modules in literary theory were becoming staple features of undergraduate Literature degrees, but few student-centred guides existed. It could be said to represent a key moment in the relationship between theorists and students of literature. Packaging itself as a source of support for 'those who fear that the subject is beyond their reach' (Eagleton, 1983, p. vii – viii), the book acknowledges the potential difficulty of getting into theory. It still serves as a staple undergraduate 'textbook' on English Literature degrees in the U.K.

Eagleton walks the student of literature through a chronology of theories, using key theorists to trace a broad movement from a focus on the author (via the Romantics) to a focus on the text (via F.R. Leavis, I.A. Richards and the New Critics) to a focus on the reader (via Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Iser and Barthes). Further expositions on the ideas of the key proponents of schools of structuralism, post-structuralism and psychoanalysis are then succeeded by a final chapter in which he performs an about-turn by asserting that literary theory, like literature, is always going to be illusory as a category. He concludes by pointing to the need for a more practical, political turn, asking his reader to consider not what literature is or how to approach it, but why we should want to engage with it.

The book stands out for its style: if the writing of literary theorists might often seem alienating because of abstruse language and chains of abstract ideas, Eagleton strives to entertain by casting the work of theorists as rather less hallowed and rather more prosaic: for example, characterising English critics as 'intellectual immigration officers' whose job is to 'stand at Dover as the

newfangled ideas are unloaded from Paris.....and keep out of the country the rather more explosive items of equipment (Marxism, feminism, Freudianism)..’ (Eagleton, 1983, p.122 -23).

Reviewers express delight in the riotous audacity of Eagleton’s approach. But several also express reservations about the tension between Eagleton’s self-positioning as both the writer who acts as our knowledgeable guide around the arcane halls of theory, and the writer who sets fire to those halls: ‘it does not cohere as a book. It is really two books – the first ‘introduces’ literary theory and the second advocates its dissolution’ (Cain, 1983, p.362).

In *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (1997), Jonathan Culler offers a different set of entry points 14 years on from Eagleton. Within the discourse of literary theory, guides often use schools labels that the novice student may find obscure. To sidestep this problem, Culler chooses to title his chapters with literary concepts that may already be familiar to his neophyte reader: ‘Language, Meaning and Interpretation’, ‘Narrative’, ‘Rhetoric, Poetics and Poetry’. He acknowledges a need for demystification, offering a confident and concise list of key characteristics:

1. Theory is interdisciplinary – discourse with effects outside an original discipline.
2. Theory is analytical and speculative - an attempt to work out what is involved in what we call sex or language or writing or meaning or the subject.
3. Theory is a critique of common sense, of concepts taken as natural.
4. Theory is reflexive, thinking about thinking, enquiry into the categories we use in making sense of things, in literature and other discursive practices. (Culler, 1997, pp.14-15)

He follows this clarification up, however, with a confession that ‘theory is [also] intimidating’ (Culler, 1997, p.15) because of its ‘unbounded corpus’. He even goes as far as saying ‘at times, theory presents itself as a diabolical sentence condemning you to hard reading in unfamiliar fields’ (Culler, 1997, p.16). His subsequent entreaty to the student reader facing this Escher staircase where ‘mastery’ is ‘impossible’ feels a little like pleading: ‘this very short introduction.. outlines significant lines of thought and areas of debate.. in the hope that readers will find theory valuable and engaging and take occasion to sample the pleasures of thought’ (Culler, 1997, p.17).

Both texts – the one that enjoys the gladiatorial clash of competing claims, and the one that expresses anxiety at a discourse ‘that does not give rise to harmonious solutions’ (Culler, 1997, p.119) – alert us to the philosophical challenges of literary theory, but also suggest a potential need for a scholarly chaperon.

More recent ‘overview’ texts by Connors (2010), Upstone (2017) or Klages (2017) suggest that literary theory has not become more accessible, inherently attractive and/or naturalised in practice

over time. In her 'Beginners' Guide', Connors assumes her novice reader may be coming to theory with an assumption that theorising is an arid activity. Upstone (2017, p.8) shares this concern about likely estrangement, and aims to persuade us that 'although literary theory can initially appear alienating and difficult, it is something to get really excited about'. These caveats may serve to reiterate the idea that theory is something 'other' from the lived experience of its users. Klages – building on her earlier text 'Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed' – takes a more assertive stance, striding through territory which she posits as straightforwardly shared rather than disputed: 'I talk about how you might apply the theories you are learning to an actual literary text. I picked Hamlet, a text which I think everyone will agree, stands as an example of a great work of literature' (Klages, 2017, p.5, *her italics*).

English teachers looking to learn about theory might feel characterised by these summative texts as disaffected, or over-shadowed and over-awed by monolithic theoretical schools and idols. To return to Eagleton, for example, I would argue that the English teacher wanting to learn about literary theory faces a bigger problem than the about-face of his conclusion. He does not conceive of an introduction as having a responsibility to establish a way forward in terms of inductive processes: the possibility of a kind of familiarisation that would avoid reification is overlooked. Eagleton may want the users of literary theory to be 'custodians of a discourse rather than purveyors of a doctrine' (Eagleton, 1983, p.175) but as he does not acknowledge that we are 'always already theorists' (McCormick, 1992a, p.114), English teachers may end up feeling they are a long way from occupying custodial roles, rather than already present and mobile within the theorising academy.

2.1.2. What does the literature tell us about the teaching of literary theory and theorising in universities?

English departments in Higher Education have introduced courses on literary theory since the late 1970's, and a small body of work documents the positive and negative aspects of creating and delivering these courses. This work – founded for the most part in the experience of teaching undergraduates – contains some suggestion as to why literary theory is a challenging subject for teachers, in terms of definition, course design, pedagogy and teacher identity.

Lecturers surveying their own experiences in setting up and delivering courses do make a lively case for their importance. A key argument put by those immersed in the direct teaching of literary theory courses is that theory can bring a new dynamism to the study of literature. Reading and analysing literature becomes an experience in which the student has more choice about routes and texts: the traditional canon is re-evaluated, and the introduction of elements of linguistics, history, sociology, media and cultural studies into the field is characterised as 'an advance' (Campbell, 1997;

Sullivan, 2002; Johnson, 2015). There is a particular delighted subversive energy in the writings of its advocates in relation to the introduction of new directions: it can be seen as a gleeful escape from established guardians of the discipline: 'theory defamiliarizes literary study, resystematises and reorganises it by inserting new texts among the old and fashioning inventive discourses for them' (Sadoff and Cain, 1994, p.12). Webster deploys the language of trial, summoning a sense of justice being served, when he celebrates the coming of 'a more questioning approach which now interrogates many aspects which were previously considered unquestionable, self-evident or natural' (Webster, 1990, p.2, my italics).

With the new focus on lecturers problematising literary study come new questions about what is considered valuable, whom is doing the valuing, and how shifts in valuation can and do occur. Sullivan documents how a move to explore 'reception moments' in the history of a literary text provides students with 'the opportunity to actually see literary value in the process of being constructed' (Sullivan, 2002, p.569). If literary meaning can be shown to be socially constructed rather than objectively contained within a text, new sensitivities to the conditions of reception open up the field of study, and can re-anchor literary study to issues of 'contextual application' (Gulddal, 2016, p.395).

A corresponding benefit of bringing literary theory into Higher Education degrees is that it can bring about a shift in terms of how students are perceived. Rather than being treated as the passive recipients of pre-ordained information, students can be encouraged to see themselves as active meaning makers. McCormick (1992b, p.4) documents what she calls 'significant developments in theories of subjectivity' and suggests that 'schooling should enable students to articulate their own readings of cultural objects and introduce them to discourses that help them explore the ways in which cultural objects are historically and culturally produced.' Making these discourses visible helps students to historicise their own reading position, which in turn should allow them to be more self-reflective (as well as potentially resistant). Willinsky (1990, p.245) underlines the importance of an inquisitive stance: 'we can move from practices that rarely speak directly of their informing theory into classroom practices that are always curious about their informing theories, curious about what is assumed about the subject under study, and curious about its form, place and claims.' Shumway (1992, p.101) takes this idea further in stating that students need also to see themselves as potential innovators in theory: 'theorising must be understood as a discursive practice that involves not only knowing the previous contributions but also how to make new ones'.

Graff and Di Leo (2000, p.2) address an ethical dimension to course and resource creation in that they see literary theory as an antidote to 'the transparency illusion': too frequently in literary study, textbooks and teachers teach students to produce responses that seem to show 'how the primary

literary texts would speak for themselves if they could speak criticism'. Johnson (2015, p.59) also challenges these 'false questions with pre-determined answers already known by the professor'. The idea that literary study should 'just' involve a close reading of the text masks the directive forces at work shaping the kinds of responses that are actually acceptable in the classroom. Graff and Di Leo see the kinds of practice that involve apparently theory-neutral reader response as exclusive and dismissive:

it's generally not assumed that more than a minority of A-students will really enter the critical conversation about literature, that is, that it's ok if the rest get turned on by some books and respond vividly. If they can't produce a literate version of critical discourse, then, well, that's only to be expected. (2000, p.3)

This body of literature does also document the struggles faced by teachers in Higher Education. Kucich (1994, p.47) gives a litany of reasons for his initial misgivings when assigned a theory course – fear of student resistance, contempt from more knowledgeable peers at the University, lack of real understanding of what undergraduates might use theory for, its plethora of 'unresolved questions'. He identifies the kind of challenge to teacherly authority that literary theory makes, the 'double bind' or 'complicating balancing act' involved in offering an overview, whilst also making active choices about what was contained within that (non-neutral) overview. Johnson also notes that in foregrounding choice and variety (often in the form of theories which promote an anti-authoritarian stances), the teacher may have to 'give up control over the class, abandoning that control to the group', becoming 'co-explorer' rather than 'authority-leader' (Johnson, 1994, p.62). Myers (1994, p.334) argues that 'theoretical texts cannot be taught as if the truth or falsehood of their contents were not in question..'. The foundations of teacherly-authority may well feel precarious, if no longer resting on a secure, time-honoured body of knowledge about canonical texts held in universal esteem.

Johnson also highlights the way that uprooting the 'firmly held ideological stances' and 'common sense assumptions' carried from school study by her undergraduate students can be a pain-inducing process which is 'emotionally counterintuitive' for teachers (Johnson, 2015, p.39). Some students 'reject theory precisely because they want to believe in the 'universality' and 'correctness' of their positions and can't bear for those positions to be made historical and contingent' (Johnson, 1994, p.58). Similarly, Campbell acknowledges that 'insensitive attempts to denaturalise the critical assumptions instilled by traditional A-Level teaching can have negative effects, and can seem like 'a devaluing of their investment in liberal-humanist conceptions of 'great literature' '(Campbell, 1997, p.132). With the teaching of deconstruction, in particular, can come a highly disquieting unsettling

of self: 'the self-image of a stable identity that many of us have is really just a comforting self-delusion, which we produce in collusion with our culture..' (Tyson, 2006, p.250)

This potential responsibility for desecration is a substantial challenge for the lecturer, who must somehow design a course that illuminates new paths forward without despoiling the paths behind, and that helps students to 'find their bearings in a field of intense rhetorical and conceptual difficulty' (Gulddal, 2016, p.393). Students must somehow be persuaded that encounters with literary theory might be strenuous, but are not unmanageable. Sadoff's reflections on her teaching contain both a faintly apologetic note, and a warning: 'the encounter with theory is necessarily frustrating and challenging, I admitted to my students, but it can nevertheless prove intellectually exciting and productive. I had learned, as all teachers of theory do, that warnings about textual difficulty, tempered with enthusiasm, can prepare students for the adventure of discovering theory' (Sadoff and Cain, p.15). Myers too is concerned about student recognition of theoretical endeavour: he counsels against selling theory to students as a means of signalling intellectual prowess or virtue: 'literary theory is not a methodology or paradigm or 'strategy' that one puts on in order to dress for academic success' – it should instead be 'an argument.. an implacable reflective struggle to work out a vexing tangle in literary experience' (Myers, 1994, p.332).

Course design has been another challenge for teachers of literary theory in Higher Education. Gulddal, in his survey of chronological and thematic course designs for teaching literary theory describes how the majority of theory courses still stick closely to a traditional historical survey format, valorising particular schools and particular theorists, and leading, ironically, to a new canon of authorities. Having gathered literary theory course descriptions from a number of universities, he demonstrates the ubiquity of this chronological 'schools approach', both in the universities and in the anthologies they prescribe as set texts, and concludes that 'the field of literary theory and criticism, pedagogically speaking, is at a standstill' (Gulddal, 2016, p.398). He concludes that whilst the schools approach might solve a practical problem in the arrangement of a vast array of theoretical ideas into 'manageable packages', these packages are less helpful for students in terms of 'imparting skills in critical and theoretical thinking' (Gulddal, 2016, p.393). One effect is the way individual literary texts must be forced to conform to a pre-established set of theoretical ideas, with no debate about what to do if they don't (Graff and Di Leo, 2000, p. 2; Richter, 2018, p.104). Another negative effect is the minimisation of conflict, and promotion of fixed positions and established bodies of truths, which ends up, in Gulddal's view, as 'the teaching of relativism and mutual indifference' (Gulddal, 2016, p.400). Myers recognises the value of the schools approach if it provides students with a taxonomical survey which 'recognises that literary theory is a substantial historical achievement' (Myers, 1994, p.331) but also supports an approach which would

demonstrate that 'theory is something that must be engaged in, not passively learned about'. McCormick (1992a), Eaglestone and English (2013), and Johnson (2015) also advocate the kind of course design that prioritises activity and experimentation with theorising rather than theory.

What is less apparent in these accounts is a concern with the kind of practice at earlier stages of literary education that is likely to have been largely responsible for generating the challenges faced by those teaching literary theory in Higher Education. In following A level Literature students on into university English degrees, Snapper (2009, 2011b) witnessed the radical shift in curriculum philosophy and critical perspective (and associated reading and writing demands) that faced the new undergraduates, and the difficulty their lecturers had in managing this shift pedagogically, 'even though they were aware in an abstract sense of the existence of the difficulty and the reasons for it' (Snapper, 2011b, p.44). Atherton finds only a 'continuity of confusion' rather than a continuity of ideology and practice between school and university English (Atherton, 2005, p.182); Green agrees that A Level and Higher Education may be adjacent phases of English education, but the paradigms of subject and the methods of study they embody do not tessellate neatly together (Green, 2006).

2.1.3. What can we conclude about discourse around literary theory and theorising in schools via pedagogical guides and accounts of English teachers' experiences?

Two strands in the literature offer entry points for discussion of how literary theory might be manifest in schools: pedagogical guides, and accounts by English teachers of their attempts to bring literary theory into the classroom.

- Pedagogical guides

A range of texts offer approaches to English teachers, and in doing so help to shape pedagogical practice 'inasmuch as they canonise specific texts, theoretical positions, and segmentations of the field' (Gulddal, 2016, p.396) as well as adding legitimacy to theory as an area of disciplinary knowledge in schools.

A small number of writers of texts about literary theory attempt to help teachers with the 'day-to-day business' of teaching by exemplifying potential outcomes of the application of theory, in the form of analytical commentary on specific textual examples. Tallack (1987), for example, takes 3 well known texts and collates erudite essays from different contributors in which differing theoretical perspectives are applied to those texts. Jacobs (2001) offers 'personal' commentaries on 24 texts with varied theoretical foci, with endnotes making explicit the interpretative strategy

just used in the chapter. These texts give teachers sample authoritative voices, but the route to their creation remains obscured.

Other texts designed to support teachers take the form of activity, text and question collections, perhaps in recognition of teachers' limited access to resources, and often with a somewhat placatory tone. For example, Stibbs (1993) offers reassurance that many of the kind of activities already to be found in work with younger students (such as 'playful' prediction work, dramatization or gap-filling) are already drawing attention to theoretical dimensions of reading, a demystifying approach also found in *From Picture Book to Literary Theory* (Stevens et al, 2003).

In an early (and often overlooked) effort 'to bridge the leap from the traditions of practical criticism into modern theory in a way which will make sense in the classroom', Hackman and Marshall draw on textbook traditions in *Rereading Literature: New Critical Approaches to the study of English* (Hackman and Marshall, 1990, p.1) to present an array of texts from beyond the canon, with special attention to the writings of women and diverse cultures. Each chapter reads like a class discussion, with a 'teacher voice' posing questions about the reading and the writing process, and offering suggestions for further reading. A high degree of freedom is envisioned by the authors, perhaps optimistically in the light of assessment constraints: 'we hope teachers will feel free to select and adapt our own order to suit the inclinations and interests of their classes and themselves' (Hackman and Marshall, 1990.p.2). In a chapter entitled 'The Literary Establishment (Who Owns Language?)', Hackman and Marshall undertake to 'pull back the curtain' on the study of Literature. Potted summaries of the development of literary criticism, 'the educational establishment', and the publishing industry accompany a deconstruction of the philosophies inherent in an A Level exam paper. Interestingly, in setting and undertaking to answer the question 'Who decides which works qualify as literature and which do not?' (p.5), Hackman and Marshall excuse teachers themselves from the list of responsible bodies.

The English and Media Centre produced a similarly kaleidoscopic collection of activities to introduce teachers and students to varied critical lenses. In *Text, Reader, Critic* (Ogborn et al, 2000, p.4) the familiar caveats resurface – 'the activities offer an unthreatening introduction to critical theory' – reminding us that explicit deployment of theory is likely to be seen as a deeply irregular (and thus probably threatening) pursuit in many A level classrooms. Responsibility for the direction(s) taken into reading is ultimately laid at the feet of the individual reader, with the honouring of personal choice and discretion: 'At the end of the twentieth century one of the positive developments has been the dissolving of boundaries between critical positions: critics construct a personal framework for reading texts from a whole range of critical theories' (Ogborn et al, 2000, p.5). Student and

teacher are thus encouraged to perceive of themselves as ultimately independent from institutional contexts, autonomous in their theorising choices.

- Teachers' own accounts of theorising practice

The paucity of accounts of theorising practice by teachers suggests that both the impetus for creating such accounts, and the opportunities to do so afforded to the English teacher in the U.K. are few. Sustained reasoning in relation to positionality and identity is not a formalised part of practice or discourse in England. In schools, English teachers may be required to produce accounts of their curriculum intent for discussion, but the focus in such requirements is on justification and making planning explicit for external scrutiny, uncoupled and distant from reflective practice for self-definition, development and discursive knowledge.

In the work of 3 practitioners who have moved into teacher education, however, we can find extended description of theorising practice, and engagement with its complexity: Nick Peim (England), Brenton Doecke (Australia) and Deborah Appleman (U.S.) write directly about their relationship with literary theory and raise questions about the ways in which such practice can be framed and advanced.

In the U.K., Peim has long been a committed, if often isolated, advocate of theorising practice. His book *Critical Theory and the English Teacher* (1993) aimed to politicise English teachers, to raise self-conscious awareness of subject formation, to promote questioning and to make explicit the fundamental principles of literary study. Peim finds dynamism in 'the mobility of critical thought', and is clear about his commitment to social reform via English, encouraging English teachers to revitalise the 'significant social practice' in which they participate in order to teach 'explicitly and sociologically against the institutional operations of inequality' (Peim, 1993, p.8).

In his PhD by publication, he gives a rare extended account of the trajectory of his own thinking about literary theory. The process of coming to theory began in his first job in an English department where principles were communal: he enjoyed his team's 'strong commitment to the newly political conscious, egalitarian project of comprehensive schooling' (Peim, 1999, p.10 – 11). These values - which he perceived as binding agents offering a kind of theoretical coherence to their work in classrooms - led to wider reading of texts about literary theory (such as Eagleton's Introduction). He committed himself to the production of arguments and demonstrations in print and public events, galvanised partly by surprise at the absence of political protest by English teachers at the arrival of the National Curriculum in 1989. In seeking to construct 'a more thoroughly critical reappraisal of the subject' (Peim, 1999, p.28) for public consumption, Peim eschewed 'academic conventions' such as frequent naming of eminent literary theorists, deviating

from 'the standard form of writing in Higher Education journals and books' (Peim, 1999, p.24) to make 'a deliberate political point' about access. Where Peim's own work might lose some of its accessibility, however, is in the lack of recognition of diverse positionalities within the English teacher community: his dedication to social reform is unlikely to be shared by all, and there is an absence of discussion of how to engage those teachers for whom articles, book chapters and conferences seem irrelevant.

Doecke also makes his own complex trajectory a site of study. In wanting to create material that would have 'currency amongst teachers' (Doecke et al, 2007, p.9), he is consistently focused on both the diversity inevitable in the locally specific nature of English teaching, and asking questions about 'the epistemological status of any account of classroom practice' (Doecke et al, 2007, p.11). In *The Little Company: Australian English teachers and the challenge of educational reform* - An Autobiographical essay for example, he narrates reactions to world events that marked the dawning of his political and theoretical consciousness, whilst also recognising the potential strangeness of such an awakening: the 'language of social justice and school reform' not always being perceived as a mother tongue to his fellow professionals - 'my commitment to social reform .. is not something that other teachers have always understood' (Doecke, 2002, p.54). He encourages the interrogation of 'a rhetoric of reform' and scrutiny of the validity of the claims of advocates of educational transformation, particularly in terms of the exclusion of teachers as partners in any grand project to reshape literature teaching. Examination of his own theorising practice is thus accompanied by consistent siting of himself as representing but not tacitly representative of theorising teachers.

Peim offers a kind of unified logic about the use of literary theory, championing its confrontational capacity; Doecke's work is more open-ended in its self-scrutiny and foregrounding of teacher diversity. Conflict for Doecke, where it appears, is in terms of the primacy of reductionist, and apparently theory-neutral teaching standards as descriptions of 'good' teaching, or with researchers who present accounts of teachers' work from the outside looking in, producing 'second hand, externalising definitions' (Doecke et al, 2007, p.8) which he asks teachers to resist. He argues that researchers should work with teachers as their collaborators, rather than making them their subjects.

Peim includes multiple suggestions for ways to bring a theoretical dimension into the reading of literary texts in the classroom, often coupling classics with contemporary media texts – Blake and Billy Bragg, Marvell and Madonna - (Peim, 1984, 1986, 1991, 1993) but his project is not to represent the messy complexity of the classroom, and students themselves barely feature. More direct accounts of efforts to deploy literary theory in the classroom can be found in Appleman's

Critical Encounters in High School English (2009), written as a manifesto to decontaminate theory of its negative charges of elitism and practical irrelevance. Like Peim and Doecke, Appleman has also moved from the secondary classroom into teacher training, and points to the benefits of detachment that this relocation brought: 'it was only when I began teaching about teaching that I started making response-based teaching explicit in my own version of 'the naming of parts' (Appleman, 2009, p.33). That teacher educators are able to construct such explanations of their epistemological development in relation to theory points to the gains of standing outside of practice to look in from a safer vantage point, where self-scrutiny might not result in immediately conflicted practice. The frenetic pace of school life, Appleman acknowledges, may preclude the luxury of philosophy: 'As one high school teacher put it, 'These [theories] are far removed from us who work on the front lines' (Applebee, 1993, cited by Appleman, 2009, p.6). The primary sense of conflict in her text comes not from governing powers or the outsider gaze of researchers but in the form of teacher doubt and hostility to the disruption of established ways of reading.

The book is a treatise to challenge to 'the current theoretical and pedagogical paradigms of the teaching of literature by incorporating the teaching of literary theory into high school literature classes' (Appleman, 2009, p.11). Appleman is mindful of her teacher-readers throughout, interleaving argument with multiple accounts of lessons, sample activities and resources. Having established the trope of theories as 'lenses', each chapter explores how teachers might use particular lenses to teach about ways of reading (reader response, deconstruction) and foci for reading (gender, class, ethnicity).

The work is not directly autobiographical, but we do get repeated glimpses of Appleman herself in action. For example, she opens her second chapter with 5 classroom vignettes. She herself leads the first lesson described, in which she divides a class of 10th grade students into groups, asking each group to create a reading of Plath's poem 'Mushrooms' using the prompt questions on literary theory cards. The group feedback follows a neat sequence, with the 'biographical group' pointing out how depressed the speaker was, following by the 'gender group' pointing out that all women feel invisible, followed by the 'social-power group' identifying other marginal groups that the poem could represent, and finally the whole class asking: 'Well, who's right? Can there be more than one right answer?' (Appleman, 2009, pp.16 - 17). Snapshots of 4 other teachers introducing literary theory language and practice to similar classes then follow. Whilst the descriptions are certainly sanitised in terms of the way the classrooms are presented, the value they may contain is in the way Appleman positions her work alongside that of other teachers, creating a sense of shared conviction about the way that the 'atheoretical' nature of students' experience of literature needs

to be challenged. Her account presents a group of teachers whose theorising work is tacitly legitimised by this dialogue with herself and each other.

Appleman works hard to identify and allay the possible anxieties that might prevent teachers from examining their own theorising, and 'drawing back the curtain' on theory for their students (Appleman, 2009, p.34). A sense of destabilisation may occur if a shift from teaching one reading to ways of reading is required: 'this kind of teaching is difficult. It requires a willingness to give up one's ultimate authority in the classroom' (Appleman, 2009, p.11). She also warns us not to confuse deconstruction with destruction: literary theory is not 'a mindless dismantling; it is a mindful one' (Appleman, 2009, p.99), and concedes that some of her students did find the uprooting of their established paths of reading 'dangerous', as 'adolescents follow a developmental imperative to construct an identity' (Appleman, 2009, p.110).

Considered together, Peim, Doecke and Appleman share a common goal in presenting the English teacher as agentic, raising questions about subject constitution and stasis, and seeing the theorising of teacher practice around literature as important but underdeveloped. Each stresses the importance of opening out a discussion of what we think we're doing, and acknowledges a reluctance of teachers to enter into theoretical territory, because of lack of familiarity and/or more pressing priorities such as state-mandated assessment.

It is important to note that all three work now as teacher educators, thus occupying a professional role in which reflection on identity, and the imperative to talk/write about it, is legitimised. What the research literature does not yet offer is a body of accounts of practising English teachers and their complex, ongoing relationship with theory. Without access to supportive academic communities and conventions and a validating 'listening ear', teachers lack the imperative to share their theorising and utilise it to develop their sense of the inclusive and exclusive contours of the discipline.

2.1.4 As a whole, what does this literature suggest about why literary theory and literary theorising does not have a strong presence in school?

These texts offer pointers as to why teachers might not engage with literary theory, why they might not import its methods into their own work, or transpose its activity from higher education back to school with students. They also contain clues about why articulation of theoretical positioning might be both important and challenging for English teachers and their students. Three significant kinds of question can be raised when these texts are considered together: questions around the siting of authority to theorise, questions around induction into theory and theorising, and questions around teachers' and students' motivation to theorise (or its absence).

Firstly, the concept of authority is significant. The summary text writers working in Higher Education have peers and students as their intended audience, and are able to position themselves as authoritative. Summary texts do not offer models for teachers in terms of making each writer's contingent positionality obvious: apart from Peter Barry, in teaching about literary theory, these writers do not make their own standpoints visible. Theory remains at a remove from its practitioners. Thus, ironically, the guides are generally models of theory-neutral work, and sidestep challenging the question of how teachers might negotiate the introduction of theorising with modelling of (subjective) standpoint.

The wider literature about literary theory and theorising in universities and schools raises questions about authority formation, preservation and transfer. Where literary theory and theorising are so often characterised as unfamiliar, difficult, inherently reactionary and 'other' in relation to school classrooms – for example in the guides for teachers - the notion of a foundational base of (liberal-humanist) literary study is likely to look like a place of safety and coherence for teachers. In some quarters, the claim is made that we can smoothly reconcile the guardianship of that base with disciplinary revision, expansion or disassembly. Christine Counsell, for example, extols English teachers' need for 'a sense of responsibility to the future as stewards of literature and language as a tradition, precisely so that anyone can renew that tradition through challenge, creativity and debate' (in Didau, 2021, p.xix, *her italics*) without the concession that simultaneous base building and base modification could prove contradictory in the classroom. 'Renewal' is a two-faced idea – it can mean repetition and consolidation but can also mean rejuvenation, renovation and reconditioning. Counsell's rhetoric is stirring, but when the theoretical bases for the 'tradition' are blanks on the map for both teachers and students, it is difficult to see how renewal in its second sense can be promoted. We can busy ourselves with the business of close reading and exam preparation and feel we are inducting our students into the discipline of literary study, but epistemological blanking might ultimately limit the endeavour, the possibility of reconstruction, and our openness to hear new perspectives offered by theorist-students sitting right in front of us.

Byrne warns that 'only engaging with the practice, rather than the theoretical perspectives, of literary studies results in students analysing, interpreting and deconstructing literature without knowing the reasons, the logic and the history behind what they are doing, and why they are doing it' (Byrne, in Bradford 2011, p.112). Teachers would need to be engaged in epistemological work, looking to one's own sources of authority and positionality in relation to literary texts and practices in order to help students explore 'the reasons, the logic and the history of the discipline', and teachers may not want to engage in work which begins with a destabilisation of teacherly authority and the objective voice of the classroom critic. As Appleman (2009) acknowledges, literary theory

poses very real questions about where authority comes from in literary study, and these questions could prove unwieldy and disruptive for teachers who want students to feel confident about teacherly authority.

Secondly, the process of induction into theory and theorising is shown to be problematic. The guides - which could be said to inadvertently position literary theory as an alien 'other' through reasserting its difficulty - generally omit concrete suggestions of how to induct students young or older into theory. Some research accounts show Higher Education instructors to be underconfident and conflicted about literary theory pedagogy in the seminar room, and the accounts of school teaching of theorising remind us of teacher struggles with simultaneous knowledge base building and deconstruction.

Thirdly, there is the issue of motivation. In Higher Education, lecturers and researchers are likely to engage with debates about disciplinary identity as they survey and develop courses and research outputs. Classroom teachers may well have no direct reason to engage or forum in which to do so. Shapiro (in Bradford, 2011, p.79) points out that 'while some students may internalise the basic predicates of different theoretical approaches, they are often left perplexed as to why one would choose one approach rather than another'. Where the worth of literary theory is not explored or understood and no link is made to one's own developing subjectivities, it is easy to see why teachers and students might see literary theory as 'an elaborate imposture, an artificial set of poses lacking in emotional authenticity' (Shapiro in Bradford, 2011, p.79). In schools, accountability measures are key drivers linked to prioritising, if not directly to motivation: as long as measures of assessment do not refer to knowledge of literary theory, and professional development programmes in schools do not include theorising opportunities, then literary theory and theorising is unlikely to feature amongst teachers' main concerns. Peim (in Davison and Moss, 2000, p.170) notes that 'pressures for teachers to adopt existing working models may suppress any desire to negotiate the historical and constitutional complexities of the subject'. A lack of cross-sector and cross-phase advocacy, coupled with a lack of presence and endorsement in mandatory assessment positions literary theory as a luxury rather than foundational pursuit in the discipline.

2.2 Identity, knowledge and the status of teachers and students as theorists in the English classroom

This is a study about English teachers' theorising work on their subject and subject-selves, and as such I am attempting to explore the kind of epistemological thinking or conceptualisation that teachers might do in relation to literary study, both with and apart from their students. The literature that features literary theory directly does not provide answers to the questions about

practising teachers' theorising. However, there is work available in which researchers and commentators survey and discuss the ways in which English teachers frame concepts of the discipline in relation to identity, knowledge, and the disciplinary status of themselves and their students. This literature can be grouped in the following ways:

- Works which attempt to define key aspects of English teacher identity (categorising accounts)
- Works which describe English teachers and disciplinary knowledge
- Works which address questions about the status of English teachers and their students within the discipline of literary study

2.2.1 How are English teachers' identities categorised within the literature?

Within the literature, there are several striking attempts to define English teacher identity via categorising positions. Perhaps predictably, it is the research designed and conducted by teacher educators that dominates the field: Marshall, Turvey, Brindley, Davies and Goodwyn have all explored the notion of English teacher identity from university vantage points, and produced material variously offering 'models', 'frameworks', and 'taxonomies'. Such systematising work has manifold benefits: it can bring classifying intelligibility to the discourse in its efforts to define the characteristics of the English teaching community; it can help teachers to explore self-definition by providing descriptive criteria; it can also contribute to sense of tribal recognition and 'belonging'; it can act as provocation, for example by ascribing subject or professional boundaries for debate. This work generally implies that theorising work happens, rather than directly assigning English teachers the status of 'theorists'; the (university) researchers create the categories and retain the status of pattern makers and framework architects.

Perhaps the model best known to teachers themselves was published by the DES in 1989, at the advent of the National Curriculum. The Cox Report (DES, 1989, written by Professor Brian Cox of Manchester University) included a list of English teacher views, claimed by Cox to hold equal weight but finding differing representation in policy, curricula and teacher self-identification:

- A personal growth view (concerned with nurturing the individual, student centred)
- A cross-curricular view (concerned with language skills)
- An adult needs view (concerned with functional literacy and social skills for the world of work)
- A cultural heritage view (concerned with the appreciation of literature)
- A cultural analysis view (concerned with critical understanding of the world and the political/cultural environment) (DES, 1989).

‘Personal growth’, ‘cultural heritage’ and ‘cultural analysis’ could be said to prefigure the kinds of lenses offered in literary theory undergraduate courses (e.g. with shades of reader response, liberal humanism, cultural materialism).

This list has become a launching point for much discussion of English teacher identity, for example in the monitoring of English teacher responses to its categories by Hardman and Williamson (1993), Peel and Hargreaves (1995), or Goodwyn and Findlay (1999). A narrative in the *Student Teacher Perspectives Journal* by a trainee feels representative of the way the list might have been deployed in teacher training courses to help new English teachers to ‘speak a philosophy’, illustrating the initiate’s absorption of the models as kind of orientating creed:

I believe that the five areas of the Cox model can be well balanced through such a text-centred approach to English teaching... a holistic attitude in which I view all five elements as useful tools to aid the development of my pedagogy. My individual inclination is to emphasise the connection between literary texts and life through ‘cultural heritage’ and foster the pastoral development of children through ‘personal growth’... (Byrne, 2017, p.13).

Marshall’s *English Teachers: The Unofficial Guide* (2000a) stands out for its use of ‘a somewhat eccentric research instrument’ (Marshall et al, 2001, p.189). Wanting to uncover ‘the implicit subject philosophies of English teachers’ (Marshall, 2000, p.1) but frustrated by established methods of researching social science, Marshall turned to a form of discourse her subjects already knew well, asking participants to annotate textual description of five different types of teacher, almost as if in a literature class, and even printing out the Guide like a paperback to increase the feeling of familiarity. Her types were:

- The Old Grammarian
- The Technician
- The Liberal
- The Pragmatist
- The Critical Dissenter

with the language of each description chosen to reflect the register of that discourse. Whilst the type names might initially read like a strange sub-deck of Happy Families, one reviewer of the resulting publication noted that ‘The validity of these characterisations lies in the extent to which the teacher respondents were prepared both to read them with sufficient care and to recognise themselves in them’ (Davies, 2002, p.731). That 58 out of 60 participants found likenesses of themselves in the portraits is testament to Marshall’s close attunement to an idiom favoured by

her constituents. Another reviewer, however, sounds a note of caution about the demarcation of viewpoints away from the dynamic context of the school: 'it would be a pity if the beliefs of teachers were seen too much in terms of the polemics of debate rather than as integral, and even partly tacit, within the evolution of professional knowledge and work in classrooms' (Burgess, 2001, p.206).

Follow up work by Marshall, Turvey and Brindley (2001) with trainee teachers in their PGCE year and first year of employment as teachers describes the complex self-situating work that teachers have to do as they enter the profession: 'student teachers not only have to negotiate between their own idealism and the turbulent realities of the classroom but between competing views of English teaching' (p.189). It is no surprise that 'the observations of these very inexperienced teachers are concerned particularly with what they are trying to sort out as the 'stuff' of English lessons – the activities they see taking place and the kinds of texts which are the objects of study' but also the activity of the research project brings about a greater consciousness of their own activity in an identity-forming process (Marshall et al, 2001, p.197). As one participant notes after revisiting the types at the end of her first year, she is aware of an attitudinal change: 'I think I ticked off labels in the description – 'Yep, that's me', sort of thing – but I didn't really engage with the difficulties of realising your ideals' (Marshall et al, 2001, p.200). What's particularly interesting here is the way that both researchers and participants share a vari-focal position, simultaneously inside and outside of the school, able to look at identity and philosophy and the process of accommodation to context without total immersion in that context. As Kempe and Reed (2014, p.59) point out,

having the appropriate mediational means available is crucial to the success of identity enactment. In other words, if criteria to an 'innovative teacher identity' are not a feature of a particular social world, the identity of 'innovative teacher' is not likely to be successfully enacted in that world.

Thus both the criteria provided in Marshall's types, and the mediational activity of the research allows the researchers and participants to uphold the idea of positionality as a construct available for, and worthy of, scrutiny.

The positionality of researchers as initial teacher trainers also points to the way that their categorising work focusses more on teachers entering or new to the profession than established teachers, whose longer-term philosophical trajectories might be perceived to be more inaccessible, calcified or complex. Even though a strand of literature on teacher identity warns us that 'identity is always deferred and in the process of becoming – never really, never yet, never absolutely 'there' (Maclure, cited by Clarke, 2003 p.187), research might usefully explore the mobile positionality in

English teachers with varying breadths of experience. The literature does not yet explore the extent to which more experienced English teachers might perceive themselves as continually possessing just such a flexibility.

In reaction to this kind of categorising work, Doecke (2014) expresses concerns about taking a paradigmatic approach to looking at English. He writes of his struggle with Dixon's 'models' in relation to English teachers and their work. He rejects both kinds of labelling as too schematic and falsely simplifying: 'when you walk into an English classroom, you do not initially encounter 'Paradigms' or 'Models' of English, but people interacting with one another, teachers with their students, and students with each other' (p.104). His key point is that understanding the interplay between different contexts (physical disciplinary sites as well as academic and ideological positionings, perhaps) is 'a complex intellectual operation' where 'it is impossible to say that what [teachers] think determines what they do in any straightforward way' (p.104). Doecke offers Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography as a more desirable counterpoint, along with continued 'reflexive engagement' (p.104). But Doecke neglects to discuss the desirability of paradigmatic modelling precisely because of the complexity of that classroom landscape. Whilst I agree with his alarm at a taxonomic and technicist drift in educational discourse, I would say that it does not have to be either/or. Making perceived paradigms explicit does not lock them into an inevitable cycle of untested reproduction: if teachers are helped to keep 'walking the bridge' between theory and practice, generalised and personally experienced contexts, they can maintain an engagement with debate rather than feeling rebuffed for an attraction to a certain type of representation of themselves and their work. Marshall's work attests to this: teachers both found themselves in her models, and were able to identify points where their philosophies and practices did not adhere to the models she offered. This is going to be important if we are talking about teachers as theorists, as pattern finding and summarising might well be said to be a key aspect of what 'theorising' entails.

2.2.2 How is the English teacher relationship with disciplinary knowledge discussed within the Literature, and how does this intersect with key questions posed by literary theory?

Whilst English teachers are not generally characterised in the literature as 'knowledge producers', there are a number of strands of debate around what does and should constitute 'knowledge' in the subject, the selection and filtering of that knowledge into classrooms, and who has stewarding rights.

Young and Muller's influential call for 'powerful knowledge' (2013) has stimulated debate about our disciplinary conceptualisations and theorising about literary study. Young (Young et al, 2014, p.74) characterises knowledge as powerful 'if it predicts, if it explains, if it enables you to envision

alternatives'. He offers three additional criteria: it will be distinct from 'common sense' knowledge that students develop in their lives outside school; it is systematic – a discipline represents those systematic relations between groups of concepts; it is specialised, having been developed by 'clearly distinguishable groups, usually occupations, with a clearly defined focus or field of enquiry'.

'Powerful knowledge' does seem to seek to reassert lines between schools and higher education, and to imply that school subject knowledge should be consciously 'academic', that is, locating itself as connected an academic sphere, which might help to bring literary theory into focus in schools. School literary study which included aspects of literary theory could certainly help students 'envision alternatives' in the form of unfamiliar or innovative ways of reading, although my reading of the literature around literary theory courses in Higher Education suggests that this is often less than successful there.

In their original argument for 'powerful knowledge', Young and Muller (2013) conceptualised academic subject disciplines as systematic and building over time, with Higher Education communities as 'parent disciplines' (White, 2019, p.429) influencing the organisation of school subjects. Knowledge in this model is powerful if it 'is developed systematically by experts within subject disciplines' (Didau, 2021, p.84). Yet English in Higher Education might well be characterised as an 'unsystematic' family, and as Kuhn points out, social knowledge fields don't work with paradigm consensus, as they are continually contested (Kuhn, 2012). The purposes of school English have never been worked out in relation to an associated university subject or disciplinary field in a way that parallels school Science, and the discipline itself is continually disputed and shifting in its form. Yates et al (2019, p.55) remind us that it is 'not an easy matter to be clear about what is 'the discipline [of English] for the purposes of schooling'.

Both the advocates for 'powerful knowledge' in English and those who argue against it claim to speak on behalf of school students. Those in favour mobilise arguments relating to social justice – for example, in his 2021 book *Making Meaning in English: Exploring the Role of Knowledge in the English Curriculum*, English teacher, writer and consultant David Didau claims it supports emancipatory learning through widening students' lives:

Everyday knowledge is dependent on the context in which it was learned whereas school knowledge – powerful knowledge – can help us move beyond the confines of our personal experience and open up new ways of thinking about the world which would otherwise be unknown and inaccessible. (Didau, 2021, p.85).

The teacher is cast as a kind of keyholder standing at the door to Narnia, but what he means by 'new ways of thinking' is not clarified. He might mean ways new to the students, but does not

seem to mean ways new to the discipline, and thus students are ultimately positioned as recipients rather than agents. He describes teaching 'powerful knowledge' as a process of granting new power to the students (often via statements of what texts they should know rather than what ways of reading), but the possible manifestations and implications of that power remain a blank. If, via the idea of 'powerful knowledge' students were helped to see literary study as a construct, and helped to ask (literary theory based) questions about each reading and reader's positionality, they might then understand that assessment requires a limited kind of reading which privileges particular (limited) viewpoints. Currently, the sanctioned classroom answer to the question 'what effect does this text have on the reader?' excludes a host of possible interpretive communities or the possibility of their existence. Teachers may well feel that exposing disciplinary structures (and their limits) destabilises classroom literary study, and that 'powerful knowledge' is best defined as safer fact learning about texts and pre-defined readings. Thus a gap might exist between the rhetoric of social justice and teacherly ambition that can be found in some rhetoric around 'powerful knowledge', and in PGCE interviews and 'teacher fantasies' (e.g. Farr, 1997), and the managerial and intellectual constraints imposed by assessment rubrics within school English lessons.

Smith (2018, p.i) makes a more developed argument that links knowledge in English to an explicit kind of power – an epistemological power. She advocates that a social realist theory of knowledge which pushes beyond merely factual teaching or content knowledge might give all pupils access 'to the means by which to judge knowledge claims and thereby challenge and change society' and such a theory 'underpins a social justice agenda'. This aligns with Muller and Young's call to teach the 'epistemological demands of the parent discipline' (White, 2019, p.432).

For Smith, for knowledge to be truly powerful, 'teachers and pupils need to be 'epistemologically aware''(2018, i, my italics). She asserts that knowledge about literature in the classroom should include conscious, interrogative work to map past, present and possible disciplinary conceptualisations (eg. of literature, text, author, reader, context) but also recognises that this is challenging:

the reassurance required by both teachers and pupils that they know how to respond to a particular examination question means that ambiguity is likely to create anxiety. Access to powerful knowledge requires an understanding of such complexities and ambiguity and a willingness to engage with them. (Smith, 2018, p.249)

In her work with a number of English teachers, she investigates 'how we might support pupils in knowing that they needed to frame their responses within conceptual frameworks' (p.254) in

relation to the teaching of a novel at Key Stage 4, and suggests a process of collaborative concept-mapping to help teachers and students see how ‘informed personal interpretation’ might fit within a web of established disciplinary practice. The possibility of ‘new’ knowledge is represented in an exemplar novel-study map in her study, in the form of two-way arrows connecting ‘informed personal interpretation’ with literary theory and literary criticism, although Smith does not go as far as to categorise teachers and students as ‘theorists’ in their own right, or suggest ways in which new knowledge might be validated and disseminated.

Didau does model a kind of personal epistemological mapping work in his chapter on ‘An epistemology of English’ (Didau, 2021, p.72), showing how he theorises the subject to himself – stating what is valuable, arguing why each aspect is valuable for students, and indicating that this kind of reasoning might be important. Certainly, agoraphobic teachers grappling with curricula design might find his path through the territory of the discipline instructive. However, it could also be argued that the neat way he lays out this path obscures the fact that epistemological work necessarily involves choices and rejections. Yandell (2017, p.584) expresses concern about epistemological blanking in curriculum design – ‘the debate and struggle that produced disciplinary knowledge are glossed over and a stable system of ideas is presented to children’ and Didau does the same here for his teacher readership. For example, his history of the development of the discipline omits the influential Dartmouth Seminar of 1966, and the influential work of Dixon, Rosen, Barnes, and other contemporary disciplinary thinkers such as Bleiman, Elliott and Eaglestone. The work of the national subject association NATE³ (and LATE⁴) is also absent. In his account, a significant disciplinary dimension is also displaced – that is, what students might be bringing to the classroom; for Didau, in line with Young’s conception of ‘powerful knowledge’, knowledge acquired outside of the school - or indeed generated within the school by the students – does not count as valid or valuable. Similarly, ‘literary theorists’ as a group are quickly sidelined by Didau because their ‘fervour eroded English’s understanding of what it was’ during his undergraduate degree (p.3). It is odd that Didau states that ‘English teachers today might be better off knowing more about the history of their subject’ (p.14) so that they can critically reappraise the ‘set of assumptions.. about what English is’ (p.14), and that stronger ‘collective memory’ (p.15) would benefit the profession, but yet he does not recognise the narrowing limits of his own territorialising work.

A second book for English teachers about English teaching and knowledge was also published in 2021. In *Knowledge in English: Knowledge, Canon and Cultural Literacy* (Elliott, 2021) a university

³ The National Association of Teachers of English

⁴ The London Association for the Teaching of English

PGCE curriculum tutor approaches teachers, students and literary study from a different direction, but also refers to issues of social justice. In her introduction, Elliott places an acknowledgement of the complexity of any interpretative act front and centre: 'Each person who reads a text creates their own scheme of text and their interpretation.. Our schemas also affected by the entirety of our previous reading and life experience... Narrative schemas accrete from reading, re-reading, contextual knowledge, what we are told and our own experiences.' (p.2) She also poses foundational questions about power and positionality:

Too rarely do we acknowledge that knowledge in the knowledge-driven curriculum has to come from somewhere: it is selected by someone and has originated in a particular paradigm. For English Teachers, that brings up a number of questions: Who chooses? Whose values do we espouse, whose text choices do we follow, whose version of culture is the one we teach for? (p.4)

She outlines the ways in which we currently 'validate' knowledge in English (p.3) and is prepared to ask, 'Whose Knowledge is it anyway?' (p.4) In relation to social justice, teachers are not neutral or powerless: 'we must acknowledge as a profession that we have the power to reinforce social structures of inequality, but we also have the power to resist and undermine those structures if we think critically about them' (p.8). The valuing of students as active thinkers is important to avoid 'impoverishing' them with transmission of closed, pre-formed 'knowledge' – if construction of knowledge is completed outside the classroom, it will result in a lower level of engagement with disciplinary knowledge. The implication here is that if disciplinary structures are invisible, and students are not actively invited into co-construction and joint explorations of aspects of the discipline, exclusivity will be perpetuated, at the expense of those not already confident in their disciplinary moves. As Hordern (2021) points out, 'it is only through generating inclusive and participative forms of (normative) knowledgeable practice that communities can acquire the characteristics that enable knowledge to become meaningful and accessible to all in society without retreating into elitism and obsolescence' (p.196).

Elliott also makes an attempt to deal with the challenge of what to do with students' own possible innovations, by pointing to the way that in literary analysis work, a funnelling motion can occur, with ideas about texts 'open[ed] and closed down into structured argument' (pp.18/19). Classroom work on texts is conceptualised as initially broad-base, and exploratory, and secondly as the conscious and active selection of ideas to construct a case about aspects of a text's worth and impact. This conceptualisation keeps the idea of multiple possible readings alight, even if assessment mark schemes might prohibit utilisation of the full scope of those possibilities.

Students are reminded that they respond to text from a position, and that there can be choice about positions – key tenets underpinning literary theory as a school of thought.

Elliott identifies the way that ‘the usage of ‘knowledge’ in the knowledge turn in education in recent years is primarily.. ‘to know that’ ‘ (p.2) - Young’s conceptualisation of ‘powerful knowledge’ draws on Matthew Arnold’s call for ‘the best that has been thought and said’, which implicitly prioritises texts over lenses, methods, approaches and motivations. Whilst ‘what counts as literature?’ is certainly a key question in debates about ‘powerful knowledge’ and text choice in English, ‘whose and which kinds of readings count?’ is less prevalent. This emphasis on ‘knowing that’, and the parallel preoccupation with ‘knowledge retention’ is currently manifest in knowledge organisers, retrieval practice, closed book exams requiring quotation memorisation, and this promotes a conceptualisation of English as having a knowledge ‘base’ – a metaphor which suggests stable foundations which can be shared, reinforced and perpetuated through effective teaching. Inasmuch as such a knowledge base exists, I would argue that currently it is not forged by teachers, but by exam board and governmental decisions about what ‘literature’ is, and what texts and methods should be pursued in its study. Teacher theorising and any drive for disciplinary negotiations are likely to be largely displaced at Key Stage 4, when quantity of material and paucity of time in which to deal with it precludes department work on the kind of foundational disciplinary questions that Elliott asks about choice, value and power.

Others also question whether schools should prioritise the communication of an ‘objective’ knowledge ‘base’ under the premise of widening students’ worlds. In their editorial to an edition of *Changing English* on ‘the knowledge question’, Doecke, Parr and Yandell (2021, p.2) describe the differing priorities as incompatible: ‘in privileging [Young’s powerful knowledge] we diminish the significance of whole realms of creative and intellectual expression in response to experience’. What literary theory can provide is a set of lenses which could go some way to reconcile the two: students made aware of lenses for reading could then choose which lenses fitted best with their interests and priorities, (e.g. with pre-chosen or independently chosen texts) rather than having to enact ways of reading and interpretations directed by others. Such an opportunity currently exists in a small way in the A level coursework unit where students offer readings informed by their choices from a small anthology of critical lens texts. Examiner reports for AQA B Literature ‘Theory and Independence’ coursework show a confidence in boundary exploration – ‘For example, “Is *Trainspotting* great literature?” is potentially an interesting task that requires a student to explore ideas and it does not have a foregone conclusion.’ (AQA, 2017, p.5) – and celebration of students’ work. The spirit of this unit is dynamic, as the examiners take pains to emphasise:

students must be encouraged to work independently and make their own choices at some point in the process. There are three areas where students could make independent choices:

- Choice of text
- Choice of critical ideas
- Choice of task

Some centres gave their students independent choice in all three areas, which was excellent to see. (AQA 2017, p.6)

This feedback speaks perhaps of the greater freedom teachers and students can enjoy via the smaller class sizes typical of A level study, with the potential logistical challenge of facilitating 'independent choice' lower down the school in large classes likely to see prohibitive, it seems wrong that this kind of work is reserved for those able – and considered able – to choose A level study.

I would suggest that such a sense of choice is absent from Key Stages 3 and 4, and thus those who do not continue studying English into Key Stage 5 – the majority of school students - are unlikely to experience the possibility of raising questions about approach and position.

2.2.3. Works which address questions about the status of English teachers and their students within the discipline of literary study

Through teaching, teachers do make daily acts to frame what counts as literature, what is to be valued within it, and which approaches and methods to reading are to be considered legitimate within the discipline of literary study. Yet few – if any – would consider themselves to be theorists. This thesis is an attempt to show how their intellectual work can and should be foregrounded, in order to promote understanding of where and how literary theory lives outside the academy, in its embodiment in teachers' work. The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory (Castle, 2007, p.1) gives us an image of the undergraduate reaching towards a vast bookcase of ideas:

The student of literature today is confronted with an array of theories concentrating on the literary text, textuality, language, genre, the reading process, social, historical, and cultural context, sexuality and gender, the psychology of character, and the intentions of the author.

But many of these theories will not be new for that student, even though their explicit framing and the idea of choosing might be: ways of reading will have been introduced and mediated by teachers in school classrooms making deliberate and tacit decisions in relation to literary texts.

McNiff and Whitehead (2005, p.2) draw attention to status tensions in describing

a reluctance by the scholarly community to acknowledge teachers as theorists, which may be construed as both a manifestation of a continuing epistemological hegemony in which higher education institutions are seen as sites of knowledge generation and schools as sites of knowledge implementation, and also as a continuing hegemony of divisive forms of logic that systematically separate theory and practice, and that inform the underpinning epistemologies of 'them and us' social practices.

If teachers are not supported to walk a bridge between literary theory as it exists in the academy and their own thinking and teaching, asking its core questions of themselves and their work, and defining who they and their students are in relation to disciplinary formation, there is a danger that they will remain excluded from disciplinary discourse by asymmetric relations of epistemological power (McNiff and Whitehead, 2005). The literature shows that the fracture between school and university disciplinary work (see Atherton 2005, Green 2006, Snapper 2008) is problematic: it undermines the robustness of subject identity. It creates dissonance for new English teachers as they try to marry the discordant models (see Green, 2005, p.112 describing how 'This realignment can be a painful and difficult process to manage, personally and academically'). For students too who wish to continue further study, the fracture can undermine confidence, as Snapper illustrates in his interviews with undergraduates:

Student B: A Level was just, I mean you went in your class and analysed the texts and that was it, you never involved these concepts –and that's where I'm getting confused...I think we've just been thrown into this. (Snapper, 2008, p.203)

Ballinger (2003, 107) notes, 'to ensure that there is more continuity in the transition from A level to the degree, a greater discourse and collaboration between teachers and lecturers may be crucial'. Indeed, the relationship between secondary and tertiary education features strongly in English teachers' and teacher educators' top priorities in a recent Delphi study by Elliott and Hodgson (2021).

The problem of 'asymmetric relations' is exacerbated by the fact that academics working in the discipline of literary study in Higher Education are likely to be expected to publish (publicise) the results of their theorising work as one marker of their belonging to the disciplinary community. The promotion of one's own thinking and articulation of positionality is a significant facet of academic identity, with peer review as an important mechanism of disciplinary preservation of quality and integrity. English teachers, on the other hand, may have a complex and sometimes uneasy relationship with their own authority as disciplinary actors, and with that of their students, with the

individual classroom the only theatre for the playing out and validation of interpretative, theorising choices. Rejan (2022, p.172), for example, teaching in New York, gives an uncomfortable account of struggling with this complexity:

I could not, in the end, engineer the students into Frankenstein-like monsters who embodied my own needs and represented the imprint of my own values and methods. As Victor Frankenstein never could, I would need to let go of a wish for the students to reinforce my own ego and authority and, in so doing, give validation to questions and challenges that might otherwise have been deemed marginal or idiosyncratic.

In English schools, assessment demands are likely to influence the teacher's script, but commentators offer different angles on status questions. Scholes describes a clash between the need for confident modelling of analytical reading and the need for promotion of increasingly independent student expertise. Ultimately he sees the sanctioned classroom 'code of interpretation' as stultifying:

There is a bright little student inside most teachers, who wants to set the rest of the class straight because he or she knows the 'right answer'. Still, the point of teaching interpretation is not to usurp the interpreter's role but to explain the rules of the interpretive game, the code of interpretation as it is practiced within the institutional sedimentations that threaten to fossilise us all. (Scholes, 1985, p.30)

Elliott (2021,109) also warns against 'sedimentation' in our perception of our role, a loss of self consciousness where lens becomes vision: 'We are so sure that the way forward is to make sure everyone plays on our terms, because that is the lesson that must be learned, that we don't stop to think about whether we have a deficit'. Where students challenge sanctioned disciplinary interpretations, the teacher may also feel they have to reject interpretative contributions because of disciplinary conventions that deny all readings as equal. For example, Oubre (2014) admits to slipping into disapproval of students straying into unsanctioned critical territories : 'students access and use "Kid Knowledge" .. to diverge from what the text says and cross into their own fantasy world of text construction rather than interpretation and analysis' (Oubre, 2014, p.67).

As a result of her case study work on English teachers, Elbaz (1981, p.45) looks at the issue of status from a different angle, by asserting that teachers 'may be unaware of the value of their own knowledge.. Certainly there is little encouragement for teachers to view themselves as originators of knowledge'. Similarly, in a highly unusual published account, early career English teachers Bulfin and Mathews (2003) review their own first years after qualifying with some dismay in that they received no validation of their conviction that 'teachers [are] valuable producers of knowledge'

(2003, p.48). They point out that English teachers conceiving of themselves as theorists is 'a perspective seldom heard in its own right' and discuss how their sense of what counts as valuable literary learning has come under threat from other established and powerful messages and stories. These confident and articulate teachers describe an ironic ensuing sense of uncertainty and provisionality in their teaching. They remind us it is easy to forget that teachers are learners who might have to work hard to create a physical and metaphorical 'discursive space' in the face of teaching conditions which often appear 'pre-determined, inflexible and isolating' (p.49).

Bulfin and Mathews do not wait for support, however. They go on to describe how their collaborative effort to continue to talk about, read about and theorise their experiences has led them to 'know and see themselves differently and more powerfully' as 'legitimate knowledge producers' (p.54). The adjective 'legitimate' is interesting here: Bulfin and Mathew's writing implies that their sense of legitimacy as theorising professionals has come from co-operative work. They describe the practical reality of teaching as a claustrophobic, congested place where 'little room was allowed for discussion and reflection' (p.52); the dynamism of their conviction in this piece, however, stands as strong testament as to the value of building and sustaining discursive spaces for teachers' intellectual sharing and renewal.

If teachers struggle to afford themselves the status of 'legitimate knowledge producers', or the status of theorists, then they may be less likely to be able to afford their students that status either. The status of students' 'new thinking' in the English classroom is tenuous, as these insights are unlikely to be formally shared and debated, and our view of teacher and student negotiation and innovation in disciplinary work remains for the most part fleeting, lost in the moment, or at best captured for a short time in essay responses and models – with negligible disciplinary impact. Little literature exists which explores the issue or possibility of disciplinary innovations in the classroom and their influential potential, in spite of stirring calls for students to 'join the conversation' from influential commentators such as Applebee (e.g. 1994), Eaglestone (e.g. 2019) and Bleiman (2019).

Elliott ends her book on knowledge in English teaching (2021) with a reminder that students are 'acutely aware of identities projected on to them in schools' (108), and of how their own knowledges aren't valued. A growing body of work does exist which calls for disciplinary work to be recentred, with a greater emphasis on the student as agentive within the discipline. Applebee (1997) reminds us that just as traditions transform individuals, individuals also transform traditions, that students should learn to operate within traditions but also how to change them, and that students should help to construct the 'curricular conversations' (p.52) rather than merely listening or emulating them. Teachers establish what counts as 'knowing' in their class – in what I would call

epistemological acts – and thus also legitimise or delegitimise particular ways in which students might conceive of themselves as thinkers, learners and knowers. This includes the kind of questions that are permitted in the classroom: Yandell and Brady (2016) give an account of Palestinian and Essex students reaching for ‘authentic questions’ about ‘Romeo and Juliet’ which bring the idea of universal readings into doubt, as they show that ‘how students respond to the text is a product of different, specific cultures and histories’ (p.54). In neither classroom are these questions seen by the researchers or teachers as a threat; instead, they are a means to push back against ‘a deficit view of students which suggests some texts are inaccessible to students’ (46) and allow students to make fluid moves from ‘text to lifeworld and back again’ (56). Yandell and Brady see the English teacher’s role as being to provide ‘enabling conditions for this orientation towards the production of knowledge’ (p.55). We can find an echo of this in Bleiman’s 2019 Harold Rosen NATE Lecture, where she praises the ‘authentic’ ‘I’ in students’ work:

So they use phrases like ‘What stands out for me’, ‘What intrigued me the most’ [as in this example], or ‘I was struck by’ or ‘I think’ or ‘I hope that’. The students own ‘perceptions, experiences, thoughts, imaginings’ (as Harold Rosen describes them) find a valid, important place in their writing and their writing is all the richer and more authentically ‘English’ for that. (Bleiman, 2019, p.41)

Similarly, Doecke and Mead (2018) ask questions about sites of literary knowledge generation. In a challenge to Young, whom they accuse of creating ‘structural antipathy towards interpretative work and constitutive reading’ (p.255), they give a detailed account of the experience of Fiona, a teacher who sees the generation and acquisition of literary knowledge as inseparable from her ongoing relations with her students and wider than the formal syllabi and its setting:

For her, the classroom itself is capable of generating knowledge: it is ‘the interaction with someone else who might have read it or has a different idea ... it’s not just the text on the page, it’s the interaction with somebody else that’s really important’. And it is also significant that for Fiona literary knowledge starts at home, when you are a child.. highlighting the importance of non-institutional, non-disciplinary contexts for generating literary knowledge, as distinct from formal literary studies. (Doecke and Mead, 2018, p.251)

Doecke and Mead describe Fiona as part of ‘an intellectual tradition that has involved sustained reflection on the ‘knowledge’ question and the unique place that English occupies in the curriculum’ (p.251).

2.2.4 Summary

Graff (2002, 29) characterises academic research scholars as ‘avant garde artists who ‘defamiliarise’ previously familiar subjects, using ‘alienation effects’ to make what seems obvious and unproblematic look strange’, a description that could equally be applied to literary theorists. Much of the work of research scholars represented in this review problematises aspects of English teacher identity, knowledge, authority and status in relation to literary study, in academic formats that locate them in the wider discourse of literary study but may well not be widely read by teachers themselves. Such work might give the researcher or commentator the status of theorist, pattern maker and justifier, but where researchers offer no replicable forums and practices for future action, mechanisms for peer calibration, or impact at school or policy level, the English teacher remains a somewhat static object of study. Thus the research mirrors the burn-out problem that also affects literary theory – sophisticated ways of reading texts, actors or contexts might exist as brief flares in disciplinary discourse but are unlikely to catch light in schools. Doecke and Mead’s (2018) idea of an ‘intellectual tradition’ of ‘sustained reflection’ is an uplifting one, but may well be deeply fragmented and fragile in increasingly technicist school environments.

Other texts such as the books by Didau and Elliott may speak more directly to English teachers and offer values-based directions, linking English with a drive for social justice in differing ways. But just as the spectre of the homogenous and homogenising ‘reader’ might be said to get between students and texts in the classroom, there is a sense that the central actors – teachers and students – are actually still one remove away from the debates in the literature and from self-identification as theorists. McNiff and Whitehead (2005, p.2) remind us that:

If education enables all citizens to control their own discourses, it must be informed by a model of democracy that promotes participative and inclusive values. Professional education discourse themselves must reflect the values of democratic participation, in which asymmetric relations of epistemological power are transformed so that all are acknowledged as capable of generating knowledge and participating in debates about the validity and legitimacy of knowledge claims.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the methodology I used to address my central research question: ‘what happens when English teachers are asked to theorise the discipline of literary study?’

In investigating English teachers’ theorising of Literature, writer and reader in the planning and teaching of literary texts, I aim to gain understanding of how they conceive of their power and role as mediators of literary study, and the power and role of their students. This work is undertaken with a view to determining if and how literary theorising can be incorporated into the compulsory age phase of school literary study. The work is underpinned by a belief that a focus on theorising as part of literary study could help raise the profiles of teachers and students as contributors to, as well as actors within the discipline, and promote in both groups a dispositional confidence to explore underlying principles of literary study and their place within it.

In the first section of this chapter, I map out the development of my foci in response to insights gained during the literature review process, detail my theoretical and philosophical orientation, and comment on reflexivity and the limitations of my theoretical framework. In section two, I discuss my research strategy, recruitment and sampling, and data collection, transcription and storage methods. In section three, I address ethical dimensions of the research. In the final section of the chapter, I explain my choice of framework for data analysis.

3.2 Clarifying the research questions

The Literature Review has contributed to a change in my conception of the thesis. At the outset of the project, I had wanted to advocate for greater ‘play’ with literary theory in the secondary school, via the use of approaches such as those found in Stevens et al’s *From Picture Book to Literary Theory* (2003) or Ogborn et al’s *Text, Reader, Critic* (2000). As I concluded the review process, however, I found I wanted to turn from textual games and analytical experimentation towards something more foundational, that is, an examination of teachers’ processes of epistemic engagement and concept framing in order to consider configurations of power in their thinking and work. Literary theory texts, accounts of literary theory teaching and learning in Higher Education, and teacher-turned-educators’ work on identity, knowledge and authority in the English classroom raised questions about the asymmetric relations of epistemological power (McNiff and Whitehead,

2005), which exclude students and teachers from debates about whose knowledge matters. I wanted to take Freire's concept of conscientization (Freire, 1970), that is 'consciousness raising' or 'critical consciousness' and see what happened if English teachers were asked to discuss how they conceptualised the role, status and position of teacher and student, and how they conceptualised key literary concepts of 'text', 'writer' and 'reader' in the disciplinary space created in lessons. I define this as literary theorising at a foundational level, and wondered if such theorising could function as an important 'opening up [of] disciplinary codes.. modes of operation, rules and conventions' (Ashbee 2021, p.11) prior to induction into the more codified paths of literary theory. Whilst teachers are the principal subjects of this research, I also see this as work as one move towards countering the alienation of student-stakeholders from the subject, as it is my contention that the disciplinary codes of literary study are presented as inveterate at school level. Increasing assessment demands crowd out the space for exploration of diverse and socially situated responses to literary texts. This means that many leave compulsory education feeling that literary study is 'not for them', rather than understanding its potential utility as a means of testing out identities and positions and finding one's own authoritative voice.

Drawing on Freire's questioning of social order and its exclusive dimensions in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), I wondered if such theorising might also illuminate the potentially exclusionary and alienating aspects of literary study to allow for alternative practices (- for example, an unpicking of the use of 'the reader' as a problematic, generic placeholder in GCSE Literature essays). Thus literary theorising could align with critical pedagogic goals: its explicit focus on exploring concept formation and the taking of a position when reading could unsettle 'naturalised' disciplinary paths and help teachers and students to reconsider their own stake and agency in constructing literary response.

The literature I had reviewed suggested that literary theory might not have an established successional line from school to university because of problems with induction processes, arcane language, authority anxiety, and teacher confidence and motivation. Its precepts and practices seemed to have become distanced from discussion of its purposes and potential value for the student and for the teacher: even whilst Barry, Eaglestone, Culler and Griffith worked to produce guides to reassure the novice student (and teacher), much of the literature and research projects a sense of theory's difficulty, driving a dependence on stewards and gatekeepers. In developing my research design, I hoped an investigation into teachers' conceptual work, their tacit theorising, might encourage them to claim space for greater epistemic engagement, bolster a perception of the school as a site of potential disciplinary influence (theirs, and their students'), and reclaim theory as both an inviting and exciting arena.

3.3 Critical Pedagogy as a theoretical framework

In terms of theoretical orientation, as the influence of Freirean thought might already indicate, I locate my starting point in the tenets of Critical Theory, and as a school and university educator, I have looked particularly to Critical Pedagogy.

Critical theory focuses on the existence of conflicts between social groups, and seeks to work for those groups at the margins. Kincheloe and McLaren (2008, p.263) define 'criticalists' as assuming:

All thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted; facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some kind of ideological inscription; the relation between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); certain groups in any society are privileged over others and oppression is forcibly reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary or inevitable.

At root, I locate my work as concerned with power relations at the level of school subject construction and reproduction, specifically in terms of the discipline of literary study in school as experienced by teachers and their students. Reading is always an act undertaken from a position; that is, every reading is socially and historically situated, and through disciplinary induction and teaching, particular stances towards texts become naturalised within the classroom. Teachers mediate between student, text and discipline in terms of the literary text-as-signifier, and what is (or could be) signified. Thus the teacher will always be involved in ideological inscription, framing literary study for their students through their choice of texts and lenses, privileging particular ways of reading which might validate or invalidate students' readings or ideological positions. Where this remains unexamined, students may leave the classroom unaware of different routes into interpretation. I contend that a sizable number of students abandoning literary study at 16 do not understand their own potential 'textual power' (Scholes, 1985): tacitly, the discipline is framed in exclusive ways.

Still thinking of myself as among their number, I do not cast teachers as unthinking oppressors, however, and also draw on Henry Giroux's work to promote the 'teacher as transformative intellectual' (1985, 1988, 2011b). He promotes teachers' power to act as agents of change rather

than pathologizing their work, but also warns against valorising only those in the academic sector, as this perception

suffers from a thorough misunderstanding about how human agents mediate and act on the world... failing to comprehend that people in different structural and social positions are constantly theorising at different levels of abstraction and within different sets of ideological assumptions and discourses about the nature of social reality. (Giroux, 1983, p.240)

I wanted to see what would happen if rather than viewing 'theorists' in literary study as a distant revered body of experts, teachers (in the first instance, and then their students) were encouraged to see their own conceptualisations as theory at work in the classroom, and to see themselves as potential contributors to disciplinary development.

As a subset of Critical Theory, Critical Pedagogy invites teachers to examine their position as mediator and the effect of their mediating choices. Darder et al (2017, p.27) describe Critical Pedagogical approaches as cultivating

a process of teaching and learning that deeply nurtures the development of critical consciousness among teachers and their students via the intentional and deliberate development of theoretical faculties, political sensibilities, and practical capacities that challenge [us] to define and critique power relations in ways that promote the transformation of existing educational inequalities and that support the humanity of students and their communities.

Critical Pedagogy is unashamedly political, and can remind teachers of literature that the discipline of literary study is a construct which may exclude groups of readers and ways of reading, and that this matters: 'social structures that are taken as 'real' are actually historically evolved and are neither natural nor inevitable, but they are nevertheless real in their consequences' (Caton, 2014, p.130).

More specifically within the field of English teaching, Luke (2000, p.451) defines Critical Literacy as the ability to analyse 'the relations and fields of social, cultural, and economic power' shaped within and through readings of texts. Critical Literacy does not promote any particular readings of any particular group but promotes the development of the kind of critical consciousness whereby teachers would 'engage students in reflection upon their own ideological investments' (Freire, 1970, p.8).

Scholes trains a Critical Literacy lens on the discipline of literary study itself in his 1985 work *Textual Power* in which he argues persuasively that ‘teaching and theory are always implicated in each other’ (ix) calling on teachers to ‘teach [students] the codes upon which all textual production depends, and to encourage their own textual practice’ (pp.24 -25) as ‘the English apparatus’ has become silted up with commitment to an outdated canon and limited ways of reading.

In the tradition of Critical Pedagogy, I wanted to explore how literary theory could be utilised to illuminate the construction of those paths. As a seminal advocate of Critical Pedagogy, Giroux defines critical theory as both a school of thought and a process of critique (2011a). Literary theory has similar potential, in its offer of differing positions for reading, and as a stimulus for discussion of disciplinary control. Currently, as much as literary theory is given life and legitimacy only through Higher Education modules, the disciplinary community might be missing a significant lost connection to the largest body of students working on literary study – that is, 11 – 16 year olds compelled to study literature in English secondary schools. Writing about the hard landing of literary theory in undergraduate study, Sly and Burton (1997. p.2) decry the fact that ‘the majority of students ... continue to be unaware of their own ideological predispositions, and unable to reflect, except in a naively subjective way, on their own practice.’

To give shape and direction to my own route into the analysis phase of the research, I have chosen to pursue three key foci that have their roots in specific ideas found in Giroux’s work. The first is a focus on the discipline of literary study. Giroux identifies academic disciplinary structures as perpetuating inequality through their conservative and un-democratic nature: ‘knowledge has been historically produced, hierarchically ordered and used within disciplines to sanction particular forms of authority and exclusion’ (Giroux and Searls Giroux, 2004, p.102). He calls for teachers to pursue a ‘border pedagogy’ where the frontiers of disciplines can be mapped and then reconfigured to ‘create new spaces where knowledge can be produced’ (Giroux,1992, p.223). Thus my first focus was upon the ways that participants articulated frames, structures and procedures to bring the discipline of literary study into being for their students. Teachers’ disciplinary framings might reflect their view of themselves and their students in relation to disciplinary hierarchies, and the kinds of approaches and readings that they would consider to be authoritative and valid in their classrooms. These examples of specific framing acts might help me to consider how to promote disciplinary reconfigurations that teachers would see as viable.

My second analytical focus is borne directly out of Freire and Giroux’s concern with the distribution of power. Freire’s identification of a banking model (Freire, 1970, p.58) whereby ‘knowledge is a

gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing' creates the image of a stark binary between teacher and student and precedes his call for a move to more dialogical relations; Giroux states that 'the relationship between authority and power is manifested not only in the degree to which [teachers] legitimate and exercise control over students, but equally important through the capacity they possess to influence the conditions under which they work' (Giroux, 1997, p.107). I wanted to listen for participants' descriptions of their planning and teaching in terms of power distribution, the extent to which they saw knowledge exchange as two-way or dialogic, and also the ways in which they validated, promoted or downplayed their own authority as stakeholders within the discipline. If literary theorising were to find a place in secondary English teaching, I would need to understand how its de-centring challenges to authority might be navigated: a key finding from the literature about literary theory in Higher Education was that its teachers found these challenges particularly problematic.

My third analytical focus relates to Critical Pedagogy's foregrounding of 'a struggle over identities, modes of agency, and those maps of meaning that enable students to define who they are and how they relate to others' (Giroux, 2020, p.5). He defines schools as 'providing students with a sense of place, worth and identity.. offering students selected representations, skills, social relations and values that presuppose particular histories and ways of being in the world' (Giroux, 1992, p.7). Freire identified and criticised transmissive teaching which closed down students' sense of themselves and their existing knowledges through the enforcement of 'a passive role' in which they could 'gain only a fragmented view of the reality deposited in them' (Freire, 2005, p.73). Participants' views of their students' positions and needs in relation to an induction into literary criticality (and, indirectly, their own sense of critical identity as teachers) would be an important third factor informing of any proposal for classroom literary theorising that I would create. This focus is also influenced by reading of Bernstein (1975) in that he distinguished between 'visible' pedagogies whereby rules of hierarchy, sequencing and legitimising criteria are explicitly constructed and shared with students, and 'invisible' pedagogies whereby students must pick up on implicit requirements to be successful.

I hoped to find out about each participant's conceptualisation of disciplinary framing, power and authority, and how they construed student identity in critical induction practices. Taken together, these articulations could be viewed together to inform a proposition for a new model of literary study at school level, one which might foster a greater sense of epistemic engagement for both teacher and student as stakeholders through active theorising about the discipline. Such a model might also offer opportunity for a more inclusive set of readings and evolving approaches to reading literary texts.

3.4 Reflexivity and Framework limitations

The identification of Critical Pedagogy as a theoretical framework has implications for my research design and my positionality as researcher. Setting out into the research process, I felt myself to be buoyed by ideals of social justice, access, equity and on behalf of teachers and students working in a school system uninterested in their concerns or potential contributions.

Yet critics of Critical Pedagogy make salient points about issues of authority and judgement in this field. For example, Gabel (2002) questions the lofty utopian perspective of the Critical Pedagogue; Fischman (2020) draws attention to the alienating potential of narratives of redemption offered by Critical Pedagogy campaigner; Latour (2004) points to the danger of leaning too easily into the debunking impetus of critique; Hodgson et al (2017, p.18) identify the paradoxical likelihood of 'ultimately reaffirming one's own superior position and thus .. reinstalling a regime of inequality'. Weiner points to its lack of purchase - 'outside of individual teachers and researchers who are dispersed throughout various departments and colleges, critical pedagogy as an epistemological paradigm has failed to reach or attract a critical mass' (Weiner, 2007, p. 59) - a failure attributed by Neumann to pervasive issues of tone and approach: Critical Pedagogy 'consistently fails to connect to large numbers of teachers ... criticalists must not talk at teachers, but rather with them about the specific challenges that they face and the contexts in which they work' (Neumann, 2013, p. 143). Peim's autoethnographic account of his efforts to promote Critical Pedagogy indicates a frustration with colleagues who did not share his revolutionary zeal (Peim, 1999); a glance at one of my own articles for NATE's journal indicates the way that I have struggled to empathise with the uninitiated⁵ (Wright 2006). Caton characterises the researcher working with Critical Theory as 'enabling individuals to begin to see their lives from perspectives they may previously have not been able to access' (Caton, 2014, p.134); 18 years on from my MA study, I do not now think of my participants as naïve and 'unseeing' but rather as having been denied space and formal audience to explore their own conceptualisations, a space and means of validation which research participation and inductive analysis might provide.

⁵ For example, note the admonishing tone of the following: 'the banner of empowerment is left behind the English office door rather than borne aloft into the English classroom' (Wright, 2006, 16).

Katz' 2014 investigation into 'Teachers' Reflections on Critical Pedagogy in the Classroom' suggests some reasons for teacher resistance. She highlights a unease with terms of power, privilege, politics, with her participants not wanting cast themselves as 'ideological crusaders' (Katz, p.15) and urges greater investigation into 'the perspective of teachers who do not self-identify as critical pedagogues to get a sense of the theory's usefulness for a wider range of teachers.' In determining a research design, I worked to find a language and approach which acknowledged these criticisms and disjuncts if I was to persuade participants to share their thinking. In addition, if, as Saunders and Wong (2020) contend, 'Critical Pedagogy does not end with theory but rather focuses on praxis, or translating knowledge into action' (para.6) any conclusions and recommendations would need to include support for action in terms and within a frame of reference accepted and understood by my participant teachers.

During each interview, my positionality was 'tangibly fluid' (Buys et al, 2022, p.2032) in that I felt I was signalling both 'insider' and 'outsider' status. Each participant was aware that I had taught in 5 schools over 29 years, and was familiar with common processes, texts, assessment criteria, content challenges and the 3 key stages of literary study in secondary schools. However, I was not a teacher in any of the participants' schools, and have been out of the classroom for the last 2 years; my positionality was therefore variable depending on what was being talked about. I had to remain alert to the ways in which a temporal or general awareness of each identity might have helped or hindered a participant. For example, my 'insider' status might have helped the flow of the conversation, allowing me to make expressions of confirmation when participant described particular conundrums or decisions in their planning and teaching; my experience of working with teachers on the MA Education programme that I lead might have helped me anticipate the strangeness of being asked to talk at length about micro-aspects of one's thinking and decision making when this is not a regular dimension of teachers' work. I deliberately focused on identity questions and autobiography in Stage 1, for instance, to allow each participant to ease towards more specific articulations of subject conceptualisations and to 'locate themselves' in the unfamiliar interview space. Conversely, I felt it was also necessary at times to emphasise that there was no 'correct' response that I was tacitly seeking as someone engaged in academic study, and that I was aware of the fast pace of change and complexity of school environments from which I am temporarily removed.

3.5 Research Strategy

Caton (2014) characterises Critical Theory as having developed away from deterministic view of social structures towards a postmodern stance where interpretive possibilities are more various. Research can thus function more as ‘a matter of nurturing growth through information sharing’, with ‘communication on the part of the researcher emphasised to enable individuals to see their lives from perspectives they may previously have not been able to access’ (Caton, 2014, p.134). More ‘just’ outcomes might be reached via ‘working for social change as a dialogue in which researchers, participants, and even readers of the written research report bring their own understandings to the encounter’ (p.135). Research can thus be framed as non-coercive, and growth and action oriented.

With this in mind, I opted to construct a project with 3 stages, drawing on the following criteria from Koshy’s definition of Action Research:

- Action research is a method used for improving educational practice. It involves action, evaluation and reflection and, based on gathered evidence, changes in practice are implemented
 - Action research is participative
 - It develops reflection based on the interpretations made by participants
 - Knowledge is created through action, and at the point of application
 - In action research findings emerge as action develops, but they are not conclusive or absolute
- (Koshy, 2009, p.1)

Given the paucity of accounts of experienced teachers’ theorising as indicated by the Literature Review, I chose to ask to participants take intentional steps to consider their own theorising as they planned, taught and then reflected upon a unit of work. McIntosh (2010, p.37) sees learning via action research as ‘enacted through a process of critical awareness – being active in practice as a form of intellectual study rather than ‘sleepwalking’ through it’. In addition, action research is often described as being for a means to bring on positive change. McCutcheon and Jung (2010, p.148) describe one goal of action research as ‘the articulation of a rationale or philosophy of practice in order to improve practice’; a strong conception of the value of this articulation for teachers and students underpins my rationale for the study.

In this research, the focus for change or refinement of practice has not been generated by institutional or assessment priorities but by an interest in teachers' and students' thinking. Noffke (1997, p.334) has cautioned against the instrumental use of action research in schools as a form of in-service education: 'Seeing action research as a means for professional development raises a complex set of questions related to issues of power: Who and what is being 'developed' and by whom, and, most important, in whose interests?' Mindful of Hodgson et al's critique of the Critical Pedagogue as wilfully blind to her own directive agenda (2017), I emphasised my 'agenda' of wanting to put the practitioner at the centre of disciplinary shaping and development in my Participant Information at the recruitment stage, valuing their thinking processes and promoting their stake and capacity to construct and reconstruct disciplinary concepts in school literary study. The data they offered would help me to understand both the potential and the limits of such a project, and evaluate any positive or negative aspects of the theorising I was asking them to undertake.

Coe et al (2017) point to the way that action research overlaps with the interpretivist paradigm in its commitment to understanding the meanings that participants and groups attach to events or ideas. Munn-Giddings also points to the critical theoretic paradigm (2017, p.72) which has a dual focus of understanding and a search for improvement in aspects of life or institutions. As a researcher who has temporarily suspended her work as a teacher in school to complete this research, whilst continuing work in university teacher training, this work is not without self-interest: I seek greater understanding of how fellow teachers conceptualise writer, reader, teacher and student, an improvement in the structuring of student induction into literary practice, and an enhancement in teachers' epistemic engagement to take back with me when I return to the school classroom.

Through interviews staged over a number of months, I have recorded and collated data about their thinking. The collaboration has come not through identical actions, but through myself as research instigator helping the teacher-practitioners to 'describe, analyse and explain what is going on, [and] generate theory about what [they] see' (McNiff, 2016, p.6). It is dynamic, with conclusions which situate practitioner-generated theory alongside research-generated theory; the conclusions do not function as an 'overlay' layer in which the practitioner contribution is overwritten.

Whilst no definitive definition of action research exists, this research is consistent with commonly held understandings of Action Research in three key ways. Firstly, it involves collaborative communicative processes in which all participants' contributions are taken seriously (Koshy, 2009,

p.21) and seeks to increase the 'market share' of teachers in knowledge generation. McNiff (2016) argues that the expectation that practitioners will and should apply established theory to their practices has become 'normative'. The new Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (DfE, 2024) includes considerable distillations from theory, coupling 'learning that' with 'learning how to' in extended grids of ideas. There is no emphasis on teacher discovery or evaluative work/critical questioning. Action research can stand as an important counterpoint to such strongly normative training frameworks, and I have sought here to give primacy to teacher perspectives (Draper et al, 2011, 5).

Secondly, through action research, a researcher can 'bring a story to life' (Koshy, 2009, p.21) – drawing out a landscape which might not be recognised if not directly inhabited by other teachers. In this, the work acknowledges teachers themselves as important recipients and readers of the research, maintaining a strong connection between subjects and intended audiences.

Finally, a salient feature of much action research is its cyclical structure and the model it supplies for future work. Whilst I have undertaken a single cycle of discussions with participants over the duration of one unit of literary study, a structure and a set of tools for future cycles and further studies now exists. My participants have each produced their own 'local' knowledge but the thesis will be moving that knowledge into a 'public' sphere, and there is the potential for scaling up the research. Action research is sometimes criticised for only producing local knowledge reapplied back into local contexts (see Hodgkinson, 1957, as an early example); I hope to work further with participants to disseminate findings in journals, subject association publications and national conferences. Action research is consciously value-based, and historically and socially situated. It recognises that the knowledge generated is not certain, definitive or generalisable and that the researcher is an actor whose presence, perspectives and positionality need to be accounted for.

However, the research could also be seen to depart from some action research models. My participants are not named as co-authors, even though the data is made up of discussion in which theorising is shared and theories are co-constructed. There is a directive drive behind the construction of the project – that is, my desire to explore the ways in which literary theorising might be encouraged in the classroom – and the Participant Information, tasks and questions reflect this.

In addition, the research has not been undertaken in situ and thus distance is created in time and place between the classroom and the discussion. Whilst I would consider myself broadly 'native to the field' (Noffke and Zeichner, 1987) having completed 29 years in secondary English classrooms, latter stages of data collection have occurred at a time when my school teaching work has been paused. The research questions and design were conceived at a time when I was still in the classroom, however.

The cycle undertaken by participants might not have been perceived by then as directly oriented towards practical change. I have looked to conscious problematisation of literary study for its transformative effects, and this is not immediately 'action-oriented'. My aim has been to create 'actionable knowledge that is sound and relevant to all participants' (Rowell et al, 2014, p.266) in the form of a model of a theorising process and evaluation of its effects on a small sample, and in the form of a new framework for literary study at Key Stage 3, as offered in the final recommendations of the thesis. It is important to note that this research work is not presented as a definitive end in itself: the next cycle of a broader research venture will be to advance and trial the recommendations, for example through the trialling of the suggested framework in schools.

3.6 Recruitment and sampling strategy

I recruited participants by putting out a request to English teacher subject networks, social media groups, and across English Departments in which I had previously worked. I secured participation and consent by sharing the Participant Information with interested parties (see Appendix A for wording of Participant Information and Consent documentation), and three of the 6 eventual participants took up the option of a supplementary phone call or online meeting to answer queries. I predicted that Data collection in 3 stages was likely to take 6 – 9 months, as I was asking each participant for one initial interview, a second interview or triad to discuss how they were planning to teach specific concepts in relation to a Key Stage 3 scheme of learning based on a literary text of their choice, and a third interview or triad after the teaching had been concluded, to review what happened with the teaching of the specific concepts.

I sought English teachers who had had taught for a minimum of 5 years and who were currently teaching key stages 3 and 4 in a secondary school in England. The sample was purposive in terms of the experience requirement: I sought knowledgeable people who would have been involved in dialogue about curriculum design with their departments and management and thereby would be well placed to articulate their thinking. I hoped to learn about the thinking and theorising of

teachers who were temporally distanced from the formalised reflective practices of initial teacher training, and who would have taught successive years of classes and successive cohorts. I surmised that this group might have had time to refine, adapt or change their conceptualisations of themselves, their students, the idea of 'the writer' and the idea of 'the reader' as a result of exposure to multiple classroom situations.

I had hoped to recruit a sample of between 5 and 10 teachers whom I would see as representing rather than representative of secondary English teachers. Recruitment adverts and call outs yielded an initial tally of 15 interested parties, and after Participant Information was sent out, 6 teachers returned their consent between February and June 2022. I had met but not worked with 2 of the 6 teachers before; the remaining 4 responded after English teacher colleagues whom I had worked with in the past passed on invitations to teachers in their networks. Of the 6 respondents, 4 completed all three stages of the data collection, 1 dropped out after Stage 1 (with no explanation given – contact was ceased), and 1 dropped out after the Stage 2 triad. I chose a non-probability sample in the knowledge that it could not fully represent the wider population, as a key aim was to investigate how a process of discussion and theory-foregrounding might be received by English teachers rather than to seek a set of objectivist truths. Kemmis, with reference to Habermas, makes reference to research as an opportunity to open up 'communicative space' (2006, p.472). The small sample size was also pragmatic given the practical demands of recruitment and transcription.

3.7 Data collection methods and timeframe

I chose semi-structured interviews with the intention of creating an expanding space for teacher voice, but remained mindful of the need to consider power dynamics. Denscombe (2014) alerts us to the 'interviewer effect', that is, the possibility of participants offering responses to gain approval - or its converse - given their understanding of the varying professional roles I hold outside of the research (e.g. teacher in a school not their own; university PGCE lecturer and MA Education programme co-ordinator). I attempted to minimise this effect by giving an account of my own positionality in the Participant Information and re-addressed this issue by inviting participants to ask me 'What are you doing?' and 'Why are you doing it?' at each stage of the research.

Each participant was sent questions two weeks before each interview (see Appendix B); they could choose to prepare responses or not at their preference. The interviews were conducted live online according at times suggested by the participants to each participant's preference. I gained

permission to record interviews in advance on Microsoft Teams, and recordings were initially transcribed using Teams transcript software. I then watched each recording back twice to check accuracy and to add notes manually to each transcript: I looked and listened for what was 'repeated, recurrent and forceful' (see Data Analysis Method below). Participants were offered the chance to check each transcript, and to add a reflective coda if they felt that the interview process had generated ideas beyond those articulated in the moment. No participant chose to add a coda.

The online format of data collection proved to be convenient for participants in that Teams allowed them to exercise a high degree of control over time and place of participation. It also allowed me to work with participants from varied geographical locations, and was 'resource-lite' for example in that transcription was automatically provided by the Teams programme. I was able to concentrate entirely on the discussion and participants were able to blur their backgrounds if they chose to. It was notable that every participant except one 'relaxed' into the interview within the first quarter of an hour (for example as evidenced in length of utterances) as the unusual situation of speaking at length about their own identity, thinking and theorising to a dedicated external listener came into focus. The interviews allow them to begin to form a sense of themselves as contributors to a kind of 'professional conversation' (Kvale, 2007) that was not related to formal performance accountability or efficacy or inspection mandates.

Its disadvantages included its accessibility – some interviews took place in school time, which whilst convenient, also meant the participant was in a public office or space and thus remained conscious of the possibility of imminent interruption. I felt that establishing trust was a little harder given the lack of physical proximity, and the fixed camera angle meant I had less access to visual cues about how participants may have been feeling.

Stage 1

For the Stage 1 semi-structured interview, which in case lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour, each participant was invited to talk about why they had become a teacher of English Literature, and their beliefs about their work. In the first part of the interview, I asked about the degree to which teaching literary study had been a motivator as they chose teaching, and what school and pre-teaching experiences with literature they had had. In the second part of the interview, I asked about where they felt the value of literary study might lie, and whom we taught it for, what we should teach and what might inform those choices, and whether they felt their views on these questions had changed since they started teaching. These questions were intended to help me listen to the ways they framed their sense of their subject-selves, and I hoped would contribute to

the body of work exemplified by Farr (1997), Doecke (2002 and 2014), Bulfin and Mathews (2003), Kempe and Reed (2104), or Tarpey (2016).

In the third part of the interview, I asked about 'curriculum intent' and literary study in their school, the role they felt they might play in shaping it, what the curriculum for literary study might achieve for their specific students, and what they would propose if there were no limits. These questions were intended to allow participants into what Fischman (2020, p.249) calls 'the space of the possible', which is 'larger than the one we are assigned'. This reflects my own valuing of theorising as formative and reformist, as well as summative and stock-taking.

Stage 2

In Stage 2 of the study, participants were initially asked to attend an on-line triad with 2 other participants, in which they were then invited to discuss a particular Key Stage 3 unit of work on a literary text or texts, and to discuss their rationale and theoretical lenses, and their value for their students. I asked particularly how each participant was conceptualising 'literature', 'author', 'reader' and 'context', given that these concepts are foundational in much literary theory work in Higher Education. I chose to turn to a specific unit of work because my review of the research literature threw up few examples of research that sought to pivot discussion of values, positions, beliefs with discussion of actual planning and teaching: I did not find any account of classrooms the where those values, positions and beliefs might (or might not) have been played out, and teachers' subsequent reflections on what happened. For example, the work of Farr (1997), Davies (1992), Ireland et al (2017) represents surveying of attitudes without direct link to curricula or specific lessons; in contrast, Yandell (e.g. 2017) provides vivid classroom snapshots with interpretative analysis. The coupling of values, beliefs and conceptualisations with the teaching of them could be said to happen when OFSTED inspectors follow up on 'curriculum intent' conversations by visiting classes and undertaking book scrutinies; OFSTED's focus, however, is on the clarity with which leaders have identified what they want their students to learn (the 'knowledge') and then how those ideas are 'implemented', and how well their 'impact' can be observed. Such work is positivist in character, firmly denying its interpretative aspects, and serving an assessment agenda that not exploratory or liberatory in nature; at a counterpoint, my data collection was exploratory in nature, to give value to teachers' view of themselves and their students, and their conception of their subject and its effects.

The triad structure was less successful than I would have hoped – in the first triad the fact that the participants did not know each other proved prohibitive and I received feedback that participants

would have preferred to continue with 1-1 interviews. Subsequently, when offered the option of either triad or individual interview, remaining participants chose interviews only.

Stage 3

Stage 3 of the study involved one further focus group discussion, after the units of literary study discussed in Stage 2 had been taught. Participants were invited to revisit and extend or adjust the theories articulated in Parts 1 and 2 in relation to what happened in their classrooms. Participants were also invited to co-summarise the actual and possible effects of the act of subject theorising, for themselves, and for their students.

3.8 Research timeframe

Principal Research Question: What happens when English teachers are asked to theorise the discipline of literary study?
Phase 1: January – June 2022
1 – 1 online recorded semi-structured interview with each participant Approximately 1 hour at participants' discretion Part A: Establishing identity and background Part B: Theories, beliefs, values and views on literary study and the teaching of literary study Part C: Curriculum intent for literary study Transcripts sent to participants for validation and amendment/addition of any further thoughts within one week with returns within one month
Phase 2: May – December 2022
Participants grouped into triads Participants not known to each other and teaching at geographical distance from one another

<p>Online recorded Triad focus group discussion</p> <p>Reversion to online recorded 1-1 semi-structured interviews at participant request</p> <p>Part A: Discussion of disciplinary decisions and perceptions of roles at the planning stage of a Key Stage 3 literature unit of work chosen by each participant. Units will be taught in the Academic Year 2022 – 2023.</p> <p>Part B: Discussion of how key concepts of ‘text’, ‘writer’, and ‘reader’ are perceived and how they might be communicated in the classroom</p> <p>Transcripts sent to participants for validation and amendment/addition of any further thoughts within one week with returns within one month</p>
Phase 3: January to May 2023
<p>Contact re-established after each participant had taught their unit</p> <p>Online recorded semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Part A: Reviewing Phase 2 responses – discussion of how disciplinary intentions and roles played out during the teaching of the Key Stage 3 literature unit of work</p> <p>Part B: Discussion of the effects articulating theory about literary study/theorising in classrooms for the participant-teachers and their students. Participant recommendations for next steps</p> <p>Transcripts sent to participants for validation and amendment/addition of any further thoughts within one week with returns within one month of receipt</p>

I initially predicted that data collection in 3 stages would take 6 – 9 months, as it involved a cycle of reflection, action, further reflection and summary. The collection process ended up taking 16 months: as participants all held positions of responsibility within English departments, it was difficult to find mutually convenient times for the Stage 2 and 3 meetings. It remained important to agree on times that did not cause disruption for any participant to avoid any sense of coercion through obligation. In addition, participants held positions of responsibility within their schools beyond that of classroom teacher, and I was cognizant that all faced the unique challenges of the immediate post-pandemic landscape in their schools.

3.9 Ethical responsibilities

I applied to Leeds Beckett University for Ethical Clearance in November 2021 and was granted approval in December 2021 (see Appendix C). I used the BERA guidelines for Educational Research (fourth edition, 2018) as a primary text in addressing Ethical considerations, and consider here the following ethical dimensions drawn directly from those guidelines: responsibility to participants, responsibility to stakeholders, responsibility to the community of education researchers, and responsibility for publication and dissemination. The benefits and risks of the research are discussed in overview in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Responsibility to participants

In terms of consent, I obtained voluntary informed consent from all participants at the outset via the Participation Information and Consent Form. I endeavoured to remain sensitive and open to the possibility that participants might wish, for any reason and with reasonable notice, to withdraw their consent. All participants were offered a date of 2 weeks after each data collection point by which to withdraw consent for data to be used, and I emphasised that to withdraw would incur no comment or penalty.

The original data collection design had included participants being brought together online in triads for Stages 2 and 3 so that they could hear each others' responses. I had hoped this would help to strengthen the idea of English teachers as a community engaged in theorising, but in the event, 4/5 participants reported back after the Stage 2 cycle that they preferred the 1-1 interview, and the 6th participant chose not to engage at all with Stage 2 or 3 (no reason given). One participant even chose to withdraw after the first triad discussion in Stage 2. She emailed to cite a change in employment circumstances as the reason why it was no longer practical for her to continue. On reviewing the recording of the triad, and notes about it, her frequent apologies to other participants and moments of hesitation over 5 seconds long might be indicative of a strong discomfort with the process. In accordance with my submission for Ethical Clearance and the Participant Information, she was able to withdraw before Stage 3, and her contributions to the triad discussion have been deleted. Wellbeing follow up support was offered, but she chose not to engage with it.

For Stage 2, where teachers were asked to discuss a unit of work they have planned for use within their school, where they themselves were not the Head of English, I asked them to check that their department leaders were happy for the unit to be discussed as part of the research.

In terms of transparency, I aimed to be open and honest with participants, giving an account of my own positionality in the Information for Participants documentation (see the 'Why have you chosen to conduct this study?' section). It was important that participants understood the varying professional roles I hold outside of the research (e.g. teacher in a school not their own; university PGCE lecturer and MA Education programme co-ordinator) but also that the aim of the research was to explore theorising and its possibilities, not to judge teachers. I could not and cannot claim neutrality, but could emphasise the exploratory nature of the work and my commitment to generative rather than critical thinking.

In terms of the right to withdraw, participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw from the data collection process at any time, and the right to withdraw their data up to two weeks after each data collection point, and their right to edit or adjust their contributions at each stage in the study. With regards to possible harm arising from participation, I recognised at the outset that some teachers might experience a sense of threat in relation to the topic. For example, teachers might perceive the research process as intrusive scrutiny. I clarified that participants could abstain from any question, line of enquiry or discussion, acknowledging that professional scrutiny can feel intrusive. As the final thesis will be in the public domain, and follow up work might include participant involvement in future publication or conference presentation, I reminded participants that their employers and managers would have access to the work. Consequently, participants were encouraged to review data at each stage to ensure they felt secure with the level of anonymisation.

I anticipated that participants might also experience feelings of destabilisation if, in the articulation of positions, they found gaps between theory, values and practice as limited by contextual restrictions. Research read as part of the literature review work for this thesis indicates that some undergraduates experience disorientation or dismay when the disciplinary knowledge base brought from A level Literature study base is opened up to critique during literary theory seminars (see Campbell 1997; Johnson 2015); school teachers too are warned by Appleman (2009, p.11) about a possible overlap occurring between 'deconstruction' and 'destruction' of ideas about literary study during theorising activity. I sought to mitigate this possibility by sending the questions to participants at the outset of each stage so that they could choose not to participate at any point.

In terms of incentives, no material incentives were offered in this study, but participants were offered a space in which to articulate their thoughts and beliefs about the teaching of Literature,

and share and discuss these thoughts and beliefs within a micro-community of peers outside of their work setting. I hoped that this would complement, or offer an alternative to, the kind of formalised accounts of positioning and practice required in official school documentation and policy.

I hope that the study will also be seen by participants as an opportunity to contribute to professional discourse. Participants wishing to be included as co-authors in future publications or co-presenters in conference presentations in relation to this research can contribute to debate in settings beyond their own immediate context. Participants will be informed about any future publication plans, with permission secured before any data was published in any articles or conference papers.

With regards to privacy and data storage, I recognised the entitlement of participants to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, and this was agreed and reiterated at each stage of data collection and analysis. Participants were reminded that if they wanted to specifically and willingly waive their right to confidentiality and anonymity I would recognise their rights to be identified in any publication of their contributions if they so wished. I remained aware of the possible consequences to participants should it prove possible for them to be identified by association or inference, and took all reasonable precautions to avoid identification – for example, by fictionalising or by changing identifying features that participants identified as a potential compromise to their desired anonymity. I also abided by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), for example in that ensuring participants knew that they can have access to any personal data that is stored, and which relates to them. Contact, transcript and recording data was stored securely on a password protected Onedrive account, no portable storage devices were used, and I cross-checked my actions against the University's Data Management policy.

Responsibility to stakeholders

The BERA guidelines stipulate that:

Researchers should, within the context and boundaries of their chosen methods, theories and philosophies of research, communicate the extent to which their data collection and analysis techniques, and the inferences to be drawn from their findings, are robust and can be seen to meet the criteria and markers of quality and integrity applied within different research approaches. (Point 60, BERA 2018)

Whilst it is possible to call the validity of the study into question because of its political, or partisan nature, I would counter this possibility with a warning against collapsing the difference between validity credentials utilised during the course of inquiry, and validity credentials applied on the completion of the project. At the point of data collection, I have tried to subdue my own views, with a concerted effort to speak less and listen more. At the point of transcription, I have worked to ensure participants agree with the accuracy of the transcripts. At the point of analysis, however, I redeclare my partisan position in the hope that the analysis might stand as a model for participants to evaluate. This declaration of partisanship keeps the work aligned the baselines of critical pedagogy, that is, not claiming to document teacher reflections in an allegedly neutral fashion, but including researcher and the research itself in the critical project as ‘inherently partisan’ (Zeichner, in Carlgren et al, 1994, p.20).

In terms of my responsibility to the community of education researchers, I have aimed to protect the integrity and reputation of educational research by working to conduct this research to the highest standards, for example remaining open to constructive criticism from participants or supervisors. My supervisors and the Education Doctorate Programme Leader were identified in Participant Information as appropriate contacts whom participants could contact should they have needed to raise questions or concerns, including those concerning formal complaints procedures.

3.10 Data transcription and storage

The transcription process had three stages. I recorded the interviews and focus group discussions on Microsoft Teams. Teams provides a transcript; I checked and amended these transcripts by examining them whilst replaying the recordings. During this checking process, I removed time stamps and verbal fillers such as ‘um’ to create a version of ‘naturalised/intelligent verbatim’ (McMullin, 2021) in order to achieve a script that was as close as possible to the actual words spoken. Any inaudible statements were marked with asterisks. The second versions of transcripts were then sent to participants with a link to the recording for self-checks if required, and a reminder they could add further thoughts to their contributions should they wish to. No amendments were requested by participants; this may reflect time constraints for them in terms of reviewing the recording, and/or be an expression of trust in the transcription process described to them.

The data collected from the interviews and focus group discussions was processed and stored in a password protected file in my OneDrive university account, to which only I have had access. Where

draft transcripts needed to be shared with participants for checking or for informative purposes prior to Stage 2 triad formation, this was only with participants' permission. Participants maintained the right to access data held about them in relation to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018. The data from this project will be stored for 5 years and then destroyed.

3.11 Data analysis methods and techniques, and how data was prepared for analysis

I was influenced by Braun and Clarke's six-phase analytical process of reflexive thematic analysis (2012, 2014, 2020, 2022), a process which 'highlights the researcher's active role in knowledge production' (Byrne, 2022, p.1393), and adjusted their model down to four iterative phases drawing on Bingham's proposal for an analytic strategy (Bingham, 2023). I had entered into the data collection process with a strong orientation towards Critical Pedagogy; the three broad foci questions from that theoretical base came into focus during the preparation of the data and their final wording was arrived at through several redrafts. This, and the protracted and fragmented nature of part time study alongside full time work blurred the line between inductive and deductive analysis: Phases 2-4 are presented in diagrammatic form below as neat stages; in actuality I moved between them many times over a period of 6 months.

The overarching research question remained: how do English teachers theorise literary study in schools?

The analysis foci were:

- a. Acts of framing: how disciplinary codes, conventions, rules and modes of operation are articulated and perceived
- b. How disciplinary power, authority and influence are and might be conceived of and distributed, and how those conceptions and distributions might be normalised or challenged
- c. How students are and might be inducted into critical identities and dispositions

I have made deliberate use of modal verbs of possibility here, in alignment with Critical Pedagogy's foundation as 'a movement that combined critique with a strong commitment to hope' (Van Heertum, 2006, p.45), and in recognition of the potentially transformative capacities participants were already likely to possess and be using – for as Fischman notes,

..educators who are committed to the ideals of fairness, social transformation, and economic, political and cultural democratisation are critical educators even if they have never read or heard the words of Stanley Aronowitz, Antonia Darder, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux... (in Macrine, 2020, p.247)

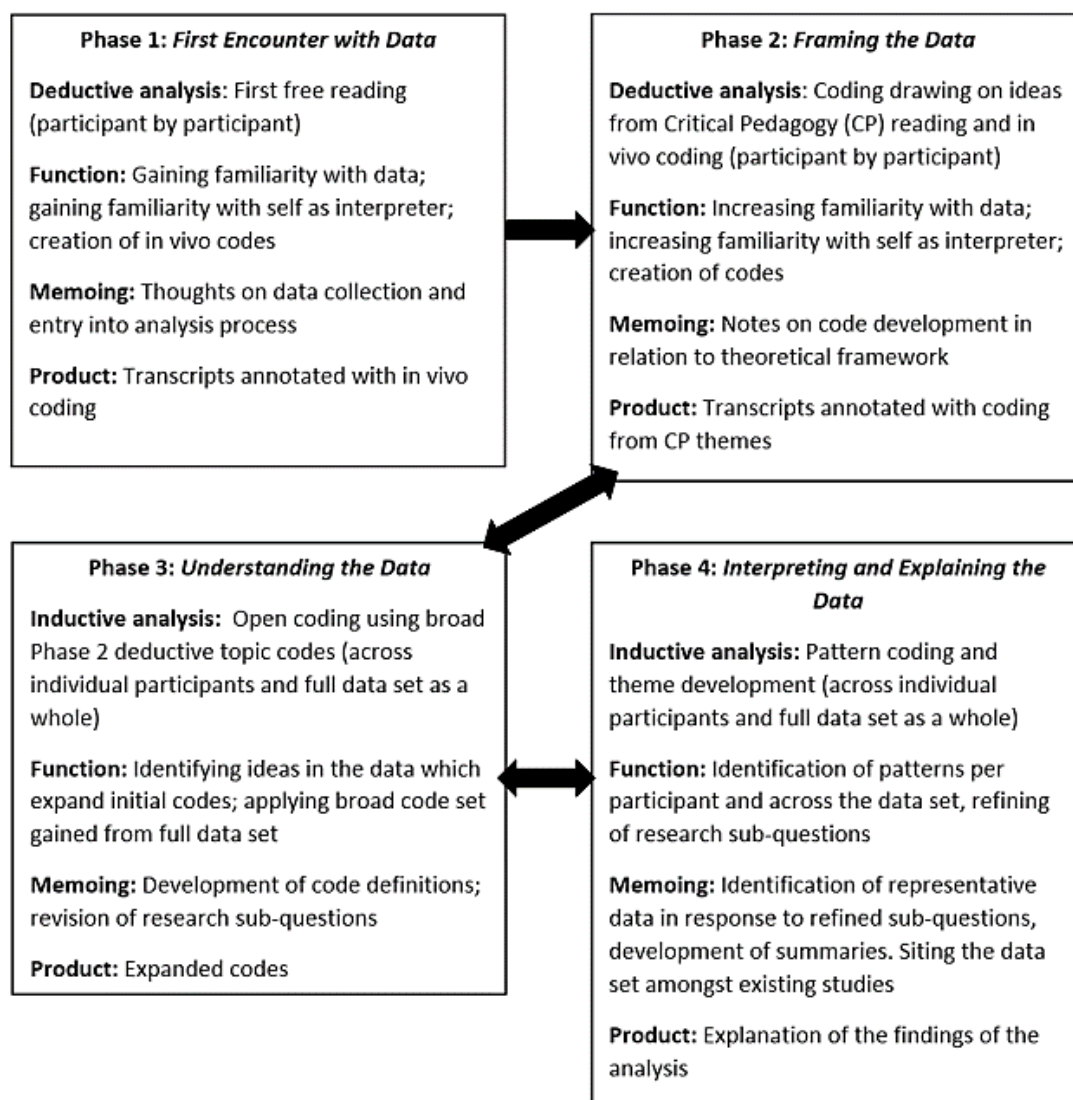


Figure 1: The Phases of Data Analysis (Adapted from Bingham, 2023)

Phase one involved close reading to gain familiarisation with the data. In vivo coding was conducted freely on each participant's transcripts, participant by participant. First memos were made in which I documented my first reactions to the data, to undertaking analysis, and to ideas foregrounded by the free process of in vivo coding and their relation to works evaluated in the literature review. These memos stand as an important acknowledgement that in vivo coding is not

a neutral process: the phrases I chose to highlight in the transcripts related to my research question and preliminary reading. Phase two involved the generation of initial codes with more conscious reference to my nascent theoretical framework: I had begun to formulate sub-questions with foci drawn from the literature of Critical Pedagogy at this time. I revisited the transcripts to retrieve further relevant phrases. Appendix D illustrates this process in relation to Participant 1, Elsa.

Phase three involved open coding using the broad deductive topic codes in the sub-questions refined as a result of Phase 2 findings and a revisiting of literature on Critical Pedagogy. The process included reference across the full data set to confirm patterning in codes, and to identify overlap and redundant codes. It quickly became clear that data could often be labelled semantically (that is, explicit statements from the participants) or latently (that is, statement where implicit meaning was perceived) (Byrne, 2022). Appendix E illustrates this process with samples from the full data set.

Phase four involved the identification of patterns and theme development, and re-application of the theoretical framework in relation to the literature, and a move towards explanations. A definitive account of teacher theories was not the end goal; rather, the research has always been predicated on a practical outcome. Close examination and comparison of 4 teachers' work and thinking over time is used here to inform proposals for a reconfiguration of school literary study that is rooted in Critical Pedagogy, and includes an epistemological aspect. Analysis across the participant responses occurred in tandem with analysis of each individual participants' contribution.

Memos were written through the process as a particularly useful aid to part time working, and allowed for the tracking of my own handling of key ideas and terms, as well as participant positioning (see examples in Appendices D and E). The slippery concepts of power, knowledge and identity in particular required repeated interrogation as they appeared with differing definitions across multiple memos. I reappraise my handling of these pivotal concepts in my synthesis of findings in this thesis.

3.12 Methodological limitations and concluding comment on Methodology

The accounts of English teacher theorising that I offer here do not represent an objective reality or direct access to thought. They are reliant on my representations of 'covert mental processes' (Calderhead, 1987, p.184), and as such, are partial. They are also context-bound. For example, the backdrop of the pandemic and its aftermath affected the amount of time and energy English

teachers could realistically offer. All participants were given the option to review my analysis of their individual contributions but none chose to do so.

A second limitation was the self-selecting nature of participants: in volunteering to articulate their beliefs, experiences, planning and conceptualisations they indicated they already possessed a desire to reflect upon and open out their practice. The withdrawal of Participant D and others stands as a reminder that this opportunity and/or my chosen format and timing would not work or hold value for all English teachers. The small sample size does include teachers from different regions, school sizes and job roles to reflect a range of teaching contexts.

Further reflections on the limits and successes of the research can be found in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis

In this chapter, I present the outcomes of my data analysis in two parts: in Part 1, I track ideas expressed by each participant in turn in relation to the 3 sub-questions of the thesis. In Part 2, I synthesise ideas from across the participants' data to show areas of convergence and areas of difference in their theorising around literary study at Key Stage 3.

The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Literary Theory states that 'theory' 'investigates the conceptual foundations of textual scholarship' (n.d.). In the gathering and presentation of data, I name my teachers' responses as foundational theorising: in articulating their ways of thinking, these participants bring shape and visibility to their approaches and positions. No definitive source exists to frame the discipline of literary study; the data, and the analysis that I have created from it as a teacher, teacher educator and researcher offer a picture of the ways in which 4 individual experienced teachers conceive of the school version of this discipline, what they draw on to create a sense of coherence in their work, and how they conceptualise Literature, its writers and its readers, and its study for themselves and their students.

The data offers two kinds of story – that of my participants' reactions to my deliberate probing of their perceptions of themselves and their students as theorists, and the more nuanced stories of disciplinary positioning contained within their wider accounts of their practice (i.e. not in direct relation to the idea of theory and theorising).

4.1 Participant 1: Elsa

Elsa is an experienced teacher who has worked in two schools. At the time of the interviews, she held Key Stage responsibility within her English department. Her semi-rural school is situated on the edge of a large town in the North of England, has just over 1,500 students aged between 11 and 16 and is part of a multi-academy trust. At the time of writing, Elsa indicates that schools and departments within this Trust appear to operate with a high degree of autonomy in terms of curriculum provision. Her Key Stage 3 scheme of learning was based on Benjamin Zephaniah's 2001 novel *Refugee Boy*.

4.1.1 Elsa's acts of framing: how she articulates and perceives disciplinary codes, conventions, rules and modes of operation

In terms of the shaping and structuring of the discipline at school level, Elsa suggests that the defining, organising and structuring of literary knowledge is an amalgam of the national curriculum, exam syllabus documents, and department curriculum design (open for negotiation and involving acts of creativity – 'we have our overview and we plot all our texts onto it and then we sort of align

skills to those texts'). There is no single locus of power; the curriculum is born out of a blend of external directives and departmental choices. Bernstein's notions of 'strong' and 'weak' framing (1975) co-exist here: there are national scale scaffolds, but there is also room for choice at local level. She also speaks about how decisions about conventions and modes of operation are marshalled at department level in a collegiate way – 'every single member of the department is having a say in how that scheme looks', and a 'curriculum map.. the learning journey' is shared with students and parents. Thus she implies that a kind of disciplinary coherence is achieved at local level with influence from national level bodies. Elsa indicates a security to be found in clearly demarcated boundaries - 'I like the restraints [of the national curriculum]' - and the freedom to be found within those boundaries: 'we still get to choose from a wide range.. poetry, prose, drama..pre-1914, post 1914'.

The convention of studying canonical texts is seen as important: Elsa is unequivocal that 'we should 100% still be studying people like Shakespeare' and emphasised her enjoyment of Dickens: 'one of the things I'm most passionate about teaching now is A Christmas Carol.' She communicates a strong sense of there being a core of accepted writers when she referred to 'the traditional mainstream': 'my A level teaching is maybe a little bit more traditional mainstream with things like Duffy and Larkin'. However, she also makes repeated mention of this being a time when canonical boundaries are subject to new interrogation and revision, with teachers starting to question syllabus decisions and redress perceived imbalances locally: 'once you start looking at.. specifications for the exam boards the people that you get to choose from are very much white and stale.. I think we need to be going and looking for more variety.. we need diversity in the curriculum.' Whilst canonical contestation may be an established feature of literary study in Higher Education, it has not generally been a formalised feature of school study, but Elsa repeatedly raises questions about centralised text choice and shows that teachers are making conscious values-based decisions as a counterpoint: 'we decided we wanted to replace [Of Mice and Men] with something that addressed race but in a more positive and contemporary way'. The attention to positionality and lens shaping which sits at the heart of literary theory, and the attention to redressing power imbalance which sits at the heart of Critical Pedagogy are both represented here.

At this point, Elsa does not position students as stakeholders or contributors to disciplinary framing: there is a sense that they may experience the map as tourists rather than as co-creative explorers. Her Stage 2 and 3 responses include some thought about the tension between honouring individual readings and creating a sense of collective cohesion in the classroom, the drawing of students into an 'interpretative community' (Fish, 1980, 2004). In Stage 1 she makes reference to problems

posed by scale within teaching: 'the fact is, I teach a lot of students each week, each year, a lot, I know that I won't reach all of them, be able to cater for all of them..'. This exposes an under-theorised element of school literary study: the potential conflict between teacherly ambition to encourage personal growth through valuing individual experiences (Dixon 1967, Cox 1991), build a classroom community of shared meanings from the experiences and social identities (in a constructivist tradition), and induct students into formal essay writing by steering them into particular sanctioned lanes of response. The imperative to produce curriculum maps, and externally imposed 'restraints' may preclude the reservation of open space for student input and mutual learning. The importance of dialogic engagement as advocated by Freire (see Shor and Freire, 1987) is thus likely to take place in fleeting moments rather than as a dimension of literary study formally codified in maps and planning documents.

Yet there are other moments in Elsa's Stage 1 responses which suggest that she does conceptualise disciplinary work on literature in school as more than just 'knowledge transmitting': it is also about helping students to have the tools to be 'knowledge seeking and knowledge producing'. The literature about the relative definitions of subject and discipline often puts school students at one remove from 'disciplinary practitioners'; for example, Winch states that 'to be part of a discipline is to be, to a certain extent, a practitioner of that discipline—that is, engaged in the disciplinary practices of acquiring, managing and evaluating the knowledge that is the focus of that discipline's activities' but then goes on to claim that 'subjects, particularly school subjects, are best seen as activities that promote acquaintance and even engagement with their associated disciplines without necessarily leading to the creation of practitioners of those disciplines' (Winch, 2023, p.151). Elsa collapses the need for that distinction, in seeing literary understanding and interpretation as being skills with multiple sites of application, within and outside of the classroom. To be a practitioner of literary study is not just to be a creator of formal critical analysis needing validation from disciplinary experts: it is to have confidence in particular ways of reading and thinking and relating one's position to literature. This could be a first example of Giroux's 'border pedagogy' in that she sees there is space to facilitate knowledge production as well as transfer.

Elsa articulates a conscious decision by her department to steer away from reader response as a mode of operation: 'we're very much more focused on the writer's intention rather than the reader response because you're just trying to avoid those clichéd comments 'oh the reader feels sorry for'.' Concentration on the writer is seen as a route to higher order responses: 'if you think about what the writer's intention was then maybe you get a slightly more sophisticated consideration of what the response is'. This focus on the writer might be practical as much as disciplinary: Elsa notes

that ‘when it comes to the reader, it’s so varied, isn’t it? Every reader is different’, but school discourses of progression and the strong focus on assessment criteria create a need for teachers to create a coherent path through learning, for themselves and their students, with limited time in which to explore or dignify multiplied responses – Key Stage 4 requirements are likely to have impacted indirectly on Key Stage 3 curriculum design. For example, the top band of the AQA GCSE Literature mark scheme a whole Assessment Objective is dedicated to ‘the writer’ (AO2) with no mention of ‘the reader’ – and whilst there is a small nod to the possibility of alternative readings, it is very small: ‘convincing exploration of one or more ideas/perspectives/contextual factors/interpretations’ (AQA, 2014, 16). Students have just 50 minutes to construct a response on their modern prose or drama text and are thus more likely to pursue ‘one’ rather than ‘more’ reader ideas.

Elsa is highly conscious of these norms of response – in the form, perhaps, of essay expectations – with ‘sophisticated consideration’ likely shaped by assessment objectives, examiner reports, standardising scripts, department discussion and her own training over time in literary response. She may be conscious of the way her classroom may have to become a site of the winnowing and funnelling of individual ideas as students are helped to fulfil those norms. It’s a challenge of time and logistics and marshalling – Elsa knows that reader responses will be ‘varied’ and all readers are ‘different’ but in inducting students into the discipline of literary study, she is tasked with guiding her classes to the creation and acceptance of a formal, generalised reader-figure or super addressee for essay and assessment purposes. McCormick warns against the creation of a claustrophobic environment - ‘The classroom [should] become a scene of expansion of ideas rather than repression of ideas’ (1985, p.849) but Elsa also grapples with a kind of interpretive agoraphobia too, pointing out that: ‘the reader is a much bigger, wider scope than the author. It’s going to vary a lot and so maybe that’s why we focus more on author than reader’.

Elsa is clear that awareness of the writer is a significant element of literary study. Indeed, all four participants’ responses indicate that just as disciplinary debates about ‘the reader’ have not assertively impinged on classroom practice, rebuttals of writerly ‘intention’ have not uprooted ‘the writer’ from their strong foothold in school literary study. Wimsatt and Beardsley’s denunciation of the ‘intentional fallacy’, Barthes’ ‘death of the author’ and Freudian, Marxist and Foucauldian attention to ‘transindividual forces’ (Neidorf, 2018, p.271) have had little impact on reading and assessment practices in secondary classrooms. Throughout her responses, Elsa is anxious to keep the writer in the picture as the reading experience is discussed, and she is comfortable with the notion of authorial intention. She chooses to emphasise that Zephaniah had a definite motive and

a definite controlling hand: 'is it a political text? How is Zephaniah using fiction to convey sort of political messages about the real world? 'He has a clear message'. She does not speak of 'the writer' as a teacher-construct in this interview, for example via a consciousness of the process of choosing which detail about him to include or exclude; she communicates a sense that the writer is an unproblematic 'whole'.

In the Stage 3 interview, after the teaching of the scheme, Elsa indicates that she has started to think in more depth about the conventions she is using to frame 'the reader' during the teaching of the scheme:

we're working hard on getting good 'effect' comment yet they will still go down the route of 'the reader feels this...'.. now I did really try to get Year 8 to think.. I asked for 'Zephaniah wants the reader to feel' or 'Zephaniah is encouraging this response' rather than just stating one feeling because it's quite common for students to say 'Well, I don't feel anything'.. I don't want them to be forced into something that is totally false-feeling for them.. keeping the focus on the writer avoids a false summary.

This small adjustment away from a sentence stem that assumed a generic reader could indicate a greater sensitivity to the potential of individual difference. Elsa has not chosen to pursue that difference but is specific that this time in her teaching of the novel, 'in this Key Stage, I generally do lead with writer over reader. I did this time, writer at the centre, Zephaniah at the centre.' 'False summary' hints at a consciousness of the way that standard sentence stems or essay structures might work to erase diverse responses – or indeed a lack of response - to texts within the school discipline. Research offers mixed conclusions about the effect of deploying generic response patterns: for example in conducting a controlled experiment to test her hypothesis of the limiting effect of the ubiquitous 'Point- Evidence – Explanation P.E.E.' paragraph structure, Enstone found it to provide 'a false sense of security' because of the 'ease of structure, the logic, the predictability of the planned thinking' (Enstone, 2020, 35); Gibbons determined that 'structures can be overused with a consequential marginalisation of choice, voice and personal response' (Gibbons, 2019, p.36); McKnight argues that 'formulaic approaches to teaching writing can both support and harm students' capacity to express themselves' (2021, p.37). Elsa's awareness of the possibility of 'false summary' here might show that she is becoming more conscious of the exclusive potential of classroom norms, and keeps the focus on the writer as a pragmatic response within the constraints of the scheme.

4.1.2 Elsa's conceptions of disciplinary power, authority and influence and their distribution

Elsa's references to values-based text updates suggest that the teachers in her department see themselves as qualified and entitled to counteract syllabus deficits, and as on a path to challenge disciplinary constructions that are perceived to be weak. If there is awareness here that literature can 'perpetuate the status quo, the dominant culture and legitimate certain ideologies, traditions, assumptions and power relations' (Mulcahy, 2007), the department feel able to make conscious choices to redress imbalance.

In terms of the power students could hold as stakeholders, Elsa does not mention them as direct contributors to disciplinary framing. However, her students do indirectly influence her text choices: she speaks repeatedly about wanting to 'engage' her students, and about how her assumptions about students' cultural backgrounds or home experiences do have impact on her planning - for example, 'we did things like the Kite Runner and kind of seeing it as a text because that was the culture they were familiar with, like Islam and the issues in Afghanistan'. She acknowledges that extra-institutional knowledge can be usefully connected to knowledge learned or discussed in the classroom, and aligns with a branch of Critical Pedagogy in which advocates such as Morrell (2007) promote teacher acts of ethnography to ensure that the curriculum resonates with its students. Her concern with engagement also takes the form of anticipating or noting enjoyment: 'I went off reading lots and lots of texts and trying to find something that was important and that would be engaging for students', 'we came up with Refugee Boy.. the students really enjoyed it'.

It is interesting that Elsa does not speak about letting students know about their influence upon her curriculum design, and gives no indication that students are or should be afforded the direct power of choice about texts or reading directions. Instead, she quietly makes conscious choices on behalf of students she considers to be marginalised, in order to help them feel confident in their identities:

I've got students from the LGBTQ community, I know that I need to get some content in relating to gender and sexuality because it's going to boost them.. I want to boost these students they're thinking, yeah, there are texts out there that are about people like me.. there are so many students that want to feel they're equal and they're not different because of something about them.

In tandem, she communicates a sense that some students need to be challenged or unsettled: 'I've got potentially one or two students in the class that are going to be quite anti [LGBTQ]'; 'you're using literacy and literature to get them to reflect on stuff, challenging things and questioning things and thinking about the bigger picture'. She positions the role of the English teacher here as a

mitigator of prejudice through text choice and discussion; particular texts and readings rather than ways of reading are provided to promote a kind of liberal enculturation. Through literary study, Elsa provides a space in which students can think about their positions and have those positions tested, but it is not a value-free space, as she is engaged in subtly nudging them towards acceptance and validation of particular groups.

Thus in some senses, Elsa's responses indicate a sensitivity to power distribution within the school version of the discipline. She characterises students as directly influential in the new readings they can produce in class and indirectly influential in terms of her curriculum choices, but she also characterises them as lacking power or insight – a lack that she feels she can address via her text choices to validate particular marginalised groups. This aligns with Freire's call to 'engage students in reflection upon their own ideological investments' (1970, p.8) and for teachers to contextualise their pedagogy. However, any comment relating to power is only loosely linked to direct, practical classroom practice and not to explication of power relations with students: her drive to end social ostracism of particular students is couched in terms of general social effect rather than enhanced consciousness of choices and modes of operation within a disciplinary arena – ultimately, it is extra-textual rather than rooted in an attention to disciplinary lenses and codes.

The authority to determine meaning for formal response is something that is to be meted out gradually in Elsa's conception of school literary study. When asked about 'interpretation' in the Stage 2 discussion, Elsa was clear that 'it's probably more of a GCSE thing.. at a higher level at GCSE, that's probably where we concentrate on it more'. In alignment with her concern about managing multiple or multiplying responses to literature - 'the reader is very varied and will change over time' – she seems to rate pursuit of a unified or coherent reader response as an important step in learning to analyse texts; the existence of multiple possible interpretations (and therefore multiple possible reading positions) is problematic; it is reserved for older students.

This is an interesting example of how debates amongst literary theorists or critical pedagogues have had little direct purchase on institutional norms: the literature contains discussions about the place of 'transactional reader response' (from Rosenblatt 1938, 1978) in school literary analysis but these discussions rarely acknowledge the teacher's logistical and assessment constraints. Lewis (2000, p.258) for example talks about reading as a 'social act' with the student 'peer dynamic' creating an exciting disequilibrium that 'poses a challenge to the concept of the classroom as a unified learning community so often idealised in educational literature'. Yet Elsa would prefer to aim for a 'unified learning community' as she does not operate in an open-ended space: she is not side-lining student response as invalid but rather making a focused choice that can help her class feel they are moving

forward together. This points to delicate tensions in the English teacher's role: they must simultaneously be 'interlocutor, gatekeeper, assessor' (Knights, 2017, p.55) and social unifier.

Elsa does talk of work with Year 10 to 'get them to consider interpretations about Gerald's character [in *An Inspector Calls*].. and sort of getting them to consider that there is maybe more than one way of looking at his character' but this is with the caveat that this is not about 'big theoretical interpretations like looking at something from a Marxist perspective.. I think that's very much an A level sort of idea'. We can see Elsa conceiving of a significant disjunct between the asking of tentative questions about character and the imposition of a political lens which she holds at arms' length as the 'theory' of a remote community.

4.1.3 Elsa's thoughts on how students are and might be inducted into critical identities and dispositions

Elsa initially refers to students' need to develop skills of criticality in relation to media texts and 'the real world' rather than explicitly in relation to literary texts:

it's just about making students confident readers so that they can go out and understand the world around them.. the fact that the things they read aren't always reliable.... When you leave school you might not necessarily enjoy sitting and reading a book, but you are going to see news headlines and to not always believe everything you see.. we sort of had to say that they should know that they are trying to sell headlines..

This model of the student is vulnerable to manipulation, and needs to be taught to be on their guard for unscrupulous and deceptive textual practice; Elsa seeks to help them to stand back from texts and make a judgement. Literary study is connected in general terms to criticality about their world: she feels herself to be 'using literature to get them to reflect on stuff, challenging things and questioning things and thinking about the bigger picture.' Thus here, as with her comment on her own desire to challenge prejudice, the notion of criticality does not relate back directly to the codes and conventions of the discipline itself.

Elsa does speak of her own induction into a more critical disposition as a teacher in this interview. She herself had been indirectly limited by a lack of discourse around disciplinary decisions as a new teacher in her first school: 'ten years ago I had no idea why I was doing what I was doing, it just 'this is what the curriculum map says, this is what you teach'. I certainly think there's a lot more awareness now.' Whilst in this comment the gap in professional discussion is not linked to specific individuals, it does imply a culture at that time where there was no expectation of choice or input

for the new teacher. In contrast, Elsa expresses pride that there is now a unity in her current department, that decision making is visible and shared: ‘every single member of the department could tell you why we do that.. the entire department’s involved.’ Whilst Elsa does not turn to her students in these comments, a critical pedagogy lens would suggest this movement to a more devolved responsibility offers potential to be utilised as a model for disciplinary reshaping at classroom level. Elsa implies that teachers can and should be trusted as stakeholders and that she has benefited from the move to shared curriculum framing. She also offers an example of her own critical disposition in her concern about British nationality being a selection criteria for GCSE Literature texts: ‘I totally understand why *Of Mice and Men* was taken off for race issues but not necessarily the nationality thing because you are then saying that only British literature is important...’ She refers here to the removal of American texts from the GCSE Literature syllabi by Education Secretary Michael Gove in 2014 as he expressed a dislike of the novella; arguments about Steinbeck’s representation of race have since come from other sources (such as anti-racist educator Marsha Garrett’s open letter to teachers in 2021). She is confident to criticise exam board ‘box ticking’ – she judges the inclusion of one poem by a black writer in the AQA GCSE Literature Anthology to be a token gesture – ‘it’s a great poem but you sort of get the sense that maybe he is in there for diversity.. the poem does not seem to work as well with the others.’ Agard’s poem *Checking Out Me History* offers contrast to the poems around it on a number of fronts – in its phonetic spelling, in its use of Creole dialect, in its lack of punctuation; whilst the Penguin/Runnymede Trust ‘Lit in Colour’ research found that ‘poetry is the most common way for secondary students to encounter a Black Asian or other minority ethnic author’ and that ‘single poems are the easiest texts to insert into the curriculum’ (Elliott et al, 2021, p.6), that singularity in the AQA Anthology leaves Elsa feeling difference is being highlighted in an unhelpful way. This again suggests potential for the sharing of critical discussion of disciplinary framings at classroom level, and increased teacher motivation to remodel, or advocate for the remodelling of a key exam collection.

In the Stage 2 discussions, Elsa speaks of ‘looking at extracts and how language is used within the text’ and ‘asking questions about what’s the intent behind that?’ But in further comments, she indicates that there is a particular direction that she plans to steer students towards: ‘starting to think about it from his point of view... his motive is to create this sense of injustice about the plight of refugees.. he has a clear message and therefore, well, why did he choose to present his characters in this way?’ We can see here that the classroom work is not actually about reaching a critical judgement about meaning but to find detail to support an argument already determined by Elsa. The learning is not about determining a critical position but about becoming adept at

explicating the writer's choices within a pre-set frame of response. In her reference to *An Inspector Calls* in Year 10, Elsa does indicate that she pushes students to begin to make choices: 'to what extent do you agree that .. in *An Inspector Calls* that Gerald isn't helping Eva, that he is only doing it out of his own motivation and selfish motivations? So getting them consider interpretations about Gerald's character – or is he sort of quite selfish in his own ways?' There are 2 possible directions here, and students must take up a position, learning what Knights calls a kind of 'disciplined subjectivity' (2017, p.91). Differing critical positions are shown to be possible, but in a carefully marshalled way. Elsa does not think younger students are ready for this: 'where you read something, and it's quite ambiguous.. you say 'Let's consider if it is there more than one way of looking at it'. But I don't think it's a routine thing that we necessarily do at Key Stage 3.'

As the literature indicates about teaching literary theory, the question of entry points into interpretation and criticism is a complex one. Applebee (1997, p.36) argues that 'the process of schooling must be a process of actually entering into particular traditions of knowing and doing' and that 'students must discuss literature they have read, not simply be taught about its characteristics'; Elsa's invitation for Year 10 students to take up one of her 2 proffered positions on Gerald could be said to be an important and necessary moment of apprenticeship into the acceptable kinds of response in the school discipline of literary study, a moment where she 'structures the curricular domain so that students can actively enter the discourse' (Applebee 1997, p.57). It could simultaneously be seen as a closing down of avenues of response, as the options are pre-formed rather than arising from class dialogue. Freire himself does not fully resolve this paradox, on the one hand arguing that 'practice cannot be non-directive [as] education presupposes an objective to be reached' (Freire and Macedo, 1995, p.378), whilst also stating that teacher and student 'become jointly responsible for a process in which they all grow.. the teacher is himself taught in dialogue with the students' (Freire, 1970, p.80).

When asked directly about her students' consciousness of their reading positions in the Stage 3 interview, Elsa states that 'I would imagine a huge amount of students don't necessarily think about it so much' as 'it's not something they necessarily have.. those discussions about their theories or where they are reading from on a regular basis'. She is aware, then, that school literary study does not foreground positionality. She points out that individualised assertions can be found in student work – 'you get comments in year 11 that come through in an essay that are theirs'; it is notable that she identifies this as a year 11 practice rather than something likely to happen earlier on.

Elsa returns to the notion of the department developing their justifications for their teaching that she had discussed in the Stage 1 interview:

I don't know if it's things like OFSTED, preparation or just sort of the thinking behind the process as well but at the start of each term we now sit down and we have a document where we go through as the department, and discuss 'right. This is why we're doing this...we are teaching this because..'

She describes this process as 'a benefit' because 'we can verbalise what we're doing in our classrooms'. It speaks of a renewed consciousness of purpose and position, epistemological engagement of the kind which underpins literary theorising and might shake loose sedimented practices and assumptions about literary study and its modes of operation. Notably, she points out that other schools might not be in a position to pursue such a line: 'But then those schools that are maybe have all the priorities.. if they're 'requires improvement' or struggling in some ways, then maybe it's not necessarily something they're able to think about so much'. Other pressures in the school system might drive teachers into technical rationality, just as for some students, the learning of stock responses to texts may function as a pragmatic response to competing personal or educational demands and challenges.

4.2 Participant 2: Chloe

Chloe has been Head of English for a number of years in an 11-18 non-selective school of approximately 2,000 students. The school is situated in a large town in the North of England, and is part of a multi-academy trust. Chloe's Key Stage 3 scheme of learning centred on Charles Dickens' 1838 novel *Oliver Twist* and Philip Pullman's 1995 novel *Northern Lights*.

4.2.1 Chloe's acts of framing: how she articulates and perceives disciplinary codes, conventions, rules and modes of operation

During Stage 1, as she spoke about her own induction into the discipline of literary study, Chloe shows she is open to the pursue a 'border pedagogy' in that she sees weak disciplinary classification as a positive aspect of the subject rather than a negative: the flexible boundaries of literary study were intellectually stimulating- 'I thought for a long time about whether my heart was History or whether it was English because I really enjoyed the crossover'. The mobile applicability of the skills she teaches her students is pitched as an asset: 'I can look and transfer that ability that I'm being taught in Literature to be able to do that in different areas.' In particular she mentions 'decoding' which she links to 'understanding the overriding metaphor' and 'the appreciation of the craft of language'. She notes that this transferability was not something emphasised in her own schooling: she 'started to talk about semiotics' only at undergraduate level and connect it to something she was already doing all the time: 'it just made absolute sense to that that that was how you would view the world, that you would decode the semiotic symbols all around us every single day'.

In terms of disciplinary shaping, the National Curriculum is referred to as a support not a hindrance: 'when we looked at the National Curriculum, we said, well it's not massively out and we don't feel it's massively wrong here and actually we decided that the fundamentals of the National Curriculum were helpful and it gave us the beginnings of the scaffold'. She indicates that this policy document is used here as a model for an articulation of curriculum, whilst also stating that the ultimate right of the teacher/department to judge its fit and validity remains. Like Elsa, there is a sense of productive interplay between external prescriptions and teacher choice. Advocates of Critical Pedagogy often instruct teachers to push back against governmental dictates - Kincheloe for example argues that 'critical teachers.. refuse to accept standardised, externally developed, scripted curricula that appeal to the lowest common denominator of teacher and student ability' (Kincheloe, 2008, p.11) – but Chloe is able to push off from rather than pushing back against the national curriculum: alongside its framings, a sense of creative input is maintained through teacher selection of enduring themes: 'when we look at poetry, we look at it thematically and we look at it over time.....'; 'we look at justice, we look at prejudice, we look at quality, we look at rule of law and morality and we really establish those concepts before we then move forward, and we just keep revisiting those in different forms.'

Chloe also generates disciplinary coherence by linking writers across time: she places Dickens and Pullman on the same line by virtue of common literary features - 'their concepts of social justice... fabulous characterisation.. the grotesque'. Interestingly, the chronological line is used with students to highlight difference or development as well as continuity across time periods and texts: 'how was Pullman inspired by Dickens? But what does he do differently or why does he do it differently now? Let's have a look at female characterisation'. This kind of traversing movement is also indicated in relation to historical context and social issues. Chloe points to her plan to teach 'kind of [the] culture and context of Victorian London' in relation to her Dickens scheme of learning, to grow her students' knowledge of Dickens' time period and its 'changing social dynamics', but does not want to make this teaching like a museum visit revering the past: she mentions specifically 'the idea of the poor houses.. and what life was like' but in close conjunction with contemporary parallels and as a stimulus to evaluate current social issues – 'how far have we come? Then they will think about throwaway fashion.. sweatshops of the modern age.. what their attitude to that is'. Literary study at Key Stage 3 thus comes across as a stimulating exploration of ideas where students are helped by teachers to build bridges within, across and beyond central texts, in line with Freire (1970) and Ira Shor's (1992) call for teaching around 'generative themes' which 'arise at the point where the personal lives of students intersect with the larger society and globalised world' (Kincheloe 2008, p.12). Indeed, in this specific example, Chloe is helping students to see their own

possible contribution to inequality through their identity as consumers: power is not just monolithic and the preserve of faceless bureaucrats but multi-stranded and implicated in the choices all of us make. Where the Critical Pedagogue teacher might put injustices enacted upon the student at the centre, Chloe goes a step further in seeking to stimulate students to 'read' their own actions (rather than their reading positions), alerting them to a potential power imbalance in society to which they contribute. This suggests an extension to the tenets of Critical Pedagogy: the classroom can be a site of challenge to students as well as to the discipline.

More conventionally, Chloe does plan to set up Dickens as a significant literary icon – 'why is Dickens so popular, why is he so famous?': it appears that the writer, his text and its canonical status will be presented as unproblematically valuable and knowable, an approach that could be defined as historical rather than historicist (Barry, 1995, p.175). Literary study here will help students to get to know a key figure commonly valued within the discipline – but not just through atomistic study of a singular work: 'we need to put within that scheme a central Dickens text as a kind of spine text with then extra reading.. but then we'll look at other grotesque characters of the children from different works'.

Chloe seemed less anxious than Elsa about how to navigate the disciplinary concept of 'the reader'. Whilst she does state explicitly that her department 'don't talk about reader positioning as much', she is positive about the possibility of convergence between student responses, and between student and teacher responses: 'in the Dickens scheme, when we look at the creation of the grotesque character, we will look at the reader's response to the description because hopefully there's a shared sense of, kind of, you know, repulsion and disgust and all those sorts of things.' The mention of 'a shared sense' is interesting: she may be drawing on previous experience of students' reactions to particular characters, and/or her own reaction, and/or a perception of likely or desired reaction that has come from disciplinary training. 'The reader' does seem to stand independently in her conceptualisation – a kind of ideal or model reader who represents herself and her students.

Like Elsa, she does also track back to 'the writer' as a stabilising pivot for talking about the text: 'we don't talk about reader positioning as much...if you're going to talk about the impact on the reader, it's gotta be followed by the justification, that explanation that has to come from the student, based on what the author's intention was'. Statements about writerly intention, then, are encouraged, and students are actively encouraged to feel a closeness to the (conceived) writer: 'we read some of the letters that he wrote so that we get a sense of who he was and his voice'. Similar encouragements appear in other participants' responses - Chanda encourages her students to visualise Shakespeare beside them: 'where is he pushing you? Where is he directing your

attention?'; Manny considers descriptions in the novel to be an invitation into an intimate shared space: 'Westall is really wanting you to experience the ghostly horror of the aftermath, to know it as he knew it, he wants to take you with him into the experience'. These routes into literary study collapse a sense of distance between the student-reader and 'the writer'. In such moments, the power dynamic is complicated: here, the teacher takes the writer off a pedestal and conjures them as a player in the room standing next to the students, but at the same time student statements about authorial intention may only fall within tacit disciplinary parameters. As with reader-response, wider disciplinary theoretical debates about authorial intention have not had significant influence on school-subject formation in its compulsory phases. A recent blog post by Andy Atherton shows a sleight of hand may be needed by those who engage with those debates or are questioned by students sceptical of teacherly pronouncements:

Encourage students to think about authorial intent *not* in terms of what they might have meant, but what the text does. For example: Shakespeare... — challenges — warns — dismantles.. We might even continue using the author's name (such as 'Priestley dismantles'), but even here the focus is still fixed on what the text does.. (Atherton, 2021, para. 4)

Writing specifically to advise teachers, Atherton indicates there might be a need to sidestep the problematic absent author even whilst using their name: 'The debate stops being about what the author wanted to show and instead becomes more about the powerful impact a text can have'.

Chloe points to value of the concept of 'the writer' as a disciplinary anchor: knowledge of biographical facts and secondary sources pertaining to writers represents substantive content which contributes to a shared sense of the identity of the discipline, and can shore up teachers' sense of confidence, authority and expertise in the field. 'Knowledge' about 'the writer' can be researched, putting the teacher back amongst an unseen disciplinary community; it can then be anthologised and organised; it can become a commodity with an impression of volume and weight. It can also offer the Head of Department one means of managerial control: Chloe reaches for 'a knowledge base for the teacher' as a response to 'quite a turnover of staff in the last two years'. She describes how 'in the Dickens scheme.. there's actually, you know, there's 'this is what we should be teaching the kids about him. This is what you need to know about him. This is what you need to know about his works.'" She also directs new or temporary staff towards the wider disciplinary community: 'And we put a section in that's got links to loads of research websites about him..' Her 'knowledge organisers' are thus both open – containing routes out to further information about writers – and closed: 'that knowledge organiser can be used for staff as well.. although it's really for the students, that's really, really critical for teachers because there's also the

knowledge they need to impart.’ This transmissive turn reminds us of the competing responsibilities of the teacher-manager: as well as being accountable to her own principles of literature teaching, Chloe is also accountable to her employing institution for organisational clarity, to her department team in terms of rationalising their work, and to the students with limited class time and exams looming. Disciplinary codes, conventions and modes of operation are subject to external influence requiring pragmatic response as well as personal or departmental disciplinary logics. Any proposal, then, for the advancement of teacher theorising must retain a sense of contextual present and the conditions for change as well as an idealised future.

In her Stage 3 interview, after teaching the Dickens-Pullman unit, Chloe revisits the idea of chronology as a means of creating disciplinary coherence, and is energised by the new route the department had taken through it:

I think the Dickens scheme itself did something that our teaching wasn’t doing before.. that’s what excited us about it, those literary connections, it encouraged us to think where does that fit with everything else that we’re doing, the things like we’ve now got timelines up in every classroom.. all texts that we teach are now attributed to one of those timelines..’

Such artefacts could work to shore up a canon, or to emphasise its constructed nature: any department curriculum taken as a whole is made up of anthologising choices, synoptic selections by teachers, and wider regulating bodies. The formal neatness of such curriculum maps and timelines might help teachers feel those choices are validated, and could help students feel confidence in locating texts in time and in relation to (some) other texts. They could make those choices more visible to stakeholders, and potentially facilitate comparison, sharing and critical review. But there is also the possibility that without explication to students, and without ongoing conscious work to retain the contingent sense of such organisational moves, the justification for choices can become submerged. There is a danger that the shaping of what counts as literary study is presented as objective, neutral and uncontested in these maps: the Critical Pedagogue might ask for, and the theorising teacher might want to offer some acknowledgement of their constructed, historically located and contingent nature. Giroux reminds us to continue to ‘pay attention to questions regarding who has control over the conditions for the production of knowledge’ in the ‘always unfinished project’ of education (Giroux 2011a, p.6). Thus Curriculum maps could remind students of their own permeable borders and foundations, with dotted lines and invitations to make additions.

In her Stage 3 interview, Chloe does indicate that she herself can cope with the unsettling of her own modes of operation. She is keen to speak of a visit to a nearby school that has taken place during the period of the teaching of the Dickens unit. The research prompt to monitor how she has taught 'the reader' has made her alert to detail in other teachers' practice. She recounts hearing teachers ask "So what is.. your view about society?" which she sees as 'almost like a Marxist lens, which obviously had been explained to them what that meant, you know from the Marxist perspective, like the female feminist lens..' This indicates the introduction of named positions associated more formally with literary theory in later phases, and the mediating role of the teacher in explaining meanings to facilitate access. Chloe is 'reinspired' by this, seeing how it could 'make us, as practitioners of our subject, more explicit about the lenses from which we can explore the text...' and stating that 'it sparked my thinking.'

She also speaks of having become more adventurous and vocal about helping students to shape their own sense of disciplinary authority:

it's appropriate to ask, where does this fit? And why do you know where does this fit? And how does it link to anything we've studied or you've read before? Show me some new links! Teach me some links! If you see a change, why do you think there's been this sea change in the topic?.. that's sort of a disciplinary approach.

Pattern identification/creation is a key skill in literary studies and a key dimension of increasing confidence, a kind of 'disciplinary code building' which indicates reading expertise, and Chloe starts to show she is encouraging students to take it over – it is not the teacher's exclusive preserve. The choosing of texts remains a directive move to support pattern finding, but Chloe's questions also indicate an openness to, and excitement about student identification of new routes and connections – exemplifying the kind of 'new space where knowledge can be produced' (Giroux 1992, p.223) that Giroux applauds – where knowledge production is not just for but by students, and the teacher can inhabit the place of learner.

4.2.2 Chloe's conceptions of disciplinary power, authority and influence and their distribution

Throughout her interviews, it is clear that Chloe pays attention to student experience. She frequently mentions student voice as a feature of department work: 'We do Macbeth, which gets rave pupil voice reviews'. It matters that they enjoy literary study and that they are heard. The canvassing of student opinion is only given broad brush strokes here, however, and Chloe's words suggest that it is done after the teaching of schemes or units, even whilst it is taken note of by staff.

More directly, Chloe does see the teacher as having a responsibility to share power by opening up spaces for student thinking: 'We look at the concept of the Gothic but we look at it through performance.. and the students get to act out, they get to script something themselves, like a missing scene'; 'we teach them *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and then we give them a scene they haven't looked at to try to build some of that independence and transferable skill across the literature that they haven't necessarily been taught how to respond to.' She has a concern about ensuring there is room for less immediately structured response to literature: the teachers should step back and the students should have moments where they can think of themselves as equally capable of interpretation. Indeed, she sees 'independent' responses as a strength of her students: 'we ask students to then apply their learning, their skill, their knowledge set to something they haven't been rehearsed in.. my school does really well on the unseen poem.'

Chloe responded to the direct question about how 'interpretation' might feature in her scheme by pointing to poetry rather than her Dickens text as the most likely arena for interpretive exploration: 'because it's you know, its very, its plot driven. There's a really clear narrative. There's.. generally a sense of shared interpretation of that text.' She seemed here to be thinking about the poem as a smaller, more cohesive unit of text which would allow for more speedy development of coherent argument construction around 'deep interpretation': 'it's more manageable isn't it?' Culler talks about interpretation 'ultimately involving playing the 'about' game: 'so what's this work really about?'" (Culler, 1997, p.64); the reading of a (shorter) poem allows for quicker entry into this game, a decisive pedagogy in which pattern finding and device effects can be related to a whole, an analysis created in miniature, at least in part as a rehearsal for the taking on of more complex and lengthy novels and plays. What might constitute an acceptable degree of guidance or explication for the teacher to offer is not clear from Chloe's response here but the pride she expresses in earlier comment about her students doing particularly well on the unseen poem element of the GCSE suggests she wants students to have a confidence in constructing their own interpretations without teacher intervention; she wants them to feel assured that they know how to play that part of the disciplinary 'game'. One purpose of school literary study then, is to learn how to utilise the kinds of language, concepts and structured response, and to present a reading that persuades the audience of its own integrity and authority. Its importance could be said to lie in the effect on the student's sense of identity: a successful student will feel they are gaining authority to operate in the arena of literary study in a way that is sanctioned and approved by those already there (as well as gaining a good grade). But there are losses too in these inductive processes. The possible uses of these skills outside of the formal education are neglected; positions of reading are largely left unexamined; the idea of a student reading is presented unproblematically without an unpicking of

why it might exist or how it might have been brought into being, that is, a focus on the social, historical and linguistic conditions of the moment and its participants. To borrow a simile from Joe Kincheloe, purpose, positions and conditions become like tracks in the snow (2008, p.176); a point of authority is reached but the sense of the route to it through the wider landscape is ultimately dissolved.

In contrast, Chloe also indicates that she herself is not always confident about teacherly authority in unbounded circumstances, in relation to shaping the curriculum. She relays a sense of anxiety about how her English department had felt nervous about acting autonomously when revising their curriculum:

In terms of having a little bit more of a free range to review our curriculum 3 or so years ago, and reading Mary Myatt and just kind of hearing the voice of somebody that was: look, if you don't love what you're teaching the kids aren't gonna love what you teach... it was almost like a little bit relieving, that was a bit like: right, can we now go back to that design of a curriculum that we feel is appropriate?

Myatt is an education advisor, writer and speaker and ex-local authority advisor and inspector who writes about curriculum; Chloe finds validation and 'relief' in the way Myatt has foregrounded teacher enjoyment as important, as if dominant discourses had relegated the teacher themselves out of sight. She puts a spotlight on the ways teachers themselves can feel subjugated: critical pedagogy should ensure the teacher herself is not excluded in recommendations for praxis. Kincheloe argues that 'if teachers don't belong at the conference table of knowledge production in education, then the table deserves to be dismantled' (2004, p.54) but Chloe reminds us that even highly experienced teachers may not always feel disciplinary confidence; this, perhaps, is one consequence of the technicist drift where authors are missing from national curriculum documents, and exam syllabi and centralised planning offer a ready panacea to complex workload challenges while quietly erasing teacher input. Any project to increase epistemic engagement and the confidence to theorise/teach theorising about literary practice will need to help teachers feel secure in situating themselves in the history of both their subject and the history of the teaching of their subject: teachers who feel doubt about the strength of their own disciplinary foundations are less likely to be able to authentically teach their students to take up empowered positions. This echoes Elbaz' concern that teachers are not encouraged to see the value of their own readings or to envisage themselves as 'originators of knowledge' (1981, p.45) and Bulfin and Mathews' 2003 account of a lack of discursive space in which teachers can work on the rules of knowledge validation (Ellis, 2009).

In addition, Chloe indicates that she's had 'quite a turnover of staff in the last two year for all sorts of different reasons' and that this might have led to the deployment of some staff members with less disciplinary confidence and interpretative skill: 'in the course of conversations and in lesson visits and things like that, I was seeing those gaps, as a bit like you've not got into the heart of this literary text.. You're going through the motions of teaching it..' The literature about knowledge in English does occasionally touch on the issue of teacher knowledge at the point of planning or delivery: Elliott raises the spectre of teacher insecurity - 'we have a responsibility to model a lack of fear of not understanding' (Elliott, 2021, p.44); Morgan notes that 'teachers in general expect to be certain, and confident' and that 'to lack such authority in the adequacy of our knowledge can therefore be daunting' (Morgan, 1997, p.102). Chloe's answers to other questions indicates that provision of knowledge organisers to staff are one tactic she uses to help teachers get over 'gaps'; a lack of time precludes opportunity for communal department work on exploring the range of interpretations that might be evoked or elicited in the teaching of a text, far less space for teachers to work on 'defining their roles as engaged, public intellectuals' (Giroux, 1990, p.368) or the modelling of trying out differing reading positions to their students. A fair charge to be levelled at Giroux's writings in the field of Critical Pedagogy (see Sadovnik 1989, Demetrian 2001, Rochester 2003) is his tendency to assume teachers are operating in the kind of secure and stable conditions in which critical formulations can be nourished; Chloe reminds us that wider systemic educational crises can extinguish the ideals and force the hand of the department head.

Like Elsa, she is also able and confident to offer more direct critique of external prescriptions when it comes to text choices: 'in terms of some of the [exam board Key Stage 4] poetry, I'm like pfft I'm not that impressed. I don't think it does what our poetry lower down the school does, it almost halts the learning and appreciation of poetry and literature.' She refers here to the AQA GCSE Literature, where poetry is delivered to teachers via a themed Anthology, and describes Key Stage 4 in its totality as 'clipped, very stunted and deliberate' because of 'the legacy of Gove'. She is assured in seeing the teacher as the locus of authority for poetry, and that her department are able to justify choices is an important facet of her work as Head of Department: 'So very much I've tried to steer CPL (Continued Professional Learning) around 'do we know why we're doing it? Do we know why it's this text?' This is the teacher as expert, the department as locus for building disciplinary but Chloe also indicates that a teacher mandate to carefully curate a Key Stage 3 curriculum is undercut by an expectation of aggressive exam focus at Key Stage 4: 'the culture that we have in schools at the moment.. We have this ironic 'let's look at Key Stage Three, let's make it full of our loving intent for our subject specialism' but then when you get to Key Stage Four, hammer them and make sure that they really, really passed their exams.'

In the Stage 3 interview, Chloe wanted to talk about her colleagues as a group experiencing change in terms of self-assertion, as if in their professional negotiations, her department were gaining confidence in pushing boundaries. After an inspection criticism about not teaching the whole Dickens text, she described the department as initially cowed – ‘we sort of kicked ourselves around a lot about that and decided we would make changes..’ but then resistant and self-validating: ‘we were thinking we don’t want to do a full text because the intent of that scheme is then completely lost.. we decided we’d go with what we knew we could do well.’ External prescriptions are not always viewed with suspicion, however: she cites OFSTED’s ‘Wasted Years’ Report (2016) as a positive catalyst to shake up practice and teacher confidence in validating their own decisions:

that really triggered the thought that we should be freed up from the constraints of ‘so we’re teaching to this..’ In a bit of an illuminated moment, we’ve been able hopefully as a profession and in this subject area to start saying.. we’re enabling ourselves to do that.

However, she also expressed a concern that younger teachers might not be able to think flexibly about a scheme of learning and offer extended, more individualised ‘appreciation’: ‘these new ECTs that kind of fly in and they are just teaching the letter of the law and they’re just doing exactly as they are told to do.. do they feel freed up enough?’ She characterised herself as able to deviate from or enlarge upon the scheme fluidly and responsively: ‘do they feel confident? I do because I’ve been doing this a long time and I go off piste..’ Without further expansion of the point, it is hard to know what she perceives to be the causes of this compliant or narrowed approach or disposition, but a later comment on experience and sustained exposure reinforces the point that experienced teachers are likely to treat the curriculum differently:

They introduced the new GCSE specification in what, 2016? So we’re kind of 6, 7 years into it, aren’t we? So we know the spec, we understand it, we own it, we’re less fearful of it.

And therefore perhaps we are more confident in taking ownership of what we do at KS3..

One solution that she offers is for the whole department to keep putting themselves in the same position as their students: ‘my team have been really positive in acknowledging that we actually need to spend more of our CPL time on our own interpretations.. on being literary critics ourselves..’ This is generative rather than replicatory practice, tacitly recognising that in literary study there is no summit or boundary edge to knowledge and skill: teachers, on a par with their students, need to keep working on producing readings.

This excitement about the generative potential of the classroom is also there in her later comment about interpretation and teacher responsibility to make different approaches visible, viable and accessible:

If we want to push students to be at that higher.. at that top band, you know, we want them to be thinking more critically about these literary texts, we have to give them the approaches, and share what those approaches are with the students.. they're then potentially thinking, thinking a bit more independently about it and therefore coming up with slightly more nuanced interpretations.

She wanted to direct students away from an expectation of teacher authorisation that she had encountered: 'you can see the frustration in some students.. oh but I want to get it right. I want you to tell me that that's the right interpretation. I want that to be sort of compartmentalised and ticked off', led by assessment and attainment requirements – 'that poem was about that and that's all I need to say and I'll be fine..'. We can see her striving to promote and establish a more questioning, risk-taking disposition: 'here are your tools to be a literary critic.. these are the ways in which to perhaps look at that and interpret it yourself..' She described her 'vision intention' as being to help students to 'be able to engage with the literature of the modern world, but also critique it.'

4.2.3 Chloe's thoughts on how students are and might be inducted into critical identities and dispositions

Chloe recalls how her own experience of induction into critical confidence at school happened in A level lessons which were 'very organic': 'we'd all get to talk.. we'd all get a say' and against a background of a home culture where speaking up and articulating a position was naturalised: 'I came from a family that debated literature and debated current affairs'. For her own students, recognising that her own upbringing may have been unusual, she speaks about pedagogical design in Stage 1 and Stage 2 interviews to provide different bridges into critical confidence. She hopes to provide induction into literary studentship through cumulative rehearsal of entering debates directed by the teacher – 'Year 9 have.. adult ability because by then we've looked at so many texts and asked so many questions' – and revisiting concepts and themes in a spiral pattern - 'prejudice, justice, rule of law.. in different forms and the challenge then steps up'. Literature is not set apart from the non-literary, but actively linked to it: themes, issues and student positions are explored in non-fiction (language) lessons prior to the study of a literary text so that students can feel they are already in a familiar place: 'you've all just had your opinions about this... you talked about that and you've written this and now we're actually gonna look at Shakespeare text which was dealing with all of that 400 plus years ago.'

As she plans her Dickens unit, she reviews past practice and identifies that a sustained close-focus approach to text may have actually been inhibiting strong critical responses:

when do we ask students to really take a step back after reading something and understand what's the big message?... you often break up your reading with lots of activities [then] you ask them to write something about it which demonstrates their understanding.. then you sort of tie that off and say thank you very much.. we've not actually asked some of the big interpretive questions.

She draws on comment from GCSE markers to confirm her critique: 'a lot of markers this year were saying.. it's the argument, the thesis behind what they're saying is lost.' This feedback suggests that it's important to encourage students to choose and occupy a position and to see if they can find a pattern of detail to support it, rather than a narrow focus of energy on getting them to rehearse pre-formed arguments. This kind of 'thesis work' could be seen as a facet of theorising – students will need to understand they can and should actively take up a position about matters occurring within the text before they can be helped to see that all readings are generated from positions which are themselves constructs reflective of identities, priorities and ideologies.

Chloe does emphasise that critical confidence should not just be validated by formal essay success: her department must work 'so that students don't feel that everything just hangs on this one final outcome.. and if they don't do very well on it, it means they can't 'do' English..': in an echo of Freire's mobius strip pronouncement that 'reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world' (Freire and Slover, 1983, p.5), she sees criticality is also a vital skill to build 'in order to read situations, be they political, be they social.. they can evaluate situations they find themselves in... they can communicate effectively'. She finds motivation in this aspect of her role as English teacher – it is 'one of the reasons that I enjoy teaching what I teach because it isn't just literature' [my italics]. She is attuned with Giroux's view of school as a site where there is 'a struggle over identities, modes of agency, and those maps of meaning that enable students define who they are and how they relate to others' (Giroux, 2020, p.5).

4.3 Participant 3: Chanda

Chanda has been Head of English for a number of years in an 11-18 selective school for girls of approximately 900 students. The school is situated in a rural town in the North of England, and is part of a multi-academy trust of schools. Chanda's Key Stage 3 scheme of learning was based on Shakespeare's 1603 play Othello.

4.3.1 Chanda's acts of framing: how she articulates and perceives disciplinary codes, conventions, rules and modes of operation

Chanda makes a number of comments about the ways in which the discipline of literary study is formulated for her students. Chronology of texts offers a way to bring coherence to literary study as teachers can explicate the relationships between texts across time: 'at key stage 3 our year seven curriculum involves seeing literature as like a relationship between writers who do it, like the Romantic rebellion, and then we do Northern Lights because Philip Pullman uses a lot of Romantic ideas.' She is keen that her students 'see writers in conversation with each other'. She does not always credit teachers with making thoughtful decisions about curriculum, however: 'I think the GCSE Anthology of poetry has kind of encouraged teachers to just pull together anthologies without much coherence sometimes. We sort of have a theme and we just shove it together'. Thus the formal models created for GCSE by exam boards are seen as influential but insufficient examples of curricular thinking, and Chanda implies teachers need to be more consciously thoughtful about their curricular and textual sequencing and reasoning. She is able to step outside of curricular practice, see exam texts as constructs, and question the legitimacy of such models (exam syllabi arriving without rationale or author but holding immense significance for formal outcomes on which her department will be judged). She can 'step outside the line of march, to scrutinise the device and see it as strange' (Scholes, 1985, p.2) and formulate a critical call for greater attention to teachers' anthologising acts.

She makes direct reference to the need to teach 'canonical texts' because 'they are so embedded in national conversations with global understanding'. She chose her Othello unit as the focus for the research conversations and asserted that students 'feel really empowered when they understand what's going on'. A striking aspect of Chanda's response in contrast with Elsa and Chloe is that she is clear that Shakespeare needs justifying: 'we definitely talk to them about why we do Shakespeare.. and we do talk about the fact that the canon is created'. She is willing to show students that his status is not unimpeachable: 'we've talked about the fact that he kind of went out of fashion a bit in the 1770s.' Her department even champions a text in which a student brings a direct contestation to canonical curriculum by challenging the teacher's choice of Ghandi as an aspect of a history curriculum (2 Billion Beats by Sonali Bhattacharyya, 2022).

Like Elsa and Chloe, Chanda maintains a respect for the writer and a strong sense of them having made sets of deliberate choices, for example in terms of sequencing of a collection: 'there's something very powerful about looking at an anthology that's been curated by a poet and what order they've put things in...' but she is also willing to work back from student to writer: 'we do talk a lot about those skills of taking what you have gained as an impression and figuring out how that impression has been created'. The writer is also understood to be a mercurial concept: '[with

Shakespeare] I did talk about 'what does the writer intend' but he was almost like this cloudy, shadowy figure in the background that the students didn't get a clear impression of.. what would they say now if you asked them about Shakespeare? ..Um, probably very little.' She described him as 'an icon' but was quick to follow this with 'but he's also just a man, like someone they could know, someone they could be'. She had started to think about the teacher's creative role in shaping students' sense of the writer: 'I kind of ascribe all of these decisions and choices to him and I really, I don't even know if it's true, really. All I can say with certainty is that he was interested in stuff!' She articulates the way that this work may function to shore up the idea of the importance of the writer but simultaneously underlines that this status should not be viewed as reserved for an exclusive club: 'we're sort of making this assumption that being a writer really is quite a privileged controlling influential place to be. Hinting that they [the students] could occupy that place. Although perhaps we could stress that more when we're getting them to write.'

Unlike Elsa and Chloe, Chanda makes an immediate and clearer separation between the student-reader and an ideal or model reader when asked about how she conceptualises 'the reader' in her class: 'well it's not the student is it?' She turns towards a more transmissive facet of her practice in articulating the need for the construction of an model reader, especially where texts are challenging. Of Othello, for example: 'they do find it very difficult some of them still do require sort of the almost 'this is what's happening in this scene' discussion.. and that barrier means that they're probably not the reader of Shakespeare that you are thinking about because you expect almost a fluency, an understanding'. She articulates the way that the teacher is likely to be holding the 'top mark' student-reader in mind, a kind of ghostly ideal. This emphasises the likelihood of a gap existing between student and the essay-construct reader. Chanda does not seem uncomfortable with this gap, and even speaks of it directly with her students:

I think, you know, I did even say to my year 11 the other day 'this is not really aimed at you'... it was something quite dry.. I said I don't think there's any way you would pick this up, but this is what was on the paper. So the reader is not them, is it? The reader is someone who is probably a lot more versed in literature.

For Chanda it creates purpose for the teacher rather than unease or problematic jarring: 'it was like well, I need to tell you this because there's no possible way as readers here and now in this classroom you're going to understand without it, but the audience would have laughed at that'.

4.3.2 Chanda's conceptions of disciplinary power, authority and influence and their distribution

The identity of students as writers themselves is also promoted: she advocates for 'a wider range of writing [by students].. opening up different voices and different ways of writing.' Students are

conceptualised as both contributing readings and as contributing new texts within the disciplinary arena. Reflecting on her own school experience, she valued how her own A level teachers created both a sense of freedom and of challenge: 'it felt very unstructured very much like it was driven by our response to the literature and then suddenly they've dropped in something [we were] getting from that that level of engagement and confidence.' The teachers' work is characterised here as a kind of subtle steer rather than overt direction or overlay of ideas and knowledge. Later in the interview, Chanda articulates the importance of students finding and occupying their own critical space in relation to texts: 'all your ideas are valid', 'they need to have their own critical perspectives and be able to articulate their views'. This communicates a view of the teacher as facilitator, space maker and validator. Their input is secondary to the students' discussion: there is no physical locus of authority; the emphasis seems generative rather than performative: 'it was driven by our response', 'it was the idea that you can take a text and you can experience anything'.

Movement between the different kinds of concepts considered in the classroom was not always easy, with Chanda indicating that each lesson was likely to require several power shifts and marshalling decisions on her part:

when we've got the [play] text in front of us, I think we do talk about it in a very sort of similar way to prose where we're very focused on the language.. and it's quite a struggle sometimes to kind of put that to one side and shift to reading as the audience. Different audience members might hear the same language very differently but we also have to say to students, 'the language means this' otherwise they would get lost in all its possible different connotations. You've got to have a feeling that you're all moving forward together with a reading of the play.

Here she identifies a key challenge for teachers that Elsa had raised in Stage 2 – the teacher's need to provide coherence and clarity can sit in tension with a desire to recognise differing possible interpretations. Sharing power for interpretation is important in her classroom, but the teacher must also take a directive role in showing how a necessarily limited number of particular arguments might be built up through selection of evidence to stop students 'getting lost'. Students might need to see experts in action in order to understand how to garner power in the disciplinary arena, an idea that can get sidestepped in Critical Pedagogy perspectives.

A sense of a willingness to demote the teacher's authority does come through when Chanda highlights how she sees talk as a crucial element of literary study: 'that's the thing about it for me.. that idea of reading a book together and talking about it together'. The teacher assumes the status of learner in such work, in line with Freire's advice that 'The teacher is no longer merely the-one-

who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach.’ (Freire, 2005, p.80). In fact, textual work legitimises discussion: Chanda delights in making her classroom an arena ‘those big questions that you just don’t get to discuss very much unless you’re doing it through the lens of something else.’ Other comment contains traces of an anxiety to avoid moral or ethical didacticism - ‘there was quite a feeling in my first few years that English was almost the way to teach PSHE sometimes.. There was a safeguarding training once on FGM and they at one moment just looked at me and went ‘have you covered this in English?’ actually, no, hasn’t come up.’ She wants the discipline to preserve a status that is distinct from other kinds of personal/social education in schools.

Chanda recognises that she herself might actually be more distanced from the issues foregrounded in *Othello* than her students: she speaks about her student cohort already grappling with aspects of identity which are both topical in current affairs and topical in *Othello* when she says:

we’ve got an increasing number now of students from a South East Asian background, they’re very interested in the idea of things like diaspora and the idea of intersection of culture, and where do things fit and sort of reflecting on, I guess, their own identities in that respect, so it gives us a different way of looking at it through *Othello* and his sort of conflicts.

It is not clear whether these students have had an influence on her choice of text – a hand in shaping what is considered relevant for student-readers – or whether preparation of the text and thinking about her class has brought real and fictional versions of the issue into new relation with each other for Chanda. Yet if her words here could signify a valued ‘push’ moment where students have a role in influencing the curriculum (which would be consistent with Chanda’s a key facet of her description of her own student identity in Stage 1), she also mentions her own drive to ‘pull’ students towards issues of relevance through exposure to texts and through their analysis, with reading representing a proxy experience or safe space in which to engage with those issues:

When we ask, ‘how is the audience responding?’ it’s probably more about how an audience who is already familiar with some of the ideas or concepts responding to this text. How might someone who has an experience or a knowledge of racism be responding to it? How might someone who’s got a knowledge or an understanding of domestic violence be responding to it?

The movement from ‘audience who is already familiar’ to the indefinite pronoun ‘someone’ suggests the opening of a space for discussion that allows for a range of direct or secondary

experience, an open sense of who 'the audience' might be. The subjunctive 'might' and the audience construct encourages the student to try out the articulation of positions and reactions.

What happens when 'the audience' (or more usually 'the reader') is fixed into being in essay form is not mentioned, and might be a crossing point worth interrogating in future research. The difference about discussing and writing about 'audience' experience in contrast with 'reader' experience is also not a focus for Chanda's comment: audience being both singular on the page and plural in the theatre, and textual experience being more tangibly socially influenced and mediated in a theatre space. Classroom-bound students are learning the smoothing art of generalisation, where textual experience and response is pulled together into an essay argument, and any nuanced and relative individual notions of 'relevance' may be lost in serving the need for authoritative commentary on textual effect.

4.3.3 Chanda's thoughts on how students are and might be inducted into critical identities and dispositions

Chanda is keen to unsettle her students from 'comfortable' positions: 'we have thought about how to politically engage our students' as she perceives that 'there's a tendency to be a bit insular'. Challenge is created through 'having lots of different texts from different places; and from 'also thinking about bringing in non-fiction connections'. In some of her comment, Chanda is keen to emphasise how she sees literary work as identity development work: 'literature functions as a way for students to explore the world themselves, their place in it, those kind of questions, and to explore what other people have to say about that as well'. At this moment, the literary text is servant to self rather than the other way around. Chanda honours student opinion: 'all your ideas are valid because they're coming from that experience of reading [the text]', with literature a stimulus to critical exploration of self: 'I teach literature because I want you to think about who you are and who you want to be and where do you fit in the world'. She is clear that she wants them to 'have their own critical perspectives and be able to articulate their views'. Indeed, early in the first interview, she offers an anecdote about being confident to challenge her English teacher's choice of text and feeling dissatisfied with the justification he offered – 'I feel like that sparked something in me... that rationale for me even then was like, that's ridiculous'. Later, she recalls accepting challenge from her own students about her choice of 'tutor read' (Things a Bright Girl Can Do by Sally Nichols): 'we've got a strong contingent who feel like we should have chosen something else.' Her reaction is demonstratively positive rather than defensive: 'it's provoked some really excellent

discussions about what that something else should be.. we've basically turned the search for next year's tutor read into a whole school nomination process'. This represents an example of 'teachers and students collaborating in the knowledge making process' (Chege, 2009, p.233), with Chanda 'recognising students as knowers' (Huerta, 2011, p.49) in the spirit of Critical Pedagogy.

Chanda wants her students to learn about varied critical positioning: she speaks about taking the Shakespearean text and 'putting it into different types of production', an example of interpretations being 'studied along with the texts they interpret' (Scholes, 1985, p.30). Thus a wider disciplinary view is opened up, bringing in readings from beyond the immediate classroom and allowing students to compare interpretations, whilst developing their own directorial decisions. This aligns with disciplinary rhetoric about students contributing to a 'conversation' across time (Applebee, 1993; Bleiman 2019; Eaglestone 2019) (although the conversation metaphor might require students' contributions to be collected, heard and recognised by the wider disciplinary community to maintain integrity beyond its rosy intent). Taking the text into the stage space does also indicate the possibility of communally constructed, co-operative interpretation, away from the solitary destination of the formal essay.

Interpretation is also related back to individual experience, as if life events will necessarily light up a particular lens on events of the play: 'how might someone who has an experience or a knowledge of racism be responding to it? How might someone who's got a knowledge or an understanding of domestic violence be responding to it?' This corresponds with Eaglestone's description of undertaking an 'act' of interpretation as being the bringing of ourselves to texts (2002). In his defining of 'interpretation', Culler arrives at the same point from the opposite direction: 'what we commonly see as 'schools' of literary criticism or theoretical 'approaches' to literature are.. dispositions to give particular kinds of answers to the question of what a work is ultimately 'about'' (1997, p.64) Chanda, Eaglestone and Culler all touch on the intertwining of person and interpretation: pre-existing experiences, understandings, dispositions, tendencies, preferences, approaches converging in the liminal disciplinary space between personal response and formal interpretation. Elliott might contend that 'in the main, academic study of Shakespeare serves to emphasize his dislocation from teenagers' lives' (Elliott, 2016, p.199) but Chanda is committed to 'bringing curricular content into meaningful relation with what students already know and with their lived purposes and intentions' (Yarker, 2016, p.110). Critical identity does not have to require an effacing of the self that has been brought into the classroom.

4.4 Participant 4: Manny

Manny has been Second in English in an 11-16 non-selective school of approximately 1,400 students for six years, and has worked in 2 other schools. The school is situated in a city in the South of England, and is part of a multi-academy trust. Manny's Key Stage 3 scheme of learning was based on Westall's 1975 novel *The Machine Gunners*.

4.4.1 Manny's acts of framing: how he articulates and perceives disciplinary codes, conventions, rules and modes of operation

In terms of curriculum creation, Manny is engaged with debate about text choices - 'There's some new discussion of 'what texts' that I think started when *Of Mice and Men* got rubbished'. He is faintly rueful about the persistence of a canon as a key feature of English curriculum architecture, positioning himself as irreverent - 'The pillars of Literature are still standing. Shakespeare's not going anywhere, let's face it. Dickens is not going anywhere. They're here for the long haul. They are too tangled up with who we think we are as a nation to get the boot..'. But he is also sensitive to its potential to unify, issuing this backhanded compliment: 'It's not a terrible thing if students share a common knowledge of some writers, even if it's a shared hatred of *Romeo and Juliet* or whatever.'

He identifies how he himself has become less concerned about valorising particular texts over time, as he feels confident in underpinning disciplinary principles and patterns and topical issues: 'I'm not as possessive of particular texts as I used to be... even if you don't find the plot and character that interesting there'll be something structural or figurative going on, some way to link it to what's going on now in the news'. Novelty and an initial lack of knowledge/expertise about a particular text is actually identified as valuable: 'You can find something interesting in most texts so I get less het up about which texts are on the syllabus now than when I first started...I think it's important actually to encounter that challenge sometimes to keep yourself fresh.' He identifies this as an unusual viewpoint, however: 'a lot of teachers feel safer with what they know... I'm not sure we're headed for a wholesale change.'

He is more directly questioning about the status ascribed to some kinds of knowledge:

Some of the cultural capital stuff has been very negative I think, it's a really short term view to say oh well we teach them a bit of Byron in Year 7 so they're on a par with Eton now. A bit of anything's not the point. It kind of pretends that culture can do it all... We need to teach them not to feel intimidated is more to the point and use any kind of story to their own ends.

'Not to feel intimidated' and 'to their own ends' suggests that he favours literary study as a means of promoting self-determination; the mention of Eton suggests a frustration with class privilege

which might exclude and work against the confidence of his students. Similarly, later in an echo of Chanda's giving over of text choice to her students and Freire's dialogic principles, he even suggests that a redistribution of power would be a positive move for the school discipline: 'It would be good if the students themselves could nominate texts, that would help us understand how they saw what English as being about or what it should be about... revitalise things.' He sees himself as an outlier who teachers 'against the grain' of current pedagogical orthodoxies (hooks, 1994) - ('Shoot me now that they haven't learned 50 quotes and discussed syllogisms though...') in that he believes the classroom should also be about escapism, a place where his students could 'get lost in a story' and step away from 'the endless march of knowledge'.

His statement that 'it kind of pretends that culture can do it all' might be a subtle warning against literature teachers making inflated claims about the degree to which textual encounters help to redistribute power. Perhaps there is a glimpse of the potential for a border pedagogy in which students are concurrently taught about the way that bigger structures – in this case the discipline of literary study itself – might contribute to the maintenance of a status quo.

Thus of all the participants, at the end of the Stage 1 interviews, perhaps Manny seems most closely aligned to the tenets of Critical Pedagogy in his more persistent and direct questioning of normative traditions, his promotion of curricular revision with its recipients at the centre of such a process, and his active discussion of school literary study as 'a world not yet finished' (Shor, 1999, p.11). Spaces in Manny's disciplinary map are not equated with voids: his students can be afforded time and encouragement to 'get lost in a story' and whilst he does not detail the aspects of curricula that get re-written, he sees revisionary work as necessary work. Extolling Critical Pedagogy, Coles (2024, p.87) states that 'if schools teach a frozen culture, students will have the opportunity only to investigate a stagnant moment in time', with privileged and dominant social structures also frozen; Manny indicates that he is open for students to contribute to the shaping of their own education: he is not possessive of a perceived knowledge base for the discipline but seems to implicitly question who has the right to define it, or determine its priorities. For pedagogy and curriculum to be equitable and inclusive, both will need to remain on the move.

In terms of how 'the reader' is conceptualised in his classroom, Manny addresses the idea of the simulated nature of 'reader-creation' in Key Stage 3 literary analysis most explicitly of all the participants, but at first chooses to emphasise his responsibility to help students feel confident members of the discipline able to produce a sanctioned, formal written response: 'It's not something they will naturally do. It's kind of odd if you look at it too closely actually... But that's essay writing all over really isn't it? We've got to make them confident to talk about that reader, saying it confidently is a big part of the battle.' Later, Manny expresses a stronger sense of

discomfort and reluctance to scrutinise 'the reader': 'we do talk about 'the reader' in the formal essay but to be honest I don't want them to think too hard about who that is – it's more important that they can just accept that words, combinations of words are likely to have a particular effect on everyone.. there isn't room or time for them to explore much more in essays'.

Like Elsa, he uses 'everyone' as a concept to unify, and points to the practical advantages of assuming a single reaction. The assumption that all readers will read a text in roughly the same way is not deployed to subdue individual reactions or as coercive conscription into 'an army of other readers, all marching in time to the music [which implies] that texts have only one meaning' (Scott, 1989, p.29). Instead, in teaching *The Machine Gunners*, he reaches for a singular reading as a tool to promote mutual tolerance: 'It's fairly common for classes to look down on Nicky early on in the novel but like Chas, we do come to see him as a victim of his circumstances who's got more to him... everyone sees that he's more than that surface impression, and it's a great moment when he tells the policeman to get stuffed.' Morgan might argue that 'any text offers you a way of seeing and valuing things and invites you to accept its version as the truth.. what comes to be accepted as the truth, as knowledge, comes to serve someone's interests' (1997, p.42); Manny's 'truth' about Nicky here seems to serve a social interest in its inducement to refrain from premature judgement of peers.

It would be rare for the fabrication and maintenance of this projected, external 'reader' to be a subject of scrutiny in school. It certainly creates a base concept for the HE lecturer to dismantle in literary theory classes further down the line; some will see this task as a difficult and potentially upsetting deracination which is 'emotionally counterintuitive' (Johnson, 2015, p.39) whilst others relish the opportunity to uproot convention (see Sadoff's description of this process as 'exciting and productive.. the adventure of discovering theory', Sadoff and Cain, 1994, p.15). However, the majority of students in my participants' classes will not get that far and so there is a likelihood that the concept of the reader will remain unexamined. Manny's comment about the 'oddness' of entering into essay writing reminds us that this juncture is an important moment where students' own reactions and readings are either validated, subsumed or marginalised, Knights' 'conflicted border between academic subject and lay readers' (2017, p.9) which is worthy of greater scrutiny and debate if we are to help students feel that literary study has a lasting importance and is done with them and for them, and not just to them.

Manny does identify the 'reader' in the analytical essay as a construct, conceding somewhat reluctantly that it might be a necessary device to induct his students into the discipline of literary study, even when that means the fading out of individual differences in reading. In his Stage 3

interview, however, he seems more troubled by the idea of presenting a homogenous 'everyman reader', comparing it to contrasting practice in a related subject:

I also teach Media Studies and in some ways its depressing that we've not really made much progress in terms of thinking about the layers of reading and interpreting in English... That argument kind of got stuck in English with 'don't be manipulated by speeches or adverts' and that's as far as it goes.....that kind of clumsy suspicion. But we never really apply that to literary texts.

He then even picks up on his own verb choice for further comment: 'in fact, we don't even really talk about manipulation with literature, we treat it differently to non-fiction... we're kind of more respectful, in a more respectful relationship with the writer of literature.' For Manny as a dual-subject teacher, the subject/disciplinary boundary is not something to be defended but a clearly artificial and porous construct. His words echo Scholes' idea that literature comes into being through an attitude to, and set of practices on texts rather than texts themselves holding some inherent quality (Scholes, 1985): 'every time we start text work we should take a second to look at how it's got there [into the classroom] because anything can get status with someone making a case for it... we make it literature by badging it like that'.

Indirectly, Manny is raising the idea of contexts of reception in terms of the ways 'value' might be ascribed to the text or denied to it – 'they didn't find much on the internet that wasn't his [Westall's] own website and it only got 3 or 4 [out of 5] on Goodreads'; 'it did win the Carnegie Medal and I don't think they spotted that that was back in 1975'. He sees himself as the primary validator of the text to the class, however: 'they didn't really ask why we were doing it – they trust that the English teacher knows what texts should be taught in English'. In terms of reception within the teaching community itself, he also notes that 'it's really not taught that much any more I don't think and I'm the only one in my department who still clings on to it'; when asked why, he raises doubt about the idea of whether total coherence across a key stage curriculum is desirable or even possible:

There's a real drive to make everything look neat and like it fits together in a big linear journey into knowledge and enlightenment at the moment..... learning maps, learning journeys, mapping everything out, do we need that?... I do wonder if most of the students, if they actually experience learning like that.. it's not a neat picture for them, surely, just hopefully lots of quality encounters and experiences of great stories and a chance to talk about what they think...

Of all the participants, he seems most conscious that teachers 'create' writer figures for their classes - 'you do strong selection work' – with specific purposes sitting behind this work: for example, he speaks of how he tries to emphasise aspects of Westall's biography that might make him relatable: 'I told them that he would have had a class just like them in mind when he was writing because he worked in schools, and he wrote for his son' and that he had started writing as a teenager. He also mentions keeping a picture of Westall holding his cat as a feature of all his Powerpoint slides for the scheme, again perhaps to help students feel connected to him. One starter activity involves students having a go at writing a description in Westall's style; in the next lesson, Manny puts anonymised examples on a slide for a quick guessing game of 'Real or Steal' so that students can see their own skill in utilising the same techniques as the writer. Taken together, these small moves could work to reduce the sense of alienation that some students experience; 'authoring' and its fellow 'authority' are not an exclusive preserve of a distant elite.

4.4.2 Manny's conceptions of disciplinary power, authority and influence and their distribution

The theme of power recurs in Manny's statements relating to teachers. He is wry about teachers' fondness for attention and sharing and revealing meanings: 'All of us love being an expert, we love holding a class's attention. You wouldn't be a teacher otherwise...Love answering questions, love making stuff that wasn't clear or relevant suddenly seem clear and relevant.' He also highlights teachers' opportunities for independence in spite of institutional systems and requirements: 'We still have a lot of power, when the classroom door is shut and no one's doing an official observation... It's still a creative job really.' In this respect, he offers a contrast with other participants in that he emphasises his individuality rather than his identity as team member, even going as far as to describe himself as 'gobby' and to say 'I'm not sure I'd like to be my own head of department to be honest..' However, he also articulates a sense of the temporal nature of teacher power: 'We don't really know how what we teach makes a difference. I think all teachers operate with a kind of...fragile hope because those kids just disappear when they leave school and you never know whether they think.. they look back and think they learned ways to read from you.' In terms of the long view of teachers' impact, it is interesting that he chooses abstract skill ('ways to read') rather than knowledge of specific texts as his focus.

That the teacher is still also a learner is a motivating factor for Manny in his teaching – students hold innovative and instructive power too:

My favourite kind of lesson is where you are talking about something, maybe a poem or something, and that student will put his hand up and say 'but what about that, sir, did you

see that there?’ and you have to start applauding because they have come up with something new.. It’s not me, it’s them.

He also has clear views on the sources of authority that he trusts and distrusts in relation to the subject: non-subject experts are dismissed - ‘I don’t agree with the way that Senior Team come to do quality assurance and they don’t know the subject from the inside’ - whereas other English teachers are afforded more respect, because of their shared understanding of the experience of external scrutiny of a complex discipline and practice: Manny has ‘more faith’ that English teachers from other schools will ‘understand what we’re about and how we choose to approach teaching literature or at least understand how we’ll experience the questions’.

Perhaps Manny does not see the community of English teachers as wielding the collective power that it might, however: he notes that ‘We don’t talk enough outside of the department..’ and identifies a waning of combined influence at a national level: ‘We don’t have the voice as a profession that we used to have... I don’t have a great sense that we’re listened to by the DfE or whoever it is that writes the syllabuses these days.. Lots of individual voices but we don’t come together.’ Whilst other participants commented on specific aspects of syllabi or assessment causing frustration, Manny is the only one to reflect on how the profession of English teachers as a whole might lack a cohesive identity and thus also lack traction in any debate about directions for disciplinary development.

Reflecting further on power in his Stage 3 interview, Manny repeats his view from earlier interviews that teachers are both subject to constraint and in possession of some freedom to act:

We never talk about who writes the syllabuses [sic] or the National Curriculum and what mandate they have to do that. We accept a lot without question..... But we’re not living in 1984 either. The teacher too has a big amount of power, I can still shut my door and largely do what I want, even if the books have to fit with a department narrative at various points.

He speaks of a kind of silent negotiation with his Head of Department about delivery of centralised schemes: ‘We agree what’s in the grid [schemes of learning are laid out in a grid document] and it’s largely fine, and we all know what the end outcomes should be, and we do some loose moderation of those’, but there is deviation too - ‘on the way to getting to those points I don’t stick to everything and I think she knows that and does not care.’ Maintaining some independence is a source of pride and of motivation: ‘I do still keep a space for what I want to do... You could get completely caught up in the accountability rhetoric but if I didn’t still love what I do, I wouldn’t do it.’ He does feel this would not necessarily be permissible in all school settings though: ‘there’s a local MAT [multi-academy trust] where I wouldn’t last a minute as they really do have to teach by

numbers there, booklets and scripts.’ Such statements could be said to contain important signals about the relations between independence, integrity and investment in practice, a triad which matters both for the retention of teachers who want their work to feel meaningful, and in the classroom for students whose study of literary texts should also feel worthwhile, apposite and consequential.

In terms of the interplay of teacher-student power in the classroom, Manny points to a lack of discussion about the impact of text characteristics on the nature of classroom interactions: when talking about eliciting students’ ‘genuine reactions’, he says that ‘maybe that’s easier with something like *The Machine Gunners* though because the language is quite close to their natural language ... it’s not too figurative which can put a layer of complexity between them and the text.’ A heavily stylised, metaphor-rich text would likely require more exposition and navigational guidance from the teacher, as would a text from a distant time – in Stage 1, for example, Manny mentions having had to teach Restoration Comedy and how ‘that was painful as there were too many jokes that needed explaining and very little that the kids could explore on their own without me leaping in with a footnote.’ The degree of dependence on the (mediating) teacher, and its implications in knowledge construction remains a largely unexamined facet of literary learning; in the final interview, Manny starts to explore his perceptions of how students’ experience of texts and his corresponding role might change across a year when he notes ‘it’s going to be a big jump from Westall to Shakespeare next for that class... it’s almost like you start teaching a different subject entirely because their level of need shoots up.’ The gains he feels he has made in terms of helping students feel connected to the discipline of literary study might well be lost: ‘we’re getting on well as a class now but it’ll be back to hard work again when they hit *Macbeth*.. sometimes you rely on the gains from one area of the curriculum to help you get through the hard slog of a lot of unfamiliar language and those..the more abstracted themes’. Like Elsa, he has spotted discontinuity within school literary study but unlike Elsa, he feels more discomforted about how to finesse it: Scholes (1985) might preach that our job is not to intimidate students with our own superior textual production, but older texts are likely to require teacher exegesis, if only to prefigure students’ own textual practice.

Manny approaches the idea of interpretation with greater focus on the process rather than an end result than other participants: ‘At Key Stage 3... there can be more play involved and I feel more relaxed about letting the students say what they’ve seen... sometimes they have a pip of an idea and we can do something together with that, we can grow it. That’s the brilliant bit.’ Culler argues that ‘what is important in the game of interpretation is not the answer you come up with..[but] how you get there, what you do with the details of the text’ (1997, p.65) Here, classroom

interpretative work has a function beyond assessment ends – Manny values the student learning to choose detail, learning to ‘grow’ an interpretation, and experiencing their views being validated. His focus in these statements is on the student rather than the text, perhaps close to early versions of reception theory where what the text ‘does’ to us is defined actually as a matter of what we do to it (Fish, 1980).

Manny senses a conflict in his own practices: ‘I want to know what they think but I’ll also rein it in if it’s going off in odd directions’ (reminding us of Chanda’s assertion that ‘sometimes I have to tell them that they’re wrong’). This alerts us to the fact that classroom ‘interpretation’ may be introduced as being about personal readings but is restricted by a set of unwritten conventions – as Eagleton states, ‘In the case of literary works, there is also sometimes a practical situation which excludes certain readings and licenses others, known as the teacher. It is the academic institution, the stock of socially legitimated ways of reading works, which operates as a constraint’ (Eagleton, 1983, p.76). When asked a follow up question about what would count as ‘odd directions’, Manny focuses on character analysis and his gentle funnelling of interpretation towards a unified sense of identification with Chas, the novel’s protagonist:

like at the start, when the parents are talking about the Greengrocer’s girl dying in the air raid, and Chas just eats his breakfast...when we’ve looked at that, sometimes people in the class take a dislike to him: ‘he’s got no heart’.. but Westall is going for an honest presentation... we’re all just a bit interested in other people’s tragedy, Chas is highly likable actually when you’ve read on.. to get a three dimensional character you have to include flaws to make them real.

Essay responses to questions of character might be said to contain tacit conventions that protagonists are heroes, writers are response-directors, and ‘personality’ and ‘character’ are elided as terms at this phase of literary analysis; Manny seems reluctant to accommodate a negative reading but does start to build a justification as to why.

4.4.3 Manny’s thoughts on how students are and might be inducted into critical identities and dispositions

In his Stage 1 interview, Manny begins to draw a connecting line between his own experiences as a student and his practice with students now. He presents himself as trying to retain an awareness of what he does and does not know about his students and acknowledging that they do not come to him as blank slates:

I read a lot at home but it was difficult to make a connection between my books and the books, the school texts and the ways we looked at them... We did Kes but it was very much looking from the outside rather than talking about what was.. what we recognised in that story. I hope my own teaching takes more account.. of students' prior knowledge, what they already know of the kinds of places and situations we are reading about.

A number of disciplinary challenges are signalled within this response: the challenge of bridging the gap between the classroom and the worlds of students beyond; the challenge of teachers not knowing the secret histories of students' literacies beyond school; the challenge of accessing and assigning value to students' existing knowledges without being intrusive. Manny retains a sense of his student cohort as complex and to a certain extent unknowable: 'I wouldn't assume everyone in my class didn't know poverty' - which might suggest he retains a sense of their variability, and this might affect how he plans and delivers schemes. (It can also be linked to the sensitivity he demonstrates in later interviews about the idea of a generic reader in essay formulae; he has thought about how he can justify its inclusion). He specifically mentions the 'idealised student' in relation to curriculum construction in a way that the other participants did not - he is aware of teacher projections and the slim chance of their review over time:

The Curriculum intent conversations do have something to do with students but a very.. idealised view of what we would like students to be. And we don't spend enough time going back at the end of a year and thinking did it actually do that? Did they actually get from there to there and become that?

Manny also talks about reader-relevance in relation to current affairs: 'there's always war and conflict going on somewhere so it isn't difficult to connect The Machine Gunners to stuff in the real world' and enjoys 'getting them to discuss their reaction to World War Two stories.. they always know more than I expect about what's going on outside the UK'. When compared with Elsa, these comments move in different directions along a horizontal axis connecting students to the world outside school; Elsa's comments about relevance relate more to the teacher's opportunity to broaden the understandings of their student-readers, whilst Manny's tilt more towards student-readers bringing existing knowledge into relation with the classroom text. Manny conceives of the students as knowledgeable at this moment; Elsa conceives of them as needing exposure to events beyond the classroom. At a nuanced level, these positions are connected to important questions of purpose – that is, whether at root teachers see literary study as there to serve and enhance life experience and understandings, or whether life experience is there to serve disciplinary development and understanding. It's the point of collision for some in terms of everyday concepts

and disciplinary concepts: ontologically, Manny seems closer to the former position, as championed by Yandell (2023, p.94):

The interplay between text and experience provides the student with a standpoint from which to reflect on his own identity, his own relationships. [In relation to the study of Henry IV] the everyday concepts of masculinity, fatherhood, identity, motive and morality are not stepping-stones on the route to secure disciplinary concepts: they are the matter of literary study, and of the serious play that it enables.

Of all the participants, Manny seems to be the least comfortable with the current contours of his teaching work and relations with students. In his Stage 2 interview, as he plans his Machine Gunners scheme, he points to the influence that patterns of discourse might have on the formation of students' critical subject identities:

I haven't resolved the kind of break in flow that comes when we've been reading for a number of lessons and then I have to introduce the idea of the essay question... the nature of lessons tends to change then.. [I] keep asking 'what do you think?' but honestly it's more like 'can you think like I think?'

Such patterning is deep rooted in school literary study – Marshall's 1987 study describes a near identical configuration, for example:

the teacher succeeds in her purpose of guiding students toward a conventional interpretation of the story . . . [the student's role] is not so much to interpret the story as to flesh out the interpretation that is embodied in her questions. Though in the end a standard critical reading of [the story] was achieved, students played a rather small part in constructing it.. (Marshall, 1987, pp.36 – 37)

Manny seems dissatisfied with the displacement of student response but also seems channelled himself into repetitive practice which he can't 'resolve'. He is also troubled by the absence of appropriate identity label: 'we're not actually training them to be literary critics, they know that, we know that, even at A level they're not that..' and would prefer to sidestep linear notions of 'mastery': 'I'd like what we do with literature to be understood as more a humanistic project at Key stage 3.'

In the aftermath of teaching *The Machine Gunners* again, in Stage 3, MP reports how his sense of his students had become unsettled because of the spotlight of the research question: 'I've thought more about how I am assuming on some level that the students are the same as the kids in the book, worried about the same kind of things, having the same kind of battles with authority figures and bullies ... identity battles to fit in.' Whilst he didn't report a move to reject these assumptions, or even to probe them further, there is a sense that he is in the process of making small adjustments to his classroom practice: 'I did ask them more questions about whether they could relate to what we were reading. Are kids kids at any time, I mean, did they feel their own experience was represented with any kind of accuracy by Robert Westall?' Students' responses highlight variation in the room: 'Some felt yes, pretty accurate, some felt no, a war childhood was pretty different, like in how the kids seemed to have way more freedom.' The classroom here is a place of triangulation not just a place where a sanctioned reaction is replicated. He also described how students commented on a matter of representation that they felt was topical: 'I didn't say anything about the presentation of John this time [a character with special needs who is tricked by the protagonists into helping them build a den] but it came up in discussion that he wouldn't be written [sic] like that now even if modern kids felt that way. I don't remember these reactions from last time I taught it.' There was even disappointment that this interest couldn't be pursued in the scheme where set assessment tasks prohibited choice: 'If they did A level language, they could choose that character presentation as a focus and really analyse it, the language used.'

He also seems to be re-examining subsumed beliefs about the teacher-writer-student nexus, with his own position held up for re-examination - 'I would certainly be a bit taken aback if they disagreed with the way I see the key characters like Chas and Bodser so I suppose that does suggest in terms of this book I'm aligned with the idea that the writer is firmly directing us.' He also articulates a related concern about the status of student opinion in the light of established classroom conventions but whilst more conscious of borders (between lay and academic readings) he is without a longer term strategy for accommodating border breaches: 'We do need to make more effort to take time to hear how the students genuinely respond to the texts. Tricky when there's an expectation of 'getting through' the text and essay though.'

4.5 Synthesis of findings

4.5.1 Summary Q1

Acts of framing: how are disciplinary codes, conventions, rules and modes of operation articulated and perceived?

In terms of my first focus question, through a process of recurrent inductive analysis, I have grouped and analysed ideas in the following ways:

- Structuring devices in disciplinary thought
- Tools for communicating the structure of the discipline
- Conceptions of a Literary Canon, its significance, its limits
- Conceptions of Literature and the nature of Key Stage 3 literary study
- How 'the reader' is constructed
- How 'the writer' is constructed

Taken together, and unsurprisingly, my data suggests that disciplinary framing happens in a complex web at national, departmental and personal levels, in codified forms (policy documents, department schemes and maps), in department discussions and negotiations, and in teacher philosophy as influenced by their own school experience and actualised through their teaching.

In terms of directive documentation, this small scale data set suggests that teachers generally welcome disciplinary framings provided by the National Curriculum, but their view of directive exam syllabi is more complex. Giroux describes what he sees as the conservative and undemocratic nature of such documentation, and indeed no participant referred to the authorship of it: a set of nameless creators produces and distributes the National Curriculum with no obvious recourse to challenge (a fact actively asserted by Manny). Yet the National Curriculum was referred to positively, with Elsa even saying she 'like[d] its restraints', and Chloe describing it as 'helpful' in its offer of 'a scaffold' for curricular thinking. Manny was more ambivalent - 'we accept a lot without question' - but it could be said to have a kind of inverse use in helping him determine what he was 'keeping a space' for himself to value and do, like negative space in artwork. The GCSE exam specifications in contrast were referred to solely in terms of their deficits, for example in Elsa's questioning a lack of diversity in set texts, or Chanda feeling critical of the poetry anthology's absence of 'coherence'. Their own sense of disciplinary authority comes into focus in these comments: they critique the imposition of models they perceive as flawed, and imply they hold alternatives. Such alternatives are realised in their Key Stage 3 teaching – Elsa has been able to choose Zephaniah's novel as a contribution to provision of diverse texts; Chanda works consciously to offer her students 'coherence' in the way that she explicates the relationship between texts across time, and teaches her students that individual poets will have 'curated' poems into a sequence in a singular collection.

Disciplinary jurisdiction is also exercised in Key Stage 3 mapping work, with curriculum maps or 'learning journeys' for students and parents presented across participants as a standard feature of

the school subject. Textual and thematic choices and decisions are on show here to parents, students, management and inspectors, and announce a sense of a department's disciplinary command, as well as its organising logics and priorities. Such documents signal the parameters for key stages, and for student understanding of what literary study is at a base level (most often through text lists, though sometimes linked to genre and concepts). Elsa and Chloe stress the distributed and democratic nature of mapping activity as a positive feature of their respective teams, with Elsa pointing to how this differs to her own induction years as a new teacher, where she 'had no idea why I was doing what I was doing, it was just 'this is what the curriculum map says''. OFSTED's push from 2018 for an emphasis on descriptions of curriculum 'intent' may have been a positive factor in incentivising such work, thus encouraging a greater degree of dialogue about curricular formations and the reasoning behind decision making – Elsa associates it with the way her department can all now 'verbalise what we're doing in our classrooms'. The extent to which the reasoning behind such framings is discussed with students seems to vary, and whilst participants spoke about students having an influence on teachers' text choices, this was indirect and not shared with the students themselves.

The Canon is mentioned by all participants, directly for example in Chanda pointing to it as 'embedded in national conversations' and Manny in rueing it as durable 'key architecture', and indirectly in the choosing of Shakespeare and Dickens as key texts for this study. No participant makes a case for the compulsory inclusion of specific texts, but all want students to understand how writers are connected to, influenced by, and comparable with each other across time: one result of the propellant arrow through curriculum maps might thus be an increased motivation to contour the shape of literary study at school level, clarifying textual landmarks, and defining the relation of one scheme to another. Canonical texts also provide a base for the finding of patterns, which have repeated mention as a source of pleasure and reward in literary study, and as a route to student originality (for example in Chloe's 'Show me some new links!'). The texts and teacher together create a space in which the student can innovate, using the pattern finding convention to create and share new meanings. Chanda alludes to the way her own sixth form teachers operated a subtle steer in the background of her seminar-style lessons whilst allowing her to feel groundbreaking in her readings – 'it felt very unstructured very much like it was driven by our response to the literature and then suddenly they've dropped in something...'. This corresponds with my own cherished memory of being made to feel like an expert as a student in school English lessons by a teacher who may or may not have heard my 'insights' into celebrated texts before, but who made the moment feel new and agentic.

Notably, the modes of operation in terms of analytical frames at Key Stage 3 are underemphasised across the data, for example in Elsa's prioritising of 'engagement' and encouragement of affective relations with texts' ideas before a focus on either their literariness or essay construction. Broad scale Issues and big society questions are valued, with participants making repeat references to a porous boundary with non-fiction or other subjects. Chloe sees literary study as providing 'wider textual experience that they probably don't really get elsewhere... politics, philosophy, sociology'; Elsa reserves making what she sees as an artificial distinction between Language and Literature for Key Stage 4; Chanda champions the way literary study gives 'that licence to talk about really powerful big questions that if you start talking about them in the pub you get a bit of a weird look, but because you're doing it in a classroom with a book in front of you, it's OK.' Chloe feels this kind of latitude contrasts with Key Stage 4, which she describes as 'clipped, very stunted and deliberate'. What Knights describes as 'the leakiness of the membrane between everyday and specialised discourse' (2017, p.11) is posited as a strength of the school subject for these teachers, implying they enjoy its openness and heterogeneity (in Key Stage 3 at least).

In referring to taxonomies which attempt to capture the essential aims of English teaching, Pike notes that 'these models and the aims they describe cannot be adequately evaluated without reference to the teaching methods generally employed to implement them' (Pike, 2003, p.4) and here perhaps we can see a problem that could be inherent in encouraging English teacher theorising: in talking of large scale, abstract purposes and intentions, my participants turn away from the more fastidious business of 'learning outcomes' and assessment which becomes insistent at Key Stage 4. A lack of experience in unpicking the mechanisms of formal response becomes apparent when participants are asked to talk about how they conceptualise 'the reader': whilst this is a fundamental element in literary study, and a stock construct in the building of formal essay responses, the teachers indicate it is not something they had been obliged to deconstruct before and the interview transcripts show clearly the biggest pauses when this question was raised (Manny even saying 'how weird.. it's not something I feel I've really ever been asked about directly before'). Elsa is anxious about the difficulty of marshalling different reader responses from a class – 'it's so varied' – preferring to focus on the writer as the pivot of attention. Chloe is more positive about her role being that of guiding her class towards 'a shared sense' of understanding, implying that she feels a key aspect of the teacher's job is to create a path of understanding of a text, to bring about unity of thinking as a subtle means of contributing to social cohesion. She seems to conceptualise the super-addressee in essays as a reflection of herself and her students. Chanda, in contrast, asserts a likely gap between the idealised reader she asks her students to create in essay responses (someone 'well versed' in Shakespeare's work and language who 'is not the student')

and the students themselves. The teacher here has a more transparently directive role in this conceptualisation, explaining textual meaning and demonstrating how to build the construct of the reader in ways sanctioned by the academic discipline. Manny also identifies this constructing work but is more troubled by it, even saying 'I don't want them to think too hard about who that [reader in the essay] is' as it might expose the fault lines between lay and academic modes and practices of reading in a way he can't resolve.

All participants are happier to talk about 'the writer' and the function of 'the writer' in their work. Elsa is clear that she feels authorial intention could be taught and learned, with one element of her role being to share material about the writer's life and own comment on their work. Chloe too takes a historical rather than historicist approach to Dickens, and identifies propositional knowledge about him, his work and his 'times' as a means by which she can keep a sense of managerial control within her department, in terms of the provision of collated material for her teachers. Chanda points to the complex way that she would be likely to balance differing notions of the writer within her scheme. She is aware she would talk with students about the writer being a 'directing' presence, whilst also knowing Shakespeare would only ever be 'shadowy, cloudy' presence, defining him as 'an icon', and also stressing that he was 'just a man' to help encourage students that his work could be accessible to them, and that they should be able to imagine themselves as writers like him. Manny emphasises the 'strong selection work' that teachers do in 'creating' the writer for their students, although as with curriculum maps, it is not clear that this contouring work would be made visible to students.

4.5.2 Question 2

How are disciplinary power, authority and influence conceived of and distributed, and how might these distributions normalised or challenged?

In terms of my second focus question, I generated the following patterns via inductive analysis:

- Expressions of teacher authority and challenges to the disciplinary authority of others
- Expressions of doubt about teacherly authority
- Examples of negotiated power sharing between teachers and students
- Perceptions of student authority and independence

Participants communicate a sense of their own authority from different angles. Chanda and Manny both consider the intellectual status of teaching. Chanda asserts that she identifies teaching work as academic work:

I do think of myself as coming from a very academic perspective when it comes to literature, and that's a really big part of its importance for me.. having that ability to look at it through those different lenses and think about different ways that it works.

Here, being 'academic' is strongly linked to understanding that readings are inseparable from positions and priorities, and can be multiple in nature. Whilst this does not suggest that she directly examines the ideological formation of the readings she teaches, it does imply she maintains an awareness of teacher choice and the importance of continued review of angle and approach. She is concerned that teachers might end up with foreshortened perspectives of texts if they did not uphold their own sense of their academic identity because of

teaching something over and over, and not asking yourself deeper questions.. you might get kind of even worse. You'd probably just reduce it.. without getting into the wide scope of it and possible reactions to it.

Manny names planning work as 'hard thinking work' and decries the fact that society as a whole 'judges teaching as just moving kids and ideas around' when in fact English teaching requires 'a hell of a lot of thought', 'intense reading' and 'mental debate and constant adjustment.' Both are in alignment with Giroux's naming of 'teachers as intellectuals' (1988), a sentiment barely evident in much current technicist discourse about teaching. An existential threat is also indicated when Manny alludes to the idea that we might be living in an era where students could question teacherly authority in terms of its sources - 'we might need to work harder to earn our stripes and offer more than Google'. Communication of intellectualism and its products might need to be overt for teachers to feel secure in their students' faith in them.

Examples are given of occasions when external expertise can be drawn on to bolster confidence and authority: for example, Chloe talks of seeking curriculum approval from consultant Mary Myatt, finding an imperative to prioritise Key Stage 3 that she located in an 2015 OFSTED report (Key Stage 3: the wasted years?), and of gaining inspiration from witnessing practice involving literary theory when visiting a neighbouring school. Yet Elsa and Chloe also both communicate a sense of their authority founded in opposition to external 'experts', as both remonstrate against external syllabi prescriptions. They question the GCSE poetry set text choices, and Chloe also speaks with pride about the way her department has pushed back against an OFSTED criticism that they did not teach whole Dickens texts ('we decided we'd go with what we knew we could do well'). Manny is dismissive of Senior Team judging English 'when they don't know the subject from the inside' but trusts the wider community of English teachers 'to know what we're about'. Thus external impositions or judgements can act as useful stimulus for individuals or departments to assert their

own disciplinary beliefs and identity. Elsa also offers resistance to 'looking at something from a Marxist perspective' as she views 'big theoretical interpretations' as the preserve of A level; this may indeed have been a moment of push back against literary theory as an element in the research project itself, a challenge which went unnoticed by me in the moment of the interview!

All participants communicate a sense that they enjoy the variation in their role with students, with interplay between directive elements (bringing coherence to class readings, creating subtle steers in student thinking), validating elements (verifying and substantiating student readings), and generative elements (making space for and encouraging creative thinking). Thus their disciplinary power is intimately connected to its sharing. But Chanda and Elsa also remind us that this composite role also creates tension for the teacher in terms of setting up routes into texts ('we have to say 'the language means this.. to stop students getting lost'), guiding reading, and authorising student interpretation. How student readings might be integrated into whole class critique and analysis seems under-theorised: participants recognised it as a problematic element of their practice (with Elsa particularly seeming anxious about the classroom as an open space for readings and Manny critical of 'the lack of room or time' for exploration) but there is no reference to the accommodation, interleaving or incorporation of student readings as a formalised dimension of scheme creation or assessment. Positions of reading are largely left unexamined; 'shared interpretation' is presented unproblematically without an unpicking of why it might exist or how it might have been brought into being, that is, a focus on the social, historical and linguistic conditions of the moment and its participants. To repeat Kincheloe's simile, purpose, positions and conditions become like tracks in the snow (2008, p.176); a point of authority is reached but the sense of the route to it through the wider landscape is ultimately dissolved.

More hopefully, however, participants do also make multiple references to informal opportunities to negotiate meaning making with their students. Elsa talks about the lack of pre-existing critiques or analyses of *Refugee Boy* allowing her and her class to 'experience it together'; Chloe sees concise poetry texts as allowing for collective interpretation and synchronised pattern finding; Chanda underlines the need for students to 'have their own critical perspectives and be able to articulate their views'; Manny is joyful in encountering originality – 'you have to start applauding because they have come up with something new' – and how if students give 'a pip of an idea' he can help them 'grow it'. Taken together, these comments give an impression that students are adding discretely and perhaps unknowingly to the reservoir of readings within the discipline, even if their contribution is not given formal recognition or wider distribution.

There are also moments where participants acknowledge students' power to instruct their practice and view of texts. Elsa and Chloe both recognise that they hold versions of the students in their

heads during the planning process and work hard to anticipate student approval and misconceptions. Chanda thinks that some students might be closer in their life experience to characters in Othello than she herself is, citing students ‘from a South East Asian background’ who are ‘very interested in the idea of things like diaspora and the idea of interpretation of culture’; Manny is keen to ‘take account of’ students’ ‘prior knowledge’ and to make use of the fact that ‘they always know more than I expect’. Thus two types of ‘ghost’ student sit behind key aspects of the English teacher’s work: the student who represents the teacher’s projected view of their class in terms of collective existing knowledges and identity, and the student who represents what the class might become, the idealised reader immortalised in the essay and disciplinary expert. A Critical Pedagogue might seek to close down distance between these conceptualisations in order to make outcomes advantage the actual students in ways more directly comprehensible to them, or to show how disciplinary processes might be co-opted to longer term ends than success in summative essay writing. Participants certainly want their students to feel confident and independent and even influential: Chanda, for example, had characterised her student-self as a boundary pusher who was confident to ask for justification of the choosing of particular texts, and had enjoyed the social and polyphonic space of the A level seminar table. Correspondingly, she seemed pleased in Stage 3 to state that the students acted as prompters to teachers in her department in terms of the articulation of justifications for text choices – ‘we are pushed into opportunities to talk about kind of why we’ve chosen the texts we’ve chosen and what makes them worth studying’. Chloe wanted her students to become assured in developing ‘inquisitive questioning’; Manny is striving to make literary study as at heart ‘lots of quality encounters.. and a chance to talk about what they think’, and articulates strong disquiet about a model of compliance where students are required only to mimic – ‘I hate the fact that we seem to keep asking ‘what do you think?’ but honestly it’s more like ‘can you think like I think?’’.

4.5.3 Question 3

How students are and might be inducted into critical identities and dispositions

In terms of my final focus question, I generated the following patterns via inductive analysis:

- Commitment to fostering and building students’ confidence in themselves
- The teacher-critic as inductive model
- Holding open space for lay readings?

All 4 participants speak of literary study as a means of fostering and building students’ confidence in themselves. Elsa wants students to be ‘knowledge producing’; Chloe hopes to help students feel

confident in literary study through cumulative rehearsal of entering debates about texts and development of strong 'thesis statements' of their own; Chanda seeks to create a classroom environment where students feel that 'all views are valid'. Perhaps encouraged by the semi-structured question foci in Stage 1, all participants also make links back to their own formative experiences in the English classroom as adolescents. Elsa and Chloe explicitly link classroom criticality with its re-application in the reading of wider situations. Manny sees the teaching of literature as 'a humanistic project'; Chanda wants to help students 'explore the world themselves' and locate and claim 'their place in it' and seems to seek texts which themselves contain examples of characters doing just that (*Things A Bright Girl Can Do*, *A Billion Beats*). No participants spoke of student use of critical confidence to evaluate and reconfigure disciplinary structures, however: none drew a line between their own expression of confidence in acts of syllabus and curriculum appraisal, and the schooling in criticality they themselves had received.

The idea of bringing established critical or interpretative voices into play as models receives differing treatments from participants. Manny signals that the introduction of established critical voices could potentially inhibit student confidence – '...*The Machine Gunners* .. does not occupy a critical space in comparison with something like *Hamlet*.. where there are critics waiting to shoot you down..'. Chanda, in contrast, describes the study of differing interpretations of Shakespeare plays as productive, as she believes it allows students to weigh up and calibrate their own responses, made stronger by the knowledge that contrasting readings have already been publicly validated and can legitimately co-exist. In her book on the status of literary criticism, Atherton sets up the image of an interminable tug-of-war between stakeholders driven by 'a desire to give English disciplinary status by grounding it in an recognisable body of scholarship' and those grounding themselves in 'a denial that English needs such a grounding as.. all it requires is a text and a sensitive reader' (2005, p.179). Atherton's focus is A Level Literature, however: neither of the extreme positions she describes accurately captures the identity of literary study at Key Stage 3 English, where the critical history of texts barely features, and whilst they are generally inducted into a narrow form of disciplinary debate and essay construction, students are not often rallied to see themselves as taking up a contributory place within that history. Eaglestone is moved to call for 'tribal denomination' of 'literary critics' to be instated at school and university level as 'it's certainly challenging that there seems to be no accepted name for what we are teaching students of literature to become' (2016, p.4); the identity, status and purpose of the school student-critic remains under-theorised and imprecise.

Examples of concurrent readings remain scarce in the pedagogical literature, but in work exploring student responses to Satrapi's graphic novel *Persepolis*, Dellacqua (2015, p.20) instructs us that 'viewing literary critics' words alongside an adolescent audience reminds us of the power of literature, how it might be interpreted, and the potential that layers of storytelling brings for meaning-making' and that 'while their observations spoke to theory that they were not privy to, adolescent voices both validated and complicated common theories of this text and the story it tells'. In this example, Dellaqua notes how the frames literally drawn on the pages of the text kept the idea of positioning and viewpoints salient for herself and her students as they explored their own personal relations to those frames: discussion of critical focalisation can take place alongside discussion of narrative focalisation.

The idea of the teacher as inductive model critic does recur in participant responses – Chloe, for example, wants her department team to 'spend more of our CPL time on our own interpretations.. on being literary critics ourselves' – but others raise its problematic nature. Manny voices concern about the 'break in flow' when he is obliged to introduce an essay question and eclipse open discussion with a pre-determined readings – 'can you think like I think?' Chanda had been clear that she wanted her classroom to be a place where knowledge was generated as well as transmitted. Her view of her students was as being (literature helps students to see who they are) but also as becoming (literature helps students work out who they might want to be). However, students occupying the critical space was not without tension for her: where students' views did not elide with her own, this was problematic - 'last year, everyone just really hated Desdemona.. no matter what I said, they just hated her.. it was really hard to get them to understand the context in terms of how brave she was being..' But she did then acknowledge that 'it's difficult sometimes to get an unmediated response', and started to unpick the degree to which she had provided, arbitrated, or facilitated new textual understanding during the teaching of the *Othello* unit:

when it comes to sort of themes, that was still quite guided. They looked to me for those.. with themes they kind of took what I gave them to start with, and kind of followed those through.... When I asked them about different interpretations of character and particularly when I gave them short sections to either perform or direct or suggest how they would stage them, there were some interesting new ideas and combinations there.

She also repeatedly emphasises how she had tried to encourage students to feel that their own readings could be validated: 'we don't want them to just have that one perception of it. We want them to try and read it for themselves first.. and then we look at some different interpretations'. One means of promoting confidence is to put them in position of (theatre) director: 'it's trying to

train them to read it in that way, to read as a director and to think about who's on stage.. they plot out for different scenes where people are going to be.. that's quite an interesting thing to get them to read in that way, and to think of themselves as being that kind of reader'. 'That kind of reader' here seems to mean a reader who can and indeed must make more conscious choices about how moments and characters are being understood. Student and teacher are pushed beyond the idea of a single valid interpretative position into a more open space where multiple possible stagings can be envisioned, and understood without requiring universal agreement.

Creating space on its own may not be enough to help students draw on the full range of knowledges they might be able to bring to the act of reading, however; Eaglestone argues that 'one of the problems of the idea of being a 'literary critic' before the 'theory wars' was that it seemed to presuppose that one agreed with the opinions and presuppositions of a white, educated literary, academic and metropolitan elite' (2015, p.11); the extent to which literary theory has supplanted those presuppositions for a more democratic, equitable and accessible set of discourses in school literary study is highly debatable. All participants signal a belief in upholding the Freirean principle that students themselves are 'the most important people in their own education' (Eaglestone, 2019, p.32), but all also signal that in the funnelling motion towards Key Stage 4 exam requirements, it is difficult to honour and validate diverse readings and positions. Hinchcliffe (2018, p.191) makes a strong case for greater 'epistemic freedom' in schools, citing English Literature as a subject which maintains 'room for doubt', an important corollary being that the classroom is where 'humans should become strong evaluators' of ideas that have saliency within a discipline, within the wider world, and within themselves. The sets of operative competencies that we seek to develop in our students need to be both academic and post-academic in their nature; that is, conduits into the discipline but also cognisant of the fact that subject matter and interpretative action exist in 'lay' contexts after our input has ended: ideas work and identity work do not stop dead for those exiting compulsory literary study at 16, and we want to promote literary encounters as both meaningful and consequential. My participants all indicated a disjunct between Key Stage 3 and the technicist turn of Key Stage 4 to data recall (plot, quotations, even argument formations) and timed writing skill; Elsa for example saw 'engagement' as a KS3 priority that was not tracked through into KS4; Chloe was concerned that students might take the final grade as signalling 'if they don't do very well on it, it means they can't do English'. At present, Key Stage 3 might be the place where teachers have more latitude to pursue epistemological investigations, but exit points also matter: the discipline at Key Stage 4, and in its higher settings, should not turn its back on 'unofficial knowledge' and the motivations of the lay reader to engage or disengage with literature, assuming nothing of rigour or consequence can be found there. Indeed, to shore up the

discipline in the light of failing uptake, literary theory might itself benefit from recentring work to include 'not only dominant, formal, explicit high textual traditions of poetics, but also subaltern and popular epistemologies that may be emergent or latent in praxis' (Krishnaswamy, 2010, p.399).

4.5.4 Teachers as theorists

The literature defining and explaining literary theory often seems to inadvertently define it as 'other', emphasising its difficulty and distancing it from human subjects. Rather than bringing in extrinsic bodies of theory, I had asked my participants to put themselves at the centre of their own epistemological investigation, to try on the mantle of theorist, in order to focus on rather than displace their mechanisms of intellectual authority. This was intended to highlight how teachers are 'always already theorists', continually working on the rules of knowledge validation through their choices, acts of framing and conceptualisation of Literature and its students. Holding the codes, conventions and modes of operation of literary study up to the light asserts their constructed nature, and in this, I hoped to prompt participants to assert their right to ask questions of the discipline and their role in its constitution. This prefigures work to help their students fit their own readings into disciplinary networks of thinking and see themselves as contributory actors to the discipline's renewal, to move ideas about inclusion in literary study beyond the review of text choices and into reading practices. In the spirit of Critical Pedagogy, such work asserts school literary study to be more than a business of reproduction: the discipline should demonstrate its relevance to students who are its co-opted investors to the end of Key Stage 4, defining their stake in its traditions as part of their induction into its practices and texts.

When asked at the conclusion of Stage 3 if they see themselves as literary theorists, participants indicate that this mantle is not a straightforward fit. Elsa is doubtful, and does not feel comfortable with the title of literary theorist: 'Not really. On a day-to-day basis teaching what I do, I think not really. Having taught A level in the past, I feel like I was much more there, but at the minute teaching 11 to 16 I don't think it's... it's necessarily something that comes into day-to-day practice'. This comment suggests that perhaps for her, theory remains associated with an extraneous body of knowledge, to be bracketed off as the preserve of A Level. She is hesitant about 'that kind of conversation' being suitable to accompany 'reading and engaging with literature in lower years' where the 'finding [of] a common path' and 'learning the skills' was a priority, and younger students might 'feel put off' by 'something too political'. This echoes the comments of some participants in Ireland et al's study who stated that they saw 'the isms' to be 'distracting' and 'too far out from the texts and the actual classroom' (2017, p.60). If 'theory' here is 'too political',

Elsa seems to be conceptualising it as a pre-set of ideas at a level of abstraction she feels to be irrelevant for her students: she is clear about not wanting 'difficult abstract labels and things'.

However, if we consider theorising – that is, developing ideas to shape or explain a practice or phenomenon, examining possible underpinning principles and structures of school literary study - there are also signs that theorising is part of her practice. Department dialogue to share and secure justification of text choices is an element of practice she is proud of and considers to be innovative – 'we can verbalise what we're doing in our classrooms.. we do tend to try new things and we are very sort of proactive on that side of things.. pushing to make the knowledge more explicit.' She also uses the interview context to start to probe her own disciplinary 'modes of operation' (Ashbee, 2021, p.11), that is, her own choice of focus and prioritisation in teaching *Refugee Boy* (for example privileging writer over reader as a means of achieving classroom coherence) and 'just to think a bit more about what I'm saying, how I'm saying it' to step away from the fast flow of everyday teaching:

I've started to think again about the bigger picture, which you often don't get chance to do day to day.. why are we teaching this and are we teaching this the right way and are we missing a trick with something.. like I'm now thinking about how I've maybe not been considering how the students see themselves in relation to the text?

In alignment with further tenets of Critical Pedagogy, she has also begun to question who is best placed to make significant decisions about texts, the siting of disciplinary authority, seeing the teacher who had actual direct experience of teaching a text across different groups as better placed to evaluate its value for literary study: 'I'm not sure the choice is right or the right people are choosing', perhaps a sign that she is developing or extending a dispositional confidence to question the status quo.

Chloe also rejects the title of literary theorist. However, she does signal that the opportunity to explain her practice and examine its principles had been productive. After the teaching of her Dickens unit, in the Stage 3 interview, she indicates that the creation of opportunity to build up teachers' critical identities as agents of their subject might be a necessary precursor to work on strengthening students' critical identities and classroom theorising. Reflecting on her Stage 2 interview, she gestures to the creation of thinking space in which new possibilities could open out:

I think what was really powerful was for us to have had that conversation. 'Cause I think in my head I was getting to that. But I don't think my team were getting to that as fellow kind of professionals.

She expresses a concern that her Early Career Teachers might also be hemmed in (echoing Elsa's reflection on her own early teaching compliance and deference): 'they're doing exactly what they're told to do.. but do they feel freed up enough... or are they just getting through the scheme..? Like the best students who have that A* confidence?' She describes her own experience as imbuing her with confidence as 'I've been doing this for a long time and I go off piste 'cause I know it and I've built it..' This suggests that knowing the structure of the discipline from the inside is necessary if its frontiers are to be traversed, as well as quietly implying that Chloe sees such movement away from a central directive line as both a permissible and a motivational dimension of teaching.

We can also see her moving away from a central curricular/syllabus line as she feels emboldened to call out the arbitrary reservation of certain kinds of student positioning for Key Stage 5: 'in a bit of an illuminated kind of moment we've been able hopefully as a profession and in this subject area to start saying we're enabling ourselves [to say] it's not just the preserves of A level 'well you don't touch that and you don't talk about that until you get to A level' '. In this moment, Chloe is moved to re-assess the assumption of hierarchical stages in school literary study (as enshrined, perhaps in mark schemes of formal qualification) – she is actively considering disciplinary framing at local level. Her confidence to rethink department conceptualisation of students is also bolstered by the fact the GCSE exam specification is in a period of stability:

we know the spec, we understand it, we own it, we're less fearful of it.. kind of 6,7 years into it.. therefore perhaps we are more confident in taking ownership of what we do at key stage 3.. that has freed us up to just.. think a little bit more freely about our subject areas..

As teachers feel 'enabled' and 'freed up', they are more likely to feel confident to consider differing possibilities for student identity and criticality – and in spite of her clear 'no' when asked if she sees herself as a literary theorist directly in the Stage 3 interview, we can see Chloe reaching towards new configurations: '... are they beginning to consider themselves as literary critics? Could they use theory or do theory..?'

The specific research focus did seem to have been a contributory factor here ('motivated by some of our conversations') but Chloe had also had extended time between our interviews with her team as a department, where they had worked together to 'diagnose some of those issues across key stage three that might get us to the point where we can build them as greater literary critics..' The department group stimulus had helped her articulate and validate her thinking about student status in the discipline: 'I think what was really powerful for us was to have that conversation.. 'cause I think in my head I was getting to that.' During a visit to another school, she had also witnessed students being trusted with 'an alternative or an additional reading' of a key character during a lesson on *An Inspector Calls* and had been impressed with students' capacity to cope: 'the students weren't just paying lip service to it.. They were producing a reading'. She wanted to discourage dependence and promote 'inquisitive questioning':

to almost try and encourage them to be a little bit more of a kind of 'here are your tools to be a literary critic.. these are the ways in which to perhaps look at that and interpret it yourself' and almost encourage them to be those... Not problem solving is it? But it's that in that inquisitive questioning which might break that barrier to just wanna be told what it means: that '..I just want to regurgitate what I've been told to say.'

External stimuli, then, had stirred up thought about purpose, identity and agency in relation to her students and she describes here a handover of tools rather than a model of apprenticeship that merely emphasised replication. In her visit the nearby schools the authoritative stance of the students had made an impression: she had witnessed teachers using 'a literary lens summary' with younger pupils 'from which they could be expounding different interpretations of their texts' which she considered to be 'really impressive'.

Chanda gives the most confident response when asked if she is a literary theorist: 'I don't suppose I've ever called myself that, but yeah, I probably think I would be.' She is keen to discuss the different dimensions that literary theory in her classroom, starting with 'theory' as linked to interpretation: 'Theory is a bigger frame, but they are not unrelated' – and points to the curation of a curriculum as an opportunity to set up such a frame as 'a lens that you could use across texts rather than a single reading of one text'. Like Chloe wanting to encourage her students to 'show her the links', she sees the making of connections and finding of patterns as theory work, but identifies logistical constraints and exam syllabi in the compulsory years of literary study as potentially prohibitive to the development of connection-making: 'It's what we'd want for all students. But they need exposure to a lot of texts and literature across time and I'm not sure the lower Key Stages allow for that.'

Theorising as conscious choice making and position taking is also a valuable and motivational aspect of professional work – ‘The slowing down to look more closely at how we think about things, like the questions about reader and writer..is really interesting and it does change then the way you want to go and maybe explore the text and to get at the knowledge of the team’ and ‘I’m fortunate to be in a department where we often have..we have literary theory kind of based conversations, even if we don’t announce that’s what we’re doing.’ Teachers need to engage in cyclical renewal of justification as students need to hear their reasoning:

That idea of, you know, cause it's about why we are doing it, why we are teaching any one thing and sequence of things.. Why bother studying literature? What is the point of it? We can be sure [students] will come and ask ‘why am I studying Shakespeare?’ We need a strong answer and that question is always going to be asked, and that’s good.

In a later comment she frames also theory as choice making and position taking by students, which she sees as a requirement of exam success and facet of identity development:

you can't do English language GCSE if you're not at some level a literary theorist....because of the fiction bit of the [AQA] language GCSE.. I just don't think you can access it very well if you can't work out a position about the question and the text you're given on the day. And part of knowing how to answer strongly is knowing why you didn't take a different position, that makes you argue more convincingly.

Manny remains tentative about the place of ‘theory’ and ‘theorising’ in school literary study, but like Chanda, he does articulate renewed interest in the status and advancement of student viewpoints:

This whole experiment did make me think more about students’ readings, about them not interfered with at the outset because you asked if they could be theorists. I don’t think that label is right but there is something important about giving more time and value to the positions they might take.

He indicates he has been thinking about his own work preparing explanations - ‘When I was choosing passages for close reading, I was considering straight away what I would say about them, that influenced my choice but probably also influenced what I would give credit to from them’ - and the relative status of teacher/student readings has become problematised: ‘Maybe in the end we do want them to think like us and read from the same place and attitudes that we’re reading from. Is that inescapable? Is that even right?’ While he does not answer his own question, he has also become more sensitive to the way that question might garner a different reaction for different

texts: 'It might be easier to approve their answers with something like *The Machine Gunners* which does not occupy a critical space in comparison with something like *Hamlet*.. where there are critics waiting to shoot you down..' That Manny sees himself as a validator suggests he feels the teacher can help the student to shore up confidence in their opinions; the thought of critics 'shooting down' those opinions also suggests a fear about initiates' vulnerability when entering the disciplinary arena.

Manny also sees theory work as disruptive, and whilst he is not against disruption, like Elsa, he is concerned about a lack of support for the English teacher wanting to work with theory if it exposes politics in the classroom against institutional norms: 'We're not supposed to bring politics into the classroom, it's not taught anywhere explicitly in the school until A level, at least not with that name, and I don't know where that leaves our students in terms of trying out speaking their views and positions.'⁶ Peim states in *Critical Theory and the English Teacher* that 'Theory promises the possibility of opening the subject to its political being' (1993, p.6) as 'the ideological inflection is always there'; Manny is worried about the blanking of that inflection in schools which also might erase any impetus to either deconstruct stances behind readings or express them: 'we sort of deny that we live in a political world. Does that make us scared of it? We have to pretend to be neutral but genuine neutral is almost impossible to ever achieve.' However, when asked directly about whether he could or would use 'political' literary theory ideas with *The Machine Gunners*, he is quick to see a space for such work, albeit with time and curricular design constraints:

Well we could look at how Westall presents the women and have a go at thinking about how women had different roles on the Home Front. But there wouldn't be time for a full feminist deconstruction of Westall's attitudes or societal norms.. And it would need to fit with something that came later I think.. The girls do get irritated with Audrey and her teapot⁷ so they'd be up for that..

Manny also brings up accountability as a constraint on what he might be able to 'validate': 'I'd like to think I can tick different positions but in reality maybe I'm not all that enlightened as I would like to think I am... There's limited time and you do always feel the end of Key Stage 4 at your back'. He names his dilemma: 'you could see [teaching] as a choice between letting them down in not knowing how to achieve in that exam or letting them down by not letting them explore what they really want to say'. But he is also quick to deconstruct his own binary frame: 'if that's all the job

⁶ The Department for Education issued 'Political impartiality guidance for schools' in February 2022; see educationhub.blog.gov.uk accessed 18.12.23

⁷ Audrey, the girl in the boys' gang, is the one to make tea for Rudi the injured German soldier whom the children find.

was I wouldn't still be doing it – I can always make space in lessons and go off track. The official schemes are only ever a beginning.' If the project of Critical Pedagogy should be a matter of showing how the space of the possible is always larger than the one we are assigned (Fischman, 2020), then Manny's forays 'off track' and Chloe's 'off piste' signal the continued existence of Narnian doors out from formally codified disciplinary landscapes.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

In the first section of this chapter, I return to my initial motivation for conducting the study to re-assert my ontological position. I summarise the perspectives and ideas discussed in the Literature Review and note what that literature suggested about the challenges inherent for teachers in undertaking epistemological activity in relation to the teaching of Literature. I also give account of participants who chose not to complete the study and what can be learned from this. In the second section of the chapter, I then summarise my conclusions about the research, including a review of its strengths and limitations. In the third section, I conclude this chapter by offering recommendations for future practice, including a proposal for a model of Key Stage 3 literary study informed by my findings, in which teachers and students are supported to theorise their power and positionality in relation to existing and possible disciplinary structures.

5.1 Motivations for the study

In April 2024, I attended a session for Leeds Trinity University PGCE students led by head teacher Chris Harrison, in which he outlined the practices he had instituted in his school to celebrate reading. He included an anecdote about a Chinese student in a Year 6 class who had come to him with a school copy of Roald Dahl's 'Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator'. The student told Chris that he didn't think it was a suitable book for the library, pointing to a moment in the text where the American President phones the Chinese Premier:

The President again picked up the receiver.

'Greetings, honourable Mr Plesident,' said a soft, faraway voice. 'Here is Assistant-Plemier Chu-On-Dat speaking. How can I do for you?'

'Knock-Knock,' said the President.

'Who der?'

'Ginger.'

'Ginger who?'

'Ginger yourself much when you fell off the Great Wall of China?' said the President. 'Okay, Chu-on-Dat. Let me speak to Premier How-Yu-Bin.' (Dahl, 1972, p.22)

The student questioned how a widely celebrated writer was presenting Chinese characters, and how this characterisation might affect his classmates' view of him. Chris had book removed from the library stock and record by the end of the day.

After the session, I asked Chris if he could say what might have contributed to that moment of agency in his (young) student. I was impressed that, like Lola Olufemi writing to her Cambridge University English lecturers about the undergraduate literature curriculum, this child had understood his status as a stakeholder in the school setting, had felt secure in questioning the book's inclusion in library stock, and had made an active contribution to the shaping of his educational setting. Chris Harrison explained that as Headteacher, he had worked to create a culture wherein staff explained the rationale for book choices to their students, thinking critique out loud, and actively seeking reasoned student input into review of those choices. His description speaks of a school where explicit consideration is given to helping students learn their right to develop and deploy a critical disposition in relation to literature, as well as more formally codified subject content and technical academic skills. Teachers model this disposition, and can make space for students to inhabit it; in miniature, this moment exemplifies Freire's notion of the teacher who 'does not regard objects as his private property, but as the object of reflection by himself and his students', and who 'reconsiders her earlier considerations as the students express their own' (Freire, 2005, p.81). Authority for this teacher is not disavowed, but 'does not carry the message that such authority is the warrant of knowledge' (Stenhouse, quoted in Elliott and Norris 2011, 133).

The construction of this thesis has been driven by a conviction that school literary study should be about more than the reproduction of formal guided responses to literary texts: the classroom should also be seen as a site where critical identity is named and nurtured and students are helped to take up and try on standpoints, and develop their own positions. Importantly, this cannot just be framed as an activity confined to school and facilitated by a teacher-mediator using apparently water-tight concepts; students should be helped to see something of the 'philosophical plumbing' (Eaglestone, 2021, p.7) of the discipline, firstly so that they become aware that it exists at all, and secondly so that they can begin to explore and theorise the way that textual authority is, can and could be constructed, by others and for themselves, in and out of school. Literary study should have a legacy for all students – that is, those who do not pursue it into A Level and beyond as much as those that do – a legacy in which the student learns not diminish or subjugate her own response to the literary text in relation to responses generated collectively or by distant critics or commentators, but can fit it into a network of possible responses. This is work of self-validation, identity work, and requires teachers who are confident to maintain critical review of their own disciplinary moves, and can assert that they themselves and their students can make a disciplinary contribution.

The literature about literary theory and theorising discussed in Chapter 2 offers pointers about work on the rules of knowledge validation. It provides us with two kinds of perspective: the perspectives of guides and chaperons who have assumed authority about theory and seek to guide from elevated vantage points, and the perspectives of those grappling with the business of theory in settings where it is to be animated and made meaningful, that is, teachers in Higher Education struggling to induct undergraduates into theory, teacher educators reviewing the practice of themselves and the English teaching profession, and teachers themselves considering the disciplinary legitimacy of their own knowledge generation. Kincheloe (2004) reminds us that too often in teaching and teacher education the only type of 'practice' signified by the term involves classroom teaching – not, for instance, the practice of knowledge production or its exploration in education: the work of being a teacher (and that of their students) is not commonly conceptualised as involving epistemological work. Thus any move to analyse epistemological assumptions embedded in classroom versions of the practice of literary study – that is, any move into theorising what literary study is and could be – may well push all teachers into potentially uncharted and challenging spaces – spaces where teacherly identity and authority can be unsettled, with the ruled margins offered by positivistic, apparently neutral value-free versions of the discipline becoming blurred and porous. Within my second chapter, Doecke, on his red rattler train, representing highly experienced teachers and teacher educators, and Bulfin and Mathews, new teachers at the other end of the experience spectrum, remind us that engaging in epistemological scrutiny of one's own practice can be complex work, particularly when undertaken without supportive professional structures. The literature also reminds us that there are few available accounts of teachers' theorising work: 'the teacher-theorist' has yet to find categorisation and validation in the discourses of literature education.

As well as practical help with the creation of induction processes, teachers are likely to want both a convincing rationale for bringing their students as well as themselves into such places of uncertainty, and reassurance that teacherly authority can be sited not only in propositional knowledge but also in the building of phronesis - kinds of knowledge beyond canons, established practices and well worn routes through texts. Giroux's frontier thinking (Giroux, 2005) involves migration from the safety of carefully delineated disciplinary territory into a more open, unfinished and unrehearsed version of thought and practice and this will not appeal to all teachers at all times. During the data collection process, a fifth participant (recorded here as 'D') did make an active choice to withdraw during Stage 2, signalling that she had come to feel that the call to theorise her disciplinary work represented a risk and a distraction. She volunteered feedback that the questions about conceptualisation had felt 'inappropriate at the moment' [we were just out of the second

pandemic lockdown]. She did not feel it was a good time 'to put what we're doing under the microscope'; rather, a teacher's focus should stay directed towards maximising student success in 'mastering the rules of the game' not 'trying to build a new game while we're actually playing it'. She felt that the uncertainty of the future her students were facing made it imperative that they direct all energies to a GCSE grade which would have longevity as 'a useful currency'; she did not want to deconstruct/look to reconstruct her version of the game at this time. Two other initial participants also dropped out before Stage 2 because of the volume and intensity of school work they were experiencing. This stands as an important reminder that Critical Pedagogy's invitation to set out on a journey (Biesta, 1998) into epistemological exploration may be rebuffed by teachers at any given moment due to the network of complex contextual factors that influence their work. D did express interest in the outcome of this research, however; follow up work to the thesis will include an exploration of her view of the viability of the recommendations I present here. As I advocate for Critical Pedagogy, I cannot marginalise any challengers or excise their critiques but must seek to understand and respond to them in any further call to action.

Fischman (2020, p.246) reminds all those working with Critical Pedagogy to attend to 'the importance of potentially transformative characteristics that are already present in many teachers.' The data collected from participants who completed all 3 stages of my project contains multiple indications that theorising about literary study and related critical epistemological work is happening, albeit in fragmentary and unstratified ways, often in overlapping layers of thought about curriculum content, key concepts within it, the role of teacher and student working within and through that curriculum, and the purpose and effect of school literary study. Space for new configurations of curriculum and for new meanings is created and maintained, for example in the way that as well as walking the tracks of linear, propositional knowledge, students in my participants' classes are also helped to feel part of a more fluid conversation in which their emergent identities are considered and their insights valued. The literature classroom remains a site of possibility, as evidenced for example in Elsa's view of students as 'knowledge producing' and desire not to force 'false-feeling' readings, Chloe's call to her students to show her 'some new links' between texts, Chanda's handing of the 'tutor read' choice over to the students and promotion of local contemporary drama with its message of curricula contestation (2 Billion Beats) and Manny's growing of students' 'idea pips'. Knights points us towards 'education as becoming' with the meaning of any text 'summoned into being within conversation' (2017, p.8) rather than being tangibly, finitely there; even if meanings appear to be fixed in essays with predetermined requirements or homogenised reader or writer figures, my participants are still finding ways to keep the disciplinary conversation open and to validate students' emergent thoughts and identities.

5.2 The limitations and successes of the research

There have been times during the research when the yoking of Critical Pedagogy and literary theorising has seemed out of joint. There were moments when I felt that their differing conceptual grammars might not always lend themselves to fluent cross-translation, in spite of epistemological overlaps. This is true too of the yoking of participant and researcher worlds during the data collection and analysis processes: in my own pattern seeking and comment building came the jarring reminders of my own ontological steers. For example, my interest in literary theory is not universally shared. It may be a self-conscious field, but its advocates (including myself) have not done a good enough job of explaining how it might relate to and have worth for all those undertaking literary study. As the review of literature indicated, this contributes to a schism in the discipline, with many teachers inducting students into literary study at the school stage perceiving theory to be at best an abstract, confusing, distant body of work, and at worst a destabilising threat.

With hindsight, I can also see the degree to which my research design has been haunted by the charged ideal of a teacher-theorist that I held: I thought every English teacher must surely be in some way a critical pedagogue troubled by disciplinary power relations, finding themselves at odds with their own subject and thereby moved to deconstruct it. Yet it is important to acknowledge how, in the course of data collection, that staunch ideal of teachers-as-insurgents-in-waiting fragmented in the dappled light of the complex stories and attitudes presented by my participant group. Vossoughi and Gutierrez (2016, p.145) offer a reminder that critical consciousness is not a coherent, stable 'state of grace' that can be 'arrived at'; rather, teachers and students are likely to 'step in and out of hegemonic forms of thinking'. My participants find lots to love in their current versions of school literary study: I remain mindful that to gain traction, any recommendations must therefore be couched in terms of reconstitution or expansion rather than substitution.

In the end, my participants seemed more gently amused than radicalised by my attempts to name them as theorists: as previous studies had suggested, the title holds little prestige in the world of the school. Only Chanda said that she saw herself as a theorist at the end of Stage 3. There had, however, been a movement in the way each participant was thinking about their scheme of learning and their relationships with students and discipline. The key concepts of reader, writer and literature had been eased out of their settings and held up for inspection: participants were able to stand outside of their practice, purposes and values and look in on them over time, in relation to a specific scheme and in relation to ideas of power distribution. It would be a stretch to imagine that this thinking could be considered to be 'literary theory' in disciplinary circles, but I do feel confident that these teachers had begun to articulate and make links between school based

disciplinary practices and mechanisms, and the positionality they might represent in terms of knowledge, authority and conscious approach. They had begun to summarise their own theories about what literary study was and could be in their classrooms.

The research has also succeeded in reminding me and my participants that 'power' is not a non-relational, static commodity that individuals possess or deploy, an allocation bound closely to institutional status. Participants articulated the way that students do exert influence on teacher decisions, albeit often in inexplicit ways (for example, in Manny's hidden 'mental debate and constant adjustment'): students' concerns, interests, struggles and perceived identities are felt to be important. Participants also emphasised students' capacity to find new readings and therefore 'teach them back' as a positive and motivational feature of their work.

The idea of the classrooms as a pluralistic site of power was more problematic. Critical Pedagogy involves a push for the rejection of a consensual view of society that denies social conflict and over emphasises social harmony (Baptiste, 2008); my participants were keen to teach about social conflict in the contained world of texts, but conceptualised their classrooms as sites for the mediation of plurality and ultimately, the smoothing out of difference into a reader-figure in formal responses to the literature. For Chanda, this was through the explicit teaching of a disciplinary 'reader' who 'is not them'. For Chloe, this was through the construction of a 'shared sense' of meaning. For Emily, plurality was a source of anxiety, and resulted in a turn to put 'the writer' at the centre of essays instead. For Manny, unable to resolve difference between multiple student readings and formal response requirements, the answer was 'not to think too hard about who that 'reader' is'. It has led me to think hard about a model of literary study for classrooms that works to help teachers reconceptualise the literature classroom, a model that acknowledges difference, a model that upholds a relational and dynamic conception of power. Such a model should not just emphasise horizontal classroom power relations but vertical relations too: it should function to offer teachers and students positions as both subjects of the discipline and actors upon it.

The research has also exposed a tension between ideas of literary study as an education of imposition and as an education of elicitation. Teachers can show an aversion to the idea of imposition even whilst engaged in a high degree of transmissive teaching. Fear of imposition may be one reason why teachers reject lenses of literary theory that come with a 'political' label (as illustrated in Elsa's rejection of Marxism and in Ireland et al's 2017 work on Australian English teachers' beliefs). Indeed, there is a government mandate to exercise caution: current guidance from the Department for Education (2022, para. 24) 'prohibits' 'the promotion of partisan political views' even whilst commanding that teachers support students to 'become active citizens' via teaching about 'the different views people have' (as long as they are 'legitimate differences of

opinion'). Yet the literature classroom cannot escape the fact that to educate is always to select from among competing values and, consequently, to privilege certain ways of being and knowing over others, whether these are labelled 'political' or not. School disciplinary structures currently work in ways that subdue awareness of this fact and obscure it from both teachers and students. I found myself searching for a model that could acknowledge the selections involved in forming responses to literary study, place greater emphasis on the contextual contingency of any response, and give greater relative value to student perspectives and contributions.

5.3 Recommendations for Practice

Critical Pedagogy as an intellectual movement offers broad outlines and principles rather than prescriptions for practice; it can be difficult to see how these might be translated into specific actions within school, and there is little literature which links the movement in practical ways to particular disciplines as they are manifest as school subjects. My first recommendations are offered to teachers, the immediate subjects of my study. I argue for the creation of a collection of tangible artefacts to help the English teaching community come to know more about the thinking sitting behind the creation of schemes, and as a means for specialists at later phases of literature education to engage with the ways in which induction processes are shaped. I then offer a frame to support a reshaping of Key Stage 3, via which teachers are encouraged to undertake a pattern of thinking that mirrors that which I propose for their students. Such a frame would help teachers to keep thinking about the purpose and value of literary study for all its students. With such mobility comes challenge but also possibility. I encourage teachers to become students again, like the protagonist Knecht in Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), to practice reflective reasoning, and to accept that the intellectual project of literary study can never be finished and neatly ruled off: schemes and curricula need to hold open space within them for student authority to be nurtured from within and without.

Recommendation 1: An epistemological seed bank

An increasing number of schemes of work are accessible to teachers via internet platforms and social media channels, and within multi-academy trust groups. Many schools and trusts are also starting to use printed booklets as the spine of lessons. Such resources work to mitigate the punishing workload of teaching, and offer ready fixes to department leads held accountable for teaching in the face of perceived knowledge gaps and staff absence or departure. In their finished form, however, the route to the creation of these documents is invisible and contexts of their production remain obscured. The tacit theorising behind curriculum creation is lost. As a result,

the teacher new to the school or profession is not encouraged to see teaching and curriculum construction as intellectual, value-laden, deeply contextualised and complex work.

My participants have taken part in an examination of key concepts and values underpinning their schemes, both prior to, and after the teaching of those schemes. The accounts they gave in successive interviews illuminate their nuanced and contrasting ways of seeing themselves, their students, and the discipline of literary study in connection with those schemes and in this, represent a kind of educational resource that is missing from the profession. Kincheloe makes a cogent argument for the development of a 'critical complex teacher education' to promote 'an awareness of the complexities of educational practice and an understanding of and commitment to a socially just, democratic notion of schooling' (2004, p.50); a 'seed bank' of schemes would contribute to a model of professionalism that included conceptualisation work in its definition of teacher 'practice'. Each scheme would be annotated to show its creators' influences and thinking, and supplemented with reflections on what happened during the actual teaching of the scheme, once or over multiple iterations. Such a bank of material would also stand as a historical record over time, a ground-level complement to the more elevated professional overviews offered by commentators such as Mathieson (1975), Goodwyn (2012) or Gibbons (2017). I see such a bank as holding value for both new and established teachers, teacher educators, and those working in later phases of literature education in terms of its provision of multiple snapshots of the choreographic detail of teaching thinking. Post-teaching reflections in particular might signpost the ways in which literary texts and disciplinary processes were making or losing connection with actual students' lives, concerns and identities.

Recommendation 2: A tripartite framework for the teaching of literature at Key Stage 3
Secondly, I propose the use of a tripartite model for literary study at Key Stage 3 entitled 'Home, Away, Here', which invites the student to consider texts from three angles, with the teacher facilitating understanding of multiple sites and sources of authority and validation. The model is intended to help the teacher work with students to explore the ways in which subjectivities are being formed – 'the kinds of selves that are made available to [students] in a particular conjecture' (De Lissoy and Reardon, 2023, p.66) whilst also locating school literary study in a wider landscape of disciplinary work.

The first approach to textual study, 'Home', adopts Critical Pedagogy's tenet that learning should make substantive contact with students' everyday experiences. Young and Mueller (2013) advocate for the importance of 'powerful knowledge' which takes the student beyond their personal experience, but too insistent a focus on the new runs the risk of alienating that student. Dewey warns against practice in which 'the bonds which connect the subject matter of the school

study with the habits and ideals of the social group are disguised and covered up' and a decoupling of social values when 'the ties are so loosened that it ..appears that there are none, as if subject matter existed simply as knowledge on its own independent behoof, and as if study were the mere act of mastering it for its own sake' (in Stengel, 1997, p.591). When entry points to textual discussion are identified by the students themselves, directive power is redistributed, the classroom is re-centred around the student, and the teacher will continually build knowledge and understanding of their students' lived experience beyond school (powerful knowledge for the teacher!) in order to facilitate further textual engagement and analysis. As Bernstein argued, 'if the culture of the teacher is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher' (cited in Gillies et al, 2010, p.28). My participants indicated that their understandings of their students' lives did inform their planning of schemes and text choices but that consideration of out-of-school knowledges had no formalised place during classroom textual explorations.

The second approach, 'Away', involves teaching students about the history of responses to literary texts, the historical antecedents that have produced the discipline and its current dynamics. Drawing on Sullivan's advocacy of the use of 'reception moments' which 'provide students with the opportunity to actually see literary value in the process of being constructed' (2002, p.569), 'Away' helps students understand that literary value is socially constructed and that modes of criticism have changed over time: readings are perpetually unfinished. Readings are also reflective of the contexts of their production, just like the texts they scrutinise: the study of 'context' in the literature classroom is extended to its products as well as its subjects. Sullivan uses *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to illustrate his argument, juxtaposing the statement from the trustees of one American library that banned the book in 1885, comments by Ernest Hemingway (1935) and Lionel Trilling (1977) stating the novel's 'greatness', and John Wallace's denunciation of its 'racist' content (1992). His students are invited to lay their own initial points of connection and difference alongside these responses, and to debate why it might have garnered such differing reactions. In relation to the research data, such an approach corresponds most closely with Chanda's use of multiple interpretations of Shakespeare. Where more modern texts such as *Two Billion Beats* might not yet have a history of critical reception, students might focus on its route to publication or performance, or take a horizontal look at how it might be judged by differing local, national or international communities.

As well as bringing ideas about cultural arbitration to light, 'Away' also involves the induction into essay modes of operation more familiar to current teachers, with worked modelling of how to achieve a writing voice that fits into existing disciplinary culture. The rationalisation of the text's

readership into one archetypal 'reader' in order to create a reasoned argument in essay form is actively demonstrated and delineated rather than glossed over. Elsa testifies to the value of use of this reader in helping to achieve both a sense of unity and community within the classroom; it is also a means by which students can 'try on' an authoritative stance through the building of coherent reasoning about interpretation using logic and persuasion, and experience confidence in making disciplinary moves using existing forms of disciplinary expression. The value of the essay form itself needs parallel explication – as the practice and form of distilled conversation, evidence-based thinking, precise, clear and ordered communication within parameters signalled by assessment criteria.

The third approach, 'Here', represents a move to recognise the uniqueness of each classroom as a site for interpretation and response. Knights describes the vital 'unpredictable semantic energies' of the seminar room where a process of individual and group self realisation and transformation can occur in cycles of 'becoming' (Knights, 2017, p.11); Moran (2022) describes the classroom as an unstable compound. The same class never happens twice and nor does the same student, and this third approach recognises this. It reminds us that whilst continuing to lean into the English teaching profession's proclivity for narratives which champion marginalised groups in society, we need to avoid assuming we know what the response of any given individual will be to textual issues. 'Here' moments might occur at any point in the teaching of a scheme – overlapping with 'Home' or 'Away' – and can be spontaneously reached or built towards, for example at the end of scheme, after the conclusion of formal responses, in relation to events from that week's news with the questions 'Does, or how does what happened yesterday change our response to this text?' and 'Does or how does the text change our response to what happened yesterday?' This points to the way that the reading of literature can be related to and consequential in non-academic spheres, and the way that our own evolving contexts and identities can have bearing on our responses, just as literary texts can have bearing on them. Manny's discovery that his students wanted to critique Westall's presentation of a character with special educational needs startled us both, asserting their capacity to identify ablism as a contemporary concept that might be brought to bear on textual analysis even whilst unable to name it or name it as theory.

HOME	AWAY	HERE
Students		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliciting and validating of first reactions to text (personal response) • Identification of elements that they recognise in relation to their own priorities and experiences/lived and perceived world (bridges) • Identification of unfamiliar elements (rifts) and how this impacts on the reading experience • Supported by examples from previous/other classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of responses to text if available – discussion of why ‘reception moments’ might have differed • Identification of readings are products of contexts just as texts are • Framing of essay construction as authority construction • Building of formal analytical response. Attention paid to the conscious construction of archetypal ‘reader’ as part of the construction of a coherent and persuasive argument • Supported by examples of contrasting readings linked to the contexts in which they were produced and expressed in disciplinary terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frames the classroom as unique context for reading (unique community, unique time, unique intellectual resources) • Readings can be formed which can be informed by but not restrained by antecedents • Reading framed as a dynamic social construction • Supported by of examples of readings produced outside of contexts sanctioned by the discipline (using or espousing disciplinary terms)

It is important to emphasise that the differing perspectives of 'Home' and 'Away' are not set in conflict with one another in this model, but laid side by side to encourage dialogue about where bridges exist and new disciplinary paths could be built. I have attempted to recognise the anxieties about authority displacement that I found in the literature and in participants' responses; the teacher's warrant of authority here is their expertise as mediator of perspectives, curator of disciplinary knowledge and embodiment of articulated critical thinking.

Kincheloe (2004) argues for the adoption of critically complex practice which maintains an aspect of ideological disembedding – that is, a recursive move to step outside of planning and teaching to scrutinise its potential for exclusive effects. The Home/Away/Here model formally codifies such a movement, making student and teacher theorising a part of each scheme of learning, rather than leaving it to individual teachers to engage in (often unsupported, discontinuous) reflective practice. A fuller example of a scheme using the model is offered in Appendix F, and includes extension of the 'Home' and 'Away' ideas into student writing, to underline their status as budding producers of texts who should see themselves as having potential to join and influence the community of literary writers that they study.

Recommendation 3: Cross-phase work on disciplinary reconfiguration

Through this research, I have asked teachers to reconceive of their students, to reconceive of literary knowledge, and to reconceive of disciplinary structures and modes of operation. The literature about the framing and teaching of theory, and the disciplinary identity of teachers and students of literature indicates 'asymmetric relations of epistemological power' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2005), and emphasises the disciplinary divide between its educational phases. In response, I extend my request for reconception to those teaching literature in Higher Education, in a call for greater cross phase working, so that we can develop an integrated approach to helping our students locate themselves within the disciplinary arena, and know their potential to change it. At undergraduate level, literary study becomes a specialist pursuit; those working at this level should stay cognisant of the way the specialism is likely to reflect the characteristics of its most successful learners, and therefore if we are to make our commitment to inclusivity and diversity sing, we must sponsor the development of new voices. In part this must come through scrutiny of exclusive aspects of the discipline and through moves to challenge them. The literary critical establishment needs to take seriously how literature is studied outside its gates (Felski, 2008). At a time of high attrition rates at the end of Key Stage 4 and falling uptake for A Level Literature (Gagnier, 2024), stakeholders working in higher education might productively pursue a fuller understanding of how the mechanisms of the discipline are framed at school level, and the means by which school students are inducted into its modes of operation and judged as successful or

unsuccessful, in order to enlarge the pool of those considering or indeed rejecting it as an option, and help those entering into specialist study.

Theory and theorising might also be raised up and demystified through cross-phase collaboration. Literary theory needs to be understood as a theory of practice and not just an end in itself (Guy and Small, 1993) – concurrently, a teachable body of knowledge and an investigation into how and why that knowledge is and might be produced, authorised and validated, by others and by oneself. To fail to do so – to erase epistemological questions - is to detach it from human needs and interests, and to deny the need for the discipline to be socially available and socially defined. I advocate that teachers and specialists in literary study should therefore work together to connect disciplinary actions with social purposes, for example as co-constructors of research focussing on ways in which literary study could be reconfigured to improve retention rates to Key Stage 5 and degree level.

Recommendation 4: Teacher educators' work with new entrants to the profession

The literature and the data also suggest there is also an important place for literary theorising in initial teacher education, and in further continuing professional development. The research work conducted by Marshall, Brindley and Turvey (2001) indicates that PGCE English trainees become well versed in operating with a varifocal lens, experiencing both immersion in classroom environments and the chance to stand back from them, and the importance of dual vision is evidenced also in the accounts of Peim, Doecke and Appleman whom, as teacher educators, were able to undertake epistemological self-study at one remove from their classroom work.

Yet participants indicate that novice teachers who have left the sites of their initial training do not always feel able to detach themselves from the immediacy of department prescriptions: Elsa spoke of feeling an imperative for action over deliberation - 'ten years ago I had no idea why I was doing what I was doing..it was just 'this is what the curriculum map says, this is what you teach'; Chloe spoke of how Early Career Teachers in her department 'fly in and they are just teaching the letter of the law' without realising the rewards of also trying 'off piste' routes through texts.

In the PGCE, subject groups offer the opportunity for comparison of department approaches and the chance to ask and answer epistemological questions about the discipline of literary study. Trainees are brought into new relation with the subject that many have studied at degree level; this is an opportune time to hold it up to the light and consider whose interests it serves. Teacher educators need to reserve space for play within the training process – space for trainees to tell the varied stories of their own situated, contingent and dynamic responses to texts and disciplinary concepts. There should be space to create curricular wish lists and articulate their justification without formal inspection of 'intent'. There should be space to learn the historical antecedents

that produced the versions of literary study that are played out currently in classrooms so that the constructed nature of the discipline is foregrounded and shown to be malleable. Initial English teacher education should thus include work to define and foster critical dispositional qualities in order that trainees can both deploy them as they take up positions in the disciplinary field and model them in action to their future students.

The Home/Away/Here model can be adapted for the teacher in relation to sample texts:

HOME	AWAY	HERE
Teachers		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation of own histories, trajectories, experiences and consideration of how these inform current attitudes to literature/the text and the formation of key concepts • Finding of the bridges from own experiences/previous literary study/lived and perceived world, the text, and how it might be taught/explored • Identification of unfamiliar elements (rifts) and how this impacts on the reading experience and confidence in teaching the text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of teaching antecedents of the text or similar texts if available – discussion of why teaching approaches might have differed • Identification of the way that readings are products of contexts just as texts are • Exploration of the ways in which essay construction might function as authority construction • Discussion of common tools used to build formal analytical response and the way ‘authority’ is created through them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing of the classroom as unique context for reading (unique community, unique time, unique intellectual resources) • Readings can be formed which can be informed by but not restrained by antecedents • Framing of reading as a dynamic social construction • Sharing and seeking of examples of readings produced outside of contexts sanctioned by the discipline (using or espousing disciplinary terms)

In most cases, new recruits to the English teaching profession have the opportunity to operate with a vari-focal lens during their training, experiencing immersion in English lessons but also standing back from the classroom in the company of fellow trainees and their educators to evaluate both

their progress in aligning with the practices of placement departments and the efficacy of what they experience there. There is a danger, however, that upon the completion of training phase, the impetus to continue the conversation will disappear into the tempest of school life: Freire's conscientization may live on in the individual as a set of ideals, but can only lead to change if nurtured through dialogue, analysis and action. The work of Bulfin and Mathews (2003) and Chloe's final responses in particular remind us of the invigorating power of forging and protecting space to test conceptualisation of literary study and students throughout a career, and within and across schools. Initial English teacher education provides a model of professional learning for future English department leaders, and thus should include a focus on the accessing and creating mechanisms of collaboration and epistemological research.

Recommendation 5: Further research

The study suggests a number of avenues for future research; I present three possibilities here.

The alternative model for literary study presented here is as yet only an outline. My immediate next steps will be to experiment with its integration into existing practice upon my return to the classroom and to record the results. Accounts of teachers working to integrate a path between students' 'Home' readings and the constraints of formally sanctioned forms of essay response are largely missing from the available literature; my participant group signalled that this was a point of tension in their work, and I see it as a key issue in helping us understand why a large number of students might begin to decide that literature and literary study are 'not for them'.

Secondly, one limitation of my research was certainly its small scale focus on individual experienced teachers unknown to each other. My findings could be richly complemented by studies with a broader contextual base, for example examining theorising work of teachers employed in multi-academy trusts with a more formalised culture of pedagogical directives and/or sharing and discussion. The linking of English departments in such trusts represents the creation of new kinds of English teaching community, and this effects of this development are yet under-researched.

Thirdly, whilst this study is adopts a micro-focus on individual teachers' theorising, it points to wider critical questions about teachers' understanding of their own right to and means of contributing to policy agenda and formation: if we are helping students to understand their ability to push out the borders of disciplinary thinking, we should also be helping teachers to see how they might go about that too. There is a lack of work exploring English teachers' relationships with policy and their perceptions about channels of influence and their accessibility. Whilst undoubtedly complex to design and achieve, a vertical study mapping policy influencers and mechanisms for

influence in relation to school subject disciplines would make for a valuable contribution to teachers' view of the location of disciplinary power.

5.4 Dissemination

Material from this study will be submitted to peer-reviewed journals such as *Changing English* and *English in Education* and the subject association magazine *Teaching English (NATE)* in an effort to open dialogue with other researchers, practitioners and teacher educators. I have already presented aspects of the research at a BERA Conference⁸ and at successive knowledge exchange conferences at the university in which I work, and plan to seek out further public platforms such as the Shared Futures conference in 2025. I will also be discussing my findings and recommendations with participants and their departments, including Participant D who chose to withdraw, in order to gain insight into their perceived viability. As an English teacher myself, there is continuing opportunity to share findings in an iterative professional dialogue with my own fellow English teachers and school leaders, and the teacher training department in which I work.

5.5 Final comments

This research was born out of a concern about the distribution of disciplinary power in literary study, drawing on ideas from action research and Critical Pedagogy to trial steps towards the reconceptualization of that power in that classroom. It has strengthened my conviction about the importance of find ways to encourage teachers to ask epistemological questions about the inclusive or exclusive elements of disciplinary processes and structures, as an extension of the valuable work on text choice evaluation that has already begun in the school sector.

'Home/Away/Here' is not a model which offers a frictionless redemptive arc for practice; it is founded in a belief in the importance of teacher-student dialogue, reciprocal learning, and the potential of the classroom as a (messy) site of co-construction. Of the English teacher, I know that I ask a lot. It is a model which requires great energy of its teacher, the energy to be acutely attentive to the present moment. Activities, lessons and responses cannot be pre-planned with the kind of minute by minute detail that might seem most pleasing or accessible to external observers. Students cannot be judged to be pre-known. Disciplinary moorings (paragraph frames, analysis acronyms) must be loosened. There will be less time available within curricula limits to cover multiple texts – breadth may need to be compromised to re-emphasise depth. The current common direction of travel towards standardized simplicity, shop-bought packages and scripted

⁸ *Exploring issues in English, Education, and Social Justice: current trends in research and practice*. British Educational Research Association Conference, 30th June 2023, University of Bedfordshire

lessons will need to be resisted, and teaching continually reconfigured as work of textured complexity. It will require stamina.

But the opportunity cost of continuing as we are is high. If the discipline of literary study is being held to account, then alongside Lola Olufemi posting her letter to the English department of the University of Oxford, and the child approaching headteacher Chris Harrison with his Roald Dahl novel in hand, I would call Darren Garvey, author of an autobiography about the lived effects of poverty and exclusion, as a final expert witness:

I couldn't read a book because the curriculum was full of [texts] that said nothing about my community or experience. I came to believe that these works were being imposed on me and that my value as a person was being derived from an ability to memorise and repeat a series of cultural prompts and cues from teachers. Teachers who had ascended into positions of authority by doing the same.

The idea that people like me don't write books still rings in my ears.. (Garvey, 2017, p.xxiv)

In his institutionally constituted relationship with literature, its study and its definition, Garvey sees a ladder, and he has had to work to imagine he might have a right to a foothold upon it, as reader or writer. There are signs that teachers themselves are starting to test the integrity of that ladder - in their questioning of the 'memorise and repeat' emphasis inherent in the national turn to direct instruction (English Association 2024), and in the probing of the inclusivity of exam syllabi text choices (Lough, 2019; Lewis, 2020; Szpakowska, 2020 and in participant responses about GCSE poetry choices).

A move to think of themselves and their students as literary theorists would be a move to rearrange a disciplinary pyramid that currently reserves epistemological work for those who have chosen to be specialists. I hope this work serves as an invitation to English teachers to claim disciplinary space, to contribute to its ongoing reclamation and renovation, and to encourage students to see that they can both receive a sense of authority from, and bring a sense of authority to literary study, both in and beyond the English classroom.

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Appendix A: Participant Information and Consent Form

Carnegie School of Education

Leeds Beckett University

Headingley Campus, Beckett Park

Church Wood Avenue

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Research Degrees Programme Director:

Dr. Shona Hunter S.D.Hunter@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Participant information sheet

Working Project title:

Beyond the Glass Bead Game: An Investigation into English Teacher Theorising and its Effects

Student: Charlotte Wright

E-mail: C.Wright2987@student.leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Supervisors:

Dr. Stephen Newman S.N.Newman@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Dr. Tom Dobson T.W.Dobson@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Introduction

I am an Education Doctorate student at Leeds Beckett University. I am undertaking a research project which aims to investigate how English teachers theorise the teaching of Literature in schools, in particular via the articulation of statements of curriculum intent.

My aim is to find out how English teachers frame the perceptions of knowledge, purpose, students and classrooms in relation to the teaching of Literature in secondary schools. I would like to invite you to participate in this project.

What is the project about?

The discipline of Literary study is explicitly theorised in Higher Education, but not in secondary schools, even though in schools it has wider reach and thus wider potential impact. Using interviews and a set of focus group triads, I aim to explore the ways in which Secondary English teachers already think and act as theorists and stakeholders in the discipline. This will involve questions about your beliefs about the value of literary study, about text choices and positionality in relation to literary texts, and about what current and future pupil needs might be met by literary study.

In doing so, I also aim to explore the ways that the generation of a body of 'practical literary theory' by teachers might impact both on your practice, your contribution to discipline development, and the experiences and knowledge of your students.

The results of the research will be used to support the development of subject theorising in English teachers, who are currently under-represented as stakeholders, agents and innovators in the disciplinary development of literary study. In addition, the research landscape in relation to English teachers is currently dominated by studies of beginning teachers, who tend to be closer to contexts of reflection required in their training. Thus I am focussing on teachers with 5 or more years' experience.

It will also provide evidence about the impact on professional identity that shared articulations of intent can have, as well as identifying barriers which may prevent such practice in school organisational life. We will work together to consider how subject theorising could be further promoted and supported in schools.

What is involved?

There are 3 stages to the study. The first stage is a two-part face-to-face individual interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. In the first part of the interview, I will ask about why you have become a teacher of English Literature, and what you think the study of Literature elements of a secondary school English curriculum should achieve for its students. In the second part of the interview, you will be asked to discuss the study of Literature in relation to your school's English curriculum. You may refer to department documentation at this point if you wish. Your responses will be typed up for you to review.

The second stage involves the sharing of the reviewed statements of intent in a focus group triad of secondary English teachers. You will be asked to read the statements as supplied by other participants and comment on areas of connection or divergence in relation to your own curriculum thinking. You will be asked about your perception of commonly held beliefs within the English teaching community in relation to curriculum, the study of Literature and its teaching.

In this stage you will also be asked to talk about a scheme of learning that you have planned for the teaching of a literary text at Key Stage 3. This is to help to link discussion of values, beliefs, theories and

perceptions of students with real practice in classrooms. The timing and length of this focus group activity will be jointly decided by participants and myself as researcher once recruitment is concluded.

The third stage involves a focus group discussion at the end of the school year to review development or consolidation of subject theorising. At this time we will discuss your post-teaching perceptions of your scheme of learning and its purpose, outcomes and value. I will also ask you about your experience of the process of articulating how you theorise the teaching of Literature in school, and its benefits and drawbacks. Again, the timing and length of this focus group activity will be jointly decided by participants and myself as researcher.

Why have you chosen to conduct this study?

I have worked as a Secondary English teacher for 28 years, and am now also involved in teacher education. In these capacities, I move between the professional worlds of school and university every week, leading me to develop a perception that teachers have not traditionally been granted the status of theorists, even though themselves and their students are key stakeholders and participants in the discipline of literary study. Thus I wish to explore the ways in which teachers are already theorists, and what the act of articulating and sharing theory might add to professional practice.

Do I have to take part?

There is absolutely no obligation on you to participate in this research. Even if you decide to take part in the first stage, you can change your mind later and withdraw from it at any point. You will also retain the right to abstain from any question or line of questioning in the interview or focus group activities.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Your participation in this study will be anonymous and confidential. All interview and focus group data will be transcribed and you will be given a pseudonym of your choice. All data is confidential and will not be reported back to employers or colleagues. Participants will be asked to agree to retain confidentiality with regards to all group activity.

What will happen to the data?

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. All the study data will be stored in my password-protected OneDrive account at Leeds Beckett University. Only I will have access to it. The raw video or audio data will be permanently deleted at the end of the study. The transcript data will be kept for five years after completion of the study and may be reviewed or used for future research or knowledge exchange activity, if you give permission for this.

How will the findings of the study be used?

The main focus of the study will be the completion and submission of my EdD thesis. A summary of findings and outcomes will be shared with all participants. I also aim to submit one or more publications in peer-reviewed research journals relating to the teaching of English, and to disseminate findings in public English forums such as the English Shared Futures conference.

What are the benefits and risks of involvement?

A key benefit is that you will be provided with a space in which to articulate your beliefs and theories, and the opportunity to locate that theorising in a micro-community of peers through review of the transcript set. This may function to complement, or offer an alternative to, the kind of accounts of positioning and practice you are required to produce in terms of official school documentation and policy (for example in relation to OFSTED inspection). You will learn about other English teachers' perceptions and perspectives from beyond your school and area, and thus will expand your understanding of the possibilities of theory and practice.

A second key incentive for participants is the opportunity to improve your own professional confidence by reflecting on your pedagogical decisions and the beliefs that underpin them, leading in turn to the possibility of more explicit disciplinary justification with your students. If you choose to co-author resulting publications and co-present findings in conference settings, you will help other teachers to consider their own theorising work and its significance.

To minimise the risk of misrepresentation, you will be invited to check transcripts and text relating to your contribution. You will retain the right to withdraw throughout the study: after each data collection point in the process, you will be offered a two week window in which to withdraw your data if you wish.

Should you have any concerns about the study at any point, you can contact the Programme Director and supervisors named above. The research has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee for the Carnegie School of Education on behalf of Leeds Beckett Research Ethics Committee.

If you would like any more information about the study before deciding whether or not to take part, please feel free to contact me by email: C.Wright2987@student.leedsbeckett.ac.uk

If you are happy to take part in the study, please tick the relevant boxes on the attached consent form. Once your permission has been given, I will contact you to arrange an appropriate time for the

first interview and to provide you with the questions in advance. At this point I will provide practical information about Stages 2 and 3 including options for focus group timings and the format and protocols for group sessions. If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the study, please do contact me directly for further discussion about the parameters and details.

Thank you so much for considering participation.

Charlotte Wright

Participant Consent Form

1. Name of participant:
2. Email address:
3. I have read the Participant Information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask the researcher questions.
 - ☐ I agree
4. I understand that this study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, Leeds Beckett University Research Ethics Committee.
 - ☐ I agree
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw myself or my data at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences.
 - ☐ I agree
6. I understand how the research data will be collected and stored and who will have access to it.
 - ☐ I agree
7. I understand how the findings will be published and how they will be shared with participants.
 - ☐ I agree

8. I understand how to raise concerns or make a complaint.

☐ I agree

9. I agree to take part in the study.

☐ I agree

10. I give permission for data that I share to be retained for five years after completion of the project and to be used, if appropriate, by the researchers in wider studies of teachers' professional learning.

☐ I agree

☐ I disagree

11. Date of consent provided:

Signature:

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview questions

EdD Research: Stage 1 Questions

[Semi-structured interview]

A: Background

Why did you choose to become a teacher of English, and how far was the idea of teaching Literature part of that choice?

What educational experience relating to Literature preceded your training to teach?

B: Theories, values, beliefs, views

Had you previously found value in studying/in being taught to study Literature, and if so, what was that value?

What do we teach Literature for?

Whom do we teach Literature for?

What Literature should we teach and what informs our choices?

To what extent have your views about these questions changed – if at all – since you started out as a teacher?

C. The study of Literature in school

How is the curriculum for Literature decided upon within your school? What role do you play in terms of curriculum creation?

OFSTED have recently asked schools to share ‘curriculum intent, implementation and impact’ with them on inspection visits. What does ‘curriculum intent’ mean to you? What does it mean in terms of a Literature curriculum in English?

What aspects of literary study are prioritised in your curriculum?

What do you think the study of Literature in your specific school should achieve for your specific student cohorts?

If you could start from scratch with no constraints, what would you propose for a curriculum of literary study in schools?

EdD Research: Stage 2 Questions [Semi-structured interview or triad]

A: Teaching literature at Key Stage 3

What literary text is the scheme or sequence based upon?

Why that text, and why that text for that year group?

How does this text and the teaching of it fit into the discipline of literary study?

B: Concepts

(How) do you intend to talk about 'author/writer' and 'authorship' with your class during the teaching of this scheme/sequence?

(How) do you intend to talk about 'reader' with your class during the teaching of this scheme/sequence?

(How) do you intend to talk about 'text' and 'Literature' with your class during the teaching of this text?

EdD Research: Stage 3 Questions [Semi-structured interview]

Stage 3 questions:

1 Revisiting your Stage 2 responses, what are your reflections on how you conceptualised author/authorship, reader, and text as Literature during your teaching of the scheme?

2 How far do you agree that you are a literary theorist – someone who has theories about literary study and its concepts? Are your students literary theorists? Do we need theorists in the discipline, and if so, who should do the theorising? Does it matter?

3 What are the benefits and drawbacks of articulating theory about what literary study is in school

a) for you as a teacher?

b) to students in a classroom?

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance

From: researchethics@leedsbeckett.ac.uk <researchethics@leedsbeckett.ac.uk>

Sent: Tuesday, December 14, 2021 3:15:35 PM

To: Wright, Charlotte Ruth (Student) <C.Wright2987@student.leedsbeckett.ac.uk>

Subject: Research Ethics

Application Ref: 92076

Applicant Name: CHARLOTTE WRIGHT

Project Title: Beyond the Glass Bead Game: An Investigation into English Teacher Theorising and its Effects

Dear CHARLOTTE WRIGHT,

Mhairi Beaton, the Local Research Ethics Co-ordinator, can confirm that the above research project has been given ethical approval and may commence. Please see your online application for any comments or recommendations.

This project has received research ethical approval in line with the Research Ethics Policy and Procedures of Leeds Beckett University.

Please note that if you wish to make substantial changes to the project, new ethical approval would be required.

Sent on behalf of the Local Research Ethics Co-ordinator.

Appendix D : Example of Data Analysis work in Phases 1 and 2: coded transcript extract and memo

Participant 1: Elsa

		Phase 1 Analysis in vivo coding	Phase 2 Analysis Informed by Critical Pedagogy themes and In Vivo coding
Broad Reading focus	Sample transcript statements	Code	Code
Literature and literary study	<p>I like the restraints in the sense that we have to study a wide range</p> <p>we have this thing, this document called 'the learning journey' and it's basically a map that's got the full 5 years and it's got our entire curriculum on this one page</p> <p>we should 100% still be studying</p>	<p>restraints</p> <p>Shakespeare</p> <p>empathy societal injustice</p>	<p>External frames - NC</p> <p>Internal frame – department generated Influenced by NC and GCSE syllabi</p> <p>Canon</p> <p>Purpose of literary study Benefit to society over individual? Social justice – countering injustice</p>

	<p>people like Shakespeare</p> <p>create an empathy for the Cratchits [in A Christmas Carol] because that's societal and unfair and actually even though that was 200 years ago, that societal injustice is still present in our own society, and what can we do about it as citizens of the 21st century?</p> <p>I know to a certain extent that it is about what's available as well because the history of Britain, there are significantly more available texts</p>	<p>available texts neglect others</p> <p>contemporary issues</p> <p>content and skills driven</p>	<p>Text choices; factors affecting text choice</p> <p>Social justice – representation/focus</p> <p>Purpose of literary study</p> <p>Benefit to society</p>
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	<p>from white men than there are of anyone else but that does not mean we should neglect the others</p> <p>we wanted [Refugee Boy] because it has contemporary issues because obviously the whole Ukrainian refugee crisis recently has fit absolutely perfectly.. We wanted to replace [Of Mice and Men] with something that addressed race but in a more positive and contemporary way</p> <p>it's very much content and skills</p>		
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	driven at the same time		
Teachers and teaching	<p>I'm such an avid reader myself because I'm so passionate about books and what we can learn from them</p> <p>the text choices.. They're largely dictated aren't they?</p> <p>I do feel like our hands are tied slightly and that maybe AQA and other exam boards they maybe need to be offering more options, I don't feel we have a choice</p> <p>ten years ago no idea why I was doing what I was doing it was just</p>	<p>text choices dictated</p> <p>hands are tied don't feel we have a choice</p> <p>every single member of department..could tell you why Having a say</p>	<p>Teachers always learners too</p> <p>External frames Constraints on teacher choice</p> <p>Critique of exam board offer</p> <p>Absence of culture of reasoning and justification Top-down?</p> <p>Renewed sense of purpose Collegiate working</p> <p>Sense of centre – tradition, mainstream,</p>

	<p>'this is what the curriculum map says, this is what you teach'</p> <p>.. Every single member of the department could tell you that and they could tell you why we do that..every single member of the department is having a say in how that scheme looks</p> <p>maybe a little bit more traditional mainstream with things like Duffy and Larkin</p>	traditional mainstream	disciplinary community, disciplinary consensus?
Students	<p>even when you think you know everything about a text, a group of students will come in and go, oh, this could</p>	students this could mean that	<p>Students teaching the teacher</p> <p>Active contribution to meaning pool</p> <p>Teacher as learner</p>

	<p>mean that, and you think, wow, I've never thought like that before</p> <p>so many students over the last few years are becoming really passionate about their rights and their identity... and they do a lot of research and understanding and that's part of their life outside school.. So why aren't we addressing it in school</p> <p>I went off reading lots and lots of texts and trying to find something that was important and that would be</p>	<p>students passionate about rights and identity research part of life outside school addressing it in school</p> <p>engaging for students</p> <p>making students confident readers [to] understand the world around them</p> <p>gender sexuality boost them</p> <p>want to feel equal not different</p>	<p>Connecting school with students' wider world and concerns</p> <p>Relevance and purpose of literary study</p> <p>Student engagement matters</p> <p>Connecting school with students' wider world and concerns</p> <p>Consideration of minority groups</p> <p>Literary study as connected to identity and validation</p> <p>Literature classroom as site to promote</p>
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	<p>engaging for students</p> <p>its just about making students confident readers so that they can go out and understand the world around them</p> <p>I've got students from the LGBTQ community, I know that I need to get some content in relating to gender and sexuality because it's going to boost them</p> <p>there are so many students that want to learn more and want to feel they're equal and</p>		<p>equality and belonging</p> <p>Education promoting challenge – not closed circle reproducing inequalities</p>
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	<p>they're not different because of something about them</p> <p>you're using literacy and literature to get them to reflect on stuff, challenging things and questioning things and thinking about the bigger picture</p>		
The reader	<p>we're very much focussed on more on the writer's intention rather than the reader response because you're just trying to avoid those cliched comments 'oh the reader feels sorry for'</p>	<p>focussed on writer's intention rather than reader response cliched comments</p> <p>every reader is different</p>	<p>Limiting disciplinary formula (cliché)</p> <p>Writer construct to allow for marshalling of response</p> <p>Acknowledgement that literary analysis might be limiting/partial</p>

	<p>But when it comes to reader, it's so varied isn't it? Every reader is different</p> <p>the reader is a much bigger, wider scope than the author. It's going to vary a lot and so maybe that's why we focus more on author than reader</p> <p>also if you have a text that is 200 years old, well are you talking about the reader in the 19th century or are you talking about a contemporary reader today?</p> <p>[the reader] is very varied and I</p>	<p>bigger wider scope than author</p> <p>19th century or a contemporary reader today</p> <p>very varied our perception differ now to then different the same</p>	<p>Logistical challenges for teacher</p> <p>Plurality of reception moments not addressed in school version of discipline</p> <p>Plurality of reception moments are addressed here</p>
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	<p>think if I was teaching an older text like A Christmas Carol, like we do at GCSE, would be very much considering.. how does our perception of the sort of social injustices differ now to what they did then? Are they different or are they the same?</p>		
<p>The writer/author</p>	<p>is it a political text? How is Zephaniah using fiction to convey sort of political messages about the real world?</p> <p>He has a clear message</p> <p>If they're thinking a reader feels sort of really</p>	<p>political text using fiction to convey political messages</p> <p>a clear message</p> <p>[writer] wanted them to empathise</p> <p>motive sense of injustice</p>	<p>Fiction as legitimate conduit for political messages in school</p> <p>Writers as didactic</p> <p>Writers as having motives not apolitical, sense of conscious manipulations in fiction</p>

	<p>empathetic towards Alum it's not that they feel empathetic it's that Zephaniah wanted them to empathise with Alum's character because his motive is to create this sense of injustice about the plight of refugees we very much lead with the author in that sense.</p>	<p>lead with the author</p>	<p>couched as author not teacher messages</p>
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MEMO: Beginning the process of Data Analysis [Phase 1]

Elsa

Pass #1:

In terms of content, layers of theory here straight away – about purposes of literary study, about what foci are and should be/ lenses at different magnitudes. Not apolitical e.g. happy to use fiction as a way to explore political messages but not keen to overtly express job as involving own political choices. Contradiction? Echoes Ireland et al study. Indicates support for marginalised groups. More sense of challenge to existing status quo (marginalised groups, text directives) than expected. Thinking about codes and themes, can see I am looking for points about power in different iterations – e.g. statements about being powerful/powerless, statements about where the kind of meaning students might formalise in essays might be located (e.g. with writer not reader).

Pass #2:

Key words emerging in my thinking – choice, framing, purpose, validation, construct.
Construction of a curriculum will always involve selection: current system involves top down

directives and department and teacher level selectivity. Students here described as influencing teacher choice but not directly involved or informed of role in selection process. Gap in Critical Pedagogy discourse – how to manage a plurality of viewpoints? Does Freire deal with this adequately? E's recourse to 'writer' as locus of meaning might be as much pragmatic as controlling. Shows up complex role of teacher.

Appendix E : Examples of Data Analysis work in Phases 3 and 4: coded transcript extract, final sub-questions, memos

Phase 3 January 2024		
Reconstruction of analytic codes in relation to theoretical framework		
	Sample statements from full data set	Code
CP focus 1: Teachers' framing of the discipline Theme: how each participant talks about 'the reader'	<p>Elsa</p> <p>we're very much focussed on more on the writer's intention rather than the reader response because you're just trying to avoid those cliched comments 'oh the reader feels sorry for'</p> <p>But when it comes to reader, it's so varied isn't it? Every reader is different</p> <p>the reader is a much bigger, wider scope than the author. It's going to vary a lot and so maybe that's why we focus more on author than reader</p> <p>also if you have a text that is 200 years old, well are you talking about the reader in the 19th</p>	<p>Writer/reader balance</p> <p>Effect of disciplinary modes of operation - negative</p> <p>Alternative focus as solution to reader 'problem'</p> <p>Varied response as problem - class</p> <p>Varied response as problem - class</p> <p>Varied response as problem – time</p>

	<p>century or are you talking about a contemporary reader today?</p> <p>[the reader] is very varied and I think if I was teaching an older text like A Christmas Carol, like we do at GCSE, would be very much considering.. how does our perception of the sort of social injustices differ now to what they did then? Are they different or are they the same?</p> <p>Chloe</p> <p>Don't talk about reader positioning as much</p> <p>In the Dickens scheme when we look at the creation of the grotesque character, we will look at the reader's response to the description because hopefully there's a shared sense of.. repulsion and disgust</p> <p>If you're going to talk about the impact on the reader, it's gotta be followed by the justification, that explanation has to come</p>	<p>Varied response as positive aspect of literary study</p> <p>Reader 'problem' sidelined (not a concern)</p> <p>Shared response as a positive aspect of literary study</p> <p>Constructing 'the reader' – a class unity</p> <p>Writer/reader balance</p>
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	<p>from the student, based on what the author's intention was</p> <p>Chanda</p> <p>Well, it's not the student is it? [ideal reader]</p> <p>They do find it very difficult some of them still do require the sort of the almost 'this is what is happening in this scene' discussion and that barrier means they're probably not the reader of Shakespeare that you are thinking about because you expect almost a fluency, an understanding</p> <p>I did even say to my Year 11 the other day 'this is not really aimed at you' I said I don't think there's any way you would pick this up, but this is what was on the paper.' So the reader is not them, is it? The reader is someone who is probably a lot more versed in Literature.</p> <p>It was like, well, I need to tell you this because there's no</p>	<p>Constructing 'the reader'</p> <p>Constructing 'the reader'</p> <p>Constructing 'the reader' – apart from students</p> <p>Constructing 'the reader' – apart from students</p>
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	<p>possible way as readers here and now in this classroom you're going to understand without it, but the audience would have laughed at that.</p> <p>Manny</p> <p>It's kind of odd if you look at it too closely actually We've got to make them confident to talk about that reader, saying it confidently is a big part of the battle</p> <p>We do talk about 'the reader' in the formal essay but to be honest I don't want them to think too hard about who that is its more important that they can just accept that words, combinations of words are likely to have a particular effect on everyone there isn't time or room for them to explore much more in essays</p>	<p>Effect of disciplinary modes of operation - positive</p> <p>Constructing the reader – student authority</p> <p>Reader 'problem' sidelined (a concern) Constructing 'the reader' – a class unity</p>
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Phase 4: Final sub-questions	Final code
A. Acts of framing: how disciplinary codes, conventions,	Structuring device for discipline Tools for communicating structure of discipline

rules and modes of operation are articulated and perceived	Conceptions of Literature and Key Stage 3 Literary study Conceptions of literary Canon How 'the reader' is constructed How 'the writer' is constructed
B. How disciplinary power, authority and influence are and might be conceived of and distributed, and how those conceptions and distributions might be normalised or challenged	Expressions of teacher authority Challenges to external authority Expressions of doubt about teacherly authority Negotiated power sharing with students Perceptions of student authority and independence
C. How students are and might be inducted into critical identities and dispositions	Fostering and building student confidence The teacher-critic as inductive model Holding open space for lay readings

MEMO: Key Concepts [Phase 4]

Current thoughts on power, knowledge and literary study:

Knowledge and understanding of how the discipline of literary study is constituted and conceptualised will give teachers confidence (power) to see themselves as both stewards and contributory actors.

Disciplinary codes, conventions and modes of operation are made visible in literary theory work.

Want to instigate dual action: teachers examining their own work on the rules of knowledge validation, and teachers then thinking how to make disciplinary rules visible to students.

Education into a discipline should be more than the transfer of knowledge of literary texts or the transfer of skills of reproducing disciplinary patterns of reading and response; it should teach students how to enter the disciplinary arena and take up a place there, but

also how to evaluate the composition and codes of that arena. This is the 'power project' of Critical Pedagogy as I see it; teachers and students learning that they have the right to expand as well as occupying disciplinary space. It is a 'power project' that aims to give those students who will exit from formal literary

Examples of Concept Memos Phases 3 and 4

MEMO: Key Concepts [Phase 4]

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MEMO: Key Concepts [Phase 4]

Current thoughts on power, identity and 'the reader':

Lack of lit linking Critical Pedagogy to study of Literature. (Critical Literacy is a developed wing).

'The reader' is a key place where the identities and knowledges the students bring into the classroom might come up against and/or be overwritten by teacher/discipline sanctioned versions of 'the reader'.

Participants: varying approaches to 'the (constructed) reader' Elsa: sees it as problem because of potential plurality of views in a class, and therefore chooses to focus on the writer instead. Chloe does not give it time. Chanda sees gap between an ideal reader and the actual student reader and is open about this and students' likely lack of literary knowledge. Talks about it with

students as construct. Manny = uncomfortable with construct but hemmed in by time and exam constraints. Most bothered by it?

- ➔ Need for model for literary study that acknowledges differing readers without discounting existing readings/ways of reading Classroom should not be anti-disciplinary.

Appendix F: Sample Scheme of Learning: Home / Away /Here: The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Topic Area for Sequence	The Yellow Wallpaper – Charlotte Perkins Gilman	Year Group	KS3: Year 9
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Teacher notes

HOME	AWAY	HERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliciting and validating of first reactions to text (personal response) Identification of elements that they recognise in relation to their own priorities and experiences/lived and perceived world (bridges) Identification of unfamiliar elements (rifts) and how this impacts on the reading experience Supported by examples from previous/other classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of responses to text if available – discussion of why ‘reception moments’ might have differed Identification of readings are products of contexts just as texts are Framing of essay construction as authority construction Building of formal analytical response. Attention paid to the conscious construction of archetypal ‘reader’ as part of the construction of a coherent and persuasive argument Supported by examples of contrasting readings linked to the contexts in which they were produced and expressed in disciplinary terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frames the classroom as unique context for reading (unique community, unique time, unique intellectual resources) Readings can be formed which can be informed by but not restrained by antecedents Reading framed as a dynamic social construction Supported by of examples of readings produced outside of contexts sanctioned by the discipline (using or espousing disciplinary terms)
Resources/teacher pre-reads		
Text	Bedford Cultural Edition ed. Dale M. Bauer	
Essay	Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1913) Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper. The Forerunner, 1913 [21 years after story publication]	
Blog	Kimberly Fashier https://cohoproducts.org/old/blog/blog-critical-history-of-the-yellow-wallpaper	
Critic	Susan Lanser (1989) The Yellow Wallpaper and the Politics of Color in America. Feminist reinterpretations/Reinterpretations of Feminism, 15 (3), 415 – 441	
Review	http://artmejo.com/a-reader-response-critique-of-the-yellow-wallpaper/	
Review	https://teenink.com/search?q=yellow+wallpaper	
Review	https://www.reddit.com/user/PurpleVein99/	
Article	Kathryn Hughes (2020) House of horror: the poisonous power of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’. The Guardian, Friday 7 th February 2020	
Video	The William Morris Gallery (2021) YouTube 27 July Kehinde Wiley. The Yellow Wallpaper – the making of the exhibition	
Blog	James Durran (2019) https://jamesdurran.blog/2019/12/09/the-power-of-exploratory-writing/	

What is the big picture?

Justify why this text should be included in the curriculum of literary study	Starting Points What are your preconceptions about this class's likely prior knowledge/learning about these aspects of craft, theme, genre and historical period?	Development [student] What understanding of this text and its ideas, concepts, style and reception history should pupils have by the end of the sequence?	Potential Misconceptions What possible misconceptions do you anticipate that you might encounter as students grapple with this text's ideas, concepts, genre and style and reception history?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accessible demonstration of writing craft – narrative voice, structure, sequence and pace, setting, metaphor, thematic cohesion ○ Varied reception history ○ Genre study: elements of The Gothic ○ Text is 1892 but themes remain contemporary: gender, power and conflict, motherhood, treatment of illness/mental health, medicine through time 	<p>[Consider text exposure and task completion in wider KS3 curriculum as part of this answer; you may also wish to consult the History department re the KS3 History curriculum]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding of the distinctive narrative voice in this text, structure, setting, how theme is addressed, the effect of the central metaphor of the woman in the wall ○ Knowledge of the writer's biography and its possible relationship with text creation ○ Knowledge of varied reception history relating to developing social discourse and concerns 	<p>[Consider your prior knowledge of this class and prior KS3 literary study and responses to date]</p>
	<p>Access Knowledge / Vocabulary What key knowledge / words do students need to understand to access this sequence?</p>	<p>Development [teacher] What understanding of student bridges into and out of this text should you aim to have by the end of the sequence?</p>	
	<p>Concepts referenced in text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ancestral halls ('taking halls for the summer') - Hereditary estate - Hysteria - Conventions of post-partum behaviour for the 19thc. middle class mother - Weir Mitchell <p>Text specific vocabulary: Felicity, untenanted, physician, arbors, chintz, sulphur, bulbous, Romaneque pattern, arabesque, undulating, derision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding of class specific frames of cultural reference brought to first and subsequent readings of the text ○ Understanding of class specific capacity to or challenge in linking the study of this text with the wider KS3 curriculum ○ Understanding of how this class approach issues of gender, power and entrapment ○ Knowledge of what this specific class found interesting in the text prior to taught content 	

Where are they going next?

How will they use this new knowledge in their future learning? When will they revisit this new knowledge or use these new skills? In this Key Stage? In the next Key Stage? In which topics?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building of genre knowledge KS4 Gothic eg A Christmas Carol, Jekyll and Hyde e.g. Use Frost and Vasiliev's [light hearted] guide to test which features might make TYW a classic Gothic novel Theme of power and control across time and texts – eg KS4 AQA Poetry Anthology section Awareness and understanding of creation and uses of narrative voice – eg KS4 and KS5 poetry, Utterson in Jekyll and Hyde 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History GCSE Topic – Medicine through the ages: changing approaches to diagnosis and treatment of 'hysteria' 	

How will I get them there?

1	Lesson Focus	WHAT knowledge will be shared or gathered in this lesson?	WHAT concepts / ideas / skills will you develop?	HOME
	First reading, first response	First exposure to plot sequence, setting, character. Teacher knowledge of student starting points collated.	Articulating first responses Confidence building in the right to respond to literary text	
	HOW will you present, share and explore the content, skills and concepts? – a brief summary of activities, and resources.			
	<p>1 Set up notes sheets: narrator, John, house, nursery. Invite students to write down impressions and thoughts during first listening. Post it note distribution: 2 questions you have at the end of reading. Create living class dictionary: distribute individual vocabulary definitions and pronunciations [see list above], with each individual student responsible throughout the scheme for explaining what particular unfamiliar words in the text mean eg ‘ancestral [out loud: an-sess-tral] means belonging to or inherited from family members from the past.’</p> <p>[Text division into its 12 sections.]</p> <p>2 Ask students to gather first thoughts after listening to sections 1-4. Offer response prompts if class or individuals need them eg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the narrative so far make you feel?• What is familiar?• Does it remind you of anything you’ve read/heard/seen before in terms of images, idea, genre or storytelling style?• Which section in a bookshop or library might you expect to find it in?• Is there anything unfamiliar in it so far that you would like to ask about?• Do you feel you’ve been invited into this story so far? Why or why not? What bridges can you find between this text and your world and experience? Is there anything in or about this text that makes you feel distanced from it? <p>3 Repeat after sections 5-8 and 9 – 12. Ensure at least one ‘hands down round’ and look for blank spaces in room to ensure range of viewpoints are heard. Collate responses (eg via recording/mind map/note taking)</p> <p>4 Post it note with questions = exit ticket.</p>			
	WHAT might ‘progress’ mean and look/sound like in this lesson?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Participation by students with range of confidence starting points.○ Extension of verbal responses to clarify ideas.				

2	Lesson Focus	WHAT knowledge will be shared or gathered in this lesson?	WHAT concepts / ideas / skills will you develop?	HOME
	Second reading Personal response/situated response	Second exposure to text [plot, character, voice]. Sharing of starting points collated from previous lesson. Gathering of knowledge of student entry points.	Literary response as argument with evidence Foregrounding of the ways in which social/temporal sites of reading affect readings Demonstration of reading happening in forums and places far from the classroom	
	HOW will you present, share and explore the content, skills and concepts? – a brief summary of activities, and resources.			
	1 Share variety of illustrations, covers, Pontuti film poster for text. Eg Jo Hatfield, Sara Barkat graphic novel. Jan Melka. Jen Yoon Where is the viewer positioned in each case and what difference might this make?			
	2 Re-read Section 2 ('We have been here two weeks... there's sister on the stairs!'). Students determine entry points into close analysis: Silent write for 4 timed minutes. Q: What is the most interesting thing for you about this section? Collate responses and link back to bridges identified in previous lesson. How far is there consensus about a) what contributes to a sense of closeness/distance b) what is most interesting?			
	3 Remind students that one key skill in literary study is the building of an argument about a reading of a text using evidence to make a convincing case for that reading. Taking either their own answer to the question 'What is the most interesting thing for you about this section?' or that of another student if it spoke strongly to them. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Challenge students to lay out their response (paragraph or bullet points) with specific evidence to support each point. There must be a minimum of 2 points.- Offer model (spoken model first then written back up second) of own answer to that question on another text already known to them (eg studied previously in that or earlier years), emphasising how internal thoughts have been moved into the external domain and how some specific detail is important to bring your listeners along with you.- Offer optional support sentence stems/phrases eg X reminds me of... X raises the issue of... .. when the writer does X, as a reader I have to.... There is a pattern of X in..... there is a link here for me between X detail and X other text (could be film, TV, art, poem, news event, other text) only if students request them- If any student is not finding anything interesting for comment/argument, offer focus eg How did you feel about the picture of marriage in the text? or What does the narrator's 'nervous weakness' mean to you? or What does the 'figure' at the end of the section do for you?			
4 Decide whether sharing of these responses should be done live in this lesson or collated and anonymised for sharing by you in next lesson.				
5 Read extracts together of other individuals' responses to the text from personal entry points e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Teenink.com responses – teenage reviews on a site by teens for teens- artmejo.com review – website on 'reading in an Arab society'- Reddit forum response from PV99 – an older woman explains how reading the story at different times in her life had different effects				
WHAT might 'progress' mean and look/sound like in this lesson?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Written or oral responses to Q supported by specific detail from the texto Less confident students volunteering to share their response in Activities 1, 4 or 5				

3	Lesson Focus	WHAT knowledge will be shared or gathered in this lesson?	WHAT concepts / ideas / skills will you develop?
	a) How literary texts are validated and preserved in the conversation (contexts for reading and dissemination) b) Tracing of theme development	Knowledge of writer biography, comment on own text and publishing context Knowledge of varying reception through time Thematic patterning and development	Concept of 'reception moments': (changing) contextual bearing on text reception Concept of textual validation: 'literature' requires validating readers/institutions Skill of theme identification and tracking
	HOW will you present, share and explore the content, skills and concepts? – a brief summary of activities, and resources.		
	1 Ask students how they think this text, first published in 1892 [show New England Magazine cover], has ended up in this classroom: what do they think might be on a flow diagram of events that has led to this moment? Introduce the idea of a community of readers of literature engaged in a conversation through time. Ask students to imagine themselves as writers of a successful modern update: what colour wallpaper? And plot out how this writing of theirs would make it into the classrooms of 2124.		
	2 Explore writer biography and her own comment: read 1 page 'Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper'. Highlight 21 year gap between publishing of story and publishing of this comment. Discuss: does this change the way you read the story?		
	3 Recap reader responses explored in previous lesson (including those of students). Introduce idea of 'reception moments' in relation to the creation of literary value or devaluing. Tell story of the story - see cohoproducts blog 1892 – 1960s and 70s revival; point out directions of reading continue to expand.		
	4 In terms of formally produced contributions to the conversation (published critical response), 3 recurring themes have been a) presentation of women b) presentation of mind / madness c) power and control. Model the process of working towards a thesis statement + flow diagram plan on the first of these themes: a) Using text condensed onto 3 A3 sheets colour code or annotate with symbols for these 3 themes. b) Having made selections, gather quotation set and arrange into groups. Choose sub-heading for each group. - Pause modelling to challenge students to repeat with theme b or c [could be in mixed confidence pairs if required] - c) Stand back to ask the big question: how are women presented, according to this evidence? d) Model the arrangement and sequencing of ideas into a plan. Construct simple topic sentences for each section. - Pause modelling to challenge the students to repeat with theme b (how are ideas about madness presented?) or c (how is the theme of power explored?) e) Share extracts of model essay on theme a. Get students to colour code for words/phases/sentence stems that set up points; words/phrases/sentence stems that show an idea is being developed or a change of direction; reference to the reader and writer; reference to imagery, syntax or structure 5 Relink this skill of construction of formal response to other subject/career areas eg job application, business report writing, documentary making, academic research.		
	WHAT might 'progress' mean and look/sound like in this lesson?		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student ability and confidence to 'teach back' reception moments Colour coded texts with students able to explain justify choices (1-1 or to whole class) 		

4	Lesson Focus	WHAT knowledge will be shared or gathered in this lesson?	WHAT concepts / ideas / skills will you develop?
	How to create an authoritative response using forms recognised by the discipline Creating the figure of 'The reader' in the formal essay	Forms of authoritative register Essay building as argument construction out from thesis statement	Movement from exploratory response to disciplinary response [continue to validate both!] Phraseology of authority in essay responses
	HOW will you present, share and explore the content, skills and concepts? – a brief summary of activities, and resources.		
	<p>1 Re-emphasise the importance of creating and occupying an authoritative tone: offer pairs of examples with more and less confident assertions about the text. Discuss what contributes to authority in a response and the ways in which a sense of authority can be developed. E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - going after precise and nuanced adjective or verb selections (not enough just to use long words supplied by teacher, see examiner report complaints) - supporting arguments with patterns of evidence where possible - grouping and signposting direction of ideas so the reader can follow a coherently built argument - feeling genuine understanding and 'ownership' of the ideas in the response <p>Use 'Mr Ben' analogy – you have to keep trying on this identity until you own it and understand your right to own it.</p> <p>2 Return to planning from previous lesson. Focus on the construction of 'the reader' in the formal essay response and its purpose to explain, illuminate and persuade about the effect of literary text. Strength in ideas and position are the initial priority: academic register can be upscaled during or after drafting. [See James Durran 2019 blog on the power of exploratory writing]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit flow diagram planning from previous lesson. Rehearse thesis statements in pairs out loud. If class or individuals lack confidence, model moving a tentative or bland thesis statement (the main claim of the essay) into one which includes the WHAT and the WHY eg Women are presented as trapped and low status -> Women are presented as physically confined and socially restricted to highlight gender inequality in 19th century America. <p>3 Live drafting of 1 section using thesis statement and 1 group of quotations. Teacher monitoring for direct support where needed. Section drafts to be reviewed prior to lesson 5 to determine patterns of error or misconception for whole class feedback exercise.</p>		
	WHAT might 'progress' mean and look/sound like in this lesson?		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Development of thesis statements and flow diagram plans to include authoritative register o Extended/ improved drafting 		

AWAY

5

Lesson Focus	WHAT knowledge will be shared or gathered in this lesson?	WHAT concepts / ideas / skills will you develop?
Draft development	Strategy for close reading of one section How to write about the effect of structural features	Development of skill of close reading for analysis construction eg syntax, figurative language, structural features Plotting of development of narrator's character
HOW will you present, share and explore the content, skills and concepts? – a brief summary of activities, and resources.		
<p>1 Whole class feedback after teacher read of section drafts after previous lesson. Directed response time for students to work on redrafting or improving single first section in response to this feedback.</p> <p>2 Continue to build textual confidence. Explore a passage from the latter half of the story in which the 3 themes are contained.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pick out sentences or phrases and complete close analysis of syntactical or figurative features. Note how by this point the reader's impressions of the narrator might have changed from first impressions and discuss what features have contributed to this. Consider the effect of structural features – eg the short sections, the moves between past and present tense, the short paragraphs. Remind students that 'the reader' in their growing response is there to illuminate ideas for their essay reader and persuade them. Emphasise that more than one reading of a sentence or section can be offered if it contributes to the overall strength of argument. Model use of subjunctive eg A reader might... or.. Recap their responses from Lesson 2: these should be incorporated if they can contribute to the direction of the thesis statement. <p>3 Return to drafting process for 2 further sections with teacher monitoring for individual support. [Extend into further lessons if required]</p>		
WHAT might 'progress' mean and look/sound like in this lesson?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater attention to detail in drafts Increasing reference to and deconstruction of the effect of syntax, figurative language and structural features 		

AWAY

6	Lesson Focus	WHAT knowledge will be shared or gathered in this lesson?	WHAT concepts / ideas / skills will you develop?
	Current responses to TYW	Revisiting idea of reception moments Introduction to the work and motivations of Kehinde Wiley Current affairs linking to text	Cross-disciplinary links: literature in conversation with art Development of the idea of the current reception moment: new readings
	HOW will you present, share and explore the content, skills and concepts? – a brief summary of activities, and resources.		
	<p>1 Remind students that readings of literary texts and responses are continually evolving. Share paintings by Kehinde Wiley from his 'Yellow Wallpaper' exhibition [William Morris gallery, London, February 2020]. Invite students to say how these paintings might be connected to, and distanced from Perkins Gilman's text. Who do they think these women are and why might KW have chosen to name the series TYW? e.g. Students might spot some bridges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the wallpaper creeping as if to trap the portrait subjects bright, garish colours art as a means of being subversive, of self expression and challenge (like the narrator choosing to write) the challenging gaze of the women. <p>2 Share the development of a reading informed by race – eg Marshall quoted in Guardian article emphasising racial questions 'hiding in plain sight' (informed by Lanser reading 1989). KW not just influenced by text but also by critical readings of it – chose black subjects. Watch the 6 minute William Morris gallery video where he is filmed finding models for the paintings: discuss how statement by KW of "The idea of being in a room and not being taken seriously" relates to the text. Revisit idea of literature study as a conversation through time.</p> <p>3 Connect the text with current events: what has come up in the news in the last week or month which might be linked to ideas in the text? What new directions of reading or positions might the text be read from in this unique time and space? Eg current attitudes to illness without visible symptoms, change in public discourse about mental health, modern slavery, film or TV texts with unsettling narrative viewpoints. [Check back to first responses from Lessons 1 + 2] Connect the text with currently evolving identities of groups: how are people suffering illness without visible symptoms viewed in today's society? How is marriage viewed? For which individuals or groups experiencing entrapment might this text have metaphorical resonance now in 2024?</p> <p>4 Set up responsive writing task choice which uses TYW as its style model [mention the AQA A Level English Language includes 'a piece of original writing and commentary' as part of its coursework]. If Assessment criteria for Creative Writing are required, aspects of the A level criteria could be foregrounded eg AOS: Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use form creatively and innovatively and use register creatively for context write accurately and position audience skilfully provide interesting and engaging content use form in original and innovative ways showing ambition show skilful and detailed manipulation of register guide reader through a coherent and cohesive text <p>TASK: take one section of 'The Yellow Wallpaper' and relocate it to a modern place and time. You may substitute elements of the original story eg setting and circumstance but the piece must be recognisably linked to the original. Pay particular attention to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> which themes you are choosing to use eg gender, power, entrapment narrative voice syntax and paragraph construction use of imagery the sequencing and pacing of ideas for your reader. <p>For students wishing to have an initial prompt offer suggestions eg a call centre worker in IT support starts seeing something in his or her screen / a reality TV contestant in a Big Brother style show starts seeing an extra person in the house.</p>		

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	5 Begin supported live drafting. [Drafting could be extended through number of available lessons and homework tasks or as per appropriate for the class].	
	WHAT might 'progress' mean and look/sound like in this lesson?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less confident students volunteering to share their response in Activities 1, 2 or 3 Student confidence in first attempts at drafting responsive writing 	

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Lesson Focus	WHAT knowledge will be shared or gathered in this lesson?	WHAT concepts / ideas / skills will you develop?
Celebration of writing talent Extending the place of TYW in the conversation	Recap of routes of validation for literature Cross-textual links Gathering knowledge of students' linked text experiences	Student potential to influence the literary world.. Cross-textual and cross-cultural links
HOW will you present, share and explore the content, skills and concepts? – a brief summary of activities, and resources.		
Upon completion of responsive writing task: 1 Share anonymised or non-anonymised extracts as per student preference to showcase writing skill and ingenuity. 2 Revisit flow diagrams from Lesson 3 Activity 1. Where and how could your work be shared with wider audiences? Create mock covers and blurbs for students' first short story collections: help students understand their potential to become published writers. Type up finished responses and collate into book for school library in first instance. Quick mini-role play: it's 2034 and you are being interviewed on the top-rated TV Arts show about your million selling collection. How do you summarise TYW for your audience and how do you explain the elements you drew upon for your own story collection? 3 Making links to other works: remind students of the conversation and the patterning and evolution of ideas, genre and literary style across texts and time. Distribute extract selection extracts from related works and challenge students to find and articulate the links eg Jane Eyre, Browning monologues, Edgar Allan Poe, Daphne du Maurier, Flowers for Algernon, Alias Grace, Gone Girl. Can students offer suggestions from their own recent readings or watchings? Draw up class cultural map including student input. 4 Conclude scheme with distribution of 'If you enjoyed this text, you might try..' list of further readings/watch list. Capture key ideas via display ready to link to KS4 texts in the following year's teaching.		
WHAT might 'progress' mean and look/sound like in this lesson?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students exhibiting pride and satisfaction in the results of their writingConcision of summaries (oral)		

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