

Look Who's Talking: An Investigation of Feminist Standpoint Theory in Secondary
Education of English Literature

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INTRODUCTION

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. [...] These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences can also be right. (I)

- The International Baccalaureate,
Language A: Language and Literature Guide

The above quote is the mission statement of the International Baccalaureate, an organisation that provides schools with courses in English at a variety of levels. I came into contact with them during my own secondary education, when I took one of their courses as a part of my bilingual diploma. Though the programme, I read literature from a wide variety of backgrounds that touched upon themes such as racism, sexism and colonialism. The course heavily affected my interest in literature as well as in these themes. After finishing the programme, I went on to study English language and culture with a particular interest in education, and thereafter to pursue a Master's in Gender Studies. This thesis, in a sense, is a result of me coming full circle.

Over the course of my studies, I have come to realise the importance and potential impact of secondary education on society. As I became more aware of the constructed nature of knowledge, I was drawn to the notion that the transfer of that knowledge should occur in an ethical and fair manner. In order to achieve this, the possibility of different, equally valid perspectives on reality should be incorporated into education more so than the dry reiteration of statements and 'facts'. In doing so, the notions that all knowledge is partial and biased, and that no one is capable of true objectivity, could become self-evident.

The motivation for writing this thesis is an ideological one. Rather than leaving this unacknowledged, I would prefer to be transparent about this. This thesis is not the result of objective considerations, but rather an analysis of an existing situation through theoretical concepts that I consider to be fundamental to ethical and honest education. What follows is an examination into how feminist standpoint theory can be used to analyse English literary education in secondary schools.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY

In order to use feminist standpoint theory to analyse English literary education in secondary schools, it is important to define the concept thoroughly. Because the discourse surrounding feminist standpoint theory is immense and far-reaching, it is a challenge to present one fully coherent definition. In order to create an understanding of what is meant with the term, this section will provide an exposition of what I consider to be the key principles of feminist standpoint theory.

Feminist standpoint theory has strong connections to Marxist theory, as is established by feminist philosopher Nancy C.M. Hartsock. Her essay “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism” has been very influential in the development of feminist standpoint theory. In it, she mentions the Marxist idea of the proletariat having experiences and views on society which are fundamentally different from those of the elite, and translates this to mean that male and female experiences also differ fundamentally. She further suggests that women have a “particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy” (36) in the same way that the view of the proletariat would be privileged over that of the elite in Marxist theory. Hartsock’s ideas support the notion that the perspective of the underprivileged is valuable in combatting oppressive systems.

One of the first to write about feminist standpoint theory was Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. Smith. She critiques sociology for the way in which women and women’s perspective have been excluded from the field, explaining that “how sociology is thought [...] has been based on and built up within the male social universe” (22). She criticises the notion of objectivity, which is used in sociology as a tool to separate “the knower from what he knows” (24) and to allow the sociologist an air of transcendence. She suggests that women are not allowed that same air of transcendence, due to the masculine forces shaping sociology. Within the male framework, she argues, the female body is considered an insurmountable obstacle whose specific functions and limitations prevent her from seeing objectively, in the way that men supposedly can. She emphasises that “like everyone else he also exists in the body in the place in which it is” (25), calling the possibility of objective knowledge into question. She therefore argues for a reform in sociology that would allow for the acknowledgement of its situatedness (29), as well as of the ways in which any person’s knowledge of the world is mediated (31). Smith’s ideas show how an entire system of

knowledge production can be shaped by and therefore biased towards certain perspectives and exclusionary to others.

Feminist philosopher Sandra Harding contributed to feminist standpoint theory by writing on the concept of strong objectivity. In her article “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is ‘Strong Objectivity?’”, she establishes that objectivity is considered a scientific ideal, and that scientists are encouraged to conform to that ideal by erasing all indicators of their individual subjectivity. However, there is little consideration for the subjective nature of the scientific field itself. Instead, it is presumed that the ideals of individuals within the scientific community somehow collectively amount to objectivity. Harding argues against this, emphasising that it is problematic to present any one community’s view as objective when it has not been questioned by those outside of the community (129). Her suggestion as to what can be counted as strong objectivity requires a dissolution of the hierarchy between subjects and objects of knowledge. She explains that the embodied nature of the subject of knowledge makes it no different from the object of knowledge. As such, she argues that “we should assume casual symmetry in the sense that the same kinds of social forces that shape objects of knowledge also shape (but do not determine) knowers and their scientific projects” (133). She refers to this reform as a “successor science” (“Instability” 653). Harding’s ideas underline how problematic it is to adhere to an established scientific method which, like Smith described, has been shaped by and biased towards a singular perspective.

Donna Haraway elaborated further on the notion of situatedness, and wrote her influential article “Situated Knowledges” in 1988. She is critical of Sandra Harding’s notion of a successor science, stating that “feminists don’t need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence,” and that “we don’t want a theory of innocent powers to represent the world” (579). She is concerned mostly with the impossibility of objectivity in any form, and is weary of what she calls the “god trick”, in which knowledge is presented as if the subject is capable of “seeing everywhere from nowhere” (581). As an alternative, she proposes a theory of situated knowledges, which acknowledges the bias, limitations and partiality of any person’s perspective. To have knowledges be embodied and situated is to have knowledges that are accountable. Haraway’s idea of situated knowledges provides an important tool that can help accurately value knowledge produced in a scientific context. If knowledge is presented along with a situating of the author, their authority for speaking on a subject can be assessed, and the bias and limitations to their perspective can be taken into

consideration when interpreting a text. These considerations are crucial if a text is to be held accountable.

Using these concepts, a basic framework of feminist standpoint theory can be formed. The theory is rooted in sociology, and at its core is the idea that all knowledge originates from within a person, who is bound to their body, identity and particular location in both space and time. Transcending those boundaries and being fully objective is impossible. As such, all knowledge is both partial and biased. Feminist standpoint theory argues for the acknowledgement of these inherent qualities of knowledge in the form of situated knowledges. It opposes traditional scientific methods in which a person removes themselves from the knowledge they produce as much as possible, in an attempt to produce objective knowledge. The value of feminist standpoint theory lies in its capacity for acknowledging different equally valid perspectives, rather than privileging a singular perspective over all others. This makes feminist standpoint theory an indispensable tool for the diminishing of social inequality, both resulting in and resulting from a cultural hegemony.

1.2 KNOWLEDGE, CULTURE AND POWER

Underlying feminist standpoint theory is the ideal that knowledge should be produced in a way that is ethical and rooted in equality. I therefore consider it to be subversive towards hegemonic power structures. Feminist standpoint theory is also tied closely with sociology, as is explained in the previous section. The focus of this thesis, however, is the education of English literature. It is important, therefore, to connect the two realms. This section is intended to offer a more comprehensive definition of feminist standpoint theory, by linking it to ideas that I deem important to bridge the gap between feminist standpoint theory and the study of culture.

Sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu has produced influential writing on power and culture using his notion of field, including his work *The Field of Cultural Production*. In the first chapter of this book, Bourdieu speaks of a cultural field which contains different positions, as well as many different agents whose position-takings in the field are a result of the forms of capital they possess. These agents can be, for example, entire genres, specific authors or individual works. Different forms of capital are of different degrees of importance in the cultural field. A literary classic, for example, will be high in symbolic capital, while a bestselling novel will be high in economic capital. Works taken up into a literary canon hold an important position in the field and have much symbolic capital, which means that they are widely recognised as examples of good writing.

The position-takings in the literary field are defined on the basis of the “*space possibles*” (30), meaning that they acquire their meaning through their relation to other positions in the field. A work of high symbolic value, for example, is meaningless if there is no position for works of low symbolic value. Bourdieu describes the literary field as “a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces” (30). Because of these struggles, the literary field is always changing, along with the agents’ position-takings and their meaning. A work of great symbolic capital, he writes, is shaped by “discourses of direct or disguised celebration” and “exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art” (35). Education, he writes, is an important contributing factor to this recognition of symbolic capital (37).

Bourdieu argues that, considering the constant struggles within the cultural field, art can only be studied effectively if it considers the factors that have established any work as being considered art (35). He adds that “one’s only hope of producing scientific knowledge – rather than weapons to advance a particular class or specific interests – is to make explicit to oneself one’s own position” (35-36). He goes on to argue that the power struggle between the dominant and dominated classes in society is directly related to the struggle for the authority to define “human accomplishment” (41). Whoever has the power to define art, literature and writing has the most impact on the cultural field. He goes on to state that such definitions “might be radically transformed by an enlargement of the set of people who have a legitimate voice in literary matters” (42).

Bourdieu’s writing is very important to the study of literature, because it establishes the relativity of what is considered literary value. Several of his arguments can be tied with feminist standpoint theory, such as his arguments for the acknowledging of a person’s own position-taking in the literary field, and considering the specific factors that caused a work to acquire symbolic capital when studying it. On top of this, Bourdieu emphasises the influence of a dominant class on the definition of a literary canon as well as the role of education in maintaining a status quo.

The belief that value is context-dependent rather than fixed has also influenced the study of language and meaning. This is explained by cultural theorist Stuart Hall in his 1997 book *Representation*. He breaks down the construction of meaning into two “systems of representation” (17). The first of these is a mental conceptual map, which consists of “different ways of organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts, and of establishing complex relations between them” (17). This process allows people to recognise different concepts, such as ‘bird’ or ‘aeroplane’, and distinguish them from another. The

second system of representation is language, and it enables communication of ideas by transporting the meaning of a concept from one person to another. This meaning is carried by signs, which can take the form of “written words, spoken sounds or visual images” (18). Hall describes three approaches to the construction of meaning through language. The first is known as the reflective approach, which assumes that “language works simply by reflecting or imitating the truth that is already there and fixed in the world” (22). The second is known as the intentional approach, which states that “it is the speaker [...] who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language” (25). Lastly, Hall describes the constructionist approach, which poses that “*things* don’t mean: we *construct* meaning, using representational systems” (25). Hall supports this final approach, and is critical of the other two. He argues that words and signs carry different meanings in different times and cultures, or can refer to fictional worlds, so they cannot be fixed, perfect reflections of reality. Regarding the intentional approach, he argues that the author can never be the only source of meaning in language, as “our private intended meanings [...] have to enter into the rules, codes and conventions of language to be shared and understood” (25). His core argument is that “meaning does not inhere in things”, but is rather constructed through “a signifying practice [...] that *produces* meaning, that *makes things mean*” (24). Like Bourdieu’s argument for the relative nature of value, Hall’s argument for the relative nature of meaning ties in with feminist standpoint theory’s critical stance towards objectivity.

The notion of constructed practices which produce meaning ties in with influential French philosopher Michel Foucault’s use of the term ‘discourse’. The term as used by Foucault is defined by research professor Sara Mills as “the unwritten rules and structures which produce particular utterances and statements” (53). She explains that according to Foucault, “we can only think about and experience material objects and the world as a whole through discourse and the structures it imposes on our thinking” (56). As these discourses privilege some and exclude others, Foucault argues that they are closely connected to power structures. He uses the term power/knowledge to describe his idea that knowledge and power are interconnected. According to Foucault, “each society has its regime of truth [and] discourses which it accepts and makes function as true” (73). These discourses consist of “rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true” (74). He argues that if reforms in society are necessary, they must be made through a reform of the regime of truth (74). Just as the arguments by Bourdieu and Hall, Foucault’s ideas can be linked to feminist standpoint theory through their premise that knowledge is not something that exists externally, waiting to be discovered, but is instead

constructed within societies. By speaking of regimes of truth as a plural, he acknowledges that what is and is not considered true differs from society to society. His argument for reforming the regime of truth is similar to the belief within feminist standpoint theory that the entire concept of objective knowledge is problematic.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who is one of the most influential philosophers within postcolonial theory, expands on Foucault's ideas of the socially constructed nature of truth by highlighting the position of those who are excluded from the discourse, and do not partake in its construction. She does this through her notion of subalternity. In her most well-known work, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak theorises that the intellectual is by definition unable to accurately represent the struggle of the oppressed. This is due to the fact that whereas the intellectual has the ability to speak out, be heard and partake in public discourse, the oppressed (or the subaltern) is not, which makes their experiences crucially divergent. She determines that when speaking of "the Third World" (84), Western intellectuals consistently represent it as being "Other" (84) and that the speaker often assumes a false position of objectivity. This results in an erasure of the actual experience of the oppressed, which she considers an act of epistemic violence (76). Instead of being allowed to speak for themselves in the public discourse, the subaltern is talked about by privileged others. Spivak's essay poses the important question of who is and who is not heard. This supports the premise of feminist standpoint theory that acknowledging a speaker's particular perspective is important.

Equally influential as Spivak in the field of postcolonial theory is literary critic Edward Said, who has written on the extensive effects of literature on the viability of imperialism. In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Said examines the way in which the past influences contemporary culture. He argues that during the peak of European imperialism, the facts of empire permeated everyday life and so profoundly impacted records we have of the period (9). Because of this, imperialism is widely present in the literary works of that period, which are frequently celebrated today (12). He poses that "the enterprise of empire depends upon the *idea of having an empire*" (11), meaning that the presence of the facts of empire in cultural productions has a significant effect on the public opinion of the empire. Through the impact history has on the present, humans of today are not immune to these effects. Said's writing supports the argument that a person's individual perspective must be recognised in order to recognise parallels and differences between the zeitgeist from which any work was produced and that in which it is read. An awareness of the prevalence of imperialism in a time during which something was written can help the reader identify and be critical of it. Said's

work also illustrates the significance of ethical literary education, and the risks of educating carelessly.

When discussing the study of literature in terms of knowledge and power, it is inevitable to touch upon the discussion of the literary canon. Because the debate surrounding the Western literary canon is too wide and diverse to fully analyse in this thesis, I will outline what I consider to be some of its core themes. The literary canon is an elusive artefact, the precise contents of which are difficult to lay out. One of the places in which the contents of the literary canon are most visible is in the education of literature. This is because works that are high in cultural capital, and are therefore considered literary classics, are usually taught in schools. By educating students on the literary canon, they acquire a cultural literacy, and learn which works are or are not a part of that canon. The Western literary canon is not perfect, however, and has been criticised for its overrepresentation of certain groups. An article written by feminist scholar Lillian S. Robinson in 1983 states that “it is probably quite accurate to think of the canon as an entirely gentlemanly artefact, considering how few works by non-members of that class and sex make it into the informal agglomerate” (84). As the canon is not centrally recorded anywhere, it is difficult to determine exactly how diverse or homogenous it really is. Edward Said has already suggested that the literary canon embodies ideals that find their way into society, which forms a strong argument for having a diverse canon. These ideals cannot be representative of society if the canon does not represent the full scale of diversity within society.

However, due to the elusive nature of the literary canon, diversifying it is not a straightforward endeavour. Mechanisms of privilege and exclusion play a role during each step of canon formation: production (i.e. the quantity and quality of what authors produce), distribution (i.e. the degree a work is treated by publishers and sold in stores) and reception (i.e. how a work is read and appreciated by readers and critics). Not only may societal influences heavily impact which groups produce certain types of literature, the spread of literature from minority groups may also be inhibited by biased processes of gatekeeping. In order to diversify the canon, the mechanics that shape it would need to change. The many underlying issues that cause one group to be privileged over others, as well as the canon’s abstract nature, makes it impossible to point out any single actor responsible for the canon. Especially regarding literary education, it has been argued by professor of English Wendell V. Harris that it is impossible to offer a course that reflects a full scale of diversity within literature and covers all desirable background, and that instead it is necessary to be honest towards students “about what *our* selection of texts and *our* approach to them does *not*

accomplish” (119). This argument is one for pursuing accountability rather than an accurate reflection of reality, which makes it highly suited for analysing literary education using feminist standpoint theory.

1.3 CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

In order to use feminist standpoint theory to analyse literary education, it needs to be defined not only through related concepts in the study of culture, but also through related concepts within pedagogy. This will be done with a focus on theories of critical pedagogy. As this thesis will primarily analyse written materials, the focus in this section will be on concepts relating to the contents of education more so than the form and execution of education. This section draws on concepts from critical pedagogy as well as critical literacy in order to connect feminist standpoint theory to the practice of educating literature.

The critical pedagogy movement was profoundly impacted by Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire’s 1970 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Darder et al. 5). The most central of his ideas is that of the “banking concept of education” (58). He views the traditional teacher-student relationship as being of a “fundamentally *narrative* character” (57) and is critical of traditional education in which teachers deposit what they consider to be true knowledge into their pupils. These pupils become empty receptacles of knowledge or dehumanised “containers” (57), who are separated from the world’s reality as “spectator, not re-creator” (60). Banking education, Freire argues, “serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed” (59). In order to achieve a liberation from these oppressors, Freire argues for a rejection of the banking concept and the adoption of problem-posing education. In this type of education, both students and teacher engage in dialogue about the world, allowing for a dissolution of the teacher-student hierarchical dichotomy (63). Freire goes on to explain that “education as the practice of freedom – as opposed to education as the practice of domination – denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent and unattached to the world” (64).

Freire’s work helps create a link between feminist standpoint theory and education. Firstly, Freire is critical of the idea that teachers or students are disconnected from the work they study, and argues instead for viewing humans as active participants. This idea can be connected to Haraway’s notion of situated knowledges versus the god trick, which argues for the unattainability of objectivity. Secondly, Freire’s argument for the dissolution of the teacher-student dichotomy is reminiscent of Sandra Harding’s argument for strong objectivity, in which the hierarchical relation between the subjects and objects of study is replaced with a

more symmetrical relation. By emphasising discussion rather than transmission of knowledge, the teacher concedes their position of supposed authority in favour of a more balanced power relation between themselves and the students. Lastly, Freire's view of banking education as serving the purposes of the oppressor rather than the oppressed underlines the importance and potential of education in maintaining or dismantling systems of oppression. This links his work to Foucault's notion of power/knowledge, and reflects the underlying ideals of feminist standpoint theory.

Freire's work has been a major influence on the works of feminist author and academic bell hooks, who connected his writings to her own background in feminist theory in her book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. She states that her work is not meant to serve as a blueprint for critical pedagogy (10), but instead as a celebration of "teaching that enables transgressions" (12). She draws upon her personal experience with the practice of critical pedagogy and the challenges it brings, and is especially concerned with the role of race and gender within education. She explains that her personal experiences "taught [her] the difference between education as the practice of freedom and education that merely strives to reinforce domination" (4). The most central argument in hooks's work is that for a transformative pedagogy, that "can fully embrace multiculturalism" (40) and in which it is acknowledged that "no education is politically neutral" (37). She is critical of the education practice of enforcing a split between the public and private, in which personal identity is expected to be left out of the educational context, "leaving in place only an objective mind – free of experiences and biases" (17). Rather than the passive receptacles students are expected to be according to the banking concept, hooks argues for "excitement in the classroom" (6) where there is "ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamics, everyone contributes", even if this does not always feel comfortable or safe (40). She applies these principles to the production of knowledge as well, arguing that "education can only be liberatory when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor" (14). hooks also describes encountering resistance to the diversification of literary education, referring to this as "the fear that any de-centering of the Western civilisations, of the white male canon, is really an act of cultural genocide" (32). The inclusion of marginalised groups in a literary curriculum, she argues, should result in "an interrogation of the biases [that] conventional canons establish" (39), but instead often results in tokenism, in which the group is featured in a much less prominent position and much less extensively than the dominant group.

hooks' emphasis on the link between the public and the private and her critical position towards the notion of objective educators connect her to the core principles of feminist standpoint theory. Additionally, her view that everyone's impact on classroom dynamics should be recognised reflects the ideal of a more egalitarian classroom, which resembles Harding's emphasis on the dissolution of the hierarchy between the knower and what is known. Her critical notes on the effects of a homogenous literary canon and the inclusion of token authors can be linked to the ideas of Edward Said, who also argues that ideals within the literary canon permeate society.

Peter McLaren has also been an influential figure in the critical pedagogy movement. In his paper "Critical Pedagogy: A Look at the Major Concepts", he insists that all knowledge, including its emphases and omissions, is "the product of agreement or consent between individuals who live out particular social relations (e.g. of class, race and gender) and who live in particular junctures in time" (72). He suggests that critical pedagogy is concerned with questions of whose interests are served with that knowledge, and who is excluded from it, and describes how one culture can dominate another not through force but through hegemonic structures such as schools. This is done through the dominant culture "[winning] the consent of those who are oppressed, with the oppressed unknowingly participating in their own oppression" (76), and legitimising the hegemonic structures by presenting them as inherently just. McLaren links this concept to a literary curriculum, which he argues is reified by presenting a literary canon as if it were shaped without being affected by social relations and biases. This, he argues, causes literacy to become "a weapon that can be used against those groups who are 'culturally illiterate', whose social class, race, or gender renders their own experiences and stories as too unimportant to be worthy of investigation" (80). Like hooks, he is also critical of tokenism, explaining that the hegemonic structure is usually strong enough to "withstand dissent and actually come to neutralize it by permitting token opposition" (82). These aspects are all part of what McLaren describes as the hidden curriculum, which refers to the (unintended) by-products of education which are not a part of the officially acknowledged curriculum, but still make up part of the students' socialisation (87).

McLaren's work is directly in line with feminist standpoint theory in his insistence that all knowledge is partial and biased, as well as emphasising the need to question where the knowledge comes from. His emphasis on the question of who is excluded from produced knowledges creates a link to Spivak's notion of subalternity, while his comments on the hidden curriculum and its far-reaching consequences form an argument for what Haraway

defines as situated knowledges: if the hidden curriculum is made visible, knowledge can become accountable.

The concept of critical pedagogy is closely linked with that of critical literacy. There is no singular definition that fully captures this concept, but it has been described as operating in roughly four dimensions: “[1] disrupting the commonplace, [2] interrogating multiple viewpoints, [3] focussing on socio-political issues, and [4] taking action and promoting social justice” (Lewison et al. 382). It has also been described as "learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Anderson 82). Critical literacy can be an aim of education. For critical literacy to be acquired, a person needs to practice some of the core principles of feminist standpoint theory, such as an awareness of the situatedness of the knowledge they acquire as well as of the limits and biases within their own perspectives. It also requires people to question the power structures that shape how and what they learn. As their principles are so closely connected, critical literacy is a useful tool for analysing literary education from the viewpoint of feminist standpoint theory.

Some of the concepts outlined in this chapter are directly related to feminist standpoint theory, others are related indirectly and bridge a gap between feminist standpoint theory and theories of knowledge or pedagogy. This chapter has outlined the core principles and concepts necessary for analysing English literary education in secondary schools using feminist standpoint theory. The following chapter will describe what methods are used in the carrying out of this analysis.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

Before answering this thesis's main question of how English literary education in secondary schools be analysed using feminist standpoint theory, it is important to explain the methodology used in obtaining those answers. I will answer that question through demonstration: I will conduct an analysis of a course in English literature at a secondary school in the Netherlands, and determine if and how different aspects of the course relate to feminist standpoint theory. Having previously outlined the theoretical framework and defined its core concepts, what follows will be a description of the methodology used in this research.

The research will be focused on a case study. This is a suitable method, as the research question is a 'how'-question, addresses a contemporary situation and does not require the comparison of different outcomes resulting from controlled behavioural elements (Yin 11). The process of literary education in secondary schools is intricate and takes place on a number of different levels. In order to gain a full understanding of it, the process must be studied in more depth than is possible using quantitative research. Additionally, the thesis is limited in its scope, meaning that it is not possible to examine a multitude of situations with a suitable degree of scrutiny, making a qualitative research method more suitable.

The research is conducted on a single case. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of a single case study. The most important limitation is that it is almost by definition limited in scope: its findings are closely connected to the case's specific context, making it difficult to draw conclusions that are more broadly applicable. However, there are a number of arguments that support the use of single case studies in certain situations. They can be useful, for example, if a case can be considered representative, or when it represents a critical case in testing a theory (Yin 47). As no two schools are exactly the same, the degree to which this particular case is representative of a larger group is difficult to measure exactly. However, the selected school can be considered representative on a number of accounts. First of all, the school consists of 754 students ("Anna Lyceum"), when the national average was 730 in 2010 (Bokman and Van der Linden 9). The school is therefore of an average size. The school is also located in Nieuwegein, a suburban town adjacent to Utrecht. As such, its population is neither from an exceedingly metropolitan nor rural background. It can thus be argued that, to an extent, the case may be representative for a larger group. Besides this, the school makes use of the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma programme, which is a programme used in 18 different schools in the Netherlands and over 4000 schools spread over 148 countries worldwide ("Netherlands in het IB"). This means that the central programme for the education of English literature used at this particular school is taught in many different

schools. This case study can also be considered to be instrumental, as the case is not necessarily representative of other cases, but can still be valuable in its capacity for illustrating what may be a broader issue (Baxter et al. 549). By zooming in on one specific situation, I hope to identify issues that may arise on a micro-level, occurring in the practice of teaching literature in secondary education. While these issues may be specific to the particular case I am studying, they can still serve as examples of the way in which feminist standpoint theory can be integrated in and used to analyse English literary education.

Considering that this research consists of a single case study, the results cannot be assumed to apply to the education of English literature as a whole. The case is bound by place as well as time, and applies to the current situation at one school. This school is public and does not express adherence to any particular religious or ideological identity. There is no information available regarding the school's demographic, so it is unknown if there are any striking features about the student population in terms of gender or ethnicity. Due to the time available for this case study, a selection out of the materials used in the English course was made. I consider this selection to be representative for the more advanced stages of the course. The study is concerned with the curriculum as it is being taught currently, and does not offer a historical account of the development of the course. It is primarily concerned with the analysis of instructional materials used in the course, and only delves into the motivations of curriculum-makers to a very minimal extent. This means that the research does not provide information on how feminist standpoint theory affects educators and the choices they make regarding their courses. The benefit of focusing on the bare materials is that this approach more accurately represents the situation as it is experienced by teachers and students in schools. This approach is suited for answering a 'how'-question, and does not look to explain or excuse the course's possible shortcomings by looking for mitigating circumstances.

This research is not meant to provide schools with a manual for how to use feminist standpoint theory in their education. It does not aim to produce detailed methods of improving upon the current situation, nor does it intend to appraise the curriculum in terms of being inherently good or bad. Instead, the focus of this research is analysing different aspects of English literary education in a secondary school. in order to find good and/or bad practices of education that reflect the principles of feminist standpoint theory.

2.1 CASE DESCRIPTION

In order to achieve a maximum of transparency, it is also important to describe the method used to select the case. I was especially drawn to secondary education because it is the most

advanced mandatory level of education in the Netherlands, and therefore symbolises the minimum requirement for a student to become an adult. In the Dutch school system, students attend secondary school from the age of 11 or 12 onwards, and partake in one of three different types of secondary education. These types are defined by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The first of these types is VMBO, or pre-vocational secondary education. This type lasts four years, and is focused on the vocational practice. The second type is HAVO, or senior general secondary education. This type lasts five years, and prepares students for higher professional education. The third type is VWO, or pre-university education. This type lasts six years, and prepares students for attending university and becoming researchers. I decided to limit myself to VWO, as this type has a larger capacity for the in-depth study of literature that would not be possible in the other types of education. This capacity is at its largest during the last three years of VWO, as the students have advanced enough with their language acquisition to study English literature. As such, this level of secondary education is most suitable for this research.

Within secondary education, some schools also offer bilingual education. In bilingual education, at least half of the school subjects are taught in English. Schools often offer the possibility of obtaining an English language certificate in addition to the regular Dutch secondary school diploma (“Tweetalig Onderwijs”). Bilingual education strives for a high level of language command in its students, and offers more room in English class to expand on topics beyond language acquisition, such as literature and culture. The selected school offers students the possibility to obtain a certificate from the International Baccalaureate (IB). The International Baccalaureate is an international non-profit education organisation (“About the IB”). They offer a course which is taught at VWO-level and requires the students to reach a near-native level of fluency, which adds to the relevance of this study in terms of education on the international level. In combination with the advanced years of VWO, the bilingual trajectory offers the most comprehensive study of English literature available in the Netherlands.

After having set these criteria, I needed to find a secondary school that would accommodate my research. I did not set any criteria relating to the school’s size, rating, religious character or demographic, so as to not limit myself beforehand. My only requirements were that the school needed to teach the advanced years of VWO within a bilingual trajectory. I began by sending e-mails to nine schools who fit these criteria in the Utrecht area, providing them with a short explanation of what my research would consist of, without disclosing my exact research question. I introduced myself and explained that I am

studying for a master's degree in Gender Studies at Utrecht University, and offered to do something suitable for them in exchange for their cooperation. Out of the nine schools I contacted, I received one positive response. This came from the Anna van Rijn College in Nieuwegein, which is the school that I attended myself between 2004 and 2010. The teacher that responded to my e-mail was Lesley Kerseboom, who teaches English to bilingual classes, and is also responsible for setting the English curriculum. She agreed to let me sit in on some of her classes, to send me documents that are part of the curriculum, and to let me interview her. Having met the criteria I had set for the single case study, I concluded my search.

2.2 MATERIALS

The case study consists out of several different materials. The bulk of it consists of written materials, which are accompanied by in-class observations and an interview. Having a case study consist of more than one source of evidence is especially important in case studies, as it helps to expand the range of the research and aids in the process of triangulation, or corroborating a phenomenon by reviewing it from different angles (Yin 117). It is important to describe each of these materials and their function (Flick 369).

I acquired the written materials through Ms Kerseboom. After I first made observations in her class, I discussed my research plan in some more detail. I asked her if she could send me whatever written materials she had that are used in the course and are provided either to students or teachers. She sent me a collection of documents, such as course manuals, student readers and teacher guides, from which I made a selection. I selected documents that were created by the IB and by the Anna van Rijn College, and documents intended for use by teachers and by students. Out of the several documents published by the Anna van Rijn College, I selected two on the grounds that they were intended for a higher level and thus aim for a greater depth of understanding in their students. The two documents were the only available documents that simultaneously offer a high degree of comprehensiveness (i.e. discussing the literary work, the author and its background), concern the same literary work, and have different target audiences.

Amongst the documents I collected is a publication of the International Baccalaureate, which is “intended to guide the planning, teaching and assessment” (1) of their course. The document is titled “Language A: Language and Literature Guide” and it is used by the English department to help shape the course taught at the Anna van Rijn College. While it is directed at teachers, it is expected to also be used to inform students and their parents about the IB programme. It was published in 2011 and is still used by the Anna van Rijn College as

providing guidelines for their execution of the IB programme. The Language A programme is intended for use at VWO level. There is a different course called “Language B” for the HAVO level, which is focused on language acquisition. As that course does not study literature, it will not be analysed in this thesis.

Another document published by the IB that is used by the Anna van Rijn College is the “Prescribed List of Authors (PLA)”. The document was published in 2010. This document is meant to accompany the language and literature guide and it contains a list of authors from which schools must make a selection to incorporate in their course. It also briefly outlines the instructions for using the document. It is paired with the “Prescribed Literature in Translation (PLT)”, which serves the same purpose, but lists works of which translations may be included in the Language A course.

The written works provided by the Anna van Rijn College belong to a section of the course that focuses on Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*. One of these works, titled “5TV A Farewell to Arms Teacher Guide”, is intended for use by the teachers of the course. It is used in a class called 5TV, meaning that they are in their fifth year of bilingual VWO. The document consists of summaries and notes on the novel’s chapters. The information helps the teachers explain and discuss the novel in class.

The document titled “5TV A Farewell to Arms Hemingway File 2015” is distributed to the students of the course. It is composed by Ms Kerseboom and her co-worker, Lorraine Fitzpatrick. The document is used to guide the students through the section of the Language A course, spanning approximately eight weeks. It contains background information on Hemingway and his writing, as well as a set of questions for the students to answer in weekly assignments. The document is built up out of different articles which deal with a variety of subjects.

In order to gain more insight into how the Language A course is interpreted and carried out at the Anna van Rijn College, I interviewed Ms Kerseboom, as she is responsible for constructing the English curriculum. The interview took place over the phone on December 16, 2016, as personal circumstances left Lesley unable to attend our meeting face-to-face. This interview did not have the purpose of uncovering her personal experiences with teaching, but focused instead on what the curriculum looks like and how lessons on English literature are carried out. I took notes during the interview and used these in my analysis.

In order to triangulate the results of my analysis, I also conducted a number of observations. In doing so, I hoped to gain a more complete insight in the execution of the Language A course. The observations were made during three visits to the Anna van Rijn

College in the month of November 2016, in classes of two different teachers. I took on a peripheral membership during these observations, which means that I did not actively participate in the class (Flick 356), although my presence was briefly acknowledged in the form of an introduction by myself, in which I stated that I was a student at Utrecht University and was observing the class for research purposes. Neither teacher nor pupils were informed of the exact purpose of my research, in order to minimise potential effects of my overt observation on their behaviour (Flick 356). During these observations, I made both written notes and audio-recordings, with permission of the teacher.

2.3 ANALYSIS

As the source material consists of different media and documents, it is important to use a suitable method of analysis for each different source. These different methods need to take into account the function of each source, as well as their role in English literary education. What follows is a description of the methods used in the analysis.

The method used for analysis is inspired by critical discourse analysis. One of the most influential writers on this interdisciplinary method of discourse analysis is Teun van Dijk, who described its key principles. These trademark features include a primary concern “with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it” (252). Van Dijk also claims that critical discourse analysis is “primarily interested in and motivated by social issues, which it hopes to better understand through discourse analysis” (252), and that one of the ways to gain insight into the power structures in discourse is to analyse exactly how that power is expressed (259). Van Dijk argues that it is important for the analyst to explain their ideological motivation, as a neutral or objective position is impossible for a critical scholar (253). He is supported in that argument by professor of English Michelle M. Lazar, who uses his work to articulate a feminist critical discourse analysis. She suggests that feminist critical discourse analysis is a form of academic activism, and that it therefore “cannot and does not pretend to adopt a neutral stance” and that it “makes its biases part of its argument” (146). This method’s focus on critically analysing power structures through discourse makes it a useful tool for an analysis using feminist standpoint theory.

I carried out a critical discourse analysis by close reading the texts that made up the bulk of the case study. Close reading is a method of text-based analysis that focuses on studying the text without considering the intention of the author. The benefit of close reading is that it allows readers to have different, equally valid individual interpretations of the same

text. In this respect, it takes what Stuart Hall has named a constructive approach to ascribing meaning to text, as explained in chapter 1.2. It has been pointed out that “supposedly ‘objective’ methods of ‘close reading’ can produce different results in different interpretive frameworks” (Sánchez and Lukić 106). It is therefore important to acknowledge that close reading practices does not enable a reader to uncover a singular, objectively true meaning of a text. The meaning of a text is not fixed, and acknowledging the possibility of multiple equally valid interpretations is a core principle of feminist standpoint theory.

The analysis of the materials was also inspired by qualitative content analysis. This is a highly flexible case study method, which has been described, amongst others, by Margrit Schreier. The method works through a process of thematic coding to guide analysis, and consists of several steps. The researcher first selects source material that reflects the full diversity of available data sources (175), and then develops a coding frame by determining categories and subcategories to organise the data into. These categories can be concept-driven (i.e. determined based on existing literature or theoretical concepts) or data-driven (i.e. determined based on themes or concepts derived from the source material) (176). These (sub)categories must be clearly defined in terms of their selection criteria (176), and there must not be any overlap between different main categories or subcategories (175). As it was not feasible to set up clearly defined, unidimensional (sub)categories for the analysis of such a variety of sources, using such complex and interconnected theoretical concepts, qualitative content analysis proved helpful in the process of analysis through its emphasis on the use of categories to aid the analysis of the source material.

For the analysis of the “Language A: Language and Literature Guide”, I first read the document from start to finish, and began underlining statements or phrases that struck me as interesting. I did not set any criteria beforehand, but used my understanding of feminist standpoint theory as explained in chapter 1 to identify relevant pieces of information. I then copied the relevant information into a separate document and went through the list of quotes, and identified what themes were prevalent. I roughly organised the pieces of information into their thematic categories. I then connected these themes to different concepts from feminist standpoint theory and went through the list again, to ensure the quotes were still organised into the most suitable category. For example, one of the themes found in the Language A Guide was paying attention to whose voice is not heard. It is stated that “students are encouraged to consider who is excluded from or marginalized in a text, or whose views are silenced” (44). I thematically marked this as having to do with silencing. I then connected this theme to Spivak’s notion of the subaltern, and checked that this quote still fit in that category.

The analysis consists of a discussion of how the concepts of feminist standpoint theory appear in the Language A Guide as a result of this process.

The analysis of the documents by the Anna van Rijn College called for slightly different approaches. The Teacher Guide and Hemingway File are both documents about literature, and therefore have a more direct connection between the subject matter and the students receiving the education than the Language A Guide, which is in fact an instructional text for teachers about education. Whereas the latter elaborates on the ideology behind education, the Teacher Guide and Hemingway File are more directly functional. They are meant to perform the education that the Language A Guide prescribes. For the analysis, this meant that while I could still organise pieces of information into different categories, not all of these categories corresponded neatly to a defined theoretical concept. The analysis, therefore, required the drawing of connections between the common themes in the document and the concepts of feminist standpoint theory.

The PLA and PLT required a different approach, as they contained minimal instruction and consisted mostly of lists of literary works, their authors and some of their key characteristics. As these documents both give an indication of what the IB considers to be the literary canon, I was interested in the contents of this canon. Per author, the PLA includes information on the author's gender and associated continent. I counted how many authors were included of each gender as well as of each mentioned continent, and worked these numbers into a table. For the PLT, works were listed alongside their original language and the gender of their author. I counted how many works were included for each gender and for each language. Due to the large number of included languages, I divided them into groups according to their approximate continents of origin. This information was then worked into a table and pie chart. These helped show the disparity between authors of different cultural origins and genders, which provided ground for analysis in itself.

The interview was focused on acquiring information about the teaching of the course. The analysis is only concerned with the verbal responses in the interview and does not include non-verbal messages such as tone or body language. Based on Ms Kerseboom's responses in the interview, I was able to outline the Anna van Rijn College's interpretation of the Language A course, and used the other analyses in the case to see how Ms Kerseboom's explanation relates to those materials.

The observations served as an additional source of information, and as such consisted of a limited amount of data. As the observations were intended to triangulate the other

sources, they are analysed through their relation to the other sources. This is done by looking for similarities and differences between the written materials and the in-class observations.

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodology used for analysing a case of English literary education in a secondary school through feminist standpoint theory. I have explained my reasons for conducting a single case study as well as the materials that I will consider in the analysis. In the next chapter, I will describe and discuss the results of the analysis.

CHAPTER 3. THE LANGUAGE A: LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE COURSE: DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF A CASE STUDY

In order to understand the case study that I have analysed, it is important to outline its different elements and their significance. These individual elements are all part of the Anna van Rijn College's English course at the bilingual VWO level. Both during English classes at school and at home, the students work towards acquiring a certificate from the International Baccalaureate that shows their proficiency in English. The course's outline is set up by the IB, but the curriculum is filled in by the school's English department. Assessment takes place both through written and oral examinations.

3.1 WRITTEN MATERIALS

The bulk of this case study is based on the written materials acquired from the Anna van Rijn College. These consist of documents published by the IB, namely a course guide and two lists of prescribed literature, as well documents published by the Anna van Rijn College, namely a teacher manual and a student reader for one module of the course. Each of these texts has a different function in the educational process. The following section aims to explain what these documents are, how and by who they are used, and how they can be analysed using concepts related to feminist standpoint theory, as outlined in the previous two chapters.

3.1.1 "LANGUAGE A: LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE GUIDE" – THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

The Language A: Language and Literature course is a course in literary education offered by the International Baccalaureate, and is taught by the Anna van Rijn College in English classes at the bilingual VWO level. The course consists of the studying of numerous texts, which are defined in the document as "anything from which information can be extracted, and includes the widest range of oral, written and visual materials present in society" (16). As explained in chapter 2, its purpose is to "guide the planning, teaching and assessment of the subject in schools" (1). It was published by the International Baccalaureate in 2011 and is the most recent version in use by the Anna van Rijn College. The course is "designed to be flexible" (1), so that teachers can adjust their syllabus to align with their specific teaching situation. Concretely, this means that the assessment criteria and examinations are set up by the International Baccalaureate, but that the school is responsible for selecting the texts and how exactly they are studied.

The document is an instructional text about education, and not an instructional text about literature. This means that it outlines the way teachers of the Language A course are

expected to teach, but does not provide information about literary works. It is important to keep this in mind when analysing the document. Just like every text, meaning in the Language A Guide can be found both in explicit, verbal messages as well as in implied messages, which can be read between the lines. While implicit messages certainly contribute to the constructed meaning of a text, it can be assumed that due to the instructional purpose of this text, its explicit messages will shape its meaning more heavily than the implicit ones. This is because of the instructional purpose of the text, which means that the exchange of a message between author and reader has to be as clear and unambiguous as possible. The reader of such an instructional text is likely to construct a text's meaning mostly through its explicit messages. These explicit messages in the Language A Guide will therefore be the focus of the analysis.

The Language A Guide makes it a point to emphasise the existence and validity of different world views and perspectives. In its introduction, for example, it explains that students are encouraged to “understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right” (i). The course is designed to be internationally relevant, and states as its aim to “develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world” (i). The IB aims to achieve this by not only studying texts originally published in English, but also literature in translation. Combined with the previously mentioned broad definition of what constitutes a text, the IB affirms that it “does not limit the study of texts to the products of one culture or of the cultures covered by any one language” (5). The course aims for its students to be “open-minded” and strives to teach them “the attributes necessary for them to respect and evaluate a range of points of view” (5). As explained in chapter 1, the recognition of the existence and validity of different points of view is one of the core principles of feminist standpoint theory, and the Language A Guide shows through these examples that it is committed to that principle.

In addition to valuing of different perspectives, the Language A course is largely centred around the question of how meaning within a text and within a culture is produced by language and context. There is a distinct awareness of the mediated nature of knowledge exchange. The guide explicitly mentions that it “has been informed by the way ‘critical literacy’ identifies concerns with the role of the contexts of a text in determining and shifting its meaning” (15). It states that “specific cultural and reading practices play a central role in the way we generate the meaning of a text” (7), and that as these practices differ between times and places, so do the meanings of texts. This, it claims, “creates a clear link with theory of knowledge” (7). Additionally, the course underlines the fact that “literary texts are not

created in a vacuum but are influenced by social context, cultural heritage and historical change” (21) and that “students are encouraged to consider that a text’s meaning is determined by the reader and by the cultural context” (21), listing different identity markers such as gender and social status as factors that influence a reader’s interpretation of a text. Insisting on the importance of cultural context when ascribing meaning to a text also builds an understanding that what people consider as truth is dependent on their individual positions. By emphasising that meaning is not fixed, the Language A Guide underlines the socially constructed nature of knowledge. As explained in chapter 1.2 through the works of Bourdieu, Hall and Foucault, this is a central idea in feminist standpoint theory.

By emphasising the importance of context, the Language A Guide also builds critical awareness of the god trick, which is a term explained in chapter 1.1. The text states, for example, that “language and literature are never simply transparent. They also encode values and beliefs”. (7) It then raises a question: “To what extent should this be considered when responding to texts?” (7). The text also emphasises the importance of examining biases in texts. In this context, the term ‘bias’ refers to preconceptions that an author may have, due to their personal experiences and/or cultural background, that find their way into a text, usually in the shape of implied messages. Students are asked to “analyse structure, language and style in addition to aspects such as text type, context, bias and/or ideological position” (40). In doing so, the examining of an author’s bias is presented as a central part of responding to literature. This means that the student is encouraged to hold knowledge accountable, and are made aware of the questionable nature of objectivity. Another question the Language A Guide poses is: “To what extent is the critical approach taken to the analysis of a text itself influenced by specific cultural practices?” (40). It hereby asks students to not only critically look for bias in the text to which they are responding, but also in their own response to texts. Through these methods, students are equipped with essential tools for holding both texts and themselves accountable for the knowledge they produce. This is a core concept in Haraway’s “Situated Knowledges”, as explained in chapter 1.1, and also relates to Harding’s notion of strong objectivity, in that it considers neither the object of study nor the method of studying a product of objectivity.

By stressing the importance of considering context of production and reception as a central part of literary criticism, the Language A Guide links back to a number of theories about knowledge, culture and power that were explained in chapter 1.2. It relates, for example, to Bourdieu’s field theory, which posed that a work of art does not exist as a masterpiece through inherent, objective qualities, but through it being collectively considered

as such. By asking questions like “How can we explain the continued interest in a particular work in different contexts and at different times?” (29), the Language A Guide asks students to interrogate the mechanics that ascribe literary value and form a literary canon. It does so even more explicitly when it asks, “When does a text become defined as literature?” (7), or “How far do power relationships in society determine what is considered literature and define the canon?” (7). By encouraging students to consider the link between knowledge and power, the Language A Guide can also be linked to Foucault’s belief that knowledge is not the result of unbiased discovery, but rather a result of power structures constructing it over time.

This recognition of the connection between knowledge and power also relates to Spivak’s writings on the concept of subalternity. By asking students to consider the effect of power structures on the formation of a literary canon, students are introduced to the idea that these power structures can result in certain groups being excluded from the canon and forced into the position of the subaltern. The course manual explicitly mentions that “students are encouraged to consider who is excluded from or marginalized in a text, or whose views are silenced” (44). Additionally, it raises the question of “which social groups are omitted from a text, and what might this reflect about its production?” (40), as well as “How valid is the assertion that literature is a voice for the oppressed?” (40). The Language A Guide raises awareness for the position of the subaltern by posing these questions, which shows a commitment to the principles of critical pedagogy, as explained in chapter 1.3.

In several ways, the Language A Guide can also be linked to Said’s ideas about the relation between literature and broader societal issues, which were explained in chapter 1. In the first part of the course, students are encouraged to “explore how language [...] impacts on the world, and how [it] shapes both individual and group identity” (18), and to “consider the relationship between literature and issues at large, such as gender, power and identity” (21). This allows students to engage with the notion that language and literature influence society and help construct identity. In addition to establishing that literary works “are not created in a vacuum but are influenced by social context, cultural heritage and historical change” (21), the Language A course requires students to consider “how texts build upon and transform the inherited literary and cultural traditions” (21). In doing so, it reflects Said’s notion that the present cannot be viewed as separated from the past. Finally, it asks students to “to reflect and question in greater depth the values, beliefs and attitudes that are implied in the texts studied” (42). Through this combination of emphases and questions, the IB establishes firmly the concepts described by Said. They acknowledge that the present is not separated from the past, and by encouraging students to view literature in its cultural context, there is also recognition

for the way in which values expressed literature have the tendency of leaking into society. By then asking students to be critical of the values embedded in a text, the Language A Guide helps students avoid the pitfall described by Said, where the problematic attitudes within a literary work go unquestioned on account of its high cultural capital.

Overall, I argue that the Language A Guide employs many of the concepts that are central to feminist standpoint theory. It explicitly mentions that “a wider aim of the course is the development of an understanding of ‘critical literacy’ in students” (5), and realises this by emphasising the importance of context and the validity of different perspectives. The presented analysis highlights only the most striking statements in the Language A Guide that reflect the ideals of feminist standpoint theory and/or critical pedagogy, of which many more instances can be found in the text. It can be concluded that the Language A Guide can provide a solid base for English literary education that aligns with the key principles of feminist standpoint theory.

3.1.2 “PRESCRIBED LIST OF AUTHORS” AND “PRESCRIBED LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION” – THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

In addition to the guide discussed above, the International Baccalaureate provides schools with both a “Prescribed List of Authors (PLA)” and a list of “Prescribed Literature in Translation (PLT)”. The Language A Guide states that “students are required to study six literature texts” (17). Four of these must come from the prescribed list of authors, one of them must come from the prescribed literature in translation, and another one is chosen freely. The PLA states that the curriculum is required to cover at least four different literary genres, three different periods and authors from at least two or three different associated locations (2). The PLA does not set any requirements for the inclusion of different genders. The impact of the PLA and PLT on each school’s curriculum is extensive, as the freely chosen work of literature only makes up one of the six literary works, and the total workload of the course is unevenly distributed with a heavy focus on the works prescribed by the IB. However, the size of the lists of prescribed literature means that the schools have some independence for constructing their curriculum according to their individual desires in terms of diversity.

Out of the main concepts of feminist standpoint theory explained in chapter 1, I argue that in terms of the literary canon, the recognition of the existence and validity of different perspectives is the most relevant. A literary canon that is ideal in terms of feminist standpoint theory should reflect a wide range of different perspectives, considering that these perspectives are all equally valuable. In order to achieve this, the canon could include authors

with a wide array of identities, for example in terms of nationality, ethnicity and gender. An issue that can stand in the way of achieving this is the availability of literature by these different groups. As discussed in chapter 1.2, mechanisms of privilege and exclusion shape the canon in a variety of ways, making it difficult to place the responsibility of a diverse canon with any single actor. It is important to consider this when analysing the PLA and PLT.

The PLA consists of 271 authors, divided over four different genres. Each author is listed with their first- and last name, whether they are male or female, the continent they are most closely associated with and their associated century. The tables below illustrate the distribution of authors of different genders and from different continents across the PLA. I excluded the associated centuries from my analysis, because an author's era does not lead to social inequality in the way that gender or nationality may, and as explained in chapter 1, the diminishing of social inequality is one of the goals of feminist standpoint theory.

	<i>Total</i>
Male	204
Female	67
Total:	271

Table 1: number of male and female authors in the PLA

The first table shows that there is a significantly smaller number of female authors than male authors presented in the PLA. Although undesirable from the perspective of feminist standpoint theory, there is no evidence that this disparity is caused by the IB. By listing the genders of the authors, the IB allows the schools to make their own considerations when selecting their literary works. In this respect, the PLA allows for a degree of accountability, which is one of the fundamentals of feminist standpoint theory.

<i>Area/Genre</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Africa</i>	25
<i>Asia</i>	7
<i>Canada, the USA and the Caribbean</i>	95
<i>Eurasia</i>	1
<i>Europe</i>	116
<i>Oceania</i>	27
Total:	271

Table 2: number of authors from various continents in PLA

The second table shows that the numbers of authors from Europe and Canada, the USA and the Caribbean are also significantly higher than those from other continents. As these are places commonly considered to be part of the Western world, they give the PLA the appearance of Western-centrism. It should be taken into consideration, however, that the PLA

lists works written originally in English. This means the supply of eligible literature is greatest coming from Anglophone countries such as the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom. This could be an explanation for the relatively large number of listed authors coming from these nations. It is difficult to determine the severity of the imbalance, as the average number of English literary works produced per capita per nation would need to be taken into consideration. It is possible that the authors from the overrepresented countries are privileged on the international literary stage, but this is difficult to verify. Here, too, the inclusion of information about the author's location allows for a higher degree of accountability than if this information was omitted.

The Prescribed Literature in Translation (PLT) lists literary works of which a translated version may be read. Works are listed with their author's last name and initials, their English title, their original title, their French title, their Spanish title, their genre, its original language, the author's gender and the publication year of the original. The tables below show the division between male and female authors as well as the division of different languages in the list.

	Total
<i>Male</i>	280
<i>Female</i>	52
<i>Anonymous</i>	2
<i>Total:</i>	334

Table 3: numbers of male and female authors in PLT

Table 3 shows that the vast majority of works in the PLT are written by men. As with the PLA, this imbalance may be due to a wide variety of causes. Although the situation is undesirable from the perspective of feminist standpoint theory, the responsibility for diversifying does not lie with the IB alone. The inclusion of the author's gender results in an important increase in accountability.

European origin	Eurasian origin	Asian origin	Middle Eastern origin	African origin					
Total	227	Total 23	Total 54	Total 26	Total 6				
English	63	Russian	16	Chinese	24	Arabic	22	Kikuyu	3
French	33	Turkish	7	Japanese	24	Hebrew	3	Acholi	1
Spanish	23			Vietnamese	2	Persian	1	Afrikaans	1
German	16			Bengali	2				
Italian	14			Hindu	1				
Dutch	12			Urdu	1				
Norwegian	9								
Classical Greek	7								
Polish	6								
Portuguese	6								
Swedish	6								
Danish	5								
Czech	4								
Finnish	3								
Hungarian	3								
Icelandic	3								
Yiddish	3								
Latin	2								
Romanian	2								
Albanian	2								
Bosnian	1								
Catalan	1								
Estonian	1								
Slovene	1								
Welsh	1								

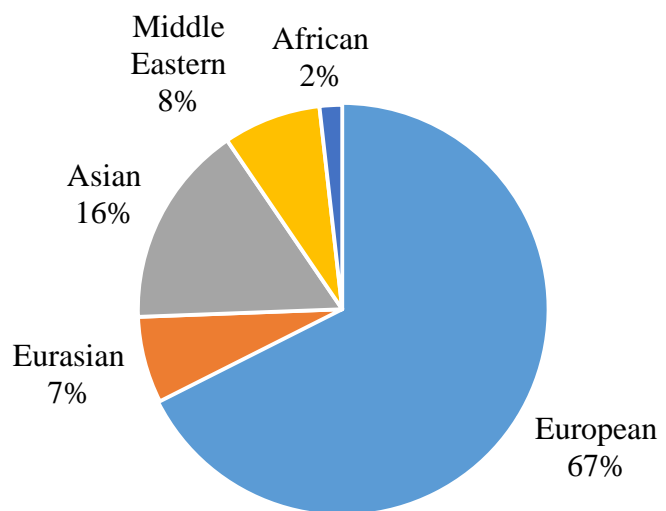


Figure 1: percentages of language origins in PLT

Table 4: numbers of languages and language origins in PLT

Table 4 and figure 1 show that the vast majority of works in the PLT are written in European languages, and that of the 39 featured languages, 25 are European. The Language A Guide claims that due to the IB’s “international nature [and] commitment to intercultural understanding, the Language A: Language and Literature course does not limit the study of texts to the products of one culture or of the cultures covered by any one language” (5). However, considering that European languages are spoken mostly in former European colonies, it is reasonable to suggest that the prevalence of European languages also indicates the presence of (historical) European cultural influence. It can also be argued that cultures from the same continent overlap more than cultures from separate continents. This makes the PLT’s numbers problematic, as it appears to value European culture over other cultures. This

contradicts their proclaimed commitment to intercultural understanding, as well as feminist standpoint theory's core principle of valuing different perspectives.

Looking at the numbers based on the PLA and PLT alone, there is a distinct overrepresentation of male authors as well as of European culture. However, there are many opaque processes that underlie the formation of a literary canon, so it is impossible to determine the exact cause for those inequalities. With regards to feminist standpoint theory, it is especially important for the producer of knowledge to situate themselves and to be accountable. This is done to a limited extent, as the process of selecting works for the PLA and PLT is not made transparent in these documents. However, the inclusion of additional information about the selected works, such as their original language, the author's gender and associated location indicate an awareness of the importance of accountability. The PLA and PLT may not perfectly reflect a diverse canon, but by embedding this tool for accountability, they still take their responsibility in providing literary education that aligns with the core concerns of feminist standpoint theory.

3.1.3 "5TV A FAREWELL TO ARMS TEACHER GUIDE" – ANNA VAN RIJN COLLEGE

This document is an example of a teacher's manual to the instruction of a literary work. It was sent to me by Ms Kerseboom in response to my request for documents used by teachers in literary education at a higher level. The document is used in the 5th year of bilingual VWO. As it is taught in the later parts of the Language A course, it is meant for teachers of pupils with an advanced knowledge of English. It consists of summaries and notes on Ernest Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to Arms*. The text in the document is the same as summary and analysis published by Homework Online Inc., a website founded in 1998 to "help readers thoroughly understand literature" ("Homework Online"). It is important to note that Homework Online Inc. is not affiliated with the International Baccalaureate or the Anna van Rijn College, because it means that the document was not written with the ideals of these parties in mind. However, as the school has chosen to make use of the document in its teaching of the work, thus endorsing the document and its views, it is reasonable to assume that the views of the school are relatively similar.

In order to incorporate the core principles of feminist standpoint theory, the Teacher Guide would ideally present knowledge in such a way that it is situated, rather than assuming a position of false objectivity. Drawing from the theory discussed in chapter 1, I suggest that this could be done in a number of ways, such as acknowledging the identity of a text's author.

This can mean that the name of the author is published alongside the text, or ideally that information about their background is included. It could also be acknowledged that the knowledge presented is neither absolute nor objective, and the language used in the work should reflect that. With regards to writing about literature, this means that a work is discussed using the constructive approach described in chapter 1.2, and speaks in terms of possible interpretations of the text, rather than in terms of uncovering the true meaning of a text. In doing so, the knowledge presented becomes accountable.

Taking these qualifiers as a base, the Teacher Guide can be analysed. It can immediately be noted that there is no acknowledgement of the guide's author. The document itself does not provide the reader with a source, author or introductory comments. While questionable, this is in itself not the most problematic aspect of the text. It becomes more problematic, however, when it is combined with an implied position of objectivity within the text itself.

There is one instance in the Teacher Guide where the choice for a provided analysis is explained. The Teacher Guide refers to a particular monologue within the novel in which the protagonist uses the word "it" to refer to something undetermined. The Teacher Guide then acknowledges that "what Henry refers to is still debated among scholars" (1) and proceeds to explain the most widely accepted interpretation. This is followed by an explanation of a less commonly held interpretation, and it is stated that "the interpretation of the novel presented here will favor the former, which is more consistent with the trends that run through Hemingway's other novels" (1). This is the only instance in which the Teacher Guide mentions the possibility of other interpretations. It is also the only example in which the Teacher Guide refers to its contents as an "interpretation". By explaining why it chooses to adhere to one interpretation rather than the other, the Teacher Guide shows accountability. By not dismissing or ignoring either interpretation, both are attributed a considerable degree of validity, which is an important notion in feminist standpoint theory.

There is an implied claim to objectivity decidedly present in the text. This is problematic because, as explained in chapter 1, feminist standpoint theory poses that knowledge can never truly be objective, and for an author to pretend otherwise by not acknowledging the limitations of their perspective leads to what is known as the "god trick" (Haraway 581). Examples of this implied objectivity are found in the Teacher Guide in many instances where the speaker uses decided terms where more indefinite language would be more suited. Regarding a summary of a scene, for example, it states that "the situation here is bleak" (1). About one of the novel's characters, it declares that "the priest is a man of the

spirit” (4). By this use of the verb ‘is’ rather than ‘seems’ or ‘appears’, these statements acquire a definitiveness, lending the speaker an air of authority or objectivity. The verb ‘is’, in these examples, operates under the presumption of an inherent truth that is being uncovered, rather than of a wholly subjective interpretation of a literary work. By using the word ‘is’, the statement is presented as though it were irrefutable. This use of language does not align with the challenging of the concept of objectivity, which is central to feminist standpoint theory.

In addition to this, the Teacher Guide repeatedly makes claims about the novel’s characters that operate under a similar assumed position of authority. It states, for example, that “Catherine recognizes the indifference of the universe, and takes joy in the fact that Henry and herself are both alive and out of immediate danger” (5), or that “the only things Rinaldi finds interesting are alcohol and sex” (7). These claims are not supported by direct quotes from the novel in which these thoughts or feelings are explicitly stated. They are, therefore, interpretations rather than fact. By presenting these statements as though they were objective observations, the Teacher Guide speaks as if it were capable of excavating a singular reality from the novel and disregards the validity of different interpretations.

Interestingly, the Teacher Guide combines this assumed position of objectivity with frequent use of subjective language. Using subjective language in itself is not problematic, as long as it can be accounted for. It is the combination with the Teacher Guide’s implied objectivity and lack of situating that makes this use of subjective language problematic. The Teacher Guide states about a particular scene that “it is *absolutely* absurd that a bunch of men should be blown apart while they are eating pasta” (2). The addition of the word “absolutely” reveals a strong emotional response from the text’s invisible author, who presents their interpretation of the scene with unwavering certainty. Referring to one character’s interpretation of a particular occurrence, the Teacher Guide states that “Catherine sees more than just this *shallow* resemblance” (7), thereby condemning the other character’s interpretation as inferior. About another character it is written that she, “*unfortunately*, has not let go of social conventions” (9). Once again, a word is added that gives away an emotional response that cannot be accounted for, due to the lack of an explicitly situated author. With every such assertion, the work becomes more subjective, and the lack of accountability becomes more problematic.

With this same appearance of objectivity, the Teacher Guide makes claims about authorial intent. It is stated, for example, that “the description of a ‘permanent rain’ is intended to create a feeling of helplessness” (2). There is no accompanying information to prove Hemingway’s intentions when writing that particular scene, which makes the claim

unsubstantiated. Similarly, the Teacher Guide claims that “Hemingway sets up the war as a metaphor for life” (3), and that “Hemingway makes the absurdity clear by spending more time describing the act of eating (53-54) than the exploding shells overhead” (2). These quotes show an intentional approach to the text’s meaning by referring to actions undertaken by the author to embed meaning in the text, rather than a constructive one. As explained in chapter 1.2, it has been argued by Stuart Hall that this approach does not account the role of the reader in ascribing meaning to a text. It operates under the assumption of one inherent fixed meaning hidden within a text that can be uncovered, rather than that of multiple, equally valid, context-dependent interpretations. As such, this strategy does not align with the core principles of feminist standpoint theory.

The Teacher Guide for *A Farewell to Arms* shows little committal to the principles of feminist standpoint theory. It does not include an introduction to the document’s author, meaning that the author speaks as if from nowhere. At the same time, the document uses subjective language, which adds another layer of meaning to the text which cannot be accounted for. Additionally, the Teacher Guide makes claims about the novel and its author that are not substantiated by evidence in the text, but are presented as though they are objective facts. As situatedness and accountability are core principle of feminist standpoint theory, it can be concluded that the document is decidedly lacking in that respect.

3.1.4 “5TV A FAREWELL TO ARMS HEMINGWAY FILE 2015” – ANNA VAN RIJN COLLEGE

The document that transmits knowledge from teacher to student most directly is the “5TV Farewell to Arms Hemingway File 2015” or “Hemingway File. As explained in chapter 2.2, it is composed by Ms Kerseboom and her co-worker Ms Fitzpatrick and is provided to the students to guide them students through an eight-week section of the Language A course. It contains basic practical information about the course and its assessment, as well as articles providing background information on Hemingway and his work. It features an introduction to Ernest Hemingway, an article on World War I and an article on modernism. This is followed up by information regarding Hemingway’s characters, style and themes, and four weekly assignments which consist of questions intended to “stimulate [students’] understanding of the novel” (16).

The articles in the document originate from a variety of sources, which are explained below. Apart from the introduction to Ernest Hemingway, no sources for the presented material are credited. The cover page of the document features the names L. Kerseboom and

L. Fitzpatrick, but it does not specify their roles in the production of the document. This lack of a clear author of the various articles makes the information presented in the document largely unaccountable.

The article “Introducing Ernest Hemingway” is identical to an essay written by professor Ganeshan Balakrishnan, PhD. This person is not associated with the Anna van Rijn College, but his essay can be found online. At the bottom of the article in the Hemingway File, he is credited as the author. The article contains a number of statements that seem to operate under a pretence of objectivity. Claims are made regarding inherent qualities of Hemingway’s work, including his “mature technique” (5), “accurate rendering of sensuous experience” (6), and “the individuality of his style” (6). Claims are also made about Hemingway’s life, with references to “his creative genius” (6) and his “painstaking hunt for an apt word or phrase to express the exact truth” (6). One critic, who argued that Hemingway’s work was devoid of substance, is dismissed, saying that “such a casual dismissal as this [...] is not justified” and that “his works should be read and interpreted in the light of his famous ‘Iceberg theory’” (7). These claims are made as if they are self-evident and do not leave room for contention. At the same time, little evidence is provided to support the statements. This is problematic, as it presents these qualities in both Hemingway and his work as though they are inherent rather than subjective. This is in contradiction with the argument that all knowledge is rooted in subjective experience, as made by Harding, Haraway, Bourdieu and Foucault and explained in chapter 1.

In addition to this, there are a number of statements within the article that express a clear bias, but do not acknowledge the situatedness of the article’s author. It is written, for example, that Hemingway’s mother “was an authoritarian woman who had reduced his father [...] to the level of a hen-pecked husband” (5). This is a distinctly negative and misogynist interpretation of the relationship between Hemingway’s parents, which is not supported by any other evidence in the article. Regarding Hemingway’s childhood, it is said that he spent this “in the northern woods of Michigan, among the native Indians, where he learned the primitive aspects of life such as fear, pain, danger and death” (5). This statement uses the uncommon term “native Indians” to refer to the indigenous people of Michigan, and establishes a link between them and supposed primitive aspects of life. There is no reference to the limited perspective of the article’s author, and both these statements are presented without questioning, as though they were objectively observed facts. This directly contradicts the concept of situated knowledges, which is central in feminist standpoint theory.

Interestingly, these supposedly objective statements about Hemingway's inherent qualities are combined with a number of instances where he is characterised more relatively, through his achievements and cultural status. Hemingway is introduced, for example, by stating that he "occupies a prominent place in the annals of American Literary history" (5). Further on, it is mentioned that his work *The Torrents of Spring* "established him as a writer of repute" (5) and that his next books ensured that "his international reputation was firmly secured" (5). His works are sometimes also described with a focus on their economic success, being described as a "best seller" (5) or "an immense success [which] won him the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954" (6). While these instances are only limited and offset by the many statements presuming objectivity, they create a space in which it can be acknowledged that Hemingway's value is due in part to the regard in which he is held by society, rather than being the inevitable result of any inherent literary merit. This aligns well with Bourdieu's field theory, which was outlined in chapter 1.2.

Although the articles about World War I and modernism do not credit any sources, their texts are identical to two handouts published for a project by the US-based National Endowment for the Arts. As the articles are only concerned with the most basic outlines of the topics, there is little in them that can be critiqued using feminist standpoint theory. The articles can be attributed, however, with a use of emotive language. It makes use of terms like "catastrophe" and "a brutal standoff", and foreshadows the arrival of World War II by saying that "an even greater threat was on the horizon" and that "the Great War might have been aptly named had the combatants heeded its warning" (9). Regarding modernism, the article states that "the great legacy of the Enlightenment and 19th-century realism crumpled beneath the force of a sustained literary revolt" (9). This emotive language adds an extra layer to the text's meaning that can be read between the lines. The source of that extra information is not accounted for due to the lack of explicit situating on behalf of the author. In this respect, the articles do not adhere to the principle of accountability, which is one of the core principles of feminist standpoint theory.

The article on Hemingway's characters appears to be an adaption of one or several very similar articles that can be found online, from a variety of sources and dates ("A Farewell", "AFWTA"). None of these sources are credited in the Hemingway File. The article describes common characteristics found in Hemingway's characters. There is little about this article that is particularly striking, apart for one instance in one of the questions. Students are presented with a summary of a scholarly debate and asked to write one or two paragraphs about the character Catherine. They are told that she is "a very controversial one among

Hemingway's critics" and are presented with two different sides of the argument. By introducing the question as such, students are reminded that there are different possible interpretations of the text. This only accounts for one of many questions in the student reader, but it is nonetheless significant, as the acknowledging of different valid interpretations is central to feminist standpoint theory.

The article on Hemingway's style appears to originate from roughly the same sources as the article on Hemingway's characters, although these sources are not credited in the document. There are a number of instances in the article about Hemingway's style where a subjective interpretation of his work is presented as if it was objective fact. It is stated, for example, that "although his sentences are choppy and simple, Hemingway effectively uses understatement to help the reader understand the atmosphere of war and the feelings of his character" (11). Even though the effectiveness of Hemingway's use of understatement may vary from reader to reader, it is presented here as though it were an absolute fact. Further on, it is stated that "because they have a fundamentally coherent 'world view' [...], great writers tend to be repetitious" (12). This sentence makes use of the notion of a 'great writer', presents a criterion for being a great writer, and suggests that Hemingway is one of these great writers. This is problematic because it suggests that there is such a thing as an objectively great writer, which can be judged based on an inherent quality that they or their work possess. Additionally, the article's author does not situate themselves, making the information unaccountable. This is in opposition with the principles outlined in chapter 1 regarding accountability, as well as those regarding the relativity of literary value.

The article on Hemingway's themes appears to be a close adaption of a document published in 2002 by Melvin C. Miles, which can be found on StudyLib.net. No source for the article is credited in the Hemingway file. The article makes frequent claims about Hemingway's world view. It states, for example, that "for Hemingway, man is born into a completely naturalistic and totally indifferent universe" (12) or that "for Hemingway, all traditional religious and/or philosophical explanations of the universe [...] are simply illusions invented and maintained by men and their social institutions" (13). These are interpretations based on themes frequently found in Hemingway's work, but they are presented as indisputable facts, as though the article's author has intimate knowledge of Hemingway's emotional life. The article does not provide any background information on its author and the limitations of their perspective, nor any evidence that Hemingway truly felt the way they so decidedly state. This leads to a 'god trick', which as explained in chapter 1.1 is in contradiction with the principles of feminist standpoint theory.

Another problematic aspect of the article about Hemingway's style is its use of the generic 'he'. By this, I mean the text often uses masculine pronouns where the subject referred to is not by definition male, and does not explain or acknowledge the implications of using the male pronoun. It refers, for example, to the Hemingway hero, saying that "he must accept the realities of nada" and that "while man has no control over his ultimate fate in a chaotic universe, [...] he can control the manner in which he confronts his fate" (13). It goes on to say that "the Hemingway 'code' consists of standards and forms of conduct by which a man can confront the realities of nada [...] with dignity, and thus by which he can impose a measure of purpose, order, meaning, and value upon his life" (14). While the generic 'he' is sometimes used to refer to people regardless of gender, this article uses masculine terms so consistently that the text appears to only refer to men. This may be due to the content of Hemingway's works, which often has male protagonists, but the article does not provide the reader with an explanation for the gross omission, nor an opportunity to question it. In this respect, the text lacks accountability.

A significant part of the student guide consists of questions that students are expected to answer as weekly assignments. These questions do not present knowledge in the way that the informative articles do, but instead guide students in their understanding of the novel. This is a crucial part of the educational process, and should therefore also be included in this analysis.

The questions posed by the guide can be roughly categorised into five different sections. The most basic of these questions are questions regarding what happens in the novel. These include, for example, questions like "How is Aymo killed?" (20) or "What steps does Frederic take to make himself inconspicuous to the other soldiers he passes?" (20). These questions ask students to reiterate something that is explicitly stated in the text. Other questions regard the identifying of stylistic elements or literary devices. These include questions like "Find an example of the stream of consciousness technique in this chapter" (19), or "Find an example of comic relief in this chapter" (21). These questions ask students to apply their knowledge of literary analysis to the novel. Both these categories require students to adhere closely to the text and do not offer or ask for a subjective interpretation of the text. They are therefore not in apparent discord with feminist standpoint theory.

A different category of questions asks students to provide arguments to support claims made in the Hemingway File. These questions include "What evidence is there that Henry likes Dr Valentini?" (17) or "What evidence is there that Catherine is disillusioned by the war?" (16). These questions require students to argue for a claim not originally their own,

without questioning the claims made. There are also questions that ask students to fill in information gaps left by the novel, by explaining character's motivations or intentions. These questions include "Why does Rinaldi say to Frederic, 'You act like a married man'?" (19) or "What does Frederic mean when he says he has made a 'separate peace' with the war?" (21). As the answers are not readily available in the novel, the questions can only lead to speculative answers. Yet, the questions are posed as if there is one definitive answer that can be uncovered. This assumes that there is a singular correct interpretation of the studied literary work, which is incongruous with central ideas in feminist standpoint theory explained in chapter 1, such as the constructed nature of meaning and a critical stance towards objectivity.

The final category of questions is centred around asking students to provide their individual interpretation of events in the novel. These questions include, for example, "Why do you think Frederic gives up his seat on the train to the captain of the artillery without making a fuss?" (18) or "Why do you think Frederic and Catherine feel the need to hurry?" (21). These questions ask students to speculate on the motivations and intentions of the characters where these are not explicitly stated, but they differ from the previous category in their situatedness. By including the words "why do *you* think", this category of questions both acknowledges that the answer is personal and therefore subjective, and allows for different equally correct responses. This acknowledgement of different perspectives as well as the emphasis on the subjective nature of the answer makes these questions more in accordance with the principles of feminist standpoint theory.

In many respects, the Hemingway File does not adhere to the principles of feminist standpoint theory. None of the document's articles properly situate their author, making the knowledge unaccountable. Additionally, it frequently uses a combination of subjective language and an assumed air of objectivity. In other respects, it provides some room for different interpretations. Still, it is decidedly different from the ideals outlined by the Language A Guide. Viewed as a whole, I would not consider the Hemingway File to be an optimal tool for teaching English literature in accordance with the principles of feminist standpoint theory.

3.2 OTHER MATERIALS

In addition to the collected written materials, this case study also includes some non-written sources. These consist of an interview with Lesley Kerseboom as well as some observations made in class. These materials are intended to provide some insight into how the written materials relate to the practice of literary education in class.

3.2.1 INTERVIEW WITH LESLEY KERSEBOOM

The interview with Ms Kerseboom took place over phone on December 16, 2016. In the interview, Lesley discussed the structure of literary education with at the Anna van Rijn College with me. She gave me information about what the literary curriculum looks like and how it is formed. What follows is an analysis of the information that I received during the interview.

When asked why the Anna van Rijn College has a partnership with the International Baccalaureate, she answered that the International Baccalaureate is currently the only available bilingual program that is concerned not only with language acquisition, but also with the context of literature. The education programme is put together by Ms Kerseboom and Ms Fitzpatrick, her fellow English teacher. The two women have joint responsibility over the programme and do not depend on the school board's approval before implementing any changes, as long as the pupil's results at their exams do not fall below the national averages. They occasionally attend three-day workshops with other teachers of the IB programme to exchange knowledge and experience. They use these experiences to construct learning materials for teachers and students.

Within the VWO level literary programme, six literary works are studied. The selection is always a point of contention, because there are very different opinions on what should be included. Ms Kerseboom states that one of the main factors in deciding what literary works are selected is the enjoyment of the students. She argues that the students usually do not remember what they do not find interesting. The works currently in the curriculum were chosen for a variety of reasons. William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was selected because Ms Kerseboom and Ms Fitzpatrick felt it was important to include one of Shakespeare's works. This particular work is very well-known, is usually enjoyed especially by the female students, and because there is a modern film adaption, the material is accessible for pupils. Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* was selected because it is usually enjoyed by the male students, and because it matches with themes taught in history class. The themes of trauma and war are also central in the current literary programme. Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* was included because it relates to the same theme of trauma, but is also because it is more modern and is centred around a young protagonist. This supposedly makes the work easier to relate to. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was selected because it features themes like privacy, propaganda and media, which are relevant to the students' daily lives, but also tie in well with what is valued within the IB programme. Wilfred Owen's poetry is included because it features themes of

trauma and war, and, like Hemingway's work, it ties in well with themes taught in history class. Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* was selected because it is set in the Middle East, and is therefore a departure from the otherwise largely western canon. It is centred around the themes of trauma and war, and both teachers felt it was important to include a work in which the protagonist is female. As *Persepolis* is a graphic novel, students are also brought into contact with less traditional forms of storytelling.

The literary programme used to look quite different several years ago. The works studied were Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Achinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Margret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These books were largely selected surrounding the theme of dystopian novels, and the curriculum was set up by the older, mostly male, teachers. It was decided, however, that several of the works were too difficult for the students. For some works, this was due to their themes, such as *Hamlet*'s existentialism. In others, it was due to a difficult context, such as the religious fanaticism in *A Handmaid's Tale*. Some works were removed because of changes to the IB's PLA, such as Alice Walker, who was removed from the list for reasons not discussed in the interview.

The fact that the entire literary education programme is set up by the two women is not explicitly emphasised during the course of the programme. It does come up, however, if a teacher is considering making changes to the literary programme, and wants the pupils to know that changes may come up in the future. When asked which themes were emphasised most in class during the studying of the literary works, Ms Kerseboom replied that there is a significant emphasis on literary context, the close reading of a text and identifying literary devices. In doing so, students are prepared for the assessment within the IB programme, which is heavily reliant on students' ability to analyse a text through close reading.

Although the interview did not focus on the thoughts and experiences of Ms Kerseboom, she did remark that she decided very deliberately to teach in a public school. The Anna van Rijn College has no specific religious or ideological affiliations. She explains that by teaching here, she feels free to discuss nearly any topic in class without fearing for the response of disgruntled parents or feeling censored by the school board. This makes it easier for the teacher to discuss potentially controversial topics, such as homosexuality, racism or gender equality.

The selection of literature taught in the Language A course at the Anna van Rijn College does not represent a wide demographic. Out of the six works taught, there is only one non-white, non-western author, who is also the only woman. From the perspective of feminist

standpoint theory, the selection would ideally represent a more diverse body of authors. It must be noted, however, that the making of this selection is also dependent on the prescribed authors and works that are provided by the IB. As concluded in paragraph 3.1.2, the overrepresentation of European and male authors is already established there. It can also be concluded from the interview that a previous, more diverse selection of literature proved to be too difficult for teaching at this level. Although it may be desirable to have a diverse selection of literature, Ms Kerseboom's comments indicate that the school also takes into consideration the feasibility and ease of teaching a work. Combined with the already limited diversity within the prescribed literature, this may provide an explanation for why the selection looks as homogenous as it does.

It is important to look at the mechanics behind the formation of the literary education at the Anna van Rijn college. As described, this process is led by Ms Kerseboom and Ms Fitzpatrick, which is too small a team to represent a full scale of diversity. However, the course is not based on their knowledge alone, as teachers of the Language A programme at different schools regularly exchange ideas with each other. This allows for different perspectives to be considered during the shaping and evaluating of the course. It is also important to consider the motivations behind the formation of the course. During the interview, Ms Kerseboom noted a number of aspects of the construction process that align well with feminist standpoint theory. She mentioned, for example, that the collaboration with the IB was created largely due to its focus on the context of literary works rather than just the works themselves. She also mentioned the importance of being able to discuss a wide variety of subject matters in class, and consciously selected *Persepolis* in order to introduce some diversity to the curriculum. The awareness of and willingness to include different perspectives into literary education shows that these core principles of feminist standpoint theory, explained in chapter 1, have a moderate effect on the formation of the literary course.

Overall, the information gathered from the interview does not show a very high degree of commitment to the principles of feminist standpoint theory. The selection of literary works does not reflect a full range of diversity in literature, and there is no direct emphasis on situating the knowledge students are asked to take in. There are signs, however, that show an inclination towards the principles of feminist standpoint theory. The reasons why these do not seem to show through in practice are not entirely clear, although it appears that it is due to a combination between practical objections and choosing to prioritise different aspects of English literary education.

3.2.2 CLASS OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the written materials and the interview with Ms Kerseboom, I made a number of observations in class in order to connect the theory of literary education to its practice. These observations were made in three different lessons, with two different teachers. They are intended to provide some additional insight in the literary education provided at the Anna van Rijn College. Although the observed classes are not connected to the documents about Hemingway analysed above, the observations still provide valuable information regarding the teacher's methods of transferring knowledge, as well as the interactions between the teacher, the written materials and the pupils. What follows below is an exposition of these observations, followed by an analysis of relevant aspects found within them.

The first and second lessons were observed in a 4th year bilingual VWO class. In the first lesson, the class discussed Oscar Wilde's story "The Nightingale and the Rose". They mostly discussed characters and characterisation. The aim of the lesson is to teach the pupils to identify the roles of literary characters, such as the protagonist and the antagonist. The teacher uses a PowerPoint presentation to explain certain elements, while pupils have a booklet from which to read the story and the related questions. The story is introduced by the teacher as an unconventional fairy tale, which is followed by an explanation of the term "conventional". This explanation is centred around the idea that conventions are not set in stone but are determined by society, such as addressing your teachers with "sir" or "madam". Oscar Wilde is introduced as a "legendary" author, who the pupils will come across in their lives more than once. Pupils are asked to discuss three statements in pairs, to see whether or not they agree. Ms Kerseboom also explains her own perspective on the discussion questions. Pupils are then asked to read the story and complete a summary of the story. The elements of a protagonist and antagonist are described as being indispensable to a story. In answering the question of which character takes on which role in the story, it is emphasised that there is not one simple answer, and that it depends on the context and the way in which a person looks at the story. Questions asked include, for example, "How is love a theme in this story?" or "What is the writer's message about logic and love?". Pupils are asked to answer these questions and explain their answers during the classroom discussion.

The second lesson took place in the same 4th year VWO class. This time, they discuss Roald Dahl's short story "Lamb to the Slaughter". The story features a female character, who is characterised a traditional housewife. The class features a PowerPoint presentation with some quotes from a book on home economics from the 1950's. The lesson focuses mostly on themes in the story, such as the marriage of the main characters and how they do or do not fit

into the image of a traditional 1950's marriage. They also discuss the subject of irony. Similar to the first lesson, pupils are asked to answer questions about the story and explain their answers. They are also probed to think about what is written in the story, for example when Ms Kerseboom points out that the husband in the story is a grown man who is likely perfectly capable of hanging his own coat, and yet his wife does it for him.

The third lesson was taught in a 6th year VWO class and consisted of pupils giving presentations on Wilfred Owen's poetry. The pupils presented on the setting of the poem as well as the writing style. In this particular lesson, there is very little participation on the part of the teacher. Two small groups of pupils had prepared presentations on two of Wilfred Owen's poems. The presentations are about five to ten minutes in length and somewhat informal, as they are not part of the official IB assessment. The pupils' presentations stay close to the text, in that they offer their explanations and interpretations of the use of stylistic devices and word choice, but do not give extensive comment on their personal or possible other interpretations of the work.

The lessons show elements that relate to feminist standpoint theory in different ways. The pupils' presentations during the third lessons do not show much interaction from the side of the teachers, but they do show what the pupils consider to be important in the study of literature. Their presentations, as stated, remained very close to the text. This is understandable as this may feel as safe territory for pupils, but it is nonetheless interesting that the importance of context in the study of literature, which is so emphasised in the Language A Guide, does not come through more clearly in the 6th year pupils' presentations. The first two classes make intensive use of a booklet with pre-written questions. These questions have similar formats as the questions in the Hemingway Reader, as they ask students to provide arguments for statements made by the booklet, or asking what an author or a character means. These questions operate under the same assumption of a singular truth that can be uncovered. However, the teacher also asks the pupils to expand upon their answer, by asking why they are inclined towards a particular answer. She also includes valuable information about the importance of context and the possibility of different interpretations which might not be included in the booklet itself. While some aspects of the in-class experience align well with the concepts of feminist standpoint theory, some aspects are more questionable.

The classroom teaching adds a different dimension to the written materials. During the first two lessons, pupils are asked questions from both an instructional booklet and guiding questions asked by the teacher. Some of the questions are mindful of the validity of different interpretations, and some of them are not. The benefit of the teacher is that they can ask why a

student is inclined towards an answer, and give additional explanations to go along with elements in the stories. Teachers can guide the student's attention to certain elements in the literary work, and encourage them to consider them very carefully before drawing their own individual conclusions. It is in these discussions that there is much more room for the consideration of multiple valid answers. Whereas the informative reader provided to the students originated from a variety of sources and did not always list an author, the in-class experience is led by the physically present teacher who is speaking in their own voice. This means that they almost cannot help but be situated: pupils come in close personal contact with them regularly, and are therefore likely more aware of the limitations of this person's perspective. The teacher cannot claim the authority of speaking from nowhere while overseeing everywhere, because they are visually and personally situated in a way in which (anonymously) written works are not. In terms of feminist standpoint theory, this makes the in-class discussion of literature a crucial part of English literary education.

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to determine how feminist standpoint theory can be used to analyse English literary education in secondary schools. In order to answer that question, I conducted a single case study of English literary education at a secondary school, and determined if and how concepts of feminist standpoint theory were being integrated there. While this thesis only studied one section of a single school, the results show both good and bad practices of English literary education with respect to feminist standpoint theory, thereby contributing to answering the main question.

I have developed a theoretical framework that outlines both the core principles of feminist standpoint theory, and connects these to theories of knowledge, cultural criticism and critical pedagogy. This theoretical framework outlines the ideas which are crucial for applying feminist standpoint theory to English literary education. I have then used this framework to analyse different sources used in literary education, namely both texts about literature and texts about literary education. The framework has also been used to analyse lists of prescribed literature as an expression of the literary canon, as well as an interview and observations. Through a combination of critical discourse analysis, close reading and qualitative content analysis, this variety of sources has been analysed.

It was shown that the Language A Guide, published by the IB, outlined ideals and principles decidedly connected to feminist standpoint theory. It was also shown that the literary canon that the IB outlined does not represent the full scale of diversity that might be desirable, although the exact cause of this imbalance is difficult to determine. While analysing the Teacher Guide, it became clear that it did not adhere to the core principles of feminist standpoint theory and was incongruent with the ideals outlined in the Language A Guide. The document's content originates from a website which is not affiliated with the IB, which explains that discord. The Hemingway File, intended for the use of students, consists of articles from a variety of sources that lack author accountability. The most problematic aspect of these sources is their tendency to speak as though objective without situating themselves, resulting in the 'god trick' of speaking as if from nowhere while overseeing everywhere. The interview showed that there is an awareness of the core concerns of feminist standpoint theory. It also showed that many other factors affect the way the English literary course is formed, causing the end product to not necessarily align with feminist standpoint theory. The observations show that the teacher plays an important role in education by showing nuances in the texts presented to pupils, and stimulating pupils to engage with texts and question their assumptions in ways that the texts alone do not.

Further research on this matter could include a more extensive study of the in-class practices of English literary education. It is clear that the classroom situation allows for a more dynamic transmission of knowledge than the written texts alone. It also appears that the texts published by the Anna van Rijn College are not necessarily representative of the in-class reality. By observing the lessons for a more extended period of time, a clearer image of their relation to feminist standpoint theory may be produced.

In conclusion, I would like to return to my introductory remarks about the importance of feminist standpoint theory to the realisation of ethical and honest education. Because of education's role as a cornerstone in Western society, it is tremendously important that its contribution is as positive as it can be. In my opinion, the recognition of different equally valid perspectives, a critical attitude towards claims of objectivity and acknowledgement of the situated nature of knowledge are crucial to realising such a positive contribution. My analysis has shown that there are ways in which feminist standpoint theory both can be and is being incorporated into English literary education. Still, there is much room for improvement, and while making adjustments and transforming education is no easy task, I argue that it is worth the work.

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